

DISAGREEMENT IN DETERMINING THE MEANINGS OF TERMS, AND
ITS IMPACT ON ATTRIBUTION TO SPEECHES OF BELIEFS WAYS



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Abstract:

This study included a short introduction to the importance of the adjustment and control of expressions meanings used in belief studies. Flowed by an opening to explain the types of relationships between the expressions and the meaning, and it's the effect of these expressions on the ways of belief. Many examples of expressions used by authors of belief field were mentioned to simulate other expressions not mentioned. Four terms were studied to explain the difference between the authors regarding their semantic meaning, and discuss each term by mentioning the impact of that argument.

key words: expressions; impact; the meaning; terms; speeches

Introduction

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds. May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and companions.

In the realm of theology, scientific terminology forms the basis for interpreting meanings, determining their validity, and distinguishing truth from error. Scholars have placed great emphasis on defining and clarifying these terms to avoid misunderstandings that could lead to incorrect judgments. This issue often arises in doctrinal matters, as differences in understanding terms can lead to divergent beliefs. An example of this importance is found in a narration by Al-Bukhari [1], where Abdullah ibn Omar recounts that the Prophet Muhammad sent Khalid ibn al-Walid to the Banu Jadhimah tribe to invite them to Islam. The tribe, struggling to pronounce "Aslamna" ("We have embraced Islam"), repeatedly said "Saba'na, Saba'na" ("We have changed faith"), a term misunderstood by Khalid, resulting in unwarranted violence. This incident highlights the critical role of accurate terminology in forming correct judgments and beliefs[2].

he terminology used in various scholarly disciplines and the expressions that clarify religious meanings vary according to the specific field of study. For instance, differences in legal rulings among jurists often stem from diverse interpretations of

terms and whether they fully convey the intended meanings. This is particularly evident in issues related to marriage, divorce, oaths, and apostasy.

Similarly, theologians and scholars of beliefs often disagree over the meanings of many terminologies. Some groups, especially dialectical theologians (mutakallimin), apply certain terms to describe attributes and names of God, or to specific aspects of faith like predestination (qadar) and belief (iman), assigning particular meanings to these terms. However, the terms they use may carry three potential interpretations:

The term is fully consistent with the intended meaning.

The term is broader than the intended meaning.

The term is narrower than the intended meaning.

When the term aligns perfectly with the intended meaning, it can be used in its literal sense as long as it is sanctioned by religious law. However, if the term is either broader or narrower, it becomes a subject of scrutiny and dispute.

For instance, when a term holds multiple meanings, the intent of the speaker may differ from how others interpret it. This difference can lead to varying understandings of religious doctrines and attributions of certain beliefs to particular individuals or sects in books on doctrinal beliefs.

Such semantic disagreements can also involve terms found in the Quran and Sunnah, as well as terminologies that arose within Islamic sects, particularly among the dialectical theologians.

This article addresses both types of terminological differences. The discussion will cover the terms scholars disagree upon regarding doctrinal attributions, providing guiding principles to discern which terminologies are permissible or impermissible. This aims to ensure that terminologies maintain their connection to their intended meanings, preventing the use of terms to convey meanings that are not linguistically or religiously supported. Terminological disagreements generally fall into two categories:

Terms mentioned in the Quran or Sunnah, generally accepted by most Muslims. The dispute often arises when a term is assigned a meaning not originally intended. For example, the term “decline” (aful), negated by Abraham in reference to celestial bodies, may refer to “movement” or “disappearance,” and such meanings are governed by the language and implications of the Quran and Sunnah.

Terms not mentioned in the Quran or Sunnah. Here, the discussion is broader since it involves both the word and the meaning. The word may be prohibited if it implies knowledge of the unseen, which is exclusively known through revelation. Acceptable meanings are those that align with correct religious principles, but they should only be expressed through precise and legitimate terminology.

The article will discuss cases in which terminological differences have impacted doctrinal attributions. Each term will be explored as an individual topic, detailing the scholarly disputes over its interpretation and analyzing the effects of these differences.

First Topic: The Concept of "Body" (Jism)

One of the debated issues among theological schools is the affirmation or negation of the concept of "body" in reference to God. Many groups have denied attributing "body" to God, while others have affirmed it. Since this term is neither explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an whether in affirmation or negation nor appears in the Sunnah, nor was it reported from the Companions or the Followers who were closer to the revelation and more knowledgeable of its meanings, its use by theological schools requires clarification of their intended meanings. This is especially pertinent since Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari noted the divergence among theologians regarding the definition of "body," listing twelve different interpretations. He remarked that the issue of "body" is a subtle and complex aspect of theology, prone to varying interpretations[3].

