

Name (*ism*), Derived Name (*ism mushtaq*) and Description (*wasf*) in Arabic Grammar, Muslim Dialectical Theology and Arabic Logic

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Abstract Recent studies on Avicenna’s modal syllogistic have pointed out the significance of his distinction between the understanding of predications ‘with regard to essence/essentially’ (*dhātī*) and ‘with regard to description/descriptionally’ (*wasfī*) (Street 2000a, 2000b, 2005a, 2005b). In this chapter I investigate the grammatical, theological and metaphysical context of Avicenna’s understanding of that what is ‘derived’ (*mushtaq*) either with regard to essence/essentially or with regard to description/descriptionally. I argue that this distinction is based on two different kinds of understanding ‘derivation’ (*ishtiqāq*). The Arabic grammarian Sibawayh distinguished two classes of the ‘derived’: [a.] “[the name of] the agent” (*ism al-fā’il*) and [b.] “the description/attribute which is similar to [the name of] the agent” (*al-sifa al-mushabbaha bi-l-fā’il*). These terms can be understood as derived either logically or grammatically. I argue that Avicenna’s *dhātī*-reading is based on the logical derivation of the ‘name of an agent’ or the ‘description/attribute’ from a noun which signifies an abstracted essence, and that Avicenna’s *wasfī*-reading is based on their grammatical derivation from a verb/acting (*fi’l*) which indicates the occurring (*hudūth*) and the happening (*huṣūl*) of an acting (*fi’l*) or of an affection by a quality (*sifa*). Thus, Avicenna’s *dhātī/wasfī* distinction is a typical product of the mutual rapprochement between Neoplatonic and Peripatetic metaphysics and logic on one hand and Arabic grammar on the other hand. I further argue that the *dhātī/wasfī* distinction is not only basic for Avicenna’s syllogistic, but also for al-Ghazālī’s semantical-logical explanation of the names of God.

1 Introduction

One of the most disputed issues among logicians and scholars of the history of logic has been the explanation of what has been called Aristotle’s multiplicity of approaches to modal logic and their integration in one consistent system.¹ In the

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Arabic tradition Aristotle's modal syllogistic was superseded by a system of modal logic in which the distinction between the understanding of predications 'with regard to essence/essentially' (*dhātī*) and 'with regard to description/descriptionally' (*wasfī*) plays an important role.² Predication 'with regard to essence/essentially' is obviously derived from a technical term of Neoplatonic and Peripatetic metaphysics and logic, namely the term 'essence' (*dhāt*) in the sense of 'form' (*ṣūra*) and 'secondary substance', that is to say, what is predicated of a thing in response to the question 'what is it?' (cf. Aristotle, *Cat.* 5, 2b 29–32; *Met.* VII, 4). Earlier Arabic logicians and theologians used the term '*ayn*' (cf. Endress 1977, 79–80; Schöck 2006, 121–3, 129, 283–4) instead of the term *dhāt*. Predication 'with regard to description/descriptionally', however, is not derived from a term of metaphysics and logic, but from a technical term of Arabic grammar. As a technical term of Arabic grammar 'description' (*wasf*) denotes what is called in English grammar a 'participle', and what is signified in Arabic grammar by 'attribute' (*ṣifa/na't*) or 'the name of the agent' (*ism al-fā'il*). But the Arabic term 'description' is broader in meaning. It can signify any act of describing and any description of someone or something, not only by an attribute or a name of an agent, but also by verbal description. That is to say, the 'description' (*wasf/ṣifa/na't*) by which the 'described' (*mawṣūf/man'ūt*) is explained in language might be a verb (*fi'l*) or an expression which is 'derived from a verb' (*mushṭaqq min fi'l*), namely an 'attribute' (*ṣifa/na't*) or a 'name of an agent' (*ism fā'il*). In any case the description characterizes the 'described', qualifies it, praises or blames it, explains and specifies it by (*bi-*) something. In this broader sense the term 'description' is used throughout the Arabic literal tradition.³ Thus the Arabic grammatical term 'description' denotes a semantical function, namely the function of describing something—which is the 'described'—by something else, namely by a quality (*ṣifa*) which corresponds to the grammatical category 'attribute' (*ṣifa*) or by an action (*fi'l*) which corresponds to the grammatical category 'verb' (*fi'l*). Both, 'with regard to essence/essentially' and 'with regard to description/descriptionally' are semiotical terms, inasmuch they refer to the way in which an expression (*lafẓ*) is used in language. However, they are also logical terms, inasmuch they refer to the way in which two things combined (*mu'allaf*) and connected (*muqtarin*) in language are combined and connected logically.

The use of an originally grammatical term side by side with a logical term and their integration in one system of understanding sentences is a typical product of the appropriation of the Aristotelian logic in the Arabic world. From the very beginning of the adoption of antique logic 'Greek' logic and Arabic grammar were rivals. As the early Arab grammarians saw it, the rules of the Arabic language guarantee an immediate understanding of the evident (*zāhir*) meaning of a sentence. For them 'Greek' logic was not only superfluous, but it could not serve to understand an Arabic sentence, since it is based on the language of the Greeks. In opposition to them the logicians, whatever language they speak, hold logic to be based on reason which is common to all human beings. This basic conflict led to a reflection on the relation of Aristotle's logic with Arabic language and to an increasing influence not only of Neoplatonic and Peripatetic logic on Arabic grammar but also of Arabic grammar on Arabic logic. The first Arabic writing commentator whose brief paraphrase of the Aristotelian Organon is preserved, Ibn

al-Muqaffa' (first half 2nd/8th century), identified the grammatical categories of name/noun (*ism*) and attribute (*na't*) with the logical categories of substance/essence (*'ayn*) and accident (*'araq*) (Schöck 2006, 121–3). For al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) the reflection on the relationship of grammatical function with logical function was a key-element of the integration of Aristotle's logic in Arabic thought. This increasing mutual influence is reflected in the report of the reciprocal teaching of the grammarian Ibn as-Sarrāj (d. 316/928) and the logician al-Fārābī. The report of this interdisciplinary joint-venture might be only legendary. But the cross-fertilisation between grammar and logic is documented in the fact that Ibn as-Sarrāj systematized the different parts of speech according to rational definitions while al-Fārābī compared and synthesized the meanings conveyed by the correct use of the Arabic language and by reasoning (Endress 1986, 201). One of the most significant products of this process of mutual rapprochement between grammar and logic is the synthesis of the Aristotelian accidental predication with the Arabic 'description' (*wasf*). The identification of that which is signified by the different grammatical categories 'name/noun' and 'description' with the logical distinction between substance/essence and accident provided the basis for Ibn Sīnā's distinction between an understanding of predications 'with regard to essence/essentially' (*dhātī*) or 'with regard to description/descriptionally' (*wasfī*).

Before Ibn Sīnā made use of this distinction in his syllogistic the term 'description' had already gone through a long history of dispute between Arab grammarians and Muslim dialectical theologians (*mutakallimūn*). In this article I will seek to shed some light on the history of this dispute helping to understand what Ibn Sīnā had in mind when he spoke of 'with regard to essence/essentially' and 'with regard to description/descriptionally'. To point out the broader significance of this distinction within the intellectual history of Arab-Muslim thought I shall begin with an attack of the famous twelfth-century Jewish philosopher Maimonides on his no less famous Muslim counterpart Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, both of them milestones of the intellectual history of medieval thought.

2 Maimonides' Attack on the Name-Description Distinction of the *mutakallimūn*

In his *Guide for the Perplexed* Maimonides (d. 1204) criticizes the Muslim dialectical theologians (*mutakallimūn*) for naming God 'agent' (*fā'il*) while they avoid the denomination (*tasmīya*)⁴ 'first cause' (*al-'illa al-ūlā*) and 'first ground' (*al-sabab al-awwal*) (*Dalālat* I, 88r–88v; transl. Pines I, 166). Maimonides reports:

[They] think that there is a great difference between our saying (*qawl*) 'cause' and 'ground' and our saying 'agent'. For they say that if we say that He is a cause (*'illa*), the existence of that which is caused/effectuated (*ma'lūl*) follows necessarily (*lazima*), and that this leads to the doctrine of the pre-eternity of the world and of the world necessarily following from God. If, however, we say that He is an agent/enactor (*fā'il*), it does not necessarily follow that that which is enacted (*maf'ūl*) exists together with Him. For the agent (*fā'il*) sometimes precedes his act (*qad yataqaddamu fi'lahū*). Indeed, they only form the idea (*ma'nā*) of the agent as an agent as preceding his act (*illā an yataqaddama fi'lahū*).

This is the saying of those who do not distinguish between what is *in potentia* (*bi-l-quwwa*) and what is *in actu* (*bi-l-fi'l*).

But you know that, regarding this subject, there is no difference between your saying a cause ('*illa*) and your saying an agent (*fā'il*). For if you regard the cause ('*illa*) as being likewise *in potentia*, it precedes its effect (*ma'lūl*) in time. If, on the other hand, it is a cause *in actu*, its effect exists necessarily in virtue of the existence of the cause as a cause *in actu*. Similarly if you regard an agent/enactor (*fā'il*) as an agent/enactor *in actu*, the existence of that which is enacted (*ma'fūl*) by him follows necessarily. For before he builds a house, a builder (*bannā'*) is not a builder *in actu*, but a builder *in potentia*; just as the matter of a particular house, before it is built, is matter in a state of potentiality. However, when a builder builds, he is a builder *in actu*, and then the existence of a built thing follows necessarily. Thus we have gained nothing by preferring the naming/denomination (*tasmiya*)⁵ 'doer/agent' to the naming/denomination (*tasmiya*)⁶ 'cause' ('*illa*) and 'ground' (*sabab*) (*Dalālat* I, 88v; cf. transl. Pines I, 166–7).⁷

Maimonides does not name openly which of the *mutakallimūn* he has in mind in his critique. But since he says “this is the saying of those who do not distinguish between what is *in potentia* (*bi-l-quwwa*) and what is *in actu* (*bi-l-fi'l*)” he is referring to the well-known theory of occasionalism, which became the ‘orthodox’ Muslim Sunnī doctrine from the time of al-Ash‘arī (d. 324/935).⁸

However, in the passage quoted above Maimonides is not arguing against occasionalism. He is rather arguing that “there is no difference between your saying a cause and your saying an agent... Thus we have gained nothing by preferring the denomination ‘agent’ to the denomination ‘cause’ and ‘ground’.” Obviously Maimonides is reacting against opponents who refused to call God ‘the first cause’.

Two centuries before Maimonides the Sunnī scholar al-Ḥalīmī (d. 403/1012) who is a disciple of two disciples of the *mutakallim* al-Ash‘arī (Gimaret 1988, 31f.) mentions as one of five articles of faith the doctrine of God’s creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) with the following words: “[The affirmation] that the existence of everything other than Himself comes into being because He originated and created it for the first time, to dissociate oneself from those who hold the doctrine (*qawl*) of the cause and the caused (*al-'illa wa-l-ma'lūl*)” (*Minhāj* I, 183ult.-184,1; cf. Gimaret 1988, 101).

Although the Muslim dialectical theologians used the term ‘cause’ ('*illa*) always linked to the term ‘caused’ (*ma'lūl*) (cf. Frank 2000, 9 n. 21) the early *mutakallimūn* did not necessarily treat these terms as correlatives (*muḍāfāt*). Their disputes focussed on the question whether the ‘cause’ ('*illa*) exists before (*qabla*) the ‘caused’ (*ma'lūl*), together with (*ma'a*) the caused, and/or after (*ba'da*) it. Depending on their answer on this question some of them used the term ‘cause’ ('*illa*) in the sense of a necessary condition of the ‘caused’ (*ma'lūl*), namely a potency (*quwwa/qudra/istiṭā'a*) which precedes the ‘caused’ in time. Others used it in the sense of the ground and the reason of doing something and therefore also hold that it precedes the ‘caused’ (*ma'lūl*). The Mu'tazilite scholar Abū al-Hudhayl (d. about 227/841) had already explained the term '*illa* as the ‘reason’ of an inference corresponding to the middle term of a syllogism (cf. Schöck 2006, 182–4). But ‘cause’ ('*illa*) could also be used for the final cause (*gharaḍ*) which is after the ‘caused’ (*ma'lūl*) or in the sense of the sufficient cause which exists together (*ma'a*), that is to say simultaneous with the ‘caused/effect’ (*ma'lūl*)

(cf. al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt* 389–91). This latter sense wins through in Muslim thought. Like the theologians Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) hold that a cause ('*illa*) in the real sense (*fī l-haqīqa*), that is to say a sufficient cause, must exist simultaneous (*ma'a*) with the caused/effect (*ma'lūl*). Otherwise it would be possible that a cause is not cause what is contradictory (cf. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā'*: *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, book 4.1, I, 165, 15–166,17; cf. also Lizzini 2004, 181; Schöck 2004).

