AḤWĀL, DIVINE SIMPLICITY, AND TRUTHMAKERS

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a comparative study between Brower's solution to the problem of divine simplicity and that of Abū Hāšim al-Ǧubbāī (d. 933). First, I argue that the theory of aḥwāl is a semantic theory rather than a metaphysical one. Then, I present a reconstruction of Abū Hāšim al-Ǧubbāī's theory of aḥwāl, based on Brower's truthmaker theory of predication. Then, I show how Abū Hāšim would reply to some of the objections that Saenz raised against Brower's truthmaker theory of divine simplicity. Later on, I discuss Abū Hāšim's explanation of the similarities between the properties that God and creatures share.

Keywords: *Abū Hāšim; divine simplicity; truthmaker; the theory of aḥwāl properties.*

1.   Introduction

According to the doctrine of divine simplicity, which is the core of all classical theisms,[1] God is absolutely simple and devoid of any physical or metaphysical complexities. Any explanation of the relation between God and His[2] properties seems to challenge the simplicity of God. On the one hand, God is not distinct from His properties, because otherwise, He will not be simple. On the other hand, God is not identical with all of His properties, because otherwise, all of His properties will be the same and God will be a property Himself. As Plantinga put it:

> [I]f God is identical with each of his properties, then each of his properties is identical with each of his properties so that he has but one property. This seems flatly incompatible with the obvious fact that God has several properties; he has both power and merciful, say, neither of which are identical with the other. In the second place, if God is identical with each of his properties, since each of his properties is a property, he is property—a self-exemplifying property. Accordingly, God has just one property: himself. (…) No property could have created the world; no property could be omniscient, or, indeed, know anything at all. (Plantinga 1980, 47)

The problem of divine simplicity is twofold. On the one hand, it is an ontological problem that concerns the very ontological ground of divine properties. On the other hand, it is a semantic problem that is itself twofold. Firstly, how divine properties can have different meanings without differing in reference, and secondly, how similarities between the divine properties and those of created beings can be explained without common referents. For there are some properties ascribed to both God and the created beings, such as being knowledgeable.

Many contemporary philosophers of religion have articulated and defended an account of divine simplicity that avoids these problems. However, the problem of divine simplicity is an old one that challenged

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[1] By classical theism, here, I mean the narrow sense of the notion of classical theism which is committed to the doctrine of divine simplicity (Leftow 1990). It is in contrast with personal theism which is not committed to the divine simplicity.

[2] I would prefer not to use 'He' to refer to God. But to keep the consistency between the quotations and the other parts of this paper and to avoid the difficulties of using the pronoun 'they' to refer to God, I keep using 'He'.

many philosophers from Augustine, Anslem, and Aquinas, in the Christian world, to *Mutakallimūn*, namely Islamic theologians, in the Islamic world. On the one hand, this article concerns one of the contentious figures among *Mutakallimūn* i.e., Abū Hāšim al-Ǧubbāʾī (d. 933), and his account of divine simplicity which is based on his theory of *aḥwāl*.[3] On the other hand, this article concerns Brower-Bergmann's truthmaker account of divine simplicity. In what follows, I will first present a reconstruction of Abū Hāšim's theory of *aḥwāl* based on a truthmaker semantics. Secondly, I will make a comparison between Brower-Bergmann's truthmaker account of divine simplicity and that of Abū Hāšim. My focus, in this part of the article, will be on how these theories explain the differences in God's properties as well as the similarities between God's properties and those of creatures.

Thus, in the next section, I will introduce Abū Hāšim's theory of *aḥwāl*, and its answer to the problem of divine simplicity. We will see how the theory of states offers an alternative ontological framework to the classical Muʿtazilī view and accommodates the properties without allocating them an ontological reality. In the third section, I will present a truthmaker reconstruction of the theory of *aḥwāl*. We will see how the theory of states shares common ontological assumptions with Brower-Bergmann's truthmaker theory of divine simplicity. Both theories dismiss the ontological reality of divine attributes and consider them as singular terms, such as "God's power", which is grounded in God's very essence, and have God as the truthmaker. The fourth section is about the similarities and differences between properties. I will argue that, unlike the theory of aḥwāl, Brower-Bergmann's truthmaker theory of divine simplicity comes short of explaining the similarities between God's properties and those of the creatures.

2.   The Theory of *Aḥwāl*[4]

One of the main applications of Abū Hāšim's theory of *aḥwāl* is to answer the question of how God can be described by several properties without

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[3] Considering Islamic philosophy/theology and the doctrine of divine simplicity, there are two other works, one about ʾašʿarītes (Nazif Muhtaroglu 2020), and the other about Ghazālī (McGinnis 2022). My paper is about one of the *Muʿtazilītes* that roughly precedes the philosophers/theologians of the two mentioned works from a historical point of view. Thus, in this paper, I do not discuss those works.

[4] Unfortunately, none of the works of Abū Hāšim are extant. Accordingly, in order to present and discuss Abū Hāšim's theory of *aḥwāl*, I refer to the later works of the *mutakallimūn*, and some of the well-known works of the scholars of *Kalām*, such as Frank (1978) and Dhanani (1994).