1.1. The Linguistic Meaning of "Body"

In Arabic, the term "body" refers to the physical form or person. Al-Jawhari explains:

"Abu Zayd said: A body (jism) is a form (jasad), and likewise the terms 'jisman' and 'juthman'. Al-Asma'i stated: The terms jism and jusman refer to the body, while juthman refers to the person" [4]. This shows that linguistically, "body" can refer to the physical form in general. Al-Jawhari also notes: "Jasad (form) refers to the physical frame, and one might say 'tajassada' (to embody), as one might say 'tajassama' (to take physical form) ". The term "jasad" is often used to refer to inanimate objects. For example, the Qur'an states: "We cast upon his throne a mere body (jasad)" [Surah Sad: 34]. "And the people of Moses, after him, made from their ornaments a calf a body (jasad) that lowed" [Surah Al-A'raf: 148]. In these verses, the term "jasad" refers to lifeless entities, such as a golden calf. Similarly, "jasad" can refer to blood, as in the poetic line by al-Nabigha: "And what was spilled upon the stones was but body (blood) ". Furthermore, the terms "bigger" and "large" can describe something substantial or massive. For instance, the Qur'an states: "And when you see them, their bodies (ajsamuhum) please you" [Surah Al-Munafiqun: 4]. "And He increased him abundantly in knowledge and body (jism)" [Surah Al-Baqarah: 247].

1.2. The Concept of "Body" According to the Karramiyya

The Karramiyya sect applied the term "body" to God, intending by it to signify His self-existence. Abu al-Qasim al-Ansari and al-Shahrastani clarified this understanding. Al-Shahrastani states when explaining the Karramiyya doctrine:

"Most of them applied the term 'body' to God, and the moderate among them said: By this, we mean that He is self-existent. This is their definition of 'body.' Based on this, they argued that two self-existing entities must either be adjacent or separate. Some ruled for adjacency with the Throne, while others ruled for separation. They also reasoned: Any two entities must either occupy the same place (like accidents with substances) or be spatially distinct. Since God is not an accident—being self-existent He must have a direction in relation to the world. The highest and noblest

direction is 'above'; hence, we affirm that He is above in essence. If He is seen, He is seen from that direction" [5]. From this, Al Shahrastani highlighted three key intentions behind the Karramiyya's use of the term "body": Affirming the existence of God.

Affirming God's distinction from His creation and negating His co-presence with them, as derived from their principle that two self-existing entities must be either adjacent or separate. Based on this reasoning, some Karramiyya members argued that God is adjacent to the Throne, while others argued that He is separate from it.

Negating the possibility of intermingling between entities, rejecting the notion that God and the Throne might occupy the same place.

These points demonstrate that the Karramiyya's conception of "body" is tied to their understanding of God's self-existence and separation from His creation[6].

1.3. The Concept of "Body" According to Theologians

For theologians, "body" refers to a composite of two or more substances. Al-Razi defines it as: "A body is, at minimum, composed of two substances"[7]. This definition has been widely accepted by most theologians specializing in creed and theology. Consequently, many theologians, including Ibn Kullab, Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, and their successors [3], explicitly denied attributing "body" to God. Similarly, the Mu'tazilites and others rejected it. They built many doctrinal arguments on the denial of "body," making it a foundational principle in discussing God's attributes.

1.4. The Impact of the Dispute on "Body" in Theological Doctrines

The diversity of perspectives on "body" among theological schools shows that the Karramiyya's understanding differs from that of most theologians. What the Karramiyya affirmed about God does not align with the concept of "body" as denied by the theologians. Hence, the affirmation and negation do not pertain to the same definition, rendering the dispute more verbal than substantive.

Al-Razi states: "The Karramiyya's earlier scholars commonly used the term 'body' for God, but they clarified that they do not mean a composition of parts. Instead, they meant self-existence. Based on this understanding, the dispute over whether God is a 'body' becomes verbal"[7]. Similarly, Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn al-Arabi commented: "If the term is used without affirming its usual meaning, we would say: Names attributed to God must be based on textual evidence, and there is no textual evidence for this term"[8]. However, other theologians, such as Al-Shahrastani, rejected the Karramiyya's justification, considering it misleading. This divergence also influences discussions on anthropomorphism and corporealism, as they relate to whether every corporealist is necessarily an anthropomorphist. This depends on two factors: the meaning of "body" and the uniformity of corporeal substances[7].