Maimonides used the term '*illa*' as interchangeable with the term *sabab*. This is possible from a position which does not deny causal efficacy in this world. But from an occasionalistic point of view '*illa*' and *sabab* are not synonymous. From this point of view the *mutakallimūn* use *sabab*, often together with *āla* ("tool, instrument"), in the sense of "means", namely for those factors which are necessary conditions and occasions by (*bi-*) which an act and an effect comes to existence, but not for their sufficient ground and efficient cause (cf. al-Māturīdī, *al-Tawhīd* 410,10f.; al-Ghazālī, *Mustasfā* I, 59f.; al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad* 100,9; 145,11; cf. Frank 1992, 27f.).⁹

In the passages quoted from al-Ḥalīmī and Maimonides, 'the cause and the caused' is used as an abbreviation for the Neoplatonic theory of the emanation of the world from the first being. In this context the *mutakallimūn* understood 'cause' and 'caused' as correlatives in the sense that from the existence of the eternal cause, namely God, necessarily follows the existence of the eternal caused, namely the world, which was inconsistent with their faith.

Maimonides intended to prove wrong the inconsistency of Neoplatonic philosophy with monotheism. His argumentation which follows the passage cited above is based on the Neoplatonic identification of efficient cause, form and final cause.¹⁰ Therefore he felt need to react against the *mutakallimūn*.

The argument of the *mutakallimūn* Maimonides refers to runs through the first part of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's (d. 505/1111) *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*al-Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*) (cf. Wisnovsky 2005, 130f.; Druart 2005, 344), the most prominent Muslim 'refutation' of Neoplatonic philosophy. Here, al-Ghazālī explains at great length why God should be called 'agent' rather than 'first cause', and obviously until the time of Maimonides al-Ghazālī's argument had become a key-element in the dispute between the defenders and the opponents of the compatibility of Neoplatonic philosophy and monotheism.

Maimonides' arguments for calling God 'cause' fall in the domain of physics and metaphysics. Since he cites opponents not present, he seems to have an easy victory. The opponents have no chance to reply. As we shall see, they would have had pretty good counter-arguments if they had had the chance to answer. Their argumentation would fall in the domain of grammar and logic. They would have argued that 'cause' ('*illa*') is a primitive noun, that is to say, an underived name (*ism*) which signifies an essence (*dhāt*), the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of a named/denoted thing (*musammā*) and 'what it is' (*mā huwa*). Therefore the term 'cause' can only be used to denote something 'with regard to essence/essentially' (*dhātī*). 'Agent' (*fā'il*) and 'builder' (*bannā'*) on the other hand are names of agents/*nomina agentium* (*asmā' al-fā'ilīn*) which are derived from verbs/actions (*mushtaqqa min af'āl*) (cf. Wright 1981, I, 106). They do not signify the reality of the named/denoted nor 'what it is'. They are rather attributes (*sifāt*) of an essence which indicate a

relation (*idāfa*) of an essence and a substance with an action. Therefore they can be used either ‘with regard to essence/essentially’ (*dhātī*) or ‘with regard to description/descriptionally’ (*wasfī*) (cf. below §§ 6–8).

Maimonides knows the difference between a name and a name derived from a verb/action, since he uses this distinction in his *Guide*. According to him all the names of God are derived from verbs/actions (*mushtaqqā min al-af’āl*), except the name Y-H-W-H (*Dalālat* I, 77v; transl. Pines I, 147). But in the context of calling God ‘first cause’ and ‘agent/enactor’ he does not apply this distinction.

In the following I am concerned with the logical and semantical key-elements of the argumentation of the *mutakallimūn* mentioned above. I shall begin with al-Ghazālī’s logical arguments for preferring the term ‘agent’ to the term ‘cause’ (§ 3), then focus on the grammatical background of the Arabic ‘name of the agent’ (§ 4) and the debates on its meaning between the early *mutakallimūn* (§ 5), then give a brief outline on al-Fārābī’s synthesis between the grammatical and the logical use of the ‘name of the agent’ (§ 6) which leads to Ibn Sīnā’s distinction between the understanding of a derived name ‘with regard to essence/essentially’ and ‘with regard to description/descriptionally’ (§ 7) and finally turn to al-Ghazālī’s semantical-logical treatment of the distinction of name on the one hand and derived name and description on the other hand (§ 8). Finally it will become clear what was gained by preferring the naming/denomination ‘agent’ to the naming/denomination ‘cause’ and ‘ground’ in the sight of the Arabic-Muslim *mutakallimūn*.

3 Al-Ghazālī’s Argument for Calling God ‘agent’ (*fā’il*) Instead of Calling him ‘cause’ (*illa*)

It is important to note the way in which Maimonides describes the doctrine of the *mutakallimūn*:

They say [...] the agent (*fā’il*) sometimes precedes his act (*qad yataqaddamu fi’lahū*). Indeed, they only form the idea (*bal lā yataṣawwarūna ma’nā*) of the agent as an agent as preceding his act (*illā an yataqaddama fi’lahū*) (*Dalālat* I, 88v; cf. above § 2).

Maimonides stops after the first sentence and seems to correct himself. However, what on first sight seems to be a correction is a rhetorical trick to catch the attention of the reader and to focus the main point of the issue.

The dispute between the elder Mu’tazilite scholars on one hand and the Sunnī scholars al-Ash’arī and al-Māturīdī on the other hand whether man might be called ‘agent/enactor’ (*fā’il*) was already based on Aristotle’s distinction between two-sided potency/power/faculty (arab. *quwwa/qudra/istiṭā’a*) and one-sided potency. The *mutakallimūn* agreed that the term ‘agent’ (*fā’il*) can only be used in case of two-sided power/faculty, but they disagreed on the question whether man’s power/faculty is two-sided. The Mu’tazilite scholars hold that man is an agent in so far as he has a two-sided power/faculty to two contraries (*qudra/istiṭā’a ‘alā diddayn*) which he can determine by an act of will (*irāda*) and a choice (*ikhtiyār*) of one of the possible contraries by which he brings about the change from a

possible to an actual action. That is to say, they called man ‘agent’ in the sense of the ‘enactor’ of his actions. Al-Ash‘arī, however, held that man’s power/faculty is only one-sided, that is to say, it does not exist prior to the action but only simultaneous “together with the action for the [particular] action (*ma‘a l-fi‘l li-l-fi‘l*)” (al-Ash‘arī, *Luma‘* 56,17, §128). Man’s faculty, or more precisely man’s particular faculties for his particular actions, are only necessary conditions but not sufficient grounds for his particular actions. This is why al-Ash‘arī refused to call man ‘agent/enactor’ (*fā‘il*), but called him ‘acquirer’ (*muktasib*) of his actions (*Luma‘* 39,10–20, §§87–8). Al-Māturīdī agreed with the Mu‘tazilite position in so far as he held that man’s power/faculty is two-sided and thus preceding the action and that man can determine his faculty for a particular action by an act of will and a choice. Therefore al-Māturīdī held that not only God but also that man might be called ‘agent’. However, he agreed with al-Ash‘arī that at the moment man intends a particular action and chooses it, his power/faculty for this particular action still is only a necessary condition for the actuality of the action. Although man’s intention, his act of will and his choice is in accordance with his particular act, man’s power/faculty does not bring about this action. Therefore man cannot be called ‘agent’ in the sense of bringing about and enacting the action, but only in the sense of a voluntary acquisition (*kasb*) of the action, whereas God is called ‘agent’ in the sense of enacting, that is to say, in the sense of creating man’s actions (al-Māturīdī, *al-Tawhīd* 364,3f.).¹¹

A key-element of al-Ash‘arī’s doctrine as well as that of al-Māturīdī is the assumption that the ‘agent’ (*fā‘il*) in the sense of the ‘enactor’ is the one who “is enacting (*fā‘il*) the action (*fi‘l*) as it really is” (*‘alā haqīqatihī*) (*Luma‘* 39,15–8) and that this is only possible if the intention (*qaṣd*) and the act of will (*irāda/mashī‘a*) of the agent is in conformity with the reality (*haqīqa*) of the action. Since it is man’s experience to intend something he holds to be good but which is not really good but bad, man’s knowledge and intention is not in accordance with the reality of the action. Therefore the reality of the action does not depend on man’s will and thus man cannot be called the ‘agent/enactor’ of the ‘act’. The ‘agent’ in the sense of the ‘enactor’ rather is the one who brings [the action] in existence (*muḥdith*) as it really is by his intention and his act of will, namely God (*Luma‘* 38,9–19, §85; cf. al-Māturīdī, *al-Tawhīd* 366,1—367,1).

This is what al-Ghazālī had in mind, when he criticized the Neoplatonic philosophers for calling God ‘cause’ instead of ‘agent/enactor’. Here is his statement of the argument:

‘Agent/enactor’ (*fā‘il*) is an expression [referring] to one from whom the act proceeds, together (*ma‘a*) with the will (*irāda*) to act by way of choice (*ikhtiyār*) and the knowledge (*ilm*) of what is willed. But, according to you [Neoplatonic philosophers], the world follows from God as a necessary consequence (*yalzamu luzūman ḍarūriyyan*) as the caused/effect from the cause (*ka-l-ma‘lūl min al-‘illa*), inconceivable for God to prevent, in the way the shadow is the necessary consequence (*luzūm*) of the individual and the light [the necessary consequence] of the sun. And this does not pertain to action in anything. Indeed, whoever says the lamp enacts (*yaf‘alu*) the light and the individual enacts the shadow has ventured excessively into metaphor and stretched it beyond [its] bound... The agent, however, is not called ‘a making agent’ (*fā‘ilan ṣāni‘an*) by simply being a ground (*sabab*), but by being a ground in a special way — namely, by way of [an act of] will

(*irāda*) and choice (*ikhtiyār*) — so that if one were to say, “The wall is not an agent; the stone is not an agent; the inanimate is not an agent, action being confined to animals,” this would not be denied and the statement would not be false. But [according to the philosophers] the stone has an action — namely falling due to heaviness and an inclination toward [the earth’s] center — just as fire has an action, which is heating, and the wall has an action — namely the inclination toward the center and the occurrence of the shadow — for all [these latter things] proceed from it. And this is absurd (*al-Tahāfut* 89,22 — 90,14; transl. Marmura 56).¹²

Al-Ghazālī denies that a one-sided nature (*ṭabʿ*) might be called ‘enacting’ (*fāʿil*) and declares that only who has a two-sided power/faculty determined by an act of will and a choice can be called ‘agent/enacting’. As already for al-Ashʿarī and al-Māturīdī also for al-Ghazālī ‘enacting’ by an act of will and choice presupposes knowledge (*ʿilm*) (cf. al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtisād* 97,2; transl. Marmura 312) since will is an intentional act. Therefore sentences as “He acted by choice” and “He willed, knowing what he willed” are repetitious. This repetition intends only to remove the possibility of taking the expressions ‘he acted’ and ‘he willed’ metaphorically. Thus ‘acting by choice’ and ‘willing by knowing what is willed’ are not to be taken as a specification (*takhṣīṣ*) of a special kind of acting and a special kind of willing to distinguish these kinds from other kinds of acting and willing, namely acting without choice by nature and willing without knowing what is willed (*al-Tahāfut* 91,13 – 92,5; transl. Marmura 57f.).

Hence, regarding God’s enacting the world the main point of al-Ghazālī’s opposition to the Neoplatonic philosophers is their denial of God’s will. Here is al-Ghazālī’s exposition of the argument of the Neoplatonic philosophers:

Even though we did not say that the First wills origination (*ihdāth*) nor that the whole [world] is temporally originated (*hādith hudūthan*), we [nonetheless] say that [the world] is His act (*fīʿl*) and has come to existence from Him, except that He continues to have the attribute of the agents (*ṣifat al-fāʿilīn*) and, hence, is ever enacting (*fa-lam yazal fāʿilan*)... (*al-Tahāfut* 158,9–11; transl. Marmura 128).

This is opposed to the doctrine of the *mutakallimūn* as reported by Maimonides in so far as they “only form the idea (*maʿnā*) of the agent as an agent as preceding his act (*illā an yataqaddama fīʿlahū*).” Here is al-Ghazālī’s answer to the Neoplatonists:

The first is that [according to the philosophers] action divides into two [kinds]: voluntary (*irādī*), like the action of the animal and of man/human, and natural (*ṭabʿī*), like the action of the sun in shedding light, fire in heating, and water in cooling. Knowledge of the act is only necessary in the voluntary act, as in the human arts. As regards natural action, [the answer is,] “No.” [Now,] according to you [Neoplatonic philosophers], God enacted the world by way of following (*luzūm*) from His essence (*dhāt*) by nature (*ṭabʿ*) and necessity (*idṭirār*), not by way of will (*irāda*) and choice (*ikhtiyār*). Indeed, [according to you Neoplatonic philosophers] the whole [of the world] follows from His essence as the light follows from the sun. And just as the sun has no power (*qudra*) to stop light and fire [has no power] to stop heating, the First has no power to stop his acts... (*al-Tahāfut* 158,16–22; transl. Marmura 128).¹³

Like the early *mutakallimūn*, al-Ghazālī distinguishes between two-sided potency, signified as ‘the power/faculty to two contraries’ (*al-qudra ʿalā l-diddayn*) (cf. *al-Tahāfut* 57,9f.; transl. Marmura 22), and one-sided potency, signified as

‘nature’ (cf. Schöck 2004). What proceeds from essence, proceeds by nature and therefore always proceeds from essence and exists together with the essence, as the light from the sun and the heating from the fire. Therefore it is

false to say that it [viz. God’s act (*fi’l*)] proceeds from his essence (*dhāt*). If it were like that, it were eternal (*qadīm*) together (*ma’a*) with the essence (al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtīṣād* 81,4).

In contrast to ‘nature’, ‘power/faculty’ (*qudra*) is two-sided. Therefore

the one who is powerful/capable (*qādir*) is the one who acts if he wills and does not act if he wills (al-Ghazālī, *al-Maḥṣud* 145,3; 176,6f.).

Since only the two-sided ‘power/faculty’ is rational and therefore presupposes knowledge whereas ‘nature’ is irrational (cf. Aristotle, *Met.* IX, 2, 1046b 4–9; *De int.* 13, 22b 36–23a 3) al-Ghazālī goes on to explain:

The second way [of answering the philosophers] is to concede that the proceeding of something from the agent also requires knowledge of what proceeds. [Now,] according to them [viz. the Neoplatonic philosophers], the act (*fi’l*) of God is one — namely, the first caused/effect (*ma’lūl*), which is a simple intellect. [From this follows] that He must know only it... (*al-Tahāfut* 159,13–5; transl. Marmura 128f.).

To sum up, ‘power/faculty’ (*qudra*) according to the *mutakallimūn* is power to possible—not yet actual—contraries and therefore presupposes the power to act by an act of will and a choice which presupposes knowledge. By the act of will and a choice of one of the possible alternatives, the two-sided power/faculty becomes determined (*mutaqaddir*) (cf. al-Ghazālī, *Maḥṣud* 145,2) to this formerly possible, now actual alternative. Since at the moment of an act of will and a choice one of the possible alternatives is determined and has become actual, the existence of its contrary is impossible, because the two contraries cannot exist together at one and the same time. Consequently the powerful (*qādir*) agent/enactor (*fā’il*) must precede his act. Otherwise one of the possible alternatives would be actual together with him and he would not have had the possibility and the power to enact its contrary.

On the other side, it follows from the priority of the ‘agent’ to the ‘events’ (*hawādith*, sing. *ḥādith*) brought to existence by his act of will that every existent except himself exists contingently, that is to say, necessary in so far as it exists by an act of will of its enactor, but not necessary by itself. Thus by claiming the precedence of the agent before his act God’s will is established as the only reason of every existent other than God himself, that it is and what it is.

Al-Ghazālī’s argumentation is based on the logical relation of condition and consequence. From the assumption—a priori and by the revelation of the Qur’ān—that God is powerful follows that he is acting by an act of will and a choice and from this follows that he is knowing. It must be concluded therefore, that God himself, that is to say, the divine essence precedes its act (cf. Marmura 2005, 141f.).

Maimonides does not challenge this argument. He rather calls into question the assumption that the expressions ‘agent’ and ‘cause’ cannot be used in the same ways. By this Maimonides neglects the difference between a derived name (*ism mushtaqq*) and a primitive name (*ism*). This topic falls in the realm of semantics.

Al-Ghazālī treats it in the opening of his *The Loftiest Intention Concerning the Explanation of the Meanings of God's Most Beautiful Names* (*al-Maqṣad al-asnā fi sharḥ ma'ānī asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*). Before we turn to this, I want to give a brief outline on the grammatical, theological and logical background of al-Ghazālī's explanation of what is 'derived from a verb'.

4 What is 'derived from a verb' (*mushtaqq min fi'l*) in Early Arabic Grammar

The term 'agent' (*fā'il*) is formed from the radical letters of the trilateral Arabic verb. In Arabic grammar it is used paradigmatically for the pattern and form of a part of speech which signifies an action and an agent. Its function in speech corresponds to the English participle, but in contrast to the English the Arabic does not distinguish between the continuous and progressive form on one side and the noun on the other side, that is to say, between "acting/doing/making" and "agent/doer/maker" or, for example, not between "writing" (*kātib*) and "writer" (*kātib*) (cf. Wright 1981, I, 131, §§ 229–30).

Some early Kūfian grammarians hold that the *fā'il* is a verb, distinguishing that which they called a continuous verb (*fi'l dā'im*) and a verb of the state (*fi'l al-ḥāl*) (Troupeau 1993, 914a; Versteegh 1995, 66). In opposition to this view, the Baṣrian grammarian Sībawayh (d. 180/796) and the Kūfian grammarian al-Farrā' (d. 207/822) claimed that it is not a verb, but the name of the agent/*nomen agentis* (*ism al-fā'il*). This name is derived from a verb (*ism mushtaqq min fi'l*) (Kinberg 1996, 359–60; cf. Sībawayh, *al-Kitāb* II, 224–30, § 432; Mosel 1975, I, 127–8), and verbs, in the words of Sībawayh, "are actions" (*hiya a'māl*)" (*Kitāb* II, 224, 14, § 432; cf. Carter 2004, 74).

Sībawayh makes use of the term '*fā'il*' in different ways. First *fā'il* stands for the form '*fā'il*', and secondly it stands for the agent (*al-fā'il*) and subject of an action, which is "concealed" (*muḍmar*) in the *fā'il* [-form] (*al-Kitāb* I, 80, 3, § 40). Hence, Sībawayh does not draw a clear distinction between signifier and signified, that is to say, between word [-form] and thing, namely between the *fā'il* [-form] and the agent (*fā'il*) (cf. Mosel 1975, I, 246f.). Also the meaning conveyed by the *fā'il*-form is ambiguous in several ways.

In §§ 32, 37 and 39 of his *al-Kitāb* Sībawayh tries to find grammatical rules to decide in which cases the name of the agent (*ism al-fā'il*) stands for an imperfect action and in which cases it stands for a finished, perfect action (cf. Mosel 1975, I, 128–35). He claims that the name of the agent without the article only stands for an imperfect action which either takes place at the time of the sentence or in the future. For example: "You say 'this one is hitting/a hitter (*hādhā dāribun*)...'" in the sense of 'this one hits' (*hādhā yaḍribu*), and he acts at the time of your message (*wa-huwa ya'malu fi ḥāli ḥadīthika*)." But "this one is hitting/a hitter (*hādhā dāribun*)" may also stand in the sense of "this one will hit (*hādhā sayāḍribu*)" (I, 54, 8–10, § 32).

However, a little later in his *al-Kitāb* Sībawayh explains that in the sentence “this one is the hitter of ‘Abdallāh and his brother (*hādhā dāribu ‘Abdillāhi wa-akhīhi*)” the name of the agent stands for the perfect and finished action (*al-fi’la qad waqa’a wa-nqata’a*) (I, 73,6–10, § 37).

Also the name of the agent with the article can stand for an imperfect action and for a perfect action. Sībawayh explains, that “if you say ‘this hitter’ (*hādhā l-dāribu*), then you determine him in the sense of ‘the one who hits/is hitting’ (*al-ladhī yaḍribu*)” (I, 54,10, § 32). On the other hand the sentence “this is the hitter of Zayd” (*hādhā l-dāribu Zaydan*) has the meaning of “this is the one who hit Zayd (*hādhā lladhī ḍaraba Zaydan*)” (I, 77,8, § 39).

It would appear, then, that there is no rule with regard to the use of the name of the agent with or without the article in relation to either an imperfect or a perfect action (cf. Mosel 1975, I, 134–5).

In §§ 39–41 of his *al-Kitāb* (I, 77–88) Sībawayh accounts for the difference between “[the name of] the agent” (*[ism] al-fā’il*) and “the description/attribute which is similar to [the name of] the agent” (*al-ṣifa al-mushabbaha bi-l-fā’il*). Both are derived from verbs, as, for example, the name of the agent (*[ism] al-fā’il*) ‘*qātil*’ from the verb *qatala* and the description/attribute (*ṣifa*) ‘*ḥasan*’ from the verb *ḥasuna*. However, since only [the names of] agents are derived from verbs which are actions (*hiya a’māl*), only the *fā’il* [–form] can indicate an imperfect or a perfect action, while the description/attribute (*ṣifa*) which is similar to it can only stand as a description which is not a state of becoming, but is already a perfect state of being (I, 82,18f., § 41; cf. Mosel 1975, I, 128–35). For example ‘*qātil*’ can be used in the sense of ‘murdering’ and in the sense of ‘murderer’, and ‘*kātib*’ can be used in the sense of ‘writing’ and in the sense of ‘writer’, but ‘beautiful’ (*ḥasan*) can only be used in the sense of ‘being [already] beautiful’, and ‘ill’ (*marīḍ*) can only be used in the sense of ‘being [already] ill’. Whereas ‘murdering/murderer’ and ‘writing/writer’ stand for an action (*fi’l*) and its agent (*fā’il*), ‘beautiful’ and ‘ill’ stand for a description/quality (*ṣifa*) and the one described/qualified (*mawsūf*).

In §§ 432–6 of his *al-Kitāb* (II, 224–39) Sībawayh tries to assign the verbs and their corresponding names (*asmā’*) of the agents and descriptions/qualities (*ṣifāt*) to semantical classes and grammatical forms (cf. Mosel 1975, I, 138–45). According to him, the first and second class are actions, the other classes are descriptions/qualities.

The first class (§ 432) are “the verbs which are actions (*hiya a’māl*) which pass from you to someone [or: something] else” (II, 224,14)—in other words transitive actions. The second class (§ 432) are “the actions which do not pass to an accusative [object] (*mansūb*)” (II, 226,9)—in other words intransitive actions. However, in some cases from these verbs one may also form descriptions, namely if one does not want to indicate an action (II, 225,9–11).

The third, fourth and fifth class (§§ 433–4) are verbs and descriptions which signify an affliction (*balā’*) of the heart (*qalb*, *fu’ād*), body (*badan*) or soul (*naḥs*) (II, 230, 11–3; 232,3; 233,11), as disease, hunger, thirst, fear, grief, etc, as well as their contraries, and colours.

The sixth class (§ 436) are “the qualities which are in the things” (*al-khiṣāl al-latī takūnu fī l-ashyāʾ*), as beautiful and ugly, tall and short, many and little, strong and weak, reasonable and ignorant, etc.

It is obvious that these semantical classes represent logical rather than grammatical categories. To sum up, there are three kinds of dissent or ambiguity in regard to the term ‘*fāʾil*’ in Arabic grammar:

- [1.] It can stand for the word or the thing.
- [2.] It is either a verb or a name.
- [3.] It can stand for an agent and his imperfect action or for an agent and his finished, perfect action.

