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PHILOSOPHY AND LANGUAGE IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

Edited by Nadja Germann and Mostafa Najafi

PHILOSOPHY IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN CONTEXT

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Philosophy and Language in the Islamic World

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Philosophy in the Islamic World in Context

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Preface

Among the most famous passages in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is the first paragraph, which opens with a quotation from *Confessions*, in which Augustine reminisces about how he acquired his native language. Wittgenstein's remarks on Augustine's considerations are noteworthy:

> These words, it seems to me, give us a particular picture of the essence of human language. It is this: the individual words in language name objects – sentences are combinations of such names.——In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands.[1]

On Augustine's account, as Wittgenstein reads it, language essentially consists of words (or names) and sentences. Thoughts, by contrast, reside in one's mind and are utterly private. However, they are correlated with words – i.e., linguistic expressions – which permits their transmission to other minds. They are, that is, the meanings of the words. In evoking this model of language, Wittgenstein could have also (and, perhaps, more pertinently) referred to Aristotle's *On Interpretation* I, 1, where words (*phōnē*) are described as symbols of affections of the soul (*tē psuchē pathēmaton sumbola*) – "affections of the soul" being the mental representations or notions that result from sense perception, i.e., the mental content that speakers seek to convey by means of words.[2] However, in order to establish a target for his critique, Wittgenstein could equally well have evoked conceptions of language developed in the Arabic linguistic tradition. For the focal points around which theories of language revolve in the Arabic linguistic tradition are none other than the concepts "word" and "meaning," *lafẓ* and *maʿnā*.

As is well known, one of the main issues that Wittgenstein had with Augustine's view on language as he understood it is the idea that we can distinguish between a sphere of "pure thought" – that is, the concepts, notions, etc., that we nourish – and the sphere of language – that is, a kind of corpus consisting of "name tags," i.e., linguistic expressions, that are "attached" to the individual thoughts, i.e., to their meanings (*Bedeutungen*).[3] It is due to such a notion of

1 Wittgenstein 1967, 2.

2 Modern and contemporary philosophers often overlook the fact that the "classical" Western model of the relation between things, thoughts, and words (i.e., language) originates with Aristotle and the late antique Aristotelian commentators – above all, Simplicius's synthesis – rather than with Augustine or with early modern thinkers like Descartes, as other scholars suggest, perhaps due to their reductive view of history.

3 For this metaphor, see, for instance, §26 in Wittgenstein 1967, 12–13.

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language, Wittgenstein gives us to understand, that Augustine and a significant portion of the Western linguistic and logical traditions up to the twentieth century that followed him (or more precisely: Aristotle) were convinced that asking for the meaning (*Bedeutung*) of words and sentences is a reasonable enterprise. Wittgenstein, obviously, was not convinced – or, at least, not unqualifiedly so. And, perhaps, he was even right to be skeptical. Nonetheless, it is questionable whether Wittgenstein's critique actually hit the weak spot of the language model he set out to dismantle, that is, whether the fundamental problem does indeed consist in the distinction between word and meaning. For, regardless of whether or not Wittgenstein's interpretation of Augustine as such is fully correct, if we take into account the Arabic linguistic tradition it appears doubtful to claim that a dichotomous notion of language – a notion based on a conceptual distinction between word and meaning – inevitably results in a sharp ontological distinction between what we just called the sphere of "pure thought" and that of a correlated, yet independent, system of signs.

From the outset, i.e., from approximately the eighth century, scholars dealing with the Arabic language made use of the distinction between *lafẓ* and *maʿnā*, word and meaning. Notably, however, the theories of language developed on this foundation were by no means monolithic. The manner in which such theories carved out the relationship between thought and language often differed fundamentally. While there were, in fact, thinkers who defended views comparable to those mentioned above as representing Wittgenstein's target – i.e., primarily, logicians working within the framework of the Neoplatonic-Aristotelian tradition – there were others for whom thought and language were inseparable, for whom thought in its very essence was linguistically informed – these were chiefly scholars active in fields like *adab* (an encyclopedic form of knowledge strongly linked with a specific ethical code).[4] By the same token, some scholars studied language mainly from the angle of semantics and reference (e.g., logicians), while others were rather interested in its use and effects (e.g., legal theorists); some focused on the metaphysics of language – pondering the origin and nature of human language, often in comparison with the divine language employed in revelation (e.g., theologians and some philologists); others focused on hermeneutics and the theory of cognition – in particular, those who, for one reason or other, addressed the problem of how to make sense of divine discourse (e.g., theologians, legal scholars).

Doubtlessly, we could extend this list of approaches, emphases, and perspectives. However, already at this point two notable features emerge: First, language

4 On *adab*, see Hämeen-Anttila 2014.

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was a major issue within the Arabic-Islamic intellectual culture (across the centuries, as we will see); it is an object that attracted enormous scholarly attention directed towards a great variety of questions, ranging from metaphysics through semantics, epistemology, and pragmatics to hermeneutics. Second, language – both in its technical and philosophical dimensions – was scrutinized by a multiplicity of disciplines and intellectual traditions; we have already pointed out the fields involved above: logic (*manṭiq*), *adab*, legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), theology (*kalām*), and philology (*naḥw*). In other words, until rather recently – as an effect of colonialism and the imposition of European concepts and institutions of knowledge and science in the Islamic world – the theory or philosophy of language was studied neither within the framework of a single discipline nor according to a shared methodology. This absence of a specific discipline devoted to what we nowadays call "philosophy of language" may be a major reason why the philosophical dimension of the scholarly investigation of language has been rather neglected by contemporary research.

It is high time, we believe, to remedy this state of affairs, and the current climate is favorable for doing so. Since roughly the turn of the twenty-first century, scholars of Islamic Studies have become increasingly interested in questions related to philosophy of language within individual fields – particularly legal theory, but also to some extent logic and theology, and, in even more recent times, *adab* and philology as well.[5] This book, therefore, seeks to bring together experts from these various backgrounds and join forces across approaches and disciplines. Obviously, due to the current state of research, on the one hand, and the richness of language-related discussions throughout the centuries, on the other, we could not reasonably aspire to produce a comprehensive and perfectly balanced analysis of the prevailing philosophical ideas about language. Rather, we were compelled "to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction." As a result, the "philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes."[6] They are centered, chronologically, on the ninth through twelfth centuries and, thematically, on the dichotomy pervading various intellectual fields, discussions, and theories in the form of the conceptual

5 Note that this is not to deny the existence of extremely valuable and sophisticated earlier (mostly late twentieth-century) research on issues that in part overlap with or are at the basis of the ones pursued here: think, e.g., of Richard Frank's groundbreaking studies of the notion of *maʿnā* (Frank 1967 and 1981), or of Bernard Weiss's inquiry into the concept of *waḍʿ* (imposition, coinage) (Weiss 1971, and more often), or again of the pioneering investigations into linguistic theory by scholars like Bohas, Guillaume, Kouloughli, Larcher, Suleiman, and Versteegh – to name but a few.

6 Wittgenstein 1967, vii.

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pair *lafẓ* and *maʿnā*, "word" and "meaning" – which were acknowledged to be the building blocks of language.

Among the first disciplines that developed theories of language in the Islamic world were theology (*kalām*) and philology (*naḥw*). These are, therefore, addressed in the opening chapters of this volume. Remarkably, the notion of *maʿnā* already puzzled the first Muʿtazilī theologians, as David Bennett shows, and induced them to study *maʿānī* (the plural of *maʿnā*) at the interface of ontology and epistemology. It is notable that despite discrepancies in their approaches, thinkers such as Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam (d. 795), Abū al-Hudhayl (d. 841), and Muʿammar ibn ʿAbbād (d. 830) agree that *maʿnā*, in the first instance, relates to cognition: it is something that can be cognized with respect to (extramental) objects, something that "is there,"[7] even if it cannot be described in terms of established metaphysical concepts. While these early Muʿtazilīs explored the metaphysics of *maʿnā*, the first philologists (and the entire tradition in this vein) were chiefly interested in *lafẓ*. For his paper, Jonathan Owens has chosen to discuss none other than the famous founding father of linguistics, Sībawayhi (d. ca. 793), who prepared the ground for all later developments in the field. However, while researchers typically concentrate on his morphology and syntax, Owens zooms in on Sībawayhi's phonetics, and, more precisely, on his theory of voicing – a theory which, at first glance, appears (and, in fact, is) highly technical, but which, at the same time, provides the material basis for a remarkable philosophical development, as will become clear in the following chapter, by Nadja Germann and Noel Rivera Calero. With the key figure of this contribution, Ibn Jinnī (d. 1002), we hit upon an approach to philology that might best be described as "speculative grammar."[8] Dwelling on the intricacies and subtleties of Arabic grammar, Ibn Jinnī developed a fully fledged theory of language: its anchorage in physical reality (i.e., sounds), its ideal make-up (i.e., grammatical structure) in perfect harmony with nature, and the semiotic power (i.e., *maʿnā*) resulting from its constitution.

The following chapter marks the transition from the linguistic tradition to the field of logic (*manṭiq*). Here, Alexander Key discusses the notion of *maʿnā* and the problem of ambiguity across the two fields of *adab* and logic.[9] While his study is anchored in *adab* and concentrated on al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (late tenth/early

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7 Needless to say, this is an allusion to Willard Van Orman Quine's notorious paper "On What There Is" (1953).

8 This is a term borrowed from the scholarship on medieval Latin philosophy, see for instance Rosier-Catach 2010, particularly 203–213.

9 Note that instead of *adab*, Key refers in his chapter to this field as "poetics." We prefer the term "*adab*," since it is broader than "poetics" and includes additional aspects (particularly, the encyclopedic nature of the knowledge it fosters along with its moral dimension) which, we believe,

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eleventh century), with side glances to later thinkers like ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 1078), Key undertakes a comparative examination of Ibn Sīnā's (d. 1037) treatment of equivocity, which developed within the framework of the latter's engagement with Aristotelian logic, and thus identifies the conceptual differences that fundamentally distinguish the approaches of *adab* and *manṭiq*. At the same time, with Ibn Sīnā, we reach a nodal point from which various traditions branch out. Through his theory of signification, he exercised a tremendous influence on both logic (*cum* epistemology) and the religious sciences, particularly legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*).[10] Accordingly, in the following chapters, we will pursue the logical and epistemological track a little further, before the role of language in *uṣūl al-fiqh* is addressed. Thus, in his contribution, Tony Street examines the fate of Ibn Sīnā's tripartite theory of signification in thirteenth-century logic, a period during which this theory was fiercely debated by the two dominant "schools," the Rāzians (the followers of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, d. 1210) and the Ṭūsians (the followers of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, d. 1274); despite these controversies, Ibn Sīnā's theory turned into the generally accepted reference not only in the realm of *manṭiq* itself – think, for instance, of the *Shamsiyya*, the handbook of logic used in the *madrasa*s starting from the thirteenth century, one of Street's primary objects – but also in that of the religious sciences, particularly *uṣūl al-fiqh*, as we will see below. However, before we turn to this sphere, Bilal Ibrahim's chapter further explores the epistemological dimension introduced into the religious sciences by Avicennian logic. Placing the main emphasis on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and a secondary one on Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), Ibrahim scrutinizes the problem of what can serve as evidence (*dalīl*) in legal (as well as theological) reasoning, which leads him to a critical reassessment of the (alleged) opposition between reason and revelation in the Ashʿarī tradition.

With this background knowledge, we are prepared to tackle the theoretical engagement with language within the framework of the religious sciences, especially of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. This section of the volume is introduced by David Vishanoff's chapter, which is dedicated to theories of divine speech. According to Islam, the Quran must be considered as God's own discourse leveled at humanity, but what is the nature of this speech? Is it merely informative – i.e., instructing humans about what they are supposed to believe and do? Or is it actually performative – i.e., does it bring about certain facts, properties, attitudes, etc.? Departing from

are essential, if one seeks to capture the epistemic stature of some of the thinkers discussed under this label, e.g., ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī.

10 For an overview of the impact of Ibn Sīnā's theory of signification on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and post-Rāzian *uṣūl al-fiqh*, see Kalbarczyk 2018, 186–250.

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Shāfiʿī (d. 820), who is considered the founder of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, Vishanoff investigates the differing accounts of this issue given by the Muʿtazilī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025), the Ḥanbalī Abū Yaʿlā ibn al-Farrāʾ (d. 1066), the Mālikī-Ashʿarī Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013), and the Ḥanafī Abū Zayd al-Dabūsī (d. ca. 1039). The conundrum of divine speech is also at the core of Robert Gleave's paper. However, his attention is directed towards the problem of how to grasp divine intention. He concentrates on Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 1067), a Shīʿī legal scholar, whose principles governing the approach to the intended meaning of (God's) speech are assessed by means of the conceptual tools offered by Paul Grice's pragmatics.[11]

With Feriel Bouhafa's contribution, our focus shifts back once again from divine to human language. Although religious scholars, due to their profession, invested considerable effort into coming to grips with the intricacies of God's own discourse, they were nonetheless also interested in human speech itself. With the example of the Ḥanbalī-Muʿtazilī Abū al-Wafāʾ ʿAlī ibn ʿAqīl (d. 1119), Bouhafa shows that religious scholars – contrary to the common view in contemporary research – continued to discuss the origin of human language and even nourished a notion of language development vaguely reminiscent of that of the Muʿtazilī philologist Ibn Jinnī (cf. above). Last but not least, both the section on philosophy and language in the religious sciences and the book as a whole are brought to completion by Mohamed M. Yunis Ali's chapter. He analyzes major theories of signification – and here the above-mentioned influence of Ibn Sīnā's tripartite division of signification is particularly obvious – with the aim of developing a synoptic perspective. By means of concepts borrowed from contemporary linguistics, as well as philosophical pragmatics (Grice), Ali sifts through a broad spectrum of *uṣūlī* texts, ranging from the Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 1085) to Ibn al-Ḥājib (d. 1248), on the basis of which he proposes a fine-grained typology of signification.

Admittedly, despite the array of topics and approaches, this volume can offer only glimpses at a "landscape," to return to Wittgenstein's metaphor. It is and remains nothing more than an "album."[12] We hope, however, that this album succeeds in giving the reader an, if not comprehensive, then at least a representative, overview of the richness, sophistication, and originality of philosophy of language in the Islamic world during its first centuries. If our hopes are ultimately fulfilled, this will be solely thanks to the authors of the individual contributions. We would therefore like to take the opportunity to express our deep

11 Grice 1989.

12 Wittgenstein 1967, vii.

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gratitude to them. Without their input, dedication, and creativity it would have been impossible to put together such an "album" of *Philosophy and Language in the Islamic World*. We are likewise grateful to all those who participated in our preparatory workshop on "Intention and Signification," held in Freiburg in 2017, including those who, for various reasons, could not pursue this project further and contribute to the book. In this connection, we would like to thank the *Alumni Freiburg*, the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG), the *Neue Universitätsstiftung Freiburg*, *R. G. Consulting Water Management*, and the *Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft Freiburg*, who generously funded this exploratory workshop. Last but not least, we would like to thank Sophie Wagenhofer, Katrin Mittmann, and the entire team at De Gruyter for their consistent and uncomplicated support.

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David Bennett

Cognisable Content: The Work of the *Maʿnā* in Early Muʿtazilī Theory

Introduction

The term *maʿnā* has achieved some notoriety among historians of philosophy due to its role in Avicenna's epistemology. Famously, Avicenna posits a faculty (*wahm*; estimation) in animals to perceive non-sensible properties (for example, "hostility" in the wolf, as perceived by the sheep) or those sensible properties which we judge to be present in objects without immediate sensation (the "sweetness" in honey when all we sense upon seeing it is its yellowness, i.e., we judge it to be "sweet" before we taste it). Avicenna calls these properties *maʿānī* (sing. *maʿnā*): they are particular features in an object, obtained by means of the faculty of estimation, and, at least for the time being, they are not abstracted by means of sense perception.[1] *Maʿnā* appears in many different contexts, however, and it has proven difficult to find a single English word which can capture the distribution of a concept which can be at once concrete and subjective, particular and yet not (exclusively) sensible.[2] In this paper, I will argue that the conceptual groundwork

1 The Avicennan theory has received extensive treatment; among many other complications is the question of whether the judgment made by the *wahm*-faculty is made without recourse to sensation, since sensation of "yellow" occurs before any judgement of "sweet" in the second case, e.g. For the most recent and incisive interpretations, with references to the most significant scholarship to date, see Alwishah 2016, 83–88 and now Mousavian 2020. *Acknowledgements*: I would like to thank the participants of the Intention and Signification conference, Freiburg, June 2017, for their spirited feedback on this project – and especially Alexander Key, who allowed me to consult drafts of his monograph on the *maʿnā* (Key 2018). This paper also benefited from discussion at the Finnish Workshop in Medieval Philosophy in Jyväskylä, November 2017. My work on this topic is part of the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond research programme Representation and Reality, in the Department of Philosophy, Linguistics and Theory of Science at the University of Gothenburg.

2 Hasse introduces the expression "connotational attribute" for *maʿnā* in this Avicennan context (2000, 132–140). Hansberger, in a different context, proposed "cognitive content" or "core" of a sensible object (forthcoming), which I will adopt here with a slight adjustment for the material with which I am dealing. On the Latinate trend for *intentio* and its long influence, see Gutas 2012, 430–431, concisely. For responses to all current approaches to the problem, see now Mousavian (forthcoming), who begins with an analysis of the "'semantic' features attributed to" *maʿānī* in Avicenna's works. As Mousavian puts it: "*maʿānī*, in general, serve some specific semantic functions and do not occupy a well-defined ontological category."

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for this term, and indeed for this very mode of thinking about non-sensible properties, was carefully mapped out by Muʿtazilīs already in the early ninth century CE.[3] I will show how deeply rooted the term is in the earliest records of Islamic theology, and how it was deployed in the development of systematic ontology in *kalām*.[4] The appropriation of this term with its peculiar *kalām* connotations is one example of the pressing need to consider medieval Arabic philosophy in concert with the theoretical innovations of the early Muʿtazilīs.

To study the term and its connotations, I have drawn examples almost exclusively from a single discursive tradition – that of Ashʿarī's *Maqālāt*. This text is not without its pesky hermeneutical problems,[5] but for my purposes it provides a unique framework in which the term can be examined *in situ*, fossilised in the doxographical evolutionary path. In taking this route, I am flying directly in the face of the criticism van Ess made of Eberhardt,[6] namely, appearing too eager to synthesise a multi-faceted work which draws from multiple sources. But I am not proposing a unified theory of *maʿnā*: I only wish to demonstrate that although the term occurs in many dispositions, it generally denotes an instance of significant cognisable content. It is not used solely to denote physical properties, even elusive ones. I use the phrase "cognisable content" because the term is almost always used to describe something which can only be acquired by some mental exertion which seeks expression in language – hence its common use

3 In an early article, Richard Frank had noted the application of *maʿnā* to states of being or conditions, concluding that *maʿānī* should be considered as "intrinsic causal determinants of the thing's being so-and-so," or rather, "of some real aspect of the being of the subject." (Frank 1967, 250, 252) Later, Frank would come to refine his view, abandoning this strict "causal" aspect of *maʿnā*, which had been developed largely to explain positions ascribed to Muʿammar (see section 5, below). Reviewing discussions in the literature of the early Arabic grammarians, he provided a systematic analysis of the term, aspects of which I will discuss in section 7 (Frank 1981).
4 *Kalām* refers to the theoretical, or discursive, practice of Islamic theology; it represents a philosophical outlook occasionally at odds with the various "orthodoxies" of Islam on the one hand, and with Graeco-Arabic philosophy on the other. The Muʿtazilīs were the most prominent practitioners of *kalām* in the ninth century. As the cases in this paper serve to demonstrate, there was considerable disagreement among Muʿtazilīs concerning even the most essential details of their ostensibly shared ontology. Nevertheless, we can identify a common body of concerns which will serve as the "system" of *kalām* ontology: for our purposes, the most important feature would be the concerted effort to reduce the constituents of existence to discrete, knowable atomic parts (atoms and accidents). The best introduction to these thinkers (to which I will refer the reader whenever a new figure is introduced) remains van Ess 1991–1997, although it is rather long. See also Wolfson 1967.
5 See van Ess 2011, 456–472 and Weaver 2017.
6 See van Ess 1991–1997, 3:78.

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in Arabic as "meaning" – yet, as we will see, it is used by Muʿtazilīs to refer to objects outside the scope of their basic ontology. As *maʿānī* come to participate in this ontology and persist in resisting a one-to-one relation with beings or utterances, however, they frustrate a purely linguistically minded reader.[7] This study of the *Maqālāt* is an exploration of what sort of content that may be: I propose seven categories.

1 *Maʿnā* as Definitional

As a fundamental term in any theoretical discourse, *maʿnā* is ubiquitous to the point of being unremarkable. As a conjugated verb in ordinary speech of any register, *yaʿnī* means "that is" or "[I] mean…," and is followed by a term or expression suitable for substitution for the antecedent. Thus, it is used in definitions as "meaning," as in, "the *maʿnā* of X is that it is such-and-such." Here is Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam[8] apparently using *maʿnā* in this pedestrian fashion:

> 1a. The *maʿnā* of "body" is that it is an existent. What I mean when I say "body" is that it is existent, it is a thing, and it is self-subsistent.[9]

It seems perfectly natural, upon encountering the construction *maʿnā al-jism annahu…*, to treat it as introducing a definition; such constructions are common enough in any sort of text. But Hishām's definition in this case introduces a series of properties entailed for anything called a "body": namely, being an existent

7 This "slippage" is invoked most clearly by Key: "*maʿnā* was undoubtedly cognitive, but it was also linguistically determined, just as while it was clearly in the mind, it was also out there in the extramental world as well" (2018, 4).

8 Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam (d. c. 795) was an early Imāmī theologian frequently associated with the Muʿtazilīs by doxographers; he certainly engaged in *kalām* with Muʿtazilīs in Baghdād. See van Ess 1991–1997, 1:349–379 and 5:70–100 (in references to van Ess 1991–1997, a second notice for material in volumes 5 and 6 refers to his compilation of [translated] source material, including material from the *Maqālāt*).

9 Ashʿarī 2005, 304.11–12:

معنى الجسم انه موجود، وكان يقول انما أُريدُ بقولي جِسْمٌ انه موجود وانه شيءٌ وانه قائم بنفسه.

Hishām, of course, is not a "card-carrying" Muʿtazilī, but an early Rāfiḍī heresiarch. Ashʿarī treats him as belonging to the thought-world of Muʿtazilism, tacitly acknowledging his influence on Naẓẓām and other early figures. Importantly for our purposes, he is one of the earliest figures whose positions have survived, and (as I hope to show) he already exhibits a systematic appreciation of the term (*maʿnā*).

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(*mawjūd*), a thing (*shayʾ*), and self-subsistent (*qāʾim bi-nafsihi*) – all qualifications crucial for Hishām's (not to mention later Ashʿarī) ontology. This is not a definition as *ḥadd*: it doesn't circumscribe the term defined, but rather presents a set of equivalences. Being an existent, a thing, and self-subsistent are not just necessary concomitants for the concept of "body"; rather if something is one of them, it is all and each of them. Hishām knew that "body" had further connotations, such as dimensionality: indeed, he applied these properties (length, width, depth) to God when he asserted that God is a body – precisely because He is an existent.[10]

In other cases, Ashʿarī presents Muʿtazilī positions which include a definitional *maʿnā* that supports a claim such that X, insofar as it has the property Y, can or cannot be considered Z. Thus, in an unattributed (Muʿtazilī) report on whether humans "create" their acts:

> 1b. Some claimed that the *maʿnā* of "agent" and "creator" is one and the same; thus, we do not apply [such terms] to humans, for we are prevented… Others said that the *maʿnā* of "creator" is that some act proceeds determinedly from him; anyone whose action proceeds from them determinedly is a creator, whether or not he is eternal.[11]

The concern here is whether *fāʿil* ("agent") can be applied to both God and humans. If the term is co-extensive with *khāliq* ("creator"), and that term is restricted to God, then, by virtue of its *maʿnā*, it cannot. If the *maʿnā* of "agent" is not so restricted, then it can be.[12]

2 *Maʿānī* as Conceptual Properties

Hishām used *maʿnā* in another way:

> 2a. Motions and the other acts – standing, sitting, willing, aversion, obedience, disobedience, and whatever else is posited by those who posit accidents as such – are attributes of bodies: they are neither [those] bodies nor anything else… He [i.e., Hishām] did not

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10 Ashʿarī 2005, 31, e.g.

11 Ashʿarī 2005, 228.7–8; 10–11:

فزعم بعضهم ان معنى فاعل وخالق واحدٌ وانّا لا نطلق ذلك في الانسان لأنّا منعنا منه... وقال بعضهم: معنى خالق انه وقع منه الفعل مقدّراً فكل من وقع فعله مقدّراً فهو خالق له قديماً كان او محدثاً.

12 It is to deal with instances of *maʿnā* like these that Frank introduced the term "entitative accidents": see Frank 1978, 43, e.g. The idea is refined in Frank 1999, 213–215.

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> claim that the attributes of a human being are things, for things are bodies, according to him. He claimed that they are *maʿānī*, not things.[13]

These attributes (*ṣifāt*), which stand against "things" in Hishām's ontology, include all those accidents which later Muʿtazilīs would consider "modes of being" (*akwān*; see below, section 6), as well as psychological states: notably, they do not include physical properties, such as colours, scents, and the like, which Hishām would have considered to be (property-) bodies.[14] That these attributes cannot be resolved with respect to bodies ("neither bodies nor anything else") indicates a certain discomfort with atomism; atomism requires a strict dichotomy of atoms and accidents. For Hishām, it was impossible to describe them as "other" with respect to bodies because "otherness" itself applies only to bodies.[15]

Indeed, Hishām does not separate bodies (or property-bodies) from attributes and leave it at that: unsatisfied with the term "attributes," he goes on to apply a term (*maʿnā*) that seems to explode the concrete specificity of an attribute. For an attribute should be affiliated with a particular body, just as accidents (in canonical Muʿtazilism) inhere in individual atoms. Hishām's *maʿānī*, however, involve further referents: "willing" and "obedience," for example, are *maʿānī* which must be coordinated with multiple objects. One might argue that these *maʿānī* are broad capacities: the capacity to will, for example. Yet if they are taken to be capacities rather than dispositions towards particular objects, then there seems to be no need for the assertion of their opposites ("aversion"; "disobedience").[16] Instead, because these are dispositions pegged to particular objects, a human may exhibit innumerable *maʿānī* according to the conceivable objects of his will.

At this point, we may well conclude that such *maʿānī* mark out those properties for which an immediate substrate cannot easily be articulated; after all, an "act," which is the broad category to which Hishām assigned these *maʿānī*, extends beyond the substrate of its agent in some conceptual manner. We distinguish between physical properties (the redness of some object) and those properties which are harder to put one's finger on, that is, acts or motions. This is precisely

13 Ashʿarī 2005, 344.9–11; 344.15–345.1:

الحركات وسائر الأفعال من القيام والقعود والإرادة والكراهة والطاعة والمعصية وسائر ما يثبت المثبتون الاعراض اعراضاً انها صفات الاجسام لا هي الاجسام ولا غيرها... وحكي عن هشام انه كان لا يزعم ان صفات الانسان اشياء لان الاشياء هي الاجسام عنده، وكان يزعم انها معانٍ وليست باشياء.

14 On physical properties as bodies in Hishām and (especially) Naẓẓām, see Bennett 2013.

15 Ashʿarī 2005, 369.

16 Later in this passage, Hishām claims that motion is a *maʿnā*, whereas resting is not (Ashʿarī 2005, 345.4–5): some opposed properties, therefore, receive special treatment.

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how the term was deployed by the later ninth century Muʿtazilī Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Ṣāliḥī (i.e., a near contemporary of Ashʿarī):[17]

> 2b. Any accident whatsoever may be applied to the indivisible particle. A certain *maʿnā* called 'composition' (*tarkīb*) may inhere in it when it is joined with others, though we do not call it 'composition' in accordance with Arabic usage.[18]

Here he is taking on one of the most slippery properties ("composition") which must somehow inhere in two atoms at once, or else be duplicated with an added component of relativity: i.e., with each atom's being composed with the other resolved as two distinct *maʿānī*. It is clear from other reports that the caveat regarding ordinary language ("Arabic usage") applies only because when we consider the atom in isolation, such an accident could (and would) still inhere in it, though it would be absurd for us to name it as such.[19] Relational properties would still be present even when we cannot name them (or their referents), and this may be why Ṣāliḥī prefers the vagueness of *maʿnā* to the concreteness of "accident" in this context.

Situating relational accidents would always prove problematic. It was the celebrated early Muʿtazilī Abū al-Hudhayl (752–841)[20] who apparently first asserted that *taʾlīf* ("composition"; the difference in terminology need not concern us here) is "a *maʿnā* inhering in two substrates."[21] He went on to describe other modes of being in the same way:

> 2c. Separation[22] is a *maʿnā* added to the existence of two atoms as a matter of distancing, just as… composition is a *maʿnā* added to the existence of two atoms as a matter of nearing.[23]

Such relational properties, considered as modes or states or howsoever, would become a special topic unto themselves in mature Muʿtazilī and Ashʿarī theory;

17 On Ṣāliḥī, see van Ess 1991–1997, 4:133–141 and 6:357–366.
18 Ashʿarī 2005, 317.10–12:

وجوّز أبو الحسين الصالحي على الجزء الذي لا يتجزّأ الاعراض كلها وانه قد يحلّه المعنى الذي اذا جامع غيره سمّي المعنى تركيباً ولكن لا نسمّيه تركيباً اتّباعاً للغة.

19 E.g. Ashʿarī 2005, 301.
20 On his life and positions on physical theory, see van Ess 1991–1997, 3:209–244 and 5:371–378.
21 Ibn Mattawayh 2009, 289. Curiously, Abū al-Hudhayl is not reported as having referred to composition as a *maʿnā* in the *Maqālāt*, but only in later Muʿtazilī sources; hence this case only serves to bolster the "conceptual" usage depicted for Ṣāliḥī above.
22 And by extension, the other modes – combination, motion, and rest, which are described as *maʿānī* earlier in the cited text (Nīsābūrī 1969, 63).
23 Nīsābūrī 1969, 119.4–6 (the attribution of this text to Abū Rashīd has been questioned):

اعلم أن الشيخ أبا الهذيل ذهب إلى أن الافتراق معنى زائد على كوني الجوهرين على سبيل البعد، كما ذهب في التأليف إلى أنه معنى زائد على كوني الجوهرين على سبيل القرب.

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here it is important only to note that for Abū al-Hudhayl, at least, the go-to term for such properties was *maʿānī*, and such *maʿānī* could be “added to” atoms (here, *jawāhir*).

3 *Maʿānī* as Conceptual Properties That Don’t Even Exist at All

Composition and separation are real, but hard to pin down. But *maʿānī* included conceptual properties that were even more vague, such as *tark*, a term which indicates renouncing or refraining from something. *Tark* is discussed at some length in the *Maqālāt*.[24] It arises as a theological problem in the context of human culpability: is failing to do something an act in itself?

The first question Ashʿarī presents concerning *tark* is whether it is a *maʿnā* distinct from the *tārik*, that is, the one doing the *tark*.[25] I take it that this manner of framing the question indicates the prominence of *maʿnā* in proto-Ashʿarī analytic method. Four positions are presented:

3a. Some asserted that *tark* is a *maʿnā* distinct from the *tārik*; it is the refraining of the soul from some object.

3b. Some denied that *tark* was anything besides the *tārik*; the *tārik* has no particular *tark*.

3c. Some said that a person’s *tark* with respect to an object is a *maʿnā*; it is neither the person nor distinct from the person.

3d. ʿAbbād ibn Sulaymān said: ‘I say that a person’s *tark* is distinct from the person, but I do not say that *tark* is distinct from the *tārik*; for when I say that the person is *tārik*, I have [simply] given information about the person, and about the instance of *tark*.[26]

24 Ashʿarī 2005, 378–382.

25 The term *tark* occurs throughout the *Maqālāt*; in fact, Ashʿarī introduces it at 377, just before the passage I will discuss, while discussing the capacity or power of God. There, Ashʿarī notes that there was disagreement about whether or not God could be described as engaging in *tark*. It may have been that question which prompted him to go further into the topic, but now with respect to human (non-)action. In the following, I will use *tark* and *tārik* rather than an English equivalent, as it becomes extremely cumbersome to use “to not-act” and “the one who does not act.”

26 Ashʿarī 2005, 378.15–379.5:

فقال قائلون باثبات الترك وانه معنىً غير التارك وانه كفّ النفس عن الشيء. وقال قائلون بنفي الترك وانه ليس بشيء الا التارك وليس له ترك. وقال قائلون: ترك الانسان للشيء معنىً لا هو الانسان ولا هو غيره. وقال عبّاد بن سليمن: أقول انّ ترك الانسان غير الانسان ولا أقول الترك غير التارك لأني اذا قلت: الانسان تاركٌ فقد اخبرت عنه وعن ترك.

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These positions map onto established Muʿtazilī attitudes towards the application of "positive" attributes.[27] Although Ashʿarī does not name an exponent of 3c, it reflects precisely the manner of thinking displayed by Hishām regarding attributes.[28] The person would be the body, and any acts, or non-acts, would fall under the category of *maʿānī*.[29] These, then, are conceptual attributes of the "hard to pin down" variety.

The first two positions, 3a and 3b, are diametrically opposed: either there is a *maʿnā* or there isn't. Since they have to do with attribution, the positions recur writ large in discussions of the divine attributes. In such cases, the issue is whether God's knowledge, for example, is conceptually distinct from God.[30] These two positions (3a and 3b) may be applied by extension to any conceivable subject such that the subject will either have it (as an added *maʿnā*), or simply be it, in this case, simply by being *tārik*. The opposition goes to the heart of Muʿtazilī ontology: positing something as a *maʿnā* means giving it a real place in that ontology, even if it does not exist.

When I wrote "simply be it," one might object that being *tārik* is conceptually distinct from being just any subject, so some *maʿnā* must already be involved, unless (as is quite possible[31]) every agent is always *tārik* with respect to some object.

27 Muʿtazilī positions on accidents and attributes are reported throughout the *Maqālāt* (see for example Ashʿarī 2005, 356–363, on whether attributes are caused or naturally inherent in things, on whether accidents expire immediately or endure over time, etc.). Indeed, attribution is one of the cardinal talking points for practitioners of *kalām*, no doubt because of its immediate relevance to theology (divine attributes). The most incisive study of this issue remains Frank 1978. Frank came to view the *maʿnā* as a special kind of attribute, an "entitative" attribute, "distinct (or at least distinguishable) from the self of the being to which they belong" (1999, 213).
28 See 2a above.
29 One may wonder why acts and non-acts in this case (if, as I maintain, it follows Hishām's approach) do not follow the rule for Hishām's motion/resting distinction noted above, according to which resting (in this case, the non-act) is not a *maʿnā*. (I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for raising this question.) The key difference seems to be that instances of *tark* are particular and unlimited in variety – hence the discussion preserved in the *Maqālāt* as to whether one can refrain from doing (many) more than one thing at a time.
30 See for example Ashʿarī 2005, 164–168. There were several ways to address the problem. Abū al-Hudhayl, for example, posited real "knowledge" (*ʿilm*), but made it identical to God (Ashʿarī 2005, 165). Most of the Muʿtazilīs held that God was knowing just as such, but His knowing was not the same as, say, His living. As we will see below, Muʿammar disrupted this discussion by appending an unlimited chain of *maʿānī* behind every instance of God's knowledge.
31 This is also discussed by Ashʿarī (2005, 380): can a person engage in *tark* with respect to what does not even occur to his mind? The issue is compounded by specific theological concerns, e.g., whether God is knowing when there are no objects around to be known (as before creation).

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It is here that ʿAbbād, characteristically, intervenes.[32] Characteristically, because this is how ʿAbbād resolved a number of issues: on resurrection, for example, he refused to say whether the resurrected human in paradise (or elsewhere) is just the same as he was on earth.[33] Ashʿarī assigns the same formula to him with respect to motion:

> [When] I say that a body is moving, I am giving information about a body and an instance of motion; I cannot say that motion is distinct from that which moves, since my saying ‘moving’ is [simply] giving information about a body and an instance of motion.[34]

ʿAbbād is presenting a grammatical escape-route, suggesting that although (logically) *tark* is separate from *tārik*, the proposition “X is *tārik*” automatically asserts the presence of the concept and the subject.

ʿAbbād’s position, when considered in conjunction with the “meaning” aspect of *maʿnā*, leads us to its role in the logic of *kalām* – a logic rooted in Arabic grammar. This has been studied extensively by others,[35] but I should point out one telling example that occurs during a survey of positions on *al-muḥāl*, the absurd or impossible statement. The (unnamed) Muʿtazilīs whose positions on *al-muḥāl* and contradictory statements cited by Ashʿarī here are mostly concerned with the non-compatibility of opposites. But the first position related is this:

> 3e. [*Al-muḥāl*] is a *maʿnā* underlying the statement whose existence is impossible.[36]

The speaker in this case may well have been using *maʿnā* to indicate a definition, as in “the word *al-muḥāl* means an impossible-to-exist statement.” In the following section of the *Maqālāt*, Ashʿarī records what seems to be an opposing position: “all speech (*kalām*) which does not have a *maʿnā* is absurd.”[37] He also provides examples of such speech, e.g. “I will come to you yesterday.”[38] So it is clear that

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32 On ʿAbbād ibn Sulaymān, see van Ess 1991–1997, 4:15–44 and 6:237–270.

33 Ashʿarī 2005, 375.

34 Ashʿarī 2005, 347.15–348.2:

قولي في الجسم متحرّكٌ إِخبارٌ عن جسم وحركة فلا يجوز ان أقول الحركة غير المتحرّك اذ كان قولي متَحرّك إِخباراً عن جسم وحركة.

35 See especially Frank 1981, which I will discuss in section 7.

36 Ashʿarī 2005, 387.8:

هو معنىً تحت القول لا يمكن وجوده.

37 Ashʿarī 2005, 388.3:

كل كلام لا معنى له فهو محال.

38 Ashʿarī 2005, 388.7.

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we are dealing with incomprehensible statements. But given the willingness of some Muʿtazilīs to call instances of non-action *maʿānī*, it should come as no surprise that some of them could allow for contentless *maʿānī* for what is unspeakable. They are, after all, only conceptually contentless: they have meaning, just as there is some *maʿnā* to a nonsense statement (an apparently random noise, for example), at least insofar as it can be distinguished from a different nonsense statement.[39] But that is a separate topic for philosophers of language, I suppose: suffice it to say that adding *maʿānī* for inconceivable concepts does not add any special burden to the Muʿtazilī ontological scheme.

4 *Maʿānī* as Super-Substances

Thus far, we have considered *maʿānī* as attributes or conceptual entities (or negations thereof) super-added to substances, however substances are imagined to be. But in one type of discourse, on the nature of the human being, *maʿnā* was applied to a substantive noun, without intending a definition. Thus Ashʿarī cites an earlier reporter, Zurqān,[40] relating the position of Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam:

> 4a. 'Human being' is a name belonging to two *maʿnā*s, a physical body and a spirit. The physical body is lifeless; it is the spirit that senses, perceives, and acts.[41]

We might initially think that *maʿnā* is here being used as a place-holder: i.e., two concepts are included in the name "human being." Even if (like Ashʿarī) we take reports from Zurqān with a pinch of salt, we have seen that Hishām used *maʿnā* to denote a concrete, attributable property. It seems odd for him to be said to apply the term to bodies (spirit being material in almost all Muʿtazilī systems, and therefore a body among bodies). The business of sensing, perceiving, and acting, of course, falls into the range of Hishāmian *maʿānī*, related to particular subjects, so we must consider this report to be garbled at best.

39 One possible route would be to consider the emphasis placed by ʿAbbād on "transmission of information." An inconceivable *maʿnā* might only be a *maʿnā* insofar as it can be transmitted to another person in the same meaning-group (see Frank 1981, 315).

40 On Zurqān (a Muʿtazilī active in the second half of the 8th century, frequently cited by name by Ashʿarī) as a source, see van Ess 2011, 1:181–183.

41 Ashʿarī 2005, 331.3–4:

الانسان اسم لمعنيين لبدن وروحٍ فالبدن موات والروح هي الفاعلة الحسّاسة الدرّاكة.

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But this usage is notable in its proximity to Ashʿarī's collection of positions on "spirit" (*rūḥ*), where several positions are given which include the proposition "X is a *maʿnā*." For example:

> 4b. Some said that the spirit is a fifth *maʿnā* besides these four elemental natures, and that there is nothing in the world besides the four elemental natures (hot, cold, wet, dry) and spirit.[42]

The naturalists who thought this way clearly considered spirit to be a substantial and material element (as did, I stress again, most Muʿtazilīs). Like Naẓẓām,[43] for instance, they would have easily called it a *jawhar* among other *jawāhir* (in their case, five types of *jawhar*). So what is meant by *maʿnā* is apparently just "a sort of thing." Something is afoot, however, as the positions immediately following this one each use *maʿnā* in a similar way.[44] It is possible that this section of the *Maqālāt*, on "the spirit, the soul, and living – and whether or not the spirit is the same as living, and whether or not the spirit is a body," belongs to a different textual tradition, one which readily might use our term (*maʿnā*) in this way. This is also suggested by the unusual (for Ashʿarī) use of *al-nafs* as the substantive noun, "soul."[45] The previous section[46] covers many of the same issues (whether the human being is the body, or the spirit, etc.) without using the term *maʿnā* at all – with two important exceptions: first, ʿAbbād, who uses it expressly in a linguistic sense:

> 4c. ʿAbbād ibn Sulaymān said that the *maʿnā* of "human being" is that it is a man (*bashar*); the *maʿnā* of "human being" is the *maʿnā* of "man," and vice versa, according to valid inference. He claimed that a human being is [made up of] *jawāhir* and accidents.[47]

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42 Ashʿarī 2005, 335.4–6:

وقال قائلون ان الروح معنىً خامس غير الطبائع الاربع وانه ليس في الدنيا الا الطبائع الأربع التي هي الحرارة والبرودة والرطوبة واليبوسة والروح.

43 Major early Muʿtazilī, d. c. 836; see van Ess 1991–1997, 3:296–445; 6:1–204.

44 In the following, I will only skip over a report from Aṣamm (d. c. 816; see van Ess 1991–1997, 2:396–418 and 5:193–211), whose comment is nevertheless instructive: rejecting all non-corporeal reality, he denied that "life or spirit," though useful as explanatory descriptions, had any *maʿnā* beyond the physical body (Ashʿarī 2005, 335–336). If *maʿnā* were meant as a purely linguistic characteristic, he wouldn't have denied its presence.

45 For *al-nafs*, see especially 4d-g, below. Interestingly, as Ritter pointed out in the apparatus to the *Maqālāt*, the entire section is quoted by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya in *Kitāb al-Rūḥ* (see Ibn Qayyim 2010, 512–516, where Ibn Qayyim cites Ashʿarī by name as its source at the beginning and end of the passage). The citation is nearly verbatim.

46 Ashʿarī 2005, 329–333, on *al-insān*, i.e., the human being.

47 Ashʿarī 2005, 330.8–10:

وقال عبّاد بن سليمن: الانسان معناه انه بشرٌ فمعنى انسان معنى بشر ومعنى بشر معنى انسان في حقيقة القياس، وزعم ان الانسان جواهر واعراض.

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This precise usage properly belongs in Section 1 of this paper, but I introduce it here in order to show the incongruence of the next section.[48] In this section, "On the human being," definitional constructs are found in the simple X is Y format: the human being is identified variously with "that which is visible" (Abū al-Hudhayl and Aṣamm), the physical body, the spirit, body and spirit, "the mixture of colour, taste, scent," etc. (Burghūth[49]), "a name belonging to two *maʿnā*s" (Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam; this is the other exception, which was already introduced in 4a), even, startlingly, as "an indivisible particle" (Muʿammar[50] and Ṣāliḥī).[51] Notably, all of these expressions – even Hishām's, but not ʿAbbād's (4c) – use the formula X (is) Y without requiring a definitional *maʿnā*. Even the more exotic positions on "human being," those of the dualists and the naturalists, i.e. those of the non-Muslims, use this formula.[52]

These two sections in the *Maqālāt*, on the "human being" and on "the spirit, the soul, and living [etc.]," are significant statements of philosophical anthropology,[53] and it is striking that they diverge on precisely this point: the use of *maʿnā* as some kind of substantive noun. It is not as though the sections are dealing with wholly separate doctrinal positions: several (Muʿtazilī) figures, together with the dualists and the naturalists, appear in both sections. And notwithstanding my previous suggestion that there may be a divergent source, Ashʿarī explicitly (and unusually) refers in the second section to the first.[54] The following positions occur sequentially in the second section, separated from 4b only by the intervening position of Aṣamm:[55]

> 4d. Aristotle[56] reportedly held that the soul (*al-nafs*) is a *maʿnā* too elevated to be subject to regulation and growth and decay; it cannot be obliterated. It is a simple *jawhar* spread throughout the whole world of living beings in such a way that it acts upon it and regulates it.

48 Represented here with 4b and 4d-g, below.

49 On Burghūth, see van Ess 1991–1997, 4:162–165 and 6:392–396.

50 On whom, see Section 5.

51 Ashʿarī 2005, 329–332.

52 Ashʿarī 2005, 332–333.

53 Similar reports occur in later doxographical works, for example in *Mughnī* (ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1965, 11:310–312), and in Ibn Qayyim (see note 45 above).

54 "We have already related his [Naẓẓām's] position on the 'human being' earlier in our book" (Ashʿarī 2005, 334.4); not even three pages earlier, in fact.

55 See note 44.

56 The rare appearances of "Aristotle" in the *Maqālāt* are notable. Suffice it to say here that by "a *jawhar* spread throughout the whole world" he must mean some Neoplatonic Aristotle.

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4e. [The Manicheans[57]] said that the soul (*al-nafs*) is rather an existent *maʿnā* possessing limits and elements, and length, width and depth. It cannot be separated in this world from any of those things to which length, width and depth apply…

4f. [The Dayṣānīs[58]] said that the soul (*al-nafs*) is attributed with… the *maʿnā* [sing.] of limitations and finitudes…

4g. Jaʿfar ibn Mubashshir [reportedly held[59]] that the soul (*al-nafs*) is a *jawhar* that is not this body, nor any body at all; rather it is a *maʿnā* [shared] between the *jawhar* and the body.[60]

I submit that these usages of *maʿnā*, together with that in 4b, carry rather more weight than those we've seen before. One could try to reduce them to "concepts": catch-all categorical markers, to be replaced with "thing," or "*jawhar*," or "entity," or simply by the entity defined as the topic. If these instances of *maʿnā* are placeholders, then 4d would have it that the "concept of soul" is too elevated, etc., which is fine. That the *maʿnā* in 4e is qualified by "existent" (*mawjūd*) poses no special problem if we take it to mean "an existent something-or-other." The Dayṣānī *maʿnā* (4f) could be reduced to an attributive *maʿnā* as in section 2, above, insofar as it seems to describe a relation to what is beyond the soul: that is, the *maʿnā* establishes the circumscribed property of the soul. But however garbled 4g may seem to be,[61] with the soul *qua jawhar qua maʿnā* interceding between *al-jawhar* and the body, it must refer to a very specific kind of "something" indeed, a thing which acts, even if only by distinguishing.

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57 Like other heresiographers, Ashʿarī includes Dualist positions when recounting physical and psychological theory. The Manicheans (and the Dayṣānīs – see below) were considered part of the intellectual milieu of the early Muʿtazila. See Bennett forthcoming.

58 The Dayṣānīs were adherents of a system of natural philosophy derived from Bardesanes (second century CE): see Bennett forthcoming.

59 The reporter of this position, Ḥarīrī (?), is not known. For Jaʿfar ibn Mubashshir, see van Ess 1991–1997, 4:56–68 and 6:274–287.

60 Ashʿarī 2005, 336.3–337.3:

وذُكر عن ارسطاطاليس ان النفس معنىً مرتفع عن الوقوع تحت التدبير والنشوء والبلى غير داثرة وانها جوهر بسيط منبثّ في العالم كلّه من الحيوان على جهة الإِعمال له والتدبير... وقال آخرون: بل النفس معنىً موجود ذات حدود واركان وطول وعرض وعمق وانها غير مفارقة في هذا العالم لغيرها مما يجري عليه حكم الطول والعرض والعمق... وقالت طائفة ان النفس توصف بما وصفها هؤلاء الذين قدّمنا ذكرهم من معنى الحدود والنهايات... وحكى الحريري عن جعفر بن مبشّر ان النفس جوهر ليس هو هذا الجسم وليس بجسم ولكنه معنىً بين الجوهر والجسم.

The passage is repeated in Ibn Qayyim 2010, 514–515, with the odd quirk that Ibn Qayyim leaves the names of the Dualist groups out. Also, *bayna* in the last sentence ("between the *jawhar* and the body") is vocalised as *bāyana* in Ibn Qayyim (2010, 515), and *bāʾin* in other editions (see van Ess 1991–1997, 6:275). I don't know what to make of that.

61 Ibn Qayyim evidently struggled with the phrasing; see note 60.

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If we were to dismiss these instances as just signifying the function of the term (in each case, *al-nafs*), rather than as deliberate elevations of the replacement term, *maʿnā*, to a privileged, super-substantial status, we would then have to ask why it (*maʿnā*) could not just as easily have been left out entirely, as was done in the immediately preceding section? One reason may be the uncertainty concerning the subject, *al-nafs*. Aristotle excepted, none of the other figures mentioned in the section were particularly keen on that term – they preferred *al-rūḥ*, as I have hinted before, and they preferred it precisely for its material nature. In the context of a *kalām* ontology allergic to non-material being, *al-nafs* would have to be grounded atomically, as an accident or as that in which accidents inhere. Rather, one should read these positions as establishing *al-nafs* as a *maʿnā*, that is, as a concrete conceptual entity beyond the traditional atomic categories. Such a *maʿnā* is more than a conceptual property, whether it is taken as an object of knowledge or of the senses (even if the faculty perceiving it is as rarefied as the Avicennan *wahm*). To say, as Jaʿfar does, that the soul is a *maʿnā* "between" the *jawhar* and the body is to say that it transcends knowable and perceptible domains, just as Ṣāliḥī's *maʿnā* of composition resisted identification with one or the other of the two bodies to which it pertains.

5 Muʿammar's *Maʿānī*

Of course, one cannot consider *maʿnā* as a term without noting the peculiar contribution of the early Muʿtazilī Muʿammar ibn ʿAbbād (d. 830). I will be brief in this case, since Muʿammar's quasi-causal *maʿānī* have been discussed elsewhere at length.[62] In the *Maqālāt*, the fullest treatment of Muʿammar's theory of *maʿānī* occurs in the context of, again, attribution: Ashʿarī had just been discussing *maʿānī* "subsistent in bodies, such as motions, instances of rest, etc.," and whether they are to be considered attributes (as with Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam) or accidents (as with most of the Muʿtazilīs).[63] Although (as we shall see) Muʿammar's *maʿānī* perform a differentiating or causal role, it is noteworthy that Ashʿarī introduces the position here, rather than in later discussions about causality.

Muʿammar held that bodies are at rest or in motion only insofar as they rest or move "on account of a *maʿnā*" (*li-maʿnan*), and that *maʿnā* is rest or motion, respectively. This *maʿnā* determines that the body moves or rests at that particular moment; if the *maʿnā* were not particular to that motion (and that body), there

62 Cf. Daiber 1975, 78–90; van Ess 1991–1997, 3:74–83; Frank 1967; Wolfson 1967, 146–167.
63 Ashʿarī 2005, 369–370. There is also a somewhat muddle-headed account in Khayyāṭ 1957, 46.

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would be no particular reason for the body to move (or rest) at that particular moment. Moreover:

> That *maʿnā* is the *maʿnā* for the motion to be an instance of motion proper to the moving thing on account of yet another *maʿnā*.[64]

Thus, he posits a virtually unlimited set of *maʿānī* for each motion (or instance of resting). In the same passage, it becomes clear that Muʿammar applies the idea of "determining-factor-*maʿānī*" and their infinite application to accidents generally: a *maʿnā* must determine whether an object is black, e.g., and that *maʿnā* must have a *maʿnā*, and so on.[65] As van Ess pointed out, Muʿammar was apparently the first to use *maʿnā* in this causal, or determinant, sense; it is striking, as he could just as well have used a normal causal term (*ʿilla*, *sabab*).[66] Frank's original assessment of *maʿnā*, which remains valid for Muʿammar's usage here, is of "intrinsic causal determinants of the thing's being so-and-so."[67]

The implications and origins of Muʿammar's physical theory deserve further study.[68] Nevertheless, we are obliged to dismiss any temptation to consider this use of *maʿnā* as a benign place-holder: *maʿānī* perform a crucial role in the unfolding of natural events (determining the application of natures as accidents) and of caused events (human and divine). Muʿammar's theory may have been rejected because he had asserted infinite strings of *maʿānī*, but the causal use of *maʿnā* was not beyond the pale. Discussing Muʿtazilī notions of cause (*ʿilla*), Ashʿarī provides the following unattributed position:

> 5a. Some said: the cause (*ʿilla*) is before the effect (*maʿlūl*) in every case. There are two types of cause. The necessitating cause, which precedes the necessitated effect, is that cause which, when it occurs, the agent cannot control its *maʿnā*, nor by his volition refrain (*tark*) from it [i.e. that *maʿnā*], once it [i.e. the cause] has come to be.[69]

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64 Ashʿarī 2005, 372.7–8 (see 6c below for these *maʿānī* as "modes of being").

65 Apparently Muʿammar applied the same rule to the analysis of God's creation, such that every act of creation must itself be created, yielding a simultaneous infinite chain (Ashʿarī 2005, 364). Similarly, he held that God "is knowing by virtue of an instance of knowledge (*ʿilm*), and for that instance of knowledge He has in turn a *maʿnā*, and that *maʿnā* has a *maʿnā*, and so on without end" (Ashʿarī 2005, 168).

66 Van Ess 1991–1997, 3:76.

67 Frank 1967, 250.

68 Or rather, since Daiber 1975, further appreciation and recognition.

69 The second sort of cause, which is not relevant to this discussion, is not necessitating: the example used is one's obedience of God's command. Ashʿarī 2005, 389.13–15:

وقال بعضهم: العلّة قبل المعلول حيث كانت والعلّة علّتان علّة موجبة وهي قبل الموجَب [وهي] التي اذا كانت لم يكن من فاعلها تصرّفٌ في معناها ولم يجز منه تركٌ لها ارادَهُ بعد وجودها.

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Here it is the *maʿānī* which are the object of control (*taṣarruf*), insofar as they are the (“intended”?) objects of the causes.

Moreover, the Muʿammarian notion of “that on account of which a thing is such-and-such” was picked up by Ibn Kullāb,[70] whose doctrine of attribution was especially influential for Ashʿarī:

5b. Ibn Kullāb said that things are only said to have an attribute on account of a *maʿnā* which is an attribute belonging to the thing; every *maʿnā* attributed to a thing is an attribute belonging to it.[71]

Ibn Kullāb’s use of the term reduces *maʿnā* to the attribute itself. If he meant to say that things are, e.g., black on account of an instance of blackness, or a nature we may call “blackness,” then that *maʿnā* is the reason to describe the object in that way, but it is also the reason the object *has* that attribute. Certainly, Ibn Kullāb did not go as deeply into this problem as did Muʿammar, but it is interesting to see that Muʿammar’s way of speaking of *maʿānī* endured.

6 *Maʿnā* and the Problem of Motion

In mature *kalām* – still before Avicenna – a certain set of accidents came to be known as “modes of being” (*akwān*, sing. *kawn*) since they had to apply either to subjects over time, or in combination with each other (i.e. with respect to composition and separation).[72] Motion and rest were analysed as *akwān* by doxographers even when it is not clear that they were thought of as such by the original proponents of the doctrines collected. So when we find a technical discussion of these concepts in the *Maqālāt* (in a section “on the *maʿnā* of motion and rest, and where they inhere in the body: i.e., in the first or second location [in which a moving body is found]”), we should expect to be hearing about the *akwān*, motion and rest. We can anticipate the problem from “the first or second location”: on an atomic playing field, a body will move from one location (*makān*, literally “place of being”) to the next; it will always be in its particular location, even if it is thought to “leap” from one to the next. The question naturally arose

70 Ibn Kullāb (d. 855): see van Ess 1991–1997, 4:180–194.

71 Ashʿarī 2005, 357.3–5:

وقال قائلون: كل ما وُصف به الشيء فانما وُصف به لمعنىً هو صفة له، وهو قول ابن كلّاب وكان يقول: كل معنىً وُصف به الشيء فهو صفة له.

72 On *akwān*, see Sabra 2009, 72–74.

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as to how the attribute "motion" applies to the atom or body – might it apply only between locations? Treating certain accidents as *akwān* seems to solve the problem by insisting on the "becoming" aspect of such changes. Van Ess has already warned against "metaphysical over-interpretation" of *kawn* in such circumstances,[73] but *kawn* is part of the technical discussion of motion, especially. In the pages leading up to the selection we will discuss below, Ashʿarī introduced Abū al-Hudhayl's understanding of motion, according to which he distinguished between apparently identical motions by referring to the instantiation of a mode of being, that is, a *kawn*, say, on the right-hand side, as opposed to that instantiated on the left-hand side.[74]

The section "on the *maʿnā* of motion and rest" includes seven positions, six of which are attributed to major early Muʿtazilīs (the other one is attributed to the comparatively less famous Ibn Shabīb, early 9th century, a student of Naẓẓām). I have listed only five of these positions, excerpting only the claims involving *maʿnā*:

6a. Naẓẓām said that the *maʿnā* of "motion" is the same as the *maʿnā* of a mode of being (*kawn*)…

6b. Muḥammad ibn Shabīb acknowledged motion and rest, claiming that they are *akwān*; some *akwān* are motions, and some are instances of rest… Translocation and departure occur when the body comes to be in the second location, for in Arabic, one does not call a body "departed," "transported," or "moved" from the first location until it comes to be in the second location. The *maʿnā* occurs in it while it is in the first location, but it is called a "departure" as soon as it exists in the second location…

6c. Muʿammar said that the *maʿnā* of "resting" is that it is a *kawn*…

6d. ʿAbbād said that motions and rest are contiguous incidents. He claimed that the *maʿnā* of "motion" is the same as the *maʿnā* of "departure."

6e. Jubbāʾī claimed that motion and rest are *akwān*. The *maʿnā* of "motion" is just that it is "departure," such that all motion is "departure." The *maʿnā* of "motion" is not that of "translocation," however; before it exists, non-existent motion is called "departure," and not "translocation."[75]

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73 Van Ess 1991–1997, 3:75, note 5.

74 Ashʿarī 2005, 350; at issue in this passage is the mode of difference between such modes of being.

75 Ashʿarī 2005, 354.1–355.14:

قال القائلون: معنى الحركة معنى الكون [...] وكان محمد بن شبيب يُثبت الحركة والسكون ويزعم انهما الاكوان وان الاكوان منها حركة ومنها سكون [...] ونقلة وزوال اذا صار الجسم الى الثاني لأن اهل اللغة لم يُسمّوا الجسم زائلاً منتقلاً متحرّكاً عن الاول الا اذا صار الى المكان الثاني فالمعنى حدث فيه وهو في المكان الاول وسُمّى زوالاً في حال كونه في المكان الثاني [...] وقال معمّر: معنى السكون انه الكون ولا سكون الا كون ولا كون الا سكون [...] وقال عبّاد: الحركات والسكون مماسّاتٌ وزعم ان معنى حركة معنى زوال [...] وكان الجبّائي يزعم ان الحركة والسكون اكوان وان معنى الحركة معنى الزوال فلا حركةَ الا وهي زوال وانه ليس معنى الحركة معنى الانتقال وان الحركة المعدومة تُسمّى زوالاً قبل كونها ولا تُسمّى انتقالاً.

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For Naẓẓām, motions are generated in the first place, necessitating the body's presence in the second place, such that its *kawn* in the second place is "motion." Indeed, as quoted (6a), he held that the motion *is* the *kawn* (in the Arabic, literally: *maʿnā* X is *maʿnā* Y). At first blush, most of these positions (6c-e) seem to be using *maʿnā* to establish the definition of "motion,"[76] perhaps under Ashʿarī's programmatic editorial conceptualisation of the problem as indicated in the title of the section. It is only in 6b that we sense something else happening: here the *maʿnā* seems to pre-exist the corresponding motion, very nearly, but not quite, like Muʿammar's causal determinants.[77] In such cases, we must reconsider the immediate interpretation ("what is the *meaning* of the term, 'motion'") slightly to accommodate *maʿnā*'s productive involvement in the scenario. Not only does the *maʿnā* imply the coming motion (as it would in Muʿammar), but it is, itself, cognisable content; it can be known, for it is called something different after its operation.

7 The *Maʿnā* as Cognisable Content

So far, we have seen various cases in which *maʿnā* is used, even in its most blatantly definitional sense, to denote some cognisable content. It is invoked when something knowable is at stake. There is an entire *kalām* taxonomy for objects of knowledge, whether they are existent or not: these are called, quite literally, *maʿlūmāt*.[78] The *maʿnā*, however, in the early material collected in the *Maqālāt*, is used to indicate the approach to a *maʿlūm*. It is a term so general that it is flexible enough to handle complex situations such as motion or causality. It stands, as we suspected from Avicenna's usage, for particular and distinct objects of cognition in every case. But its flexibility is such that it needn't stand in for accidents, say, on a one-to-one basis. Revising his early work on the topic after a virtuoso study of early Arabic grammarians, Frank classified discussions of *maʿnā* into four general senses: namely, meaning as (1) the "intent of the sentence," as (2) "of a noun or a verb as its referent," as (3) a term's "semiotic equivalent," and as (4) "the content or conceptual significance of a word, phrase, or sentence… grasped as

76 As may be seen in the Arabic text, position 6c (Muʿammar) is actually a little bit weirder: he seems to assert that *every* mode of being is an instance of resting, and vice versa.
77 Section 5.
78 See, for just one classic case, the entire text of Ibn Mattawayh 2009, which is essentially an inventory of *maʿlūmāt*.

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one [concept]… by a plurality of individuals who share a common understanding of it."[79] It is this last variety which links the grammarians in Frank's study to the *kalām* practitioners we've been considering here, and finally to the *maʿānī* of such importance to Avicenna's sheep. And crucially, this last class is not restricted to individual accidents, to return to *kalām* ontology. Returning finally to where we began, with Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam, we find an early passage in the *Maqālāt* on his treatment of (human) acts:

> 7a. Acts are attributes applied to agents: they are neither the agents, nor *not* the agents, and are neither bodies nor things. Hishām is related to have said: "they are *maʿānin*, not things or bodies." This was also his position on the attributes of bodies such as motions and instances of rest, volitions and aversions, speech, obedience and disobedience, unbelief and faith. He claimed that colours, tastes, and scents are bodies, and that the colour of a thing is its taste and its scent. According to Zurqān, he said: "motion is an act, but resting is not an act."[80]

Hishām distinguishes between his property-bodies (colours, etc.) and those things which are super-attributes, exemplified here particularly by "acts." By excluding the sensible property-bodies, he avoids establishing a parallel system for apprehension of sensible forms (i.e. as seems to occur in Avicenna). The key to understanding this position, I argue, and the reason that wherever *maʿnā* occurs in the *Maqālāt* (and by extension, in early *kalām* generally) it must be considered with care, is that these acts all involve objects – and those objects are included in the *maʿnā*. The objects involved, moreover, are not simply static, but involve further activity: thus, "obedience" is obedience of the subject (me, e.g.) to the object (God, presumably) *by virtue of God's command*. This is why *maʿānī* cannot be said to be the same as or different from the agent: they include the agent as well as the agency of another. As such, they are instances of complex cognisable content.

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79 Frank 1981, 314–315.

80 Ashʿarī 2005, 44.6–12 (the reader will note that this is a slightly reformulated version of the same position in 2a):

الأفعال صفاتٌ للفاعلين ليست هي هم ولا غيرهم وانها ليس باجسام ولا اشياء، وحُكي عنه انه قال: هي معانٍ وليست باشياء ولا اجسام، وكذلك قوله في صفات الاجسام كالحركات والسكنات والارادات والكراهات والكلام والطاعة والمعصية والكفر والايمان، فاما الالوان والطعوم والارابيح فكان يزعم انها اجسام وان لون الشيء هو طعمه وهو رائحته، وحكى زُرقان عنه انه قال: الحركة فعلٌ والسكون ليس بفعل.

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8 Conclusion

We have considered *maʿānī* across a wide semantic range, yet they have always referred to some kind of cognisable objects. Even when they are purely definitional ("the *maʿnā* of X is Y") they are clearly intended to direct the reader to an otherwise non-evident cognisable aspect of some entity. When used to refer to properties or features of external existents (entities in the *kalām* ontology, as bodies or as individual atoms, depending on the practitioner's approach), they pick out attributes in a curious way, anticipating the "hostility" perceived in Avicenna's wolf. Moreover, they immediately begin to break down the atomistic attitude towards attributes: they take on relational attributes which cannot be otherwise fixed, and they are applied to non-existents and non-acts. They are applied to causality in order to discuss the reasons for things coming to be a certain way. At every point we have encountered *maʿānī*, they operate on a plane of meaning beneath the surface of *kalām* ontology. The ontological constituents of *kalām* would get on perfectly well without *maʿānī*, but we would not know about them.

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Jonathan Owens

The *Voie Diffuse* and Reconstruction: The *De Audibilibus* and Sībawayhi's Account of Voicing

Introduction

Let me try to contextualize the paper on two levels. A broader theme of the paper is that Sībawayhi's treatment of voicing was informed by his empiricist approach to language description which led him to develop a description of the sounds of Arabic that was remarkably detailed and accurate in articulatory phonetic terms.[1] As far as most aspects of his articulatory phonetics go, the question is moot as to whether or not he was influenced by outside concepts. Looked at by contemporary standards, any perceptive observer of speech articulation would arrive at a basic system such as the one Sībawayhi developed. Independent parallel invention (Sībawayhi and contemporary phonetics in the current case) emerges from the act of developing an empirical descriptive articulatory phonetics.

More narrowly, where Sībawayhi's descriptive phonetic apparatus is incomplete he uses a range of terms which touch on the basic idea of voicing, all of which will be discussed below, *iʿtimād, nafas, ṣawt, ishbāʿ, mushraba, ṣawt al-ṣadr*. This array of voicing-related terminology suggests that Sībawayhi "knew" that he was looking for a tangible physical effect without being able to nail down the precise phenomenon empirically. As will be seen, what can be termed the "phonetic metaphors" behind this array of terminology is more often than not opaque to us today, and given this incertitude, the question of outside influence can be considered. However, rather than attribute Sībawayhi's treatment to external influence, the array of terminology can be viewed as Sībawayhi the phonetician searching for the mechanism behind the third pillar of articulatory phonetics, the voiced-voicing contrast.

This brief summary masks a number of issues which deserve greater treatment. I mention two here. One is the component of metaphor in meta-phenomenon.

1 I would like to thank Pierre Larcher and Georg Leube as well as an anonymous reviewer for comments on an earlier draft. For phonetic accuracy I use IPA (international phonetic alphabet) symbols when discussing sounds qua sounds (not as names for classes of sounds). These symbols include ʔ = ʾ, ʕ = ʿ, x = kh, θ = th, ḍ = "ḍaad"; long vowels are written twice (e.g. /aa/ = /ā/). I use IPA symbols even for Sībawayhi's representation, who saw sounds such as /q/ and /ṭ/ as voiced sounds, as well as /ḍ/ which in Sībawayhi is a voiced lateral emphatic fricative.

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A key phonetic term such as *makhraj/mukhraj* 'place (of articulation),' lit. 'place where it is pushed out/pushed out' is both close to the manner in which phonetics (of any era) understands the idea of place of articulation, and it is used consistently by Sībawayhi. Voicing, however, was not described "correctly" as an articulatory action, and as will be seen, is characterized with a range of terminology, with relevant metaphors dispersed across different domains. It may be asked whether the lack of a clear conceptual link to the physical act led Sībawayhi to describe the phenomenon with a diversity of terms. Lacking such a link, we are left to speculate as to what exactly Sībawayhi was describing.

A second perspective is internal to the linguistic tradition, though since the Arabic linguistic tradition represents a largely self-contained body of knowledge informed by its defining theory, it is interesting as a bell weather for how Arabic-Islamic knowledge systems conceptualized and structured a complex, differentiated domain of usage and cognition. Although Schaade the study of Schaade *Sībawayhi's Lautlehre*, published in 1911, was among the first detailed descriptions of a domain of linguistic description in Sībawayhi, there has been a remarkable lack of discussion linking Sībawayhi the phonetician to Sībawayhi the morphologist/syntactician. As I have suggested earlier, both Sībawayhi's basic morphological and syntactic methodology (broadly speaking, *qiyās*) and the entities he adduced to develop, support and evaluate linguistic constructions diverged considerably from his phonetic and (morpho)phonological description.[2] An examination of these differences would contribute to understanding the epistemological bases of Arabic linguistic theory.

1 Voicing

Perhaps the greatest phonetic paradox in the late eighth century grammarian (d. 793) Sībawayhi is his remarkably detailed phonetic observations and precise phonological classification of phonemes, set against the fact that he failed to identify the phonetic parameter of voicing, vocal cord (or vocal fold) vibration, which defines his *mahmūs* 'voiceless' vs. *majhūr* 'voicing' contrast.[3] Thus equating his three parameters, *makhraj* (or *mukhraj*) *al-ḥarf*, *mahmūs* vs. *majhūr* and the manner in which air moves through a differentiated vocal tract producing different sounds (manner of articulation) with place, voicing and manner of articulation, there is a perfect correspondence with the fundamental articulatory phonetic categories in contemporary phonetics. Moreover, over, above and independent of these three

2 Owens 2019, 38.

3 Cantineau 1960, 21.

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parameters, Sībawayhi recognized a fourth, secondary parameter, *iṭbāq*, which equally equates with a secondary (co-)articulatory parameter namely emphasis.

In an interesting article, Heselwood, Watson and Maghrabi while not solving the question of what articulatory parameter Sībawayhi intended by his dichotomy *mahmūs* vs. *majhūr* do suggest an historical origin for it.[4] Their argument is based on a close reading of the Classical Greek text *De Audibilibus*, often attributed to the 3rd BCE scholar Strato[5] and a comparison of this text with Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*, as well as *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* as attributed to Khalīl. Their argument goes as follows.

The author of the *De Audibilibus* distinguishes two basic classes of sounds, aspirated and unaspirated. An aspirated sound (*dase* 'rough, uneven'), comprising /s/, /h/ and the aspirated stops /p^h/, /t^h/ and /k^h/ is interpreted as aperiodic. "das-" sounds, henceforth referred to under the root *das*-, are said to be unclear because they have two components, sound and breath.[6] This combination of two properties is held on independent grounds to lead to a lack of clarity. An unaspirated sound (*pila, pil*-) on the other hand is 'clear, smooth, strong.' Whereas *das*- sounds are obfuscated by the two properties of breath and sound, the *pil*- sounds are clear because they lack the component of breath. Heselwood et al. note from the *De Audibilibus* "Aspiration is produced when we drive out the breath immediately at the same time as the sounds" … "unaspirated sounds are those which proceed without any release of the breath."[7] These latter are considered "smooth" sounds.

As Heselwood et al. note the equation of *pil*- with voiced sounds is supported by the description of the *pil*- sounds in the *De Audibilibus*, which explains periodicity in acoustic terms.[8] Contextualizing the phonetic advances of the *De Audibilibus* in the Aristotelian tradition, Gottschalk writes, "His [author of *De Audibilibus*, J.O.] discovery that every sound consists of many separate pulses enabled him to distinguish their frequency as a factor which determines pitch from the factors governing the other properties of sounds."[9]

The *De Audibilibus* correctly (by modern phonetic standards) characterized sounds into two categories, periodic, those characterized acoustically by a

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4 Heselwood, Watson and Maghrabi 2014 (henceforth, Heselwood et al.).

5 Gottschalk 1968.

6 Quoting from the *De Audibilibus*, "in conversation the breath issuing from the mouth causes a lack of clearness when the sounds are not equally stressed; not merely in the case of those [sounds] which show a lack of clearness by themselves, but also when they interrupt the sounds which are clear, because the movement concerned with hearing becomes uneven" (Heselwood et al. 2014, 202).

7 Heselwood et al. 2014, 198.

8 Heselwood et al. 2014, 204.

9 Gottschalk 1968, 441.

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regular wave form, and aperiodic, those characterized by irregular, unpredictable wave forms. The former are *pil-*, the latter *das-*.

The authors argue that the *das-/pil-* contrast is replicated in Sībawayhi's contrast of *majhūr/mahmūs*. I will leave off extended discussion of this, and Sībawayhi's original quotes until the next section. An initial overview of the descriptors and attributes associated with the two Ancient Greek categories looks as follows:

(1) *Das-* vs. *pil-* and correspondence in *mahmūs/majhūr* (≈ approximates)

das- rough, hairy	aperiodic	aspirated	sound + breath	≈ *mahmūs*
pil- strong, smooth, bare	periodic	unaspirated	sound	≈ *majhūr*

Heselwood et al. also argue for a possible semantic and cultural connection between *pil-* = *majhūr* and *das-* = *mahmūs*.

2 Problems

The *De Audibilibus* emanates probably from the third century BCE. So far as is known, there are no translations of the work into Arabic. In any case, as has been often pointed out, most major translations from Greek works postdate Sībawayhi. Heselwood et al. do consider the possibility that the idea of voicing may have arrived in the Arabic tradition via Syriac renditions of Dionysius Thrax (170–90 BCE, *Technē Grammatikē*). However, they show that Thrax's division of consonants differed from both that of the *De Audibilibus* and Sībawayhi in having three levels of resonance, thick (*das-*), medium (*mesa*) and thin (*pil-*). Thrax was applied to Syriac by Jacob of Edessa (ca. 700), who took over Thrax's tri-partitite division. This situation is analogous to that of the three parts of speech in the Arabic tradition, noun, verb and particle, which as Versteegh noted recalled an Aristotelian tradition, rather than that of Thrax.[10] One can therefore agree with Heselwood et al. that if there is a Greek tradition it would have come from the older *De Audibilibus* or a tradition linked thereto. Clearly, however, lacking other tangible diachronic links from the work to Sībawayhi, this perspective puts a heavy burden on the textual and linguistic comparison of the two sources in sections 2 and 3.

Heselwood et al. give a great deal more attention to the Greek sources than to the Arabic. A close reading of the Arabic, however, reveals a number of problems in the proposed interpretation. In sections 2.1–2.3 I will look at key Arabic

10 Versteegh 1977, 38–89 (=Chapter 3).

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terms and ideas in detail and in sections 2.4, 2.5 and 3 look at the phenomenon of voicing from a comparative Ancient Greek-Arabic perspective. In the two summary sections, 4 and 5, it will be reiterated (recalling work from the 1980's invoking the idea of a *voie diffuse*) that without a solid descriptive basis of the Arabic categories, no reconstruction of possible influence is possible. However, with such a background, a more precise consideration of such influence can be developed than that found in Heselwood et al., as will be suggested in section 5.

I should also note that my Arabic source is Sībawayhi. It is Sībawayhi who first defined the Arabic grammatical categories, and whose ideas ultimately became the mainstream Classical Arabic as we understand it today.[11]

2.1 Sībawayhi's Description of the Voicing Mechanism

As noted above, Sībawayhi's description of the voicing mechanism is, relative to his clear identification of the place and manner parameters, obscure. Till today I do not think there is an answer to what physical events Sībawayhi was describing with his voicing metaphor. I offer no definitive solution here, though will discuss the matter in some detail and attempt to identify the major issues involved.

The relevant passages are as follows, beginning with the voiced *majhūr*.[12] In order to give an idea of the interpretive challenges which will be discussed, I begin with a fairly literal translation of passages then will work towards linguistically more palatable ones. What I consider the difficult interpretive parts are in boldface. These will be discussed below.

Q 1. *Fa-al-majhūra* ***ḥarf ushbiʿa al-iʿtimād fī mawḍiʿihi*** *wa-manaʿa al-nafas an yajriya maʿahu ḥattā yanqaḍiya al-****iʿtimād ʿalayhi wa****-yajriya al-ṣawt. Fa-hādhihi ḥāl al-majhūr fī al-ḥalq wa-al-fam illā anna al-nūn wa-al-mīm qad* ***yuʿtamadu*** *lahumā fī al-fam wa-al-khayāshīm.*

"As for the voiced, it is a phoneme whose **dependence/support/leaning is satiated/filled** up at **its place** (of articulation) so that it prevents the breath from flowing with it, until its **dependence/support/leaning** is finished **and** the sound can continue. And the location of the voiced (sound) is in the larynx and mouth, except that the **dependence/support/leaning** of the /n/ and /m/ occurs in the mouth and the nasal cavity."[13]

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11 See Owens 1990 for an account of the early developments and section 3 below for more discussion.

12 Sībawayhi 1970, 2:453–454.

13 Sībawayhi 1970, 2:453.21–454.1:

فالمجهورة حرف اشْبِع الاعتماد في موضعه ومنع النفس أنْ يجري معه حتى ينقضي الاعتماد عليه ويجري الصوت. فهذه حال المجهورة في الحلق والفم الا أنّ النون والميم قد يعتمد لهما في الفم والخياشيم.

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Q 2. *Wa-ammā al-mahmūs fa-ḥarf* ***uḍʿifa al-iʿtimād fī mawḍiʿihi*** *ḥattā jarā al-nafas maʿahu.*

"And as for the voiceless, it is a phoneme whose **dependence/support/leaning has been weakened at its place** (of articulation) so that the breath can flow with it."[14]

Note here that the term *nafas* 'breath' might appear to have an independent status from *ṣawt*, so that *mahmūs* for instance is argued to consist of both *ṣawt* + *nafas*, the *majhūr* only of sound. This is a key point in Heselwood et al.'s argument for parallelism with the Greek. This idea will be examined here from a number of different perspectives.

2.1.1 Other Translations

Before proceeding, I will briefly present other translations for this passage.

Q 3. "The *majhūr* is a letter **fully supported in its place** and the flow of breath is impeded until the support is completed and the sound flows on."

Mahmūs: "a letter weakly supported in its place and the breath is allowed to flow with it."[15]

Al-Nassir's translations stay quite close to a literal translation. The reason for al-Nassir's reticence in proposing more specific phonological terminology, it appears, is that he recognized the problematic nature of Sībawayhi's characterization, in particular that it does not obviously refer to vocal cord vibration. Moreover, *iʿtimād* is hardly a term used outside these passages.[16]

Heselwood et al. do not translate the entire passage:

Q 4. "A *mağhūr* sound prevents the breath from flowing with it until the articulation is complete **while** the sound continues to flow."[17]

Here *iʿtimād* is interpreted as "articulation." The use of "while" is commented on in detail in 2.3 below.

Q 5. *Mahmūs*: "the breath flows with it."

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14 Sībawayhi 1970, 2:454.2:

وأمّا المهموس فحرف اضْعِف الاعتماد في موضعه حتى جرى النفس معه.

15 Al-Nassir 1993, 35.

16 See 2.1.2.2 below.

17 Heselwood et al. 2014, 199.

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2.1.2 Individual issues

To understand the question at hand it is best to concentrate on key and problematic parts.

2.1.2.1 *Fī Mawḍiʿihi* 'in Its Place of Articulation'

This translation is not particularly problematic. Sībawayhi's treatment of place of articulation is quite clear. The various places of articulation start at the back of the month (/ʔ, h/ therefore being the first two sounds) and move forward. Each sound has a place of articulation. Sībawayhi's technical term for 'place' is *mukhraj* or *makhraj* (pl. *makhārij*). Sometimes he also uses the term *mawḍiʿ*, as when describing emphatics he writes, "... if you put your tongue in their places," places = *mawāḍiʿihinna*, i.e. in their places of articulation.[18] Thus here, and in the description of voicing, *mawḍiʿ* is understood as 'place of articulation.' This interpretation is supported by his subsequent remark that the *iʿtimād* occurs in the larynx or mouth, i.e. there is a one-to-one correspondence between an aspect of voicing and where in the vocal tract a sound is produced, a point confirmed by his observation that the *iʿtimād* in the case of nasals is both in the oral and nasal cavities. This reproduces his place of articulation classification of the nasals /n/ and /m/, which he notes are articulated at certain points in the mouth,[19] as well in the nasal cavity (*khayāshīm*).[20] Moreover, Sībawayhi applies the same procedural test for identifying the locus of the *iʿtimād*, the locus of the place of articulation, for the nasal sounds[21] as he does to specify the unique manner of articulation property of nasals, namely the flow of air through the nasal cavity.[22] In both, you realize that the nasal cavity is involved, because if you hold your nose shut, the sound stops. Note, however, in one case one is talking about the voicing parameter, and in the other the manner of articulation of nasals.[23] I reiterate this point in the discussion around (5) in section 2.4 below.

18 Sībawayhi 1970, 2:455.5; see Versteegh 1978 for treatment of *mawḍiʿ* as morphosyntactic term.
19 Sībawayhi 1970, 2:453.11.
20 Sībawayhi 1970, 2:453.16.
21 Sībawayhi 1970, 2:454.2.
22 Sībawayhi 1970, 2:454.17.
23 One can thus sympathize with Ibn Yaʿīsh's attempts to distinguish between the nature of the constriction distinguishing the voicing parameter from the manner of articulation parameter, as discussed in Schaade 1911, 2. The later grammarians were reduced basically to understanding Sībawayhi from his text, as we are today, not from a comparison between a living language and a text, as in Sībawayhi's era. From their perspective, Sībawayhi's description of the voicing mechanism would appear to dovetail with his manner parameter.

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There is thus considerable evidence that one aspect of Sībawayhi's interpretation of voicing is that it is closely tied to a place of articulation. This puts it at significant variance to the physical correlate of voicing as vocal cord vibration.

2.1.2.2 *Ushbiʿa/Uḍʿifa al-Iʿtimād, Yaqtaḍī al-Iʿtimād*

I begin with *al-iʿtimād*. It can be assumed that *iʿtimād* is not the same as 'place of articulation,' an idea expressed by *mukhraj/makhraj*.[24] Al-Nassir's 'support' is not particularly helpful as a phonetic term, though one sense of *iʿtamada*, namely 'lean on' (*tawakkaʾa*)[25] suggests in a phonetic context 'articulate,' in the sense that one articulator leans on another. This derivation was already suggested by Schaade.[26] Moreover Sībawayhi does not distinguish between active and passive articulator when he describes the places of articulation,[27] so it could be that *iʿtamada* refers to this process, i.e. to articulation.

In one further passage where the form 8 is used as a phonetic term such an interpretation is not contradicted. The passage refers to the assimilation of /s/ to /ṣ/ under the influence of a following /q/, *sabaq-tu>ṣabaq-tu* 'I preceded.' The idea here is that /q/ can exert an emphasizing effect because it is pronounced far back and high in the mouth, more so than any other oral obstruent. Sībawayhi's explanation appears to be, since emphatic sounds involve a raised tongue, the high back pronunciation of /q/ facilitates a raising effect on /s/. The use of the predicate *muʿtamad* comes in the conclusion to his explanation, "And this shows that its articulation (*muʿtamaduhā* 'its point of support' [as suggested by Pierre Larcher], lit. 'its being supported') is the hard palate."[28] That *muʿtamad* would imply not only the place of articulation with the passive articulator, but also the active articulator, the tongue, and hence a complete articulation, would follow from the implied argument that the tongue needs to be raised for /q/, this raising assimilating a following /s/ to /ṣ/.

If a translation of *iʿtimād* as 'articulation involving active and passive articulator' can be argued for only on a conditional basis, the interpretation of *ushbiʿa*

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24 See 2.1.2.1.
25 Ibn Manẓūr 1984, 4:3097.
26 Schaade 1911, 6.
27 The passive articulator is generally the top of the mouth (velum, hard palate, alveolum), the active the tongue. Sībawayhi does not explicitly distinguish between active and passive articulator. He simply names parts of the tongue and parts of the top of the mouth. For instance, the /q/ is pronounced at "the farthest part of the tongue and what is above it in the hard palate" (Sībawayhi 1970, 2:453.6). He nowhere says that the tongue is raised against the hard palate, however. Rather, the tongue is treated as a fixed instrument, just as the top of the mouth is.
28 Sībawayhi 1970, 2:478.8.

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is all the more difficult. Schaade suggests that *ushbiʿa* means 'strongly articulated (kräftig artikuliert),'[29] a meaning suggested also in al-Nassir's translation. However, I see no independent support for this interpretation.[30] *Ishbāʿ* is used as a technical term referring to one of two alternative ways of pronouncing the short case vowels –*u* and –*i*.[31] In the *ishbāʿ* the case vowel is lengthened and elongated, *maʔman-**ii**-ka* 'your haven.GEN,' vs. the *ikhtilās* rendition where the case vowel is rushed and probably a schwa-like pronunciation.[32] The key parameter is not strength but rather length, via filling out the pronunciation. The basic meaning associated with {šbʿ} is 'being full, satiated.' The voiced sounds, *majhūr*, are filled out in some way. A similar metaphor accrues to a class of sounds termed *mushraba*. These are discussed in greater detail below.[33] Importantly, the *mushraba* include all and only voiced sounds, less the semi-vowels /y/, /w/. *Mushraba* means 'saturated.' It can be suggested that one perspective Sībawayhi interpreted the voiced sounds from was a container metaphor which saw the breath (*nafas*) as filling up its articulation (*iʿtimād*) until the articulation ends and the breath proceeds. While nothing so graphic can be postulated for the metaphor behind the voiceless, with the voiceless sounds the container is too weak to accumulate the breath.

Regardless whether this interpretation is exact or the best, the point is that Sībawayhi had no concept of voicing as vocal cord vibration. Rather, it seems, he was interpreting the voicing mechanism as if it was caused by the same factors which define place and manner of articulation, namely the airstream being hindered by something in the vocal tract. As will be seen briefly below in 2.2.1f, hindrances in the airstream (*ṣawt*) define the basic categories of stop, fricative, nasality and so on. Sībawayhi, however, clearly realized that the voicing parameter was independent of those which defined manner and place. Sībawayhi used a quasi technical term for the "voicing" hindrance *iʿtimād* (verb *iʿtamada*) and he had a specific "container" metaphor which needs a substance to either absorb or

29 Schaade 1911, 6.

30 I suspect that this interpretation is inspired by the antonym of *uḍʿifa* 'made weak,' the characterization of the voiceless sounds. There are no compelling reasons to assume a prioristically that Sībawayhi or the Arabic grammarians in general always developed binary terms on the basis of antonyms, even if in some cases they did. In contemporary phonetics, for instance, /i/ vs. /a/ will often be described antonymically in terms of closed vs. open or high vs. low. The Arabic terminology for these two vowels are *kasra* vs. *fatḥa*. This may be phonetically inspired, as Mitchell 1990, 68 observed. The /a/ is an open {ftḥ} vowel, *kasra* a vowel that involves 'breaking' {ksr} the lips. On this account, the terminology is inspired by articulatory gestures, not by semantic opposites.

31 Sībawayhi 1970, 2:324.15–18.

32 Owens 2009, 60–1.

33 See 2.2.1g, 2.3.

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let pass. This substance was the *nafas*. As a complete set, the terms can be exemplified as follows:

(2) Components of Sībawayhi's voicing metaphor

al-nafas	*yushbiʿ*	*al-iʿtimād*
DEF-breath	fills up	DEF-articulation
Substance	fills	container

2.2 How Are *Nafas*, *Ṣawt* Used in Sībawayhi's Phonetics?

As interpreted in Heselwood et al. it would appear that *nafas* and *ṣawt* are categories of comparable functional weight. They write, "It is notable that in the Greek and in the Arab accounts the material of speech is seen as comprising two separable components, breath and sound."[34] From the analogous Greek perspective "breath" and "sound" may be equally endowed acoustic components (a matter requiring greater attention). From the Arabic perspective *ṣawt* and *nafas* are clearly of unequal status. As a look through the citations in Troupeau shows, *ṣawt* is a basic and multifaceted category whereas *nafas* is hardly found outside the brief discussion of voicing cited above.[35] It is therefore relevant to look in greater detail at the functional breadth of these terms, particularly *ṣawt*, as well as to adduce further terminology Sībawayhi uses to describe phonetic phenomena relevant to the current issue.

2.2.1 *Ṣawt*

a. II 168.9 *Ṣawt* = phoneme: a *hamza* can be maintained, without doubling it (doubling the *ṣawt*)
b. II 110.17 *Ṣawt* = sound, the long vowels (*ḥurūf al-madd*) are phonemes with lengthened sounds (also II 325.13)
c. II 303.12 *Ṣawt* = phonetic property of a sound. In pausal position, *thamma-h#* 'there is' may be followed by an [h] (which allows the –a to be preserved) in the same way *ayna-h#* may be followed by an [h] because the /n/ (e.g. of *aynahu*) is the closest (type) of sound to it (*hiya* [i.e. /m/] *ashbah al-ḥurūf bihā fī al-ṣawt*). In II 464.8 *ṣawt* is used in a similar sense: /n/ can assimilate to

34 Heselwood et al. 2014, 199.
35 Troupeau 1976.

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/m/ because the two sounds are comprised of the same component (*ṣawtu-humā wāḥid*).

d. II 309.3 *Ṣawt* = auditory signal. One of the realizations of a final –*u* in pausal position is lip rounding (termed *ishmām*) which is manifested only as a visual gesture, "not as a sound to the ear" (*laysa bi-ṣawt li-al-udhn*). A similar meaning is found in II 314.9 where the contrast resides between final Ø and a sound (which in this case is [aa]).
e. II 310.11 *Ṣawt* = release: speaking of pausal forms in –*u*, "if you say *ḥidhq* 'skill,' you can't pause except with a small sound (*ṣuwayt*) because of the strength of the phoneme (*ḥarf*), and some Arabs have a stronger sound (at pause)."
f. II 454.6/11/12/13/15/16/19 *Ṣawt* = sound, metonym for "airstream as modified by vocal tract configuration." *Ṣawt* here describes how modifications to the airstream produce the various manner of articulation contrasts. For a *shadīd* 'stop' sound like /q/, /k/ and /ğ/, the sound is completely prevented from moving (*yamnaʿu al-ṣawt an yajriya*), as opposed for example to the *rikhwa* 'fricative' in which you allow the airstream to move (*ajrayta fīhi al-ṣawt*). Nasals are considered stops (*shadīd*) but nonetheless they allow the airstream to move (*yajrī maʿahu al-ṣawt*) through the nasal cavity. The semivowels /w/ and /y/ have a more broadened vocal tract for the airstream (*yattasiʿu li-hawāʾ al-ṣawt*) than other phonemes. II 455.7-9 describing the articulation of emphatic sounds has a similar nuanced sense, and probably II 468.21 and II 477.19 as well.
g. II 310.13/17 *ṣawt al-ṣadr* = 'voiced sound' (?), lit. 'chest sound.' An intriguing usage concerns the following set of sounds termed *mushraba* and a sub-set of these are termed *qalqala*:

(2) *Mushraba* and *qalqala* sub-class of *mushraba*
qalqala: q, ğ, ṭ, d, b
mushraba only: l, n, m, ʿ, ġ, ʾ, r, z, ẓ, đ, ḍ

It is striking that these constitute the set of voiced consonants[36] (Sībawayhi does not call them this, i.e. "*majhūra*," in this chapter), minus /y/, /w/ and /aa/,

36 Following Cantineau (1960, 21–22), Fleisch (1961, 219–223) and al-Nassir (1993, 14, 37), I think there is little evidence that Sībawayhi's class of *majhūr* can be considered anything but as a class of voiced consonants. Some scholars (Odisho 2010, Heselwood and Maghrabi 2013) would see in the term the contrast between tense (*mahmūs*) vs. lax (*majhūr*) or aspirated vs. unaspirated. This argument is advanced to accommodate the presumed fact that Sībawayhi's inclusion of *ṭāʾ* and *qāf* among the *majhūr* needs explaining. It doesn't. It needs explaining only if one aprioristically assumes that today's widespread values of /ṭ/ and /q/ for these two sounds reflect the

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which Sībawayhi explicitly excludes from the phonology of the *mushraba*. Sībawayhi identifies a sub-set of the *mushraba*, /z, ẓ, đ, ḍ/ which are characterized by what can probably be interpreted as a voiceless, pausal release, as will be discussed in 2.2.3 below.[37] The important observation here is that these sounds are opposed to the voiceless, explicitly cited as *mahmūsa*, because the latter are released (inherently) with breathing (*tanaffus*), not with voice (*ṣawt al-ṣadr*, repeated for the second time). Sībawayhi uses *tanaffus*, a form V verbal noun cognate with *nafas*, though it should be noted, here is the only token of this term in the *Kitāb*.

This passage is interesting in bringing a cognate of *nafas* into contrast with a usage of *ṣawt*. Note, however, that the contrast is with *ṣawt al-ṣadr*, i.e. a particular type of *ṣawt*, so it is not at all the case that *ṣawt* stands opposed even to a cognate of *nafas* here. Moreover, in one other passage Sībawayhi reckons the *alif*, /aa/, which is classified among his *majhūr*, 'voiced' sounds, to be a type of *nafas*, breathing (*bi-manzilat al-nafas*).[38] The *alif*, /aa/, being voiced, it is clear that Sībawayhi sees no inherent connection between breath in the sense of *nafas* and a voiceless sound.

All in all a detailed examination of the usages of *ṣawt* recalls the contextually sensitive ambiguity of other of Sībawayhi's key terms. An *ism* can be a generic category 'nominal,' or it can mean 'common noun' vs. *ṣifa/naʿt* 'adjective.' I have identified in the past three distinct, contextually defined senses of *ḥarf* for

pronunciation used as a model by Sībawayhi. The issue requires an article or chapter in and of itself, but two basic facts stand out. First, there is nothing in Sībawayhi's phonetic descriptions which suggests that *ṭāʾ* and *qāf* are somehow a different type of *majhūr* than, say, *dāl* is. To the contrary, Sībawayhi explicitly states, for instance, that "were it not for emphasis, the /ṭ/ would become a /d/" (Sībawayhi 1970, 2:455.9). Secondly, there is multiple phonological evidence in Sībawayhi that these two sounds pattern with other voiced sounds, including the set of *mushraba* sounds alluded to in section 2.2.1, e, g, 2 (also note 37).

37 Druel (2015, 21) states that the release after the *mushraba* sounds was to preserve the voicing of the final consonant. Sībawayhi does not explicitly say this; I think it more likely that Sībawayhi was dealing with a general pre-pausal devoicing. Specifically, Sībawayhi says that the *mushraba* divide into three classes, the *qalqala* characterized by a small release, the four fricatives marked by a puff of air (*nafkha*), and the rest, which have no noticeable release.

In any case, Druel provides an insightful account of how later grammarians and Quranic readers either did, or failed to come to terms with Sībawayhi's class of *qalqala*. Misinterpretations arose from such diverse mistakes as a failure to understand the phonetics, to orthographic misreading. It is noteworthy that Druel recognizes that Sībawayhi's class of *qalqala* makes phonological sense only if the /q/ and /ṭ/ are voiced.

38 Sībawayhi 1970, 2:394.13.

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morphology and syntax alone.[39] What emerges from this brief survey is that *ṣawt* does not generally stand opposed to *nafas*, that *ṣawt* is a far more versatile and central term than *nafas*, and that *ṣawt* can be contextualized as 'voiced sound,' but only in the collocation *ṣawt al-ṣadr*, not when *ṣawt* is used as a self-standing noun or attribute.

2.2.2 *Nafas*

A key term in Heselwood et al.'s argumentation is *nafas* 'breath,' since it is a part of the explanation of the articulation of voiced and voiceless sounds. *Nafas*, however, hardly plays a role in Sībawayhi's phonetics, beyond the topic of voicing, so an independent assessment of its functionality as a technical term is impossible. By the same token, the lack of profile in Sībawayhi speaks against an important breath vs. sound dichotomy as in the Greek tradition.

2.2.3 *Nafkha* 'Breath, Unvoiced Release'

The term *nafkha* 'breath' plays an important role in one phonetic topic, namely that associated with the explanation of the *mushraba* and *qalqala* sounds. In pausal position, after four *mushraba* sounds /z, ẓ, đ, ḍ/, an audible release can occur which sounds like a puff of breath (*nafkha*).[40] This release can be stronger or weaker among different Arabs.[41] On the other hand, in some of the *mushraba* sounds such as /l, m, ɣ, ʕ, ʔ/ no such release is (physically?) possible. This term probably indicates a pre-pausal devoicing of a final voiced obstruent, such as is attested in many Arabic dialects.[42] What is intriguing here is that Sībawayhi's operative term for final devoicing, *nafkh*, is explicitly said to sound like breathing, *nafas*.[43] Heselwood et al. describe *nafas* as 'oral release.' In the context of the current paper, it is equally

39 Owens 1990, appendix 245–248.
40 Sībawayhi 1970, 2:310–312.
41 One might also consider the idea that *nafkha* represents glottalization, a pausal realization which often accompanies final devoicing in contemporary dialects.
42 Here as in other issues (see discussion of palatalization of /k/ in Owens 2013a), Sībawayhi appears to have introduced a term ad hoc to the specific phenomenon under discussion, rather than to have developed the general idea of devoicing of a final obstruent. One aspect of Sībawayhi's phonetics and (morpho)phonology, excellent though it is, is that he never conventionalized the useful idea of allophonic variation. For the Arabic dialects, see e.g. Watson 1993, 10; Werbeck 2001, 36.
43 Sībawayhi 1970, 2:310.18–19.

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relevant that the product of final consonantal release is not described as *nafas*, even if, apparently, it describes a perceptually similar phenomenon.

2.3 *Wa* 'While' or 'And'

Good linguistic translations reflect a translator's theoretical bias. As seen in Q4 above, Heselwood et al. translate the '*wa*' which neutrally means 'and' (*ḥarf al-ʿaṭf/nasaq* in traditional grammar, a coordinating particle) as 'while.' *Wa* is indeed a multifunctional discourse particle whose translation from one context to another might be 'and,' 'so,' 'therefore,' 'while' and any number of further possibilities. Context and individual interpretation "determines" the meaning. In this case, whether one chooses 'and' or 'while' has significant theoretical implications. 'And' describes a succession of events: *nafas* (or *ṣawt*) flows, it is stopped at the point of articulation by the saturation of the *iʿtimād*, and when the articulation is released, the air continues to flow. The sequence is as follows.

(3) The sequential model (Sībawayhi)
Voiced sound:
flow stop flow = *nafas* Ø *nafas*
Voiceless sound:
flow flow flow

In this interpretation, argued for in the current paper, there is no overarching theory of sound composition in Sībawayhi, such that both *nafas* and *ṣawt* stand as independent components of a sound. There is one airstream, and this either flows continuously, as with the voiceless sounds, or is blocked in a particular articulatory configuration, as with the voiced sound.

'While,' on the other hand, reflects the interpretation of Heselwood et al. that in Sībawayhian phonetics, as in the Greek, voiced sounds consist of two components, breath (*nafas*) and sound (*ṣawt*). In this model, while the breath is stopped in the voiced sounds, the sound, *ṣawt*, is still active.

(4) The Greek simultaneous model
Voicing
breath (*nafas*) Ø breath
sound (*ṣawt*) sound sound

In the voiceless sounds, both breath and sound flow together simultaneously.

Voiceless
nafas *nafas* *nafas*
ṣawt *ṣawt* *ṣawt*

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From the Arabic alone both translations are possible, though I believe the one in Q 1 is the more intuitive to a contemporary speaker of Arabic at least. Note that al-Nassir uses such a translation, i.e. *wa* = 'and.'[44]

Three arguments can be adduced supporting the translation 'and,' two relating to the *majhūr* and one to the *mahmūs*. First, from an internal Arabic perspective, in the characterization of the *majhūr* there is no intimation of two components, *nafas* and *ṣawt*. As elaborated upon in section 2.2.1, *ṣawt* is multivalued to the point of being vague. A translation which sees the breath (*nafas*) being released and the sound (*ṣawt*) continuing simply says that the airstream[45] continues its normal course. *Ṣawt* here can simply be taken as another of its contextually-defined values, namely as a synonym for *nafas*. Secondly, it was shown in 2.1.2 that for the *majhūr* Sībawayhi postulated a complete blockage in the vocal tract. There is no intimation that a second component (*ṣawt* in Heselwood et al.'s reading) is somehow exempted from this blockage.

From a text-internal reading, in the parallel explanation of the voiceless sound, Sībawayhi writes not of two components, but rather one, namely *nafas*. There is no hint in the *mahmūs* characterization that two independent components, breath and sound, are in play, as the Greek model demands.

Finally, anticipating the argument in the next section, Sībawayhi was essentially an articulatory phonetician. Articulatory phonetics favors a linear interpretation as in (3) rather than a simultaneous model as in (4). I turn to this point now.

2.4 Acoustic vs. Articulatory Parameters

An interesting aspect of Heselwood et al.'s discussion concerns the interpretation of the Greek contrast between aspirated and non-aspirated sounds. They observe that in the *De Audibilibus* the contrast between the two types of sounds has an acoustic basis. The *De Audibilibus* speaks of "regular" blows of the air and when "…there is not one blow of the air all at once, but when it strikes often and a little at a time."[46] As noted in section 1, very plausibly, the authors interpret this contrast to mean that the author of the *De Audibilibus* understood the non-aspirated sound to be periodic, in contemporary parlance, producing a regular wave form, vs. the aperiodic aspirated sound.

44 Al-Nassir 1993, 35, Q 3.

45 See 2.2.1f.

46 Heselwood et al. 2014, 202.

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(4) above models an acoustic interpretation of sound. An acoustic account, by the nature of acoustics itself, accommodates different aspects of a sound which run in parallel. A /z/, for instance, is a voiced sound with regular (periodic) vocal cord vibration reflected in concentrations of energy up to 400 Hz., and it simultaneously has concentrations of energy at frequencies between 4–5,000 Hz. /Ž/ also has regular vocal cord vibration, along with concentrations of energy at a lower 2000 Hz. This fits the *Greek* conception of sound production as summarized by Heselwood et al. very well.

In their further discussion it is made clear that the Greek tradition was acoustically orientated. There is a close connection between music and sound, between the acoustic attributes of a sound and its aesthetic and moral evaluation, and between acoustic properties and what is rational and predictable like a periodic wave form.[47] The *De Audibilibus* speaks of a sound in a wide range of mediums, in timber, pottery, in musical horns, in an oboe (or flute), in the windpipe.[48] Human sound is but one part of this complex.

An acoustic model of speech complements, but does not explain, Sībawayhian articulatory phonetics. The phonetic genius of Sībawayhi was that of an articulatory phonetician describing sound production in humans. What happens to the air stream is of paramount importance. Sībawayhi's observations in this regard were precise, acute, brilliant. II 309, noted above (2.2.1d), can perhaps be taken as prototypical of his interest. Sībawayhi observes that one realization of a final *–u* is in fact not a sound at all but rather a gesture of the lips which is visible, but does not produce a sound. How sounds are produced and articulated, or in this case, not produced, is his interest. It is in this context, I think, that one can understand Sībawayhi's failure to come to terms with the articulation of voicing. Clearly Sībawayhi had no access to the glottis. He could not observe how vibration there produced voiced sounds, lack of vibration, an open glottis, voiceless. The closest he came to ascertaining a relation is perhaps in the idea of *ṣawt al-ṣadr*,[49] but *ṣadr* simply means 'breast, chest,' and is far too vague a designation to entertain the idea that he had a precise idea of the voicing mechanism.

The idea that Sībawayhi thought in articulatory, not acoustic terms, may further help us understand his conception of voicing, as summarized in 2.1.2 above.[50] As suggested there, the description of voicing involves a hindrance at some point in the vocal tract, this hindrance being either filled up with breath

47 Heselwood et al. 2014, 204–205.
48 Aristotle, (Pseudo-) 1936, 57, 63, 65, 67, 77.
49 See 2.2.1g above.
50 It also dovetails with the observation that Sībawayhi never dealt systematically with suprasegmental stress, tone, pitch or intonation, all of which assume some sort of basis in acoustics.

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producing a voiced sound, or not filled up, producing a voiceless one. This has as its metaphorical basis the same idea of a sound (*ṣawt*) moving through and being acted upon by different vocal tract configurations as does his account of manner of articulation. It is for this reason that we find Sībawayhi recycling descriptive phrases for both. These include the following.

(5) Corresponding phrasing between *mahmūs/majhūr* and other articulatory parameters
   a. *Yamnaʿu al-ṣawt/-nafas an yajriya*; 'it prevents the *ṣawt/nafas* from flowing' (*shadīd/majhūr*, stop/voiced, used for both stop/voiced sound).
   b. *Mawḍiʿ*; point of constriction (e.g. both for /l/ and the *iʿtimād* of both *mahmūs* and *majhūr*).
   c. Nasal articulation: shown procedurally for both *majhūr* and for nasal sounds by pinching the nose shut while articulating the sound.[51]

The arguments in favour of (5) have already been presented, though can be brought together in one place here. First, as argued currently, Sībawayhi was an articulatory phonetician. While there is a degree of articulatory overlap in the production of all sounds, articulatory phonetics is broadly a sequential representation of sounds. Indeed, in the one significant instance of co-articulation, i.e. where a sequential treatment is impossible, namely emphasis, Sībawayhi does develop a separate description with a specialized term, *iṭbāq*. Otherwise he is concerned to describe sounds in linear order, corresponding to their expression in time (e.g. his detailed treatment of pre-pausal variants).[52] All in all, these considerations speak for (3), and against (4) as a model for understanding Sībawayhi's voicing model. Secondly, as argued in 2.1.2, Sībawayhi interpreted the voicing mechanism as a type of oral (or nasal) tract constriction, articulated with (voiced) or without (voiceless) the added quality of capturing or allowing breath to freely flow.

In passing it can be noted that the evidence presented here speaks against the suggestion in Heselwood and Maghrabi that Sībawayhi's description may imply "valving actions in the larynx," i.e. that what Sībawayhi describes as an *iʿtimād* might refer to vocal cord vibration (the equivalent of constriction).[53] No evidence from Sībawayhi himself speaks in favour of this, while the indices developed here point to Sībawayhi looking for parallels between voicing and manner of articulation in the supra-glottal vocal tract.

51 See 2.2.1f.

52 See 2.2.1g and 2.3.

53 Heselwood and Maghrabi 2013, 225, also against al-Nassir 1993, 36.

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2.5 *Pil*- and *Das*- Do Not Correspond to Voiced and Voiceless Consonants in Arabic

One aspect of Heselwood et al.'s argument is the correspondence between the Arabic terms *majhūr* and *mahmūs* with the Greek *pil*- and *das*-.[54] What can be extracted from the detailed and elucidating discussion of these terms in their paper is that caution needs to be exercised as to the precise nature of any terminological correspondences.

In the *De Audibilibus* Classical Greek stop consonants are classified into two values, unaspirated stops (*p, t, k*) and voiced stops (*b, d, g*) vs. aspirated stops (*das*-, p^h, t^h, k^h).[55] The Arabic *majhūr* vs. *mahmūs* contrast, however, is based on voicing. All that can be said here is that the Ancient Greek and the Arabic have two basic classes based on phonetic type. Heselwood et al. might want to replace Arabic "voicing" with "amount of breath"[56] or some other parameter, but this is an argument which needs to be developed in detail and independently of the very brief claims made in their article.[57] Moreover, various issues remain outstanding, for instance how the Arabic grammarians extracted from the Greek classification categories comprising members that have only partially overlapping phonetic values in the Arabic or why if *nafkha* is used for 'voiceless release,' *nafkha* does not appear in place of *nafas* in the description of voiceless sounds, or alternatively, why *nafas* isn't used for 'voiceless release.'[58]

3 Cultural Associations

One aspect of the voiced-voiceless distinction in the Greek tradition is the association of aspirated and non-aspirated sounds with aesthetic and moral properties, as mentioned briefly in section 1 above. To develop a further parallel with the Arabic tradition Heselwood et al. point out that in Khalīl's *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, according to tradition the first Arabic dictionary, the idea of {hms} is imbued with negative qualities. They suggest that this parallels the negative qualities associated with aspirated sounds. *Hams* is associated with secrecy. They suggest that for Khalīl, "…the property of *hams* confers a lack of clarity on a sound and shrouds it

54 See (1) above.
55 Heselwood et al. 2014, 205.
56 Heselwood et al. 2013, 224.
57 See notes 36, 37.
58 See 2.2.3.

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in secrecy the way persons acting suspiciously would wish to conceal the sounds of their voices and footsteps."[59]

I would raise two problems in the invocation of Khalīl to these topics. First a general point about the major sources for our understanding Arabic grammar. It is almost trivial to observe that without Sībawayhi there would be no understanding of Classical Arabic as we know it today. Grammar starts with Sībawayhi, and as Versteegh has remarked, not infrequently ends with him as well. This is abundantly clear in our understanding of phonetics and phonology. All detail derives from Sībawayhi. The role of Khalīl in influencing Sībawayhi remains an outstanding question. Against Heselwood et al., [60] the fact that Khalīl is regarded as Sībawayhi's teacher says absolutely nothing about where linguistic terminology originated, from Khalīl , from Sībawayhi, from an unknown third party. The one scholar who dealt in detail with Sībawayhi's antecedents, Talmon (1997, 2003) never reached a definitive answer to the question, how much of the *Kitāb* was Sībawayhi's and how much was Sībawayhi using ideas already developed elsewhere. Moreover, Versteegh's work on linguistic thinking in the early, pre- or co-Sībawayhian exegetical literature reveals a rather impoverished linguistic terminology which does little to explain Sībawayhi's sophisticated grammatical thinking.[61] In their paper, Heselwood et al. rely on Khalīl as much as on Sībawayhi. However, expecting to be able to derive a theory of phonetics and phonology from the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* is akin to using a large contemporary dictionary of English to deduce what modern phonetics and phonology is.[62]

The second critical point concerns how one should understand the dictionary entry for *hams* and *jahr*, the two designations for voiceless and voiced. On the face of things there is no issue here. *Hams* means 'inaudible,' *jahr* 'loud, clear.' Acoustically, voiced sounds *are* in fact inherently louder than voiceless ones, being more sonorant, having greater resonance. So one can see here a "successful" and direct metaphor behind the technical terminology. In the much later *Lisān al-ʿArab* (13th century), Ibn Manẓūr's basic definition of *hams* is simply 'what is hidden as far as sound, walking or food goes.'[63] From his discussion of the entry one could deduce that there is nothing inherently negative about the word. A nickname for a lion, for instance is *hamūs* (something like, 'the silent one').

In passing it should be noted that Sībawayhi's invocation of acoustic terms, loudness/softness to describe voicing is only an apparent anomaly to his otherwise

59 Heselwood et al. 2014, 197.
60 Heselwood et al. 2014, 212.
61 Versteegh 1993.
62 See Talmon 1997, 283–287 for a brief attempt at reconciling the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* with the *Kitāb*.
63 Ibn Manẓūr 1984, 6:4699.

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articulatorily-based phonetics. As seen in 2.1.2.2, when he actually gives his own physical interpretation of voicing, he uses an articulatory term, *iʿtimād*.

Heselwood et al. attempt to color the Arabic semantics of *hams* and *jahr* with a Greek brush. As noted above, the Greeks drew a consistent relation between negative qualities and aspirated sounds. "Like Al-Ḫalīl, the Greeks not only regarded breath in speech as a cause of unclarity, but had very negative attitudes towards it."[64] From a reading of the Khalīl's *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, however, it is hard to discern any deep-seated distrust of what is inaudible. The short entry for *hams*[65] begins with *hams* as a phonetic term, moves on to *hams* in the sense of inaudible, esp. of footsteps, and then gives one report about the Prophet (*ruwiya ʿan al-nabī*) which appears to link *hams* with the devil's whispering. This very linkage is cited on at least six different occasions throughout the article by the authors, as if repeating the same assertion gives it greater weight. It is, after all, the only evidence they present linking a negative aesthetic and moral disposition towards the idea of *hams* in the Arabic tradition. Finally the entry cites the one Quranic verse where *hams*[66] occurs, *fa-lā tasmaʿu illā hamsan* "so you will not hear except a whisper [of footsteps],"[67] which simply illustrates the second meaning in the entry.

What is evident in the attempt to find a larger cultural narrative for the *hams/jahr* distinction is the same precedence to the Greek source: first define the issue from the perspective of Ancient Greek, then find evidence in the Arabic sources, without establishing that the Arabic reproduces the systematicity found in the Greek approach.

4 An Initial Critical Summary

Heselwood et al. was strongly based on original Greek sources and looked at the Arabic only in passing.[68] In particular, the crucial figure of Sībawayhi with his variegated and detailed discussion of phonetics and phonology is largely ignored, except for his brief characterization of the voiced–voiceless distinction. This article takes the issue from the reverse perspective, namely, to what extent does the work of Sībawayhi correspond to the categories of voicing as described

64 Heselwood et al. 2014, 207.
65 Khalīl 1988, 4:10.
66 In the Leeds online Quranic dictionary, *hams* is simply glossed as 'a faint sound.'
67 Quran 20:108.
68 Heselwood et al. 2014.

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in the *De Audibilibus*. At the end of their article Heselwood et al. present a list of eight correspondences (identities or similarities) which they say are common to the Greek and Arabic traditions.[69] I won't look at all of these, but except for one point, which will be taken up in the next section, the list presents items which are simply wrong, which are rather trivial, or which require a great deal more discussion and critical thought than a simple claim that the state of affairs, as stated, is true. I will exemplify one point from each here.

Not correct: "the view that sound on its own is clear." This was well exemplified for the Greek tradition. It is impossible even to apply in the case of Arabic since there is no well-profiled concept of 'sound,' and so no contrast between sound and breath.[70] As discussed in section 2.2.1 the presumed Arabic term, *ṣawt* "sound," is a multi-functional, context dependent term which can be imbued with a number of distinctive phonological and phonetic nuances.

Requires more discussion: "The binary division of speech sounds despite both Ancient Greek and Classical Arabic having triadic obstruent systems–aspirated–voiced–voiceless in Greek, aspirated–voiced–emphatic in Arabic." It is difficult to discern what is being argued here. The triad "aspirated–voiced–voiceless" is phonetically and phonologically of a different order from "aspirated–voiced–emphatic" (if indeed one should even accept the first term, aspirated, as the most appropriate). All that this says is that there are three major phonetic/phonological classes of sounds in Arabic. How one categorizes these is a matter of phonological debate. Sībawayhi's classification is simple, clear and phonologically defensible (if he needs to be defended). All consonantal sounds are voiced or voiceless, while four sounds /ṣ, ṭ, ḍ, ẓ)/ have the secondary articulatory characteristic which defines emphatic consonants. In his conception, emphasis cross-cuts the voiced–voiceless contrast. Most contemporary treatments of Arabic look at emphasis in this way.

Trivial: "The association of breath with moral culpability." Again, this is nicely exemplified for Greek. The association is completely lacking in Sībawayhi. Little can be concluded from one citation of Khalīl's *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*.

5 Reconstruction and the *Voie Diffuse*

What lies behind the voiced/voiceless, *majhūr*/*mahmūs* distinction in Arabic phonology is an issue of lasting interest, and any suggestions as to its nature

69 Heselwood et al. 2014, 209.

70 See 2.3.

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or origin are welcome. The possibility of a Greek background to any scientific terminology and usage in Arabic-Islamic culture is a constant. Heselwood et al. have uncovered an interesting similarity between the descriptive phonetics of Arabic *majhūr*/*mahmūs* and the Greek *pil-*/*das-*, namely "the view that speech sounds comprise either sound alone (*pil-* and *majhūr*) or sound plus breath (*das-* and *mahmūs*)."[71] I will rephrase this presently. One other similarity needs to be emphasized, and that is that neither the Greek nor Arabic traditions described the mechanism of voicing (vibration or lack thereof of vocal cords).

When one looks in detail at the Arabic, i.e. Sībawayhi's treatment of voicing, a number of differences emerge. It is relevant to list the main ones.

De Audibilibus	Sībawayhi
acoustic characterization of voicing	articulatory characterization
	conceptually, voicing described in terms also found in other articulatory parameters (place, manner)
breath and sound two well profiled components	no clear opposition between breath vs. sound
	breath (*nafas*) as component invoked only once in *al-Kitāb*

I think there are two ways to answer the question whether there is any sort of historical link between the Greek and Arabic conceptions of voicing. On the one hand, it is clear that if there is a link, it must be of a very indirect kind. There are vast conceptual differences between Sībawayhi's articulatory approach to phonetics and the acoustic approach of the *De Audibilibus*, differences which I think rule out the postulation of a direct transmission of any kind. I think if one were predisposed not to see a Greek influence on Arabic grammatical thinking, as with Carter[72] and post 1980-Versteegh, as well as much of the work on the grammatical tradition from around 1980–2000, from the survey conducted here one could argue in this vein.

On the other hand, there is one strong argument in favour of a connection, namely the involvement of breath, *nafas*, in defining the difference between the voiced and voiceless consonants. The crucial factor is the Arabic. Given the general usage of *ṣawt*, there appears to be no reason why Sībawayhi needed to use the idea of *nafas* 'breath' at all. No one would notice if he had written in a

71 Heselwood et al. 2014, 209.

72 See e.g. Carter 1972.

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hypothetical Q1... *wa-manaʿa* ***al-ṣawt*** *an yajriya* for instance. Precisely this phrase is used elsewhere,[73] for instance describing manner of articulation, it having been shown above that Sībawayhi's characterization of manner uses many of the same descriptors as does his characterization of voicing.[74] Furthermore, it is only here that *nafas* plays a role. Otherwise it is not a part of his phonetic vocabulary. For Sībawayhi, it is a theoretical isolate.

6 An Historical Analogy: Bahrain, Oman, Uzbekistan, the Eastern Dialect of Nigerian Arabic

Not playing a role in his phonetics, not even decisively contributing to a description of the voicing phenomenon it is used in, a legitimate question is why *nafas* is there at all. One possible answer uses an analogy from comparative historical linguistics. An important element showing long-term, and often unexpected cognation is the idea of relic forms. These are forms which unexpectedly (by some understanding of that term) appear in different varieties/languages/dialects and whose similarity will lead one to postulate a common origin. I discussed one case relating to a morpheme *–n* (or *–in* or *–an*).[75] In Arabic I call it the intrusive *–n* because it intrudes quite unobtrusively and with complete regularity in a very small number of varieties only before an object suffix and only suffixed to an active participle. Thus, given an AP *kātib* + object pronoun like *–ha* 'it.F,' automatically an *–n* must be inserted between AP and pronoun, hence *kātb-**in**-ha* 'he written it.F.' In those dialects where it occurs, lack of *–n* produces an ungrammatical result. I list the main dialects where this occurs, these forming the basis of a classic reconstruction carried out below:[76] Bahrain, Oman, Uzbekistan, the eastern dialect of Nigerian Arabic. In addition, it can be noted, the same suffix is reported before an object suffix after imperfect verbs in Oman and the Tihama (Saudi Arabia, Yemen), though thorough studies are lacking.

It has to be emphasized that there is nothing demanding an intrusive *–n* in these forms. The vast majority of Arabic dialects representing probably 97% of all speakers do not use this intrusive *–n* at all. *Kātib-ha* is the corresponding form.

73 Sībawayhi 1970, 2:454.6.

74 See 5 above.

75 Owens 2013b.

76 Along the lines advocated in Owens 2009.

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It just happens that it is necessary in these dialects. There are two explanations for why it should be distributed as it is. Either the form developed independently in two or more dialects, or it developed once and spread. There is no automatic answer to this question. However, a key point is that the form really has no raison d'etre. *-n* has no independent meaning, other than to signal "suffixed object on AP." That a meaningless morpheme should develop independently in Uzbekistan, Bahrain and Nigeria is vanishingly unlikely. What one can dub a principle of unexpectedness excludes independent development in these cases: the more unexpected an event, the less likely multiple occurrence will be due to independent development. Knowing that Arabic did indeed spread out of the Middle East, the plausibility of a common origin is rendered all the more likely. This *–n* is a classic relic, a form probably once more widespread in a population, and now only surviving in isolated groups.

This story goes further, into Aramaic and Ethiopic, leading to an ever larger group of unexpected occurrences of the intrusive *–n*, though the point will be clear from the partial example of Arabic. This same principle of unexpectedness applies to the appearance of the term *nafas* as an element in the Arabic description of voicing. *Nafas* does not have a distribution outside of the voicing discussion – it is a conceptual island as it were – so it cannot be explained as a natural development from other conceptual building blocks in Sībawayhi's thinking. Its function of accounting for the contrast between voiced and voiceless sounds parallels the function/description of breath in the account of aspiration. In both the Greek and Arabic accounts it is part of a *deus ex machina* apparatus that "explains" the occurrence of a class of voiced and voiceless or non-aspirated and aspirated sounds, without actually describing the underlying mechanism causing the existence of the two classes. Having identified these parallels, the next question one asks (as indeed Heselwood et al. appropriately do), is it likely that the Greek and Arabic scholars would have arrived at such close parallels entirely independent of one another. My own feeling is no, though as noted above, there is room for argument.

Though the current discussion is essentially limited to the phenomenon of voicing, it will be clear that a complex of elements are implicated in understanding the matter, both in the Ancient Greek and in the Arabic traditions. The implicit approach of Heselwood et al. is that transmission occurred from an Ancient Greek phonetics to an Arabic that kept large parts of the Greek system in tact. The principle of unexpectedness would contradict a wholesale loan of the Greek system to the Arabic, however. It cautions against Heselwood et al.'s attempt to draw historical relations between the pairs:

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majhūr derives from *pil-*
mahmūs derives from *das-*

As the discussion above will have made clear, there is little of "unexpectedness" here. The basic meanings of the forms do not match, the phonetics which each describes do not match completely, the phonological equivalences do not match, there are competing Arabic terms for the component 'breath' which need to be accounted for. Moreover, even if there is a relation it will be hard to disentangle from a universalist factor:[77] Arabic phonetics lends itself to recognizing a binary voiced/voiceless dichotomy.[78]

What therefore is suggested is that the idea of "breath" as a descriptor in Sībawayhi's concept of voicing was somehow transmitted from the Ancient Greek to the Arabic grammatical thinking. As with so many Arabic grammatical terms, it can only be inferred that it was transmitted. To return to the analogy with relics in historical linguistics, I think the analogy is useful in another way. Relics are embedded in systems which in their entirety can be quite dissimilar to one another. Uzbekistan Arabic has undergone such co-territorial influence from surrounding Dari (Persian) and Turkish (Uzbek) that it borders on a structurally mixed language.[79] If one compared Uzbekistan Arabic with Nigerian Arabic one would be as struck by the differences as by the similarities. This only makes the relic –*n* shared by both varieties all the more striking. And similarly with the Greek and Arabic approaches to phonetics. As described in 2.4, the very phonetic basis of Sībawayhian phonetics differs from that of the *De Audibilibus* as an articulatory vs. an acoustic phonetics. They are, as it were, two dialectological approaches to interpreting phonetics. In the context of these differences, the isolated factor of breath being stopped in a voiced sound, shared between the *De Audibilibus* and Sībawayhi becomes all the more striking and difficult to interpret except as a transmission of some sort.

Whatever the transmission was, it falls under what is known as the *voie diffuse*. This recognizes the fact that certain ideas, teaching material, pedagogical organization and curricula were present throughout the Hellenic Middle East at the time of the Arabic-Islamic expansion. However, we either will never have direct access to this material, or even if, will not be able to ascertain directly how such ideas and institutions interacted with the emerging Arabic-Islamic culture. All we can do is look at a known input, and a known output, and infer that the one led in some way to the other. The inference implies reconstruction, as described

77 Versteegh 1980, 337.
78 See note 36.
79 Owens 2001.

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in this section. Versteegh nicely summed up the challenge involved, "In trying to sketch the process of borrowing, we must keep in mind that it was often not a question of taking over entire systems, ready-made, but of piecemeal assimilation, often consisting of no more than bits of knowledge."[80]

This very aptly describes the issue at hand. It is individual parts, not complete systems one needs to consider, anomalies in the Arabic grammatical thinking, arbitrary associations which do not appear to follow from "*qiyās*," terminology not replicated elsewhere in the system. Versteegh moreover gives a number of convincing examples based on the idea of unexpectedness. For instance, to exemplify the grammatical class 'noun' (*ism*) Sībawayhi uses three examples, *rajul*, *faras*, *ḥāʾiṭ* 'man, horse, wall.' Versteegh points out that in Greek and Latin pedagogical grammars, two standard exemplars of nouns are 'man' and 'horse,' two examples known to have derived from the Stoic tradition.[81]

From this perspective I do think a contrastive examination of the *De Audibilibus* might uncover further unexpected parallels. Consider, for instance, the following passage.

> Q 6. When the lungs and windpipe are full of moisture, the breath is dispersed and does not pass out continuously, because it sticks and becomes thick and moist and difficult to move, as happens in the case of catarrh and in drunkenness. If the breath be absolutely dry, the voice becomes rather hard and dispersed; for moisture, when it is slight, holds the air together and causes, as it were, a unity in the voice.[82]

Strictly speaking, Sībawayhi has nothing similar to this passage. Yet it contains two elements of Sībawayhi's description which merit closer attention. One is the suggestion that breath can be hindered in the windpipe, which obviously recalls Sībawayhi's idea that the *iʿtimād*, one of the elements of the voicing metaphor,[83] is a simple obstruction. Secondly, there is an association between fullness, moisture and blockage, in the Greek model, by implication, between moisture and lack of aspiration. This association in turn recalls two of the predicates in Sībawayhi associated with voicing, saturation, *mushraba* 'saturated,'[84] and fullness *ashbaʿa* 'fill up.'[85]

To point out these correspondences is one matter. Whether it will be possible to show in a convincing manner that Sībawayhi was *in some way* influenced

80 Versteegh 1980, 340.
81 Versteegh 1977, 40.
82 Loveday and Forster 1984, 1230.
83 See 2.
84 See 2.2.1g.
85 See 2.1.2.2.

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by classical Greek thought in his own conceptualization of these phenomena remains a question to be answered. One is putting together an intellectual, diachronic jigsaw puzzle, with perhaps 90% of the pieces missing.

A basic methodological correlate of examining the *voie diffuse* is clearly a detailed and broad overview of both the input, and the output ideas. Both ends need to make sense against the proposed transmission.[86] Heselwood et al. fulfill the first condition nicely, but in failing to examine the Arabic output closely, actually weaken the case for contact. This is unfortunate, because much speaks for some sort of transmission. A methodological implication of the current paper is that arguing for contact along the *voie diffuse* requires higher standards of argumentation than for the *voie directe* (or *voie érudite*), because evidence for it will by definition be indexical. Just as questions of language change and contact require painstaking attention to individual elements in dialects and languages, so too does the transmission of ideas. The reward is a better understanding of how ideas in general get transmitted and develop, and specifically, what antecedents contributed to the intellectual history of the Middle East.

86 Concretely, the history of western Oriental studies has seen a tendency to privilege the Greek input, seen to a degree in Heselwood et al. This led to a backlash of sorts (e.g. Carter 1972), which downplayed the Greek influence.

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Nadja Germann and Noel A. Rivera Calero

The Causes of Grammar: Ibn Jinnī on the Nature of Language

Introduction

In an article on "The Place of al-Jāḥiẓ in the Arabic Philological Tradition," Ramzi Baalbaki draws attention to an intriguing remark made by Ibn Jinnī (d. 1002) in his *Khaṣāʾiṣ* concerning a mistake his famous predecessor had made on an issue related to syntax.[1] Baalbaki's purpose in citing Ibn Jinnī is to adduce an example of the severe criticism Jāḥiẓ (d. 868) regularly attracted from grammarians for his alleged or actual shortcomings in *naḥw*. For the purposes of this paper, centered on Ibn Jinnī rather than on Jāḥiẓ, this remark is highly instructive, on account of two features which Baalbaki himself already mentions in his summary of the relevant passage. The first is the respectful – or, as Baalbaki has it, apologetical – manner in which Ibn Jinnī refers to Jāḥiẓ, an impression which is, in fact, strongly supported by the specific wording Ibn Jinnī chooses.[2] In contrast to Baalbaki, however, we do not believe that this is merely "apparent courtesy."[3] For us, this passage instead reveals the high esteem in which Ibn Jinnī held his predecessor and his embarrassment about having to join the choir of his critics.

This leads us to the second notable aspect of Ibn Jinnī's remark: he feels compelled to correct Jāḥiẓ due to the significance of the latter's attack on the grammarians, as becomes clear in the chapter in which Ibn Jinnī makes his comment. This chapter is a "refutation of those (*man*) who believe that the grammatical causes (*ʿilal*) are corrupt."[4] Now, for Ibn Jinnī, claiming that the grammatical theory of causes is inherently flawed is a major issue, in no way comparable to the everyday quibbles among philologists about the correct *iʿrāb*. It aims directly

1 Baalbaki 2009, 97–98. We would like to thank Mostafa Najafi for his careful reading of and inspiring comments on an earlier version of this paper.

2 Thus, after having reported Jāḥiẓ's remarks on the grammatical point under discussion, Ibn Jinnī introduces his critique with the words: "May God have mercy upon Abū ʿUthmān [al-Jāḥiẓ], for had he known that (…)" ("*Wa-raḥima Allāh Abā ʿUthmān, ammā innahu law ʿalima anna* (…)," Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:185.16.

3 Baalbaki 2009, 97.

4 Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:184.9, the title of the chapter: "*Bāb fī al-radd ʿalā man iʿtaqada fasād ʿilal al-naḥwiyyīn*"; the continuation of the title (l. 10) is quite instructive ("[…] *li-ḍaʿfihi huwa fī nafsihi ʿan iḥkām al-ʿilla*"), as it explicitly reproaches the anonymous "*man*," i.e., most probably, Jāḥiẓ, of failing himself to master these "causes."

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at the core of his own project and thus represents a vital threat to his very conception of grammar. According to Ibn Jinnī, not only does grammar constitute a complex system, that is, an integral whole – most of his colleagues would agree on this point – but it does so as the result of underlying causes – or rather, ultimately, as the result of a particular, unifying cause: the nature of language itself. It is this deep conviction – the driving force behind his *Khaṣāʾiṣ* – which compels Ibn Jinnī to oppose the claim made by Jāḥiẓ in the above-mentioned passage, but which in its specific guise simultaneously sets him apart from most *naḥwiyyūn* of his time. This particular unity underlying the wide range of grammatical features will be at the center of this paper, whose principal aim consists in bringing out Ibn Jinnī's basic ideas about the phenomenon called language.

1 The Causes of Grammar

Ibn Jinnī was by no means the first to think and write about the causes (*ʿilal*) of grammar. From the available sources, it appears that Ibn al-Sarrāj (d. 928) takes pride of place in this regard, even though there may have been more scholars engaged in the discussion, at least so far as we can tell from indirect evidence.[5] Ibn al-Sarrāj distinguishes two levels of *ʿilal*; first, the basic rules or principles (*uṣūl*) of grammar – e.g., that the direct object (the *mafʿūl bihi*) takes the accusative (*naṣb*); and second, the reasons for these basic rules or, as Ibn al-Sarrāj puts it, "the cause of the cause" (*ʿillat al-ʿilla*) – in this case, for instance, the fact that the direct object is governed by a verb or what resembles a verb.[6] Ibn Jinnī, nearly half a century later, would criticize Ibn al-Sarrāj for this concept, due to the threat of an infinite regress that it entails,[7] but, in fact, Zajjājī (d. ca. 949), a former pupil of Ibn al-Sarrāj, had already done so, albeit not explicitly. Instead, Zajjājī wrote an entire book dedicated to the *Explanation of Linguistic Causes* (*al-Īḍāḥ fī ʿIlal al-Naḥw*), to date one of the most well-known treatises on *taʿlīl* in the Arabic philological tradition.[8]

5 For example, Versteegh refers to Quṭrub (d. 821), Māzinī (d. 862), and Ibn Kaysān (d. 912 or 932). However, while their books evoke the notion of *ʿilla* in their titles, they "may have been dedicated partly to different topics" (Versteegh 1995, 20, note 4). Suleiman 1999, 44, adds Lughda al-Aṣbahānī to Versteegh's list.

6 See, for instance, Ibn al-Sarrāj 1996, 1:35.

7 See, for example, Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:173–174, a chapter explicitly dedicated to the problem of *ʿilla* and *ʿillat al-ʿilla*.

8 For a short introduction, translation, and commentary of the *Īḍāḥ*, see Versteegh 1995. For a succinct study, see also Versteegh 1997, 48–56 (=Chapter 5, on Zajjājī's theory of linguistic

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In contrast to his teacher, he discriminates three levels of causes. While the first two levels correspond to Ibn al-Sarrāj's *uṣūl* and *ʿillat al-ʿilla*, insofar as they strictly concern intra-grammatical explanations,[9] the third one is of particular interest to our topic. It is a justification of the grammatical system and, hence, of the two preceding levels of causes, that occasionally even appeals to extra-linguistic factors. An example of what Zajjājī has in mind with this third level of causes, which he dubs "dialectic and speculative causes" (*ʿilal jadaliyya wa-naẓariyya*), is his discussion of the "reason for the heaviness of the verb and the lightness of the noun"[10] in chapter 19 of the *Īḍāḥ*:

> The Baṣrans say: 'The verb is heavier than the noun, because nouns are more original and more declinable than verbs, since some nouns can do without a verb when combined with other nouns, e.g., *Allāh rabbunā* "God is our Lord," (...). The verb, on the other hand, cannot do without the noun and does not occur except together with it.' Some of them express this more clearly by saying: 'The heaviness of the verbs and the lightness of the nouns should be understood in the following way. When a noun is pronounced, it signifies an underlying referent, e.g., *rağul* "man," *faras* "horse." The hearer does not have to think long about it. But when a verb is pronounced, the hearer inevitably has to think about its agent, because a verb cannot be separated from its agent and cannot exist without an agent.'[11]

From a modern point of view, one might be astonished to hear Zajjājī speak, not in his own voice, but instead by quoting opinions of his predecessors, whether of whole schools, like "the Baṣrans"[12] here in this citation, or individual scholars. His achievement is not, certainly, to have produced numerous explanations on his own; rather, it consists in his attempt to address grammatical issues from

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explanation). The *Īḍāḥ* is edited as Zajjājī 1959. On the *ʿilal* tradition (in distinction to the *uṣūl* tradition), see Bohas, Guillaume, and Kouloughli 2006, 8–14. The most detailed study is still Suleiman 1999, 43–63 (=Chapter 3, on Zajjājī).

9 The first level of causes, the *ʿilal taʿlīmiyya* ("pedagogical causes") can in fact be compared to Ibn al-Sarrāj's *uṣūl*, whereas the second level differs. For Zajjājī, second-level causes are not explanations of the basic grammatical rules, but of analogies between different grammatical features. For instance, they elucidate why a noun (*ism*) following the particle *inna* ("verily, indeed") takes the accusative, just as the direct object related to a verb (*fiʿl*) does. Unsurprisingly, Zajjājī calls these second-level causes the "analogous causes" (*ʿilal qiyāsiyya*).

10 "Heaviness" and "lightness" are categories frequently applied to phonology and phonetics and, thus, to consonants, vowels, and glides. For their application to syntactic issues, see Versteegh 1995, 179–180, note 1.

11 Zajjājī 1959, 100; translation: Versteegh 1995, 177, slightly modified.

12 "The Baṣrans" are allegedly one of the two first schools of grammar in the Islamic world, their rivals being "the Kūfans." On the beginnings of Arabic grammar or linguistics, see Versteegh 1997, 36–51 (=Chapter 3); also Versteegh 1987, particularly 156–162 (on "Die Periode der zwei Schulen" and "Die Bagdader Periode"). Note that in what follows we will use the terms "grammar," "philology," and "linguistics" as well as their derivatives interchangeably.

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the perspective of their underlying reasons and to elaborate positions concerning these reasons, which are scattered throughout the philological literature. For our purposes, the second part of the quotation is particularly instructive, since, in contrast to the evolving standards in the field of grammar, it does not limit itself to purely formal – i.e., morphological and syntactic – considerations, but has recourse to, first, the semantic dimension of language and, second, the intellectual effort involved in decoding language. Accordingly, nouns have a single referent which is, thus, easy to grasp. Verbs, however, are more demanding. Beyond the activity signified by a verb, this latter necessarily co-implies an agent. Yet, this agent is not indicated by the verb itself, such that the listener must undertake additional (mental) steps to find out about her or him.[13]

Regardless of whether this and similar explanations come across as somewhat *ad hoc*, they reflect an undeniable desire to anchor grammatical features in the givens of language. In this regard, Zajjājī's three levels of causes clearly transcend Ibn al-Sarrāj's distinction between *uṣūl* and *ʿillat al-ʿilla*, even though Yasir Suleiman rightly deplores the fact that, due to "the lack of any attempt in the *ʾĪḍāḥ* to classify the various kinds of *ʿilla* it contains in terms of the tripartite typology,"[14] it is sometimes difficult to keep them apart. Nonetheless, with respect to the epistemological status that Zajjājī himself ascribes to the causes – and it appears that he has all three levels in mind here – the following, somewhat longer quotation is remarkable. It is taken from a passage at the end of chapter 5 of the *Īḍāḥ*, dedicated to the "theory of linguistic causes." There, Zajjājī presents a simile which Khalīl ibn Aḥmad (d. 791), the forefather of *naḥw*,[15] is reported to have offered in reply to the question of whether the causes he suggests as grammatical explanations derive from the Arabs or are his own inventions.

> [Khalīl's] answer was: 'The [ancient] Arabs spoke according to their instinct and nature and they knew the structure of their speech. In their minds there was a solid knowledge of its causes, even though these were not transmitted from them. I explain by means of what

13 It should be emphasized that, while treatises dedicated to this kind of questions were to remain marginal within the discipline of grammar (*naḥw*) itself, they had a significant impact on the development of scientific fields such as rhetoric (*balāgha*) and legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). A decisive step forward into this direction constitutes the focal figure of this paper, Ibn Jinnī, as we will see below.

14 Suleiman 1999, 57. What is notable about Zajjājī's third level of causes is the fact that it (at least, in part) transcends merely intra-linguistic explanations of grammatical features. In a way, it can be depicted as a meta-level, founding grammar rules in "objective" linguistic facts. See, for instance, Versteegh 1995, 90–91, note 1; 1997, especially 71–74. We will further explore this dimension in the following paragraphs.

15 On Khalīl see, for instance, chapter 2 in Versteegh 1997.

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> *I* consider to be the cause in a given case (…). You could compare my situation to that of a wise man who enters a masterfully constructed house with a marvelous arrangement and parts, being convinced of the wisdom of its builder by reliable information or evident proof and manifest arguments. Whenever this man hits upon something in the house, he says: "He did this in this manner according to such-and-such a cause or reason" which occurs to him and comes to his mind as a permissible explanation. It is possible that the wise builder of the house acted, indeed, according to the cause mentioned by the man who entered the house, but it is equally well possible that he acted according to some other cause.'[16]

The first issue to attract our attention is the supposed linguistic instinct of the Arabs and their perfect, natural mastery of the Arabic language and its grammar. We will return to this recurring motif which, in this quotation, is adduced to justify the need grammarians have to search for the *ʿilal*: The Arabs simply have not transmitted the causes on the basis of which they structure their speech. This, in turn, means that, just as the famous Khalīl, Zajjājī and his colleagues depend on a specific method in order to uncover these causes, to wit, deducing them from the available linguistic data. By means of an analogy, the linguistic data is compared to a house, which is to say, not merely to a heap of bricks and timber – raw materials of some sort – but rather to a higher-order unit arranged and given proportion in a particular manner. And just as architecture rests on certain principles, language does too, as this parable implies, and these principles can be seized and captured in the form of grammatical rules. On the one hand, the simile strongly reminds us of classical arguments from design,[17] applied in this case to the nature of language; on the other hand, however, it displays Zajjājī's epistemological prudence. The causes deduced empirically – that is to say, inductively – from linguistic phenomena are, at best, probable and at worst fanciful conjectures, but can never be known with certainty. A "wise man" will undoubtedly arrive at explanations closer to probability than to mere fantasy, but, as Zajjājī has us understand, it may so happen that he is actually wrong and that there is "another cause."[18]

16 Zajjājī 1959, 65–66; translation: Versteegh 1995, 89, modified.

17 What we have in mind here are, particularly, teleological proofs of God's existence developed in the Ancient Greek and early *kalām* traditions, and beyond. For a succinct study of "Arguments from Design," see Davidson 1987, 213–236 (=Chapter VII).

18 Note that, in contrast to Suleiman 1999, particularly 56–57, our focus is not on the ontological entailments or presuppositions of the various types of *ʿilal*, but instead on the epistemological level, i.e., the degree of certainty with which the *ʿilal* can be known. Thus, while we agree with Suleiman that Zajjājī can be described as a realist with essentialist leanings, we would like to add that, in terms of epistemology, he seems to be quite familiar and in agreement with the *falāsifa* of his time, according to whom inductive knowledge does not lead to certain but only to probable (or even epistemically weaker kinds of) knowledge.

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Ibn Jinnī takes the notion of *ʿilla* one step further. Almost the entire first volume of the modern edition of his *Khaṣāʾiṣ* is centered on a discussion of the causes.[19] In a way that is comparable in many respects to the approach of Zajjājī, he distinguishes between intra-linguistic and meta-causes. However, it is odd to see that he neither refers to his predecessor nor takes the pains to discriminate between these two, systematically quite distinct, genres of causes on the level of terminology;[20] he calls them both "*ʿilal*." While the first kind corresponds to Ibn al-Sarrāj's two levels of causes, the second type may be portrayed as their metaphysical foundation, as we will argue. Accordingly, they even transcend Ibn al-Sarrāj's *ʿillat al-ʿilla*, just as Zajjājī's third level of causes does (at least, in part).[21] Their status and function can be most clearly discerned at the beginning of the discussion in chapter 7, where Ibn Jinnī addresses the problem of whether the "causes of the grammarians" are closer to the "causes of the theologians" or to those of the jurists. His answer is as simple as it is straightforward: they are closer to the causes of the theologians,[22] which for us raises the question of why this is so, leading us to Ibn Jinnī's thoughts about the nature of grammatical reasoning as located somewhere in between theological and legal reasoning as the two extremes of one and the same epistemological scale.

As Yasir Suleiman has already underscored, according to Ibn Jinnī there is a significant distinction between theological and legal *ʿilal*: while theological reasoning is firmly based on sense perception, legal reasoning is not, but instead relies on signs (*aʿlām*) and symbols (*amārāt*).[23] Ibn Jinnī does not further

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19 The most meticulous analysis is still Suleiman 1999, 64–108 (=Chapter 4, on Ibn Jinnī).

20 Ibn Jinnī's silence vis-à-vis Zajjājī has already been noticed in previous research. As Suleiman 1999, 105, note 5, underscores, the "only explicit reference to Zajjājī in *Khaṣāʾiṣ* occurs in volume 2 on page 384." By contrast, Ibn Jinnī explicitly mentions Ibn al-Sarrāj to reject the latter's *ʿillat al-ʿilla*, mentioned above, at the beginning of the present section.

21 See note 14 above. This is in contrast to Suleiman 1999, 72, who believes that Ibn Jinnī's rejection of Ibn al-Sarrāj's *ʿillat al-ʿilla* "would also extend to the last two *ʿilla*s in Zajjājī's tripartite classification." Our interpretation is closer to Versteegh 1995, 90, note 1, who holds that Ibn Jinnī's "criticism does not apply to az-Zağğāğī's distinction of three levels" which "cover all types of argumentation." Cf. more specifically again Versteegh 1997, 70: "Az-Zağğāğī's innovation is that he prevents the chain of causation to go on *ad infinitum* by setting up a third level of argumentation, on which the causes that are adduced by linguists to explain the rules of grammar are explained in their turn by extra-linguistic arguments."

22 See the first sentence of the chapter which immediately replies to this question, Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:48.2–3: "Know that the causes of the grammarians (...) are closer to the causes of the theologians than they are to the causes of the jurists" ("*Iʿlam anna ʿilal al-naḥwiyyīn* [...] *aqrab ilā ʿilal al-mutakallimīn, minhā ilā ʿilal al-mutafaqqihīn*").

23 Suleiman 1999, 66. The corresponding passage in Ibn Jinnī is Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:48.3–5.

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elaborate on this distinction. However, from the intellectual context, as well as his subsequent remarks on grammatical *ʿilal*, it is sufficiently clear what he has in mind. The distinction is situated on the level of epistemology. Sense perception (*ḥiss*), on the one hand, is considered to be *ḍarūrī* in the twofold sense of the word: it is both immediate, i.e., it is at hand, and necessary, i.e., it cannot be otherwise. Therefore, whatever is entailed by sense perception (e.g., the existence and states of affairs of the things perceived), follows by necessity.[24] Signs and symbols, by contrast, lack this immediacy and, along with it, necessity. They adumbrate and point at things only indirectly and, as such, require interpretation. Moreover, unlike the things themselves, i.e., the objects of sense perception, signs and symbols do not exist as such, but are produced by someone who coins or uses them for a certain purpose. Meanwhile, even if the meaning of the particular signs and symbols is perfectly clear, the reasons lying behind them – i.e., why their creator instituted these signs in particular and not others – remain obscure.[25] Consequently, according to Ibn Jinnī, theologians can argue based on ostensible or self-evident facts, whereas jurists cannot; likewise, theologians can set up logically necessary arguments, while jurists cannot. The legal practice of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*), in other words, will never reach the level of objective truth, but always contains traces of personal opinion (*raʾy*) and, therefore, leaves room for epistemic doubt.[26]

In this regard, grammar is, as Ibn Jinnī maintains, better off, for it is grounded in sense perception (*ḥiss*), just like theology, and operates on the

24 Lying behind these considerations is a certain epistemology defended in Muʿtazilī circles (in contrast to other *kalām* schools). Accordingly, some things or facts can be known necessarily, either intuitively or by means of reason, without divine revelation. In general, physical entities accessible by way of sense perception and a number of *a priori* premises like the law of non-contradiction are acknowledged as such *ḍarūrī* givens. On the different kinds of knowledge discussed in classical *kalām* and, most significantly, the distinction between necessary and acquired knowledge, see van Ess 1966, 95–163, especially 113–128; on the inceptive period van Ess 1991–1997, 3:380–382 (centered on Naẓẓām, with further references).

25 The examples that Ibn Jinnī offers of such arbitrary signs concern specifics of the daily prayer: the number of prayers, the ritual cleansing, the number of prostrations, Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:48.6–10, i.e., legal specifications. In other words, while it is *ḍarūrī* (and an ethico-metaphysical given), as we will see, to praise the benefactor (God), the precise manner – the "signs" instituted to do so – are legal prescriptions that could be otherwise. There is no way for human beings to know why God demands five prayers a day and not three or eight.

26 This concern about certainty (*yaqīn*), a Quranic term, and the worry about epistemic doubt (*shakk*) strongly reminds us of the vivid interest in epistemological issues observable in *falsafa*. See, for instance, Fārābī who dedicated an entire treatise to the conditions of *yaqīn*, a topic to which he returned repeatedly throughout his œuvre; the relevant treatise is Fārābī 2012.

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basis of the heaviness or lightness of the issue at hand: "[The grammarians] rely on sense perception and argue, on account of their soul, by appealing to the heaviness or lightness of the issue."[27] As such, this claim is in no way novel for specialists in the field of classical Arabic grammar. In relation to the aims of this paper, however, it is noteworthy, in particular due to the principle of heaviness and lightness adduced here, a principle which turns out to be a chief pillar of Ibn Jinnī's argumentation. In what manner, in his view, does this principle have to do with sense perception as the foundation of immediate, necessary, and, hence, certain knowledge that he considers to be so characteristic of theological reasoning?

The notion of heaviness and lightness in language is not an invention of Ibn Jinnī, as we have seen.[28] Already Sībawayhi drew on it, followed by the entire philological tradition.[29] As indicated before, it was in fact applied to various fields such as phonology and syntax – an example of this latter usage being Zajjājī's quotation above, which depends on the presumed heaviness of the verb (*fiʿl*) and lightness of the noun (*ism*). In the present context, Ibn Jinnī makes use of a morphosyntactic example borrowed from Zajjāj (d. 923), another teacher of Zajjājī.[30] The grammatical rule under consideration in this example – that the subject (*fāʿil*) of a sentence takes the nominative (*rafʿ*), and the direct object (*mafʿūl bihi*) the accusative (*naṣb*) – can be explained by the first-order *ʿilla* that case markers are means to bring out different functions of syntactic elements and, thus, avoid ambiguity. In Arabic the case marker of the nominative is the short vowel *-u* (*ḍamma*), that of the accusative the *-a* (*fatḥa*). Now, the choice of these vowels, which is to say, the phonetic representation of the syntactic features is, Ibn Jinnī believes, by no means random – rather, it adheres to the principle of heaviness and lightness.

27 Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:48.3–4: "*Wa-dhālika annahum innamā yuḥīlūna ʿalā al-ḥiss, wa-yaḥtajjūna fīhi bi-thiql al-ḥāl aw khiffatihā ʿalā al-nafs.*" We will come back to the peculiar meaning of "on account of their soul" (*ʿalā al-nafs*) in this quotation.

28 See above with note 10 (in connection with Zajjājī).

29 For Sībawayhi see, for example, Sībawayhi 1966, 1:20.16–17: "*Iʿlam anna baʿḍ al-kalām athqal min baʿḍ, fa-al-afʿāl athqal min al-asmāʾ, li-anna al-asmāʾ hiya al-ūlā.*" For instances of the subsequent linguistic tradition (references, beyond "the Baṣrans" and some "others," to the Kūfans Kisāʾī [d. 805], Farrāʾ [d. 822], Hishām [d. 824], and Thaʿlab [d. 904]), see Zajjājī 1959, 100–101; translation: Versteegh 1995, 177–178; the issue at hand is the heaviness of the verb and the lightness of the noun.

30 Zajjāj was Zajjājī's most important teacher and namesake, see Versteegh 1995, 12, note 28. Ibn Jinnī (1952–1956, 1:49.1), simply refers to Abū Isḥāq who, however, is identified with Zajjāj by the editor (Ibn Jinnī (1952–1956, 1:49.1, note 1).

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This principle, as Ibn Jinnī sees it, can be summarized as the systematic attempt to avoid heaviness and achieve lightness in language. In our last example, this tendency becomes apparent from the consideration of the fact that, in general, a given sentence contains several direct objects, but no more than one subject. Hence, in order to avoid heaviness, the element that occurs more often is marked by the "light" -*a*, while, conversely, the least frequent element is marked by the "heavy" -*u*.[31] By virtue of this and a small number of further meta-*ʿilal,* Ibn Jinnī seeks to explain the basic phonetic, morphological, and syntactic features of language, features which, in turn, are captured by means of grammatical rules, i.e., first-order *ʿilal* or Ibn al-Sarrāj's two kinds of causes. As our example evinces, Ibn Jinnī's meta-*ʿilal* are consistently of a particular kind: they appeal to – assumed or actual – properties of language as a physical phenomenon. In this case, the -*a* is supposed to be lighter (in and of itself), produced more easily (by a speaker), and perceived as lighter and, therefore, more pleasant (by a listener). In other words, the heaviness and lightness of linguistic features, according to Ibn Jinnī, are objective, physical facts that can be accessed by everyone by way of sense perception (*ḥiss*). It is for this reason that he sees himself as being in a position to claim that grammatical *ʿilal* – as far as the most fundamental features of language, which form the backbone of grammar, are concerned – are ultimately based on and derived from sense perception.[32]

Moreover, Ibn Jinnī is convinced that, ontologically speaking, heaviness and lightness in language are not merely facts like the color, size, and shape of an individual physical object, e.g., a clownfish. For even though these properties are *ḍarūrī,* inasmuch as they are perceptible (*ḥissī*), and whenever one sees a clownfish one immediately and necessarily perceives its particular combination of color, size, and shape, as they occur on the specific object one observes, these properties are ontologically contingent, a fact that is corroborated by the variety, in terms of color, size, and shape, of existing clownfishes. The principle of heaviness and lightness, by contrast, has a different ontological and, consequently, epistemological status.

31 In the Arabic philological tradition, the various constitutive elements of language (consonants, glides, and vowels) are ranked on a scale ranging from "heavy" to "light," see Bohas 1981, particularly 207.

32 Note that the emphasis here is on "*most fundamental* features of language." According to Ibn Jinnī, language and, consequently, grammar additionally have various non-fundamental features whose causes, hence, do not share the same necessity. It is for this reason that the study of grammar, even though it is closer to theology than to law on Ibn Jinnī's account, does not fully attain theology's epistemological level. For a discussion of these less-than-certain *ʿilal*, see Rivera Calero forthcoming, particularly chapter 5, section "Causes of the Grammarians."

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According to Ibn Jinnī, it is as fundamental and obvious as the moral duty to be grateful to the benefactor and obedient to God:

> In terms of its necessity and obviousness, this is like thanking the benefactor and blaming the evildoer in its general acceptance and absence of disagreement, and like the necessity to obey the Eternal – may He be praised.[33]

This is a bold claim. Both gratitude to the benefactor and obedience to God are well-known religio-ethical norms which, as the Muʿtazila agree, are self-evident.[34] They are ingrained in every human being's soul,[35] regardless of whether or not they are Muslims. In other words, just as everyone, provided they actually follow their "natural" bearings, feels obliged to thank the benefactor and submit to God's commands, everyone who is of sane mind, *compos mentis*, "naturally" perceives and shuns heaviness in language and aspires lightness instead, according to Ibn Jinnī.[36]

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33 Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:49.5–7: "*Fa-jarā dhālika fī wujūbihi, wa-wuḍūḥ amrihi, majrā shukr al-munʿim fī inṭiwāʾ al-anfus ʿalayhi wa-zawāl ikhtilāfihā fīhi, wa-majrā wujūb ṭāʿat al-qadīm subḥānahu.*"

34 For this notion in general and a succinct analysis of the obligation to thank the benefactor in particular, see Reinhart 1995, 107–123 (=Chapter 6); see also Izutsu 2002, 200–202. Epistemologically, for Ibn Jinnī this ethical law, in turn, is on a par with certain metaphysical presuppositions like the law of non-contradiction, as becomes clear from a passage later in the *Khaṣāʾiṣ*. There he returns to the fact that many grammatical causes lack the necessity of the theological ones (n. 32), whereas the *ʿilal al-mutakallimīn* (1:145.7–8) "(…) cannot be otherwise (*lā qudra ʿalā ghayrihā*); don't you see that the coincidence of black and white in one place is impossible, and not [just] detestable, and that a body cannot simultaneously move and be at rest?" For a similar list of supposedly self-evident first axioms, see Zajjājī 1959, 42; translation: Versteegh 1995, 23 (slightly modified; Arabic terms added): "There are things that are known intuitively (*bi-badīhat al-ʿaql*), without proof (*burhān*) or argument (*dalīl*). (…) We know, for instance, intuitively (*badīhatan*) and without argument (*dalīl*) that it is impossible for a body to be simultaneously at rest and moving, (…) just as we know that it is impossible for a body to be in two places in the same manner and at the same time."

35 This is the link we were still missing in note 27, where Ibn Jinnī, in underscoring that the grammarians rely on sense perception, referred to their souls as the arbiters of the heaviness or lightness of the perceived matter.

36 The expression "*compos mentis*" is borrowed from Reinhart 1995. In order to be an individuum perfectly responsible for one's own acts or intentions – to count among the addressees of the divine law – one must, first and foremost, be fully capable of understanding. It is this theologically and legally charged notion, flavored with a specific Muʿtazilī connotation (namely, the assumption that certain axioms are known *a priori*, i.e., independent of God's revelation, as adumbrated above, note 24) to which Ibn Jinnī appeals here as he advances his theory according to which certain grammatical causes are rooted in the human soul in the same manner as ethico-religious obligations and logico-metaphysical principles.

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We are now in a position to better appreciate Ibn Jinnī's rejection of Jāḥiẓ in the chapter dealing with "those who believe that the grammatical causes are corrupt."[37] For Ibn Jinnī, the most fundamental elements and rules of grammar – of the first-order *ʿilal* – are as coherently structured and necessary as the objects and laws of nature (i.e., of the cosmos) studied by the theologians. In fact, this small set of meta-causes are the joists of a perfect whole, constructed like the superbly designed house evoked in the simile which Zajjājī borrowed from Khalīl. However, there is a decisive difference between Zajjājī's notion of grammar and Ibn Jinnī's. Whereas Zajjājī cites (approvingly, we must assume) Khalīl's concluding remark, according to which the deductive reconstructions of the laws determining the "architectural whole" of grammar might be replaceable by other explanations and, consequently, are at best probable, epistemologically speaking, Ibn Jinnī does not agree: on his account, there are a certain number of rules of grammar[38] that are neither replaceable nor epistemologically weak, since they are founded in self-evident meta-*ʿilal* – first and foremost, the law of heaviness and lightness, the grammatical counterpart to the ethical principle of gratitude to the benefactor and the metaphysical law of non-contradiction.

Therefore, even though the rules of grammar can be deduced only indirectly, through analysis of linguistic data, the Arabic language itself – the empirical material of the grammarians – is governed by principles such as the law of heaviness and lightness. And since these laws are simultaneously rooted in the soul – the locus of cognition – of every *compos mentis*, they are known immediately and can be applied with necessity when deriving grammatical rules from the data.[39] The basic setup of language, as we can now conclude, for Ibn Jinnī constitutes a sphere almost on a par with (theological) ethics and metaphysics. It is, among other things, governed by first, self-evident principles that explain why certain (namely, the most fundamental) grammatical rules cannot be otherwise and, *pace* Jāḥiẓ, are far from being "corrupt" – precisely like the fundamental ethical and metaphysical principles applied in theology. In other words, the basic laws of

37 See our introduction above; the relevant reference is in note 4.

38 See note 32.

39 Ibn Jinnī is well aware that not all the grammarians are equally competent and reliable; according to him, there are "skillful and exact" but also "dull and weak ones" (Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:48.2–3). Nevertheless, he is convinced that the linguists, as such, are guided more or less directly by God himself ("[...] *anna Allāh* [...] *qad hadāhum* [sc. *al-naḥwiyyīn*] *li-hādhā al-ʿilm al-karīm*," Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:190.5–6). While he does not go into further detail, from our analysis so far it is clear that the essential meta-causes of grammar, like the principle of lightness versus heaviness, are embedded in the soul of every *compos mentis* (see the notion of *ʿalā al-nafs* note 27 above) and, thus, serve as their "natural" bearing or guidance. For further shades of this concept, see our discussion of the role of intuition in the subsequent section of this paper.

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grammar and even some of their specific realizations (think of the *ḍamma* for *rafʿ* versus the *fatḥa* for *naṣb*) are not arbitrary; rather, they are anchored in language and governed by self-evident first principles.

Ibn Jinnī's interest in the causes of grammar is, on its own, already exceptional among philologists, as noted above. However, he transcends his field even further: having identified, on the one hand, the nature of language itself and, on the other, humanity's cognitive constitution as the two principal "meta-causes" of grammar, he dedicates a substantial part of his *Khaṣāʾiṣ* to a detailed discussion of the essential features of language, as well as the predispositions of its original speakers. In view of the topic of our paper, this unique discussion – we know neither of any predecessors nor of any direct followers of his in the realm of linguistics – shall be at the center of the next section.

2 Language and Intuition

We have already mentioned that, in Ibn Jinnī's view, there is a deeper reason for the fundamental features of language, namely, the existence of a limited set of first principles – like the law of heaviness and lightness – which determine the basic setup of language (and, hence, of grammar). This observation, however, calls for an explanation: what kind of thing is language after all? And what is the status of these principles anyway: is language not an artifact, such that regardless of how well designed its principles are, at the end of the day they are merely human inventions and, therefore, by no means *ḍarūrī*, contrary to Ibn Jinnī's above-mentioned claims? One might wonder whether it was questions such as these which induced Ibn Jinnī to reflect upon the source of the seemingly carefully planned order underlying language (and, hence, grammar). At any rate, he is one of the few grammarians who explicitly addressed the question of the origin of language. He even dedicated a complete chapter to this issue,[40] a topic which had hitherto been discussed almost exclusively among theologians.[41] This chapter has already been the object of research,[42] so we can concentrate on those aspects that are relevant to us.

40 Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:40–48 (=Chapter 6).

41 For the vivid controversies about the origin of language among the theologians, see Loucel 1963–1964, who still offers the most detailed analysis of the debate. See also Weiss 1966.

42 In addition to Loucel and Weiss (see previous note), see Versteegh 1997, 101–114 (=Chapter 8, on "The origin of speech: Ibn Jinnī and the two alternatives"), and most recently Larcher 2020, with further bibliographical references.

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Ibn Jinnī's discussion circles around the issue that dominated the controversies of his time: the opposition between divine inspiration and human agreement as the possible efficient causes of language.[43] However, in contrast to Ibn Fāris (d. 1004), the only other grammarian of the formative period known to have discussed the genesis of language, Ibn Jinnī does not seem to be willing to take sides.[44] In the final section of the chapter on "whether the origin of language is divine inspiration (*ilhām*) or [human] convention (*iṣṭilāḥ*),"[45] after lengthy discussions of arguments in favor of and against both positions, he sheepishly abstains from judgment:

> Thus, I stand dejected between the two scales of the balance. I try to weigh them, but I turn away in defeat. If afterwards some bright idea occurs to me which may tip the scale in favour of one position or the other, I shall adopt it.[46]

This ending to the chapter is baffling. Why would Ibn Jinnī, after having filled several pages on the issue, leave the question open? Does he want to conceal his true position? In current research, he is associated with the Muʿtazila who maintained that language came about by human convention. In the age of Ibn Jinnī, however, the Muʿtazila were on the retreat due to the abuse of the school's doctrines during the *miḥna*.[47] By keeping the question in suspense, was he attempting to avoid being recognized as a Muʿtazilī? But then, why did he raise it in the first place? And why, after having done so, did he not simply follow the model of his colleague Ibn Fāris and defend the divine origin of language?

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43 In contrast to the Greek tradition, Muslim theologians were not so much concerned with the question of whether language came about by nature (*phúsei*) or by imposition (*thései*); instead, since the late 9th / early 10th century, the debate revolved around the quarrel of whether language resulted from divine institution (*tawqīf*, *ilhām*) or human convention (*iṣṭilāḥ*, *tawāḍuʿ*). While the Muʿtazila, following the lead of Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī (d. 933), usually insisted that language was the product of human agreement, their adversaries, particularly, the Ashʿarīs maintained that it was created by God (according to van Ess 1991–1997, 4:325, Ibn al-Rāwandī [fl. 9th century] had already defended this latter position, i.e. nearly a generation prior to Ashʿarī).

44 Ibn Fāris is confident that (the Arabic) language originated through divine revelation and is not the product of human convention, see Ibn Fāris 1964, 13: "I say: the language of the Arabs is [divine] institution" ("*Aqūl: inna lughat al-ʿarab tawqīf*"), which is the very first sentence of the "*Bāb al-qawl ʿalā lughat al-ʿarab a-tawqīf, am iṣṭilāḥ*" ("Chapter on whether the language of the Arabs is [divine] institution or [human] convention").

45 Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:40.10.

46 Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:47.14–16; translation: Versteegh 1997, 102, slightly modified.

47 The term "*miḥna*" "(together with its counterpart *imtiḥān*) signifies the procedure adopted by the caliph Maʾmūn, and officially applied under his two immediate successors, for the purpose of imposing the view that the Ḳurʾān had been created," Hinds 2012.

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In his analysis of this chapter, Kees Versteegh points to a diminishing interest in the topic among theologians, culminating in "more or less the orthodox point of view" represented by Ghazālī (d. 1111) who "stated that both positions were equally well possible from a rational point of view."[48] However, this was the situation a hundred years later. During Ibn Jinnī's lifetime the origin of language was still controversial in theology. Therefore, in his meek abstention from judgment, we believe that he actually does express a specific standpoint, a standpoint that will emerge more clearly once we additionally look into passages where he explicitly addresses and further details the Arabic language's (almost) perfect structure. In effect, as these passages will reveal, Ibn Jinnī seeks to square the circle: on the one hand, he aims to account for the fact, acknowledged by the philologists ever since Sībawayhi's *Kitāb*, that there are valid linguistic varieties, such as the dialects of certain Arab tribes,[49] which are the obvious result of human creative, linguistic activities. On the other hand, as results from the preceding section of our paper show, Ibn Jinnī needs to assert that language has an origin that is not arbitrary: the beautiful architecture of the Arabic language and, hence, of grammar, already admired by Khalīl, cannot be the result of mere chance, on his account. Therefore, regardless of his alleged Muʿtazilī leanings, a pure, undifferentiated conventionality thesis is not suitable for Ibn Jinnī's defense of the core claim that the nature of language is essentially comparable to that of ethics and metaphysics. Therefore, we argue, although this seems to be contradictory, at first glance, Ibn Jinnī in fact holds an intermediary position: for him, language is, in a way, both divine and the result of human convention. The key notion which allows him to couple these two positions is the idea of a natural instinct (*ṭabʿ*) or inborn intuition (*salīqa*) of the Arabs.[50]

48 Versteegh 1997, 112 (both quotations).

49 The notion of validity here refers to the idea defended from the outset by the Arabic philological tradition that certain linguistic testimonies are trustworthy and reliable as evidence for grammatical features or unusual vocabulary. The difficulty consisted in determining which testimonies possess(ed) this distinction. There was general agreement that the Quran and early, particularly pre-Islamic, poetry were beyond doubt and represented unadulterated Arabic. Moreover, scholars agreed that (even contemporary) Bedouins could serve as dependable sources due to their natural intuition (which will be discussed in what follows), provided their dwelling places were sufficiently far away from the cities with their linguistically heterogeneous populations and, hence, their susceptibility to solecisms and the intrusion of foreign words. An interesting discussion – one of the earliest extant – of the tribes that fulfil these criteria and, therefore, can serve as linguistic informants is Fārābī 1969, 146–147 (§§134–135). On this passage (as well as a second version thereof in Suyūṭī's *Muzhir*), see Larcher 2006.

50 In addition to *ṭabʿ* and *salīqa*, Ibn Jinnī uses a number of more or less synonymous expressions to convey this idea, for instance, *salīqiyya* and *najr*, as in Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:76.6.

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The conviction that the ancient Arabs and in "modern" times some rare Bedouins, who happen to still remain unaffected by foreign influences, possess a unique capacity to speak accurately and discern correct from flawed Arabic is a recurring motif, which can be traced to the earliest texts related to philology.[51] We already encountered this idea above, in the second quotation from Zajjājī's *Īḍāḥ*. Thus, in order to corroborate the occurrences and correctness of specific vocabulary items or to solve grammatical issues under debate, grammarians typically fell back on linguistic data collected from the Bedouins. Somewhat comparable to the methods applied in *ḥadīth*, they would refer to an ancient Arab acknowledged to be *faṣīḥ* (to speak the purest form of Arabic), who had pronounced a specific expression or phrase related to the problem at hand, while simultaneously displaying this Bedouin's solution. This solution would then serve as grammatical evidence, eventually tipping the scale in the direction of a particular usage. Due to their natural intuition (*salīqa*), all Arabs were, according to this idea, able to serve as linguistic authorities – at least in principle, for already before the age of Ibn Jinnī the philologists had to concede that not every Bedouin was equally reliable as a source of flawless Arabic (*faṣāḥa*). Owing to the impact of non-native speakers as well as common processes of language development, Arabic undeniably underwent gradual change, a change that was perceived and described as corruption and decay.[52]

A first piece of evidence in favor of our interpretation regarding Ibn Jinnī's intermediary position consists in the fact that in his chapter on the origin of language he explicitly falls back on the notion of *ilhām* and not *tawqīf* (as did Ibn Fāris, see above with note 44). For the distinction between *ilhām* and *tawqīf*, see van Ess 1991–1997, 4:322–326, here particularly 325: "Schon Kraus hat im wesentlichen klargestellt, wo der Unterschied zwischen den beiden Begriffen liegt: *tauqīf* ist '(übernatürliche) Belehrung,' *ilhām* dagegen 'Begabung.' *Tauqīf* heißt, daß der Prophet seinen Schülern jedes einzelne Wort beibringt; *ilhām*, daß ihnen die Sprachfähigkeit von Gott verliehen worden ist." It is in this latter sense, we believe, that Ibn Jinnī conceives of language as the simultaneous result of divine inspiration (*ilhām*, in the sense of "capacity lent to coin language") and convention (*iṣṭilāḥ*, in the sense of "application of this capacity"). Cf. also Ibn Jinnī's uncommon emphasis on the conventional nature of language. Regardless of the details of its origin, he seems to be convinced that convention (*muwāḍaʿa*) must be presupposed, since in one way or other the human being is always involved in the process of giving names to things, see particularly Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:45–46.

51 On the "Speech of the Bedouins," see Baalbaki 2014, 7–16 (with further bibliographical references). In what follows, we will utilize the terms "[ancient] Arabs" and "Bedouins" interchangeably. Where necessary, we will indicate whether we refer to the ancestors or their "modern" (in relation to Ibn Jinnī's era) descendants.

52 Baalbaki 2014, 1–6, shows that the rise of philology (meant here as embracing both branches, lexicography and linguistics or grammar) was not only due to the undeniable interest in understanding the Quran and its occasionally difficult language, but also to the spreading and fear of *laḥn* (grammatical mistakes) within the Islamic society.

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A major motive driving the Arabic philological tradition during its formative period was therefore the endeavor to prevent linguistic deterioration and to preserve their language in a state that was regarded as faultless.[53] For this reason, when grammarians set out to collect linguistic data and establish an Arabic corpus, the *lisān al-ʿarab*, they sought to make sure that their informants fulfilled certain criteria guaranteeing that their linguistic *salīqa* had not yet been obscured.[54] In his *Khaṣāʾiṣ* Ibn Jinnī makes extensive use of the linguistic corpus; apparently, he himself even consulted Bedouins whom he considered trustworthy informants and whose testimonies he used repeatedly.[55] However, compared to his predecessors and contemporaries, he further elaborates on the notion of the Arabs' *salīqa*. For Ibn Jinnī, inborn linguistic intuition not only assures that specific words, forms, or entire sentence structures can be deemed correct and, hence, used by everyone; but, in his view, this inborn instinct is also, and particularly, the *raison d'être* of the perfect setup of the Arabic language. For, as he believes, it is *by virtue* of this natural intuition that the Arabs molded and arranged their language. This is precisely what we meant by the "intermediary position" mentioned above: for Ibn Jinnī, the origin of language is divine, inasmuch as the Bedouins' *salīqa* is a divine gift; however, it exists, at the same time, as a result of human convention, insofar as the Arabs themselves, applying this endowment, devised their language:

> [The Arabs' awareness and acknowledgement of the causes of language] could have been due to a message they received or an awakening in which they were given insight into the specific wisdom (*wajh al-ḥikma*) behind [the causes of language]. However, if it was due to inspiration (*waḥyan*) or something similar to it, so much the better for the sharpness of the insight and the nobility of the awareness. For God – may He be praised – guided them to [the causes of language…] only because they are naturally fit (*fī ṭibāʿihim*) to accept them and to embrace the soundness (*ṣaḥḥa*) of the institution (*waḍʿ*) [of language…].[56]

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53 It appears that, for the classical philologists, Arabic has existed ever since its (divine or human) genesis in its most accomplished form, this assumed perfection often being considered a reason why God chose this language for his supposedly final revelation. For further details and an interesting (earlier) example of the promotion of this idea, see note 59 below and, particularly, our conclusions.

54 For a survey of these criteria – such as remoteness from urban centers, lack of grammatical training, illiteracy – see Baalbaki 2014, 7–16.

55 For a detailed analysis of Ibn Jinnī's take on the linguistic corpus and his view on the reliability of the Bedouins and their testimonies, see Rivera Calero forthcoming, chapter 4; on his personal informants, see Baalbaki 2014, 31, with references to the *Khaṣāʾiṣ* in note 151.

56 Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:238.15–239.2. Only a few lines later (Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:239.3–5) he adds: "This noble language would not have been given to them unless their souls (*nufūs*) were receptive to it and sensitive to the strength of its craft (*quwwat al-ṣanʿa*) and aware of the extent

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According to Ibn Jinnī, regardless of whether this can be called a revelation, it is clear that God is the one who guided the Bedouins and bestowed their specific nature on them. It is for this reason that they are aware of and able to apply universal principles, like the law of heaviness and lightness, not only insofar as they speak themselves and assess the prose or poetry of others, i.e., insofar as they make use of and deal with the already existing "product" language; but also insofar as they – or rather, their ancestors – first crafted it, acting, as it were, as "tools" of the divine creator.[57]

Focusing on this key notion, Ibn Jinnī develops a fully fledged linguistic theory that might be described as a theory of imitation. Accordingly, as the ancient Arabs shaped their language, driven by their inborn intuition, they sought to structure it in a manner that represents reality as accurately as possible. In what follows, we will examine his theory, which has hitherto escaped scholarly attention. However, already at this stage it may be worth mentioning that, while, to our knowledge, there is not a single linguist from the formative period who addressed similar questions, Ibn Jinnī – both in terms of his interests and the specific theory he developed – is strongly reminiscent of the *faylasūf* Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 950), who nearly half a century earlier had already advanced a strikingly similar linguistic theory.[58]

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of the blessing with which they were provided," which insinuates that it was not random for God to choose the Arabs and not any other nation for this specific gift: their souls were particularly receptive and sensitive to receiving the basic *ʿilal* (causes) and developing a superior kind of language – which is to say, according to the preceding section of this paper, a language that faithfully realizes natural (i.e., divine) principles such as the law of heaviness and lightness. Note that, as above note 27 (*ʿalā al-nafs*), it is again the soul (*nufūs*, the plural of *nafs*), the locus of cognition, that is here described as the decisive factor justifying the Bedouins' unique endowment. The concept of *waḍʿ* is likewise noteworthy: it is often used with respect to the origin of language and usually (but not necessarily) employed in connection with divine institution, in contrast to human convention. However, in the course of history, it increasingly came to refer to the idea of "*original* coinage," i.e., in contrast to *later* language change as a result of usage (*ʿurf*) or the creation of technical terminology, through what is referred to as "second imposition" (*waḍʿ thānī*). For the history of the concept of *waḍʿ*, see Weiss 1966.

57 While other languages were (at least occasionally) acknowledged as similarly capable of clear and appropriate expression (for an example, see our conclusions), it was generally attributed to the Arabs' particular natural – or rather divine – sensitivity that they ended up developing a language which excels all other languages in terms of its beauty and coherent structure. Interestingly, by understanding the Bedouins' creative linguistic activity as *instrumental* to the divine plan, Ibn Jinnī defends a kind of causality seamlessly compatible with the notion of secondary causality developed by the *falāsifa*, the philosophers adhering to the Aristotelian tradition.

58 For Fārābī's theory of linguistic imitation, see Germann 2015–2016. In what follows, we will occasionally highlight major parallels.

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There are numerous levels on which Ibn Jinnī discerns the traces of the foundational activity of the Bedouins, which lent the Arabic language its admirable composition, comparable to the perfect building we encountered in Khalīl's analogy.[59] The most fundamental level, in this regard, is the well-known root letter system upon which Arabic is based.[60] In view of what we have just discussed, it will not come as a surprise that for Ibn Jinnī the root letters underlying linguistic expressions (*alfāẓ*) are no more arbitrary than the grammatical features and the particular means (especially the morphological patterns, as we will see) fashioned to realize them. On the contrary. According to him, the ancient Arabs selected these roots deliberately, since every letter (*ḥarf*) conveys some basic meaning (*maʿnā*) or, perhaps more properly, some basic connotation or semantic shade. Consequently, a particular root, for instance *Ḍ–R–B*, determines what, in modern terminology, might be called a semantic field, in this example "to hit, hitting." Every "inhabitant" of this semantic field shares these letters and their basic signification, but is distinguished by a morphological pattern that supervenes on this root and lends it its specific meaning or connotation. Thus, *ḌaRaBa* signifies "[he] hit [perfect tense]," while *aḌRiBu* means "[I] hit/will hit [present tense/simple future]" and *ḌaRB* simply "[a] hit/[the activity of] hitting [verbal infinitive]."

By means of various examples, one of which is *KH–Ḍ–M* as compared to *Q–Ḍ–M*, Ibn Jinnī elucidates his idea of how semantic fields are constituted by roots. Both roots in this example are almost identical. They share two root letters – the second and the third – differing only with respect to the first (*KH* versus *Q*). These two letters, however, in their turn, sound very similar. Due to this almost perfect coincidence, Ibn Jinnī believes that both roots convey the same basic meaning: "to nibble, nibbling," but have slightly different connotations, realized by means of the faint difference between the first letters which the ancient Arabs selected: *KH* in the one case, *Q* in the other. The semantic difference expressed by this phonetic discrepancy consists, Ibn Jinnī explains, in the kinds of food associated with the activities respectively: while *KH–Ḍ–M* implies the nibbling of moist

59 There is another remarkable parallel, in this case with Jāḥiẓ who, in quite similar terms, admires the perfect nature of the Arabic language; see Behzadi 2009, especially 113–125 (=Chapter 3.7 "Die Sonderstellung der arabischen Sprache"). We will return to this aspect in our conclusions.

60 Arabic, like other Semitic languages, consists of root letters constituting the bases of linguistic expressions and defining their respective semantic fields. By virtue of patterns, realized by means of vowels, prefixes, reduplication of root consonants, and the like, specific forms with their particular connotations are derived from these bases.

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food like watermelon, *Q–Ḍ–M*, by contrast, entails something dry or crunchy such as barley:[61]

> Hence, [the Bedouins] chose the *khāʾ* due to its softness for moist [food] and the *qāf* due to its hardness for dry [food], imitating (*ḥadhwan*) by virtue of the ring of the sounds (*masmūʿ al-aṣwāt*) the perceived events (*maḥsūs al-aḥdāth*).[62]

As is obvious, what Ibn Jinnī alludes to here is onomatopoeia: the root letters are taken as phonemes which "imitat[e]" sounds perceptible in reality. Onomatopoeia is not the only essential principle he sees at work in the basic setup of language; however, along with the law of heaviness and lightness it certainly is a crucial one. Moreover, this quotation conveys a further truth about Ibn Jinnī's conception of language in general: language is meant to imitate reality. This is, as we have already indicated, a significant parallel with Fārābī's philosophy of language.[63] However, Ibn Jinnī expands this idea even beyond Fārābī's theory: according to him, the Arabs' alleged search for imitation not only concerned the selection of the most elemental building blocks of individual expressions, the root consonants, but also their sequence. For Ibn Jinnī is convinced that even their linear arrangement – their pronunciation one after the other – echoes certain

61 For this example, see Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 2:157.13–15. For a more detailed study of this and the following examples, see Rivera Calero forthcoming, chapter 3.

62 Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 2:158.1–2. While it is improbable that Ibn Jinnī had direct knowledge of Plato, considerations such as these are strongly reminiscent of the *Cratylus*. Moreover, they played an important role in early theological discussions about the divine attributes, see van Ess 1991–1997, 4:21 (with further references in note 16), in connection with ʿAbbād ibn Sulaymān (d. 830), the first among the theologians who developed his doctrine "auf der Basis einer allgemeinen Sprachtheorie"; accordingly, "zwischen den Wörtern und den Sachen" there is "eine natürliche Beziehung (…); die Wörter passen zu den Sachen (…). Besondere Beweiskraft kam den onomatopoetischen Wortbildungen zu." Cf. in this connection Ibn Jinnī's reference to "those people who held that all languages have their origin in the audible sounds like the murmuring of the wind, the yearning of the thunder," etc., a view which on his account "is sound and acceptable," see Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 1:46.14–47.2: "*wa-dhahaba baʿḍuhum ilā anna aṣl al-lughāt kullihā innamā huwa min al-aṣwāt al-masmuʿāt, ka-dawī al-rīḥ, wa-ḥanīn al-raʿd (…) wa-hādhā ʿindī wajh ṣāliḥ, wa-madhhab mutaqabbal.*"

63 According to Fārābī, language imitates thought which, in turn, represents reality (provided this reality is well understood by the thinker in question, otherwise mistakes occur). While he does not explicitly mention onomatopoeia, he is convinced that, already on the level of the root letters, the inventors of language (to him, human beings, not God) sought to imitate the "meanings" (*maʿānī*) the respective bases were intended to represent. For this most fundamental kind of imitation, see Germann 2015–2016, 148–149.

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aspects of reality. To demonstrate this feature, he adduces the root *B–Ḥ–TH* (to search, searching) and explains:

> Due to its roughness, the *bāʾ*, by virtue of its sound, resembles (*tushbihu*) the noise of a claw hitting the ground; the *ḥāʾ*, due to its raucousness, resembles the claws of a lion or wolf or their likes as they penetrate deep into the earth; and the *thāʾ*, due to the expectoration, [represents] the spreading of soil.[64]

As above, the three root letters "by virtue of [their] sound[s]" mimic noises produced by something in extramental reality. Now, however, their sequence, too, is meaningful: it corresponds to a gradually elapsing event whose 'originator' is perceived with increasing clarity: first, claws "hitting the ground," second, these claws "penetrat[ing] the earth," thereby emitting a sound disclosing the nature of its originator: a large, predatory animal, and third, the "spreading of soil" as an effect of the claws' furrowing the ground.[65] As Ibn Jinnī depicts it, the three root letters, due to their individual acoustic features and combined in this specific order, conjure up an imaginary scene, constituting, as it were, an iconographic representation of the abstract semantic field that the ancient Arabs sought to capture when they first coined the root *B–Ḥ–TH*. The particular qualities of sounds resembling noises in extramental reality in the course of certain events, we can thus infer, were accurately perceived (note again the role of *ḥiss*) and kept in mind by the Bedouins of old, due to their extraordinary *salīqa*. As a consequence,

64 Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 2:163.1–3. For this "relation of motivation between the phonetic content of the consonants of the root and the meaning conveyed by it," i.e., the "event," as Ibn Jinnī calls it, see Bohas and Saguer forthcoming, particularly section 3 "The lexical level." In this paper, Bohas and Saguer argue (see their "Conclusion") that "for the whole Arabic grammatical tradition, from its founder, Sībawayhi, to contemporary commentators of the Koran, it is self-evident that the sign is motivated" and not arbitrary (like in the European and Anglo-American traditions), regardless of "whether they adopt the point of view according to which language is the result of divine revelation or they adopt the point of view according to which language results from human convention" (Bohas and Saguer, forthcoming, "Introduction"). The fact that, at least in the case of Ibn Jinnī, this idea of an acoustic motivation serves the purposes of his theory of imitation and, thus, constitutes an essential cornerstone of his philosophy of language, apparently went unnoticed.

65 It is astounding to see that Ibn Jinnī proceeds in a manner that is virtually the inverse of the application (and coinage) of metaphors and figurative speech. If someone were to devise a parable for the search for something, he or she might in fact think of a predatory animal seeking for prey and zoom in on its claws hitting on, penetrating, and finally opening up the ground. We can conclude that, as they developed their language, the Arabs advanced exactly the other way round: they perceived something in reality from which they abstracted a general concept and then chose letters (phonemes) which in a way "resemble[d]" the sounds produced by the observed thing or event.

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they chose these sounds as models for the root letters tailored to imitate the corresponding events, either in a strictly onomatopoetic manner,[66] or in order to evoke a mental image (like the lion or wolf furrowing the ground while on the hunt for prey in our quote), which serves, in turn, as an icon for an abstract concept (the search for something).[67] It is noteworthy that the criterion supposedly governing the ancient Arabs' selection of the corresponding root letters is consistently semantic: the sounds resemble certain events that either directly or indirectly constitute the semantic content captured by the corresponding roots.[68]

This constant semantic grounding can be observed throughout Ibn Jinnī's discussion of the various levels of the Bedouins' creative linguistic activity. Thus, according to him, this tendency likewise directed their search for appropriate morphological patterns – another resemblance to Fārābī.[69] As mentioned above, morphological patterns supervene on the root letters and add further semantic shades or connotations. That is to say, each morphological pattern possesses its

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66 Another example which Ibn Jinnī offers is the sound production of the grasshopper (verbalized as *ṣarra*) as compared to that of the falcon (called, in turn, *ṣarṣara*), see Rivera Calero forthcoming, chapter 3. According to Ibn Jinnī, both sounds are similar and, hence, captured by means of identical root consonants (*Ṣ* and *R*); however, the production of these sounds is different, a fact that is echoed by the specific forms of the verbs: while the grasshopper draws out the sound it emits (which is therefore expressed as *ṣarra*), the falcon has an intermittent cry (hence, *ṣarṣara*).
67 For Ibn Jinnī, every consonant, thus, possesses some sort of intrinsic connotation. This is particularly obvious in connection with his theory of the "great etymology" or "great derivation" (*al-ishtiqāq al-akbar*). On this account, not only do all the expressions derived from one root share a semantic field, but every expression resulting from whichever root consisting of these three consonants, shares some common semantic ground. For the analysis of Ibn Jinnī's "great derivation," see Rivera Calero forthcoming, chapter 3.
68 With respect to the parallel with Fārābī's theory of linguistic imitation adumbrated above, it is striking that he already underscores the "naturalness" of this process of language coinage. According to him, the "language positors" arrived at their "imitations" – i.e., the concrete expressions and forms of realization (e.g., the patterns) – by closely following their "natural dispositions." In contrast to Ibn Jinnī, Fārābī's key term here is not *salīqa* or *najr*, but the theologically charged *fiṭra*, see for instance Fārābī 1969, 138.19–139.1 (§122), translation: Germann 2015–2016, 148: "[A given people] will endeavor – by their natural disposition, not by design (*bi-fiṭarihim min ghayr an yataʿammadū*) – to make the utterances, that are established to indicate meanings, imitations of the meanings (*muḥākāt al-maʿānī*) and to establish them to bear a closer resemblance to the meanings (*yajʿalūhā aqrab shabahan bi-al-maʿānī*)." It is via the *maʿānī* that the utterances imitate the things and events in reality, on Fārābī's account.
69 For the various levels of "structural imitation" – one of which concerns the morphological patterns – see Germann 2015–2016, 149–152. In contrast to Ibn Jinnī, Fārābī's theory is embedded in a quasi-historical development, suggesting the gradual evolution of language (that is, language in general, not only Arabic); for a careful analysis of the various stages as well as the political implications of the narrative, see Druart 2018.

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own meaning or signification (*maʿnā*).[70] To illustrate his point, Ibn Jinnī refers to the pattern of the tenth verbal form which, in its basic configuration, is distinguished by the prefix *ist[a]* followed by the root pattern *CCaCa* (where the upper case *C*s represent the root consonants, while the lower case vowels represent the corresponding vocalisations), for instance *istaKHRaJa*, *istaQDaMa*, *istaMNaḤa*, etc. This form, Ibn Jinnī suggests, usually connotes a request or demand. What is requested, is the activity conveyed by the respective root. And just as in reality the request precedes its fulfillment, the prefix in this form, signifying the request, precedes the root, capturing the requested activity:

> Thus, just like the activities (*afʿāl*) of the response follow the activities of the request, the root letters (*ḥurūf al-aṣl*) follow the letters of the augment (*al-ḥurūf al-zāʾida*) that were coined (*wuḍiʿat*) for [the purpose of] requesting and demanding.[71]

In this case, Ibn Jinnī concentrates exclusively on the order of the augment and the root, while he remains silent about the specific letters (*ist[a]*) chosen to form the augment. This may be negligence, in this particular instance, or it may be due to the fact that some patterns more naturally lend themselves to a reflection about their intrinsic characteristics than others.[72] An example of this latter kind is certainly the second verbal form upon which Ibn Jinnī focuses immediately afterwards. It consists in a reduplication of the second root letter; hence, *CaCaCa*

70 See the distinction between *maʿnā* I and *maʿnā* II introduced by Bohas and Guillaume 1984. Unsurprisingly, this feature of language is also at the basis of Ibn Jinnī's semantic theory, according to which linguistic expressions signify, first, on a basic level, constituted by the root letters. In this manner, the semantic field is conveyed. Second, they signify on the supervening level of morphological patterns. For instance, by means of verbal tense the time of the represented event is transmitted. Additionally, Ibn Jinnī distinguishes a third level of signification which he dubs "*maʿnawī*." For him, this is a signification that is only implicit in the *alfāẓ* and must be inferred from what is expressed explicitly (cf. the parallel with Zajjājī above, directly following the first citation from *Īḍāḥ*). E.g., in the case of a verb, the corresponding verb pattern indicates person (first, second, third), number (singular, dual, plural), and gender (masculine, feminine); however, just like a personal pronoun these indications function as placeholders: who is actually meant in reality (or in a story or poem) must be derived from the context. For Ibn Jinnī's semantic theory, see Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 3:98–101 (="*Bāb fī al-dalāla al-lafẓiyya wa-al-ṣināʿiyya wa-al-maʿnawiyya*"; "Chapter on the signification of the utterance, the pattern, and the meaning").

71 Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 2:154.14–16. Note his usage of the expression *wuḍiʿat*, which is perfectly in line with the concept of *waḍʿ* already seen above, note 56.

72 The fact that Ibn Jinnī focuses on some features which he explicitly underpins with his theory while remaining silent about other features may also be due to a divide observed above: accordingly, only the *essential* features of language are metaphysically anchored and robust like ethical and metaphysical laws; other, non-essential features, by contrast, are not; see above, note 32.

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turns into *CaCCaCa*. In this example, the accentuation of the middle consonant resulting from its reduplication is the feature Ibn Jinnī seeks to explain:

> So [the Arabs] said: *kassara*, *qaṭṭaʿa* (…).[73] And since they made the words (*alfāẓ*) signs (*dalīla*) of the meanings, the strongest [root letter] of the word ought to (*yanbaghī an*) match (*yuqābil*) the strength (*quwwa*) of the activity.[74]

Obviously, there is a difference between simply breaking something and breaking it into millions of pieces, i.e., literally shattering it. The latter activity clearly is an intensification of the former. With regard to his theory of language, this example thus plainly reveals what Ibn Jinnī has in mind. Just as in reality there are activities that are related to one another like basic form and intensification, the ancient Arabs felt the need to find linguistic means suited to capturing this relation. Since the semantic fields of both relata are identical ("to break, breaking"), the Bedouins did not change the root letters; rather, they sought to express the semantic shade by dint of the pattern, which in view of the intended "meaning" could be realized most "naturally" by reduplicating the middle consonant. As a result, the "new" word (*kassara* instead of *kasara*) "is stronger" and, thus, perfectly corresponds to the intensified, i.e., more powerful, execution of the underlying activity.[75]

As these examples evince, Ibn Jinnī applies the notion of the Bedouins' inborn linguistic intuition in a manner that is distinct from that of his predecessors and contemporaries in the realm of grammar. For him, this presumed gift of the ancient Arabs is important, but not primarily in connection with the collection of the linguistic data that took place chiefly during the late 8th and the 9th centuries. Rather, its core significance consists in the role it played in the *creation* of the Arabic language. Thanks to their *salīqa*, the ancient Arabs had a

73 *Kassara* ("to break into [many] pieces, shatter") is the second form of *kasara* ("to break, fracture"), *qaṭṭaʿa* ("to cut into [many] pieces, lacerate") of *qaṭaʿa* ("to cut, disjoin"). The added meaning in both cases is intensification or increase.

74 Ibn Jinnī 1952–1956, 2:155.4–5.

75 In Fārābī's parallel theory, examples like these would fall under the first kind of "structural imitation," concerning the level of morphology, see Fārābī 1969, 139.18–140.1 (§123), translation: Germann 2015–2016, 150–151: "Just as among meanings (*fī al-maʿānī*) there are those that remain precisely the same while their accidents change successively, so are there utterances for which fixed letters (*ḥurūf rātiba*) and [changing] letters (*ḥurūf* [*mutabaddila*]) are established, as though the latter were changing accidents of precisely the same utterance with each changing letter standing for some changing accident." We believe that "[changing] letters" is a generic term for Fārābī that applies not only to vowels but also to phenomena like the just-described, i.e., the reduplication of a root consonant.

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supreme sensitivity vis-à-vis fundamental linguistic principles and the natural properties of vocal sounds. They utilized these principles and their insights into the characteristics of sounds as they developed their language: as they came up with roots determining semantic fields, patterns adding specific meanings and connotations, vowels serving as case markers, etc. In Ibn Jinnī's view, the Arabs' natural intuition, we can now conclude, is the actual gateway through which the various causes (*ʿilal*) governing grammar came into being. It is, in other words, the metaphysical foundation of the Arabic language, guaranteeing its divine and, hence, impeccable nature.[76]

Within the Arabic philological tradition, Ibn Jinnī's theory of language – its setup and genesis – is clearly exceptional. We know of no earlier or contemporary linguist who made a similar attempt to explain the fundamental features of grammar and language as a whole. The same is true for the subsequent philological tradition which remained focused on the formal features of language, largely disregarding its nature, as well as its semantic dimension, let alone its link with extramental reality. With this unique interest and his particular approach, Ibn Jinnī, as we have noted occasionally, is much closer to Fārābī than to his colleagues in the field of *naḥw*.[77] However, there is another conspicuous similarity, not with Fārābī but with another famous predecessor. With Ibn Jinnī's strong emphasis on the nature of language and its rootedness, via the *maʿānī* it conveys, in extramental reality, i.e., God's creation, he displays a concern that reminds us of none other than – Jāḥiẓ, the thinker who questioned the soundness of the grammatical causes. This brings us back to our point of departure and prompts us to make some final remarks.

76 Let us emphasize that this metaphysical foundation concerns, in the first place, the *essential* features of language. As for the non-essential features, following Ibn Jinnī's track of thought, they certainly possess a particularly high esthetic quality like the entire Arabic language; however, they could be otherwise and, with regard to the Arabic dialects, some of them will offer more pleasant or appropriate solutions, whereas others represent less happy realizations, moving farther away from the ideal of clarity and beauty (recall Khalīl's analogy of the building). Similarly, in Fārābī's theory of imitation there are degrees. In his case, however, they are degrees of *accuracy* and not of beauty: language can represent reality (by way of thought) more or less appropriately, which is to say, truthfully. The dimension of esthetics, plainly present in Ibn Jinnī (just as it is in Jāḥiẓ, see our conclusions), is entirely absent from Fārābī's considerations.

77 Despite the observed similarities, there is, however, a striking difference: while Fārābī develops a *general* linguistic (and anthropological) theory, Ibn Jinnī, by contrast, concentrates exclusively on Arabic.

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3 Conclusions

In a monographic study of language and understanding in Jāḥiẓ, Lale Behzadi makes a remarkable observation:[78] one of the major driving forces behind his concern for language in general, and its accurate usage in particular, consists in his conviction that language serves a specific purpose, namely the comprehension of divine creation. The *alfāẓ* people employ as they speak are, by way of their *maʿānī*, inextricably linked with their significata – the things, events, and relations in extramental reality. Language, therefore, constitutes humanity's closest link with divine creation while being itself part of creation. It is for this reason that human beings are called on to use language in a responsible manner, to choose the words that correspond best to the objects they intend to talk about. Obviously, these ideas depend on the assumption that language as such, by its very nature, possesses all the necessary properties to direct its users unfailingly toward the intended meanings. In principle, Jāḥiẓ believes, every language can convey its message clearly and distinctly in such a reliable fashion. However, Arabic, in his view, excels in this respect. It is the language God chose for his final revelation because of its unique quality.[79] On his account, even though every language is part of God's creation, Arabic holds a distinguished position for two reasons: first, in and of itself, its design is superior to that of every other language; second, the ancient Arabs, ever since their mythological forefather Ismāʿīl, had been "naturally endowed" (*maṭbūʿūna*)[80] with a unique eloquence and intuition for correct speech, as though by divine inspiration:

> [In contrast to the speakers of other languages], all that the Arabs possess simply is intuition (*badīha*) and improvisation (*irtijāl*), as though it were divine inspiration (*ilhām*), without (*wa-laysat hunāka*) effort (*muʿānā*) and suffering (*mukābada*) (...). Rather, [the Arabs] focus their mind (*wahm*) on speaking (*kalām*) (...), and thus they are sent down the meanings (*maʿānī*) and the words (*alfāẓ*) come down over them.[81]

Behzadi is certainly right in observing that Jaḥiẓ's specific thoughts about the relationship between linguistic expression (*lafẓ*) and significatum (*maʿnā*) were overlooked by his immediate successors within the philological tradition.[82]

78 For the following, see Behzadi 2009, particularly 87–107 and 115–122.
79 Cf. our discussion of Ibn Jinnī and comparison with Jāḥiẓ above, note 59.
80 Jāḥiẓ 1968, 3:28.11.
81 Jāḥiẓ 1968, 3:28.5–10; see Behzadi 2009, 115. Note that Jāḥiẓ, just like Ibn Jinnī, refers to *ilhām* rather than *tawqīf*; i.e., if language exists as a result of divine inspiration, it is a capacity, not a lexicon cum grammar handed down by God.
82 Behzadi 2009, 109.

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It appears, however, that Ibn Jinnī did take careful note of them. Moreover, not only is he generally in line with his predecessor, as regards the latter's emphasis on the natural excellence of both the Arabic language and the linguistic instinct of its original speakers, but he goes beyond Jāḥiẓ with his attempt to provide this view of language with a sound theoretical underpinning. With his specific interpretation of the Bedouins' *salīqa* as both the efficient and formal causes behind the creation of Arabic and his identification of the essential laws underlying grammar as equally necessary as the fundamental laws governing ethics and physics, Ibn Jinnī develops a firm, metaphysically grounded theory of language, humanity's exclusive gift. Ironically, it is precisely this theory, centered on what he considers to be the causes of grammar, which forces him to attack none other than his great model Jāḥiẓ in the chapter "refut[ing] those who believe that the grammatical causes are corrupt."[83] Equally ironic is the fact that, just like his predecessor's semantic, pragmatic, and epistemological considerations of language, the theory Ibn Jinnī develops in his *Khaