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LOGIC

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LOGIC OF SENSE

Chapter II

**The Key Exemplifications of Logic-and-Meaning Configuration
in Arabic Philosophy**

In Chapter I, I argued that sense generating procedure is crucial to producing meanings we operate with, and that modes of sense generating procedure may vary. If this is correct, then it is possible to demonstrate the dependence of content (*what* we say) on the mode of sense generating procedure (i.e., *how* we generate it). Bringing to light this dependence of the *what* on the *how* is the goal of this chapter.

§ 1. The “fixedness/existence–non-existence” configuration

1.1. General observations

1.1.1. An *a priori* analysis of logic-and-meaning configuration

The logic-and-meaning configuration reveals to us mutual dependence of its constituents. The point is that they make sense only if taken together; it is only in their interrelation that they can be conceived and endowed with a sense.

This means we can never start with a certain absolutely simple concept and then, developing it, demonstrate its complexity. Only a full configuration provides a valid starting point for any sense-making activity. The *inner complexity* of any sense, disclosed as its “configurability”, i.e., as *its role in a logic-and-meaning configuration*, is what we discover as a result. This implies that we cannot speak of “meanings” as atomic entities attached to this or that sign and signified by it.

Speaking of the principle of configuredness, I want to highlight more than the fact that any concept makes sense not as an isolated unit but always and only in its connection with other concepts. I also mean that the *organization* of this connection may take different forms. To make it clear, let us consider the inner structure of the logic-and-meaning configuration depicted on Fig. 3 and Chart 3.¹

For the sake of convenience and brevity, let me designate the sense emerging in the area where two other senses transfer into each other as a “first-level sense.” The pair of senses which, by this transfer, create the first-level sense might be called “second-level senses.” A logic-and-meaning configuration consists of two levels and defines the correlation between them which, in its turn, is defined by the manner in which second-level senses relate to each other (or, vice versa, defines that manner: we are dealing with a mutual connection cutting both ways).

To realize how the logic-and-meaning configuration defines the particulars of sense generation, we need to describe three vital points in their interrelation: the correlation between second-level senses; the correlation between the pair of second-level senses and the first-level sense; the way in which the former defines the latter (or is defined by it). All those points are relevant for both readings of sense generating procedure we deal with (for substance-based and process-based worldviews), though they totally differ in two cases. Let us have a closer look at a process-based reading of the logic-and-meaning configuration.

The two second-level senses transfer into each other. The first-level sense is an area where this transfer takes place—an area within which the mutually transferring senses cannot be found *as such*, remaining outside it. Second-level senses achieve a state of unity as the first-level sense; in other words, they are one when regarded as the first-level sense.² However, their sameness is arrived at, it is not just there to begin with, when we regard those two senses as such. To be more exact: their unity is actualized as a *process* of transfer.

Unity arrived at as a process of transfer is subsequent to a state which is not a unity. When regarded as such, two second-level senses make up an opposition. The notion of opposition, together with the notion of unity, turns out to be necessary and fundamental in the description of the logic-and-meaning configuration. It seems we are unable to define those notions any further; they appear to be *intimated* by the very “configuredness” of senses.

We may, however, say that the nature of opposition is entirely defined by the mode of logic-and-meaning configuration. In the discussed case the contraposed senses are such as to transform into one another by virtue of the area which we

¹ See Logic of Sense, Chapter I (*Ishraq*. Islamic philosophy yearbook. No. 2, Moscow: Vostochnaya Literatura Publishers, 2011, pp. 320, 322) <<http://iph.ras.ru/uplfile//smirnov/ishraq/2/1s1.pdf>>.

² In our example discussed in Chapter I, water and fire are one as a “heating-of-water” process.

called the first-level sense. Under the mode of sense generating procedure we discuss, this area of their mutual transfer and, therefore, their unity, does not embrace the two contraposed senses as such, i.e., it does not incorporate and interiorize them.

1.1.2. Logic-and-meaning configuration *a posteriori*: basic ontology in Arabic philosophy

Those *a priori* regularities are defined by the mode of logic-and-meaning configuration which, I argue, lies at the core of sense generating activity in classical Arabic culture. Now I am going to measure them against the background of Arabic philosophical legacy. I will refer to it in its fullness, including its five major trends: Mu‘tazilite Kalām, Falsafa, Ismā‘īliyya, Ishrāqiyya, and Ṭaṣawwuf.

The Mu‘tazila introduced the basic triad describing modes of the presence-and-absence of a thing, the triad that remained, with variations, fundamental throughout the history of Arabic philosophy. These are: “existence” (*wujūd*), “non-existence” (*‘adam*) and “fixedness” (*thubūt*). It does not mean that the stock of concepts used by Mu‘tazila to describe the way in which a thing is present to us is exhausted by the above three terms. We can find quite a few more: *kawn* (emergence), *ḥudūth* (origination), *zawāl* (cessation), *ibtidā’* (commencement), *i‘āda* (reproduction), *baqā’* (lasting existence), *fanā’* (ruin), *khalq* (creation³), as well as their derivatives: *takwīn* (creation), *i‘dām* (destruction), etc.

The term *thubūt* “fixedness” attains—as early as during the Mu‘tazilite stage—the status of that sense which was named the first-level sense. Let us follow the evolution of such understanding and the polemics around it.

‘Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, a brilliant doxographer of the early Kalām, states that “some” people thought

that the things are things prior to their existence and that they are fixed as things prior to their existence [Ash‘ari 1980, p. 518].

Al-Ash‘arī is rather scanty of words while expounding this thesis, for which a number of reasons could be suggested including the fact that he never shared this view. ‘Abū al-Ḥasan is a fairly objective doxographer; when not quite sure that he conveys an opinion exactly enough, he thinks it necessary to point this out, and sometimes gives a thorough description of the entire sequence through which the views of his predecessors were handed down to him. On the other hand, his personal preferences had a significant impact on his work: he gives more attention to the views of al-Jubbā‘i, his master and opponent, than to doctrines of other Mu‘tazila.

³ This term has numerous synonyms, like *ibdā’*, *takhlīq*, *ṣun’*, *inshā’*, etc. The meanings of those notions varied with different thinkers.

In this case, we have to restrict ourselves to this brief statement of the view which, as al-Ash‘arī reports, was expressed by ‘Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāt. Let us consider al-Ash‘arī’s evidence in more detail.

The presented thesis can be broken into two lines that I will arrange one below the other for the sake of convenience:

زعموا ان الاشياء اشياء قبل وجودها
وانها مثبتة اشياء قبل وجودها

za ‘amū ‘anna al-ashyā’ ašhyā’ qabla wujūdi-hā
wa ‘anna-hā muthbata ašhyā’ qabla wujūdi-hā

they argued that the things [are] things prior to their existence
and that they [are] fixed as things prior to their existence

It looks like the two lines convey the same thought. Essentially, the repetition adds nothing new. Moreover, the two phrases differ but slightly: as regards their structure, the only difference between them is presented by the copula omitted in the first line and inserted in the second. Apart from this, the two phrases following the preposition ‘anna (“that”) are absolutely identical, if we disregard the substitution of the subject *ašhyā’* (“things”) by the pronoun *-hā* (“they”) in the second line. What we have is an instance of recurrence: the second line tells us exactly the same as the first one.

This should not escape our attention, since the two phrases stated by the same author in the same context and differing as described above enable us to single out that which is called “copula” in its purest form. Essentially, here we have a very clear-cut case, when the difference between the two phrases consists *exclusively* in the use of a copula. However, there is more to it than that. The copula that we have a lucky opportunity to observe in this way is a copula in its purest form—a copula that establishes sameness.

Actually, either of the two phrases is tautological. Their subjects receive no predicate other than themselves; they establish nothing but the equality of subject to itself. This state of affairs, as well as the absence of any other modality, is demonstrated by the first phrase: *al-ašhyā’ ašhyā’*.⁴ The equality of a thing to itself is a pure sameness; it is hardly possible to imagine a more obvious case of “the same” than the relation of a thing to itself as to “the same.”

To equate something with itself, one has no need to resort to anything other than itself. Something *is* something—this tautology relating the thing to itself appears obvious. A thing requires nothing extraneous *to be* itself. It seems, this

⁴ The elimination of the definite article *al-* in the repeated word *ašhyā’* “things” is due to the rules of Arabic grammar; it does not suggest that the predicate differs from the subject. The Arabic phrase *al-ašhyā’ ašhyā’* omits the copula; we can render it into English as “The things [are] things” only on condition that, performing a sort of Husserlian *epoché*, we do not notice the copula [are] which is indispensable in English translation but is not there in Arabic original. The same applies to the translation of al-Khayyāt’s words “they [are] fixed as things...”

A=A equation highlights the essence of equality in its fullness. The copula “to be” therefore appears to us the most evident one: a thing *is* itself—this hardly leaves any room for doubt; this equity principle is a bedrock of logic.

However, what do the two phrases, in which we find so fortunately a similarly clear-cut case of a thing equaling itself, imply?

They state something different, which stands in a stark contrast to the just mentioned self-evidence. What functions as a copula here is the word *muthbata* “fixed.” What does it convey?

The first thing to observe is the seemingly unusual choice of the term whose relation to the description of the sphere of existence is not obvious at all. Besides *wujūd* “existence,” the Mu‘tazila often used the term *kawn*, which we conventionally translate as “existence-emergence.” It is very revealing that, in this case, neither of the above terms was used but another one was found which—and this, again, is very revealing—sounds quite weakly and unconvincingly to our ear. And indeed, fixedness of things—what does it mean? And what is its relation to existence?

We can answer the last question, at least. The analyzed phrase states that the fixedness precedes the existence of a thing, that it is “prior” to its existence.

This explanation, however, makes matters more complicated, because, prior to the thing’s existence, we have its “non-existence,” which is seemingly obvious. This was well perceived by Islamic thinkers, for whom the expressions *wujūd ba‘da ‘adam* (“existence after non-existence”) and *‘adam ba‘da wujūd* (“non-existence after existence”) became something like philosophic clichés.⁵ However, what we come across here is not “non-existence” (*‘adam*) but the state

⁵ These clichés are more typical of the Falāsifa, though the general idea they convey also found its expression among the Mu‘tazila. Though some of the latter held that “non-existence” comes only after the first “existence” of a thing, the alternation of the two states was seldom doubted. What matters is the fact that, one way or another, the state of “fixedness” differed both from the state of “non-existence” and “existence.” The grounds for this differentiating may be discovered in the procedural aspect of the formation of the above-mentioned notions: attention to the sense generating procedure enables us to perceive content that depends on it.