The term *ṣifa* is as ambiguous as the term *fāʾil*. It can not only stand for “the description which is similar to [the name of] the agent”, but also for the “quality” itself. And it can stand for the function of describing/qualifying a name (Mosel 1975, I, 141–5). When this function of describing/qualifying is meant, the Arab grammarians and the Muslim dialectical theologians rather use the verbal noun “describing/description” (*waṣf*) to signify the act of describing. The term ‘*ṣifa*’ on the other hand tended to be used to signify the word and the thing itself by (*bi-*) which the name (*ism*) is described/qualified (*mawṣūf*), namely an attribute and a descriptive predicate as well as the affliction (*balāʾ*), the colour or the quality (*khaṣla*) which is supposed to be in the described thing (cf. Frank 2004).

5 The Controversies on the Derived Name ‘wicked’ (*fāsiq*) in Early Muslim Dialectical Theology (*kalām*)

According to Sibawayh the verb “to deny someone or something, not to believe” (*kaḥara*) with its noun ‘unbelief/unbelieving’ (*kuḥr*) belongs to the transitive actions (*al-Kitāb* § 432, II, 226,1). From this it follows that ‘unbelief/unbelieving’ is an action, and ‘unbeliever’ (*kāḥir*) is the name of an agent who denies someone or something. The verb “to depart from [an obligation or law], to act wickedly” (*faṣaqa*) with its nouns *fusūq* and *fiṣq* belongs to the intransitive actions (§ 432, II, 226,20). ‘Wickedness/acting wickedly’ (*fiṣq*) is an action and ‘wicked’ (*fāsiq*) is the name of an agent which can stand for an imperfect or a perfect action and the agent, namely for an agent who is acting wickedly or who has acted wickedly.

This interpretation was the basis of the doctrine of the Baṣrian theologian Wāṣil b. ‘Atāʾ (d. 131/748–9). He was not only considered the founder of the theological school of the Muʿtazila (van Ess 1992, 234–5), but also the founder of dialectical theology (*kalām*) (ʿAbdaljabbār, *Faḍl* 234,14). His dogma of the ‘wicked’ was subject of controversies over several centuries.

This dissent over the use of the name of an agent arose when Wāṣil interchanged the categories of the ‘described’ (*mawṣūf*) which is the ‘name’ (*ism*) and its ‘description’ (*waṣf*) by an attribute (*ṣifa*). Wāṣil argued that the great sinner (*ṣāḥib al-kabīra*) from the Muslim community who was called by four different

Muslim dogmatical parties ‘wicked polytheist’ (*mushrik fāsiq*), ‘wicked ungrateful’ (*kāfir ni‘ma fāsiq*), ‘wicked hypocrite’ (*munāfiq fāsiq*) or ‘wicked believer’ (*mu‘min fāsiq*) should be named ‘wicked’ (*fāsiq*). Grammatically all four denominations the different parties used to signify the great sinner consist [1.] of a derived name (*ism mushtaqq*) which stands in function of the described (*mawṣūf*) and [2.] the description (*waṣf*) by the attribute (*ṣifa*) ‘wicked’ (*fāsiq*). In Arabic the description/attribute follows the name, since it has the function of describing (*waṣafa*) the name (cf. Mosel 1975, I, 325–7). Wāṣil, however, argued that because all parties agree on ‘wicked’ (*li-ttifāq... ‘alayhi*), this is the right ‘naming’ (*tasmiya*) of the great sinner instead of the different denominations ‘polytheist’, ‘ungrateful’, ‘hypocrite’, ‘believer’. This resembles the Aristotelian method of finding the ‘common’ (*koinon*) in different things and setting it over the different things as a genus. But grammatically Wāṣil interchanged and converted the described (*mawṣūf*) which is a name and its description (*waṣf/ṣifa*).¹⁴

By introducing ‘wicked’ (*fāsiq*) as the denomination (*tasmiya*) of the great sinner Wāṣil tried to solve the question of the ‘status’ (*manzila*) of those who transgressed and departed from religious obligations and laws in Muslim society. Wāṣil claimed that ‘wicked’ is a third status between ‘believer’ and ‘unbeliever’. The wicked in Muslim society should not be treated as an unbeliever who cannot be member of the Muslim community. In the afterlife, however, he would be in hell like the unbeliever (cf. van Ess 1992, 260–7).

Thus, it is only in this world that ‘wicked’ is a third status, while in the afterlife there are only two statuses, namely ‘inhabitant of paradise’ and ‘inhabitant of hell’. Being a believer and a future inhabitant of hell is impossible. And being an unbeliever or wicked and a future inhabitant of paradise is impossible. Therefore being an unbeliever and wicked is possible. But being a believer and wicked is impossible. This doctrine provided the starting point of a long dispute among dialectical theologians. Logically and grammatically it was linked to two major problems:

First, if believing (*īmān*) and unbelieving (*kufr*) are contradictory, because ‘belief/believing’ is “to ascribe truth” (*taṣdīq*) [to someone] and “to confirm” (*iqrār*), and ‘unbelief/unbelieving’ is “to ascribe falsehood” (*takdhīb*) [to someone] and “to deny” (*inkār*), then ‘believing’ neither consists of parts nor can it increase or decrease. How then ‘wicked’ can be a middle or a third between ‘believer’ and ‘unbeliever’? There is no middle between two contradictories (Aristotle, *Met.* X, 4, 1055b 2). In contrast to the former interpretation of ‘belief/believing’, which was held by Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) and his followers (cf. Schöck 2006, 104–11), Wāṣil and his colleagues held that ‘believing’ is a sum of actions, and if this sum of actions is incomplete, then ‘believing’ is abolished. Therefore both ‘unbelieving’ and ‘wickedness/wicked acting’ (*fisq/fusūq*) must be understood as a privation of ‘believing’. However, in this case it is impossible that ‘unbelieving’ and ‘wicked acting’ are both the same kind of privation of ‘believing’ (cf. *Met.* X, 4, 1055b 21–23). And from this it follows that it is impossible that ‘unbelieving’ and ‘wicked doing’ are both contraries of ‘believing’ (cf. *Met.* X, 5, 1056a 11).

This brings us to the second problem. According to Wāṣil, ‘unbelieving/unbeliever’ (*kāfir*) and ‘wickedly acting/wicked’ (*fāsiq*) are both names of

agents which are derived from verbs which ‘are’ or signify actions (cf. above § 4). But, if an ‘unbelieving/unbeliever’ is someone who denies someone or something, namely God, the prophets and their messages, then he remains an ‘unbelieving/unbeliever’ only as long as he denies them. Because if he stops ‘denying’, he stops ‘unbelieving’ and therefore stops being an ‘unbeliever’ (cf. Fakhraddīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr, K. al-awwal fī qawlihī a’ūdhu bi-llāh...*, *bāb al-khāmis*, I, 47, 19–21). On the other side, according to Wāṣil’s doctrine someone ‘wickedly acting/wicked’ stays ‘wicked’ after he has finished his wicked action.

The Mu‘tazila never succeeded in finding a satisfactory solution to these problems. However, the oppositional arguments made them rethink and modify their doctrine. During this process the meaning and use of the derived name was further clarified and extended.¹⁵

Wāṣil’s early opponents focused on the restriction (*taqyīd*) of ‘wicked acting’ (*fīsq*) according to the categorical questions ‘at which time?’ and ‘in what respect?’ They argued that ‘wicked acting’ can only be a privation of believing at some time and in some respect, while ‘unbelieving’ is an absolute (*muṭlaq*), unrestricted and complete privation of ‘believing’.

The Baṣrian theologian Abū Shamir was probably a younger contemporary of Sībawayh (cf. van Ess 1992, 174). He held the following opinion:

I do not say ‘absolute wicked’ (*fāsiq muṭlaq*) in regard to the wicked from the Muslim community (*al-fāsiq al-millī*), without me restricting (*dūna an uqayyida*) and saying: ‘wicked in regard to such a thing’ (*fāsiq fī kadhā*) (al-Ash’arī, *al-Maḳālāt* 134, 12f.).

Similar to this, from an anonymous opponent of the Mu‘tazilite dogma is reported as saying:

I do not say in an absolute sense ‘wicked’ (*fāsiq ‘alā l-iṭlāq*) to someone who commits great sins without saying: ‘wicked in regard to such a thing’ (*fāsiq fī kadhā*) (al-Ash’arī, *al-Maḳālāt* 141, 12f.).

While Abū Shamir restricted ‘wicked’ (*fāsiq*) to a particular action, Abū Mu‘ādh at-Tūmanī restricted ‘wicked acting’ (*fīsq*) to a particular time. He also was probably a contemporary of the Baṣrian grammarian Sībawayh and perhaps also lived in Baṣra (cf. van Ess 1992, 735). It is reported that he maintained:

... Every act of obedience (*tā’a*) in regard to which the Muslims do not agree on the unbelief of the one who omits it (*al-tārik*) is an ordinance of belief (*sharī’a min sharā’i’ al-īmān*). If it is a duty, then he [who leaves it undone] will be described/qualified with ‘wicked acting’ (*yūṣafu bi-l-fīsq*), and one says of him ‘he acts/acted wickedly’ (*innahū fasaqa*), but one does not name him with ‘wickedness/wicked acting’ (*lā yusammā bi-l-fīsq*) and one does not say of him ‘wicked’ (*wa-lā yuqālu fāsiq*). The great sins do not exclude someone from believing, if they are not unbelieving... (al-Ash’arī, *al-Maḳālāt* 139, 14–140, 3).

The verb ‘he acts/acted wickedly’ (*fasaqa*) is *verbum finitum* which signifies a finished act, not a particular time (cf. Wright 1981, I, 51). A finished act may be an act completed at some past time, an act which has been already completed and remains in a state of completion, an act which is just completed or an act, the occurrence of which is so certain, that it may be described as having already taken

place (Wright 1981, II, 1f.). But in any case the verb refers to a time and to that extend is restricted (*muqayyad*).

According to Abū Mu‘ādh the name of an agent as ‘wicked’ (*fāsiq*) cannot stand in a restricted sense. If ‘wicked acting’ (*fisq*) is not meant absolutely (*muṭlaq*), that is to say, unrestricted to a particular action which takes place at a particular time, then one must use a verb which signifies the agent together with the time. Abū Mu‘ādh uses the verb “to describe/to qualify” (*waṣafa*) to indicate the meaning which is restricted to a time, and the verb “to name” (*sammā*) to indicate the meaning which is not restricted to a time.

Another anonymous opponent of the Mu‘tazilite doctrine argued:

One does not name (*lā yusammā*) ‘the wicked’ (*al-fāsiq*) among the people who pray in the direction of the Ka‘ba (*ahl al-qibla*) as ‘wicked’ (*fāsiqan*) after his [wicked] action has come to an end (al-Ash‘arī, *al-Maqālāt* 141,10f.).

That is to say, the name of an agent ‘wicked’ cannot stand for a past action which is fully completed and does not stay in a state of completion.

By these arguments the Mu‘tazilite scholars were forced onto the defensive. To avoid refutation they used one of the oldest dialectical tactics. They distinguished two different aspects of the matter in dispute. In regard to one of the aspects they admitted that their antagonists were right. In regard of the other aspect they contradicted them by turning the tables.

The Mu‘tazilite ‘Abbād b. Sulaymān (d. after 260/874) claimed:

One says to him [viz. the wicked (*al-fāsiq*)], ‘he believes/believed [in God]’, and one does not say to him ‘believer/believing’ (*yuqālu lahū [innahū] āmana [bi-llāh] wa-lā yuqālu lahū mu‘min*) (al-Ash‘arī, *al-Maqālāt* 274,9f.).

Āmana is *verbum finitum* which in the Qur’ān often stands as antecedent of a conditional sentence, for example in verse 2,62: “who [ever] believes in God... and does what is good...” (*man āmana bi-llāh... wa-‘amila ṣālihan...*). ‘Abbād distinguished between ‘to believe in [God]’ (*āmana bi-*), and ‘to believe’ in the sense of ‘to obey [God]’ (*āmana li-*), namely to do what is good. The first kind of belief/believing corresponds to the above-cited definition of Abū Ḥanīfa and his followers that ‘belief/believing’ is “to ascribe truth” (*taṣdīq*). The second kind of ‘belief/believing’ corresponds to the old Mu‘tazilite teaching that ‘belief/believing’ means to act in accordance with religious obligations and duties, that is, to obey (*aṭā‘a*). ‘Abbād maintained that he who believes only in the first sense without also believing in the second sense does not believe in the full sense, but only in a restricted sense. Therefore one must use the verb ‘he believes/believed’, which restricts his believing to a particular time. This meant that someone does not believe while he acts wickedly. His belief is restricted to the particular time he does not act wickedly. However, this is a weak counterargument, since it is possible to ascribe truth to an obligation while acting against it.

Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī (d. 303/916) followed ‘Abbād and maintained:

One says ‘he believes/believed’ (*āmana*) [in the sense] of the descriptions of the language (*awṣāf al-luḡha*), and one says ‘believer/believing’ [in the sense] of the names of the language (*asmā’ al-luḡha*) (al-Ash‘arī, *al-Maqālāt* 274,12f.).

Al-Jubbāṭ used the term ‘description’ (*wasf*, pl. *awṣāf*) for the meaning which is restricted to a particular time, and he used the term ‘name’ (*ism*, pl. *asmāʾ*) for the meaning which is not restricted to a particular time. But later he changed his categories and, instead of two different grammatical categories, distinguished between a grammatical category and a socio-religious category:

He maintained, that there are two kinds of names: names of the language (*asmāʾ al-lughā*) and names of the religion (*asmāʾ al-dīn*). The names of language, which are derived from actions, come to an end together with the end of the actions. And by the names of religion man/human is named (*yusammā*) after his action has come to an end and while he is in the state (*hāla*) of [doing] his action. The wicked from the Muslim community (*al-fāsiq al-millī*) is a believer/believing [in the sense] of the names of language. The name [‘believer/believing’] comes to an end together with the end of his act of obedience (*fiʾlihī li-l-īmān*). And he is not named by ‘belief/believing’ (*īmān*) [in the sense] of the names of religion (*al-Ashʾarī, al-Maqālāt* 269,9–14).

‘The wicked from the Muslim community’ (*al-fāsiq al-millī*) is named ‘wicked’ in the socio-religious sense, that is to say in the sense of ‘the name of religion’. This name is not restricted to a particular action and time. In contrast to this ‘the name of language’ is restricted to the time of a particular action.

Finally, the Muʿtazilite scholar Abū I-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī (d. 319/931) distinguished between [1.] a name which is derived from an action and which is restricted to a particular action, and [2.] an absolute (*muṭlaq*), unrestricted name of the agent which is derived from an action *and* which has the function of a sign (*sima*) to distinguish different classes of people:

Our word ‘believer/believing’ is not only derived from the verb/action [‘to believe in [God]’ (*āmana bi-*), and ‘to believe’ in the sense of ‘to obey [God]’ and to be submissive to him (*āmana li-*), since not everyone who ascribes truth to someone (*ṣaddaqa aḥadan*) and obeys him (*aṭāʾ ahū*) and is submissive to him (*khadaʾa lahū*) is named with it in the sense of an absolute name (*ism muṭlaq*). And it also is not only a sign (*sima*),¹⁶ since, if it were [only] a sign, it would be possible to name with it someone who is not so [viz. who does not believe in God, does not obey him and is not submissive to him]; similarly if one names the beauty (*al-ḥasnāʾ*) ‘ugly’ (*qabīḥa*). Because this is not the case, it has been settled that it is a name which is derived from an action and a praise in respect to religion (*madḥ fi l-dīn*) and a sign to distinguish [between ‘believer’, ‘unbeliever’ and ‘wicked’] (*al-Māturīdī, al-Tawḥīd* 551,12–5).

To sum up, according to the Muslim dialectical theologians up to the time of al-Fārābī the names of agents (*asmāʾ al-fāʾilīn*) ‘believer’ and ‘wicked’ can stand for three different meanings:

- [1.] They can stand in a restricted meaning, namely in regard to a particular action.
- [2.] They can stand for the bearer of the name (*ṣāhib al-ism*) while he is in the state (*hāla*) of [doing] his action.
- [3.] They can stand restricted to a particular action and time *and* as a sign to distinguish the bearer of the name (*ṣāhib al-ism*) from other subjects. In this third sense the derived name (*ism mushtaqq*) is used as a class name which is linked to some action (*fiʾl*) or quality (*ṣifa*) of the bearer of the name, but not linked to the time at which he performs the action and not

linked to the time at which he is described/qualified (*wuṣīfa*) by the quality. To this extent the derived name can be used in an absolute sense ('*alā l-ittlāq*') which is not restricted to a particular action and time, in other words as a paronym like brave (*shujā'*) and grammarian (*faṣīḥ*) (Aristotle, *Cat.* 1, 1a 12-15; *Mantiq*, ed. Badawī I, 3; *al-Naṣṣ*, ed. Jabre I, 25).

6 The Different Meanings of the 'derived' (*mushtaqq*) According to al-Fārābī

The two meanings mentioned above—namely what al-Jubbā'ī called 'the names of the language' (*asmā' al-lughā*) and 'the names of the religion' (*asmā' al-dīn*) and what al-Ka'bī described as first 'the name which is only derived from a verb/action' and second 'the name which is derived from a verb/action and is a sign to distinguish'—correspond to two different meanings of the derived name which al-Fārābī explains in his commentaries on Aristotle's *On interpretation*.

Al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) knows very well the old dispute on the question, whether the '*fā'il*' is a verb (*kalima*) or a derived name (*ism mushtaqq*). He reports that many of the ancients (*qudamā'*) held that it is a verb (*al-Fuṣūl* 70,5–9). From this we can conclude that at al-Fārābī's time Sībawayh's opinion¹⁷ had been generally accepted. Al-Fārābī also follows Sībawayh. However, he clearly identifies Sībawayh's "[name of] the agent" (*[ism] al-fā'il*) and Sībawayh's "description which is similar to [the name of] the agent" (*al-ṣifa al-mushabbaha bi-l-fā'il*)¹⁸ with Aristotle's 'derived name', since he gives the examples: the white (*al-abyaḍ*), the black (*al-aswad*), the hitter (*al-dārib*), the moving (*al-mutaḥarrik*), the brave (*al-shujā'*) and the eloquent/the grammarian (*al-faṣīḥ*) (*al-Fuṣūl* 69ult.-70,1; cf. *al-'Ibāra* 135,10). These examples represent Sībawayh's categories of 'agent' and 'description' together with Aristotle's examples for paronyms. According to Sībawayh 'the white' and 'the black' are descriptions which are derived from colours, 'the hitter' is a name of the agent, 'the moving' is a description which is derived from an affliction (*balā'*) of the body and 'the brave' and 'the eloquent' are "qualities (*khiṣāl*) which are in the things"—and 'brave' (*shujā'*) and 'eloquent/grammarian' (*faṣīḥ*) are Ishāq b. Ḥunayn's (d. 298/910) translations of Aristotle's examples (*Cat.* 1, 1a 12–15; *Mantiq*, ed. Badawī I, 3; *al-Naṣṣ*, ed. Jabre I, 25).¹⁹

The difficulty al-Fārābī deals with is that there exists no grammatical pattern and form (*shakl*) to distinguish between derived names and descriptions which are restricted to particular actions on the one hand and a potency (*quwwa*) and specific difference (*faṣl*) of a subject on the other hand. In language both are formed by derivation (*ishtiqāq*). Al-Fārābī solves this problem by the following explanation:

For example the name/noun 'standing' (*qiyām*) signifies the essence 'standing' as [an] abstracted [entity] (*dhāt al-qiyām mujarradan*) without the thing in which is 'standing'. Then it is changed by replacing the order of some of its consonants and vowels, so that its form (*shakl*) is replaced. So from [the name/noun] 'standing' becomes the word '[the one

who is] standing' (*qā'im*). It signifies that the [essence] 'standing' is connected (*muqtarin*) with a subject not articulated (*maudū' lam yuṣarrah*) (*al-'Ibāra* 143,10–13).

Al-Fārābī deviates here from the Arab grammarians in so far as he claims that the name 'standing' (*qiyām*) signifies the abstracted (*mujarrad*) 'self/essence' (*dhāt*) 'standing', that is to say the quality (*kayfiyya*/cf. Greek *poiotes*) 'standing' itself. Thus, the name of the agent (*ism al-fā'il*) 'standing' (*qā'im*) is not—as the Arab grammarians say—derived from the verb (*fi'l*) which signifies a time of being standing, nor from the infinitive and verbal noun (*maṣdar*)²⁰ 'to stand/standing' (*qiyām*) which signifies the happening (*huṣūl*) of 'to stand/standing' and therefore also signifies 'standing' temporally. It is rather derived from the name/noun 'standing' in the sense of an abstracted atemporal essence and quality. Only on this basis al-Fārābī can claim that for example the name of an agent '*nāṭiq*' can stand both for [1.] someone who is 'rational', that is to say who has the potency/faculty of 'speech/reason' in the sense of rationality, for [2.a] someone actually 'reasonably thinking' and for [2.b] the 'speaker/speaking/talking', that is to say, someone actually 'speaking/talking'. This is a new way of understanding which is foreign to the understanding of the Arab grammarians. It is al-Fārābī's aim to reconcile the new logical understanding with the old grammatical understanding. He argues:

In Arabic the name 'speech' (*nutq*) can signify the [specific] difference itself, namely the potency/faculty (*quwwa*) ['rationality' (*nutq/aql*)] by which man/human thinks reasonably (*ya'qilu*). And it can signify the action/act (*fi'l*) of [applying] this potency/faculty. And it can also signify [the happening of] speaking/talking with the tongue. When we say 'he will speak/he will think reasonably' (*yantuqu*), then this does not signify that man/human will have this potency/faculty at a future time. It signifies the same as when we say 'he will think reasonably' (*ya'qilu*), 'he will say' or 'he will talk'... (*Sharḥ* 34,15–18; cf. transl. Zimmermann 1981, 23f.).²¹

From this it follows that 'the name of an agent' can stand not only for an agent and his imperfect or perfect action and thus for an agent while he is in the state (*ḥāl/ḥāla*) of performing an action, after his action has come to an end, or for someone who will perform an action in the future (cf. above § 4), but also without relation to an action.

To sum up, according to al-Fārābī the name of an agent can stand for:

- [1.] an agent who has a potency/faculty, as for example the 'rational' (*nāṭiq/āqil*);
- [2.a] an agent who is applying a potency/faculty, as for example 'reasonably thinking/understanding' (*nāṭiq/āqil*);
- [2.b] an agent who is performing an action, as for example 'standing' (*qā'im*) and 'speaking/talking' [with the tongue] (*nāṭiq*).

The second two ways of understanding the name of the agent (*ism al-fā'il*) are connected and restricted to the time of the happening (*huṣūl*) of the action. The first kind of understanding is not connected and not restricted to a time of an action. This distinction leads to Ibn Sīnā's distinction between the *wasfī-* and the *dhātī-*readings of propositions.

7 The Different Meanings of the ‘derived’ (*mushtaqq*) According to Ibn Sīnā

In his *Pointers and Reminders (al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt)* Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) distinguishes two kinds of necessary relation of a subject-term with a predicate-term: absolute/unrestricted (*‘alā l-iṭlāq*) necessity (*darūra*) and necessity dependent on conditions, with other words, restricted (*muqayyad*) necessity. He explains two kinds of restriction. These two kinds of restricted necessity are based on the distinction between a name and what is ‘derived’ and the distinction between two meanings of the ‘derived’:

Necessity may be [1.] absolute (*‘alā l-iṭlāq*), as in ‘God exists/is existent’; or [2.] it may be connected to a condition. The condition may be either [2.a] the duration of the existence of the essence (*dhāt*), as in ‘man/human is necessarily (*bi-l-darūra*) a rational (*nāṭiq*) body’. By this we do not mean to say that man/human has always been and always will be a speaking/talking/reasonably thinking (*nāṭiq*) body without beginning and without ending, because that would be false for each human individual. Rather, we mean to assert that he is a rational (*nāṭiq*) body while/as long as the essence exists as a man/human. [...] Or [2.b] [the condition may be] the duration of the subject’s being described (*mawṣūf*) by (*bi-*) what is set down together with it, as in ‘every moving is changing’. This is not to be taken to assert that this is the case absolutely (*‘alā l-iṭlāq*), nor for [the time of] the duration of the existence of the essence, but rather as long as the essence of the moving [thing] is moving. There is a distinction between this condition and the first condition, because in the first is set down the root/origin of the essence’ (*aṣl al-dhāt*) which is ‘man/human’ (*al-insān*), whereas here the essence is set down by an attribute (*bi-ṣifa*) that attaches to the essence which [viz. the essence] is the moving [thing]. To ‘moving’ belongs an essence and a substance (*lahū dhāt wa-jawhar*) to which attach that it is moving or²² that it is not moving; but ‘man/human’ (*al-insān*) and ‘blackness’ (*al-sawād*) are not like that (*al-Ishārāt* I, 310; cf. transl. Street 2000a, 213; id. 2005b, 259–60).²³

Ibn Sīnā distinguishes here with regard to the combination (*ta’līf*) of a subject-term with a predicate-term three kinds of truth-condition:

- [1.] pure and simple actuality (*fi’l/energeia*),
- [2.a] the actuality (*fi’l/energeia*) of an essence,
- [2.b] the actuality (*fi’l/energeia*) of the attachment of an attribute to an essence and a substance.

