Philosopher of Samarqand: Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī's Theory of Properties

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6.1 INTRODUCTION: AL-MĀTURĪDĪ IN CONTEXT

When one thinks about philosophy in the medieval Islamic world, the names of famous Muslim *falāsifa* may come to mind: for example, al-Kindī/Alkindus (d. 873), al-Fārābī/Alpharabius (d. 950–1), Ibn Sīnā/Avicenna (d. 1037), and Ibn Rushd/Averroes (d. 1198). A further prominent figure is the *mutakallim* (theologian) al-Ghāzālī/Algazel (d. 1111) who is notorious for his opposition to certain beliefs held by the *falāsifa*, despite the rather more interesting fact that he was also important for the incorporation of their philosophical methods into *kalām* (dialectical theology) (Wisnovsky 2004, 65). That each of these thinkers possesses a Latinized name is indicative of their acceptance in the medieval Western philosophical canon and their influence, to varying degrees, on major Christian theologians such as Aquinas (d. 1274). A name lacking this philosophical currency is Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 944), a theologian of the Ḥanafī tradition from Samarqand in Transoxiana. This is not a

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surprising state of affairs. Despite eventually being crowned the eponym of one of two main schools of *kalām* in Sunnī Islam along with the contemporaneous Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 936), al-Māturīdī was for a long time not acknowledged outside his locality of Samarqand as a major theological figure, let alone in medieval Christian Europe (Rudolph 2015, 319–320; Aldosari 2020, 178).

The vagaries of history that lead to a person's fame are not precisely correlated with the originality or intrinsic philosophical interest of their ideas. Nevertheless, this perceived lack of influence has likely played a part in lessening recognition of al-Māturīdī's intellectual contributions in contemporary study of the history of philosophy. In his *Philosophy in the Islamic World*, Peter Adamson, an important champion for the inclusion of Muslim theologians in the canon, devotes an entire chapter to "al-Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites," but less than a paragraph to al-Māturīdī and his school (see Adamson 2016, 373). Ulrich Rudolph, the author of the foremost intellectual history of al-Māturīdī and his milieu, suggests that he does not have "a philosophical orientation in the conceptual framework of his thought" (Rudolph 2015, 315). This is a surprising judgment considering that Rudolph himself identifies points of likely influence from al-Kindī on God's oneness and acknowledges al-Māturīdī's theological use of Neoplatonic metaphysics (Rudolph 2015, 277).[1] Rudolph's point seems to be that despite using philosophical terminology and concepts, they do not impact the structure of his system. One of the aims of the present chapter is to show that, at least for al-Māturīdī's theory of properties, these elements run deep.

While, of course, it is not necessary to establish a connection to the ideas of a recognized Muslim philosopher for a theologian's work to have philosophical merit, al-Māturīdī can claim such a link (to al-Kindī) as a

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[1] There are other examples of Kindian echoes in the work of al-Māturīdī. See his statement, "the philosophers term [the human being] the microcosm" (*wa-huwa alladhī sammathu al-ḥukamāʾ al-ʿālam al-ṣaghīr*) (al-Māturīdī 2010, 67). This appears to derive from al-Kindī who writes, "those of the ancient philosophers possessing discrimination who did not speak our language termed the human being the microcosm" (*tusammā dhawū al-tamyīzi min ḥukamāʾi al-qudamāʾi min ghayri ahli lisāninā al-insāna ʿālaman ṣaghīran*) (al-Kindī 1950, vol. 1, 260). Also, al-Māturīdī's use of the word *māʾiyya* (whatness) finds a precedent in al-Kindī's *On First Philosophy (Fī al-falsafa al-ūlā)* (Adamson and Pormann 2012, 30). The most likely source for these teachings is directly from al-Kindī's student Abū Zayd al-Balkhī (d. 322/934) or indirectly via al-Māturīdī's Muʿtazilī rival Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī who is known to have met Abū Zayd (Rudolph 2015, 159). But the circulation of written material through less famous channels cannot be ruled out.