This may well remain outside the field of vision when the traditional, content-oriented approach is applied. By way of an illustration of the latter, let me refer to an EI article of van Ess, one of the greatest authorities on the early Kalām. Though providing a detailed description of al-Khayyāt’s views, he does not mention the term *thubūt* “fixedness” and calls the theories we now discuss “theories of pre-existence” (see [van Ess]). Through such omission the analyzed views of the Mu‘tazila are incorporated into the system of fundamental ontological notions developed by the Western tradition—notions based on the category of “being” and implying specific relations between being, existence, and non-existence.

In this context, it would be extremely interesting to consider the evidence of al-Suhrawardī who, analyzing the category of “fixedness,” demonstrates that it can *in no manner* be reconciled with those ideas of “being” that were formed already in Classical Antiquity (see Chapter II, § 1.5.4.1. *Criticism of “fixedness” from the standpoint of Aristotelians*). I would like to point out once more that we discuss regularities that serve as a direct consequence of the sense generating procedure and therefore remain immutable despite any fluctuations of content in the course of development of philosophic theories.

of “fixedness”: that’s what comes “prior to existence,” according to the opinion we are analyzing.

The terminology under discussion thus becomes more complex and, at the same time, begins to clarify. The term “fixedness” now differentiates itself not only from notions that express “existence” (*wujūd, kawn*). It turns out to be different from the term referring to “non-existence” (*‘adam*) as well. On the one hand, the difference between “fixedness” and “existence” appears now wholly justified by the fact that—as our author affirms—the state of fixedness is prior to existence, thus being somehow opposed to it (though we have not so far clarified the essence of this opposition).

On the other hand, finding the difference between “non-existence” and “fixedness” is more problematic. Either of the latter pair precedes existence so as to appear, in a way, one and the same. Let us note, though, that “non-existence” may be placed both before and after “existence,” whereas we cannot so far affirm the same regarding “fixedness.” This observation drawing a tentative distinction between fixedness and non-existence makes no difference to the heart of the matter: it is the state “prior to existence” that interests us the most, and we do not know yet how to tell fixedness from non-existence in this respect.

The only thing that we can affirm with any certainty is that the two just mentioned concepts *ought* to be distinguishable. One of the arguments in favor of this is as follows. Al-Ash‘arī himself, as noted above, did *not* share the thesis under consideration—following his teacher, al-Jubbā‘i, he strove to disprove it. I intend to return to this dispute somewhat later; at this point, it will suffice to say that neither al-Jubbā‘i nor al-Ash‘arī (and, as far as I know, none of the thinkers who participated in the discussion of these three concepts) used this seemingly obvious opportunity to equate the state of fixedness with non-existence on the basis that both are “prior to existence.” Al-Jubbā‘i and al-Ash‘arī oppose the opinion presented here and blame their opponents for being self-contradictory, but they never say that fixedness is equal to non-existence, which would have made either of the two concepts redundant. If both supporters and opponents of the presented thesis had conceived of the state of fixedness as preceding existence in the same way as non-existence precedes it, they would have doubtlessly pointed out this sameness.

At the moment, it would be appropriate to sum up and make some conclusions. In its purest form, the copula in our example can be conceived of as “fixedness.” This fixedness is distinct from both existence and non-existence. It precedes existence, being placed “prior” to it—though, in all likelihood, not the way non-existence is placed before existence. It means that fixedness is not identical to non-existence.

This being the case, we may also ascertain the following. Sameness, which we have been considering in its clearest form (that of a thing being equal to it-

self), could be expressed not by “being” (e.g., “being itself”). The sameness could be conceived of as “fixedness.”

Attempting to approach a definition of this concept would entail addressing the logic-and-meaning configuration in the process-oriented mode which we discussed above. The three analyzed concepts are arranged relative to one another exactly in accordance with the configuration reflected on Fig. 3 and demonstrated on Chart 3.⁶ “Fixedness” is here the first-level sense, while the “existence” and “non-existence” are a pair of second-level senses. Fixedness precedes both existence *and* non-existence as a first-level sense precedes the second-level ones.

If we consider the relation between the second-level senses, we will observe that one of them also precedes the other (the order of sequence depends on which of the two we consider first: we can get “existence after non-existence” and “non-existence after existence” with equal success; both are logically possible). However, this precedence can in no way be confused with the precedence of fixedness which goes before these two. That is why our authors do not generally confuse them. Strictly speaking, these are entirely different kinds of precedence, and we can speak of fixedness only there where non-existence and existence coincide, where they transfer into each other and, by virtue of this transfer, are the same. Thus we come across the concept of coincidence and sameness once again.

We have stated that a thing coincides with itself in a state of fixedness. This proves to be a coincidence of existence and non-existence. According to the analyzed view, a thing’s coincidence with itself is the coincidence of its existence and non-existence. A thing cannot be said to “be” itself; a thing “fixes” itself. Here “being” turns out to be merely a single aspect of this “fixedness”; moreover, it is an aspect that, as such (i.e., as existence proper), lies outside the domain of fixedness, whereas, within the latter, existence is transfigured by virtue of being one with non-existence. The mode of thinking we are dealing with in this case makes no transition from “coincides” to “is”; here, coincidence is verbalized and conceptualized differently—viz., as the state of fixedness.

It is the right moment to consider the conceptualization of that visual image which is presented on Fig. 3.⁷ This will also be convenient in that it gives us the opportunity to address concepts rather than illustrations. Let us now attempt to introduce those concepts.

1.1.3. Is the standard set theory a vehicle of conceptualization?

To put it briefly, the difference between the two analyzed ways of conceptualizing coincidence consists in the following. The classical set theory treats any element of the area of overlapping as belonging to the both sets. For instance, if

⁶ See Logic of Sense, Chapter I (*Ishraq*. Islamic philosophy yearbook. No. 2, Moscow: Vostochnaya Literatura Publishers, 2011, pp. 320, 322).

⁷ Ibid.

we—contrary to the popular saying “he who was born to crawl cannot fly”—agreed to think that the set of “the flying” somehow overlaps at some point with the set of “the crawling,” then it would mean that there *is* at least one “flier” that *is* simultaneously a “crawler.”

The coincidence of the “flier” and the “crawler” is regarded here as a coincidence of existences, so that the existence of the dragon we conjured up, that can both fly and crawl, is an area of overlapping of the two sets. In this case, the essential point is that, if we eliminate the fact of overlapping of the two sets from our picture (thereby abstracting ourselves from their coincidence) and focus our attention only on one of them (it is immaterial on which one—the “flying” or the “crawling”), our dragon will by no means disappear: it will retain its being in any case, since it “*is* a flier” and, at the same time, “*is* a crawler.”

Thus, step by step, we come to the idea that “to be” taken as a copula (“the dragon *is* a flier”) is in some way, which is both unbreakable and very intimate, connected with “to be” which expresses the existence of subject as such (“the dragon *is*”): only the possibility of the former makes the latter possible too. If we can predicate something to the subject by means of “to be,” then we may state that the subject “*is*.” Correspondingly, if we predicate something to it by means of “fixedness,” it means that the subject “fixes” itself.

We might say that the subjects are subjective in different ways; or, that things are presented to us in different ways. To be more exact, different kinds of things present themselves to us differently. Substance-things *exist*, but process-things are *fixed*. This leads to the following conclusion: The way to speak of a thing may vary in different cultures and, vice versa, cultures, as ways of interpreting the universe, may differ from one another at this exact point.

Let us return to our analysis of the overlapping of the “flying” and the “crawling” sets in accordance with the principles of set theory. What happens if we turn our back to their overlapping, confining ourselves to the “flying” set—moreover, only to that part thereof which was the area of its overlapping with the “crawling” set, viz. the subset of “dragons”? No individual dragon belonging to it would undergo any change at all as a result of ceasing to belong⁸ to the area of overlapping of the two sets. Regarding such a dragon only as a “flier” (saying, “the dragon is a flying entity”), we still have a full-fledged dragon before us, the same one that can crawl. A dragon is a dragon in any of these three cases: both when it belongs to the area of overlapping of the two sets, and when we consider either of the sets—together with the dragon belonging to each—individually.

⁸ This question, of course, is related to the difference between the Platonic and intuitionistic views on the problem. Will the dragon belonging, in our example, exclusively to the “flying” set also belong to the “crawling” set regardless of whether we established this membership or not? Here, I assume that our statement, “the dragon is a flier,” by no means rules out a very definite possibility to say that “the dragon is a crawler,” with the “dragon” in question remaining the same.

It is this opportunity that we are deprived of when considering coincidence as it is conceptualized within the process-based mode of sense generating procedure which we are dealing with. *Thubūt* “fixedness” has to be interpreted within the paradigm of a process, as a link between its two sides, active and recipient. Even if existence and non-existence in the general case cannot be taken as an actor and a recipient literally,⁹ the process-based paradigm of interpretation is relevant to understand what is meant by *thubūt* “fixedness”: it is a link binding them together and making their mutual transfer possible.

Fixedness is an area where existence and non-existence coincide, where they become the same, transferred into each other; but we cannot say that fixedness *belongs* to both existence and non-existence. Here, the basic intuition of the set theory fails to explain the correlation between the three notions. The reason is that the discussed case came to life within the process-oriented universe of Arabic thought, while the set theory is based on a substance-oriented worldview and culminates a long chain of conceptualizations relevant to it.

And another observation. We encounter here the direct, literal meaning of the copula, rediscovering it anew: it binds and connects the senses. There might be different ways of such connection, and the fact of coincidence alone does not necessarily entail that the copula in question is “to be.” As “coincidence” is broader than “being,” so the copula expressing it may well be other than “to be.” And it is this “other than *to be*” that defines a different correlation of senses bound by the copula; and it is this correlation that forms the contents of the notion of fixedness in the concrete mode of sense-generating procedure under consideration.

1.1.4. The law of excluded middle: how formal logic is grounded by logic of sense

All this relates directly to the law of excluded middle. This law is usually formulated as follows: “*A* is either *B* or non-*B*.” It means that if *B* may be predicated to *A* in principle, then any *A* is *necessarily* either *B* or non-*B*, and, at the same time, *A cannot* be both *B* and non-*B* simultaneously and in the same sense.¹⁰

⁹ For Ibn ‘Arabī’s ontology, though, this is a relevant interpretation, as here the Divinity (= existence) acts by providing existence to non-existent entities of the world which are recipients (*qawābil*) of this existence-granting activity. Perhaps it is less obvious that al-Fārābī’s and Ibn Sīnā’s notion of *mumkin* “possible” is best interpreted in a process-based model, as a link between existence and non-existence which belongs to neither of them and which, nonetheless, grounds them and makes them possible.