In book 5 of the *Ilāhiyyāt* Ibn Sīnā explains the “how-ness” (*kayfiyya*) of the existence (cf. Greek *tropos tēs hyparxeōs*) of common things (*al-umūr al-’amma*) (Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā’*: *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, book 5.1, I, 195,3). Existence may either belong to quiddities (*māhiyyāt*) qua quiddities and universals (*kulliyāt*) qua universals, or to quiddities and universals in so far as they are the quiddities and essences of individuals (*ashkhās*) existing outside the mind.

In light of this metaphysical background the three kinds of logical necessity explained by Ibn Sīnā in the *Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt* are equivalent to three modes (lit. “how-nesses”) of existence: That whose existence is actual necessarily exists either [1.] because it is existent by itself, or [2.] because it is existent by something else, namely either [2.a] by the universality which is attached to it, or [2.b] by accidents which are attached to it.

[1.] That which is not existent by something attached to it but by itself (*bi-dhātihū/per se*) is God. [2.a] That which is existent by universality attached to it are the quiddities and universals in so far as they exist as abstracted quiddities and universals in the mind. Since universality does not belong to the common things (*al-umūr al-’amma*) as such, existence belongs to them by accident (*bi-l-’araḍ/per accidens*). [2.b] That which is existent by accidents which are attached to it is an aggregate (*jumla*) (book 5.4, I, 226,7 and 15) of an essence/substance and its accidents. Since accidents do not belong to essences as such, individuals (*ashkhās*) also exist by accident.

Hence, [1.] what is pure and simply actual is necessary by itself, whereas [2.a] the actuality of an essence, and [2.b] the actuality of the belonging of an attribute to an essence and a substance are necessary by accident.

Therefore [1.] the first kind of logical necessity explained in the cited above passage is atemporal, whereas [2.] the second two kinds are temporal:

The [1.] first kind of necessity is ‘absolute’, that is to say, the predicate is affirmed of the subject without any restriction (*taqyīd*), namely not restricted (*mu-qayyad*) to one of the conditions of the two other kinds of necessity explained in the following. In so far as these two other kinds of necessity are restricted either by the duration of the existence of an essence or by the duration of a description of an essence, ‘absolute’ here means without relation to duration and change and consequently without change from possible existence to actual existence (cf. Aristotle, *Phys.* III, 1, 201b 4–5). Thus, the absolute necessity of the proposition ‘God exists/is existent’ means that God’s existence is *in actu* without beginning or ceasing to exist and therefore existing without having been possible before being actual (cf. Aristotle, *Met.* IX, 8, 1050b 6–1051a 2). ‘Absolutely necessary’ means without change and therefore without any relation to time (cf. Aristotle, *Phys.* VIII, 1, 251b 10–11). Hence, ‘absolute necessity’ is atemporal necessity. This is the kind of necessity which is opposed to “necessary when it exists” (Aristotle, *De int.* 9, 19a 23–26).²⁴ That is to say, God’s existence does not depend on the condition that he is existent in the mind, nor on the condition that he is existent physically outside the mind.

The [2.] second two kinds of necessity are restricted with regard to the time of the duration of the existence of either essence or description, that is to say, with regard to the time either [2.a] an essence or [2.b] a description of an essence is existent. Hence, necessity here means temporal necessity. This is the kind of necessity Aristotle explains *De int.* 9, 19a 24–6 as the necessity of the existence of something *when (idhā)* it exists actually and the impossibility of its non-existence when and in so far as it exists (cf. Street 2000a, 214).

In [2.a] the first case necessity is restricted to the time of the duration of the existence of the essence (*dawām wujūd al-dhāt*) signified by the subject-term, for example as long as existence is attached to the quiddity (*māhiyya*) ‘humanity/humanity’ (*insāniyya*) by which the universal ‘man/human’ exists in the mind. This is the time when (*idhā*) the essence ‘humanity/humanity’ is *in actu* and thus this is the time when the essence necessarily exists in so far as it exists (cf. Aristotle, *De int.* 9, 19a 23–26). The name ‘man/human’ may either signify the universal ‘man/human’ existing in the mind or denote a concrete man/human

existing outside the mind. If it is used to signify the universal which according to Ibn Sīnā is existing only in the mind, then the statement ‘man/human is a rational body’ is necessarily true as long as the quiddity ‘humanness/humanity’ is existing in the mind. Since existence is not essential to the quiddity ‘humanness/humanity’ *qua* quiddity, but is inseparable from the universal ‘man/human’ *qua* universal, the proposition ‘man/human is necessarily a rational body’ is omnitemporally true, that is to say for all times *when* ‘man/human’ exists in the mind. Thus, there is no ‘absolute’ logical necessity with regard to the relations between quiddities abstracted from things existing outside the mind. The logical necessity of a proposition as ‘man/human is necessarily a rational body’ rather depends on the condition of the existence of the universal ‘man/human’ in the mind.

If the name ‘man/human’ is used to denote men/humans existing physically outside the mind, then the statement ‘man/human is necessarily a rational body’ is true with regard to the time from the particular generation to the particular corruption of each particular substance denoted as ‘man/human’. Also in this case the proposition ‘man is necessarily a rational body’ is omnitemporally true, namely for each particular time *when* ‘man/human’ exists physically outside the mind.

However, whereas the term ‘man/human’ in the first case is used as *signification* (cf. Arab. *dalāla*) of the meaning of the abstracted quiddity ‘humanness/humanity’ and the universal ‘man/human’, in the second case it is used as *appellation* (cf. Arab. *tasmiya*), that is to say ‘to name’ all human individuals. Therefore, in the first case the predication is intensional, and in the second case the predication is extensional.

The change by generation and corruption might be understood as a change from one thing to another thing, that is to say, from one substance to another substance as for example the change from metal to statue (Aristotle, *Phys.* III, 1, 201a 29–30), or—to take Maimonides’ example in the passage cited above (cf. § 2)—from building material to house (cf. Aristotle, *Phys.* III, 1, 201a 16–18), or—to take Ibn Sīnā’s example ‘man/human’—from sperm to man/human (cf. Aristotle, *Met.* IX, 7, 1049a 2; Qur’ān 16,4) and from man/human to an inanimate body. But generation and corruption might also be understood as the change from nothing to something and from something to nothing (cf. al-Fārābī, *al-Qiyās al-ṣaghīr*, ed. Türker 270,7–9; ed. ‘Ajam 49,6–8). Therefore the generation and corruption of a substance might be understood as the change from the possible to the actual and in this respect necessary, whether generation is understood in Aristotle’s sense as generation from something, namely from matter, or in the sense understood by the *mutakallimūn* as creation from nothing. In any case the statement ‘man/human is necessarily a rational body’ is only true when the term ‘man/human’ signifies the universal ‘man/human’ existent in the mind and/or denotes a substance ‘man/human’ existing outside the mind. ‘Rational’ and ‘body’ belong to every concrete man’s ‘reality’ (*ḥaqīqa*) denoted (*musammā*) by ‘man/human’ (cf. Lizzini 2004, 178). However, when a man dies, the substance ‘man/human’ has been corrupted and the new substance which has been generated when the substance ‘man/human’ ceases to exist is an inanimate body which is not rational.

The subject-term ‘man/human’ is grammatically a primitive name/noun (*ism*) which is not derived from a root, but is itself a ‘root/origin’ (*aṣl*), as ‘grammar’ is

the root and origin from which is derived ‘grammarian’ (cf. Aristotle, *Cat.* 1, 1a 12–15; 8, 10a 30). The predicate-term ‘rational’ (*nāṭiq*) is—as Ibn Sīnā claims—derived from [the root/origin] ‘speech/reason’ (*nutq*) in the sense of the abstraction ‘rationality’ (Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā’*: *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, book 5.6, I, 230,7–9). Like al-Fārābī Ibn Sīnā also must deviate here from the Arab grammarians (cf. above § 6). If, as the Arab grammarians say, *nāṭiq* is derived from the verb (*fi’l*) or from the verbal noun (*maṣdar*) which both indicate the performance and the happening (*ḥuṣūl*) of the action ‘to speak/speaking/to think reasonably/reasonably thinking’, then *nāṭiq* can only be predicated as temporally restricted. Only under the condition that *nāṭiq* is derived from the [the root/origin] ‘*nutq*’ in the sense of the abstracted essence ‘speech/rationality’ which is the quiddity and reality of ‘man/human’, can Ibn Sīnā hold that the derived name ‘rational’ is predicated univocally (*bi-l-tawāṭu*) of the universal ‘man/human’, of the species ‘man/human’ and of the individual ‘man/human’ (cf. Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā’*: *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, book 5.6, I, 230,12–13). It is only on this basis that the statement ‘man/human is necessarily a rational (*nāṭiq*) body’ is a logically necessary statement. If, however, in this statement the term *nāṭiq* were derived from the verb or the verbal noun ‘to speak/speaking’ and therefore were used to indicate the temporal application of the potency/faculty ‘rational’, namely ‘reasonably thinking/understanding’, or in the sense of the temporal description (*waṣf*) ‘speaking/talking’ with the tongue (cf. above § 6), then the proposition would have the sense ‘man/human is necessarily a reasonably thinking/understanding body’ or ‘man/human is necessarily a speaking/talking body’ which is false, whether the term ‘man/human’ is used to signify the universal and the species ‘man/human’ or to denote concrete individual men/humans.

In [2.b] the second case necessity is restricted to the time of the duration of the attachment of an attribute to the essence and substance denoted by the subject-term. This is the time *when* the essence and substance is described as either being in a certain state (*ḥāl*) or as performing an action (*fi’l/’amal*). Hence, the statement ‘every moving is changing [*when* it is moving]’ is also omnitemporally true, namely for each time when movement is attached to an essence and a substance, whether in the mind or in physical existence outside the mind. Thus, the logical necessity of the proposition depends on the condition of the existence of the attachment of an attribute to an essence in the mind, but it does not depend on the condition of the existence of concrete states or actions existing outside the mind.

The subject-term ‘moving’ is grammatically a description/attribute (*waṣf/ṣifa*) which is similar to [the name of] the agent (*ism al-fā’il*). Therefore—similar to “the bearer of the name” (*ṣāhib al-ism*) which is “concealed” (*muḍmar*) in the grammatical *fā’il* [-form] (cf. above § 4)—the bearer of the attribute ‘moving’ is concealed in the grammatical form of the attribute (*ṣifa*) ‘moving’ (*mutaḥarrik*). That is to say—from Ibn Sīnā’s logical point of view—that by a grammatical attribute (*ṣifa*) as for example ‘moving’ is set down an essence and a substance to which the attribute ‘moving’ is attached. Grammatically the attribute (*ṣifa*) ‘*mutaḥarrik*’ is similar to the name of an agent ‘*nāṭiq*’, however, they differ logically. ‘Rationality’ is essential and thus constitutive (*muqawwim*) for that of which it is predicated. Therefore ‘rational’ is not ‘attached’ to the essence and substance

which is rational. ‘Movement’, however, is a quality (*kayfiyya*) of everything to which it belongs. Therefore ‘moving’ is an accident (‘*araḍ*’) of the essence and the substance to which it is attached. Ontologically speaking the essence and quiddity (*māhiyya*) to which the quality (*kayfiyya*) ‘movement’ is attached and the substance (*jawhar*) to which the accident (‘*araḍ*’) ‘moving’ is attached is “the bearer of the potency” (*hāmil al-quwwa*) (Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā’*: *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, book 4.2, I, 184,8) ‘movement’. Therefore the grammatical attribute ‘moving’ may be used in language either [1.] ‘with regard to the essence’ (*dhātī*) which might be moving or not moving. Under this condition the statement ‘all moving are resting’ is not false but possibly true, since an essence and a substance which is in the state of moving may at another time not be moving but resting (cf. Aristotle, *Met.* IX, 1048b 1–3). Hence, the logical necessity of the *dhātī*-reading of the proposition ‘all moving are resting’ is restricted to the duration of the attachment of the potency of moving or not moving to an essence. It is omnitemporally true: Whenever the potency of moving or not moving is attached to an essence and a substance [whether in the mind or outside the mind in physical existence], the potency of changing or not changing is attached to the essence.

