Theology

In this chapter, our scholars are talking about God. This is not the first time we have encountered him. God and the theological problems associated with his description have already appeared in chapter 4 on the lexicon, and they will appear again in chapters 6 and 7 on Aristotelian logic and poetics. Theological concerns, like concerns with language, cut across the genres and disciplines of eleventh-century scholarship. Everyone was playing the same game, in which the ball was *maʿnā* and the bat was *ḥaqīqah*. This is the chapter in which my translation of *maʿnā* as "mental content" comes under the most pressure.

FRAMING THEOLOGY

Islamic Theology (ʿilm al-kalām)

This chapter probes the sensitive boundary between words and things through a reading of theological debates at the nexus of language, mind, and reality. For Ibn Fūrak, *maʿnā* was a central theological concept at the core of an epistemology that linked humans to the divine. The word *maʿnā* appeared on both the human and the divine level, but it was an epistemological not an ontological framework that was being shared. Theology placed God and his creation in a single epistemological framework, where they were described by humans with the same conceptual vocabulary but remained incommensurable. This incommensurability is worth stressing at the outset.

A non-Arabist colleague recently asked me whether the theories I read in these Arabic texts were themselves coming out of a belief system, whether God and

religion were driving eleventh-century Arabic accounts of meaning. After all, when one reads the accounts of how language signifies ideas or things in Samuel Coleridge, Walter Benjamin, or Paul De Man (to pick famous names on the question of language almost at random), the sign that is everywhere is a religious symbol.[1] The sign is Christ, a symbol of the eternal, opposed (for Coleridge) to the mechanical abstractions of allegory. But none of this helps answer the question of how the God of Islamic theology shared an epistemological framework with his creation, let alone how reference or allegory functioned in Arabic. A religious genealogy comparable to the Christian heritage of the sign is totally absent from the eleventh-century Arabic accounts of meaning. For the scholars under consideration in this book, the subject matter was unquestionably God, whereas the conceptual transmission history came from the disciplines of Arabic grammar and lexicography. Religion did not just lie in the background of Ibn Fūrak's epistemology; God was his epistemological goal. The knowledge was human, and the subject matter humans cared about knowing was divine.

The Arabic name of this discipline was *ʿilm al-kalām,* which up to this point I have simply been translating as "theology." But a literal translation would be "the science/discipline/knowledge of speech." How can theology, the study of God and his creation, have been given a disciplinary label related to speech? *ʿIlm al-kalām* did not contain, after all, any of the components we may expect a "science of speech" to contain in English. As we have seen, grammar, pragmatics, and lexical precedent were all studied elsewhere. The answer is that theologians like Ibn Fūrak knew that their discipline, which had grown up in the eighth and ninth centuries (Alexander Treiger),[2] was a discipline in which humans tried to talk accurately about both God and the world. What we have in *ʿilm a-kalām* is speech (people talking) about a variety of topics, structured according to foundational principles and subsequent statements. The speech had to be rational, and if it was not, Ibn Fūrak thought it would end up meaningless: "speech with no mental content behind it."[3] According to al-Ašʿarī, the variety of *ʿilm al-kalām* topics included "motion and rest, body and accident, colors and ways of being, the atom and the leap [the latter a contested argument against the indivisibility of atoms],[4] and finally the attributes of

1. Benjamin (1996), Coleridge (1816, 36–37), de Man (1983, 189).

2. Treiger (2016).

3. وكان [الأشعريُّ] يَبني الكلامَ في ذلك . . . وكان كثيراً ما يَبني كلامَه في . . . وعلى هذا الأصل
وهذا كلامٌ لا يَحصل تحته معنى. يَبني الكلامَ في إطلاق القول بأنْ . . . Ibn Fūrak (1987, 101.7, 112.23, 162.8, 121.3).

4. Dhanani (1994, 160f).

the Creator."[5] Ar-Rāġib's definition was: "Knowledge of rational indicators, accurate demonstrative proofs, division and definition, the difference between reason and supposition, etc."[6] What we have before us here is a discipline that includes parts of what would be studied today in the natural sciences, philosophy, religion, and even in some parts of literary theory. And the name of this discipline in its eleventh-century Arabic context was "Speech about . . ." My reluctant working translation for ʿilm al-kalām will remain "theology."

This discipline of theology fits into our four scholars' careers in different ways. Both Ibn Fūrak and ar-Rāġib wrote creedal works designed to tell their readers what to believe,[7] and both wrote hermeneutic works designed to help their readers understand divine revelation. (Ar-Rāġib dealt with the Quran; Ibn Fūrak with both Quran and Hadith.)[8] Ar-Rāġib produced both a traditional exegesis of the Quran and an alphabetically ordered glossary.[9] Ibn Fūrak wrote a traditionally structured exegesis, which was itself largely structured as a verse-by-verse glossary: "If they ask you the mental content of this word, tell them it is . . ."[10] Ibn Fūrak also wrote on legal theory,[11] which ar-Rāġib did not, and ar-Rāġib composed books of ethics and of literary compilation and poetics,[12] which Ibn Fūrak did not. Ar-Rāġib's intellectual territory overlaps with Ibn Fūrak on questions of the divine, but his Neoplatonic/Aristotelian-flavored ethics and poetics also overlap with the work of Ibn Sīnā and al-Ǧurǧānī (the central figures of the next two chapters). Ibn Sīnā was cognizant of theological discourse but did not see himself as a participant. Al-Ǧurǧānī was in dialogue with theologians and made sure his account of language aesthetics was part of the discussion on God's language. The profile of ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār, the Muʿtazilī theologian whose work has already appeared in our discussions of translation, and whom we will meet again in this chapter, is closest to that of Ibn Fūrak. ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār and Ibn Fūrak both wrote exegesis of Quran and Hadith, legal theory, and theology.[13] They and al-Ǧurǧānī were taking part in the same conversations, which usually took the form of bitter arguments between

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5. Al-الكلام في الحركة والسكون والجِسم والعرض والألوان والأكوان والجزء والطفرة وصفات الباري .5
Ašʿarī (1953b, #2).

6. معرفةُ الأدلّة العقلية والبراهين الحقيقية والتقسيم والتحديد والفرْق بين المقعولات والمظنونات وغيرِ
ذلك. Ar-Rāġib (1984, 95).

7. Ibn Fūrak (1987), (2003); ar-Rāġib (1988a).

8. Ibn Fūrak (2003).

9. ar-Rāġib (1984), (1992), (2001), (2003).

10. Ibn Fūrak (2009a), (2009b), (2009c).

11. Ibn Fūrak (1906), (1999).

12. ar-Rāġib (1986), (1988b), (2006), (2007).

13. Heemskerk (2000, 36–52), (2007).

the Muʿtazilī and Ašʿarī schools of theology about both substance and methodology. Every single scholar with whom I engage used the same core conceptual resources of *lafẓ, maʿnā,* and *ḥaqīqah* to talk about language, mind, and reality.

Relativism? Words or Things

In a discipline with "speech" in its title, translations of *maʿnā* must trace out the points at which Ibn Fūrak's concern for language shades into a concern for thought, or alternatively into a concern for the extramental world. But how do we know when we are reading his epistemology (a theory of knowledge), and when we are reading his ontology (an account of what actually is)? Ibn Fūrak's epistemology looks toward God, and his ontology includes God. But how does he mark the boundaries between language, mind, and reality? My predecessors have noticed with varying details of pained awareness that a linguistic threat always lurks when reading these Classical Arabic texts. Could they really just be talking about words? Was it all semantics rather than science? Michel Allard raised that very possibility in 1965.

Writing about the reportage in al-Ašʿarī's *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn* on al-Ašʿarī's famous Muʿtazilī teacher al-Ǧubbāʾī, Allard argued that for the Muʿtazilah the empirical truth of the divine was unknowable and that discussions of the divine attributes were therefore just "opérations particulières de l'esprit humain qui essaye en son langage d'exprimer la totalité du mystère divin." These divine attributes, the things that God has or does, were a central topic in Islamic theology. (See Frank and Gimaret.)[14] For Allard, the judgments made by scholars like al-Ašʿarī and al-Ǧubbāʾī about God were rational but they: "ne l'atteignent pas dans sa réalite, mais manifestant la cohérence d'un langage humain."[15] The texts that led Allard to this conclusion were clear statements by al-Ašʿarī that the Muʿtazilah held divine attributes to be aspects of speech acts, linguistic statements rather than actual things with ontological status.[16] (I deal with this doctrine below.) In 1965, Allard did not have access to the work of ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār, but al-Ašʿarī's tenth-century assessment of the Muʿtazilī School was correct, and in the eleventh century ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār did state that the divine attribute is a human act of description.[17] It must have seemed to Allard that if scholars talk either about

14. Frank (1978), Gimaret (1988).

15. "Particular operations of a human spirit that was trying in its language to explain the totality of the divine mystery . . . did not reach God's reality, but rather showed the coherence of human language": Allard (1965, 122).

16. .قالتْ المعتزلةُ والخوارجُ الأسماءُ والصفات هي الأقوال وهي قولُنا الله عالمٌ الله قادرٌ وما أشبَه ذلك
Al-Ašʿarī (1929–33, 172).

17. .لأنَّ الصفة هي القولُ كما أنه الوصف   Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 7:117).

words or about things, then the Muʿtazilah had been talking about words. Both Richard Frank and Johannes Peters inhabited the same twentieth-century world in which this was a key philosophical distinction and were extremely concerned at the prospect of *kalām* becoming not a science of the real but a vortex of linguistic relativism. Frank: "This is a distortion of both metaphysics and theology, for whatever feelings one may have about linguistic philosophy, to attempt to reduce the systematic thought of a medieval author to linguistic problems is to alienate it completely from its own proper sense."[18] Peters: "Should we conclude from all this that the qualities are the result of a purely intellectual activity which gives names to things, or even worse: Should we conclude that the qualities are only names and words arbitrarily given? Not at all."[19] Rarely in the literature do scholars take such a tone, and the fact that both men do so here is indicative of high twentieth-century academic stakes.

In his later work Frank came to see an "evocative richness" in the same overlap between language and external reality that had previously been of such concern, and he identified this richness as "a very basic aspect of their thought." But his translation strategy remained the same: the identification of different senses for key expressions that were "formally distinct but . . . nevertheless inseparably linked the one to the other."[20] This book is an attempt to continue the task that Frank began and work through more of the relationship between language, mind, and reality in these texts. But in order to do so, I would like to propose a different translation strategy, one that is in line with the methodology I outlined in chapter 3. As Frank and Allard both noted, we cannot afford to lose in translation the precision and rigor that these eleventh-century theologians brought to their work. They rarely appealed to some sphere of inexplicability, whether divine or human, but on the contrary constantly struggled to do what we now tend to call "science," a systematic attempt to understand how the world works. Their world included not just human beings but also God, and not just study of things in the extramental world but the study of language, meaning, and cognitive processes as well. Perhaps most important, however, scholars such as Ibn Fūrak were often very precise about the boundary between language and mind. For example, in his discussion of the optimal procedure for engaging in the dialectical theological debates of the eleventh century, Ibn Fūrak wrote that one should be careful not to give too much weight to aesthetically pleasing expressions but rather should "display the *maʿānī* to one's soul in order to determine what is true and what is invalid without reference to

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18. Frank (1968, 299).

19. Peters (1976, 152).

20. Frank (1999, 189).

linguistic expressions."[21] I see this as a statement about cognition that privileges the mind over language; Ibn Fūrak thought that *maʿnā* was a sphere in which humans could exercise their judgment without language necessarily being involved.

In the eleventh century there was no cultural clash between scholars who cared about things and scholars who fetishized words. Instead, there was a conceptual vocabulary with *maʿnā* at its core. My argument resides in the experiment of reading Classical Arabic theology as *maʿnā*-centric and trying to work out from the evidence provided by usage both what sort of thing *maʿnā* was for them and how we can understand what it meant. Ibn Fūrak is my test case, and I hope that conclusions drawn here may prove informative for work on other scholars. My colleagues have noted the importance of language for these authors and the problem caused by the term *maʿnā*. Frank was well aware of language's cultural centrality,[22] and A. I. Sabra wrote that "the whole subject of language usage as a recognized argument in establishing *Kalām* doctrines deserves an extensive treatment, for which there is no space here."[23] Peters's important glossary of ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār's terminology has an entry for *maʿnā,* in which Peters writes that "some authors have been intrigued by this obscure concept. . . . To give a correct and clear translation of the word *maʿnā* is very difficult."[24] This is the point at which language and reality seem to overlap, the place where Frank located an "evocative richness," and it is here that we need to play their language games. *Maʿnā* is our ball.

THEOLOGIES DIRECTED AT THE WORLD

Language in ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār

The world that eleventh-century theologians wanted to understand was dominated by the observable phenomenon of human language. Scholars needed to use language to describe God, and in the process they needed to ask what language was and how it worked. Just as they were interested in the forces that caused objects to move in the world, with God inextricable from their accounts, so too were they interested in how language worked, and God was inextricable from these accounts too. In the above discussion of the threat of relativism, we encountered ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār's Muʿtazilī claim that God's divine attributes were in fact just human descriptions of him. Determined to preserve the ontological and epistemological transcendence and unity of the divine, the Muʿtazilah held that divine attributes

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21. والطريق إلى التلخيص مِن ذلك عَرْضُ معانيها على النفس لِيَفصِل بين حقّها وباطلها من دون العبارات.
Ibn Fūrak (1987, 320.18–19).

22. Montgomery (2006, 38–39).

23. Sabra (2006, 209). Cf. Sabra (2009).

24. Peters (1976, 156 n. 234, 157).

were not eternal ontological things but rather human acts of description.[25] ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār then needed to explain how human acts of description worked. His explanation took the form of a structure of reference centered on how we use nouns.

When ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār wrote that *maʿānī* should not be confused with attributes, he was restating an established Muʿtazilī doctrine: "Attributes are speech acts, just as descriptions are speech acts."[26] Perhaps the clearest reason to make such a separation was that there was no theological risk involved in the multiplication of speech acts, whereas there was a substantial risk of polytheism involved in a theology that allowed the actual qualities or cognitive conceptions of God to multiply *ad infinitum.* The Muʿtazilah agreed with the Ašāʿirah about the existence and nature of *maʿānī,* just as they agreed about the monotheistic nature of the divine. The use of the word *maʿnā* was shared conceptual vocabulary between the two rival theological schools. They disagreed, but they did so from common conceptual ground, using shared terminological assumptions to play their language games.