¹⁰ Discussion of a closely-related topic in regard to Islamic thinkers is found in the first issue of “Ishraq”: *Mesbah M.T.* On the Lookout for the Bedrock of Knowledge // *Ishraq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook*. No. 1. Moscow: Languages of Slavonic Culture, 2010, pp. 118–131; for the mentioned issue, see especially pp. 125–127, § 1.4. “The Principle of Non-Contradiction.” M.T. Mesbah says that “the principle of non-contradiction is one of the primary self-evident propositions about which a consensus exists among Muslim logicians” (op. cit., p. 125). This is

Let us consider an example. If a stone may be said to have weight (and this is true for any stone, at least on the surface of the Earth), then necessarily it is either heavy or non-heavy, and, at the same time, it cannot be both heavy and non-heavy.

It seems so obvious that it hardly needs to be mentioned. Two readings of the law of excluded middle, the “prescriptive” and the “prohibiting” one, come together and appear inseparable.

This is true, of course, but an important reservation is needed: this is true only if we retain a substance-oriented perspective of reasoning. As we shift to process-based perspective, another thing becomes no less obvious.

Let us consider an example of a process. As I am composing these lines, my “writing” hand is linked to the letters and the words which become “written” through the process of “writing.” The process of writing is a unity of its two contraposed sides, i.e., my writing hand and words written by it. However, it is a unity which does not, so to say, embrace and interiorize those two opposed sides: it would be rather unusual to say that the process of writing “consists of,” or “is divided into,” the writing hand and the written signs in the same way as all the stones are divided into heavy and non-heavy. It is much more natural to conceive the process of writing as a link between those two, tying them up together but not encircling or embracing them.

So, a process is a unity of the two opposed sides, but this unity has a nature different from a unity of “heavy stones” and “non-heavy stones” which amounts to just “stones.” The set of stones encompasses both heavy and non-heavy ones, it defines them by setting a border which, in accordance with Aristotelian definition, contains all its parts within itself. This, and only this makes the law of excluded middle applicable here in its both readings, the prescriptive and the prohibiting one (“Any stone is either heavy or non-heavy” and “No stone is both heavy and non-heavy”).

It would be absurd to apply the same law to the process and say that (1) “Any process of writing is either the writing hand or the written signs,” or, equally, that (2) “No process of writing is both the writing hand and the written signs.” This is not simply untrue; this makes no sense. And it is exactly that sense-making feature that I am trying to highlight: things make sense differently in substance-based and process-based perspectives.

Formally speaking, the second of the above two statements could be considered correct, because its negation is false. We cannot hold, of course, that “Any process of writing is both the writing hand and the written signs,” and therefore we might agree with (2) which is its negation. And yet, I argue that this second

true of course for Arab-speaking logicians who followed Aristotelian tradition (Mesbah mentions Ibn Sīnā, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, et al.). I argue that this is really self-evident only in perspective of a substance-based worldview, and that the self-evidence becomes different in the process-based perspective.

statement is senseless as well as the first one. It does not make sense because the copula is inappropriate. The process does not *exist* like stones exist; the process gets *established* as a link between the actor and the recipient. Process is the third entity uniting the actor and the recipient; we can say that it is established and fixed as their unity, as the domain where they transfer into each other.

This domain cannot be interpreted as an overlapping area of the two opposed sides of the process, if we understand overlapping as an intersection of the two sets. Unlike the “flying” and the “crawling” dragon belonging to both sets *and* to either of them, the process of writing cannot be said to “belong to” the writing hand or the written signs, or to both of them: this simply makes no sense. And unlike the dragon who does not care about the “crawling” creatures who are not simultaneously the “flying” ones (they all may well disappear, but the crawling-and-flying dragon will stay), it is vital for the process to keep both of its sides, the active and the recipient, for otherwise it will simply cease to be established as a link between them.

All this is rather obvious, if not to say trivial, when we consider clear-cut examples of a substance and a process. However, when we read texts of the early Islamic philosophers, our interpretation might stumble over the difference of substance-based and process-based perspectives, and it might happen that we are dealing with a process-related text trying to squeeze it into the substance-based perspective. I am not saying that it happens always and everywhere, I am only saying that this might well be the case at least sometimes. Respectively, paying attention to the correctness of interpretation perspective may be a solution.

Let me take as an example a well-known thesis of some of the Mu‘tazila who held that attributes of God are neither God nor something other than God. If we take this statement at its face value, provided both alternatives are negated in the same way and in the same meaning, then it is an outright violation of the law of excluded middle in its prescriptive mode. The Mu‘tazila introduced division of the Universe into “God” and “other than God” (*mā siwā ‘Allāh*) which was both exhaustive and dichotomic. From that point of view, any thing should fall into one of the alternative categories, either “God” or “other than God,” and it would be illogical to say that Divine attributes belong to neither of the two sets exhausting the Universe. Why then did they claim it to be a solution to the mind-breaking problem of Divine attributes?

Of course, there is no single answer to such question, and interpretations might be different and conflicting. What I suggest is to consider the possibility of interpreting this statement not in a substance-based perspective, where it really sounds illogical, but in a process-based one. With the alteration of the logic-and-meaning foundation this statement starts making perfect sense and sounds well-grounded.

One of the ways to express Divine attribute (*ṣifa*) is to use a relevant *maṣdar*, e.g., *‘ilm*, *irāda*, etc. *Maṣdar* in Arabic is a name for the process and/or its fruit. *‘Ilm* refers to the process of cognizing (“knowing”) and to its result (“knowled-

ge”), *irāda* addresses us to the process of willing and to the will which exercises this process. Such being the case, Divine attribute *‘ilm* (“knowing”) is neither God nor something other than God (where “other than God” means the world), because it is a process linking them together: God is “knowing” the world, but this process of “knowing” is neither God nor the world, neither the active nor the passive side, but the link between the two. In this process-based perspective this statement is perfectly grounded, sounds trivial rather than paradoxical and breaks no law of logic.

In the like manner, let us try to interpret another thesis put forward by early Islamic thinkers:

A thing cannot move or be at rest in the state of its emergence (*hudūth*) [Ash‘ari 1980, p. 326].

This was one of the answers to the question whether a body moves or rests at the moment (*hāl*) when it comes into existence. Some advocated the view that it is at rest, some others said that it moves, while others held that it neither rests nor moves. Was this difference of opinions justified by diversity of premises and ways of argumentation, or it resulted out of difference of logic-and-meaning perspectives as well?

I argue that the latter is at least possible. Let us consider the statement “A body moves” (or, which is logically the same, “A body rests”). Interpreting it in a substance-related perspective, we will say that movement (or rest) is a predicate of the body considered as a substance, and as such it follows the law of excluded middle not only in its prohibiting, but in its prescriptive reading as well: the body is either at rest or moving at any given moment. Diverse opinions arguing for rest or movement of the body in the moment it comes into existence fit into this substance-based perspective.

The other way to interpret the same statement (“A body moves”) is to put it into a process-related perspective. In that case, we are dealing not with the substance (“body”) and its predicate (“moving”), but with the process of “movement” *per se*, which requires the two opposite sides: the actor and the recipient. To find those two in the case of movement is more difficult than in the case of writing: here actor (“moving” body) and recipient (“moved” body) appear to be one and the same body. This really being the case, they are separated, though, in time: the moving, i.e., the active side of the movement process, is located in the initial instant of time (atomic moment *waqt*), while the passive side of it, i.e., the body moved, is located in the next instant of time (occupying, of course, a different space). If movement is interpreted this way, then *two* moments of time are absolutely necessary for the process of movement to be established as a link between them.

Moreover, rest (*sukūn*) needs to be interpreted in the same way; I want to say that this meaning is produced through the same mode of the sense-generating procedure. Rest is not a dichotomic partner of movement, in which case a body

would be at rest just by virtue of lacking the predicate of movement. Rest, like movement, is a process linking the two subsequent moments of time with the body's location being the same for both of them.

So, movement and rest are two processes requiring — for the process-based mode of sense-generating procedure to take place — necessarily two subsequent moments of time, and not one. In that case the statement we are dealing with (a body neither rests nor moves in the moment of its coming into existence) simply refers to this logical evidence and is explained by being made in a process-based perspective.

I argue that the cases when the law of excluded middle appears to be broken by this or that thesis of Islamic philosophers may be interpreted in the process-oriented perspective where they regain their logical validity. At the same time, we find in al-Ash'arī's *Maqālāt* a very convincing example of a detailed treatment of the law of excluded middle and its implications. It fits into a substance-related perspective, though, for it deals with body's ability to move and to be at rest simultaneously, with an indication of the possibility to ascribe to it both states at once (with different meanings) or one at a time (but in the same meaning). Analyzing the case of a moving man the skin of whose head moves relative to the surrounding air but rests relative to other parts of his head, al-Ash'arī writes:

It both moves relative to a certain thing ('*an shay'*) and rests on a certain other thing. This statement is not self-contradictory (*lā yatanāqaḍ*) in the same way the statement that this layer is at once adjacent to one [layer] and separated from another is not self-contradictory either. Self-contradictory would be resting on a thing and moving relative to the very same thing at the same time, as self-contradictory would be adjoining a thing and being separate from the same thing at the same time [Ash'ari 1980, pp. 323–324].

1.1.5. Relations of sameness, opposition, unity and plurality as defined by logic-and-meaning configuration

Let us now consider the understanding of unity in its relation to plurality for the process-based mode of the logic-and-meaning configuration. The first-level sense expresses the unity of the opposed pair of second-level senses. The first-level sense is the domain where the two second-level senses become one, in the same way as a process expresses the unity of the actor and the recipient.

This unity places its plurality outside itself, rather than incorporating it within. In a manner of speaking, a first-level sense is, as such, “empty” within—or, to be exact, is unconditionally and perfectly *simple*: it is devoid of any inner plurality whatsoever. The explicated plurality of this unity resides *outside* it, being, as we said, *established*, or *fixed* by it. “To establish,” or “to fix” (*ṭhubūt*) means, among other things, to place the plurality beyond the confines of the unity, while this unity remains as such (as long as we do not consider the plurality it estab-

lishes outside itself) perfectly simple: it cannot be developed or explicated “from within,” by disclosing its inner latent complexity.

1.1.6. Cognition and its verbal expression backed by logic of sense

While analyzing the process of verbalization and conceptualization of logic-and-meaning configuration, I will restrict myself to the three above-mentioned components: copula (and, ergo, of the way of predication), opposition and unity in its relation to plurality. These three constituents are directly interrelated, so that any attempt to lay bare one of them entails discussing the remaining two.

On the other hand, the opposite is true as well: basic verbalization and conceptualization of a logic-and-meaning configuration boils down just to this. In other words, it is these categories that are both necessary and sufficient for describing a logic-and-meaning configuration; besides, such description exhausts the possibilities of sense generation it contains, thereby laying the basis for further sense formation.