Or the grammatical attribute ‘moving’ may be used in language [2.] ‘with regard to the description’ (*wasfī*) ‘moving’ which describes a state (*hāl*) of being of an essence and a substance. Under this condition the logical necessity of the *wasfī*-reading of the proposition ‘every moving is changing’ is restricted to the duration of the attachment of the quality ‘movement’ to an essence and of the accident ‘moving’ to a substance. It is omnitemporally true: Whenever ‘movement’ is attached to an essence and ‘moving’ is attached to a substance [whether in the mind or outside the mind in physical existence], ‘change’ is attached to the essence and ‘changing’ is attached to the substance.

To sum up, according to Ibn Sīnā “the derived” (*al-mushtaqq*)—namely “[the name of] the agent” (*ism*) *al-fā’il*) and “the description/attribute which is similar to [the name of] the agent” (*al-ṣifa al-mushabbaha bi-l-fā’il*) (cf. above § 4)—can be used in language to indicate five different meanings:

[1.] It can stand ‘with regard to essence/essentially’ (*dhātī*) to indicate:

- [1.a] an essence and a quiddity to which is attributed an essential potency and quality, as for example ‘rational’ (*nātiq*) in the statement ‘All rational have the power of volition’;
- [1.b] an essence and a quiddity to which is attributed a passive-potency (*quwwa*) to be in a state (*hāl*) of being and to be in a contrary state of being, as for example ‘moving’ (*mutaḥarrik*) in the statement ‘All moving are resting’;
- [1.c] an essence and a quiddity to which is attributed an active-potency (*quwwa/qudra*) for an action (*fi’l/amal*) and for a contrary action, as for example ‘speaking’ (*nātiq*) in the statement ‘all speaking are keeping quiet’ or as for example ‘standing’ (*qā’im*) in the statement ‘all standing are sitting’.

[2.] It can stand ‘with regard to description/descriptionally’ (*waṣṣfī*) to indicate:

- [2.a] an essence and a quiddity to which is attributed a quality (*kayfiyya*) by which the substance is in a state (*ḥāl*) of being, as for example ‘moving’ (*mutaḥarrīk*) in the statement ‘All moving are changing [when moving]’;
- [2.b] an essence and a quiddity to which is attributed a quality (*kayfiyya*) by which the substance is connected (*muqtarin*) (cf. above § 6) and related (*muḍāf*) (cf. below § 8) to an acting/doing (*fi’l/fa’l’amal*), as for example ‘walking’ (*māshīn*) in the statement ‘All walking are changing [when walking]’.

In [1.] the first case “the derived” is derived from names/nouns which signify the abstractions, that is to say, the essences (*dhawāt*) ‘rationality’ (*nuṭq*), ‘movement’ (*ḥaraka*), ‘standing’ (*qiyām*). In [2.] the second case “the derived” is derived from the verbs (*af’āl*) or from the verbal nouns (*maṣādir*) ‘to move/moving’ (*ḥaraka*) and ‘to walk/walking’ (*mashy*). Both, the verb and the verbal noun signify the temporal happening (*huṣūl*) of the actions ‘to move/moving’ and ‘to walk/walking’.

Whereas al-Fārābī had identified the logical derivation of a name or an attribute from an abstracted meaning and the grammatical derivation from a verb or a verbal noun (cf. above § 6), Ibn Sīnā distinguishes the two kinds of understanding derivation with regard to their meaning: the logical derivation indicates the relation of a subject with a quality or an action; the grammatical derivation indicates the relation of a subject with the happening (*huṣūl*) of the affection by a quality or with the happening of an acting.

The use of *nāṭiq* in the sense of [1.a] ‘rational’ corresponds to what Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī first called “the name of the language” (*ism al-lughā*) and then “the name of the religion” (*ism al-dīn*), and of what Abū l-Qāsim al-Ka’bī said that it is “not only [grammatically] derived from the verb/action” but that it is also used as “a sign (*simā*) to distinguish” and as “a praise (*madḥ*)”. Hence, from Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī’s and Abū l-Qāsim al-Ka’bī’s nominalistic point of view ‘rational’ (*nāṭiq*) had to be explained as a grammatically derived name which is used with regard to the subject of an action and unrestricted (*muṭlaq*) to the time of the action in the sense of a class name. However, in contrast to the essential name ‘rational’ the class name can only signify a sum of individuals and therefore can only be predicated extensionally, but not intensionally. The use of for example ‘walking’ [2.b] as a description (*waṣṣf*) corresponds to what Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā’ī first called “the description of the language” (*waṣṣf al-lughā*) and then “the name of the language” (*ism al-lughā*), and what Abū l-Qāsim al-Ka’bī explained as an attribute which is “[only grammatically] derived from the verb/action” (cf. above § 5).

With regard to Maimonides’ attack on the *mutakallimūn* (cf. above § 2) the most crucial sentence in the passage quoted above from Ibn Sīnā is the last sentence: “but ‘man/human’ and ‘blackness’ are not like that”. ‘Man/human’ (*al-insān*) and ‘blackness’ (*al-sawād*) both are primitive names/nouns which can only be used to signify the universal or the substance ‘man/human’ and the quality ‘blackness’. According to Ibn Sīnā the generation of a substance is a non-gradual

substantial change which occurs all at once. That is to say, substantial change occurs with the appearance of a form (*ṣūra*) that replaces the form which is corrupted and takes its place (McGinnis 2004). Therefore from the semantical as well as from the logical point of view it is not true to say ‘every man/human is an irrational body [at some given time]’ and it is not true to say ‘every sperm is possibly man’, since there is nothing underlying an essence and a substance which endures when an essence and a substance is corrupted and another essence and substance is generated. When a man/human dies his concrete reality (*ḥaqīqa*) and the essence ‘man/human’ has ceased to exist and the dead irrational body is not denoted as ‘man/human’. When sperm has [been]²⁵ changed to man, the essence ‘sperm’ does not exist any more and the essence which has generated from—or, instead of—sperm is denoted as ‘man/human’ but not as ‘sperm’.²⁶ This point of view coincides with the Sunnī doctrine that there is no natural potency in things by which they change from being something to being another thing, that the will of God is the only reason why things exist as they do and “that the existence of everything other than Himself comes into being because He originated and created it for the first time” (al-Ḥalīmī, *Minhāj* I, 183ult.-184,1; cf. above § 2). This semantical-logical aspect is also the basis of al-Ghazālī’s argument for calling God ‘agent’ rather than ‘first cause’ as shall be explained in the following.

8 Al-Ghazālī’s Semantical-Logical Distinction Between ‘name’ and that What is ‘derived’ (*mushtaqq*)

In the passages from the *Incoherence of the Philosophers* discussed above in § 2 al-Ghazālī dealt with the term ‘agent’ (*fā’il*) from a logical point of view without touching the semantical aspect. In the opening of his *The Loftiest Intention Concerning the Explanation of the Meanings of God’s Most Beautiful Names* (*al-Maḡṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ ma’ānī asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā*) he provides a semantical-logical explanation of the difference between name (*ism*) and that what is ‘derived’ (*mushtaqq*) and their semantical functions:

[1.] What is understood (*mafḥūm*) from the name (*ism*) may be the essence of the named/denoted (*dhāt al-musammā*), its reality (*ḥaqīqatuhū*) and its quiddity (*māhiyya*) [viz. the reality and the quiddity of the named/denoted]. These are the names of the species (*asmā’ al-anwā’*) which are not derived, as when you say ‘man/human’ (*insānun*), ‘knowledge’ (*ilmun*), ‘whiteness’ (*bayāḍun*) (*al-Maḡṣad* 25,13–15).

From the [primitive] name/noun (*ism*) has to be distinguished

[2.] what is derived (*mushtaqq*) and what does not signify the reality of the named/denoted, but leaves its reality undetermined (*mubḥama*) and signifies an attribute that belongs to it (*ṣifa laḥū*) [viz. to the named/denoted], as when you say ‘knower/knowing’ (*ālimum*) and ‘writer/writing’ (*kātibun*). Then the derived is divided in [2.a] what signifies the description of a state of the named/denoted (*waṣf ḥāl fī l-musammā*) as ‘the knowing’ (*al-ālīm*) and ‘the white’ (*al-abyaḍ*), and in [2.b] what signifies a relation (*iḍāfa*) of it [viz. the named/denoted] with something inseparable [which cannot exist independently, apart from the named/denoted] as ‘the creator/the creating’ (*al-khāliq*) and ‘the writer/the writing’ (*al-kātib*) (*al-Maḡṣad* 25,15–19).

What is understood from [2.a] ‘the knowing’ (*al-‘ālim*) is something undetermined to which belongs the description/attribute ‘knowledge’ (*lahū waṣf al-‘ilm*), and what is understood from [2.b] ‘the writer/the writing’ (*al-kātib*) is something undetermined to which belongs the action ‘writing’ (*lahū fi’l al-kitāba*) (*al-Maqṣad* 26,7–9).

Like Ibn Sīnā’s distinction between a predication whose necessity depends either on the actuality of an essence or on the actuality of a description (*waṣf*) al-Ghazālī’s distinction between [1.] what signifies the reality of the named/denoted and [2.] what does not signify the reality of the named/denoted is based on Aristotle’s distinction between [1.] the secondary substances and [2.] the accidents explained in *Cat.* 5. This distinction orders things [1.] in being by itself and [2.] in being with regard to something else and in [1.] vertical predication of ‘what-it-is’ (*mā huwa*) and [2.] horizontal predication of a relation of something with something else (cf. Zimmermann 1981, xxv).

By passing over what is [grammatically] derived and what *does* signify the reality of the named/denoted al-Ghazālī synthesizes the grammatical functions of [1.] name (*ism*), [2.a] description/attribute (*ṣifa*) and [2.b] ‘[the name of the] agent’ (*[ism al-] fā’il*) with Aristotle’s basic distinction between substance and accident. [1.] A name/noun (*ism*) signifies and denotes the denoted (*musammā*), [2.a] an attribute/description (*ṣifa*) signifies a state (*ḥāl*) of the described (*mawṣūf*) and [2.b] a [name of the] agent (*fā’il*) signifies an action (*fi’l*) of an agent which is “concealed” in the grammatical *fā’il*-form (cf. above § 4). From the logical point of view both, a state of being of a substance and an acting of a substance can be subsumed under the horizontal predication of a relation of something with something else, since they both are expressed in language by derivation (*ishtiqaq*) from a verb. A name, however denotes by vertical predication. Therefore

[1.] the term ‘essence’ (*dhāt*) stands for the Aristotelian *eidos* in the sense of the form (*ṣūra*), which is the principle by which a thing is an object of imagination, whereas ‘reality’ (*ḥaqīqa*) signifies what a concrete particular denoted thing (*musammā*) is by its form (cf. al-Ghazālī, *Mustaṣfā* II, 12,16–18; cf. also Lizzini 2004, 178). The term ‘quiddity’ (*māhiyya*) is the abstract noun for ‘what-it-was-to-be’ (cf. Aristotle, *Top.* I, 5, 101b 38), that is to say, the answer to the question ‘what is it?’. The term *nau’* stands for the Aristotelian *eidos* in the sense of the species. In the above-cited passage ‘the name of the species’—which corresponds to what is called in Arabic grammar more usually ‘the name of the genus’ (*ism al-jins*)—is the expression (*lafẓ*) in language which signifies the essence.²⁷

And [2.] what is derived and what does not signify the reality of the named/denoted, but signifies an attribute (*ṣifa*) of the named/denoted corresponds to Aristotle’s accidents.