Issue Two: The Concept of "Place"

The question of whether or not to attribute a "place" to God Almighty has been a subject of contention among various theological schools[3, 9]. Certain groups of theologians (mutakallimun) have denied that God is in any place, asserting that He is transcendent and not confined by spatial limitations. They even claimed consensus among Muslims on this matter. On the other hand, some groups affirmed that God is associated with a "place." Upon examining the implications of both affirmation and denial, it becomes evident that those who deny this concept often do not address the same meaning intended by those who affirm it. However, there may be overlap in certain contexts, necessitating clarification of what each party means by "place" when affirming or denying it.

2.1 The Meaning of "Place" According to Those Who Deny It

Certain theologians define "place" as a created, physical location within this world, which, in their framework, consists of accidents (attributes) and substances[10]. According to this perspective, every place and spatial dimension is created. Al-Qadi Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi stated: "It is established through proof and obligatory to believe in the impossibility of attributing place or direction to the Almighty, as both are created, whereas God is eternal without a beginning"[8]. Abu Mansur al-Baghdadi similarly reported a consensus among Muslims: "They unanimously agreed that He is not confined by place and is not subject to time[10].

Al-Qadi Abu Bakr justified this position by reasoning that places and directions are created and contingent, while God is eternal and without beginning. Therefore, it is inconceivable for the Eternal, who has no limits or boundaries, to occupy finite, created spaces. This reasoning aligns with that of Al-Ustadh Abu Ishaq al-Isfara'ini and Ibn Furak during their debates with Ibn Haytham on the issue of divine transcendence.

Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi explained this idea more explicitly: "He is not confined by place," which theologians describe as God being "non-contingent" (laysa mutahayyizan), i.e., not bound by space [7]. They considered spatial confinement (tahayyuz), place, and embodiment (tamakkun) as characteristics of substances and accidents. Substances occupy specific places, and accidents exist within substances. Bodies are composites of multiple substances. Since God is neither a body, a substance, nor an accident, these spatial constraints cannot apply to Him. Abu al-Muzaffar al-Isfara'ini summarized: "Our scholars unanimously agree that it is impermissible to say that the Almighty is in a place whether fixed, spatially confined, or directional. Nor does He possess dimensions, volume, or corporeality. The consensus of Ahl al-Sunnah (the Sunni scholars) is clear on this matter. Some theologians linked the denial of place to the idea of God being self-sufficient. Abu al-Muzaffar al-Isfara'ini noted in his enumeration of Sunni beliefs: "You must know that the Creator of the universe exists independently, meaning He is not dependent on

a creator to create Him, nor on a place to contain Him”[6] . Others associated the denial of place with the rejection of contact, which is characteristic of bodies and contingent beings. According to Abu al-Qasim al-Balkhi, contact only occurs between two bodies. He argued: “It is inconceivable for God to be in one place and not another, as that would entail contingency”[9].

2.2 The Meaning of "Place" According to Those Who Affirm It

In contrast, other groups within the Muslim community including theologians and others affirmed that God is in a "place," specifying that this place is "above the Throne" based on evidence from the Qur'an and Sunnah. This perspective can be further divided into three subgroups:

The Salaf and the Generality of Hadith Scholars:

These scholars affirmed that God is above His Throne and claimed consensus (ijma‘) on this view. They asserted that no dissent existed among the early generations regarding this matter[11].

The Karramiyya Sect:

The Karramiyya explicitly described God as a "body" and affirmed His spatial elevation, asserting that He is in a direction "above"[11].

Early Attributes Theologians (Mutakallimun):

This group rejected the notion of God being a body while affirming His association with place. Key figures include ‘Abdullah ibn Said ibn Kullab, al-Harith al-Muhasibi, and Abu al-Abbas al-Qalanisi. Ibn Furak documented Ibn Kullab’s statement in Kitab al-Tawhid: “God is above His creation, in a place unlike other places” specifically addressing the hadith of the slave woman (hadith al-jariya) [12]. Abu al-Hasan al-Ashari and his followers including al-Baqillani, al-Bayhaqi, and Qadi Abd al-Wahhab al-Maliki also affirmed this view. They explicitly stated that God is above the Throne[13]. For those affirming God’s association with place, "place" refers to a realm beyond the created universe, devoid of any other existence. Al-Hafiz ‘Uthman al-Darimi explained: “As for your claim, O Murisi, that He is neither encompassed nor confined, this aligns with our belief. God is above the Throne in the void of the Hereafter, where no created being exists with Him, nor is there any sky above Him”[14].

