

## THE ATTRIBUTE OF TAKWĪN IN ḤANAFĪ-MĀTURĪDĪ THEOLOGY: THE EIGHTH ATTRIBUTE AND THE DIVIDE WITH THE ASH‘ARĪS

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**Abstract.** *The article examines the attribute of takwīn - the divine act of bringing into being - in Ḥanafī-Māturīdī theology and the doctrinal divide it created between the Māturīdīs and the Ash‘arīs. Both schools accept the seven attributes of meaning; the Māturīdīs add takwīn as an eighth essential attribute, eternal and subsisting in the divine essence, whereas the Ash‘arīs assign it to the attributes of act and treat it as conceptual rather than real. Four points of contention are analysed: the division of attributes into essential and active, the Ash‘arī criterion of defect together with the Māturīdī objection to it, the claim that takwīn is reducible to power, and the identification of takwīn with the created object. It is argued that the Māturīdī position rests on a single principle applied consistently - the attribute is eternal while its object is originated - and that this same principle answers the charge that an eternal takwīn entails an eternal world. The primary texts are read alongside the recent analysis of al-Dibo (2018).*

**Keywords:** *takwīn, divine attributes, Māturīdism, Ash‘arism, essential attributes, attributes of act, eternity, kalām, Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, Abū al-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī.*

### INTRODUCTION

Among the doctrinal differences that separate the two Sunnī schools of kalām, the question of takwīn is the most technical and, for that very reason, the most instructive. It is not a dispute about what God does - both schools affirm that He creates, sustains, gives life and causes death - but about what kind of reality the divine act possesses: whether it is an eternal attribute subsisting in the divine essence, or a relation obtaining between an eternal attribute and its originated object. The question is often summarised in handbooks in a single sentence: the Māturīdīs affirm an eighth attribute, the Ash‘arīs do not (Yücedoğlu, 1987:256). The summary is accurate but unhelpful, because it conceals the reasoning on either side and thereby makes the disagreement look like a matter of enumeration. It is not. Behind the count of seven or eight attributes stands

a disagreement about how the eternal is related to the temporal, and behind that, a disagreement about what a criterion in theology is permitted to do (al-Dibo, 2018:163).

The relative neglect of the topic in Western scholarship is partly explicable. The argument is conducted in a vocabulary - *i'tibārī* and *ḥaqīqī*, *ta'alluq* and *muta'allaq*, *qidam* and *ḥudūth* - that resists translation, and its stakes are not obvious from outside (Rudolph, 2015:285). Yet the doctrine was treated by the school itself as one of its identifying marks, and the commentary literature returns to it with a regularity that indicates how much was felt to depend on it (Yücedoğru, 1987:258). The present article has three aims: to set out the division of the divine attributes as the two schools understand it; to examine the four points at which the dispute becomes explicit; and to assess the Māturīdī answer to the objection that an eternal act entails an eternal world. The recent study of al-Dibo, which treats the subject in four sections and assembles the relevant passages from the Māturīdī corpus, serves as the principal point of reference (al-Dibo, 2018:163-178). The thesis defended here is that the Māturīdī position is not a cluster of separate claims but the consistent application of a single rule: an attribute is eternal, its object is originated, and the two may never be collapsed into one another. Once the rule is identified, each of the four disputed questions is seen to be an instance of it, and the familiar objection from the eternity of the world is seen to misapply it.

The primary sources used here are of three kinds. The first is al-Māturīdī's *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, preserved in a single manuscript in Cambridge University Library and available in the critical edition of Topaloğlu and Aruçi (al-Māturīdī, 2003) as well as in the earlier edition of Kholeif (al-Māturīdī, n.d.); his *Qur'ān* commentary is also consulted where it bears on the divine act (al-Māturīdī, 1994). The second consists of the works of the school's systematiser, Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114), namely *Tabṣirat al-adilla* (al-Nasafī, n.d.) and *Baḥr al-kalām*. The third comprises the later creedal literature and its commentaries, above all al-Taftāzānī's *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id* (al-Taftāzānī, 1982) and Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī's *Sharḥ al-'Umda* (al-Nasafī, 2011), together with the glosses that accumulated around them (Ibn Quṭlūbughā, 1317 AH; Khidr b. Jalāl al-Dīn, 2008).