In accordance with Arabic grammar al-Ghazālī distinguishes two kinds of that what is ‘derived’:

[2.a] The description/attribute (*ṣifa*) which is similar to the [name of the] agent (*fā’il*) signifies a state (*ḥāl/ḥāla*) of the described (*mawṣūf*) which is ‘concealed’ in the grammatical pattern of the attribute (*ṣifa*).

[2.b] The [name of the] agent (*fā’il*) which signifies a relation (*iḍāfa*) of an agent which is ‘concealed’ in the grammatical *fā’il*-form with an action (*fi’l*) (cf. above § 4).

By identifying Aristotle's distinction of the ways in which secondary substances and accidents are predicated with the Arabic grammatical distinction of names which are not derived and descriptions which are derived, al-Ghazālī meets the same difficulty already al-Fārābī had dealt with. Not only accidents (*a'rāḍ*) in the Aristotelian sense, but also differentia (*fuṣūl*) are signified by derivation as for example 'rational' (*nāṭiq*). However, according to *Cat.* 5 differentia signify 'what-it-is', that is to say, they signify the quiddity (*māhiyya*) of the named, while accidents signify qualities of the named. Al-Ghazālī solves this problem in the same way as al-Fārābī had done (cf. above § 6). He subsumes both differentia and accidents under the derived name in the sense of *Cat.* 1 and treats them as appellations which may either be used with regard to a potency/faculty (*quwwa*) of an essence as for example the derived name *nāṭiq* may be used in the sense of 'rational'. Or they may be used as appellation of someone who applies this potency/faculty, as for example the derived name *nāṭiq* may be used in the sense of someone speaking/talking with the tongue and reasonably thinking. By this distinction al-Ghazālī is able to explain why not only God's essential attributes but also attributes which signify God's actions can be attributed to him without a beginning:

With regard to the names which go back to the action (*tarjī'u ilā l-fi'l*) as 'the creator/creating' (*khāliq*), 'the former/forming' (*muṣawwir*) and 'the giver/giving' (*wahhāb*) some people say: "He [viz. God] is described as being creator/creating without a beginning (*bi-annahū khāliq fī l-azal*)". And others say: "He is not described [as being creator/creating without a beginning]". [However,] there is no foundation for this disagreement. 'The creator/creating' is applied to [indicate] two meanings: The first of them is certain definitely without a beginning. The second of them is denied definitely. And there is no kind of disagreement between them, since the sword is named/denoted 'cutter/cutting' (*qāṭi*) while it is in the scabbard and it is called 'cutter/cutting' when it is in the state (*hāla*) of incising into the neck. In the scabbard it is cutter/cutting *in potentia* (*bi-l-quwwa*) and at ('*inda*) the incision it is named/denoted 'cutter/cutting' *in actu* (*bi-l-fi'l*). And the water in the jug is thirst-satisfying (*murwin*), however, *in potentia*, and in the stomach it is thirst-satisfying *in actu*. The meaning of the water's being thirst-satisfying in the jug is that it is by the attribute/quality (*bi-ṣ-ṣifa*) that the thirst-satisfying (*irwā*) happens at ('*inda*) the encounter with the stomach. And this is the attribute/quality of the waterhood²⁸ (*ṣifat al-mā'iyya*). And the sword in the scabbard is 'cutter/cutting', that is to say, that it is by the attribute/quality (*bi-ṣ-ṣifa*) that the [act of] cutting (*qaṭ*) happens when (*idhā*) it [viz. the act of cutting (*qaṭ*)] meets the place [of the cutting]. And this is the [attribute/quality] of the sharpness. [...]

The creator (*bāri*) is creator/creating without a beginning (*fī l-azal khāliq*) in the meaning in which the water in the jug is said to be thirst-satisfying. And this [meaning] is, that it is by the attribute/quality (*bi-ṣ-ṣifa*) ['actorness' and 'creatorship'] that the acting (*fa'l*) and the creating/creation (*khālq*) is possible. And in the second meaning He is not the creator, that is to say, the creation does not proceed from Him [without a beginning] (*al-Maqṣad* 31,14–32,6).

This is nothing else than Ibn Sīnā's distinction of understanding a derived name with regard to essence (*dhātī*) or with regard to description (*waṣfī*) (cf. above § 7). If taken with regard to essence (*dhātī*) the attribute 'creating/creator' means: *When* (*idhā*) the divine essence exists, the divine power to create exists. 'Creator/creating' here is understood with regard to the divine essence, which has the power (*qudra*) to create. Being 'creator/creating' here is taken as an attribute of

the divine essence as being ‘rational’ is an attribute of man/human as long as the essence ‘man/human’ exists as man/human and has not changed to an inanimate body and as being ‘thirst-satisfying’ is an attribute of water as long as the essence ‘water’ exists as water and has not evaporated and changed to the new essence ‘air’.²⁹ However, since in contrast to man and water the divine essence exists absolutely, that is to say, without generation and corruption and thus purely actual, the divine essence has the power to create without a beginning and without an end and consequently the attribute ‘creating/creation’ (*khalq*) belongs to the divine essence without a beginning and without an end. Thus the sentence ‘God is creator/creating’ if taken with regard to the divine essence is an absolutely necessary statement in the same sense as ‘God exists/is existent’ is an absolutely necessary statement.

Taken with regard to description (*wasfī*) the attribute ‘creator/creating’ means God is creating *when* he is creating. “When (*idhā*) it [viz. the act of cutting (*qat*)] meets the place [of the cutting]” is the moment/time (*waqt*) of the change from possible cutting to actual cutting. Similarly, when (*idhā*) the act ‘creating/creation’ (*khalq*) meets the place of the creating/creation (*khalq*) is the moment/time of the change from possible creating/creation to actual creating/creation. Consequently, when the act of creating actually proceeds from the divine essence the divine essence is described as being creating. However, since there was no time before the act of creation, there is no time *when* God is being described as being not-creating.

Hence, in the first sense ‘creator/creating’ is purely actual, whereas in the second sense ‘creator/creating’ is omnitemporally actual, namely as long as time is brought into existence by God’s act of creation.

9 Conclusion

Aristotle explains in *Physics* III, 1, 201a 29–201b 5 that there is no change in metal from being metal *in potentia* to being metal *in actu*. And also a statue is not a statue *in potentia* before changing to a statue *in actu*. In so far as the change of a substance and an essence is the change from something to something else metal rather is metal *in actu* and a statue *in potentia*. The change from metal to statue is a change from potentiality to actuality. Therefore Maimonides was wrong when he maintained that a cause (*illa*) might be named/denoted a cause *in potentia* before it is a cause *in actu*. And his example in proof this statement, namely that “the matter of a particular house, before it is built, is matter in a state of potentiality” (cf. above § 2) was misleading. Matter in a state of potentiality is not opposed to matter *in actu* but to house *in actu*. There is no change from being a cause in a state of potentiality to being actually a cause as there is no change from being matter in a state of potentiality to being actually a house without the change from one substance and essence to another substance and essence. One might say ‘sperm’ is potentially ‘man/human’. However, the saying ‘man/human is potentially ‘man/human’ is self-contradictory. Therefore, against Maimonides can be argued from a logical and from a semantical point of view. From the logical point of view

it can be argued that if the divine essence changes from being cause *in potentia* to being cause *in actu* the divine essence itself would change from being *in potentia* to being *in actu* and thus would not be eternal. From the semantical point of view it can be argued that if the divine essence changes from being cause *in potentia* to being cause *in actu* the name ‘cause’ would be used equivocally for two different essences. From this it becomes clear what the *mutakallimūn* had gained “by preferring the naming/denomination (*tasmiya*) ‘doer/agent’ to the naming/denomination (*tasmiya*) ‘cause’ (*illa*) and ‘ground’ (*sabab*)” (cf. above § 2). The terms ‘cause’ and ‘ground’ are primitive names which can only denote a substance and an essence. The term ‘agent’ (*fā’il*) however is a derived name which can signify either with regard to essence (*dhātī*) or with regard to description (*wasfī*). In case it is used with regard to essence it signifies an agent who has the potency/faculty to enact by an act of will and a choice to enact or not to enact (cf. above § 3). In case it is used with regard to description the term ‘agent’ (*fā’il*) signifies an agent when (*idhā*) he is in the state of being (*hāl*) enacting.

One can only wonder whether Maimonides himself has fallen victim of a fallacy or whether he consciously used an eristic argument to overcome his opponents.

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Notes

1. An exposition of the problem is given in Lagerlund 2000, ch. 1, esp. pp. 12–14.
2. See Street 2005a and 2005b, 256–262.
3. On this broader sense of ‘description’ (*wasf*) see Sumi 2004.
4. I read *tasmiya* (“denomination”) instead of *ismiyya* (lit. “nounhood, nounness”).
5. Cf. the preceding note.
6. Cf. the preceding note.
7. I have slightly modified Pines’ translation.
8. On the genesis of this theory see Rudolph 2000; Schöck 2004.
9. Frank mixed up the relation of condition and consequence with the relation of cause and effect and hold the *asbāb* to be “causal conditions” which have “effects” (see esp. Frank 1992, 38 and 40). Al-Ghazālī, however, — as already al-Ash’arī (*Luma’* 56,17–20, § 128; cf. Schöck 2004, 119–21) and al-Māturīdī (cf. Schöck 2004, 121–3) — holds that man’s power/faculty (*qudra*) is a necessary ‘means’ and ‘ground’ (*sabab*), that is to say, a necessary condition by (*bi-*) which the consequence, namely the act, follows. This does not mean that man’s power/faculty effects his act (cf. Marmura 1995).
10. On this problem see Wisnovsky 2003, 61–98.
11. See in detail Schöck 2004.
12. I have very slightly modified Marmura’s translations.
13. I have very slightly modified Marmura’s translation.
14. See in detail Schöck 2006, 43–53.

15. See in detail Schöck 2006, 152–79.
16. On *sima* see Schöck 2006, 171f., n. 94.
17. Cf. above § 2.
18. See above § 2.
19. Zimmermann (1981, xxx) comments that of these examples only *dārib* and *mutaḥarrik* are “participles; the others are original nouns”. However, this is not the Arabic understanding. Zimmermann (loc.cit.) further comments that al-Fārābī’s understanding that *ḥayy* (“living”) is derivative in pattern (*shakl*) (al-Fārābī, *Sharḥ* 35,3f.) “makes morphological nonsense” and that al-Fārābī “here has fallen victim of multiple confusion”. As shown above § 4, al-Fārābī is in complete agreement with the Arabic grammarians.
20. On the verbal noun, lit. the “origin” (*maṣdar*) cf. A. Bäck 2007, § 3.
21. I have slightly modified Zimmermann’s translation.
22. Lit.: and.
23. I have slightly modified Street’s translation.
24. Ishāq b. Ḥunayn has translated *De int.* 9, 19a 23–26 as follows: “The existence (*wujūd*) of a thing is necessary when it exists (*idhā kāna mawjūdān*). And when it does not exist then the negation of its existence is necessary. Not all what is existent has a necessary (*ḍarūrī*) existence. And not all what does not exist has a necessary non-existence. That is to say that when we say ‘the existence of all what is existent is necessary when it exists’ this is not the same as when we say that its existence is absolutely necessary (*bi-anna wujūdahū ḍarūratan ‘alā l-iṭlāq*). Aristotle, *al-Naṣṣ*, ed. Jabre, I, 128.
25. From the Sunnī point of view one has to say ‘has been changed’, namely has been changed by God’s immediate creation of man/human from sperm (cf. Qur’ān 16,4) and not ‘has changed’, namely has changed by virtue of its potency (*quwwa*) to change to man.
26. See on this problem Street 2000b, 134–35 with n. 11.
27. Thus, in contrast to Ibn al-Muqaffa’ (cf. above § 1) al-Ghazālī does not identify [primitive] name and second substance, but distinguishes between ‘the name of the species’ and what is understood (*mafhūm*) from it, this is the signified (*madlūl*).
28. The term does not have an equivalent in the English language. It could also be translated as ‘waterity’ (cf. humanity).
29. On the change from water to air or, as we would say, steam see McGinnis 2004, 57 n. 23.

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