This description is thus a step from logic-and-meaning configuration to our verbalized sense producing activity. It seems as if verbalized cogitation (worded thoughts) were but a development, a fuller unfolding of the possibilities already inherent in a logic-and-meaning configuration.¹¹ Verbalized thought is, in a very real sense, backed by logic of sense.

Another aspect is also worthy of note. I have specified the manner in which the understanding of opposition, of unity and plurality, and of the copula (which is related to the way of predication) is defined by a logic-and-meaning configuration. Proceeding from the *intuition* of the mode of sense configuration, we arrived at the understanding of all these categories. It seems to be the case that the basic intuition of the way in which senses get configured in a substance-based or process-based mode of the logic-and-meaning configuration also defines the understanding of these categories that are nothing but verbalization and conceptualization of such intuitions.

It means that the way we think is—at least partially—determined by the logic of sense we follow, i.e., by the logic-and-meaning perspective in which our sense-generating activity develops itself. We spoke of the two such perspectives, substance-based and process-based. Both are inherent to human consciousness, but they are as such incompatible. We may see the universe as a collection of substances or as a collection of processes: both ways are possible, but they are basically different. There are perhaps other logic-and-meaning perspectives besides those two. I think that human universality amounts to all those perspectives being equally possible. Yet we cannot realize and implement all of them at once:

¹¹ This work discusses a logic-and-meaning configuration as an individual entity. Our cogitation, naturally, does not boil down to this basic instance of sense generation; rather, it runs through complex logic-and-meaning constructions emerging as conjoinings of logic-and-meaning configurations. This matter should become the focus of future work.

we have to choose. Cultures differ in many ways, and one of them may be the logic-and-meaning perspective which becomes predominant in the sense-generating activity.

1.2. The copula: a general inquiry

Let us get back to the thesis we started to analyze earlier. We have noted that, for the author quoted by al-Ash‘arī, things are *fixed* as things, which means that things coincide with themselves thanks to their “fixedness” (*thubūt*). We said that the copula in this phrase is expressed via fixedness and that—in its capacity of the copula—fixedness differs from being.

Now, it would not be amiss to wonder if this idea is applicable to cases other than that of the above-discussed phrase. Does Arabic language really tend to link the subject to the predicate via “fixedness” rather than via “being”? And, if so, what could this possibly mean? To answer that question, we are about to launch a brief excursus into the domain of Arabic linguistics.

1.2.1. The copula in Arabic grammar

Theoretical analysis of Arabic started with the famous *Book (Kitāb)* of Sībawayhi (d.c. 796) and developed through the chain of original works and commentaries which left ample room for elaborating, emending or disputing predecessors’ views. However, despite the debate between its individual representatives and even entire schools, the domain of this science remained a single whole in that it preserved the foundations laid by its originators: the edifice reared above was being modified and elaborated, but the basis itself remained essentially intact.

Let me address Ibn Hishām’s (1310-1360) reasoning in order to highlight the approach of Arabic grammarians to the copula issue. In his *Mughnī al-labīb ‘an kutub al-a‘arīb*, Ibn Hishām addresses ideas expounded in the *al-Mufaṣṣal* by al-Zamakhsharī (1075–1144). I will first set forth Ibn Hishām’s views in my own words, supplying afterwards the corresponding quotation from his text in its entirety, so as to enable the reader to judge the validity of my interpretation.

Ibn Hishām considers the copula in the context of his analysis of the typology of a sentence (*jumla*). This typology, as developed by Arabic grammarians, is also of interest, and I am going to address it somewhat later. For the time being, let us focus on the issue of the copula as such.

Ibn Hishām analyzes the sentence (في الدار زيد) *fī al-dār Zayd*: “Zayd in the house”) adduced by al-Zamakhsharī as an example. As we can see, the copula is not expressed in this phrase explicitly, and the Arabic grammatical theory makes the same observation. The question is, what this fact entails.

From our standpoint, it would look quite natural that the omitted copula is to be restored via the verb “to be.” This would be done by the transformation:

“Zayd in the house” \Rightarrow “Zayd *is* in the house.” According to this view, it is the verb “to be” that functions as a universal expression of the copula, regardless of whether the grammar of any concrete language requires to show it explicitly or allows to omit it.

To proceed, we normally assume that ascribing a being to anything whatever is the first thing necessary to make it enter the field of our vision and become the matter of our discussion. How to handle this being, what is the correlation between being and existence, being and non-being, and other metaphysical questions could be addressed only after we acknowledge this fundamental role of “to be.”

Let us compare these seemingly trite statements with what Arabic grammarians, in the person of the above-mentioned authors, impart to us.

Al-Zamakhsharī, and Ibn Hishām who comments on his views, find what they describe as the “omitted stability” (*istiqrār maḥdhūf*) in the analyzed sentence (“Zayd in the house”). Despite being omitted, this “stability” is still an indispensable part of the phrase and can therefore be restored. In this capacity—i.e., as an essential part with an implied possibility of reinstatement—it is called the “implied stability” (*istiqrār muqaddar*). I translate the term *istiqrār* as “stability” to distinguish it nominally from “fixedness” which I used to translate the term *thubūt*. On the other hand, it is hard to refrain from at least assuming that “fixedness” and “stability” belong to the same string of ideas.

Irrespective of how matters stand with equating *istiqrār* with *thubūt* (“stability” with “fixedness”), there is a fact that cannot escape one’s notice: viz., that it is not “being” that is considered as implied and restored in this case. It is something else. In view of the crucial nature of this statement, we of course need an extra proof, other than the verbal one (the linguistic closeness of the terms “fixedness” and “stability”)—a proof that would corroborate the above hypothesis in a most decided manner.

Such a proof lies, in my opinion, in the following. The “omitted stability,” as our authors write, is capable of being restored as both a verb and a noun; either has the same root as the term “stability” (*istiqrār*) itself. In the former instance, we get *istaqarra* “he obtained stability”; in the latter, *mustaqirra* “stable, immovable” [Ibn Hishām, pp. 492, 498].

To be on the safe side, let us not precipitate into equating the restoration of “stability” with that of the copula: the question of whether it is indeed the copula that gets restored in that way remains so far open. Still, what was stated above clearly attests to the following. The very manner of restoring “stability” is such as to *preclude* a possibility of interpreting it as an indication to the copula derived from “to be.” This is easily provable by *argumentum ex contrario*.

Let us attempt to construe the phrase in question as though our authors really implied, perhaps not explicitly, the copula “to be.” After considering the original sentence, “Zayd in the house,” with the “restored stability” in its two versions,

we will observe that the copula is not restored in either of them—that is, if we expected its reinstatement in the form of “being.”

Indeed, the sentence *Zayd mustaqirr fī al-dār* “Zayd stable in the house” still lacks the copula “to be.” From this standpoint, there is no difference whatever between “Zayd in the house” and “Zayd stable in the house”: if we restore the copula “to be” in the former sentence, we are going to restore it, in exactly the same way, in the latter, which will result, respectively, in “Zayd *is* in the house” and “Zayd *is* stable in the house.” The latter phrase will differ from the former only in the addition of another accidental attribute (the quality “stable”) to the attribute already mentioned in it (the location “in the house”).

From the perspective in which “being” appears as a universal and basic (which are merely two ways of expressing the same thing) form of connecting senses, the quality *mustaqirr* (“stable”) cannot lay claim to the copula’s role because, in addition to other limitations, it is numbered among the ten Aristotelian categories instead of standing in equal relation to all of them. The same applies to the restoration of the copula through the verb “to obtain stability”: *istaqarra fī al-dār Zayd* “Zayd obtained stability in the house” does not, in fact, reinstate the copula “to be,” since it suggests a possibility of translation into the copula-restoring “Zayd *is* [the one who] obtained stability in the house.”

We can securely postulate the following. That which is omitted and restored, rendering the sentence’s structure incomplete or reinstating its completeness, is regarded by our authors as “stability” (*istiqrār*), not as one of the possible variants of the verbs “to be” (*yakūn*, *yūjad*) or derivatives thereof. This conclusion perfectly agrees with the observation that was made during our analysis of al-Khayyāt’s thesis regarding the “fixedness of things as things prior to their existence”: “fixedness”—as the expression of a thing’s identity with itself (i.e., as the purest and most fundamental function of copula)—is not “being.” We can assume that the “stability” which al-Zamakhsharī and Ibn Hishām discuss has something to do with that correlation between senses which is expressed as “fixedness” in the above-analyzed statement of al-Khayyāt.

However, the question remains: does this “stability” *equal* the copula, does it really express the copula?

In the above instance, “stability” is restored in both nominal and verbal form. This is no accident: such, according to Arabic grammar, are the two types of sentences irreducible to each other. (Although certain authors tended to enlarge the list of such sentence types, our pair represents its basic minimum.) “Zayd in the house” is, from the standpoint of Arabic grammar, an incomplete sentence. This means that it does not constitute a *single* sentence. “Zayd in the house” are *two* sentences¹²

¹² *Fī al-dār Zayd*: “Zayd in the house” is an ellipse which corresponds, firstly, to nominal sentence *Zayd mustaqirr fī al-dār* “Zayd [is] stable in the house” (there is no [is] copula an Arabic sentence, as we remember), and, secondly, to verbal sentence *istaqarra fī al-dār Zayd* “Zayd obtained stability in the house.”

irreducible to one another—they accidentally dovetail in their truncated form, but diverge in their complete (*muqaddar* “restored”) one.

Consequently, the “stability,” which our authors speak of as omitted in the sentence “Zayd in the house” and as restored in two forms (nominal and verbal), is not the copula as such; it is the necessary structural element of the sentence that transforms it into one of the two possible, and mutually irreducible, sentence types.

The fact that our authors select “stability”—rather than a form of another noun/verb conveying the meaning of “being”—as the omitted/restored element of the phrase is just another, by no means decisive, argument in favor of contrasting the grounds of this reasoning with the notion of the copula as “to be.” The omitted/restored copula should not express anything really unexpected, anything that cannot be omitted without impacting the general meaning of a sentence. If I am right, then—from the outlook of the mode of sense-generating activity we are discussing—“stability,” which is so close to “fixedness,” fills the requirements of a minimum content (and, vice versa, of a maximum abstractness, remoteness from any concrete content) far better than a noun or a verb expressing the idea of being (e.g., “existent” or “exists”). This completely agrees with the observation that “fixedness” expresses, in classical Arabic discourse, such a way of presenting a thing which is maximally devoid of any concrete content whatsoever.

We may now formalize the contrast between the views expounded above and those that proceed from the understanding of the copula as “to be.” In the latter perspective “Zayd in the house” is regarded as a basically *single* sentence; and—no matter how the rest of its supposedly omitted elements are restored—all restored versions would inevitably be reduced to a common denominator: “Zayd *is* in the house” (or: “*There is* Zayd in the house,” etc.).

However, according to Arabic grammar, “Zayd in the house” represents *two* mutually irreducible phrase types. This conclusion is insupportable if the copula is conceived of as “to be.” The crux of the matter does not lie in the nominal distinctions between “to be” and its possible Arabic translations, on the one hand, and “fixedness,” on the other. It inheres in the logic of reasoning itself: the two sentence types cannot be understood as mutually irreducible if the copula is interpreted as “to be.”

Nevertheless, such irreducibility persistently recurs in Arabic grammatical theories. In anticipation of what lies ahead, I would like to point out that the thesis about the independence of the two sentence types is ingrained in Arabic grammatical theory on account of its expressing the two types of sense generation through *isnād* (“supporting”)—a procedure that will be analyzed in detail below.¹³

¹³ See Chapter II, § 1.3.1. *Is the nominal form of the copula accidental in Arabic?*, in particular, § 1.3.1.1. *An interpretation of the copula huwa “he,” and laysa [huwa] “not-he,” as expressing the idea of “being,”* and further; for the ontological implications of these issues, see p. 274 (those sections remain yet unpublished in English, reference is to the Russian edition).

I now adduce the promised quotation from Ibn Hishām's text on sentence types in its entirety, so that the reader is able to gauge in a more complete context the validity of the interpretation offered here.

*Division of sentences into nominal,
verbal and circumstantial*

The nominal (*ismiyya*) [sentence] is one that opens with a noun, e.g., قام زيد *Zayd qā'im* "Zayd [is]¹⁴ standing," هيئات العقيق *hayhāt al-'aqīq*, "That-one¹⁵ [is] chalcedony," قائم الزيدان *qā'im al-Zaydān* "The two Zayds [are] standing" for those who think such [a sentence] acceptable—and those are al-'Akhfash and the Kufians.

The verbal (*fi'liyya*) [sentence] is one that opens with a verb, e.g., قام زيد *qāma Zayd* "Zayd stood up," ضرب اللص *ḍuriba al-liṣṣ* "The robber was beaten," كان زيد قائما *kāna Zayd qā'iman* "Zayd was standing," ظننته قائما *ẓanantu-hu qā'iman* "I supposed him standing," يقوم زيد *yaqūm Zayd* "Zayd stands," قم *qum* "Stand up!" [Ibn Hisham 1979, p. 492].

Let me interrupt the quotation here to make an observation regarding one of the sentences used by Ibn Hishām: كان زيد قائما *kāna Zayd qā'iman* "Zayd was standing." The sentence employs the verb *kāna*—"to be" in the past tense. Using it in the present tense—يكون زيد قائما *yakūn Zayd qā'iman* "Zayd is standing"—makes no difference whatever (strictly speaking, a *really* literal translation requires placing "was" or "is" before "Zayd," but that would be a highly non-standard usage of English). In that case, the latter sentence would have been directly comparable with the above-mentioned one, in the "nominal sentences" section, viz. قائم زيد *Zayd qā'im* "Zayd [is]¹⁶ standing," differing from it only in containing يكون *yakūn* "is." If the "is" in question were a mere omitted/restored copula, then the sentence where it was omitted and the sentence where it was restored would be doubtless assigned by Arabic grammatical theory to the same class of sentences. Moreover, they would be treated as *one and the same* sentence, as follows from the numerous instances of the use of the *taqdīr* ("restoration of the omitted") device in Arabic linguistics, whereas the very fact of this omitting/restoring (i.e., *taqdīr*) would be unfailingly pointed out by the theory. The absence of any such indication demonstrates that the two sentences under discussion were by no means construed as having an omitted/restored copula, which serves as another proof of my thesis: the verb "to be" was not seen by Arabic grammar as an expression of the copula.

We may now proceed with our quotation.

¹⁴ Once again, as in note 4 above, I ask the reader to imagine that there is *no* copula [is] in this and next English sentences: this exactly is the case with Arabic expressions.

¹⁵ *Hayhāt* "that-one" is a noun, according to Arabic grammar.

¹⁶ No copula [is] in this and next English sentences again.

The circumstantial (*zarfiyya*) [sentence] is one that opens with a circumstantial qualifier (*zarf*) or with a drawn [noun] (*majrūr*),¹⁷ e.g., زيد عندك *'a-'inda-ka Zayd*, “With you Zayd?” and زيد في الدار *'a-fi al-dār Zayd* “In the house Zayd?”, if we assume that زيد *Zayd* “Zayd” governs the circumstantial qualifier, the drawer (*jārr*) and the drawn, but not the omitted stability (*istiqrār maḥdhūf*) and is not the beginning [of the sentence] (*mubtada'*) whose predicate [is formed by] those two (i.e., the circumstantial qualifier and the *jārr–majrūr* pair.—*A. S.*). As an instance of this, al-Zamakhsharī cited في الدار *fi al-dār* “in the house” from زيد في الدار *fi al-dār Zayd* “Zayd in the house,” on the basis that the restored stability (*istiqrār muqaddar*) is a verb, not a noun, and that it alone was omitted, while the pronoun transferred into the circumstantial qualifier, governing it.

Al-Zamakhsharī and others added to this the conditional clause (*jumla sharṭiyya*). It would be correct, though, to assign it to the verbal sentences, as it will be demonstrated.

Reminder (*tanbīh*): By the “opening of a sentence” (*ṣadr al-jumla*) we mean that which is supported (*musnad*) or that which supports (*musnad ilayhi*),¹⁸ so that nothing will change should any particles (*ḥarf*)¹⁹ precede them. Therefore sentences like أفانم الزيدان *'a-qā'im al-Zaydān* “[Are] the two Zayds standing?”, لعل أباك *'a-Zayd 'akhū-ka*, “[Is] Zayd your brother?”, ما زيد قائم *la'alla 'abā-ka munṭaliq* “Your father must have departed,” ما زيد قائم *mā Zayd qā'iman* “Zayd [is] not standing” are nominal, while sentences like

¹⁷ I.e., a genitival noun. In this translation, I purposely preserve the Arabic terminology literatim as much as possible. I do so partly because the terms' etymology—which could be properly rendered only in such literal translation—was never entirely ousted and became part and parcel of their meaning; and, quite often, the reasoning of Arab philologists appears somewhat vague without taking into account this immediate, sense-fraught literal heritage.

¹⁸ I.e., a noun or a verb in the former case (*musnad*) and a noun in the latter (*musnad ilayhi*). Here, as above, I intentionally stick to translating the terms literally to highlight the meaning which Arabic grammar imbued them with. The “sense” of a sentence (*fā'ida*) forms only if its message (“that which is supported”: a verb or a noun unknown to the listener) is “supported” by a noun which the listener knows and which, by virtue of being known, serves as a “support.”

¹⁹ *Ḥarf* is one of the basic concepts of Arabic grammar. The assumption that the term is related to the Greek word *horos*, which occurs in Aristotelian logic and means “border,” might explain the term's etymology (Arabic grammars associate *ḥarf* with *ḥadd*, “border”), but it can be poorly correlated with the meaning it acquired in Arabic grammar. On the one hand, *ḥarf* refers to a consonant, though treated jointly with the vowel that accompanies it (*ḥaraka*, lit. “movement”: due to being vocalized, one *ḥarf* moves in the direction of another that is next to it), or, when the vowel is absent, jointly with the “null” found in its stead (*sukūn*, lit. “peace, quiet”). Another meaning of the term is close to the notion of particle. The division of all words into nouns, verbs, and *ḥurūf* (pl. of *ḥarf*) was established already in Sibawayhi's work: nouns point to meaning within themselves; verbs, in addition, point to time; *ḥarfs* point to meanings outside themselves. As they do not point to any meaning independently, particles do not count when it comes to classifying sentences.

زيد أقام زيد *'a-qāma Zayd* “Did Zayd stand up?”, إن قام زيد *'in qāma Zayd* “Should Zayd stand up,” زيد قد قام *qad qāma Zayd* “Zayd has already risen,” هلا قمت *hallā qumta* “Have you not risen?” are verbal.

To proceed, we consider that with which [a sentence] opens basically (*fī al-'aṣl*),²⁰ so that sentences like كيف جاء زيد *kayfa jā'a Zayd* “How did Zayd come?”, as well as تأتي آيات الله تنكرون *fa-'ayy 'āyāt 'Allāh tunkirūn*, “[Then] which of the signs of Allah will ye deny?”,²¹ ففريقا كذبتم وفريقا تقتلون *fa-farīqan kaḏhabtum wa farīqan taqtulūn*, “Some ye called impostors, and others ye slay!”²² خشعا ابصارهم يخرجون *khushsha'an 'abṣāru-hum yakhrujūn* “They will come forth, — their eyes humbled,”²³ are verbal, because there was an intention²⁴ to place these nouns after [the verbs]. In exactly the same way, [verbal] are sentences like يا عبد الله *yā 'Abd 'Allāh* “O Abdallah!”, وإن احد من المشركين استجارك *wa-'in 'aḥad min al-mushrikīn istajāra-ka* “If one among the Pagans ask thee for asylum,”²⁵ والانعام خلقها *wa al-an'ām khalaqa-hā* “And cattle He has created,”²⁶ والليل اذا يغشى *wa al-layl 'idhā yaghshā*, “By the Night as it conceals (the light),”²⁷ since basically (*'aṣl*) they open with verbs, and [that basis] is restored (*taqdīr*) as follows: ادعوا زيدا *ad'ū Zaydan* “I summon up Zayd,”²⁸ إن استجارك احد *'in istajāra-ka 'aḥad*, “If ask thee for asylum one,” خلق الانعام *khalaqa al-an'ām*, “He has created cattle,” اقسم والليل *uqsim wa al-layl*, “I swear by the Night” [Ibn Hisham 1979, pp. 492–493].²⁹

²⁰ The terms “basis,” “basic” (*'aṣl*, *'aṣlī*) in Arabic grammar refer to primal, original or immutable, rather than to prevailing or general theses. Below, there follow sentences derived, via acceptable transformations, from such a basic, original state.

²¹ Qur'ān 40:81 (transl. Abdalla Yousuf Ali).

²² Qur'ān 2:87 (transl. Abdalla Yousuf Ali).

²³ Qur'ān 54:7 (transl. Abdalla Yousuf Ali).

²⁴ The idea of the importance of “intention” (*niyya*) was also typical of the *fiqh* where, by virtue of the indissoluble conjunction between intention and action, a deed that remained undone owing to some insuperable obstacles could still be deemed performed if there had been an actual intention to commit it. Here we are dealing with a manifestation of the same tendency: the actual import of a sentence is not the one displayed in its actual grammatical structure, but the one determined by the intent of the speaker or writer.