His simplicity being violated.[5] In the Qurʾan, different properties are ascribed to God. Accordingly, the *Muʿtazilīs* were challenged to explain the relationship between God and these properties, and yet preserve God's transcendence and oneness. Before Abū Hāšim, there were two main rival views on this issue among the *Muʿtazilīs*:[6] (1) Abū al-Huḏayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 841) held the view that God is identical with His properties. For instance, Him being knowledgeable (*ʿālim*) implies that being knowledgeable is not a distinct reality from His. Being knowledgeable is God Himself; thus, according to Abū al-Huḏayl, God's attributes are not distinct realities from Him, and 'God's being knowledgeable' refers to nothing but God Himself. (2) Ibn Kullāb (d. 859) advocated the view that God's attributes are distinct entities from Him and so they are not identical with God. In his opinion, 'Being knowledgeable' refers to a reality distinct from and alongside God.

Both views are unacceptable. On the one hand, if God were identical with His properties, He would not be transcendent. Moreover, His properties, by transitivity of identity relation, would be identical to each other and thus the differences between the properties would disappear; for example, 'being knowledgeable' would be the same as 'being powerful'. On the other hand, if God were distinct from His properties, then He could not be one, for affirming eternal realities alongside God means admitting the existence of several gods. Thus, neither case is acceptable.

This problem of explaining the relation between God and his properties seems to be the same problem i.e., the problem of divine simplicity, that contemporary philosophers of religions, as described by Plantinga, are concerned with. According to both camps, God's properties can neither be identical nor distinct from Him.

Abū Hāšim replied to this conundrum by defining the notion of *ḥāl* (i.e., state).[7] He added *aḥwāl* (the plural of *ḥāl*) to the vocabulary of *kalām*. The metaphysical categories of the theories of the *Muʿtazilīs* included only God, atoms, and accidents (Dhanani 1994, 17).[8] This atomistic metaphysical picture

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[5] However, the theory of states is not confined to this problem, as states also play an extensive role in Abū Hāšim's metaphysics (see Šahrastānī 1956, 79; Hellī 1995, 15; Thiele 2016, 368; Frank 1978, 16).

[6] These are, in fact, the two earliest rival theories concerning the attributes of God among the Muʿtazilīs (see Frank 1978, 11).

[7] It is worth mentioning that before Abū Hāšim, different theologians had tried to answer this problem, though all of them were faced with crucial objections. The most notable attempt was that of Abū Hāšim's father, Abū ʿAlī al-Ǧubbāʾī (d. 915), who was the head of the Basrian Muʿtazilite school at the time. For more, see Frank (1978, ch. 1).

[8] However, it does not mean that they exclude complex objects. The congeries of atoms make a complex object. Moreover, according to Abū Hāšim and his followers, accidents can be inherent in

lacks properties and comes short of explaining the similarities and differences between entities. Roughly, Abū Hāšim's *aḥwāl* fill this gap by providing an explanation of the similarities and differences between objects.[9] Abū Hāšim borrowed the notion of *ḥāl* from grammarians (*naḥwīyūn*). According to them, a *ḥāl* is the manner in which an act is happening, or an object is. In 'Zayd went walking', 'walking' is the *ḥāl* in which Zayd was going. In 'Zayd is knowledgeable', 'being knowledgeable' is a *ḥāl*. It means that Zayd *is*, and he is in the state (*ḥāl*) of being knowledgeable. Abū Hāšim paraphrases the subject-predicate propositions in the form of the latter.[10] Thus, predicates indicate *aḥwāl* (henceforth states).

In a general categorization, states are of two kinds (Šahrastānī 1956, 79):[11] Those that are grounded in the object, that has the state, itself, and those that are grounded in something other than the object itself. The former states are of two kinds: The property-of-essence (*ṣifat al-ḏāt*) and essential properties. The property-of-essence is its self-identity i.e., that which makes it to be what it is and distinct from other things. For instance, being atom for an atom. Essential properties are those properties that a thing necessarily has when it exists. For instance, being space-occupying (*taḥayyuz*) for an atom. The object itself is the condition or ground (*aṣl*) of these states. The states which are grounded in something other than the object itself are also of two kinds: Those which are grounded in accidents (*maʿānī*), for instance, the state of being black which is grounded in an accident of blackness, and that which is grounded in the act of an agent (*fāʿil*) i.e., the state of being existent.[12]

Nevertheless, states have some peculiar characteristics. According to Abū Hāšim, a state is neither an object (*ḏāt*) nor a thing (*šayʾ*). For the Muʿtazilīs, an object (*ḏāt*) or a thing (*šayʾ*) is that which is knowable, and consequently, that which can be characterized by some attributes.[13] Thus,

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such complex objects. Similarly, *aḥwāl* may be predicated to any kind of objects, complex objects, or atoms. For more, see Frank (1978, 2).

[9] It does not mean that *aḥwāl* are properties. As will be explained, they are the true predications of objects.

[10] It is worth mentioning that in Arabic subject-predicate sentences are made without a copula. Abū Hāšim added the verb *kāna* (from *kawn* which means being or becoming) to subject-predicate sentences. Accordingly, a sentence as '*a* is *F*' means that *a* is and *F* is the state of his being.

[11] The details of different kinds of *aḥwāl* are from (Frank 1978).