Ibn Fūrak and ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār also shared a belief in the epistemological power of the lexicon and its lexicographer curators. The lexicographers were ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār's first point of call when he came to defend his statement about *maʿānī* being separate from attributes; it was they who represented language precedent and provided (alongside the Quranic text of the revelation) an epistemological backstop for his theories about language usage.[27] The lexicon was for ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār a stable system in which every expression communicated a certain matter, and it was the default state for language: "Absent any obstacles, expressions must be used to refer to everything that they specify."[28] This may seem to be a very tight and restrictive view of what language can do. But ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār was in fact arguing for the ability of language to do more, and he was using the lexicographers as his alibi. He was engaged in dismissing his own caricature of his opponents' position on the legitimacy of human descriptions of God: according to him they denied that God's speech could be described, but he said that lexicography proved that humans could and should use words to describe whatever those words applied to. ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār also had another division of language usage that we have not yet

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25. قالت المعتزلةُ والخوارج الأسماءُ والصفات هي الأقوالُ وهي قولُنا اللهُ عالمٌ اللهُ قادرٌ وما أَشبه ذلك. Al-Ašʿarī (1929–33, 172). Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 7:117).

26. لأنّ الصفة هي القولُ كما أنه الوصف. وبيّنَا أنّ تسمية المعاني بأنها صفاتٌ لا تَصِح لأنّ الصفات هي القول كما أنه الوصف. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 7:117.10–11). Cf. Peters (1976, 151 n. 213).

27. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 7:117.12, 5:251.19, 5:255.7f).

28. لأنّ كلّ عبارةٍ أفادتْ في اللغة أمرًا ما فيجِب إجراؤها على كلّ ما اختُصّ بذلك إلا المانع. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 7:118.3–4).

encountered. He gave an account of how language worked as labeling (*laqab*) and an account of how language worked without labeling.

ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār was discussing whether or not it was legitimate to describe God as a thing. This was another established and characteristic debate in Islamic theology. (For a representative review, see Brodersen.)[29] ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār believed that God was a thing, and he held this position because of his understanding of what language was and how language worked. He wrote that "our speech act 'thing' records everything that can truly be known and reported on." To put this another way, we use the word "thing" for everything that we know and can talk about, everything we can predicate of something else, everything about which we can say, 'that is a . . .'" For this reason, we use "thing" to name all kinds of different things with different descriptions in different classes. ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār immediately contrasted this way of using language with an epistemologically separate category of language use, the label (*laqab*): "If ['thing'] were a label, then it would single out something specific to the exclusion of everything else, and if what was being communicated was a class or an attribute, then it would equally be necessary for 'thing' to single out that class or attribute to the exclusion of all others."[30]

ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār then sharpened the distinction between these two kinds of language usage. Using words as labels "communicates," but words can also be used to report on what is known without necessarily communicating what is known.[31] This seems to be counterintuitive, but he has a specific understanding of what it means to communicate here, which he makes clear with some examples from ordinary language. According to ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār, the speech acts "I saw a thing" and "I saw" are identical with respect to what they communicate.[32] The word "thing" does not therefore communicate anything accurately, although it does report something that can be truly known. This is an account of how language reference works, an account that makes a distinction between language-as-label, which communicates, and language that does not meet that standard. ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār was sensitive to the criticism that it is inappropriate to use the latter, less rigorously referential, kind of language to describe God. He wrote that words that do not communicate may still be used to report on a particular thing: "a body," for example, is a speech act that

29. Brodersen (2014, 473–76).

30. لأنَّ قولنا شيءٌ يقع على كلِّ ما يَصح أنْ يُعلم ويُخبر عنه ولذلك تُسمّى به الأشياءُ على اختلافها واختلافِ أوصافها وأجناسها ولو كان لقباً يختصّ شيئاً معيّناً لَوَجَبَ أنْ يُخَصّ به دون غيرِهِ ولو أفاد جِنساً أو صفةً لَوَجَبَ أنْ يُختصّ به دون غيره. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 5:249.7–10).

31. هذا الاسمُ وإنْ كان يَجري على كلِّ ما يَصح أنْ يُعلم ويُخبر عنه فإنه لا يُفيد ذلك فيه. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 5:250.4–5).

32. لأنَّ قولِ القائل رأيْتُ شيئاً ورأيْتُ في الفائدة سواء. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 250.8–9).

applies only to substances but that does not formally communicate "substance."[33] In these cases, it is possible to consider the noncommunicating speech act to be, in effect, working as a label, and this makes it acceptable for "thing" to be used for God.[34]

But there are still two separate kinds of language. Just like twentieth-century analytical philosophers of language, ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār wanted to give an account of language (or at least of nouns) that was strictly referential: "The label is what specifies the thing labeled and singles it out so it receives a determination that functions in the same way as a physical gesture of indication."[35] But unlike twenti-eth-century advocates of language as reference, ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār understood some ordinary language to fall short of that standard, in this case the word "thing." One the one hand, there was language that functioned according to a strict account of reference, in which a word applied to what it specified (whether an instance or a class) and nothing else. On the other hand, there was language that was used in context, speech acts that might at times work in the same way as labels but that did not provide the same epistemological specificity. Theology was the driver of this discussion, because the question of how to describe God forced theorists like ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār to confront the degree to which they understood language as ref-erential. (One cannot physically point at God.) He was also using vocabulary from earlier Muʿtazilī discussions of whether "thing" could be used for what God had not yet created.[36] And his vocabulary itself came from theories of grammar and lexicography in which the "label" was one way to talk about the proper noun or name. By the eleventh century, these resources enabled ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār both to parse the theological legitimacy of certain speech acts and to reach conclusions about how language itself functioned. The conclusion he ultimately reached was that strict accounts of reference were possible, but strict reference did not work for God.[37]

ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār reached this conclusion with the help of two conceptual frame-works with which we are already familiar, the lexicon and accuracy. The difference between the categories of label and not-label is that a label can be changed without

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33. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār. لأنَّ قولنا جِسمٌ لا يقع إلا على الجواهر وإنْ كان لا يُفيد ذلك فيه. (1965–74, 5:250.6–7).

34. فمِن حيث [الشيءُ] يقع على كلِّ ما هذه حالُه صار كأنه مُفيدٌ فلذلك وَصَفْنا اللهَ وعزَّ به ولا. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 5:250.11–۱۳). يَمتنِع أنْ يقال إنه في حُكمِ اللقب وإنْ لم يكن لَقَبٌ.

35. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 5:250.13–14). لأنَّ اللقب هو ما عيَّن الملقَّب وخصّص ليقع به التعريفُ الجاري مَجرى التخصيص بالإشارة.

36. Al-Ašʿarī (1929–33, 161.8–10, 522.15f), Frank (1982, 262–63, 277–78 n. 9). Cf. Frank (1984, 49).

37. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 5:203.14–15). أنَّ اللقب المَحْض الذي يَختص الأعيانَ هو الذي لا يَجري عليه تعالى . . .

affecting the lexicon (what Frank calls "arbitrary denomination"),[38] whereas nouns that are not labels cannot be changed without affecting the lexicon. As Abū Hilāl put it, describing a black thing as white is lying, but labeling a black thing "white" is not.[39] Just as we saw the lexicon function for ar-Rāġib and Ibn Fūrak as a limit, so the lexicon works for ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār as a ground in which he can anchor word usage that cannot be justified by a strict account of reference. A label simply points at something, but other nouns rely on the lexicon, and therefore on precedent, to make sense.[40] The paradigm of accurate reference is therefore the label, close to what we may call a proper noun, and independent of the lexicon. The vast majority of language, however, relies on the lexicon. In the lexicon, nouns point to *maʿānī*, and with some painfully circular Arabic syntax that I will avoid by way of paraphrase, ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār explained how these *maʿānī* could still make sense in the absence of accurate reference: the only *maʿnā* that the speech act "thing" communicates is a bringing together of everything that can be known and reported on with this noun.[41] That is how the noun "thing" is placed in the lexicon.[42] It communicates a *maʿnā*, and it is therefore appropriate to use it to talk about God, because the *maʿnā* in question is such that God is one of the things that can be reported upon. But "thing" cannot be a label for God.

What we see in the work of ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār, exemplified in this brief review of his position on whether or not God can be called a "thing," is a broad conviction that when it comes to the vast chasm between God and humanity, language falls on the human side. The lexicon was developed by human beings and is used by human beings. Language was a human lexicon, determined by precedent rather than reason or revelation.[43] The use that human beings make of their language does not have an impact on God: "Negating his name does not negate him."[44] Ibn Fūrak agreed that this separation existed, writing that if someone were to protest

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38. Frank (1982, 263).

39. Abū Hilāl (2006, 41.17–18). فالقائلُ للأسودِ أبيضٌ على الصفة كاذبٌ وعلى اللقب غيرُ كاذب.

40. إنّ شيءٍ [كذا] وإنْ لم يُفِد في الحقيقة على ما نُبيّنه بعدُ فإنه مخالِفٌ للقبِ المحضِ ولذلك لا يصح تبديلُه مع بقاءِ اللغة كما لا يصح ذلك في الأسماءِ المفيدةِ ولذلك لا يصح أنْ يَزال عن جِهته مع بقاءِ اللغة كالألقاب. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 5:202.3–5).

41. يُبيَّن ذلك أنّ ما له ولأجله لم يُفِد قولُنا شيءٌ معنىً يَرجِع إلى المسمّى دونَه وهو أنّ جميعَ ما يصح تسميتُه هو ما يَستعمِل عليه هذا الاسم وهو كلُّ ما يصح أنْ يُعلم وأنْ يُخبر عنه. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 5:202.6–8).

42. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 5:203.8–9).

43. أنّ استعمالَ الأسماء والأوصاف يَحسُن مِن جهة اللغة . . . اللغةُ هي الأصلُ كما أنّ أصلَ . . . ما يُعلم مِن جهة السمْع فأدِلّةُ السمْع هي الأصلُ وما يُعلم بالعقل فهو الأصلُ فيه. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 5:197.4–7).

44. فليس في نفيِ الاسم نفيُه. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 5:251.6).

that God, in commanding the unbeliever to believe, was ordering something he knew to be impossible (a key Muʿtazilī ethical argument with which the Ašāʿirah disagreed), then the answer should be: "Impossibility here is only in the speech act. The one who says 'impossible' moves a speech act away from the norms of truth and correctness and into error and falsity. It is not the person commanded who is impossible."[45] Neither Ibn Fūrak nor ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār thought that a human speech act could of itself create reality or determine the nature of God. But ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār came to this position through a thoroughgoing separation of human language from the divine sphere.

Atoms, Bodies, and Accidents with Ibn Fūrak

Ibn Fūrak's extramental world was composed of atoms that were combined into bodies. The eleventh-century theological texts do not all describe themselves as primarily engaged in the pursuit of atoms, but they almost all deal with atoms as an important question of fact, and this has proved a useful and productive lens with which to fit Islamic theology into the history of a scientific field that traditionally starts with Democritus and could be seen to end with the Large Hadron Collider.[46] Just as the beginnings of pre-Socratic Greek philosophy had been concerned with "the physical constitution of the universe," so a concern for atoms, accidents, space, and void had started in Arabic in the eighth century.[47] Atomism has been one of the central ways in which Anglophone and European scholarship has approached Islamic theology. But what would our reading of eleventh-century Islamic theology look like if it focused on maʿānī rather than on atoms? Ibn Fūrak was certainly concerned with the physical world; his investment in things both created and divine is clear. What did he say about atoms and maʿnā, and what happens if we try to continue the experiment of always translating maʿnā as "mental content"?

Chapter 37 of the Muǧarrad deals with the atom. It is the smallest division of reality possible, the "indivisible part" one reaches when dividing the composite bodies that constitute the world.[48] Ibn Fūrak describes this chapter as particularly subtle and intricate theology, subtle and intricate speech about God and the world.[49] He writes that all bodies in the world are composed of indivisible atoms according to the maʿnā that "every atom cannot be halved or divided into thirds

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45. إنّ المُحال إنما يكون في القول وهو القولُ الذي أحالَه قائلُه عن سُنَن الحقّ والصواب إلى وجهِ الخطأ
والبطلان وليس المأمورُ به مُحالاً. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 116.4–7).

46. Dhanani (1994); Sabra (2006), (2009); Wolfson (1976, 466f).

47. Gutas (2004, 199).

48. اعلمْ أنه كان يقول إنّ أجسام العالَم متركِّبةٌ من أجزاء غيرِ متجزِّئة. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 202.13).

49. فصلٌ آخر في باب إيضاح مذاهبه في اللطيف من الكلام والدقيق. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 202.10).

or quarters. It cannot be contemplated that an atom could be divided or partitioned in such a way as to produce further divisions, parts, or atoms."[50] Ibn Fūrak also reported that belief in infinitely divisible parts was false, equivalent to the religiously controversial belief that bodies were cosmologically arranged in some form of vertical hierarchy: "There is no difference between the statement that every atom can be halved and the halves halved again, and the statement that every body has a body above it and a body below it."[51] Here we see an Islamic theological commitment to monotheism that uses avoidance of Neoplatonism as a reason to commit to atomism. (Cf. Herbert Davidson on Abū Yūsuf b. Isḥāq al-Kindī, d. ca. 870, and John Philoponus, d. ca. 570.)[52] We also see a determination to direct theology toward the real world. It is the physical bodies of the world that are at stake here.

But human cognition is involved. In Ibn Fūrak's quotation, al-Ašʿarī used the word *maʿnā* in much the same way as Abū ʿUbaydah had: to introduce a conceptual paraphrase ("according to the *maʿnā* that . . .") A few sentences later, Ibn Fūrak used *maʿnā* again, this time as a label for causal factors in the agglomeration and subdivision of bodies. He explained that just as there was an upper limit on the process of combining bodies, so there had to be a lower limit on to what extent those combinations could be unwound to result in individual atoms: "The fact that there is a limited number of *maʿānī* by which bodies come together or are separated proves that the atoms are in themselves indivisible from all aspects."[53] This is a similar usage of *maʿnā* to Muʿammar's cause; *maʿnā* here, in Ibn Fūrak, is a factor that brings together atoms to make a body. (Cf. Herbert Davidson.)[54] We may in English introduce a conceptual paraphrase with "according to the idea that . . . ," and we may say that there is "a limited number of factors involved" in the combination or subdivision of bodies. Where we use "idea" and "factor," Arabic used *maʿnā*.

Atoms had *maʿānī*. For example, the quality of being is a *maʿnā* held to subsist in the atom itself. Another *maʿnā* is combination, which is in the atom when it is

50. اعلَم أنه يقول إن أجسام العالَم متركّبة من أجزاء غير متجزّئة على معنى أن كلَّ جزءٍ منها لا يصح أنْ يكون له نِصف أو ثُلث أو رُبع ولا يُتوهَّم أنْ يَنقسم أو يتبعّض حتى يصير أقساماً وأبعاضاً وأجزاء. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 202.13–15).