complement to his original theological corpus. In fact, there is a good argument to be made that overemphasizing the distinction between medieval Muslim philosophers and theologians is unhelpful in general. Al-Kindī, for one, makes clear that the task of philosophy is intrinsically theological because "first philosophy" is "the knowledge of the first truth who is the cause of all truth" (Adamson 2006). The aim of the present chapter, therefore, is to introduce the reader to philosophical aspects of al-Māturīdī's thought, specifically through outlining his theory of properties, the role that it plays within his metaphysics, and how he uses it to advance his theological project. I intend to show that treating al-Māturīdī seriously as a philosopher is intellectually rewarding, as well as important for a broader appreciation of the development of ideas in the tenth century.

6.2   Al-Māturīdī's Metaphysics: An Early Trope Theorist?

As a theologian within the formative period of *kalām*, al-Māturīdī does not introduce his metaphysical ideas independently but elaborates them alongside his theological ones as needs dictate. It therefore becomes necessary to extract them from various places in his surviving theological treatise, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*. This job is made more difficult by the dense and cryptic Arabic employed in this text, which is found in the unicum manuscript housed in the library of the University of Cambridge.[2] The scholar of early *kalām*, Josef van Ess, aptly comments that al-Māturīdī does not provide the theological context to each question under investigation but expects readers to be able to supply it themselves (van Ess 1981, 556). In some ways, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* stylistically recalls Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which Hugh Lawson-Tancred compares to a palace or a cathedral, yet one "still covered in scaffolding, with gaps in its plaster and decoration and even with key structural elements tottering insecurely on makeshift supports" (Aristotle 2004, lii). Indeed, though there is no evidence that al-Māturīdī had read the *Metaphysics*, he was possibly exposed to it indirectly, as the first Arabic translation was written for al-Kindī (D'Ancona

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[2] The manuscript has been digitized. See https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-03651/1, accessed March 26, 2020. An edition was produced in 1970 by Fathalla Kholeif and another superior one in 2003 by Bekir Topaloğlu and Muḥammad Aruçi. References in the current chapter are to the second edition of this latter text. All translations from the Arabic of al-Māturīdī's *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* in this chapter are mine.

2009). One of many important differences between the two texts concerns their reception. Whereas the *Metaphysics* has generated its own supporting literature of commentary and translation through the ages, al-Māturīdī's text was considered by his followers as containing "a little obscurity and prolixity, and a kind of difficulty in its order" (al-Bazdawī 2003, 14), and was abandoned for more accessible texts that drew upon his ideas.[3]

Al-Māturīdī does make active use of ontological terminology from an Aristotelian text to which he evidently did have access, the *Categories*. Specifically, he was familiar with the Arabic translation of the *Organon*, which he refers to as *Al-Manṭiq* of Arisṭāṭālīs and from which he lists the ten categories (al-Māturīdī 2010, 215–216).[4] The *Organon* was among the first Greek texts to be rendered into Arabic by the litterateur Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. 757), or his son, in the mid second/eighth century (D'Ancona 2009). Accordingly, al-Māturīdī classifies reality into the category of substance (ʿayn), by which he means a concrete particular, and the category of quality (ṣifa), the attribute or property possessed by it (al-Māturīdī 2010, 105).[5]

But eschewing the Aristotelian hylomorphism adopted by the *falāsifa*, as well as the atomism that became prevalent in the *kalām* tradition, al-Māturīdī develops a bundle theory to describe the nature of the world. Two creative Irāqī thinkers of early *kalām*, Ḍirār b. ʿAmr (d. ca 815) and al-Ḥusayn al-Najjār (d. ca 845), both loosely related to the school of the Muʿtazila, seem to have provided the inspiration.[6] These figures proposed that accidents, which are contingent qualities that must be possessed by their substances, comprise the fundamental ontology (Rudolph 2015,

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[3] For example, the Māturīdī theologian, Mankūbars al-Nāṣirī (d. 1254), quotes extensively from al-Māturīdī's commentary on the Qur'an but does not even mention *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, demonstrating the extent to which this latter book had dropped out of regular circulation by his era (Aldosari 2020, 193).

[4] In al-Māturīdī's Qur'anic commentary, he mentions that though it is permissible to review the books of the *falāsifa*, one must take only what agrees with the Qur'an and leave the rest (al-Māturīdī 2006, vol. 9, 39). Based on his adoption of philosophical concepts, this "agreement" should be understood in an expansive, rather than restrictive, sense.

[5] It seems that the use of ʿayn rather than *jawhar* for substance is a specific characteristic of the second-/eighth-century translation of the *Categories* (van Ess 1981, 559). Al-Māturīdī sometimes uses the term *jawhar*. See al-Māturīdī (2010, 215).

[6] Cornelia Schöck points out that Ḍirār's ideas are likely to have a Neoplatonic genealogy. She highlights several similarities with the commentary of Porphyry (d. 305) on the *Categories* and with the early Christian, Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395). See Schöck (2016, 66–70).

245, 253; see also Cassin 2014, 835). The usual term in the *kalām* tradition for the accident is *ʿaraḍ*, which initially had the meaning of the perception of a phenomenon when an object presents itself (van Ess 2002, 9). The picture is of accident-like qualities, *tropes* in the contemporary philosophical vernacular, that form bodies as bundles with no underlying atomic substrate (see Sorabji 1988, 57).

The influential classical Māturīdī theologian Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī (d. 1114) records that al-Māturīdī followed this stance since only accidents are perceptible. But al-Nasafī does everything he can to undermine it, claiming it is a doctrine voiced in al-Māturīdī's *Maqālāt*[7] and therefore not his decided theological position (al-Nasafī 2011, vol. 1, 189–190; see also Rudolph 2015, 253). Some contemporary scholars have been keen to follow al-Nasafī in this view (see Yavuz 2016, 56–57; Bulgen 2019, 262). Nevertheless, in his *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, al-Māturīdī is quite explicit that, within the creation, what is not a body (*jism*) is an accident (*ʿaraḍ*) (al-Māturīdī 2010, 83).[8] He goes on to explain that he prefers the term *ṣifa* for scriptural reasons:

> In the Book of God, the name *ʿaraḍ* is for desiring attractive things, such as in His saying, Most High, "You desire the attractions (*ʿaraḍ*) of the lower world" [Q. 8:67] and His saying, "Had it been a nearby attraction (*ʿaraḍ*)…" [Q. 9:42] So based on this, naming it a quality (*ṣifa*) is closer to the Islamic terminology (*al-asmāʾ al-islāmiyya*). (al-Māturīdī 2010, 83)

Digging deeper into al-Māturīdī's ontology, it becomes apparent that substances are not just bundles of qualities but of particular property instances, or tropes. This emerges in the context of his dialectical exchange about

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[7] This is a lost heresiographical text. *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* (Book of Unicity) and *Kitāb al-maqālāt* (Book of Doctrines) were standard Arabic titles for, respectively, Islamic theological compendiums and heresiographies in the tenth century.

[8] There is an added difficulty to al-Māturīdī's system insofar as he affirms the existence of opposing *ṭabāʾiʿ* (natures) within things: "every sensed thing is not free from being gathered from diverse opposed natures" (al-Māturīdī 2010, 78). Rudolph argues that these are a kind of *ʿaraḍ* that can form into bodies, rather than those characterizing momentary states (see Rudolph 2015, 256–259). This would make them akin to Ḍirār's concept of *abʿāḍ* (sing. *baḍʿ*; parts, or primary qualities), which uses a similar distinction (van Ess 2018a, 41–43). I suggest that this picture is substantially correct and would add that al-Māturīdī also uses the term to speak about the diverse tendencies of specific things, approaching a concept of dispositions. I will not discuss them further here.