[12] Some of the *Muʿtazilīs* including Abū Hāšim held the view that some objects do not exist, and accordingly, to be existent is a property. It is also worth mentioning that a fifth kind of states has been mentioned in some sources, namely being perceived. This one is neither grounded in the object itself nor in another thing other than the object in question. See Frank (1978).

[13] The Muʿtazilīs sometimes defined object (*ḏāt*=essence) as that which can be characterized by descriptions, and thing (*šayʾ*) as that which can be known (Abd al-Ğabbār 1965, 252-253), however, they usually take *ḏāt* and *šayʾ* to be equivalent, as in Nīšābūrī (1979, 43). For more details see Dhanani (1994, 31-32).

states are not knowable. Moreover, objects are either existent or nonexistent. Thus, states are neither existent nor nonexistent. As al-Ǧuwaynī put it:

> The one who asserts (*ʾaṯbata*) *aḥwāl* does not mean that they are subsistent (*ṯābita*) but claims to assert the knowledge about them. *Aḥwāl*, in themselves, are neither subsistent (*ṯābita*) nor non-subsistent (*manfīya*), likewise, they are neither existent nor nonexistent. (al-Ǧuwaynī 1969, 610)

The idea that states are neither subsistent nor non-subsistent may sound perplexing. However, it seems that what al-Ǧuwaynī tells us lies in the following lines:

> The son of al-Ǧubbāʾī [namely, Abū Hāšim] and his followers among the later Muʿtazilīs did not describe *aḥwāl* as those which are known (*maʿlūma*). Likewise, they did not characterize *aḥwāl* as those which are unknown (*maǧhūl*). Because, unknowing (*ǧahl*) is a kind of knowing (*ʿilm*), and thus, what is not known is also not unknown. (al-Ǧuwaynī 1969, 642)

To assert that something is unknowable is to give information about it. Thus, it must be known, in one way or another. Otherwise, one would not recognize that it is unknowable. Moreover, being unknown is a characteristic of the *thing* in question. It is information of it. Thus, a state, in itself, is no *thing* at all. We can only speak of states through objects. However, the question of what states are remains to be answered. To answer this question, we should first see how one can truly assert that an object has (or is in) a state.

Consider the property-of-essence for an atom i.e., an atom is an atom. This is a state for the atom. But there is no metaphysical entity in reality that is the state (or property) of *being self-identical*. What enables us to truly assert 'an atom is an atom' is that it is an analytic truth. An atom is necessarily an atom by itself. Thus, to say that an atom has the state of being self-identical is nothing but asserting the truth of 'an atom is an atom'. According to Abū Hāšim, the property-of-essence is grounded in the object itself and does not have any referent. What makes the truth of an object be in such a state is itself. The same can be said about the essential properties. Being space-occupying is in the definition of an atom: an atom

is that which occupies space when it exists.[14] There is no metaphysical entity as the property of being space-occupying (*Taḥayyuz*), but it is necessarily true that an atom is space-occupying when it exists. That is grounded in the object, here an atom, itself, because this is what an atom is.

Now consider the states which are grounded—not in the object itself but rather—in something other than the object. They are grounded either in accidents or in the act of some agent (*fāʿil*). For the former case, consider the accident of blackness which is inhered in a black object. Here, there is an object, an accident of blackness, and nothing more. There is no universal of black or the property of being black. However, it is true that the object is black, or in other words, the object is in the state of being black. The same is true of the state of being existent which is grounded in the act of some agent. There is no entity in reality as the state or property of *being existent*, but the assertion that some object is existent can be true. Because not all objects exist and being existent is the property that only some objects have.[15]

What we reviewed above was about the states of objects other than God. According to Abū Hāšim, God's states are all grounded in his essence. However, there are no entities like the state (or property) of being omnipotent. What we know as God's properties are merely the state, mode, or manners of His being. Thus, from ascribing different predicates to God, it does not follow that some entities *are* alongside God. Moreover, there are no entities as properties or states—whether universal or individual—that are identical to God. That is how Abū Hāšim replies to the problem of divine simplicity.[16]

The way I proposed the theory of states may raise two questions. Firstly, if the theory of states is not committed to the ontological reality of the properties, what is the difference between the theory of states and the theories that Abū Alī al-Ǧubbāʾī and Abū al-Huḏayl al-ʿAllāf put forward? The Latter two theories, similar to that of Abū Hāšim, denied that God's attributes belong to a metaphysical reality distinct from God. Abū al-Huḏayl al-ʿAllāf claimed that God is knowledgeable, powerful, and living by virtue of an entity of knowledge, power, and life that is identical with God, and for Abū Alī al-Ǧubbāʾī, the attribute is the act of attribution and

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[14] On the contrary, an accident is that which does not occupy space when exists (see Dhanani 1994, 16).

[15] Abū Hāšim like many other Muʿtazilīs held the view that some objects do not exist, and thus some and not all objects exist.

[16] In fact, these two are both the same problem as explained in the first and second part of the paper.

nothing more. Thus, the differences should be explicated. Secondly, according to several contemporary secondary literatures on the theory of states, states are metaphysically real and the theory of states is not a semantic but a metaphysical theory (see, for instance, Benevich 2016; Thiel 2016). Hence, it should be justified why the theory of state is construed here as a semantic theory.

I will briefly answer these questions. Let us first consider the difference between Abū al-Huḏayl's theory of God's attributes. Thiel (2016) shows that Abū al-Huḏayl's theory does not explain the differences between God's many attributes, and how different attributes can be said to be identical with God while He is one (Thiel 2016, 366). As we will see in due course, these explanations are crucial parts of the theory of states. Concerning the difference between the theory of states and Abū Alī's theory, Frank (1978) makes the point clear. According to the position of Abū Alī, '*what is known and affirmed in the statement 'Zaydun ʿālimun'* [Zayd is knowing] *is the reality of the act of knowing that is the ground of his being knowing*' (Frank 1978, 23-24). Frank provides a passage from Ibn Mattawayh's *at-Taḏkira fī ʾaḥkām al-ğawāhir wal-ʾaʿrāḍ* explaining how the position of Abū Hāšim and his followers differs from that of Abū Alī. Accordingly, the position of Abū Hāšim, concerning the above proposition, *'Zaydun ʿālimun',* is that:

> Since it is true that he [namely Zayd] has a state (*ḥāl*) in his being knowing, the knowledge that he is knowing is a knowledge of the thing itself [i.e., the subject as] in this state rather than a knowledge of the act of knowing or of the thing-itself as Abū Alī [al-Ğubbāʾī] says (i.e., that the knowledge of it is a knowledge of that by virtue of which the knower is knowing), for the latter is not correct in our view (Frank 1978, 24).

Accordingly, Ibn Mattawayh reports that Abū Hāšim "*refutes the position he cites from Abū Alī, for […] he* [i.e. Abū Alī al-Ğubbāʾī] will not allow one to speak of states (*aḥwāl*) in any context". For Abū Alī, the act of attributing is the attribute. For him, ascribing knowledge to God is the assertion of 1) His reality, 2) that he is in contrary to whatever that cannot know, 3) that ascribing ignorance to God is a false assertion, 4) that there are things that God knows (Frank 1978, 15). On the contrary, Abū Hāšim takes *being knowledgeable* to be a *ḥāl* that is intelligible (*maʿqūl*), and that which the predicate signifies. Frank summarizes the difference between the theories of the father and the son as follows:

> What Abū Hāšim did was to consider and, against his father's
> analysis, to reexamine the sense of the assertion (ʾiṯbāt) that is
> made in simple predications and to reinterpret some instances
> (not all) as conveying the sense (ʾafāda) of a state or
> qualification of the being of the subject. (Frank 1978, 22)

Enough for the differences between Abū Hāšim's theory and those of Abū
al-Huḏayl and Abū Alī. Now, let us move to the second question. As
mentioned, the second literature on the theory of states suggests that the
theory of states is a metaphysical theory, and states are metaphysically real.
It is hard to interpret in what sense states are claimed to be metaphysically
real. Since states are neither existent nor nonexistent, it has been argued
that their reality will result in the violation of bivalence (see Zolghadr
2020). Suppose *s* is a state, and take the proposition p to be: 's is existent'.
By supposing that existence (*mawǧūd*) and nonexistence (*maʿdūm*) are
mutually exclusive and exhaustive, *p* will be neither true nor false. I am
not sure that this is a correct interpretation of the theory of states. For this
reason, I have followed al-Ǧuwaynī's interpretation of the theory of states
according to which, as we saw earlier in this section, a state is not an entity,
and it does not have any subsistence (*ṯubūt*). Accordingly, the theory of
states is a semantic theory rather than a metaphysical one. This
interpretation blocks the objections that the theory of states violates
bivalence.

With these understandings let us move on to the next section. Much has
been said, nevertheless, this question has not been answered: How can a
predication be true of something without admitting any metaphysical
entities as properties? In the next section, I will reply to this question by
applying a truthmaker semantics.

3. Truthmakers and *Aḥwāl*

Brower and Bergmann (2006)[17] appeal to a truthmaker theory of predication to
reply to the problem of divine simplicity. As we will see, this truthmaker
theory of predication is compatible with the theory of states. Nonetheless,
the theory of states presents a more comprehensive explanation of, on the
one hand, the difference between predicates that we ascribe to God, and on
the other hand, the shared predications between God and creatures.

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[17] Brower (2008) presents a more detailed explanation of the idea.

Brower and Bergmann (2006, 378) recognize that the problem of divine simplicity is a result of an assumption: the truth of all true predications is to be explained in terms of a subject, and an exemplifiable. As already explained, appealing to any entity as an exemplifiable results in the divine simplicity problem. For this reason, Bergmann and Brower apply a truthmaker theory of predication to any intrinsic essential predications to God of the form 'God is *F*'. In doing so, they introduce the following principle:

> (*) If an intrinsic essential predication of the form 'God is *F*' is true, then (i) *God's F-ness* exists, (ii) *God's F-ness* is the truthmaker of 'God is *F*', and (iii) *God's F-ness* is identical with God. (Beebe 2018, 474)

Accordingly, there is no need for an exemplifier to make 'God is *F*' true. What makes 'God is *F*' true, is *God's F-ness* which is nothing but God Himself. This is true of every true predication to God. Thus, there is no metaphysical complexity in God. All predications, in this case, are true in virtue of only what God is in himself. God is the truthmaker of his predications. For objects other than God, however, truthmakers are different i.e., truthmakers are not always the objects themselves. The truthmaker of 'snow is white' is not the snow itself. Rather, it is a trope like entity of whiteness that is inherent in snow. This follows from a general principle of truthmaker theory of predication:

> (**) If an intrinsic predication of the form '*a* is *F*' is true, then *a's F-ness* exists, where this entity is to be understood as the truthmaker for '*a* is *F*'. (Brower 2008, 17)

In contrast, as we have seen, God's F-ness is God himself who is a concrete individual. Thus, the truthmaker of his predications is God himself. 'God is knowledgeable' is an essential predication of God and thus is true in virtue of God himself. Moreover, God is simple and there is no metaphysical complexity in him. However, other objects, such as Socrates, are not simple and Socrates being just is not an essential predication. Thus, *Socrates' just* is not Socrates himself. In other words, the truthmaker of 'Socrates is just' is not Socrates himself. It is another entity, e.g. a trope, which makes 'Socrates is *F*' true by residing alongside Socrates. 'Socrates is just' is true in virtue of Socrates' justice which is not Socrates himself.

Let us now go back to the theory of states. As already explained, states are nothing but the mode or the way an object is. There is no entity as a state. Objects can be said to be in different states either in virtue of themselves

or in virtue of something other than the object itself. Essential states of an object are predicated truly in virtue of the object itself. Examples are the states of God and the essential states of every object. Contingent states of an object are predicated truly in virtue of an accident or the act of an agent. Examples are the location of an object, the color of an object, the existence of objects other than God, etc. Thus, in the case of God:

> (***) If an intrinsic predication of the form 'God is *F*' is true, then (i) *God's F-ness* is the state of God's being, (ii) *God's F-ness* is the truthmaker of 'God is *F*', and (iii) *God's F-ness* is identical with God.

Similarly to Brower-Bergmann's solution to the problem of divine simplicity, Abū Hāšim dismisses any entity as an exemplifiable alongside God; there is no metaphysical entity as properties or states. States are just predications. Hence, predications of God can be true of Him, in virtue of God's being Himself. There are, nevertheless, more to be discussed about the predications of God, namely the predications which are shared between God and humans and the differences between different predications of God. These are the subject of the next section.

4.   Similarities and Differences in Predication

We affirm different predications to God, such as being just, being knowledgeable, etc. The truthmaker of each of these predications is God himself. Nevertheless, we have not answered the question of what accounts for the differences in these predications? There is no entity, alongside God, corresponding to these predications. According to Brower-Bergmann's truthmaker theory of predication (**), God's being just, God's being knowledgeable and God's being powerful are God Himself. Thus, Brower-Bergmann's truthmaker theory of predication does not, in itself, explain the differences between these characteristics that we ascribe to God. Nevertheless, Brower (2009, 117) explains these differences by claiming that all God's predications derive from Him being divine. In other words, other predications of God are true in virtue of Him being divine. God is divine by nature, and other predications of God follow from it.

Concerning the similarities between the predications that we ascribe to both God and creatures, Brower-Bergmann's truthmaker theory of predication provides no explanation. There are some characteristics that God and creatures share, such as *being knowledgeable*. According to the truthmaker theory of predication, the truthmaker of *is knowledgeable* is, in

the case of God, God Himself, and, in the case of Socrates, a trope that inheres in him.[18] Thus, this question arises about what does explain the similarity between these predications?

Unlike Brower-Bergmann's solution to the problem of divine simplicity, Abū Hāšim's theory of states answers—or at least tries to answer—both questions. In what follows we will review Abū Hāšim's explanation of (1) the differences between God's predications, and (2) the similarities between God's predications and those of creatures.

To answer these questions, we should first review Abū Hāšim's account of inferences from the known to the unknown (*istidlāl*). Abū Hāšim's theory of states is based on his theory of inference[19] (*istidlāl*) (Rashed 2020). For one reason, making inferences is based on similarities and differences between objects or predications, which is grasped, in the context of Abū Hāšim's metaphysics, through states (for more details, see Rashed 2020). Thus, we should first see this connection. *Istidlāl* is an inference from what is known to what is unknown. Based on what makes the link between the known and the unknown, Abū Hāšim distinguishes between two different types of such inference (Rashed 2020, 40; Ibn Mattawayh 1965, 167): (1) inferences made through the community of connotation (*dalāla*), and (2) inferences made through the community of cause (*ʿilla*). *Istidlāl* comes from the root *d l l*, which has a double meaning (for more details, see Rashed 2020, 40). On the one hand, it is the reference or the meaning of a word. On the other hand, it has the meaning of *proving* or *establishing*. The first type of *istidlāl* expresses the first meaning, and the second type of *istidlāl* expresses the latter meaning.

Ibn Mattawayh explains the first type of *istidlāl* as follows:

> The first is like the denotation (*ka-al-dalāla*) of His descriptions since the fact that He is powerful (*kawnuhu qādiran*) follows necessarily from the reality of what establishes it, namely that He has the ability to act (*ṣiḥḥat al-fiʿl*). And the same is true of many of His descriptions. The majority of questions concerning divine oneness obey this definition. (Ibn Mattawayh 1962, 165)

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[18] As mentioned, in the case of the theory of states, the truthmaker of 'Socrates is knowledgeable' is an accident of knowledge which inheres in Socrates and not a trope.

[19] It would be better to translate *istidlāl* as 'proof by sign' as Rashed (2020) does. However, for the sake of simplicity, I chose a one word, i.e., 'inference'. The explanation following these lines will clarify the notion of *istidlāl*. It is worth mentioning that many other *mutakallimūn* also use *istidlāl* as a rule of argumentation. However, Abū Hāšim applies *istidlāl* to his theory of *aḥwāl*, in the way that will be explained in this paper, to get new conclusions concerning God's descriptions.

In this type of *istidlāl*, one infers a concept analytically from another concept. Suppose we know that God is able to act. 'Being able to act' and 'being powerful' have the same denotation. Thus, from the fact that God is able to act, we can infer that He is powerful (*qādir*). Again, from being powerful, being alive follows. The concept of being powerful includes the concept of being alive. Thus, Abū Hāšim begins with one property of God, namely being able to act. The act of God is the creation of the world, which is a skillful act. Thus, God is powerful. The concepts of life and knowledge are embedded in the concept of being powerful. Thus, God has one property which is being powerful. Other predicates that we ascribe to God are nothing but conceptual constituents of the concept of that one property. Henceforth, Abū Hāšim explains the different ways of describing God through an analytic reduction of concepts. There is one property i.e., being powerful, whose concept includes other concepts through which we characterize God.

Thus, Abū Hāšim's answer to the question of what accounts for the differences in the predicates that we ascribe to God is as follows: All characteristics of God are embedded in Him being powerful. In other words, all characteristics of God analytically follow from God's being powerful. This idea is similar to that of Brower. According to Brower, truthmakers need not stand in a one-to-one correspondence with the predications they make true. Thus, the same object can be the truthmaker of conceptually distinct truths, in the same way that Socrates is the truthmaker of the following truths:

a) Socrates is human.
b) Socrates is an animal.
c) Socrates is a material object.

In the case of Socrates, there are three predications that subsume their subject under increasingly general sortals. Brower hypothesizes that there is also a kind of hierarchy in the case of divine predications. Just as Socrates is an animal *in virtue* of being human, we can say God is good (and also powerful, wise, and just) *in virtue* of being divine. Thus, Brower takes '*God is divine*' to be the fundamental predication of God. Other predications of God follow from Him being divine (Brower 2009, 117). God is wise, just, etc., in virtue of Him being divine. As Brower put it,

> Provided we insist—as traditional theists have, and as certainly seems coherent to do—that all God's (non-formal) intrinsic attributes derive from the divine nature, then it will follow that predications (…) are related in roughly the way that

predications subsuming their subject under increasingly general sortals are related. (Brower 2009, 117)

Nevertheless, Brower does not explain to us in what sense other predications derive from God's being divine. As we have seen, Abū Hāšim suggests a conceptual analysis of the general property of God, which for him is being powerful (*qādir*). The concepts of other predicates are embedded in the concept of God's being powerful.[20]

Now let us move on to the second question: (2) What accounts for the similarities between God's predications and those of creatures? The person who builds a bridge is able to act, in fact, a skillful act. Thus, she is powerful. How one can ascribe *being powerful* to both God and a creature? What accounts for the similarity between God and a creature without violating God's transcendence? To see Abū Hāšim's answer to these questions, we should review his second type of *istidlāl*. As Ibn Mattawayh put it,

> The second type [of *istidlāl*] is the community in cause [*ʿilla*], like the way we say that the things that we make need us to be made. Then through making an analogy (*qiyās*) to the hidden, we conclude that His actions need Him for their occurrences. (Ibn Mattawayh 1962, 165)

Thus, this second type of *istidlāl* is an analogy between the known and the unknown.[21] This analogy is made by first making a relation between cause and effect in the known realm, and then extending it to the unknown realm through an analogy. The essence of God is unknown. However, through some analogies from our experiences that are known to us e.g., that any skillful act is done by a skilled agent, we conclude that the world, which is complicated and delineated, is the result of the act of a skilled agent which is God. Thus, what establishes the similarities between God's predications and creatures' predications is the cause-effect relation. The similarity lies in the effect of the acts of God and humans which, here, is a skillful act. More importantly, the similarity is not in the essence of God Himself and the creatures.

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[20] Saenz (2014) presents different possible interpretation of Brower's account of derivation of some predications from 'God is divine'. One of these interpretations is conceptual derivation. For an objection to this interpretation, see Saenz (2014) and for a reply to that objection, see Beebe (2018).

[21] What Abū Hāšim called 'unknown' (*'maǧhūl'*), other Muʿtazilīs called 'hidden' (*'ǧāʾib'*), and what Abū Hāšim called 'known' (*'maʿlūm'*), other Muʿtazilīs called 'manifest' (*'šāhid'*). Ibn Mattawayh, in the above quotation, is using the common term for explaining these types of *istidlāl* that Abū Hāšim applied.

As can be seen through these types of inferences, Abū Hāšim's theory of states, on the one hand, provides an explanation of how we grasp the truth of God's predications—an explanation which Brower-Bergmann's truthmaker theory of predication does not provide—and, on the other hand, provides an explanation of the relation between God's different predications—an explanation which differs from that of Brower-Bergmann. These two issues are the subjects of Saenz's objections to Brower-Bergmann's truthmaker theory of divine simplicity (Saenz 2014). In what follows, we will explore these issues respectively.

Brower-Bergmann's account does not provide any explanation of how a concrete object is the truthmaker of its essential intrinsic predications.[22] As Saenz put it:

> Truthmakers are supposed to be that which gives a metaphysical ground of truth, and grounds are supposed to be explanatory in nature. That is, if x makes <p> true, then x (or x's existence) metaphysically explains why <p> is true. (Saenz 2014, 463-464)

As Beebe (2018, 476-477) shows, this explanation is not what a truthmaker theory is expected to deliver, and moreover, '*it is generally accepted among truthmaker theorists that concrete individuals alone can serve as truthmakers for intrinsic essential predications*'. As Pawl (2019) argues what Saenz asks for is an epistemic explanation, rather than a metaphysical one. A general form of an epistemic explanation may be as follows: a provides an epistemic explanation for b by shedding light on why and how it happens. It is in contrast to a metaphysical explanation which may have the following general form: a provides a metaphysical explanation of b by making b obtain, exist or happen. Thus, Brower-Bergmann's truthmaker theory of divine simplicity provides the metaphysical explanation, however, not the epistemic explanation. In fact, the metaphysical explanation is what the truthmaker theory of divine simplicity is expected to provide. For this reason, Pawl concludes that Saenz's argument does not work against the truthmaker theory of divine simplicity. However, I assume that providing an epistemic explanation is an advantage for any theory that explains divine simplicity. Let us now go back to Abū Hāšim's theory of states by considering the distinction between epistemic and metaphysical explanations. Abū Hāšim's second type of *istidlāl* provides some kind of an epistemic justification for the predications we ascribe to

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[22] For more on Saenz's objection, see Saenz (2014). For discussions on Saenz's objection and replies to it, see Beebe (2018) and Pawl (2019).

God, though not exactly the explanation that Saenz asked for. For Abū Hāšim, the essence of God is not known. We only have access to the effect i.e., the creation of the world, whose cause is God. Moreover, from our knowledge of the world, we know that any skillful act is caused by a skilled agent. Creating the world is a skillful act, and thus God is a skilled agent, or in other words, He is able to act, which means He is powerful. Thus, Abū Hāšim provides a justification for how we grasp the fundamental property of God. As mentioned (see page 12 above), Saenz asked for an explanation of how God, as the truthmaker of His predications, makes His predications true. Such an explanation cannot be presented in Abū Hāšim's theory of *aḥwāl*, because the essence of God is not directly accessible, and it is unknown. What we know about God is through His creation. Any knowledge of God comes from the created world. For these reasons, Abū Hāšim's epistemic justification of God's predication is not—and cannot be—exactly what Saenz has asked for. Let us summarize Abū Hāšim's epistemic justification. Abū Hāšim begins with the two following premises: (1) the world must have a creator which is God, and (2) from our knowledge of the world and creatures, we know that any skillful act is the result of a skilled agent. Then, Abū Hāšim concludes that God is powerful.

There is still more to be said about the predications of God. It concerns the second main objection that Saenz raises against Brower-Bergman theory concerning the relation between different predications of God. As already mentioned, Brower maintains that all God's intrinsic attributes follow from him being divine. As Saenz shows, Brower does not explain to us in what sense other predications of God follow from Him being divine. Saenz considers three candidates (see Beebe 2018, 480-482): (I) the priority of God's being divine over other predications of God is merely a conceptual matter. (II) that priority is a non-conceptual matter that is based upon a priority in reality. (III) that priority is just a brute and unexplained fact. Saenz rejects all three candidates. As mentioned, Abū Hāšim advocates the first option, however, unlike Brower, Abū Hāšim maintains that all predications of God follow from Him being powerful and not from Him being divine. For this reason, we restrict our discussion to the first option i.e., that the priority of one of God's predications over other ones is a conceptual matter. As Saenz argues, there must be such a priority, and it must be justified. Regarding such a priority, Saenz considers the following sentences:

(1) God is wise because God is divine.
(2) God is divine, at least in part, because God is wise.

Saenz holds that (1) and (2) are jointly exhaustive because it is just false that the truth of 'God is wise' is not in any way explanatorily related to the truth of 'God is divine'. As Saenz put it:

> Here is a question everyone, and so the divine simplicity theorist, has to answer: what explains the pattern of dependency among the truth of the predications expressed in (1)? That is, why is it that the truth of one predication, that God is wise, depends on the truth of another, that God is divine, rather than the other way around? In short, why (1) rather than (2)? This question must have an answer. That one *predication* is true in virtue of another *predication* is not a fundamental fact. (Saenz 2014, 470)

This is plain from Saenz's example of BACHELOR. Saenz rejects the conceptual priority by giving an example:

> BACHELOR is made up of, or composed or constituted by, UNMARRIED and MALE, and it is precisely because of this that Bill is a bachelor because he is an unmarried male and not the other way around. It would be conceptually incoherent to think that Bill is an unmarried male because he is a bachelor. (Saenz 2014, 470)

Thus, Saenz's main point is that if the priority of being divine over being wise were conceptual then (2) would be a conceptual mistake. Accordingly, Saenz rejects the conceptual priority of *being divine* over other predications of God. Saenz seems to be right, because being divine, if we consider it as a property, is the conjunction of other properties that classical theism holds to be true of God. This is what the example of BACHELOR delivers. If someone is both male and unmarried, he is a bachelor. Being a bachelor is nothing more than *being male* and *being unmarried*. Similarly, God's *being divine* is nothing more than the claim that all the other predicates that theists ascribe to God are true of Him. *Being divine* is the conjunction of other predicates ascribed to God. It is not a distinct property.

However, this argument does not work against Abū Hāšim's theory of states. For him, the fundamental property of God is *being powerful*. But *being powerful* is not—conceptually speaking—the conjunction of other predicates that Abū Hāšim ascribes to God, such as *being knowledgeable*, *being wise*, *being just*, etc. Moreover, *being powerful* is the only predicate that entails analytically other predicates. If God is powerful (in the way He

is that created such a delineated world), He is knowledgeable, wise, etc. On the other hand, if all other predicates, but *being powerful*, were true of God, his being powerful would not be entailed. Thus, *is powerful* (*kana qādiran*), as God's fundamental predication can explain the truth of other predications of God, and it also satisfies the justification which Saenz asked for.

To sum up, Saenz asked why one property is prior to others. Abū Hāšim could answer that *being powerful* is the fundamental property, because it is the only property that follows by arguing from the external world, in contrast to the case in which its concept follows analytically from the concepts of other predications. Abū Hāšim explained this inferential procedure in his account of the inference from the known to the unknown. However, one may object that this priority is an epistemic one, and not a metaphysical priority. True! Abū Hāšim does also provide a metaphysical explanation of this priority. There is no such entity as properties. There is only the essence of God which is the truthmaker of all God's intrinsic essential predications. The essence of God makes 'God is powerful' true. The concept of *being powerful* consists of the concepts of *being alive*, *being knowledgeable*, etc.,[23] but it is not confined to these concepts. The conjunction of these concepts does not deliver the concept of *being powerful*. The symmetry that Saenz points out in the case of *being divine* and other predications of God, or in the case of *being bachelor* and *being male and unmarried* does not exist in Abū Hāšim's explanation of God's predications. The priority in the case of the predicate *is powerful* over *is alive*, *is knowledgeable*, etc., comes from the fact that only the first entails others and not the other way around. Since the aforementioned symmetry does not hold here, Saenz's argument does not work against Abū Hāšim's theory of divine simplicity.

5.   Conclusion

In this paper, I first presented a reconstruction of Abū Hāšim's theory of states based on Brower-Bergmann's truthmaker theory of predication. I argued for an interpretation of the theory of states according to which the theory of states is a semantic theory rather than a metaphysical one. It explains the truth of God's predications without assuming any entities,

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[23] Being knowledgeable and being alive are characteristics that distinguish God from a natural/mechanical cause. It is important to note that Abū Hāšim makes this distinction through the way he articulates his account of *istidlāl.*

such as properties, as exemplifiable. I showed that the truthmaker theory of predication can explain the peculiar and puzzling characteristics of states such as 'states are neither existent nor nonexistent' and 'states are neither knowable nor unknowable'.[24] I showed, through reading the works of later *mutakallimūn*, that all these descriptions of states mean that states are not metaphysical entities. In other words, no *thing* is a state. The puzzling way of speaking about states has some reasons though. Speaking of something implies referring to that thing. To be referred implies to be something, and consequently to be either existent or nonexistent. According to Abū Hāšim, everything is either existent or nonexistent.

Thus, states are neither existent nor nonexistent. States are no things. Similarly, not only states are not known, but they are also not unknown. As mentioned (see above footnote 12), to know that something is unknown we must have some knowledge about it. That which is known is an object. Since states are no entities, they are neither known nor unknown. Thus, states are predicates that enable us to make true predications of God and other objects without assuming any metaphysical entities as exemplifiable. That explains how predications of God do not violate His simplicity. A predication, 'God is F', may be true without F being a metaphysical entity. God is the truthmaker of such predications.

Moreover, we compared Abū Hāšim's solution to the problem of divine simplicity to that of Brower and Bergmann. Then, we saw how Abū Hāšim's theory of states provides some epistemic justification for the truthmaker theory of divine simplicity. As we have seen, Abū Hāšim provides a more comprehensive explanation of the differences between God's predications. Moreover, Abū Hāšim explains the similarities between the attributes that God and creatures share. This latter explanation is absent in Brower-Bergmann's truthmaker theory of divine simplicity.

Acknowledgments

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[24] These characterizations of states made Abū Hāšim's opponent to construe it as a contradictory claim which violates the principle of non-contradiction. As an example, see Zolghadr (2020). However, in this paper, we present a semantic interpretation of the theory of states which saves the theory from inconsistencies.

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