51. وإنه لا فرْقَ بين قول مَن قال إنه لا جزءَ إلا وله نِصف ولنصفه نِصف وبين قول مَن قال إنه لا جِسمَ إلا وفوقَه جسم وتحته جسم لا إلى نهاية. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 202.16–18). Herbert Davidson (1987, 106f, 115). Thanks to Rodrigo Adem for the reference.

52. Herbert Davidson (1969).

53. وكان يقول إن ما دلَّ على حَدَث الأجسام دلَّ على تناهيها وإنّ ما فيها من الاجتماع والانضمام الذي عنه التجزّؤ والافتراق والافتراقُ محصورٌ فكذلك ما يَعتقبه من ضدّه من أجزاء الافتراق محصورٌ وانحِصارُ المعاني التي بها تجتمع وتفترق دليلٌ على أنّ الأجزاء متناهيةٌ في نفسها من جميع جهاتها. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 202.19–22).

54. Herbert Davidson (1987, 55).

combined with another atom.[55] It is the *maʿnā* of being that makes a certain body actually be in a place.[56] Furthermore, the being *maʿnā,* just like a color *maʿnā,* is inevitable and necessary for any substance.[57] (Substance is the material substrate, composed of atoms, from which bodies are formed.)[58] So atoms combine to make bodies, and *maʿānī* are present on both levels: a single atom that exists in a place has the *maʿnā* being, and a body made up of combined atoms has the *maʿnā* being. One thing that is apparent here is that atoms, like God, are an ontological category that works as a *terminus ad quem,* a final epistemological point beyond which there is nothing. But the same is not true of *maʿānī,* which can be added on to various levels of extramental things in the world just as they can qualify things in the mind.

The *maʿānī* that atoms had were accidents, those Aristotelian nonessential qualities or properties of things (for example, "red" as a quality of a chair).[59] For Ibn Fūrak, these *maʿānī* accidents included, in addition to color, qualities such as being, which was necessary for an atom to exist, or being gathered together, which happened when atoms joined together to form bodies and substances.[60] An accident was a *maʿnā* that "does not subsist in itself."[61] The phrase "subsist in itself" was used to distinguish between bodies and substances on the one hand and accidents on the other: accidents did not subsist in themselves, and they required a place in which they could inhere,[62] whereas what did subsist in itself was a category largely reserved for the divine. (See below and Gimaret.)[63] Bodies composed of substance could also exist without a place, because Ibn Fūrak's system allowed for

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55. وكان يقول إنّ الجزء الواحد يَحتمل جميعَ الأعراض المتعاقِبة عليها وإنّ الذي به يكون كائناً في المكان إذا كان مكانٌ وهو كونٌ فيه موجودٌ وبه قائمٌ في كلّ حالٍ سواءً كان منفرداً أو مجتمعاً وإنْ كان مجتمعاً مع غيره. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 203.4–7). مع غيره كان ذلك المعنى اجتماعاً له مع غيره.

56. المعنى الذي يختصّ الجسمَ لأجله فيكون في مكان دون مكان هو الذي يُسمّى كون. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 262.15).

57. وإنّ الجوهر لا يجوز أنْ يخلو من الكون كما لا يجوز أنْ يخلو من اللون. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 242.11).

58. ويقول إنّ أقلّ ما يقع عليه اسمُ الجسم جَوهرانِ مختلفان. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 206.15–16). Cf. Peters (1976, 121).

59. Arist. *Metaph.* 1026b35–1027a1.

60. وكان يقول إنّ الجزء الواحد يحتمل جميع الأعراض المتعاقبة عليه وإنّ الذي به يكون كائناً في المكان إذا كان مكان وهو كونٌ . . . وإنْ كان مجتمعاً مع غيره كان ذلك المعنى اجتماعاً له مع غيره. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 203.4–7).

61. العرض . . . فأما ما اصطلح عليه المتكلمون فهو المعاني التي لا تقوم بأنفسها. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 333.5).

62. حادِثٌ يَقتضي محلّاً يقوم به وهو العرض لا يصح حدوثه قائماً بنفسه. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 276.5–6).

63. See note 96 below and Gimaret (1990, 37).

the possibility of existence prior to the creation of the world.[64] Bodies could not be thought of as combinations of accidents, however, because an accurate account of "accident" was that it did not subsist in itself, and this held true even if it was combined with other accidents. Bodies had accidents (a chair could be red) but accidents didn't have accidents of their own. (Red couldn't be yellow, and a combination of different accidental qualities couldn't, without at least an atom, have an accident of its own.)[65] Accidents were also different from bodies, because accidents could have opposites, but bodies could not. (Black is the opposite of white, but a man is not the opposite of a horse.)[66]

Ibn Fūrak's discourse about accidents helps us see what his *maʿānī* were. They were not bodies composed of atomic substance but rather qualities that were dependent on those bodies and atoms. They were also subject to some simple logical operations, such as having an opposite. But this was not the only usage Ibn Fūrak made of *maʿnā*. As we saw in "Two Distinct Lexemes" above in chapter 3, Ibn Fūrak used *maʿnā* to talk about the mental content occasioned by speech acts: "The *maʿnā* of [the speech act] 'X is an accident' is that X is a *maʿnā* that exists in an atom."[67] When he argued with other scholars' understanding of "body," he talked about "the *maʿnā* of the body."[68] This refers to the mental content in the mind of the theologian when defining the concept "body." In play are not two separate lexemes but rather one piece of core conceptual vocabulary in Arabic that maps the mind and its interaction with language in a way that English does not. Let us consider how Ibn Fūrak talked about the *maʿnā* of being gathered together: "If the atom is gathered together with another atom, then the *maʿnā* in question is the atom's 'gathering together' with the other atom."[69] The first part of this translation, before the comma, deals with extramental reality. The second part, after the comma, deals with mental existence. The *maʿnā* here is a piece of content that is located in the theologians' minds and enables them to think about, and then name, the behavior of the two atoms in question.

64. وإنْ كان حادثاً لا في مكانٍ فهو بحيث أنْ لو وُجِد مكانٌ كان فيه. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 211.18–19).

65. . . . واعلمْ أنه كان يذهب إلى احالةَ قول مَن قال إنّ الجسم مركّب من أعراض جُمِعَتْ وأبعاض أُلِّفَتْ بل كان يقول إنّ العرض الواحد والأعراض الكثيرة حُكمُها سواء مِن قِبَل أنّ ما له من الحدّ والحقيقة لا يختلف بالقِلّة والكُثرة . . . وحُكم العرض الواحد وشرطُه أنه يستحيل أنْ يكون قائماً بنفسه محتملاً للعرض . . . فأما ما اصطلح عليه المتكلمون فهو المعاني التي تقوم بأنفسها. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 211.8–13, 333.5).

66. لا عَرَضٌ مِن الأعراض إلا وله ضِدٌّ مِن مُوافِقٍ أو مخالفٍ ولا يصح وجودُ عَرَضٍ لا ضِدَّ له وكذلك لا يصح وجودُ جوهرٍ له ضِدٌّ ولا وجودُ ضِدٍ لجوهر. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 261.20–21).

67. See chapter 3 note 45 above.

68. . . . وإنْ أجاب مجيبٌ بأنّ حقيقة معنى الجسم . . . مَن ذهب من المعتزلة إلى أنّ معنى الجسم . . . Ibn Fūrak (1987, 29.19–20, 210.16).

69. . . . وإنْ كان مجتمعاً مع غيره كان ذلك المعنى اجتماعاً له مع غيره. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 203.6–7).

Bodies, composed of atoms, moved with a *maʿnā* that was movement. The accurate account of movement was that it was a *maʿnā* that took a body from one place to another; there was nothing else in movement of which one could give an accurate account.[70] As such, this *maʿnā* of movement was visible to the eye, just as the other *maʿānī* of color, combination, and separation were also observable.[71] But this *maʿnā* was not caused by another: *maʿānī* couldn't stack up behind each other in a causal chain as Muʿammar had thought. As always, the question looming in the background was the divine attributes of God. Whereas Muʿammar had said that God's essential attribute of knowledge was there because of a chain of infinite causal *maʿānī*,[72] Ibn Fūrak denied that there could even be two links in such a chain: God's knowledge was a *maʿnā,* and it couldn't have its own *maʿnā* of knowing.[73] This is compatible with Ibn Fūrak's account of the justice of God's acts: the justice is in the specific instance of an act; justice does not depend on a separate *maʿnā*.[74] Ibn Fūrak did not want to allow the proliferation of *maʿānī* behind the divine unity or command of God, and unlike Muʿammar he did not think that use of the word *maʿnā* was a way out of this monotheistic bind.

Ibn Fūrak's *maʿānī* had causal roles only when it came to the extramental reality of objects moving. When it came to God, the *maʿānī* were limited and static: God's knowledge was a *maʿnā,* but it was not caused by anything else, *maʿnā* or otherwise. The *maʿnā* as cause was a human issue. For example, Ibn Fūrak wrote that the word *ʿillah* (a cause or reason, translated by Frank as "ground") could, "like the accidents and the rest of the *maʿānī* that subsist in substances," be called a *maʿnā*.[75] Just as an accident was a specific kind of *maʿnā,* so the *ʿillah* was a different specific kind of *maʿnā,* the kind that was a cause requiring humans to act according to a specific scholarly ruling. We know these particular causal judgments were the

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70. سأل [سائلٌ] فقال هل للحركة حقيقة سواءها فأجاب [الأشعريُّ] بأنه ليستْ لها حقيقةٌ غيرها بل Ibn Fūrak (1987, 333.6–8). حقيقتُها نفسُها وهى أنه معنىً يتحرّك به المتحرّكُ ويُفرغ مكاماً ويَشغَل مكاناً

71. Ibn Fūrak (1987, وكان يقول إنّ الألوان والحركات مرئيّةٌ لَنا الآن وكذلك الاجتماع والافتراق. 333.10–11).

72. وأما معمّرٌ فحكى عنه محمدُ بن عيسى السيرافي النظامي أنه كان يقول إنّ البارئ عالمٌ بعلم وإنّ Al-Ašʿarī (1929–33, 488.3–5), van Ess (1991–95, عِلمُه كان عِلمَه له لمعنىً وكان المعنى لمعنىً لا إلى غاية 5: 267–68).

73. ويأبى أنْ يُوصف العِلم بأنه عالمٌ أو تُوصف الحركة بأنها متحرّكةٌ لأن ذلك يؤدي إلى قيام معنىٍ بها Ibn Fūrak (1987, 39.18–19). فلا يَحتمل المعنى معنىً

74. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 140.12–13). إنّ أفعال الله تعالى عدْلٌ وحِكمةٌ وحقٌّ وحَسَنٌ لِأعْيانها لا لمعنى

75. أنّ العلّة هو المعنى الذي يَتعلق به الحُكمُ المُوجَبُ عنه وكان لا يأبى تسميةَ المعاني التي تَقُوم Ibn Fūrak (1987, 303.4–5, 310.7f). Cf. Frank (2004, 755). بالجواهر كالأعراضِ الحادثةِ القائمةِ بها عِلَلٌ

result of worldly hermeneutics, because they could be wrong: apostates had their false reasoning (*iʿtilāl*).[76]

One thing that brings all *maʿānī* together is the fact that they could always be expressed in language. This led to a tension, inherent in the development of these theories of theological physics, between the role played by the lexicon on the one hand and by human reason on the other. Ibn Fūrak complained that al-Astarābāḏī, the rival scholar who had scooped his book on al-Ašʿarī, had mistakenly adduced a statement that there was nothing in an accident of which one could give an accurate account. Ibn Fūrak said this could not be true because al-Ašʿarī had understood the accident "according to the lexicon" as simply "that which presented itself." One could, therefore, give an accurate account of the category of accident, a lexically accurate account.[77] Elsewhere, the position that bodies in the state of coming to be were not moving was characterized by Ibn Fūrak as being: "according to the lexicon, not according to reason, because the lexicographers call the body 'moving' when it is in one place and then is moved to another. The body in the state of coming to be, however, has not been in a previous place." In both these cases the lexicon is the arbiter of correct descriptions of forces in extramental reality. Ibn Fūrak calls this theorizing "from the perspective of the lexicon." But he goes on to say that while the existence of a body in a state of coming to be is not called "movement," it is nevertheless: "in the *maʿnā* of what is called 'movement.'"[78] This is theorizing "from the perspective of rational minds," and it uses *maʿnā* as the arbitrating structure. But even here, the lexicon is an indispensable part of the process: Ibn Fūrak can make the argument that the *maʿnā* of the vocal form "coming to be" is the same *maʿnā* referred to by the vocal form "moving" only because of the existence of a lexicon in which *maʿānī* map onto vocal forms. The same tension can be found in the opening chapter of the *Muǧarrad* on knowledge: al-Ašʿarī is asked for the causal factor behind God's knowledge, and he answers that God's knowledge is knowledge not because of some equation or relation but rather because the word "knowledge" is derived in the lexicon from the word "knowing." God is unquestionably "knowing," so there is no need for

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76. ‏Ibn Fūrak (1987, 296.17f).‏ . . . ‏ومِثالُ ذلك في اعتلال الملحد فيما يدّعيه مِن قِدَم العالَم‏

77. ‏ثم حكى عنه بعد ذلك أنه كان يقول إنّ العرَض ليستْ لها حقيقةٌ فهذا أيضاً خطأ فاحش لأنّ العرَض‏ ‏عنده ما يعرض من طريق اللغة ولا يختصّ ما يقوم بنفسه ممّا لا يقوم فأما ما اصطلح عليه المتكلمون فهو‏ ‏المعاني التي تقوم بأنفسها.‏ Ibn Fūrak (1987, 333.3–5).

78. ‏وكان يقول إنه لا يصح أنْ يكون [الجسمُ] متحرّكاً في حالِ حُدوثه من طريق امتناع تسميته بذلك‏ ‏مِن جهة اللغة لا مِن جهة العقول وذلك أن أهلُ اللغة سمّوا الجسمَ متحرّكاً إذا كان في مكانٍ ثم انتقَل منه إلى‏ ‏غيره والجسمُ في حالِ حُدوثه لم يكن كان في مكان قبله وانتقل عنه إليه ولذلك لا يُسمَّى ما فيه من الكون‏ ‏حركةً ولكنه هو بمعنَى ما يسمَّى حركةً.‏ Ibn Fūrak (1987, 211.20–24).

further investigation into the causes of his knowledge.[79] Here the lexicon is the ultimate adjudicator; it is the morphological structure of the Arabic language that provides the reason for God's knowledge. *Maʿnā* is the arbitrating structure, and it functions only through the lexicon.

Ibn Fūrak asked whether "re-creation" was in the same *maʿnā* space as "re-created." Should these two separate stages of a single process be placed in the same category?[80] This was a matter of whether, in an occasionalist world, things maintained their identity during a process of change. A black object, described as such, did not continue being black but rather was constantly recreated as black with a series of imperceptible handovers.[81] Being black was an accidental quality, but the same principle applied to substances themselves; a substance could have the *maʿnā* of continuance, and that *maʿnā* could be constantly recreated to ensure its stability.[82] This was Ibn Fūrak's Ašʿarī occasionalism. It applied only to the created world: God could have a permanent *maʿnā* of continuance, as we will see below, but in the world he continually re-created the *maʿnā* of continuance in bodies.

The problem with this theory was that when combined with the doctrine of different descriptions occupying the same *maʿnā* space, it led to contradictions. For example, a body that was being initialized would, at the time of its initialization, also be already re-created, because "initialization" was in the same *maʿnā* space as "re-creation," and "re-creation" was coterminous with "re-created." This is a theory of extramental physical forces and qualities: substances in the world have colors, and bodies in the world continue to exist. The problem for Ibn Fūrak was how to construct a rationally consistent account of these physical forces and qualities. He dealt with the initialization/re-created contradiction by making a distinction between *maʿnā* on the one hand and language on the other. It was true that an existent thing in the process of initialization had the same *maʿnā* as an existent thing that had been re-created. But escape lay in the lexicon: "An existent thing in the process of initialization is not actually named 're-created' in the

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79. فسأل نفسَه فقال إنْ قال قائلٌ فلِما كان العالِمُ عالِماً ألأَجل أنّ العِلم علمٌ أم لأَجل أنّ العِلم عِلمٌ وأنه مضافٌ إليه فأبطلهما وقال إنما كان العالِم عالِماً لِما اشتُقّ منه اسمُ العالِم . . . [بياض في الأصل (جيمارت)] Ibn Fūrak . . . . استقرار اللغة ولا يحتاج في استحقاق إلى ذلك ولم يكن ذلك لأَجل إضافة العِلم إلى العالِم (1987, 11.1–6).

80. والصحيح على مذهبه أنّ الإعادة هي نفس المُعاد وأنّ معنى قولِنا إعادةٌ ومُعادٌ يرجع إلى حدوثٍ بعد Ibn Fūrak (1987, 242.21–22). حدوثٍ تخلّلهما عدمٌ.

81. وإنّ استدامة الوصف للأسود بأنه أسود وما توهّم الناظرُ إليه أنه باقٍ فذلك لتجدُّدِ أمثاله وتعذُّرِ الفصل Ibn Fūrak (1987, 242.9–11). بين ما يُعدَم منه ويُحدَث لتجانُسهما وتشاكُلهما لا لأَجل أنه بقي إلى الثاني.

82. وعلى هذا الأصل فلا يُنكَر عنده بقاءُ جوهرٍ مع عدم سائرِ الجواهِر بأنْ يجدَّد بقاءٌ له. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 242.11–12).

lexicon."[83] Human language made a distinction between "initialization" and "re-created," but when it came to the operative *maʿnā* they were the same. The gap is clear: human language on one side and the operations of occasionalist physics on the other. Ibn Fūrak used an account of language usage and precedent to escape a conceptual problem that was posed in terms of *maʿānī*.

Another test of Ibn Fūrak's understanding of the relationship between *maʿnā* and extramental things is his description of the interaction between *maʿnā* and something that does not exist. He wrote that al-Ašʿarī "refused to call a nonexistent thing a name that would necessitate *maʿānī* subsisting within it." It was, he thought, impossible for a *maʿnā* such as knowledge or movement to be in something that did not exist. Even though use of the name "moving" or "knowing" established only the *maʿnā* of knowledge or movement and did not actually establish "the essence of the knowing person or the moving thing," nevertheless the presence of a *maʿnā* of knowing or movement did require there to be something existing in which that knowledge or movement could be.[84] In this statement from Ibn Fūrak we can see a clear separation between language on the one hand and mind and reality on the other. Language has a close relationship with mind: the use of a certain word inevitably produces a *maʿnā*. But this *maʿnā* does not then by itself affirm the existence of something in which the *maʿnā* could subsist or to which it could apply. The only way the existence of a *maʿnā* necessitates the existence of anything is by the logical argument that one cannot have movement in something that does not exist. Ibn Fūrak's mind was a rational place in which the law of noncontradiction held: "Two contradictory *maʿānī* cannot occur in the same place."[85] It was not a mental world that denied hypothetical or unreal things—"something that does not exist can be mentioned or known"—but it was a world in which those nonexistent things had to behave in rationally predictable ways: "The nonexistent cannot be killed or hit." Ibn Fūrak knew that language did not control extramental reality—"mentioning something does not make it exist"—but his mental content was internally consistent: the mental content of "having been killed" did necessitate the mental content of an act of killing.[86]

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83. فإذا قيل على هذا ففي حالِ ابتدائه يجب أن يكون مُعاداً لوجودِ نفسه فالجواب أنه بمعنى ذلك وإنْ لم يُسمَّ به من طريق اللغة فلأنّ المُعاد والمبتدأ بمعنى واحد. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 243.1–3).

84. وكان يأبى أيضاً أنْ يُسمَّى المعدومَ بالأسماء التي تقتضي قيامَ المعاني به كقولنا إنه متحرِّكٌ أم عالِمٌ لأنّ ذلك وإنْ كان إثباتاً للعلِم والحركة لا لِذات العالِم والمتحرِّك فإنّ ذلك يَقتضي وجودَ العالِم والمتحرِّك لاستحالة قيام عِلم وحركةٍ بِمَعدوم. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 255.15–17). Cf. al-Ašʿarī (1929–33, 523).

85. وأن المعتبر عنده في معنى التضاد استحالة اجتماع المعنيين في محل من جهات الحدوث فقط لا معنى آخر. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 111.7–8).

86. وكذلك يستحيل أنْ يُوصَف المعدومُ بما يقتضي وجودَ معنىً به ممّا يقتضي وجودَه كنحوٍ وَصْفِنا للمَقتول بأنه مقتولٌ لأنّ ذلك وإنْ كان يقتضي قيامَ قتلٍ بالقاتِل فإنه لا يصح قتلٌ لمقتولٍ معدومٍ ويصحّ وجودُ

Frank Griffel suggests that a good starting point for thinking about *maʿnā* in English is "anything that exists and is not a body." (Cf. Herbert Davidson, who simply uses "thing.")[87] I would like to suggest that we can add a location to this translation: *maʿānī* exist in the mind. The fact that they exist is critical: *maʿānī* have an ontological status and salience, as evidenced by the fact that they adhere to laws of noncontradiction. But their existence is a mental existence. The ultimate test of these readings, and of the concomitant translation of *maʿnā* as "mental content," is God. But the God revealed by reading Ibn Fūrak's Islamic theology never entirely gets away from human epistemology. Theology remains the human struggle to get to God, and for Ibn Fūrak this is a struggle with *maʿnā*.

There is a long section in the *Muǧarrad* that deals with the possibility and permissibility of humans actually seeing God, where Ibn Fūrak considered the question of whether seeing God would mean that one acquired, with regard to God, a *maʿnā*. His answer was an attempt to maintain the necessary separation between the divine and humanity, and to promise a superlative affect to humans who reached such a stage, but despite this Ibn Fūrak remained committed to his human epistemology: "The person who sees necessarily attains a knowledge of what they see." Even when confronted with God, humans would process the superlative impact of this encounter with *maʿnā*.[88] The mechanism of sensory perception was the same for both language and reality: "Everything that exists can be seen and heard; everything we see has a 'vision,' and everything we hear has an 'audition,' that is in both cases specific to it and followed by a *maʿnā*."[89] *Maʿnā* was the stuff of cognition with which humans processed everything: their mental content. But at the same time, in an occasionalist world of Ašʿarī theology, it was God who made each specific mental content follow each vision and audition into the human mind; God was the cause of perception.[90]

ذكرٍ لمذكورٍ معدومٍ والفرقُ بينهما أنّ وجود الذكر لا يقتضي وجودَ المذكور ووجودُ القتل يقتضي وجودَ المقتول (22–255.18 ,1987) Ibn Fūrak. فلذلك جاز أنْ يُذكَر المعدومُ ويُعْلَم ولمْ يجزْ أنْ يُقْتَل المعدومُ ويُضْرَب

87. Herbert Davidson (1987, 427), Griffel (2017, 14).

88. وكذلك كان يقول في جوابِ مَن يسأله فيقول [أ] إذا رأيْتُمُوه تَستفيدون فيه معنىً أو لا بأنّ الفوائد إنما تَحْدُث في الرائي لا في المرئيّ وهو أنه يَحصل للرائي ضرورةً عِلمٌ بما يَراه مع أنواعٍ من اللَّذّات زائدةٍ على لَذّة كل. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 89.18–20).

89. وإنّ كلَّ مَوجودٍ يَجوز أنْ يُرى ويُسمع وإنّ لِكلّ مَرْئيّ لَنا رُؤْيةً وإنّ لِكلّ مَسموع لَنا سمْعاً يَخصّه وله معنىً يعاقبه. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 80.13–15).

90. وإنما يُحدِث اللهُ الإدراكَ على مجرى العادة عند حُدوثِ معانٍ ومقابَلةَ أشياء لا لأجل تلك المعاني المقابَلة ولا. لأجل Ibn Fūrak (1987, 88.19–20).

THE WORLD CONNECTED TO GOD

"God created things and instances and made them exist as substance and accident." With this pithy statement Ibn Fūrak displays the difference between things in general (*šayʾ*, plural *ašyāʾ*) and particular instances of things (*ʿayn*, plural *aʿyān*; for discussion of these distinctions beyond Ibn Fūrak see Frank).[91] The theological point here is that the world and its things are created and not eternal (as the atheists claimed),[92] but the clear epistemological and ontological implication is that God's creation extends throughout and beyond physical reality. For it was not just that God created substance and accident but rather that substance and accident were all that he created; there were no other types of created thing.[93]

God's maʿānī

God's divine attributes shaped much of Islamic theological discourse, and theories about them helped create the epistemological structures Ibn Fūrak used for his descriptions of extramental reality. God has divine attributes that are *maʿānī* and that, unlike accidents, subsist in themselves. Alongside knowledge, another example of a divine attribute is "continuance" (*baqāʾ*). This is a *maʿnā* that God has, and God is thereby "continuing"; that is, he keeps on being God.[94] God's continuance *maʿnā* does not subsist in something else, as an accident would.[95] In typically circular formulations: "The continuance of the Creator continues for itself because its self is continuance,"[96] and "The continuance of the Creator continues, and it has a continuance that is its self."[97] These are *maʿānī* that subsist in themselves and do so by themselves without any extra causal factors. What Ibn Fūrak was doing here was working to preserve the monotheistic integrity of the creator. God could not continue with a *maʿnā* of continuance in his self because that would, under the conditions of strict monotheism, necessitate God's actual self being continuance as well as being God. And God cannot be two things. The continuance *maʿnā* had to be kept separate from the self of God. It had to subsist in itself. God and continu-

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91. Frank (1999, 171f).

92. وكان يقول إنّ الله تعالى أَحْدَثَ الأشياءَ المُحدَثةَ أشياءَ وأعياناً وأَوْجَدَها جواهرَ وأعراضاً . . . مَن. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 253.18–19, 254.3–4). خالَف في هذا الباب لازمَه قولُ أهلِ الدهر في قِدَمِ الأعيان مِن الجواهر والأعراض.

93. اعْلَم أنه كان يقول إنّ أقسام المحدَثات نوعانِ جواهرُ وأعراض. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 265.22; cf. 93.14–15, 94.11, 95.14, 98.23–25).

94. أنّ البقاء معنىً مِن المعاني لأجله يَبقى الباقي . . . . Ibn Fūrak (1987, 237.17–18).

95. ويَمنع أنْ يَقوم بقاءُ الباقي بغيره. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 43.4–5).

96. وكان يقول إنّ بقاء البارئ تعالى باقٍ لِنفسه لأنّ نفسَه بقاء. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 237.19).

97. وإنّ بقاء الباري تعالى باقٍ وله بقاءٌ وهو نفسُه. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 43.3–4).

ance could not be in the same *maʿnā* space.[98] I do not think it is too problematic to read *maʿnā* here as "mental content." Ibn Fūrak is talking about the human cognitive processes that explain divine functions. Humans have to make mental content separations between those different aspects of the divine being; our mental contents have to be logically ordered, and they must in their logical order adhere to the logic of monotheism. Ibn Fūrak uses *maʿnā* to talk about human cognition: "Something that continues, continues only because it has a continuance that is its mental content and its formal definition and its accurate account."[99] These three predicates for "continuance," mental content, formal definition, and accurate account, are all human epistemological processes. Ibn Fūrak is telling us how we should think about God. But he did not think God, or his divine attributes, were figments of human imagination; these mental contents had a target that was outside the mind.

Just as important for Islamic theology was how we should think about the world. Ibn Fūrak rejected the idea (which he attributed to al-Ǧubbāʾī, the Muʿtazilī theologian from a century previous) that the only thing that we can accurately think of as continuing was God.[100] Ibn Fūrak had no time for a theological statement that would reserve accuracy for God alone and deny humans the ability to give accurate accounts of the world. This was not a disavowal of God's complete separation from the world as its creator but rather a commitment to keep using the conceptual vocabulary of Islamic theology to describe things, instances, substances, and accidents. It was a stable vocabulary that enabled Ibn Fūrak to understand and then explain how God and human fitted together in the world.

Acquisition (kasb)

In Ibn Fūrak's Ašʿarī School of Islamic theology, one of the primary ways that God and humanity fitted together was the theory of the acquisition of acts. This was a theory that explained how human beings could act in a world entirely created and controlled by God, and it gave scholars an account of human action and motivation with which to negotiate the ethics of theodicy. (See Frank and Thiele.)[101] Human beings can exert force on the objects in the world and be accountable for their actions, but the actual movement of the object in question is in fact done

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98. وﻣُﺤﺎلٌ أنْ ﺗﻜﻮن ﻧﻔﺲُ اﻟﺒﺎرئ تعالى في معنى البقاء. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 237.18–19).

99. إنّ الباقي إنما كان باقياً لأنَّ له بقاءٌ ويقول إنَّ ذلك معناه وهو حدُّه وحقيقتُه. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 237.3–4).

100. وكذلك كان يُنْكِر قولَ الجبّائي في ذهابِه إلى أنْ لا باقٍ في الحقيقة إلا الله تعالى ويقول إنَّ ذلك يُوجِب أنْ يَخُصّه بأوصافه ولا يُجيز مشاركةَ غيرِه له فيه حتى يُحيل أنْ يُوصف بكلّ وصْفٍ وُصِف هو به إلا هو وذلك مُحال. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 240.9–11).

101. Frank (1983, 210–15), Thiele (2016b).

by God. Humans are only local agents, and God is the real agent of change.[102] Ibn Fūrak's account of this core doctrine used the word *maʿnā* a great deal.

Ibn Fūrak wrote that "ability is a *maʿnā* that happens and is an accident. It does not subsist in itself, but rather it subsists in the living substance."[103] Humans can be accurately described as having ability,[104] and God created it, just he created the actual smell of something at the same time as the *maʿnā* of smell occurred in the human in question. These *maʿānī* are in human beings, while the actual referents of the *maʿānī* are created concurrently by God in the extramental world.[105] Humans may appear to be agents, but this is an illusion created by the divine action happening at the same time as the human cognition. On this reading the category of *maʿnā* becomes utterly central to one of the most famous doctrines of Ibn Fūrak's Ašʿarī School of theology.

Ibn Fūrak thought that ability was a *maʿnā* in the living extramental substance of another human or animal. But the word he used for this accidental quality was the same word that he used for human mental contents, and for his own cognition of those accidental qualities, a cognition that he could express in speech. It is not possible to show that he considered these two types of *maʿnā* as separate categories. On the contrary, the text itself shows how they overlap. The sentence quoted above is bracketed by the statement that "ability" is in the same *maʿnā* as "capability," "potentiality," and more. Using our Anglophone conceptual vocabulary, it makes little sense to say that "ability," "capability," and "potentiality" are all one and the same factor in an extramental substance, unless one means that "ability," "capability," and "potentiality" are all words for the same thing. Our conceptual vocabulary tends to push us either into a cognitive process in which the words "ability," "capability," and "potentiality" are judged to have the same meaning or into an extramental reality where "ability" is a faculty that exists in another living being. But Ibn Fūrak's conceptual vocabulary runs the two options together in the same sentence. There is no evidence that he considered them as either separate or different.

But Ibn Fūrak was a theologian equipped and prepared to make distinctions between language, mind, and reality. If he wanted to stress that something was

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102. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 91.22f). ويقول إنّ كَسْب العبد فعلُ الله تعالى ومفعولُه.

103. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 107.19–20). اعْلم أنه كان يذهب إلى أنّ الاستطاعة هي القُدرة وأنه معنىً حادثٌ عَرَضٌ لا يَقوم بنفسه قائمٌ بالجوهر الحيّ.

104. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 107.22–108.1). وكان يقول إنّ الإنسان مستطيعٌ باستطاعةٍ هي غيرُه وإنه يُوصَف بذلك على الحقيقة.

105. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 213.17–19). Cf. al-Bāqillānī in Thiele (2016b, 268 n. 72). يُحدِث [اللهُ] لوناً وطعماً ورائحةً عِند حُدوثِ بعض المعاني مِن أحدنا لا أنه هو الذي أحْدَثَه وإنْ كان قد حَدَثَ عِند حُدوثِ ما يقع منه.

linguistic rather than extramental truth, he did so. If he wanted to stress that what he was talking about was a real thing out in the extramental physical world, he did so. But here, at a central theological, ethical, and philosophical moment, he built a theory of the acquisition of acts that made none of those sharp distinctions. On the contrary, he used a conceptual vocabulary of *maʿnā* that elided the distinction between epistemology and ontology as if it were irrelevant to his concerns.

The selfsame doctrine of acquisition that he put forward may have enabled him to do this. The barriers that divide language, mind, and reality were lowered by God, who created both the *maʿānī* in human minds that made sense of action in the world and the extramental *maʿānī* that constituted that action. God managed both human cognition and extramental physics; humans still thought about physics with their cognitive processes, and *maʿnā* was the stuff of both. It is the translation process that makes us take a stand on the location of the *maʿānī,* not the theological texts themselves. Ibn Fūrak thought that both mind and reality were created and God had exactly the same amount of control over each one. God's control came through an account of causation that was occasionalist. Everything was created at its instant, and God could choose the opposite of the expected outcome or the visible accident at any time. (The undeniable existence of patterns in the world did nothing to disprove this, for God could choose to break them with miracles).[106] Bodies continued to exist only because God kept on renewing their continuance.[107] The same was true of accidents.[108] *Maʿnā* was a fundamental epistemological category that allowed Ibn Fūrak to talk about God while maintaining his commitment to monotheism, to develop a theory of extramental qualities and accidents, and to fit language, cognition, and perception together.

God's Speech

Let us hold onto this reading of *maʿnā* as mental content and move on to three more *quaestiones* that are familiar to Arabists. The theological doctrines of God's speech, God's names, and speech in the soul all deal with the nexus of language, mind, and reality, and all three help us understand what eleventh-century scholars thought language was and how they thought it worked. Language was the primary conduit between humans and the divine. So what did God do when he wanted

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106. وكان يقول إنّ الحوادث كلّها مخترَعٌ لله تعالى ابتداءً مِن غير سببٍ يُوجِبها ولا عِلّةٍ تُولّدها وإنه ما مِن عَرَضٍ فَعَلَه مع عَرَضٍ أو بعدَه عَرَضٌ أو قبْلَه إلا وكان جائزاً أنْ يَفعَلَه مع خلافه أو على خلافِ ذلك . . . ولكنه تعالى قد أجْرَى العادةَ في إحداثِ ذلك . . . ونقْضُ العادةِ إنما يكون مُعجِزةً وكرامةً ودلالةً للصادقين وإبانةً مِن الكاذبين. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 131.7–9, 134.7–9).

107. وإنّ الجسم يَبقى دائماً بتجدُّد البقاء له حالاً فحالاً. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 238.18–19).

108. وهكذا قولُه في سائر الأعراض إنه لا يصح وجودُ شيءٍ منها أكثرَ مِن وقْت واحد . . . ويَستحيل في حالَين متّصِلَين. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 12.22–13.3).

to communicate vital information to his creation? He spoke. Ibn Fūrak said on more than one occasion that absent such divine speech we are not in a position to determine much of what we should do, or much of what we could know to be true. God spoke to make the *maʿānī* of his speech clear to his creation. These *maʿānī* were available to humanity, and according to the same principles of occasionalism laid out above, God controlled this access.[109] Ibn Fūrak did not put as much effort as many of his contemporaries into determining the literary processes through which God communicated, agreeing with the prevalent assumption that God did so in an inimitably perfect way but not going into any great detail about how that perfection was inimitable. (The question of inimitability received substantially more attention from ar-Rāġib and al-Ǧurǧānī.) For Ibn Fūrak, the Quran was a miracle because it was eloquent, well structured, grammatically correct, and contained information humans would not otherwise have known.[110] He was more interested in the ontological and epistemological status of the speech itself.

God's speech was not an accident. On the contrary: it had a rare status for Ibn Fūrak as a *maʿnā* that was actually in God's very essence, with all the eternality, combination, and overlap that that might entail.[111] In the long-running debate on whether this eternality was a problem for Islamic monotheism, Ibn Fūrak held that the Quran's eternal *maʿnā* was in God's self, and the instances of it in human writing or recitation, or indeed divine writing on the heavenly preserved tablet, were outside, created, and accurately accounted for as no longer eternal.[112]

Maʿānī were therefore facts about how reality actually is, cognitive judgments that human beings make about reality, human thoughts and ideas that may or may not have anything to do with the world outside, the referents of the speech that humans engage in with one another, or the divine message that God seeks to communicate to humanity. God could choose to put them in human minds, or in external things, or in both. (Compare the ninth-century statement reported by al-Ǧāḥiẓ, via Jeannie Miller: "God can do what he wishes with names, just as he can do what he wishes with *maʿānī*.")[113] A translation strategy that identifies

109. وإنه [كلامُ الله] مسموعٌ على الحقيقة لله تعالى ولِمَن أسمعه مفهومٌ لمن فهّمه وعرّفه معانيه من المؤمنين . . . يَستدرِك [موسى] بها معاني كلامه [تعالى] والمرادَ بخطابه . . . حتى يَعلم [المرءُ] ابتداءَ مرادِ الله تعالى بخطابه وبمعاني كلامه إيّاه. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 59.13–14, 21, 64.20–21).

110. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 62.20f).

111. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 59.11–12). Cf. أنه كان يقول إنّ كلام الله تعالى صِفَةٌ له قديمةٌ لم يزل قائماً بذاته. Farahat (2016, 594), Vishanoff (2011, 153f).

112. وأنّ تِلاوتهم وقِراءتهم مُحدَثةٌ والمتلوُّ والمقروءُ بها غيرُ مُحدَث . . . وكان يقول إنّ كلام الله تعالى مكتوبٌ على الحقيقة بكتابةٍ حديثةٍ في اللوح. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 60.8–9, 61.22).

113. وزَعَم أنّ اللهَ تعالى يَحكُم في الأسماء بما أَحَبَّ كما أنّ له أنْ يَحكُم في المعاني بما أحب. Al-Ǧāḥiẓ (1965a, 3:329.16–17), Miller (2016b, 64). The translation is mine.

maʿnā as a core subject matter of Islamic theology helps us understand how this discipline can sometimes look on the surface as if it is all about naming, while at the same time it is also clearly very much about things. *Maʿānī* are the link. Omnipresent across the practice of Islamic theology (itself a "science of speech"), when *maʿānī* are expressed in language by a theologian, they inevitably become the mental content of that theologian along the way. (Cf. Frank on this same topic.)[114] But it is our conceptual vocabulary in English that forces us to posit the requirement for a movement from extramental fact or divine attribute to mental content. In Ibn Fūrak's conceptual vocabulary there was no such movement; *maʿnā* did not become mental content after having been an extramental or divine entity. It was just *maʿnā*.

So much of Islamic theology was about naming. This is one way we can read it as a "science of speech" (*ʿilm al-kalām*); the process in which the theologians were engaged was a process of making sure their *maʿānī* were aligned with God's *maʿānī*. Whether they were talking about his divine attributes or the physical forces observable in his creation, eleventh-century theologians were concerned to ensure that their minds had correctly and accurately mapped his *maʿānī*. For the backstop to these processes was always divine, whether it was the divinely placed lexicon that determined an accurate account or the divine act of creation that put the *maʿnā* of movement into a rolling ball and the *maʿnā* referent of speech into the minds of humans engaged in conversations with each other. God aligned *maʿānī* across the divide between this world and the heavens; the Quran was the moment when he did this with the Arabic language.

God's Names

Ibn Fūrak's fifteenth chapter is titled "Further Discussion Clarifying al-Ašʿarī's Positions on the *Maʿānī* of God's Names and Attributes Appearing in the Quran, Sunnah, and Community Consensus."[115] The theological category at stake here is *maʿnā,* which determines and structures the divine names and attributes. *Maʿānī* are, in effect, a set of ontological and cognitive pigeonholes into which different linguistic descriptions or theological functions can be placed by the theologian. For example, God is described as eternal, and the *maʿnā* of this description is that God is prior in existence to everything else, for ever. This is then the same *maʿnā* as the description of God as without beginning.[116] The two linguistic descriptions

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114. Frank (2000, 28–32).

115. فصلٌ آخَرُ في إبانة مذاهبه في معاني ما وَرَد مِن أسماء الربِّ تعالى وصِفاته في الكتاب والسُنة واتِّفاق الأُمة. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 42.7–8).

116. فأما وصفُه بأنه قديمٌ فهو إجماع الأُمة ومعناه أنه متقدِّم بوجوده على كلِ ما وُجِد بالحدوث بغير غاية. ولا مُدَّة وهو معنى الوصف له بأنه أزليّ. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 42.19–20).

go in the same *maʿnā* pigeonhole. Ibn Fūrak had a theological concept of a critical aspect of God's divine nature: God was older than everything else. This was a *maʿnā*. He then placed the linguistic descriptions of God as being eternal or without beginning in this *maʿnā*. It was a way of thinking that allowed the complexity of theological possibilities to align with human reason, human language, and revelation. These three arenas revolved around *maʿnā,* the core category in which Ibn Fūrak's theological resolutions took place. It was a flexible structure; these *maʿānī* could be subject to internal subdivision. For example, the Arabic word *qadīm* could apply either to God or to his creation. God used it in the Quran to describe the way the moon appeared after waning, "like a *qadīm* date-palm stalk." (In English, we would translate this as "old.")[117] The same word was a theologically permissible description of God himself. (In English, we translate this as "eternal.") We can therefore give an accurate account of a created thing as *qadīm* if our intent is simply to refer to something that was before something else. But the *qadīm* that never ends—that is, God—is different. The *maʿnā* pigeonhole labeled *qadīm* has two shelves: one for an eternal God and the other for created things that are old.[118] These options were available for all God's names: the divine *maʿnā* was not the same as the created *maʿnā*. (Cf. ar-Rāġib's position that the created *maʿnā* was part of the divine *maʿnā*.)[119] And the shelf for the eternal God could have more than one linguistic description placed therein; not just "eternal" and "without beginning" but also "first."[120] But this pigeonhole metaphor can take us only so far. Can we still think of *maʿnā* as mental content? Ibn Fūrak is not dealing with meanings here; or if he is, they are unlike "meanings" in English: the *maʿānī* are stable categories or concepts that have ontological salience and can be expressed in language. "Mental content" is a clumsy placeholder, but it does at least do the job of reminding us that although the target of his cognition is divine, and although God controls his cognition, at least some of this work is taking place in the mind of the theologian.

We can see this play out in a series of claims throughout the *Muǧarrad,* where Ibn Fūrak reports on al-Ašʿarī's determination to place multiple quite different vocal forms within the same mental content. At one point he equated the mental

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117. كان يقول إنّ المحدَث يُصف بأنه قديمٌ على الحقيقة إذ أُريدَ به تقدُّمه على ما حدث بعده كقوله حَتَّى
عَادَ كَٱلْعُرْجُونِ ٱلْقَدِيمِ وإنّ العرجون كان قديماً على الحقيقة على معنى أنه تقدّم العراجين التي حدثت بعده.
Ibn Fūrak (1987, 27.21–28.1).

118. وكان يقول إنّ القديم الذي لم يزل موجوداً هو أحد وَصْفَيْ القِدَم ونَوعَيْ معناه. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 28.1–2).

119. أجمعوا على إطلاق أسماء الله تعالى ومنْع أمثالها في المعنى واللغة. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 42.4–5). ar-Rāġib (1992, 347/2.9–10). Cf. ar-Rāġib (1984, 115), فمعناه المَوجودُ في الناس من المعنى الموجود لله تعالى (1988a, 270).