2.3 The Impact of This Disagreement on Doctrinal Attribution

The analysis above demonstrates that the disagreement regarding "place" arises from differing definitions. Those who deny it argue against the idea of God occupying a created, finite space, while those who affirm it posit a transcendent, uncreated place above creation. This distinction is evident in the words of figures such as Ibn Kullab, who stated that God is above the Throne yet denied any spatial confinement as understood in physical terms. This divergence underscores the necessity of contextualizing each side's definitions and intentions.

The debate's implications extend to theological accusations. Those denying place accuse their counterparts of confining God to a created, finite realm, a position the latter explicitly reject. Conversely, proponents of divine place argue that denial of their view entails denying God's very existence. Ibn Abd al-Barr articulated:

"The innovators Jahmites, Mu'tazilites, and Khawarij all deny these attributes, refusing to interpret them literally. They claim that those who affirm them are anthropomorphists, while the latter accuse them of denying God altogether"[15].

Issue Three: Speech and the Speaker

Among the terms whose meanings have sparked considerable debate in the fields of theology and sectarian doctrines is the term "speech" (kalam). The divergence in its definition and application in matters of belief has had a notable impact, both on the variation in theological doctrines and on the construction of sectarian discourses. Ibn Bazeeza Al-Tunisi alluded to this by stating:

"Know that the people of Islam have unanimously agreed to attribute the quality of 'speech' to God Almighty. However, they have differed significantly in their understanding of what this entails, resulting in contradictory interpretations..."[16]

To clarify the concept of "speech" according to each group, and to examine its implications for their doctrines, we must delve into the views of various factions on this term.

3.1 Speech According to Linguists

In linguistic terms, "speech" refers to meaningful utterance, which involves two elements: expression and meaning. Ibn Faris explains:

*"The root 'K-L-M' has two primary meanings: one refers to meaningful utterance, and the other to wounds. The first pertains to speech. For instance, one might say: 'I spoke to him,' meaning that an intelligible exchange occurred. The term is also expanded to denote a single meaningful word, a narrative, or even an entire poem. The plural forms are kalimat and kalam, as in the Quranic verse: 'They distort words from their [proper] places' [Al-Nisa: 46]."

This interpretation is supported by other Quranic examples, such as the description of the Golden Calf: "Did they not see that it could not speak to them?" [Taha: 89], which indicates that the ability to articulate is integral to speech. Likewise, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated: "God decrees matters

as He wills, and among what He has decreed is that you should not speak during prayer," referring specifically to intelligible utterance, not internal thoughts.

3.2 The Mu'tazilite View on "Speech"

The majority of the Mu'tazilites held that speech consists of ordered letters forming comprehensible statements[11]. These letters are articulated sounds, yet they viewed divine speech as an act of God[3, 9], not an intrinsic attribute. According to this view, whatever is an act of God is created. Consequently, they considered divine speech to be created and fashioned. Their perspective on the "speaker" aligns with this: a speaker is one who produces speech. Since God creates speech in an external medium (such as a tree or the air), it follows that He is the creator of speech, but not that the speech emanates directly from His being[11].

3.3 The Ash'arite View on "Speech" and the "Speaker"

Ash'arite theologians unanimously argue that speech is a meaning subsisting in the essence of the speaker, distinct from the uttered words that convey it. They reject the notion that divine speech involves letters or sounds, considering these to be mere expressions of the internal reality of speech. Abu al-Qasim al-Ansari elucidates:

"Our scholars assert that speech is an inherent meaning within the self of the speaker. It is neither composed of letters nor sounds. The words uttered are merely expressions of the internal discourse, akin to how a person internally understands their knowledge, emotions, or intentions.[11, 17, 18]"

Similarly, Abu 'Ali al-Jubba'i and other theologians used the term "mental discourse" for this concept[18]. For the Ash'arites, a "speaker" is one in whom this intrinsic meaning resides.

The View of Ahl al-Hadith

The traditionalists (Ahl al-Hadith) hold that divine speech comprises both expression and meaning[2, 19]. They assert that the Quran, in both its wording and meaning, is from God. This view is substantiated by various prophetic traditions and scholarly opinions, such as those of Ahmad ibn Hanbal and al-Bukhari[20, 21].

The Karramite View on "Speech"

The Karramites define speech as the ability to articulate, which they consider an eternal, uncreated attribute of God. However, they distinguish between God's eternal "speech" and His "utterances," the latter being created and contingent upon His will[11].

3.4 Implications of These Differences

The debate over the definition of "speech" has profoundly influenced theological doctrines and sectarian disputes. For instance, some Ash'arite scholars accused those who affirmed that divine speech includes letters and sounds of adopting the Mu'tazilite position that the Quran is created. This stems from the Ash'arite belief that letters and sounds, being sequential and finite, are necessarily created[22].

Conversely, Ahmad ibn Hanbal and other traditionalists affirmed that God spoke with a voice, citing prophetic traditions like the one narrated by Ibn Mas'ud:

"When God speaks, His voice can be heard like the rattling of chains over a smooth stone.[21]".

The Karramites' distinction between "speech" and "utterance" also faced criticism. Opponents argued that if God's utterances are created, then His speech cannot be eternal a position they saw as problematic[6]. This analysis demonstrates how variations in the understanding of "speech" and "speaker" have led to profound theological divergences and shaped the doctrinal landscape of Islamic thought.

The Fourth Issue: The Term "Ilah" (God)

Among the matters of contention within the Islamic community is the definition of the term "ilah" (god). Given that this term is central to the greatest expression of Islam Kalimat Al-Tawhid ("There is no god but Allah") it becomes imperative for Muslims to comprehend its meaning. This understanding ensures that Muslims have clarity about their creed, and enables followers of other faiths to grasp its significance when uttered. Reciting this phrase necessitates establishing its principles, and its correct application depends on comprehending its intended meaning.

For this reason, commentators, theologians, and scholars of Islamic sects have discussed the meaning of ilah, primarily aiming to clarify the essence of La ilaha illa Allah. Since this term was familiar to the pre-Islamic Arabs, and because it is mentioned frequently in the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as in the statements of the Prophet's companions and later scholars, perspectives on its meaning have varied. Some examined it through the lens of linguistic roots, considering that the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic and addressed to a people in their own tongue. Others analyzed it in the context of theological frameworks, linking it to established creedal principles. These differing approaches have had implications for both theoretical and practical religious matters. Thus, anyone seeking to understand this term must evaluate the interpretations offered by various schools of thought, examining the resulting differences in its conceptualization and their impact.

4.1 The Meaning of "Ilah" Among Arabs and Qur'anic Commentators

The term ilah in Arabic linguistically refers to worship, as evidenced by two key points:

a. The Definitions of Arabic Linguists

Al-Raghib Al-Isfahani stated: "Ilah was used as a term for all objects of worship, such as Al-Lat. The sun was also called an 'ilah' because they worshipped it. Alaha ya'lahu means to worship[23]. The term 'ilah' is not properly pluralized, as there is no true deity besides Allah. However, the Arabs, believing in the existence of multiple objects of worship, used the plural form 'alihat' (gods)."

b. Usage in the Qur'an

The word ilah is used consistently in the Qur'an to signify worship. Two examples illustrate this: In Surat Al-A'raf (7:127): "And they said, 'Will you leave Moses and his people to cause corruption in the land and abandon you and your gods?'

Ibn Abbas interpreted ilahatik (your gods) as your worship. He added that Pharaoh was worshipped but did not worship others. Similarly, Mujahid explained it as "your worship." This interpretation demonstrates that alah means to worship, with ilahah being its verbal noun. In Surat Nuh (71:23): "And they said, 'Never leave your gods. Never leave Wadd or Suwa or Yaghuth or Ya'uq and Nasr.'"

Ibn Abbas commented that these names referred to righteous men among the people of Noah. After their death, the devil inspired their people to place statues at their gathering spots and name them after these men. Initially, these statues were not worshipped, but over time, as knowledge faded, people began to worship them. The idols are called alihat (gods) because they were objects of worship.

Ibn Abbas, known for his expertise in both Arabic language and Qur'anic interpretation (blessed by the Prophet's prayer for his understanding), is a leading authority on this matter. His explanation, along with others', affirms that the term ilah refers to an object of worship. This understanding is supported by linguistic scholars, exegetes, Hadith scholars, jurists, and others[1].

4.2 The Theologians' Perspective

Islamic theologians (mutakallimun) offered various interpretations of the term ilah, summarized by Abu Al-Hasan Al-Ash'ari in his works:

The Invincible and Overpowering One: The one who is not defeated and whose will is absolute.

The Strong One: As implied by the term's linguistic roots.

The One with Divinity: Al-Ash'ari defined divinity as the ability to originate substances and properties, deeming this the most accurate explanation[24]. He argued that the Arabs used ilah to refer to someone with a unique distinction, whom they venerated for this trait. For example, they described an idol as "the god of such-and-

such tribe." The Muslims adopted this term but used it exclusively for Allah, as only He possesses true divinity and is worthy of veneration[11].

Al-Ash'ari's interpretation reconciles linguistic and theological dimensions. He accepted the Arabs' linguistic usage of *ilah* to mean a venerated entity but restricted its application to Allah, the Creator and Sustainer. His approach differs from the Arabs, who used the term for both worthy and unworthy objects of worship.

4.3 The Mu'tazilite Perspective

The Mu'tazilites diverged significantly, defining *ilah* based on their theological principles, which emphasize denying Allah's attributes. For them, *ilah* means "the eternal," referring to what is not created[12]. By this definition, they denied that Allah's attributes, such as knowledge or power, are eternal, arguing that this would imply a multiplicity of eternal beings. This interpretation led them to claim that those who affirm divine attributes are positing multiple eternal entities alongside Allah, contradicting their concept of divine unity.

4.4 The Practical Implications of These Differences

From the aforementioned presentation of the sects' doctrines, it becomes clear that the semantic meaning of the term "God" was not uniformly understood among the sects. The concept of "God" for one sect differs from the understanding of another. This disparity had a significant impact on people's theological positions, which we will briefly address as the context allows:

-One of its effects on theological positions is evident in the stance of the Mu'tazilites. When they considered "God" to mean "the eternal" and held that attributes are distinct from the essence, they ruled that anyone who affirmed divine attributes was asserting the existence of eternals alongside God. This contradicted their concept of God. For this reason, Qadi Abdul Jabbar criticized Ibn Kullab and al-Ash'ari for affirming divine attributes, as he believed this contradicted the most specific characteristic of God in his view. He stated: "According to the Kullabiyyah, God is deserving of these attributes due to eternal realities, and by 'eternal,' they meant 'pre-existent.' However, since he observed that Muslims unanimously agreed that nothing is pre-existent alongside God, he refrained from explicitly declaring it. Then al-Ash'ari emerged and openly asserted that God is deserving of these attributes due to eternal realities "[25].

-Another effect is observed in how the interpretation of "God" influences the understanding of the phrase **la ilaha illa Allah** ("There is no god but God"). For instance, those who interpreted "divinity" as the power to create *ex nihilo*, or as eternality, understood the phrase **la ilaha illa Allah** differently. Those who equated divinity with the power to create understood it as "There is no creator but God." Those who equated divinity with eternality understood it as "There is none eternal but God." Each of them thus reduced the testimony's meaning to either God's actions or the negation of His attributes.

Meanwhile, those who interpreted "God" as "the one worthy of worship" understood the phrase to mean "There is none worthy of worship but God". This divergence of interpretation gave rise to the theological debate over whether offering acts of worship to anyone other than God nullifies the testimony *la ilaha illa Allah. *

-Those who interpret "God" as the creator or the eternal do not see the act of worshiping other than God as invalidating the testimony *la ilaha illa Allah*, at least from the standpoint of literal alignment, even if they may forbid such practices for other reasons .

-On the other hand, those who interpret "God" as the one worthy of worship regard offering acts of worship to anyone other than God as a violation of the testimony *la ilaha illa Allah*, deeming such a person a polytheist.

Conclusion

These are examples of the divergence in the semantic meaning of terms and the resulting impact on beliefs and theological positions. From this, it becomes clear that a single term in the realm of theology may elicit two primary stances among theologians: In terms of using the term where no explicit textual evidence exists: Some groups employ the term in affirmation or negation, while others refrain from using it in either sense.

In terms of the intended meaning: This is the crux of the matter for all groups, as they strive to ensure the correctness of the meaning they ascribe to a term, which is the purpose of linguistic conventions. Here, their differences arise according to the foundational principles of each group, whether those principles are derived from religious texts or rational reasoning.

Moreover, disagreements over a single term do not justify attributing a position to a group contrary to its intended meaning. It is essential to consider the group's intent in using a term. Similarly, no group has the right to arbitrarily use terms and then claim they intended a meaning other than what the term signifies or to adopt a religious term and ascribe to it a meaning not supported by language or religious texts. This principle helps close the door to the introduction of new terminologies or novel interpretations of religious terms.

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