²⁵ Qur'ān 9:6 (transl. Abdalla Yousuf Ali).

²⁶ Qur'ān 16:5 (transl. Abdalla Yousuf Ali).

²⁷ Qur'ān 92:1 (transl. Abdalla Yousuf Ali).

²⁸ The restored basic form (*'aṣl*) of this sentence should perhaps sound “I summon up Abdallah” to correspond to the initial one *yā 'Abd 'Allāh* “O Abdallah!”

²⁹ Why such a lengthy quotation? The basic purpose is to show in what detail the celebrated Ibn Hishām discusses grammatical issues, what subtleties he brings to light, so that it is absolutely unlikely that, given such an intense attention to details, that this renowned systematizer of syntax overlooked the basic possibility of restoring the copula with the help of the verb “to be.”

1.2.2. The copula in Falsafa and Ishrāqī philosophy

Grammarians, whose views we discussed above, do not use the term “copula” (*rābiṭa*) as such. Other Arabic grammarians use *rābiṭa* and (more often) *rābiṭ* to denote any syntactic “connection,” including that between *mubtada*’ (nominal subject) and its *ḵhabar* (its nominal predicate); they state, as a rule, that no “connection” is needed in that case, meaning a verbally explicit kind of “connection,” i.e., *lafẓ* “expression.”³⁰

Let us now have a look at the texts of Falāsifa who expounded Aristotle’s logic. Their views are much closer to those of Arabic grammarians than it is usually admitted by researchers. That is what Ibn Sīnā writes:

You should know that each categorial proposition (*qadiyya ḥamliyya*) is expected (*ḥaqqu-hu*) to have, in addition to the meanings of the predicate (*maḥmūl*) and the subject (*mawḍūʿ*), a meaning of the combination of them, which is the third after those two. If we wish all meanings to have a corresponding number of expressions, then this third [meaning] has to have an expression that would demonstrate it. In certain languages, it is omitted—like it is, basically (*ʿaṣlan*), in Arabic. Thus, we say, زيد كاتب *Zayd kātib* “Zayd a scribe,”³¹ whereas it would be proper (*ḥaqqu-hu*) to say, زيد هو كاتب *Zayd huwa kātib* “Zayd he a scribe.” And in some languages, it cannot be omitted, as is the case in Persian with *ast* in the expression زيد دبیر است *Zayd dabīr ast*, “Zayd is a scribe.” This expression (*lafẓa*) is called the “copula” (*rābiṭa*) [Ibn Sina 1960, pp. 285–286].

Before getting down to the quotation, let me observe that Ibn Sīnā employs here the concepts of the *dalāla ʿalā al-maʿnā* “demonstration of the meaning” theory widely adopted by Arabic grammarians and philosophers. According to that theory, a “word” (*kalima*) is a unity of “expression” (*lafẓ*) and “meaning” (*maʿnā*), by virtue of which the former “demonstrates” (*dalāla*) the latter. *Lafẓ* and *maʿnā*, expression and meaning, are conceived as a *zāhir-bāṭin*-pair, while *dalāla* is a process of “demonstration” of the latter by the former. The “word” (*kalima*) amounts to this process-established link between its two sides, *lafẓ*

³⁰ E.g., al-Suyūṭī writes:

As long as the message (*ḵhabar* = predicate) is connected to the beginning (*mubtada*’ = subject) like the characterizing is connected to the characterized, they do not need any particle to connect them (*ḥarf rābiṭ bayna-humā*), just like an act (*fiʿl* = verb) and an actor (*fāʿil* = agent) do not need it [Suyutī v. 1 p. 403].

³¹ In this English sentence, the copula is missing and, therefore, it is not a phrase (it does not make sense). We should say “Zayd *is* a scribe” to comply with English grammar. In Arabic, *Zayd kātib* “Zayd a scribe” is a perfect sense-making and grammatically correct phrase. If the copula needs to be restored in Arabic, it is restored as *huwa* “he,” and the question is whether we can equate Arabic *huwa* and English *is*, regarding them one and the same copula. Therefore I give word-by-word translation to pinpoint this problem.

“expression” and *ma‘nā* “meaning.” This understanding of a word cannot be reinterpreted in a semiotic perspective, as a “signification,” i.e., as a relation of a sign (*‘alam*) to the signified, because in that case *no* regularities peculiar to process-oriented understanding of a word and defined by the process-based mode of a logic-and-meaning configuration stay true.³² This cluster of notions, word (*kalima*), expression (*lafz*) and meaning (*ma‘nā*), is another exemplification of the logic-and-meaning configuration in its process-oriented mode, and relations between those notions are defined by logic-and-meaning regularities I described above.

Let us get back to the quotation. I will leave aside what Ibn Sīnā tells us about the Persian language, since, in this case, we are interested in Arabic. In the just cited passage, we notice the very same thing we have already noticed above, in our discussion of al-Zamaḵsharī’s and Ibn Hishām’s views: the way Ibn Sīnā restores the copula *by no means* restores it for the mode of thinking associating the copula with “to be.” “Zayd he [is] a scribe” still requires the unbracketing of “is” (= the copula, in this case) to become the full-fledged “Zayd he *is* a scribe.”

Furthermore, the examples adduced by Ibn Sīnā highlight the fact that copula *is not* restored as the verb “to be” even more glaringly than the excerpt from the Arabic philological work we analyzed earlier. This is the case because, firstly, he cites a Persian example in which he directly uses the copula “to be” side by side with the Arabic one, which means that the use of something other than the verb “to be” in the Arabic sentence illustrating the same thesis as the Persian sentence must have some justification: such lack of symmetry between the examples cannot be accidental. This is the case because, secondly, Ibn Sīnā no longer uses a verb or a *nomen agendis* derived therefrom, as the grammarians before him did. Instead, he uses the pronoun *huwa* “he,”³³ a usage that completely rules out a possibility to reinterpret the copula so restored as a derivative of “to be.”

Let us imagine that the copula in the sentence *Zayd kātib* “Zayd a scribe” could be restored by means of one of the two Arabic verbs that are supposedly equivalent to the verb “to be”: *yakūn* and *yūjad*. We would have then *yakūn Zayd kātiban* and *yūjad Zayd kātiban*. Such insertion of “to be” verbs is allowed by Arabic grammar; the above sentences would be neither incorrect nor absolutely unnatural for the Arabic language. However, the entire point is that, as a result, we would in either case get a sentence that is *not equivalent* to the original one (*Zayd kātib*). In other words, it is allowable to say “Zayd *is* a scribe” in Arabic—

³² I will discuss this issue later, in Chapter II, § 1.4.3.3. “*Huwiyya* ‘he-ness’ and *wujūd* ‘existence.’”

³³ It is important that, according to Arabic grammar, the word “he” is a “noun” (*‘ism*, lit. “name”). By understanding *huwa* as the copula we completely divest it of the attributes of a verb, which are still present in *istaqarra* “he obtained stability,” and *mustaqirr* “stable” (in the latter case, these attributes are rather vague, since *nomen agendis* lacks the main attribute of the verb—tense). Ergo, in the case of *huwa* “he,” Arabic language entirely diverges from the verbal nature of the copula, which is so prominent in the “to be” copula.

such a phrase would not be ungrammatical, it would only belong to a different sentence type than the original “Zayd a scribe.”

The discussed substitution (*Zayd k̄atib* ⇒ *yakūn Zayd k̄atiban*) results in a change of the sentence’s structure: the word *k̄atib* receives the accusative (*naṣb*) instead of the nominative (*rafʿ*) case, and the entire sentence becomes verbal instead of nominal, with *Zayd* performing in the verbal sentence a function different from that which it performed in the nominal one. Employing the idea of “grammatical category,” we might say that, as a result of the above transformation, the lexical meanings of the sentence’s units would remain the same, whereas their grammatical categories would change. However, restoration of the copula *by no means* implies such a change: omission of the copula in those languages where it is optional produces no essential change in the sentence structure.

That the use of the word *huwa* “he” by Ibn Sīnā was no accident will become more evident somewhat later, during our acquaintance with analogous views expressed by different schools of Arabic philosophy. For the time being, it would suffice to state that, in this case as well, the copula in the form in which it is restored in Arabic (not only in language and grammar proper, but also in the exposition of the basics of Aristotelian logic) is radically different from the copula expressed via the verb “to be.”

Al-Suhrawardī’s *Hikmat al-Ishrāq* (“The Wisdom of Illumination”) presents a parallel with the above Avicennian statement:

Know that each categorical proposition ought (*min haqqi-hā*) to have a subject, a predicate and a relation (*nisba*) between them, which might be acknowledged as either true or false. It is owing to this relation that a proposition is a proposition. The expression demonstrating this relation is called the “copula” (*rābiʿa*). In certain languages, it may be omitted, and some other figure (*hayʿa*) substituted for it informing us of that relation, as, for instance, in Arabic: زيد كاتب *Zayd k̄atib* “Zayd a scribe”; it may also be mentioned, for instance, زيد هو كاتب *Zayd huwa k̄atib* “Zayd he a scribe” [Suhrawardi 1952, pp. 25–26].³⁴

³⁴ J. Walbridge and H. Ziai translate this paragraph as following:

Know that every categorical proposition must have a subject and a predicate and that the relation between them is assent or denial. It is only by virtue of their relation that a proposition is a proposition. The word that indicates this relation is called the “copula.” It may be omitted in some languages and something else that indicates the relation be substituted for it—as in Arabic, where one can say either, “Zayd literate,” or, “Zayd he literate.” [Walbridge, Ziai 1999, p. 15].

I admit that this translation is better than mine in every respect except the accuracy in what regards the copula issue. The Arabic text says:

اللفظة الدالة على تلك النسبة تسمى "الرابعة" وقد تحفظ في بعض اللغات ويورد بدلها هيئة ما مشعرة بالنسبة كما يقال في العربية "زيد كاتب" وقد تورّد كما قيل "زيد هو كاتب"

The Arabic phrase is unambiguous: the copula **may be omitted**, when a specific figure stands for it, e.g., "زيد هو كاتب" *Zayd huwa k̄atib*, or it **may be mentioned**, as in "زيد كاتب" *Zayd k̄atib*,

This text virtually repeats the theses of the Avicennian *Al-Ishārāt wa al-tanbīhāt* (“Book of Directives and Remarks”), which spares us the trouble of analyzing it in detail. On the other hand, the persistence of this thesis regarding the copula in Arabic—which stands in such a *stark contrast* with our “natural” expectations—cannot fail to make us think about the reasons behind it. Speaking of persistence, let me point out that al-Suhrawardī repeats Ibn Sīna’s words not just because he regards the latter as his spiritual guide (one can easily quote instances of striking divergences in their texts), which means that, in this respect, their common vision lies deeper than their agreement or disagreement on certain content-related theses and has, perhaps, logical nature.