Opposing positions are taken from the sources in which they are stated rather than only from Māturīdī reports of them, so far as that is possible. For the Mu'tazilī side this means the works of 'Abd al-Jabbār ('Abd al-Jabbār, n.d.); for the Ash'arī side, al-Shahrastānī's *Nihāyat al-aqdām* (al-Shahrastānī, n.d.) and the later Ash'arī commentaries. Where a position is cited only through a Māturīdī intermediary, this is indicated. For the secondary literature the study relies on al-Dibo (2018:163-178),

whose article assembles the Māturīdī arguments and the replies to their opponents, and on Rudolph (2015:125-140) for the formation of the school at Samarqand. Turkish scholarship on the question, in particular Yücedoğru (1987:256-260), and the studies of Türcan (2005:147-148) and Ünverdi (2015:82) on the related problem of the creation of human acts, are also taken into account. The method is textual and comparative. Each position is quoted in the original Arabic, rendered into English, and then set against the corresponding position of the opposing school. No attempt is made to adjudicate the dispute theologically; the aim is to reconstruct the structure of the reasoning and to identify where exactly the two schools part company.

### MAIN PART

Before the positions can be compared, three pairs of terms require comment, since the whole argument is conducted in them and a mistranslation at this stage will distort everything that follows (al-Dibo, 2018:164).

The first pair is ḥaqīqī and i'tibārī. An attribute is real in the first sense when it is something in the thing described, independently of how anyone regards it. It is conceptual in the second sense when it exists only as a consideration or a way of regarding, with no corresponding reality in the thing itself. When the Ash'arīs call the attributes of act conceptual they do not mean that God does not really create; they mean that creating is not an additional reality in God over and above His power and its object. When the Māturīdīs insist that takwīn is real, they are denying precisely this (al-Dibo, 2018:168).

The second pair is ta'alluq and muta'allaq - the relation of an attribute to what it bears upon, and the object upon which it bears. The notion is indispensable to both schools: power bears upon the possible, knowledge upon the knowable, will upon the willed. The Māturīdī claim that the one divine act receives different names according to its different relations uses this vocabulary, and so does the Ash'arī claim that the attributes of act are relations of the eternal attributes rather than attributes in their own right (al-Dibo, 2018:164). What separates the schools is not the concept of relation but the question whether a relation can exhaust what an act is.

The third pair is qidam and ḥudūth - eternity without beginning and origination in time. The dispute would be unintelligible without the assumption, shared by all parties, that these two are exhaustive and exclusive: whatever is not eternal is originated, and nothing is both (al-Shahrastānī, n.d.:12). It is this assumption that makes the objection from the eternity of the world look compelling, and the Māturīdī reply consists in

showing that the dichotomy applies to the attribute and to its object separately, not to the pair taken together (al-Dibo, 2018:175).

Both schools divide the attributes into those of the essence (ṣifāt al-dhāt) and those of act (ṣifāt al-fi'l). The disagreement does not concern the division itself, which is common ground, but the content of each class and the rulings that follow from membership in it. As al-Dibo observes, the division of the divine attributes and the differentiation of their rulings is probably the single most important source of disagreement between the Māturīdīs and the general body of theologians (al-Dibo, 2018:166).

The Māturīdīs, in effect, decline to let the division carry any weight. For them both classes are eternal attributes of the essence, and the position goes back to the founder of the school himself, who states (al-Māturīdī, 2003:48; al-Dibo, 2018:166):

صِفَتُهُ الَّتِي هِيَ الْفِعْلُ هِيَ صِفَتُهُ ذَاتِهِ

«*Ṣifatuhu allatī hiya al-fi'l hiya ṣifatu dhātih*» - «*His attribute which is the act is an attribute of His essence*»

Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī, in Baḥr al-kalām, retains the two-fold division while equalising the rulings attached to its two sides. Under the attributes of the essence he lists life, power, hearing, sight, knowledge, speech, volition and will; under the attributes of act he lists creating, providing sustenance, bestowing favour, granting blessing, doing good, mercy, forgiveness and guidance (al-Dibo, 2018:166). God, with all His attributes and names, is one; and with all His attributes and names He is eternal and without beginning (al-Nasafī, n.d.:I/266).

Two consequences follow, and they are decisive for the whole debate. The first is that takwīn and the remaining active attributes are not conceptual attributes (ṣifāt i'tibāriyya) but real and eternal ones, through which effect and necessitation occur when will and choice are joined to them. The second is that the attributes of act are not themselves the acts: they are the source from which the acts proceed. The active attributes are eternal; the acts are originated. In itself the attribute is one, and its names differ only because its relations differ (al-Dibo, 2018:166).

This last point deserves emphasis, because it is easily misread. The Māturīdīs are not multiplying eternal entities in God. They affirm one attribute of action, which is called creating when its object is a created thing, providing when its object is sustenance, and guidance when its object is a guided person. The multiplicity lies entirely on the side of the objects, not on the side of the attribute; as al-Dibo puts it, the difference of

the names of His act is due to the difference of its effects and its objects, not to any difference in His essence (al-Dibo, 2018:164).

Against this stands the Mu‘tazilī arrangement, which must be mentioned because the Māturīdī position was formed partly in opposition to it. For the Mu‘tazilīs the most proper description of God is eternity (al-qidam), and for that reason they denied any attribute that would conflict with it; to affirm the eternity of any attribute of meaning or of act, they argued, leads to a multiplicity of eternal things and contradicts the divine unity which they made the first of their principles (‘Abd al-Jabbār, n.d.:35; al-Dibo, 2018:166-167). The Māturīdīs reply that the attributes are not entities additional to the essence in the sense required by that objection (al-Nasafī, n.d.:I/271).

The Ash‘arī arrangement occupies the middle ground and is the real opponent in this debate. Both schools affirm the seven attributes of meaning - knowledge, power, will, life, hearing, sight and speech - together with the attributes derived from them, by which God is knowing, powerful, willing, living, hearing, seeing and speaking; these derived descriptions are called the attributes of quality (al-ṣifāt al-ma‘nawīyya). On these seven the two schools are agreed. The Māturīdīs, however, add an eighth, the attribute of takwīn, attaching it to the seven and giving it their rulings, whereas the Ash‘arīs decline to count it among the essential attributes and refer it instead to the attributes of act (al-Dibo, 2018:168; al-Taftāzānī, 1982:81).

For the Ash‘arīs, accordingly, God is Creator, Provider, Giver, Life-giver and Bringer of death in the sense that He does these things. Creating, providing, giving life and causing death are all created acts of God and are the objects of the eternal essential attributes (al-Dibo, 2018:168). The attributes of act, on this view, are originated when regarded through their effects and their variations in created things, and in relation to God they are conceptual rather than real attributes, since they are the objects of the eternal attributes and not themselves of their kind (al-Dibo, 2018:168; al-Shahrastānī, n.d.:220).

One further observation on the Mu‘tazilī side is needed here, because it explains why the Māturīdīs were so insistent on the reality of the active attributes. If the active attributes are not real, the natural next step is to ask what the act of creation is; and the Mu‘tazilī answer, that it is simply the created thing itself, removes the question rather than answering it (‘Abd al-Jabbār, n.d.:41). The Māturīdīs saw the Ash‘arī position as occupying unstable ground between their own view and this one: having denied that the act is a real eternal attribute, the Ash‘arīs must either identify it with its object, which is

the Mu‘tazilī answer, or leave it as a relation with no term on the divine side (al-Dibo, 2018:171).

The Ash‘arīs do not leave their division unmotivated. They propose a criterion by which an attribute may be assigned to one class or the other, and the criterion is elegant: an attribute whose negation entails a defect belongs to the essence; an attribute whose negation entails no defect belongs to the acts (al-Dibo, 2018:168).

The application is straightforward. Negate life and the defect of death follows; negate power and the defect of incapacity follows; and the same holds for knowledge with ignorance, sight with blindness, hearing with deafness. Negate speech and the defect of muteness follows, which is why speech is counted among the attributes of the essence. But negate of God the giving of life, the causing of death, the setting in motion or the bringing to rest, and no defect of incapacity follows, since these belong to the originated attributes of act (al-Dibo, 2018:168).

The Māturīdīs rejected this criterion, and the manner of their rejection is as significant as its content. They did not propose a rival criterion. They produced a counter-example and let it do the work. The argument, as reported by al-Dibo, runs as follows. One asks the Ash‘arīs: may it be said that God is neither just (‘ādil) nor bounteous (mutafaḍḍil)? If they answer yes, people will hasten to charge them with unbelief. If they answer no, they are then asked: are bounty and justice attributes of the essence or of the act? Should they reply that they belong to the essence, they abandon their own doctrine and must describe God as just and bounteous from eternity. Should they reply that they belong to the acts, they have invalidated the very distinction they laid down, since the negation of these attributes plainly does entail a defect (al-Dibo, 2018:169).

The force of the objection lies in its form. It does not contest the theological content of the Ash‘arī position; it tests the criterion against a case the criterion cannot accommodate, and shows that either answer costs more than it gains. This is a characteristic move of Ḥanafī-Māturīdī argumentation and is closer in spirit to juristic reasoning - where a rule is tested by the cases it fails to cover - than to the deductive style of philosophical theology (Rudolph, 2015:130). From the same premise the Māturīdīs draw a positive conclusion. One may say that God was Creator in pre-eternity, because the attribute of creation subsists in Him, just as one says that He was Powerful in pre-eternity although nothing was then the object of His power. What one may not say is that anything was created in pre-eternity, for non-existence cannot be a created thing (al-Dibo, 2018:169). The distinction between the attribute and its object is thus already

doing its work at this stage of the argument, well before the question of the eternity of the world is raised.

A second line of objection holds that takwīn adds nothing to what has already been affirmed, since it is simply power (qudra) considered in relation to its object. If that is so, affirming it as an independent attribute is superfluous, and the Māturīdīs have added an eighth attribute without adding anything to the doctrine of God (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:83). The Māturīdī reply distinguishes the two notions by their relation to the object, and the distinction is exact. Power is compatible with the non-existence of its object: God is powerful over what He has not created and never creates, and no absurdity follows. Takwīn is not compatible with the non-existence of its object in the same way: where the act of bringing into being has occurred, the thing brought into being exists (al-Dibo, 2018:171).

The supporting illustrations are drawn from ordinary language and are the more effective for it. The existence of striking with nothing struck, of breaking with nothing broken, of wounding with nothing wounded - all of these are impossible, because the act and its object are correlative and neither can be conceived without the other. To speak of takwīn with no mukawwan is of the same order as to speak of a mukawwan with no takwīn, and both are absurd (al-Dibo, 2018:171).

Two further considerations are added in the same passage. The first is a principle of theological economy: an attribute may not be affirmed of God if no benefit attaches to it, for that whose presence and absence are alike is idle (al-Dibo, 2018:171). The Māturīdīs turn this principle against their opponents - if takwīn is merely a name for a relation, then affirming or denying it changes nothing, and the Ash‘arīs are left defending a distinction that does no work. The second consideration returns to the unity of the divine act. The names of the act differ not because the act differs in itself but because its effects and objects differ. There is one act; creating, providing and guiding are its relations, individuated by what they terminate upon (al-Dibo, 2018:164). On this understanding, the Māturīdī affirmation of an eighth attribute does not add an eighth eternal entity to the divine essence; it names the single reality from which all the particular acts proceed (al-Nasafī, 2011:96).

It is worth pausing on the form of this argument, because it differs from the one used against the Ash‘arī criterion. There the Māturīdīs tested a rule against a case it could not cover. Here they argue from the grammar of action itself: an act and its object

are correlatives, like a father and a child, and a correlative term cannot be instantiated alone. The argument does not depend on any theological premise and would hold equally of created agents. Its theological force comes from the next step, which is the claim that God's act, being an attribute of His essence, is eternal while the correlation with its object obtains at the time appointed for that object (al-Dibo, 2018:175).

The third disputed question is whether the act of bringing into being is identical with the thing brought into being. The Ash'arī tradition inclines towards affirming the identity, and the inclination is consistent with its refusal to treat takwīn as a real attribute: if the act is nothing over and above its object, then there is no additional attribute to affirm, and the economy of the system is preserved (al-Shahrastānī, n.d.:222). The Māturīdīs reject the identification as invalid, holding that the correct position distinguishes the two (al-Dibo, 2018:171). Their reasoning is the one already encountered in a different application: an attribute and its object belong to different orders of being. To identify the act of creating with the created thing is either to make the eternal identical with the originated, which is impossible, or to make the act originated, which concedes the whole question in advance.

Here the Māturīdī position gains in coherence what it loses in simplicity. It must maintain a distinction that is difficult to state and that has no obvious phenomenal correlate - one cannot point to the act apart from its effect - but it avoids a consequence that the opposing view finds hard to escape. The Ash'arī alternative is simpler to formulate and harder to defend when the question of divine eternity is pressed (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:84). It should be noted that this disagreement has consequences beyond the doctrine of attributes. If the act is identical with its object, then the created act of a human being and God's creating of it stand in a particular relation, and the discussion of acquisition (*kasb*) is shaped accordingly. The connection is explicit in the Turkish literature on the question, where the dispute over takwīn is treated together with the problem of the creation of human acts (Ünverdi, 2015:82; Türcan, 2005:147-148).

The strongest objection against the Māturīdī position is the one that has been visible on the horizon throughout: if the act of bringing into being is eternal, then what is brought into being must be eternal too, and the eternity of the world follows - a conclusion no Muslim theologian accepts (al-Dibo, 2018:174).

The Māturīdī answer rests on a distinction between an attribute and its object, applied with complete consistency. The world is originated and not eternal, because

whatever depends in its existence upon a cause is originated, while the eternal is that which is independent in its existence of anything other than itself. Whatever is not independent of another, and whose existence is tied to that other, is necessarily originated; and since the existence of the mukawwan depends upon takwīn, it cannot be eternal (al-Dibo, 2018:175).

A second argument reinforces the first by showing that the opposing claim is self-defeating. To hold that the world is eternal is to hold that it has no Maker; but to affirm a Maker is to deny that it is eternal. The two cannot be held together, and so the world is originated and not independent of another in its existence (al-Dibo, 2018:175).

The third argument is the decisive one and it is an argument from parity. The eternal power of God did not necessitate the eternity of what depends upon it for existence; and the objects of these attributes were tied to particular times precisely so that their eternity should not be imagined (al-Dibo, 2018:175). The principle is stated most plainly by al-Nasafī:

إِنَّ التَّكْوِينَ صِفَةٌ أَزَلِيَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ بِذَاتِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى كَصِفَةِ الْعِلْمِ وَالْقُدْرَةِ وَالسَّمْعِ وَالْبَصَرِ، فَكَانَ التَّكْوِينُ أَزَلِيًّا وَالْمُكُونُ حَادِثًا، كَالْقُدْرَةِ كَانَتْ أَزَلِيَّةً وَالْمَقْدُورُ حَادِثًا، وَكَذَلِكَ الْإِرَادَةُ وَالْمُرَادُ

«Inna al-takwīna ṣifātun azaliyyatun qā'imatun bi-dhāti-llāhi ta'ālā...» - «Takwīn is an eternal attribute subsisting in the essence of God, like the attributes of knowledge, power, hearing and sight. Thus takwīn is eternal while the created thing is originated, just as power is eternal while its object is originated, and likewise will and the thing willed» (al-Dibo, 2018:175)

The structure of this reply deserves attention. It does not introduce a new principle in order to meet the objection; it points out that the objector already accepts the principle in two other cases. No one infers from the eternity of divine power that its objects are eternal, nor from the eternity of divine will that the things willed are eternal. The Māturīdī asks why the inference should be drawn in the third case alone, and the question is not easily answered without conceding that the objection presupposes what it set out to prove - namely, that takwīn is not an attribute of the same kind (al-Dibo, 2018:175; Yücedoğlu, 1987:259).

A related objection charges that an eternal takwīn with no object would imply incapacity: an act that brings nothing into being is an act that has failed. The Māturīdī reply turns on the purpose for which the attribute exists. Incapacity would follow only if takwīn existed in order that the created thing should exist in pre-eternity and it failed

to do so. But takwīn does not exist for that; it exists in order that the thing should come into being at its appointed time. One does not say that the existence of will with nothing willed implies incapacity or compulsion, for the same reason: will exists so that the thing willed should be at its time, and the absence of the thing willed in pre-eternity entails neither necessity nor incapacity (al-Dibo, 2018:175).

Taken together, these replies show that the Māturīdī position on the eternity of the attribute is not a concession extracted under pressure but a straightforward application of the distinction between an attribute and its object. The conclusion of al-Dibo's study states it in its final form: the attribute of takwīn is eternal for God, the eternity of takwīn does not require the eternity of the mukawwan, and while the attribute is eternal the whole of the created order is originated (al-Dibo, 2018:176).

One more consequence of the Māturīdī position deserves to be drawn out, since it is rarely stated explicitly in the sources. If the divine act is one eternal attribute whose names vary with its objects, then the apparent plurality of God's dealings with the world - creating, sustaining, guiding, forgiving - reflects a plurality in us and not in Him (al-Māturīdī, 1994:I/22). The doctrine thus performs, within the theory of attributes, the same work that the doctrine of divine simplicity performs elsewhere: it preserves unity on the side of God while allowing the full variety of scriptural description on the side of the world. Read in this way, the affirmation of an eighth attribute is not an addition to the divine essence but a safeguard against multiplying it (al-Nasafī, n.d.:I/271).

Viewed as a whole, the Māturīdī treatment of takwīn is governed by one rule: an attribute is eternal, its object is originated, and the two must never be collapsed into one another. Applied to power, the rule yields the familiar doctrine that God is powerful over things that do not exist. Applied to will, it yields the doctrine that God wills eternally what comes to be in time. Applied to the act of creation, it yields the attribute of takwīn (al-Dibo, 2018:175). The school's opponents accept the rule in the first two cases and refuse it in the third; the Māturīdīs ask on what ground the exception is made, and receive no answer that does not presuppose the point at issue.

It must be added that the dispute is not merely terminological, although it has sometimes been described as such. If the divine act is conceptual rather than real, then the relation between God and the world is exhausted by power and its objects. If the act is a real eternal attribute, then creation is grounded in an attribute of the essence and not in a relation supervening upon it (al-Dibo, 2018:168). The difference affects the way providence, sustenance and guidance are conceived, since on the Māturīdī view

all of these are relations of one eternal attribute rather than separate originated acts (al-Nasafī, 2011:96).

There is also a methodological lesson in the way the Māturīdīs argue. Their central move against the Ash‘arī criterion is not to deny its conclusion but to test its generality, and this is the manner of a jurist rather than a metaphysician. The observation is consistent with what is known of the school’s origins: its founder was a Ḥanafī jurist before he was a theologian, and the argumentative habits of the legal tradition are visible in his theology throughout (Rudolph, 2015:130-135).

The historical dimension deserves notice as well. The doctrine is already present in substance in al-Māturīdī’s own statement that the attribute which is act is an attribute of the essence (al-Māturīdī, 2003:48); its systematic defence, however, belongs to Abū al-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī and to the commentary tradition after him (al-Nasafī, n.d.:I/266). This is the pattern Rudolph describes for the school as a whole: the founder supplies the principle, the later generation supplies the system, and the name of the school is attached only once the system exists (Rudolph, 2015:125-140). The treatment of takwīn is a particularly clear instance, since the four arguments examined above are not all found in Kitāb al-Tawḥīd but are assembled gradually in the literature that follows it (al-Dibo, 2018:170).

The later commentary tradition did not merely repeat these arguments; it refined the terms in which they were put. In al-Taftāzānī’s commentary on the Nasafī creed the question is handled with the full apparatus of logical definition, and the objections are arranged in the order of their strength rather than in the order in which they had historically arisen (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:81-84). Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī’s commentary on his own ‘Umda performs a similar service for the Māturīdī side, setting out the position in a form compact enough to be memorised (al-Nasafī, 2011:96). The glosses that accumulated around these texts - among them the gloss of Ibn Quṭlūbughā on al-Musāyara (Ibn Quṭlūbughā, 1317 AH:II/34) and the commentary of Khidr b. Jalāl al-Dīn on the Nūniyya (Khidr b. Jalāl al-Dīn, 2008:112) - show the question still alive in the Ottoman madrasa centuries after the original dispute.

A limitation of the present study should be stated plainly. The reconstruction offered here depends on the Māturīdī presentation of the opposing arguments, mediated in several places through the collection assembled by al-Dibo (2018:163-178). Positions reported by one’s opponents are rarely reported in the form their holders would have

chosen, and a full treatment would require the Ash‘arī statements of the criterion to be read in their own context rather than in the setting of the refutation (al-Shahrastānī, n.d.:220). What can be claimed here is narrower: that the Māturīdī arguments are internally consistent and that they identify a genuine difficulty in the criterion as the Māturīdīs received it.

Finally, a word on what the dispute does not concern. Neither school holds that God’s act is constrained, that the world is eternal, or that the divine attributes are entities separate from the essence. The area of agreement is far larger than the area of disagreement, and the disagreement itself is about the correct description of something both sides affirm (Yücedoğru, 1987:260). This is worth stating, because polemical presentations on either side have sometimes magnified the difference into an opposition of principle, which it is not.

A comparison with the Ash‘arī treatment of divine speech is instructive here, and the parallel is one the sources themselves invite. The Ash‘arīs affirm an eternal attribute of speech while holding that the words and letters heard in the world are originated; the eternity of the attribute is not thought to entail the eternity of its expressions (al-Taftāzānī, 1982:72). The Māturīdīs ask why the same structure cannot be admitted for the act of creation - an eternal attribute with originated objects - and the question is a fair one, since the two cases are formally identical (al-Dibo, 2018:175). That the Ash‘arīs accept the structure in the case of speech and reject it in the case of act suggests that the motivation for the rejection lies elsewhere than in the structure itself, most probably in the fear that an eternal act implies an eternal world, which is exactly the objection the Māturīdīs answer.

## CONCLUSION

The Māturīdī affirmation of takwīn as an eighth essential attribute is not an isolated doctrinal peculiarity but the consistent application of a principle the school maintains throughout its treatment of the divine attributes. Both schools accept the seven attributes of meaning; the Māturīdīs add takwīn and give it the same rulings, while the Ash‘arīs assign it to the attributes of act and regard it as conceptual rather than real (al-Dibo, 2018:168).

The Ash‘arī criterion - that an attribute whose negation entails a defect is essential - is the weakest point of the opposing case, since justice and bounty satisfy the criterion while being classed as active attributes. The Māturīdī counter-argument exploits exactly

this inconsistency and does so without committing its authors to a rival criterion of their own (al-Dibo, 2018:169).

The reduction of takwīn to power fails because power is compatible with the non-existence of its object while the act of bringing into being is not; and the identification of takwīn with the created thing fails because an attribute and its object belong to different orders of being (al-Dibo, 2018:171). The objection that an eternal act entails an eternal world is answered by the same distinction: takwīn is eternal, the mukawwan is originated, exactly as power is eternal while its object is originated (al-Dibo, 2018:175). The attribute exists so that the thing may come to be at its appointed time, not so that it should exist in pre-eternity; and the absence of the object in pre-eternity therefore entails no incapacity (al-Dibo, 2018:176).

A promising direction for further research would be a textual comparison of the treatment of takwīn in *Tabṣirat al-adilla* with that in the later commentary literature, in order to establish at which stage each of the four arguments examined here entered the school's standard repertoire, and to what extent the Ash'arī replies were reformulated in response (al-Nasafī, n.d.:I/266; Rudolph, 2015:140).

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