120. فأما معنى وصْفِه بأنه الأوّلُ فهو معنى وصْفِهِ بأنه قديمٌ أزلي. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 43.17).

content of eighteen different words from seven separate sets of consonants.[121] This would have been anathema to Abū Hilāl, but al-Ašʿarī was not mapping mental content to make a point about fine semantic differences in the lexicon; he was making an argument about how human cognition dealt with God and negotiated the linguistic precedent of revelation: "Although revelation forbids that God be called 'supporting' or 'able,' with regard to the mental content both are correct."[122] Al-Ašʿarī wanted to limit the number of things that could qualify God; with maʿānī structured in this way he could replace eighteen divine attributes with one.

On the level of syntax, Ibn Fūrak talked about how the morphologies of words such "he did" and "he is doing" can have different forms while being "in the mental content" of each other. These are the "mental contents of syntax" (maʿānī an-naḥw) that we encountered in chapter 2, and will meet again in chapter 7 on poetics.[123] It was a model of reference in which vocal forms existed, and both grammarians and theologians worked to map them onto mental contents, each according to his own wishes. These were the same maʿānī that functioned as epistemological and ontological pigeonholes. Words referred to them, and they explained and described extramental objects. God passed his down to humanity through revelation, although he had already created them in human minds.

Speech in the Soul (kalām nafsī)

The final theological topic at the nexus of humanity, God, language, mind, and reality is the famous (among Arabists!) distinction between speech in the soul and speech on the lips (kalām nafsī and kalām lafẓī). It was a distinction intended to separate God's divine speech from human speech, in effect a recognition that the maʿnā of speech could not quite be the same for the eternal and the temporal. The standard position shared by Ašʿarī theologians such as Ibn Fūrak and al-Bāqillānī (in disagreement with the Muʿtazilah) was that an accurate account of all speech was that it was maʿānī in the soul, and that verbal (or written) repetitions thereof were indications of that original mental-content fact.[124]

121. وكان يقول إنّ معنى قولِنا مُحدَثٌ وإحداثٌ وحُدوثٌ وحادِثٌ وحديثٌ وحَدَثٌ وفِعْلٌ ومَفعُولٌ وإيجادٌ ومُوجَدٌ وإبداعٌ ومُبدَعٌ واختراعٌ ومُخْتَرَعٌ وتكوينٌ ومُكَوّنٌ وخَلْقٌ ومَخلوقٌ سواءٌ في المعنى Ibn Fūrak (1987, 28.6–9).

122. وإنّ الله تعالى لا يقال له آنّدٌ ولا مُستطيعٌ لِمنْع السَمْع منه فأما المعنى صحيحٌ . . . وكان يقول إنّ معنى القادِر والقَوِيّ والقُدرة والقُوّة سواءٌ . . . وكذلك كان لا يفرّق بين العلم والدِراية والفِقه والفَهم والفِطنة والعقل والحِسّ والمعرفة. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 44.12–15).

123. وما هو على صورةٍ يَفْعُلُ قد يكون بمعنى فَعَلَ. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 65.24–66.1).

124. Al-Bāqillānī (1963, 101f), Ibn Fūrak (1987, 59.11, 192.4f), Ibn Mattawayh (2009, 196f), Vasalou (2009, 221), Vishanoff (2011, 153f).

The following statement from Ibn Fūrak allows us to fill out more of the picture with regard to what he thought this mental content looked like when it was not instantiated in words on the lips or page. An accurate account of mental content is that it "has no letters, no morphological form, and no syntax. The letters and sounds with which the indications arrive are expressions of the speech of the speaker, his commands, prohibitions, and predications. They operate in the same way as the indications connected to intimations and physical gestures of communication, all of which serve to indicate the mental contents that subsist in the self."[125]

This account of speech as mental content in the soul holds true for both God and humanity (al-Bāqillānī).[126] It leads to a situation in which God has the eternal divine attribute of speech, and that attribute is of course a *maʿnā*, one of the *maʿānī* that subsist in themselves. At the same time, God's speech communicates his *maʿānī* and humans receive them via language in their own created minds as *maʿānī*. We do not have a category in English that covers all these bases, but Arabic did. Vishanoff has perceptively observed, in the context of a discussion of divine imperatives in which the legal force of the command comes from the *maʿnā* rather than the vocal form (*ṣīġat al-amr*), "Because *maʿnā* is both attribute and meaning, the ontological gap between God's eternal attribute of speech and its created expression is also a hermeneutical gap between meaning and the verbal form that expresses it."[127] Ibn Fūrak (and al-Bāqillānī) had a core conceptual vocabulary that assumed *maʿnā* was both the divine truth that they sought in revelation as exegetes and the eternal divine truth that they posited as theologians. In English, we would call the latter "an attribute" and the former "a meaning." But eleventh-century Arabic used the same word.

We learn here that the *maʿānī* we have been in pursuit of since the first page of this book do not for Ibn Fūrak come in the shape of words. But do they come in the shape of language? Are *maʿānī* some language of thought that does not necessarily have sound, letters, or syntax but that does still order itself in the pragmatic categories of command, prohibition, and predication? Is this what is sometimes called "speech" (as noted by Frank)?[128] Ibn Fūrak does not provide us with the answers to all these questions. What he does give us is a systematic account of how

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125. فليس بحروفٍ ولا له صورةٌ ونظامٌ وإنما هذه الحروفُ والأصواتُ التي تقع به الدلالات عبارةٌ عن كلامِ المتكلمين وأمره ونهيه وخَبَره فسبيلُها سبيلُ الكِنايةِ والدلالاتِ المتعلِّقةِ بها وبالإشارة التي تكون دلالاتٌ على المعاني القائمة في النفس. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 192.5–8).

126. Al-Bāqillānī (1998, 2:5), Farahat (2016, 594).

127. Vishanoff (2011, 180). Thanks to David Vishanoff for an encouraging conversation on this question during the conference "Intention and Signification: Philosophy of Language across Islamic Disciplines, 800–1200" at Albert Ludwig University, Freiburg, in June 2017.

128. Frank (2000, 29).

human cognition used *maʿānī* to deal with the world and with God. It will be only with Ibn Sīnā and al-Ǧurǧānī in subsequent chapters that we start to see *maʿnā* given cognitive patterns and rules that stand at a certain remove from the vocal forms of language itself.

HUMAN ACCURACY

Objective Truth

Arabic theory understood accuracy in a linguistic framework. In this framework, there were only two ways that the plane of vocal form could connect to the plane of mental content: an accurate type of connection recorded in the lexicon (*ḥaqīqah*) and an alternative type of connection that went beyond the lexicon (*maǧāz*). Here I want to ask how persistent this linguistic framework was in Ibn Fūrak's theology. Did his conception of accuracy always contain the shadow, or even the presence, of language?

Arabic scholars in the eleventh century and earlier looked for accurate accounts of both things and ideas. Ibn Fūrak himself described the task of investigating knowledge as work on the "accurate mental content of al-Ašʿarī."[129] Pursuit of "accurate accounts of things" (*ḥaqāʾiq al-ašyāʾ*) was one of the most common ways to describe the practice of philhellenic philosophy (as noted in chapter 2.) In both these cases, whether words, things, or ideas were at stake, *ḥaqīqah* stood for getting it right.

Ibn Fūrak was committed to an objective sphere of truth, and he used *ḥaqīqah* to describe the accuracy available there. In a discussion of how necessary knowledge (inescapable knowledge, as opposed to what is acquired) must perforce be shared among all sentient beings, he wrote that if this principle did not hold, and necessary knowledge was disparately available to different people despite their equal access to it, "that would lead to collective disavowal of the accurate accounts and invalidation of the routes toward establishing them."[130] The accurate accounts are real knowledge of how things are, knowledge of the sort that would be at stake were we to lose the equalizing principle that two rational and sentient beings, in the absence of obstacles, know the same thing in the same way. Ibn Fūrak clearly cared as much about the pit of epistemological relativism as Peters and Frank.

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129. Ibn Fūrak. ‏فبدأنا عند ذلك بالكلام في العلوم ومداركها وأقسامها وذكرِ حقيقة معناه على أصلِه‎ (1987, 9.13–14).

130. ‏وأمّا في الضَّروريّات التي تقع ابتداءً فلا يصح فيها أيضاً إلا المشارِكةُ بين الأحياء وذَوِي الحوّاس‎ Ibn ‏والعقلاء مع زَوالِ الآفات وإنّ إجازةَ خلافِ ذلك تؤدّي إلى تناكُرِ الحقائق وإبطالِ الطرق إلى إثباتها‎. Fūrak (1987, 16.22–17.2).

At one of the early points where he criticizes the work of al-Astarābāḏī, this accurate discernment of reality is the epistemological point of contention. Al-Astarābāḏī was wrong, Ibn Fūrak said, to write that accurate discernment of the truth or falsity of things was possible only through the Quran, prophetic example, scholarly consensus, and rational indicators. The problem with this standard list was that it omitted things that were known via sensory data and historical reports.[131] Ibn Fūrak wanted to extend the sphere of objective truth to include both those categories, and so to cover both observation and history. But the name both he and al-Astarābāḏī gave to what can be accurately known to be true or false was *ḥaqīqah*.

Later on, in chapter 40, Ibn Fūrak discussed how one person can know something in two different ways at the same time but cannot have two separate and identical knowledges of the same thing at the same time. Al-Ašʿarī apparently deduced this from the fact that an atheist (*ad-dahrī,* on whom see Patricia Crone)[132] could know a body existed (true) while believing it to be eternal (false). If the belief was false, then it could not be knowledge, "because knowledge has to be of the accurate account of what is known."[133] At this point, the appellation "knowledge" is reserved for those times when one gets it right (because if one's knowledge is false, then it is perforce just a belief) and the test is accuracy; one is right only when one knows the accurate account.

Accurate Language about the World

Accurate language about the world is an epistemological standard of accuracy that is structured with concepts that came from linguistic accounts of reference. There is a clear parallel between *ḥaqīqah* (accuracy) and *maʿnā* (mental content) here; both terms emerged from accounts of how language works and were then used to describe how cognition functions. Their continued use in cognition retains a strong linguistic flavor.

Let us take Ibn Fūrak's report on what al-Ašʿarī thought about the mental content of truth: "The vocal form 'the truth' contributes to multiple mental contents according to different aspects of usage. Truth cannot be enumerated in a concise vocal form." Al-Ašʿarī then compared "truth" to an Arabic word that had meanings so separate that some might call it a homonym in English: ʿadl, the verbal form of which could be used to say both "he *deviated* from the truth" and "he *behaved justly.*" Al-Ašʿarī wrote that the accurate account of ʿadl was that, like "truth," it could refer to different types of mental content. The next problem was

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131. إذْ كلُّ الأشياء لا تُعرف حقيقتُها في صِحّتها وفسادها من الوجوه التي ذَكَرها من الكتاب والسنة والإجماع ودلائل العقول بل أكثرُها يُعرف بغير هذه الطريقة وإنما الكتابُ والسنة والإجماع ودليل العقل يُعرف به بعضُ الأشياء دُون بعضٍ وجملةُ ذلك ما عَدا ما يُعلم بالحسّ وخبر التواتر. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 21.17–20).

132. Crone (2009), (2012).

133. لأنّ العِلم يجب أنْ يكون على حقيقةِ ما المعلومُ عليه. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 221.21).

a matter of pragmatics, of meaning in context: the question "Is unbelief true or false?" could be legitimately answered in both the affirmative (because unbelief is created by God) and the negative (because the unbelief acquired by humans is forbidden by God).[134] All these theological problems (two lexical homonyms and a matter of pragmatics) are linguistic; this is theology as the policing of language usage against the epistemological reference point of the lexicon. But these are also cognitive problems about the mental content of truth and the possibility of giving an accurate account of it. Ibn Fūrak identified two complementary methodological approaches to questions like these. The first was to explain how a vocal form could have more than one accurate account of its multiple mental contents. This approach rested on an attitude to the lexicon that assumed different names within it could point at the same mental content and occupy the same cognitive pigeonhole.[135] The second approach was to posit a category of *absolute* truth or *absolute* justice, for which a single mental content could be established in accordance with revelatory precedent. The account for "truth" was then ontological rather than linguistic and lexically based: "The mental content of absolute truth is that it is what has been verified as being and truly exists. . . . It inevitably either is or it will be."[136]

In chapter 8 of the *Muǧarrad* Ibn Fūrak focused on "the mental content of the accurate account and the mental content of going beyond the lexicon."[137] He started by confirming that the accuracy is about more than language: "Our use of 'accuracy' may extend beyond vocal forms and statements to what is neither."[138] Ibn Fūrak goes on to report that "the accurate account of a thing is the self of that thing when it is as it is described . . . , and its accurate account is also its mental content, from which its description is derived." The accurate accounts of "black," "moving," "long," "short," "knowing," "capable," and "speaking" are in each case a mental content, from which these descriptions ("black," "moving," "long," and so on) are derived.[139] This is a presentation of the accurate account, in which it can

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134. لفظة الحقّ مشتركةُ المعاني مختلفةُ الوجوه ولا يمكن حَصْرُه في لفظٍ مختصَرٍ وكذلك قال في معنى
العدّلِ وحدّه وحقيقته لأنَّ ذلك مما تتنوّع معانيها وتختلف ألا ترى أنه يقال عَدَلَ فلانٌ عن الحق وعَدَلَ
على فلانٍ فالعدّلُ عن الحق جَورٌ والعدّل عليه تركُ الجَور . . . جواباً عن سؤالهم إذ قالوا الكُفْر حقٌّ أو
باطلٌ أنّ مِن أصحابنا مَن قال إنه حقٌّ مِن حيث الخلق وباطلٌ مِن حيث اكتسابه الكافرُ مَنْهياً عنه Ibn
Fūrak (1987, 25.2–5, 9–10).

135. أنّ الأصل [في كلمة ما] توقيفٌ وما في معناه يسمَّى باسمه لِمُساواته له في معناه . . . . Ibn Fūrak
(1987, 41.22–23).

136. فعلى هذا يمكن أنْ يقال في معنى الحق المطلَق إنه هو الذي تحقَّق كونُه وصحّ وجودُه . . . هو
كائنٌ أو سيكون لا محالة. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 25.16–17, 21).

137. فصلٌ آخر في بيانِ مذهبه في معنى الحقيقة والمجاز. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 26.10).

138. إنّ استعمالنا الحقيقةَ قد يتعدَّى الألفاظَ والأقوالِ إلى ما عداها أيضاً. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 26.12–13).