1.3. The copula in Arabic and its irreducible difference from “to be”

Speaking about the copula in Arabic grammar and philosophy, I underscored its nominal character, and presented—as an argument for the naturalness of its restoration as *huwa* “he” (or *laysa huwa* “not-he”), rather than as a form of the verbs *yūjad* and *yakūn* supposedly analogous to the “to be”-based copula—the idea that, if one tried to preserve in an Arabic sentence a likeness of our habitual “to be” copula and insert the verb “to be” or its derivatives,³⁵ then the resultant Arabic sentence would inevitably change its form, transforming from the nominal into the verb one.

Thus, if the classical example with the omitted copula, “Zayd a scribe,” becomes restored with the *huwa*-copula (“he”), the resultant sentence will be *Zayd huwa kātib* “Zayd he a scribe”: the form of the sentence did not change—a nominal sentence with the omitted copula became a likewise nominal sentence with

huwa kātib (words in bold correspond to the bold Arabic expressions). Al-Suhrawardī is absolutely clear on the topic: the Arabic copula, when mentioned, is mentioned as *huwa* “he.” But the translation gives a distorted impression that “he” is “something else that indicates” the copula, as if a copula was not “he” and was not mentioned by al-Suhrawardī at all in those two examples!

I think this is not by chance, because a note to this paragraph says:

In the simplest sentences, Arabic omits the verb “to be” and sometimes uses a pronoun to mark the division between the subject and predicate [Walbridge, Ziai 1999, p. 173, note 15].

This is surprisingly different from what al-Suhrawardī himself says: *Shaykh al-Ishrāq* provides a *general* statement, not an observation about *simplest* sentences; pronoun “huwa” is clearly denoted by him as a *copula*, not as a *division between*, the subject and the predicate. The verb “to be” is not mentioned by al-Suhrawardī *at all*; so what is this note about? Its only message is to confirm, in total contradiction with al-Suhrawardī’s explicit statement (which agrees, as we have seen, with that of Ibn Sīnā), that the “to be” copula is universal, whereas some languages, like Arabic, might deviate from this universality in some minor and unimportant respects. To agree with that, we need to close our eyes to al-Suhrawardī’s text.

English translation of the next paragraph of *Hikmat al-ishrāq* ({18}, 17–24) renders Arabic *huwa* once as “he” and calls it “copula,” and once as “is.” The Arabic original leaves no doubt again that the Arabic copula is *huwa* “he”; “to be” or its derivatives *are not mentioned* at all.

³⁵ This was done in Arabic translations of Greek texts and is done by contemporary authors who discuss the question of copula in Arabic.

the restored one. However, if we tried to restore the copula as “to be,” we would get *yakūn* (*yūjad*) *Zayd kātiban* (lit. “is/is found Zayd a scribe”: for all its unwieldiness, a verbatim translation gives an idea of the Arabic sentence’s structure), and that is a verb sentence, not a nominal one.

However, Arabic grammar persistently maintains that those are two *different* and, more importantly, mutually *irreducible* sentence types. The transition from one classificatory category to another thus cannot be the result of the copula restoration, which is not expected to produce fundamental changes in sentences: adding “to be”-type verbs (*yakūn* and *yūjad*) to an Arabic sentence introduces a change far more substantial than the proponents of restoring the copula as “to be” would like to admit.³⁶

Moreover, *kātiban* (“a scribe” in accusative) is, from the standpoint of Arabic grammar, a superfluous element in the sentence which was obtained by trying to restore the copula as the verb “to be,” because speech will be “tied up” and the new sentence will be “intelligible”³⁷ without it, Arabic grammarians tell us, whereas, in the original sentence, that word was necessary and the sentence could not be formed without it. This change in the role of the word *kātib* “scribe” is addi-

³⁶ For example, F. Shehadi, though treating the question in detail and mentioning Arabic linguistic theory at the start of his study, completely disregards those effects when speaking about usage of *yakūn* and *yūjad* as a copula [see Shehadi 1975].

³⁷ I am considering this in the light of the normative theses of Arabic linguistics about the “tying up” (*in ‘iqād*) of speech which happens due to the presence of a “sense-imparting” (*mufida*) sentence whose function, in our instance, will be fulfilled by the “verb + noun” construction, i.e., *yakūn* (*yūjad*) *Zayd*, “There is Zayd,” whereas *kātiban* (“scribe” in accusative) would be routinely classed as one of the *zawā’id* “addings,” or *faḍalāt* “extras, excesses”—surplus words, admissible but not essential for the intelligibility of a phrase. Thus, Ibn Yaʿīsh writes:

Know that, since the recipient (*mafʿūl*) is an excess (*faḍla*), the sentence can do without it, and the action and the agent become tied together into speech without the recipient, therefore it is permissible to omit and not to mention said recipient, even though the action demands (*yaqtaḍī*) it [Ibn Yaʿīsh 1938, v. 2, p. 39].

Ibn Yaʿīsh speaks about *mafʿūl* “recipient” of an action, while in our case *kātiban* is *fāʿil* “actor”, but this is not important here. The point is that the “basis” (*ʿaṣl*) of the verbal sentence is a verb+noun (action and actor) structure. It consists of two elements: *musnad* “supported” and *musnad ilay-hi* “support,” so that the process of *isnād* “supporting” runs between those two and produces the meaning of a sentence. Since the verbal sentence in its basic verb+noun structure is already “helpful” *mufida* in transmitting meaning, e.g., it makes sense, any other element of the sentence is considered *faḍla* an “excess,” because it is inessential for the fact of “tying up” (*in ‘iqād*) of the speech. Let me note that this reasoning fits perfectly in the process-based perspective, since the meaning of a sentence is considered as a process, not as a substance, so what matters are the prerequisites of a process: the agent and the patient, the support and the supported, and not the attributes of a substance.

Since the question of which sentence makes sense and which does not and of how to tell one from the other in terms of theory and terminology is a pivotal question of Arabic grammatical theory, transition of a sentence into another category can by no means be dismissed as trivial and accidental.

tionally emphasized by the switching from the nominative case to accusative. The alleged restoration of the copula—which, theoretically, was not supposed to change anything in the sentence’s structure—actually resulted in a new, *different* sentence.

Those arguments appear convincing enough as long as we stay within the framework of assumptions and classifications of Arabic grammar proper. It is from *its* standpoint that the restoration of the copula as a “to be”-type verb gives us a really different sentence, which is not equivalent to the original one. However, if we consider the same examples from the standpoint of Western linguistics and analyze them using the notion of grammatical concepts as presented, e.g., by E. Sapir,³⁸ the situation will look different.

Indeed, from the standpoint of that theory, the transformation *Zayd kātib* ⇒ *yakūn* (*yūjad*) *Zayd kātiban* (“Zayd a scribe” ⇒ “is/is found Zayd a/as a scribe”) leaves grammatical concepts intact. The “reference” distributing direction of the action remains the same (Zayd is the scribe, not the scribe is Zayd), the modality is also preserved (this is a categorical affirmative statement), we still get the subject–object relation right, both “Zayd” and “a scribe” remain in the singular, and the tense is still present.³⁹

The situation is truly amazing: basing our reasoning on Western theory and adopting the attitude typical of most researchers of the copula in Arabic, we obtained the very same result we aimed for, thus proving the “obvious” fact that the Arabic “to be”-type verbs—*yakūn* or *yūjad*—restore the copula without changing anything in sentence structure.

We encounter here another instant of contrast between the two perspectives of sense-generating activity. Unlike the former cases, we deal here not with an immediate, basic level of sense generation represented by a logic-and-meaning configuration, but with its rather remote effects. However, even on this high level of sophisticated linguistic theory the same regularities can be observed. Western theory treats the sentence and its meaning as a kind of *substance* which stays the same as long as its attributes are not changed: all that was said about grammatical categories in E. Sapir’s sense boils down to this. As for Arabic grammarians, they are concerned with meaning (*fā’ida*) of a sentence as a result of a *process* of “supporting” (*isnād*) which runs if a sentence possesses its two necessary and sufficient conditions: “supported” (*musnad*) and “support” (*musnad ilay-hi*; see also note 37). Supported-and-support are either a non+noun (nominal phrase) or a verb+noun (verbal phrase) structure. The process of “supporting” (*isnād*) runs differently in the two cases, so the meaning of a nominal and a verbal phrase cannot be the same.

³⁸ See [Sapir 1921, Chapter V. Form in Language: Grammatical Concepts].

³⁹ Present-future tense, to use the exact term of Arabic grammar. Besides, *kātib* “scribe” is an *ism fā’il* “name of an actor (agent)” that, as such, can imply any tense, including the past one, though in the latter case the past tense would have most likely been indicated explicitly.

More than twenty-five years ago G. Bohas and J.-P. Guillaume pointed out:

We think that since more than half of a century most of researchers who study the history of Arabic grammatical theories have been following a wrong path. They proceed from assumption that historical and structural linguistics accumulated experience and knowledge which give it the right to judge—and to condemn—the legacy of Arabic grammatical tradition, and that any fruitful study of language should necessarily comply with views completely alien to it. We, on the contrary, hold the following:

1. The only coherent, encompassing and targeted explanation of Arabic language today is the one we discover in the works of Arabic grammarians.

2. The texts of Arabic grammarians are an indispensable source of any description of Arabic language in what regards both the facts they contain and the explanations they propose.

3. The theory of Arabic grammarians is by itself an object of study, regardless of its importance for comparative study of borrowings and influences. Those are independent areas, and they should not be mixed up [Bohas, Guillaume 1984, pp. VII–VIII].

Their voice was drowned, figuratively if not literally, in a chorus cherishing the *universality* of science and its unanimous applicability and, therefore, superiority of triumphant Western linguistics over archaic and outdated Arabic grammatical theory⁴⁰. I think that science is truly universal, but only if it takes into account the plurality of sense-generating perspectives and, accordingly, the contrast between theories produced by them. The discussed case, I guess, serves as a good example of such a contrast.

1.4. The term *huwiyya* “he-ness” as a philosophical elaboration of the copula

Let us return to the history of Arabic philosophical discourse represented by Mu‘tazila, Falāsifa, Ismā‘īlī and Šūfī thinkers. In this discussion, we will consid-

⁴⁰ This is a good example of what the fight against “Orientalist” approach leads to when it is waged outside reasonable limits. If “No West no East” slogan is taken literally and in an absolute sense, as it sometimes happens, then the “East” has no longer any say of its own, and from now on it has to comply with the Western standards and criteria, because the so-called “universal” is hardly anything but the renamed “Western.” “Universal” linguistic science is a Western science, and as such it is based on specific, and not universal, logic-and-meaning foundation. It follows that it is not universally applicable, and when we deal with a different logic-and-meaning foundation, as in the case of Arabic language and linguistics, we need to be cautious with the universality thesis. The logic-and-meaning approach developed in this book has nothing to do with reification of cultural differences leading to cultural superiority claims, which E. Said was so fiercely fighting against, since diverse logic-and-meaning perspectives are basically equal in the sense that they cannot be ranked as “better” or “worse”. Thus the logic-and-meaning approach provides a sound ontological foundation for anti-Orientalist claims, at the same time reshaping them.

er not the copula as such, but its philosophic interpretation in connection with the development of a cluster of problems bearing on the ways in which a thing can enter the domain of our cognition, that is, in what way it can make sense to us.

This discussion proceeded in two major directions. On the one hand, it involved the problem of *huwa* (“he”). The gradual metaphysical elaboration of this concept, as well as of its derivative *huwiyya* (“he-ness”), and imbuing them with increasingly rich content were carried out by Mu‘tazila, Ismā‘īlī and Ṣūfī thinkers.

On the other hand, exponents of Arabic Peripatetic school used the term “he-ness” when they attempted to express Aristotelian view of the copula and idea of being in terms of Arabic philosophic discourse. This was being done, first and foremost, in the course of translating and commenting the Aristotelian corpus, in an attempt to convey the Stagirite’s ideas as faithfully as possible.

1.4.1. Mu‘tazila

We have begun to study the copula because we noticed that a thing is conceived of as coinciding with itself owing to its “fixedness” which is not the same as “being.” We subsequently found that the copula is understood as “he” (*huwa*), not as “to be.” The notion of *huwa* “he,” as the absolute “common denominator” of all things voiced by the Mu‘tazila, is quite at home in this system of ideas. They develop this view in the course of discussion concerning the Divine attribute of “countenance” (*wajh*), al-Ash‘arī tells us:

They diverged in their opinions as to whether it is [really] said of God that He has a countenance (*wajh*). Some said that God has a countenance which is Himself (*huwa huwa*). Thus said ‘Abū al-Hudhayl [al-‘Allāf].

Others emphasized: we say “countenance” in a broad sense (*tawassu‘an*), while referring to the fixedness (*ithbāt*) of God, since we fix (*nuthbit*) such a countenance as is He Himself (*huwa huwa*). For the Arabs replace a thing with a “countenance”; e.g., one might say: “If it were not for your countenance (*law lā wajha-ka*), I would not have done it,” which means: “If it were not for you, I would not have done it.” Thus said al-Nazzām, most of the Basrian Mu‘tazila, and also Baghdadian ones.

Still others deny that it is permissible to mention a “countenance” and to say: “God has a countenance.” If asked, “Does not God Himself say, ‘Everything is perishable save His countenance?’”⁴¹ they answered that they read the Qur’ān thus, but do not say—other than during the reading of the Qur’ān—that “God has a countenance.” Thus said the followers of ‘Abbād [Ash‘ari 1980, p. 189].

Let us leave aside the opinion of those (‘Abbād and his followers) who denied any possibility of reinterpreting the “countenance” and making this attribute

⁴¹ Qur’ān 92:1 (transl. A. M. Daryabadi).

philosophically intelligible. We are interested in those who did acknowledge such a possibility. Of course, interpretation of Divine attributes is directly connected with the understanding of oneness in its correlation with multiplicity (the oneness of God and the multiplicity of His attributes) which I intend to discuss somewhat later. However, the problem of the “countenance” is singled out by al-Ash‘arī.

So, what is the *modus operandi* of Mu‘tazila who recognized the possibility to discuss the issue of God’s “countenance”? First of all, let me note that they are all virtually of like mind, since al-‘Allāf’s standpoint differs from that of other Mu‘tazila (the first and the second opinions respectively in al-Ash‘arī’s account) on a minor point, which has no bearing on the essence of the problem under discussion. As regards the very procedure of reformulating the “countenance” attribute, we observe an agreement between the Mu‘tazila (who, let me repeat, recognize such a possibility).

“Countenance” (*wajh*) is reduced to “he” (*huwa*), and the sameness of the two things is asserted: the countenance is nothing but God, and this sameness is expressed by a repetition of “he” (*huwa huwa*). This sameness, or coincidence, is nothing other than fixedness (*ithbāt*). The understanding of the coincidence of things with themselves that we discussed above (“things are fixed as things...”) is further confirmed here by al-Ash‘arī explanation: a thing coincides with its countenance, which results in its fixedness (*ithbāt*).

Let us observe that none of the opinions cited by al-Ash‘arī equates the “countenance” with the “existence” (*wujūd*) of God. It is fixedness, not being, that turns out to be the ultimate foundation of a thing, further irreducible and inseparable from that thing. This fixedness can be most immediately expressed by the third person pronoun “he.” In this connection, it is important to point out the difference between “fixing” (*ithbāt*) and “fixedness” (*thubūt*, *thabāt*) on the one hand and “existence” (*wujūd*) on the other: the former is primary and—in addition to defying any reinterpretation—provides the basis for reinterpreting other concepts (as in the case of “countenance”), whereas the latter is subject to reinterpretation; moreover, it *demand*s reinterpretation. “Existence” fails to turn out to be the irreducible basis of a thing, it is merely a *property* attendant upon it and extraneous to it, which applies to *all* things, even—nay, above all—to God (in connection with the problem of oneness). Therefore, here we find no analogy with that interpretation of “being” as accidental for every thing but entirely coinciding with God’s essence which was typical of Western Middle Ages.⁴² We will yet have an opportunity to talk about the fact that this difference is by no means accidental and minor, but derives from the very nature of the problems we discuss here.

I would like to remark here *en passant* that such an understanding of existence (*wujūd*) as an attribute (*ṣifa*) of a thing, which becomes attached to its ipse-

⁴² And of the Greek-inspired branch of Arab philosophy, of course, but not of Mu‘tazila, al-Kirmānī, al-Suhrawardī or Ibn ‘Arabī.

ity (*dhāt*) thereby transforming the thing into a dyad (instead of a single entity), can be found virtually in all trends of medieval Arabic philosophy, ranging from Mu‘tazila to the Šūfīs (including, among others, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā with their ontology of *mumkin* “possible”). However, this is never said about “fixedness”: on the contrary, the introduction of the latter concept enables one to solve the problems of duality that emerge when existence is mentioned. Ergo, classical Arabic philosophy demonstrates remarkable consistency in divorcing the two concepts as essentially different at the most basic level of ontological constructions.

This is what al-Ash‘arī writes about the opinions of Mu‘tazila regarding the “existence” of God:

As regards the expression about the Creator that He is existent (*mawjūd*), al-Jubbā‘ī affirmed that the expression “existent” about the Creator might be construed in the sense “known” (*ma‘lūm*), and that the Creator is incessantly “finding” (*wājīd*) things, might be construed in the sense incessantly “knowing” (*‘ālim*) [things], and that “the known” (*ma‘lūmāt*) is the incessantly “existing” (*mawjūdāt*) for God and “known” by Him in the sense that He incessantly knows it; and [that He is] “existent” might be construed in the sense that He is incessantly “known” (*lam yazal ma‘lūman*), and in the sense that He is incessantly “being” (*lam yazal kā‘inan*).

Hishām Ibn al-Ḥakam claimed that the expression “existent” with regard to the Creator means that He is a body, since He is existent and He is a thing.

‘Abbād denied that one might say about the Creator that He is a “being” One (*kā‘in*).

Others said: “existent” in regard to the Creator means that He is a thing. [Still] others said: “existent” in regard to the Creator means that He is limited (*mahdūd*). Thus said the assimilators (*mushabbihā*).⁴³

[Still] others said that “existent-as-entity” (*mawjūd al-‘ayn*) means in regard to Him that He is incessantly “fixed-as-entity” (*lam yazal thābit al-‘ayn*). This expression refers one to fixing (*ithbāt*) Him.

‘Abbād said that the expression “existent” about the Creator means fixing (*ithbāt*) that name as Divine. ‘Abbād denied that it is permissible to speak of the Creator as of “Self-sustained” (*qā‘im bi-nafsi-hi*), or that He is an “entity” (*‘ayn*), [that] He is a “soul” (*nafs*), that He has a “countenance” (*wajh*), and that His countenance is He [Himself], and that He has arms, eyes and side. He would recite, “For us Allah sufficeth, and He is the best disposer of affairs,”⁴⁴ only when reading the Qur’ān—in his own speech he never said this.

⁴³ The *mushabbihā* serves as a general denomination of thinkers who likened God to things corporeal or material, including the anthropomorphists.

⁴⁴ Qur’ān 3:173 (transl. Abdalla Yousuf Ali).

God's words, "Thou knowest what is in my heart, thou I know not what is in Thine,"⁴⁵ he interpreted thus: You know what I know, and I do not know what You know. He did not say that God is a "Surety"⁴⁶ [Ash'ari 1980, pp. 520–521].

As we can see, the reference to "existence" presents for the Mu'tazila a problem, not the basis for reasoning that could solve it. "Existence" has to be reinterpreted, and both "thing" and "fixedness" end up among what it is reduced to. I intentionally cite the relevant passage from al-Ash'arī in its entirety: my goal is not to wear out the reader with a multitude of nigh incomprehensible quotations, but merely to demonstrate the magnitude of the problem of reinterpreting "existence" that the Mu'tazila faced, and also the fact that none of the cited opinions regarded existence as the ultimate (i.e., requiring no further explanation) foundation on which to construct reasoning about God. Unlike "existence," "he" (*huwa*) functions exactly like the aforementioned foundation, or starting point for reasoning, e.g.:

'Abū al-Hudhayl [al-'Allāf] said: He is "knowing" due to knowledge which is He, He is "powerful" due to power which is He, He is "alive" due to life which is He [Ash'ari 1980, p. 164].

The third person pronoun "he" expresses a pure fixedness of that which is spoken about, without implying any content-related features in that which is fixed, and, for this very reason, "he" turns out to be that ultimate foundation to which everything can be reduced, but which itself is not reducible to anything.

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⁴⁵ Qur'ān 5:116 (transl. Abdalla Yousuf Ali). Since al-Ash'arī speaks of a Qur'ānic quotation, the text is referred to as "God's words," though, properly speaking, these are the words of Jesus addressed to God, which explains the way the capital and lower case letters are used.

⁴⁶ "Surety" (*kaḥīl*)—see Qur'ān 16:91.

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