divine speech with an unnamed interlocutor, likely the Muʿtazilī Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī (d. 931). Al-Māturīdī writes:

> [Al-Kaʿbī] claims: "Merciful (*raḥīm*) is an attribute, unlike mercy (*raḥma*). [This is because] everyone who performs the attribute of a thing, he is described by it; just as the one who reviles another or glorifies him is his reviler or glorifier. In the same manner, He created mercy and it is not permissible that He be attributed with it when He created it until He says, 'I am merciful.' So, by that we know that the attribute is His statement that He is merciful."[9]

> Abū Manṣūr, may God have mercy on him, says: how unaware he is of this confusion about the attributes so that he begins such in the explanation of the attributes of God; glorified is God above the like of this imagination, and He is transcendent. Were the attribute in reality [merely] the attribution of the attributor (*waṣf al-wāṣif*), it renders futile speech of the creation, because the creation is [made up of] substances (*aʿyān*) and attributes (*ṣifāt*). And it renders futile his [own] speech about joining together, splitting apart, movement and rest, which particulars are not free from in the affirmation of their temporality, though they are free from the attribution of the attributor for them. So, it is established that the attributes are integral to the particulars, not as he mentions. (al-Māturīdī 2010, 119)

Here, al-Māturīdī contrasts his own position of attributes, which are integral to their concrete particulars, with his interlocutor's concept nominalism, which grounds properties in the concepts held about them.[10] An important part of his critique is the assertion that the opponent falls into incoherence if concept nominalism, which has been introduced for its deflationary account of divine attributes, is applied to the obviously real

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[9] Both printed editions of *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* render this phrase as "His statement, 'Indeed He is merciful'" (*qawluhu innahu raḥīm*) (al-Māturīdī 2010, 119; al-Māturīdī 1970, 56). That would imply a direct Qurʾanic quotation, such as Q. 5:39: "Indeed God is forgiving, merciful" (*inna allāha ghafūrun raḥīm*). As there is no such phrase in the canonical text of the Qurʾan, it may be better to read al-Māturīdī as using indirect speech, as follows: "His statement that He is merciful" (*qawluhu annahu raḥīm*). The manuscript allows for this possibility. See Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī, "Kitāb al-tawḥīd," Cambridge University Library, Cambridge, MS Add.3651, fol. 27r.

[10] He makes the case more explicitly in al-Māturīdī (2010, 113–114). There is further discussion in el Omari (2016, 107). For an indication to the doctrine in al-Kaʿbī's own writings, see al-Kaʿbī (2014, 101–102). Contemporary concept nominalism is outlined in Rodriguez-Pereyra (2008).

properties found in the world. Al-Māturīdī's presentation of his opponent's response provides further elaboration of the two contrasting metaphysical treatments of properties:

> [Al-Kaʿbī] says: "We never said that God, when He creates redness in a garment, makes for it an attribute. Yet was redness to be an attribute for it, it would be permissible to say that when God created it: 'He described the garment with [redness].' And the same would be true for movement and rest. Like this is the one who writes to another describing his height, it is permissible to say: 'he described himself to us in his letter.'" [Al-Māturīdī says:] [al-Kaʿbī] claims this is clear. Then [al-Kaʿbī] says: "We do not deny the permissibility of the unrestricted statement that redness is the attribute of the red thing, and mercy is the attribute of the action, but metaphorically speaking, while the reality is what I have mentioned."

> Then [al-Kabī] objects on account of it thus being permissible that there is for the attribute an attribute. [Al-Māturīdī] says: yes, with the meaning that it is being described, but that is only in existence as long as the one describing it is speaking. When he stops speaking, it no longer exists. (al-Māturīdī 2010, 119–120)

In this passage, the opponent rejects al-Māturīdī's claim that he ends up holding two inconsistent theories of properties. Al-Kaʿbī points out that, according to his position, the existence of all properties is due to God's description of them. That is, al-Māturīdī's stance on integral properties is allowable as a useful metaphor, though concept nominalism is the literal truth. Then he launches his own objection, claiming that according to al-Māturīdī's account, a property, for instance redness, would be given a further property by its conceptual description, which is incoherent. Such criticism of the meta-qualification of attributes (*waṣf al-ṣifa*) had been discussed prior to this. For instance, it is ascribed to the ninth-century theologian Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Qalānisī (Al-Ṣaffār 2011, vol. 1, 208). Al-Māturīdī's response to this critique is that it is not problematic for real property instances to be given a kind of temporary attribute when they are described, so long as it disappears thereafter. This would seem to make property concepts linguistic abstractions that refer to their real counterparts.

As al-Māturīdī observes, the different positions adopted by the two figures in their back-and-forth polemics are predicated on the direction in

which each argues. For members of the Baghdadī Muʿtazilī school, such as al-Kaʿbī, properties observed in the world are only metaphorically real, receiving their true reality from the concepts described by God and subsequently known to us. That is, the apparent concrete ontology of "redness" is a metaphor that can be used in speech, but really all properties come under their relevant divine descriptions. For al-Māturīdī, because we have no direct access to divine concepts, we should take observable properties as ontically real and the basis for reasoning about God. As he says:

> There is no way to know the veiled reality except by indication from the manifest one. Therefore, when one wants the description of the High and Majestic, that is the path of knowledge in the manifest world and [it provides] the possibility of speech. [This is] because we lack the capacity for cognising with names other than that which we have witnessed, and there is no pointing to what we have not taken in with the senses and realised through perception. Were that a capacity we possibly possessed, we would have said so. But [we desired] to remove any anthropomorphism from our statement "knowing not like the knowers" (*ʿālimun lā ka-l-ʿulamāʾ*), and this is the type [of approach] in all with which we name and describe Him. (al-Māturīdī 2010, 91)

Al-Māturīdī's elucidation of divine properties is grounded in his twofold use of the principles of analogy (*mithl*) and transcendence (*khilāf*). At the heart of his theology is the simultaneous affirmation of divine properties through the language of their observable analogues and denial of the accompanying whatnesses. According to al-Māturīdī, when we perceive something in the world, we can distinguish between its whatness (*māʾiyya*),[11] or the kind of thing it is, and its isness (*hastiyya*), or its existing at all (al-Māturīdī 2010, 70). This distinction between whatness and isness is conceptual rather than ontological. In other words, it is the mind that differentiates between *what* a given thing is and *that* it exists at all, rather than each concept corresponding to distinct aspects of its inherent metaphysical structure. The word *māʾiyya* derives from *mā huwa* (what it is), which is a translation of Aristotle's Greek phrase for essence: *to ti ên einai* (lit. what it is to be a thing) (Cassin 2014, 1133). In al-Māturīdī's words: "'What is it? (*mā huwa*)' means, 'From what is its whatness known in the

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[11] I prefer "whatness" as a translation to "essence" because the latter carries a great deal of conceptual baggage.

creation?'" (al-Māturīdī 2010, 174). *Hastiyya* is an unusual word that comes from the Persian *hast* (is), meaning isness, or particular existence (Wisnovsky 2003, 157). Al-Māturīdī's distinction between whatness and isness is central to his theological account of God's properties, because whereas God's existence and attributes can be affirmed, any inference to His whatness from the creation must be negated. Thus Al-Māturīdī states:

> Then the meaning of our statement "a thing unlike things" is an annulment of the whatness (*mā'iyya*) of things [from God]. [A thing] is of two kinds: a substance (*'ayn*), which is a body (*jism*), and quality (*ṣifa*), which is an accident (*'araḍ*). So, it is necessary with respect to Him to annul the whatnesses of the substances, which are bodies, and qualities, which are accidents. When we remove the meaning of body from the substances, we negate the associated name, just as when we remove the anthropomorphic meaning (*ma'nā al-tashbīh*) from the affirmation and reject nullification of attributes (*ta'ṭīl*), we negate the position [of anthropomorphism]. (al-Māturīdī 2010, 105)

The position that al-Māturīdī reaches with respect to divine properties is termed by him "verification" (*taḥqīq*), or "affirmation" (*ithbāt*) (al-Māturīdī 2010, 91). This is a stance in which God is conceived as a substance, or concrete particular, possessing substantive attributes, albeit ones whose whatnesses cannot be known due to their dissimilarity with their created analogues. So, God is "a thing unlike things" (*shay'un lā ka-l-ashyā'*) and affirmed as having knowledge, yet not like that of human beings; hence He is "knowing unlike knowers." For this procedure, al-Māturīdī draws an inference from the Qur'anic verse Q. 42:11, "There is nothing like Him (*laysa ka-mithlihi shay'*), yet He is the hearing, the seeing." He uses this principle to negate a body, or accidents, to God, as "they are the explanation of the likeness of things" (*humā ta'wīlā shibhi al-ashyā'*). The idea is that similarity and opposition are indelibly linked to the created order in terms of its plurality, nonexistence, and contingency, and that these are all transcended by God in His oneness (al-Māturīdī 2010, 89). His method bears some comparison to the ways of pre-eminence (*via eminentia*) and negation (*via negativa*) of Aquinas and before him Pseudo-Dionysius (see Rocca 2004, 22). Like these Christian counterparts, al-Māturīdī allows God's transcendent perfections to be known through analogy, while negating the equivalence to their worldly analogues.

Yet al-Māturīdī's application of metaphysics to God's nature can be usefully contrasted with the often-associated idea of divine simplicity, which Sunnī theologians commonly encountered from the Muʿtazila school of thought. The version of simplicity that al-Māturīdī ascribes to his main interlocutor, as already discussed, is a kind of concept nominalism, which he criticizes for reducing different attributes to merely mental individuations based on the naming of God's actions within creation. Such a position makes divine attributes appear to be temporally generated, only arising once there is something in creation to be so named, and is linked by him to Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 745–46), a controversial early Transoxianan theologian:

> [T]he basic [position] against the denier of the attributes […] is that what Jahm says becomes necessary with respect to the nullification of [God's] names, attributes, and to their temporal generation, so He would be unknowing and without power, then knowing. God is majestic and exalted over that. (al-Māturīdī 2010, 130)[12]

The canonical formulation of divine simplicity in the Christian tradition, whereby God's attributes are explained as identical to each other and to Him, is found in Aquinas (see Vallicella 2006). The kind of view used by Aquinas does not receive much attention from al-Māturīdī, presumably because it was less prevalent in his immediate milieu.[13] Nevertheless, it is clear that he would see such a position as violating his theological method in emphasizing transcendence at the expense of analogy, such that God could not be understood as possessing substantive properties at all. Moreover, he would have an obvious scriptural objection to considering God's knowledge and power, for instance, to be identical.

An important contrast here can be made with Duns Scotus (d. 1308) who understands God's attributes to be formally distinct, meaning that they are not identical with God's "essence," nor with each other (Cross 1999, 43–45). Scotus' position closely mirrors the classical theological position of the Ashʿarī and Māturīdī schools, which understand God's essence (*dhāt*) as a kind of substratum in which His attributes are established. As the quotations in this chapter show, al-Māturīdī's conception of

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[12] Al-Kaʿbī tries to respond to this criticism in his *ʿUyūn al-masāʾil wa-l-jawābāt* (al-Kaʿbī 2014, 101–102).

[13] It can be found in certain members of the Basran school of the Muʿtazila, for example, Abū al-Hudhayl (d. 841–842) (al-Ashʿarī 1950, vol. 2, 236).

God does not include such a reified substratum, rather relating Him directly to His attributes.[14]

What does this foray into al-Māturīdī's theory of properties reveal about his philosophical inclinations and his contribution to the subject? To begin with, there is a definite Aristotelian bent to his thought. He cites Aristotle by name and, like him, reasons from empirical sensation toward metaphysical principles and ultimately the nature of God. This tradition was transmitted to him by the circle around al-Kindī in Baghdad, giving to al-Māturīdī's system a quality reminiscent of this early member of the *falāsifa*: a reception of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic themes within an Islamic theistic framework. Yet if al-Māturīdī's fundamental metaphysics owes a debt to these influences, it is an idiosyncratic one, tempered by his access to Aristotle's corpus, the influence of other early *kalām*, and his own systematic theological ambitions, which center the Qur'an. Although his dual ontology of substance and quality seems a pared down version of the *Categories*, it is one not impacted by the hylomorphism introduced in the *Physics* and developed in the *Metaphysics* (Ainsworth 2016). This is a significant departure from the main intellectual trajectory of the *falāsifa*, leading him to develop a sparse, almost modern, nominalism of concrete particulars and their property instances. Moreover, whereas al-Māturīdī's system is partly an adaptation of the accident-led ontology of Ḍirār b. ʿAmr and al-Ḥusayn al-Najjār, which has its own Neoplatonic antecedents, he leverages his Aristotelian categories for distinctively theological ends. Both of the above figures had held that God's whatness is unknowable and took this in the direction of an entirely negative theology: divine attributes were defined by negations of actions (van Ess 2018b, 179–180). Al-Māturīdī retains the criterion of divine transcendence but lets it apply to the category of quality, rather than substance alone. This allows him to affirm a positive ontology to God's attributes as properties, while retaining their utter transcendence from their created analogues. An achievement of the unrecognized "Philosopher of Samarqand" is therefore a nuanced articulation of substantive divine attributes via a novel philosophical synthesis.

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[14] Note that al-Māturīdī uses the term *dhāt* within his system for God's existent "nature." But this should not be understood as a substratum stripped of His attributes.

6.3   Using al-Māturīdī
in the Philosophy Classroom

The difficulty of al-Māturīdī's prose makes his works tricky to comment on and to teach, a point not missed by his early successors. The lack of a reliable, annotated English translation of his major theological text, *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, is a further impediment to the inclusion of his thought in courses on the history of philosophy.[15] Nevertheless, there is some cause for hope while scholarship waits for such a volume to arrive. The very absence of a recognized translation as a point of reference has forced contemporary researchers to provide lengthy translated quotations of key portions of al-Māturīdī's text, as can be seen from this chapter. Such excerpts could be creatively used in a range of teaching environments. For example, someone teaching Islamic or, more generally, medieval philosophy and theology could bring in al-Māturīdī's distinctive ideas on properties and their application to debates on divine simplicity, negative theology, and attribute theories. Study of these aspects of his thought is not only interesting in terms of al-Māturīdī's specific solutions but shines a comparative light on dominant positions in the medieval Christian tradition, as alluded to above. When teaching an introductory course on the philosophy of religion, one may want to eschew the technical debates discussed in this chapter but still highlight the significance of al-Māturīdī's original theological synthesis. Those who teach more systematic courses that involve tropes may also consider enriching and diversifying the historical context of their syllabus by including al-Māturīdī as an early example of a trope theorist. Finally, he also has important ethical ideas that could be explored in comparison to other religious thinkers and philosophers.

Recommended Reading

Cerić, Mustafa. 1995. *Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islam: A Study of the Theology of Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944)*. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization.

Dorroll, Philip. 2016. The Universe in Flux: Reconsidering Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī's Metaphysics and Epistemology. *Journal of Islamic Studies* 27/2: 119–135.

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[15] Note that one of the editors of the recent edition of *Kitāb al-tawḥīd*, Bekir Topaloğlu, produced an explanatory Turkish translation in 2002. I have recently learnt through private correspondence with Tahir Uluç that he is working on publishing a complete English translation of the text, building on his own Turkish translation, which was published in 2021.

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