139. وحقيقةُ الشيء عنده نفْسُ الشيء إذا كان فيما يُوصف به الشيءُ ويُرْجَع إلى نفسه وحقيقته معناه

be used for both words and things. It is complemented by Ibn Fūrak's collection of formal definitions in legal theory, *Kitāb al-Ḥudūd fī al-Uṣūl,* where he writes that "'accuracy' can be used according to two mental contents, the first of which is the description of a thing that is its formal definition, its clarification, and the mental content on account of which this thing deserves that description. The second is the accurate account of speech, which also goes back to description in that it is a speech act according to original lexical placement."[140] In both the *Muǧarrad* and the *Ḥudūd* there are two spheres in which theologians or legal theorists use *ḥaqīqah,* the word for accuracy. One sphere is language: accurate speech accords with lexical precedent. The other sphere, mental content, has no necessary correlate in vocal form and is actually prior to linguistic expression: we derive descriptions of things from the mental contents that are accurate.

Ibn Fūrak used *ḥaqīqah* as an indicator of accuracy, whether he was talking about the cognitive mental contents that enabled humans to think about the world and from which descriptions were derived, or when discussing word usage vis-à-vis the lexicon. The three domains of reality, mind, and language are inextricably connected by mental content, which sits in all three levels. We think about the world with mental content, and we refer to mental content when we talk. We then evaluate all this mental content according to the standard of the accurate account, an epistemological tool that enables certain cognitive processes and certain connections between vocal form and mental content to be privileged.

Accurate Accounts of Literature and Physics

The Arabic accurate account was not just a point where words and things combined; it was also an epistemological judgment that applied to both science and literature. By "science," I mean the systematic investigations by eleventh-century Arabic theologians and philosophers into the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world, and by "literature" I mean the specific set of approaches to aesthetics and poetry found in this period. For Ibn Fūrak and his contemporaries these included the study of imagery and the question of what a metaphor is and how it works, both tested against a self-consciously aesthetic canon of poetry and prose. This is the paradigmatically literary territory into which Ibn Fūrak moves only ten lines or so into chapter 8. For Arabists, it is no surprise that a discussion of physics (what it is to be moving) shades so quickly into a literary discussion of how metaphors work.

الذي يُشتقّ الوصفُ منه إذا كان جاريًا مجراه كقولنا أسودُ ومتحرّكٌ وطويلٌ وقصيرٌ وعالِمٌ وقادِرٌ ومتكلّمٌ حقيقةُ
الأوصاف هذه تُشتقّ منها التي معانيه مجراه يجري وما ذلك جميع. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 26.13–15).
140. حقيقةُ استحقّ الذي والمعنى وبَيانُه حدّه هو الشيء وصْفُ أحدُهما معنيَين على تُستعمل الحقيقةُ
الأصل في له وُضِع فيما مستعمَلٌ قولٌ بأنه وصْفه إلى راجِعٌ الكلام وذلك حقيقةُ هو الثاني الوجهُ لأجله الشيءُ.
Ibn Fūrak (1999, 145.2–6).

It is a familiar feature of the Classical Arabic intellectual landscape and the corollary of its obsession with language; if one cares about language to the extent that its structures infuse one's ontology, then one's care for language cannot but extend to the creation of language as literature and the criticism thereof. Just as the chapters of this book move from mental contents in theology to mental contents in poetry, so Ibn Fūrak himself makes the same move inside a single short chapter: from accurate accounts of color and movement in a body to accurate accounts of reference in a line of poetry. The framework of the accurate account is constant throughout this move, just as mental content is a permanent part of the conceptual landscape.

Ibn Fūrak tells us what speech that goes beyond lexical placement looked like to him: "Some statements and vocal forms are called *maǧāz* according to a mental content that holds them to have moved away from that for which they were lexically placed to that for which they were not."[141] This is the accurate account applied to words and to their usage vis-à-vis the lexicon. It matches the lexicography and poetics of ar-Rāġib that we encountered in the previous chapter, and we will see al-Ǧurǧānī develop it in chapter 7. In the mind of the person who considers a speech act there is a mental content that constitutes their decision as to whether the vocal forms of the speech in question still have their original connections to the mental contents they encompassed in the lexicon. Speech acts consist of vocal forms and mental contents, while other mental contents make determinations about those speech acts. This is why I am comfortable translating *maʿnā* as "mental content" and understanding it as the stuff of cognition; mental content is in speech and is thought about speech, both part of literature itself and the material of literary criticism. There is a potential here that will be exploited by al-Ǧurǧānī.

When eleventh-century scholars said that speech went beyond the lexicon, they were giving an account of language that focused on a historic lexical relationship; a particular vocal form was known in the lexicon of the community to refer to a particular mental content, and this was the accurate account (*ḥaqīqah*). As soon as that link was altered, the speech act went beyond the lexicon (*maǧāz*). Ibn Fūrak, in this book of his about theology, explained speech that goes beyond the lexicon with three examples. The first is from the Quran, when the narrative voice is decrying those who plotted against the new religious community rather than joining it: "rather it was the scheming of the night and the day."[142] Ibn Fūrak makes the point that the scheming didn't really belong to the night or the day but rather happened during those times. The mental content of the verse is not that either night or day is a schemer but rather that the scheming took place during night

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141. وإنما يقال لبعضِ الأقوال والألفاظ إنها مجازٌ على معنى أنه قد تُجُوِّز به عمّا وُضِع له إلى ما لَم يُوضَع له. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 27.1–2).

142. بَلْ مَكْرُ ٱللَّيْلِ وَٱلنَّهَارِ. Quran 34:33 (as-Sabaʾ).

or day.[143] The verse as it stands in the Quran is therefore speech that goes beyond the lexicon. Accurate speech would be if the relationship of vocal form to mental content remained unaltered, and the night and day really had schemed. Ibn Fūrak then wrote: "This is like the statement of the poet: 'As for the day, it is in shackles and chains.'" He explained that the mental content was that the shackling occurred during the day, not that the day was itself actually wearing metal restraints.[144] The final example sees him switch back to the Quran and Moses coming across "a wall that wanted to fall down." Ibn Fūrak pithily notes that according to an accurate account walls don't want to do anything.[145]

The accurate account was a test of literature. But it was also a test of eleventh-century physics; when Ibn Fūrak wanted to say that accidents do not occupy space he wrote: "Accidents do not accurately have a spatial aspect, because they do not touch each other, and one accident cannot be a border for another."[146] The accurate account here is an epistemological standard of correctness, not necessarily connected to any linguistic sphere. This is made clearer a few lines later when he wrote that in a discussion like this, our expression "spatial aspect" is not accurate, and neither are the vocal forms "half," "third," and "quarter." This is because "the accurate account of a speaker's statement 'I took half a penny' is that they took a thing and left its exact like. The expression of this action with 'half' is a process of semantic extension."[147] The actual extramental reality of which one can give an accurate account is made up of atoms. All substances that exist can exist individually and separately from the rest: "This is the mental content of our statement that 'the atom cannot be subdivided' and that 'a substance cannot be divided or halved in its essence.'"[148] Because the world is actually made of atoms, the only accounts

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143. فالمعنى أنّ المكرَ يقع فيهما. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 27.3), (2009b, 139).

144. وهذا كقول الشاعر أمَّا ٱلنَّهَارُ فَفِيْ قَيْدٍ وَسِلْسِلَةٍ والمعنى أنّ التقيّد يقع فيه لا أنه يكون تقيّداً له. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 27.3–5).

145. فَوَجَدَا فِيهَا جِدَاراً يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنقَضَّ. (Quran 18:77 (al-Kahf). ولا إرادةَ في الحقيقة للجدار. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 27.5–6).

146. ويقول إنّ الأعراض لا يصح أنْ تكون لها جهةٌ على الحقيقة من حيث لم يصح أنْ يُماسّ بعضُها بعضاً وأنْ يكون بعضُها حدّاً لبعض. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 203.19–20).

147. بل حقيقةُ قولِ القائل أخذتُ نصفَ درهم أنه أَخَذ شيئاً وتَرَك مثلَه فعبّر عنه بالنِصف توسّعاً. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 203.24–25).

148. وكذلك كان يقول إنّ عِبارتنا التي استعملناها هاهنا لهذا المعنى بلفظِ الجزء توسعٌ مِن قِبَل أنها لا حقيقةَ للبعض والنصف والثلث بل حقيقةُ قولِ القائل أخذتُ نصفَ درهم أنه أخَذ شيئاً وترك مثلَه عبّر عنه بالنصف توسعًا فعلى هذا إذا قيل الجزءُ والبعضُ والنصفُ والثلثُ والنصفُ والربعُ فَذلك توسّعٌ على أصله وحقيقتُه ما ذكرنا أنّ كلَّ واحدٍ من هذه الجواهر المَوجودة لا يُنكَر أنْ يُوجَد منفرداً عن سائر الأجزاء مفارقاً لها وهذا هو معنى قولِنا إنّ الجزء لا يتجزّأ وإنّ الجوهر لا يَنقسم في ذاته ولا يتنصّف. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 203.23–204.4).

that can be strictly accurate according to this account of physics are those that make statements about individual atoms and their behavior. Every other grouping beyond the single atom is semantic extension, a broadening beyond an original strict accuracy. Ibn Fūrak therefore used "accurate account" to identify the moments when language gave an accurate account of the world as it was in extramental atomic fact. Frank's translation of *ḥaqīqah* here is a valuable one: "analytically strict [and] ontologically designative."[149] The nature of the world was at stake here, and the scientific framework being used to make sense of it was fundamentally linguistic. Ibn Fūrak used a core conceptual vocabulary for a scientific project. Atoms were understood to the extent that they could be spoken about. The vocabulary needs translation, and the project of naming and subdividing reality is still taking place in the Large Hadron Collider.

KNOWLEDGE IS EVERYTHING

We have come to understand that *maʿānī* were the primary building blocks of Ibn Fūrak's theology. They provided an interface between language, mind, and reality; they were the raw material for human perception of the world and understanding of God, and they were the cognitive source of the ideas that humans expressed in language. *Maʿānī* helped structure theological and scientific epistemologies and were themselves the stuff of those cognitive processes. There is a circularity here: *maʿnā* is both how we know and what we know. (Cf. Frank on the Muʿtazilī Abū al-Huḏayl al-ʿAllāf, d. 842.)[150] Knowledge (*ʿilm*) was everything. Ibn Fūrak was aware of this, and the first chapter of the *Muǧarrad* he titled "Clarification of al-Ašʿarī's School of Thought with Regard to the *Maʿnā* of Knowledge and Its Formal Definition."[151]

Ibn Fūrak started his chapter on knowledge with what he said was the fundamental and central statement of al-Ašʿarī around which all his other definitions of *maʿānī* revolved, that "the *maʿnā* of knowledge and its accurate account is that with which the knower knows the known."[152] This is concise and circular to the point of obscurity. But the theological problem that al-Ašʿarī and Ibn Fūrak faced was very real: how humans could best think of the divine. It was problematic to think of God as having a self that was his knowledge, because it was incoherent from the human perspective; it did not conform to the universal and accurate

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149. Frank (1984, 50). Cf. al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 7:130.3–10).

150. Frank (1969, 465–66).

151. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 10–11). الفصل الأول في إبانة مذهبه في معنى العِلم وحدّه.

152. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 10.12). معنى العِلم وحقيقتُه ما به يَعلَم العالِمُ المعلوم.

account of knowledge with which humans worked.[153] Daniel Gimaret has explained this doctrine as avoidance of the confusion of substance and accident, with both God and knower being substance and knowledge an accident. This is more than plausible, but the conceptual vocabulary of substance and accident is absent from these passages in al-Ašʿarī and Ibn Fūrak.[154] When al-Ašʿarī had discussed the same doctrine, he talked not about substance and accident but about *maʿnā* and how humans conceive of knowledge: it was impossible for God to be "in the same *maʿnā* as his attributes. Don't you see that the route by which it is known that knowledge is knowledge is that the knower has knowledge?"[155] Al-Ašʿarī was saying that we comprehend the *maʿnā* of knowledge, we know what knowledge is, only by thinking of someone knowing something and thereby having knowledge. Our very conception of knowledge is of someone having it, not that someone is it. This is why God cannot be knowledge, nor be knowing in his self; we must understand him as having knowledge. (Cf. Frank on Abū al-Huḏayl).[156]

The theological process here is a policing of human speech acts that reflect human cognitive processes made up of *maʿānī*. Al-Ašʿarī made this clear in response to a hypothetical suggestion that God could be neither a knower in himself nor a knower with a separate *maʿnā*. His response was that there is no third option: the knowledge is either a separate *maʿnā*, or it is in God himself; we cannot affirm the knowledge in any other way.[157] I think that although it is clumsy, the translation of *maʿnā* as "mental content" is still viable here: these are theories and debates about how humans should think of God. The pressure on my translation comes from the way the word "mental" calls into question whose mind the content is in. There is no doubt that the theological process is taking place in the mind of the theologian, but there is equally no doubt that the target of that process, the *maʿnā* with which God knows, is divine and therefore not in the mind of the theo-

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153. وعلى ذلك عوّل في استدلاله على أنّ الله تعالى عالِمٌ بعلم مِن حيث أنه لو كان عالِم بنفسه كان نفسُه عِلمٌ لأنَّ حقيقةَ معنى العِلم ما يَعلَم به العالِمُ المعلومَ فلو كانتْ نفسُ القديم سبحانه نفساً بها يَعلَم المعلوماتِ وَجَب أنْ تكون عِلماً وفي معناه. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 10.12–15). Cf. al-Ašʿarī (1953a, 30 n. 18), Gimaret (1990, 37).

154. Al-Ašʿarī (1953a, #25), Gimaret (1990, 275).

155. ويَستحيل أنْ يكون العِلمُ عالماً أو العالِمُ عِلماً أو يكون اللهُ تعالى بمعنى الصفات ألا ترى أنّ الطريق الذي [به (مكارثي)] يُعلَم [به (غرابه)] أنّ العلم عِلمٌ أنّ العالِم به علم. Al-Ašʿarī (1953a, #25), (1955, 30.7–9).

156. فلما استَحال أنْ يكون الباري تعالى عِلماً استحال أنْ يكون عالِماً بنفسه فإذا استحال ذلك صحَّ أنه عالِمٌ بعلم. يستَحيل أنْ يكون هو نفسه. Al-Ašʿarī (1953a, #25), (1955, 30.10–12). See also al-Ašʿarī (1953a, #18), (1955, 26.16–27.5); Frank (1969, 466–67).

157. فإنْ قال قائلٌ ما أنكرتم أنْ يكون الباري سبحانه عالماً لا بنفسه ولا بمعنى يَستحيل أنْ يكون هو نفسُه قيل له لو جاز أنْ يكون عالِمٌ لم يرجِع به إلى نفسه ولا إلى معنى ولم يَثبُت به نفسُه ولا معنىً يَستحيل أنْ يكون هو نفسُه وإذا لم يجز هذا بطَل ما قالوه. Al-Ašʿarī (1953a, #26), (1955, 30.13–31.2).

logian. This is the same problem that we faced with the use of *maʿnā* in physics: theologians like Ibn Fūrak used a conceptual vocabulary based around *maʿnā* that did not inherently mark the boundary between the human mind and the world outside. The tension is a reminder that we do not have a word in English that does the work *maʿnā* did in Arabic.

Knowledge was everything, and it was different from other human or divine actions. One can know a taste, but taste itself is not knowledge.[158] Ibn Fūrak's choice of this example reminds us once again that he is seeking to apply to God conclusions developed with reference to humanity. This is arguably the central tension of Islamic theology. The lists of *maʿānī* other than "knowledge" that he provided in this first paragraph of his chapter 1 are evidence of this assumption: "movement, ability, color, and taste," and then "speech, movement, color, and taste." Both lists combine *maʿānī* understood to be unquestionably both divine and human (for example, "speech") and *maʿānī* that are consistently under-stood as theologically incompatible with God ("color" and "taste"). Ibn Fūrak also tells us how al-Ašʿarī asked himself whether the knower knows because knowledge is knowledge or because such knowledge is *relative* to the knower (in the same way as movement is relative to the mover).[159] Ibn Fūrak reported that al-Ašʿarī considered both alternatives invalid and wrote that "the knower knows only on account of that from which the name 'knower' is derived for him."[160] Ibn Fūrak then commented that "this is an intimation that this is the *maʿnā* of 'knowledge': that from which it is necessary to derive the name 'know-ing' for whomsoever engages in knowing."[161] Once again, a *maʿnā* with an onto-logical significance that extends to the divine is constructed with reference to the lexicon.

Ibn Fūrak also distinguished knowledge from belief. (The Arabic word is *iʿtiqād,* which could also be translated as "firmly combined" or "compactly formed"; see Frank.)[162] He wrote that the root principle from which belief is derived "is investigated without *maʿānī*."[163] In this short passage, Ibn Fūrak was

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158. أَلا ترى أنّ . . . الطعْم لا يصح أنْ يكون شيءٌ مِن ذلك عِلمٌ لمّا لم يجزم أنْ يكون عالِماً به عالِماً.
Ibn Fūrak (1987, 10.16–18).

159. فلِماذا كان العالِمُ عالِماً أَلأجل أنّ العِلم عِلمٌ أمْ لأجل أنّ العلم عِلمٌ وأنه مُضافٌ إليه. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 26.21–22). الحركةُ التي أُضيفتْ إلى المتحرِّك . . . . (1987, 11.1–2).

160. إنما كان العالِمُ عالِماً لما له اشتُقَّ منه اسمُ العالِم وهو العِلم. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 11.2–3).

161. وهذا إيماءٌ إلى أنّ ذلك معنى العِلم وهو الذي يجب أنْ يُشتَقّ لِمَن قام منه اسم. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 11.5–6).

162. Frank (1989, 42f).

163. وكان يُنكِر أنْ يكون معنى العِلم اعتقادُ الشيء على ما هو به وقال إنّ وصْفَ عِلمنا بأنه اعتقاد مجازٌ. لأنه أصل العَقْد والاعتقاد إنما يَتحقَّق بغير المعاني وإذا استُعمل في ذلك فعلى التوسُّع ومِن مذهبه أيضاً أنه لا

responding to an old Muʿtazilī doctrine, attributed to al-Ǧubbāʾī, that knowledge is the belief that something is as it is.[164] In the roughly contemporary defense of that doctrine by ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār, we can see that for the Muʿtazilah there was a distinction between a broad category of belief and a narrower subcategory of belief called "knowledge," in which the belief came with certainty.[165] This is close to the Ašʿarī position of Ibn Fūrak that we encountered above: belief can be false, but knowledge is accurate.[166] The Muʿtazilah were firm in their location of the divine attributes in human language and cognition; there is no problem reading ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār's *maʿnā* here as "mental content," a conceptual category that was part of the human process of reasoning through the possibilities for accurate description of God. But what are the *maʿānī* that Ibn Fūrak thought were not involved in belief? One way to think about them is to use the pigeonhole metaphor suggested above for *maʿānī* as categories. Ibn Fūrak uses *maʿnā* in his theology because it provides him with a stable concept that can be separated from language and applied to both mind and reality (whether that reality is worldly or divine). If the *maʿānī* are stable mental contents that reflect the world, then they cannot be false; one can of course have a false cognition of them, a flawed or corrupted idea, but the *maʿnā* itself is, perhaps, by definition true. We already know that an accurate human account of a *maʿnā* was called *ḥaqīqah,* and here we have a remark by Ibn Fūrak that suggests while *maʿānī* are the stuff of human cognition, they are not the stuff of human false belief or faulty supposition. This fits with my assumption in chapter 2 that the *maʿānī* of theology, lexicography, and grammar are one single category used in different ways. When scholars say that the *maʿnā* of X is Y, they are claiming to report fact. Scholars of course disagreed on the facts, and everyone from lexicographers to theologians disagreed about *maʿānī,* but everyone agreed that in doing so they were concerned with facts about language, the world, or God. They were concerned, like Ibn Fūrak, with knowledge, not belief.

يُفرَّق بين العِلم والمعرفة وكذلك اليقين والفهم والفتنة والدراية والعقل والفقه كلّ ذلك عنده بمعنى العِلم . . . . وكان يمنع وصْفَ العِلم والجهل بأنهما اعتقادان على الحقيقة وإنْ أجاز أنْ يُطلَق عليهما ذلك توسّعاً ومجازاً. Ibn Fūrak (1987, 11.7–11, 13.23–24).

164. Frank (1969, 465), al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 12: 25.18).

165. اعلمْ أنَّ العِلم هو المعنى الذي يقتضي سكون نفس العالِم إلى ما تناوله . . . والذي يقول شيوخُنا رحمهم اللهُ في العِلم أنه من جنس الاعتقاد فمتى تعلَّق بالشيء على ما هو به ووقع على وجهٍ يقتضي سكون النفس . . . Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Ǧabbār (1965–74, 12: 13.1, العِلم هو الاعتقاد الواقع على بعض الوجوه 25.17–18, 27.8–9).

166. See note 133 above.

EVERYTHING IS KNOWLEDGE

When *maʿnā* worked to establish the strict monotheism of the Islamic God, it did so by moving the action into the human mind. We have seen scholars in this chapter reminding us that the words "description" and "attribute" refer to linguistic acts of description. We have not seen them engage in similar reminders that *maʿnā* refers to human cognition, but perhaps the reason no scholar said that *maʿānī* were cognitive is that there was no one around to disagree, whereas some creeds did indeed deny that God's descriptions and attributes were human and linguistic. The closest we get to a noncognitive *maʿnā* is the theory of Muʿammar, and in the absence of extant texts we cannot be sure exactly where he would have positioned his causal *maʿānī* between the mental and extramental realms. All we can be sure of is that he was using a core conceptual vocabulary that he shared with contemporary Arabic accounts of how language worked. However, with Ibn Fūrak we can at least consider the prospect that his cognitive *maʿānī* were located in human minds and that the effort he expended to prevent God being associated with internal multiplicity was focused on human cognition of God rather than on the extramental constitution of the divine being.

When the action moves to the sphere of human cognition, it starts to make more sense that language would be heavily involved. Again, this enables us to explain how so much of Islamic theology was about naming: the names given to things mattered because they reflected mental contents, and the mental contents reflected the extramental reality of the world. These two vectors of reflection were then critically evaluated according to the standard of accuracy. Theologians asked whether the vocal forms of language did in fact accurately reflect mental contents, and they could turn to the lexicon to adjudicate and negotiate their conclusions. Theologians also asked whether their mental contents accurately reflected the extramental world that their senses observed, and they could turn to reason and logic to adjudicate their conclusions. Theology was science for Ibn Fūrak and his contemporaries; the stuff of their debates was human mental content, and they wanted to make that content as accurate as possible. Humans had mental contents that resulted from their interactions with the world and mental contents that resulted from their considerations of the divine. Both needed to be assessed according to lexical precedent, revelatory precedent, reason, and sensory data as appropriate.

Ibn Fūrak's Ašʿarī theory of the acquisition of acts, as discussed above,[167] was relevant to this picture of human mental content. When we consider that theory, it seems logical to conclude that God had exactly the same control over human mental contents as he did over every single other atom or thing in his creation.

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167. See section above: "Acquisition".

If this is the case, then theology was less about human cognition and reason and more about what God did with human mental contents. This makes theories like acquisition seem quite different: God created the human and created the extramental objects with which the human interacted. God also created the movements of those extramental objects and then created the human mental content that was human cognition of the movement of the extramental objects. On this reading, mental content simply provided God with a means to manage human minds. It is tempting to suggest that conclusions such as these may have been on the minds of scholars such as Ibn Fūrak's pupil al-Qušayrī, who contributed to the development of mystical epistemologies in which *maʿānī* and *ḥaqāʾiq,* accurate accounts of mental contents, became increasingly tightly connected to the divine and increasingly distant from the physics and linguistics of Ibn Fūrak.

However, the observation that Ašʿarī occasionalism contributes to a system in which God's omnipresence makes the location of *maʿānī* irrelevant would not have made sense to Ibn Fūrak. His typology of God's creation (things, instances, substances, and accidents) did not include *maʿānī,*[168] which suggests that he did not see them as a separate ontological category; they were just part of his process of thinking about things, instances, substances, and accidents. The observation about occasionalism rather comes out of the process of translating Ibn Fūrak into twenty-first-century English, a process that itself requires one to take a position on the location of the *maʿānī* between language, mind, and reality. The conclusion that I draw here is that *maʿānī* were connected to language because they could always (and only) be expressed in language. This meant that accounts of *maʿānī* were rooted in the lexicon. But Ibn Fūrak did not see the *maʿānī* as dependent on the lexicon or on human language. They were a category he could separate from language, a set of conceptual pigeonholes into which theological and physical concepts could be slotted and from which connections could then be made to specific linguistic vocal forms in contexts. The translation "mental contents," with the caveat that it does not produce fluid or easily read English prose, works for *maʿānī* on this account. The problem comes with the decision, forced upon us by the translation process but not necessarily experienced by the authors of these texts, as to whether the *maʿānī* are in human minds, outside in the extramental world, divine, or, while remaining themselves, in all three.

This is a moment at which some comparative philosophy may be useful. Twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholars of ancient Greece have encountered a similar problem with accidents, those Aristotelian nonessential qualities we encountered earlier in this chapter, and with universals. Mohsen Javadi makes the following important observation: "All concepts, including universals, exist in the

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168. See note 92 above.

mind as mental qualities, but not [as] instances of substance. . . . Universals . . . are always present in the mind as mental qualities, as is the case with other accidents."[169] In Ibn Fūrak's theology we are not dealing with universals, or at least we are not dealing with the Aristotelian tradition of universals (that continued in Arabic, as the next chapter will show). But we are dealing with accidents, which as Ibn Fūrak said are a subcategory of *maʿānī*.[170] Javadi locates his clarity about the location of universals and accidents in the work of, among others, Ibn Sīnā: "As far as I know, this problem was not discussed in the West, but we can find a rich and detailed discussion of it in Muslim philosophy, especially in the discussion of 'knowledge' or 'mental existence' [*al-wuǧūd aḏ-ḏihnī*]."[171] We will come to Ibn Sīnā in the next chapter, where Javadi's observation will be shown to be correct. Ibn Sīnā was working with the same conceptual vocabulary as Ibn Fūrak and ar-Rāġib; he exploited the potential of *maʿānī* to build theories of cognition in a way that his predecessors in the Arabic Aristotelian tradition had not.

I would like to end this chapter on Ibn Fūrak with some observations made by Richard Cross about Duns Scotus (the thirteenth-century Scot whom we met in chapter 2 when considering the translation of *maʿnā* as "entitative"): "It makes no difference at all to cognition whether or not the object of cognition is inherent in the mind. Just the same causal story is told in both cases, and in both cases we can think of the mind as somehow or other including its object—even if that object is external to it." The theory of causality is what is important, not the location of the object of cognition: "The same nature can be said to exist in reality and in the mind, and to this extent extramental particulars, or aspects of such external particulars are, in a qualified way, themselves somehow 'in the mind.'"[172] Cross's analysis of Scotus has led him to the same point where our reading of Ibn Fūrak, an Islamic theologian working three centuries earlier, led us. In both thirteenth-century Europe and eleventh-century Iran and Iraq, a theory of theological physics could function with what looks to us now like a complete collapse between mind and world.

I suggested above that the blur between epistemology and ontology in Ibn Fūrak could be connected, via the Ašʿarī theory of acquisition, to the work of scholars like al-Qušayrī who are usually called "Sufi" or "mystic." I then noted that this is a connection that makes sense only in hindsight, arises only as an option in the translation process, and would not have made sense to Ibn Fūrak himself. Nevertheless, it is worth considering. Cross engages in a similar process with

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169. Javadi (2013, 70).

170. See note 61 above.

171. Transliteration modified from Javadi (2013, 70).

172. Cross (2009, 294 [72]).

Scotus, and asks whether Scotus's assumptions "weaken the account of the self, such that the self is no longer a self-contained whole but extends out into the environment too." This is very much a question couched in the terms of twenty-first-century philosophy, which is no bad thing. Cross continues: "Mental contents are 'in' the mind whether or not they inhere in the mind. To be in the mind, all such contents have to be are actual objects of occurrent cognition." This matches the conclusions drawn in this chapter about *maʿānī:* movements in living extramental bodies and divine attributes are both objects of cognition and mental contents. The explanation Cross gives for his reading is also useful: "Inner and outer theatres have the same observer—the mind or intelligence—and this breakdown of the distinction between representation and represented hinges on the loosening of what it is to be 'in' the mind: not as such inherent, but simply part of a causal story originating with semantic contents and issuing in an occurrent cognition."[173]

I have no intention of connecting Scotus's theory of the self to Ibn Fūrak, nor of suggesting that Ibn Fūrak's ideas necessarily made their way from Baghdad to the Scottish borders (or more accurately, to Oxford and Cologne). What I would like to do is use Cross's reading of Scotus as an alibi for my reading of Ibn Fūrak and suggest it as a possible resolution to the problems of interpretation identified by Frank, Gimaret, and Allard. If the inner and outer theaters of mind and extramental reality do indeed have the same observer, and that observer is the human intelligence of the theologian, then it is moot whether *maʿānī* are mental contents, extramental forces and qualities, or divine attributes. *Maʿānī* were the stuff of human intelligence, whether it was directed at the operations of grammar and syntax, linguistic precedent in the lexicon, extramental physics, or the nature of the divine. They were explicable categories that provided Ibn Fūrak with epistemological stability, clarity, and terminological concision, three merits that are lost when his Arabic is translated into our English.

173. Cross (2009, 300 [78]).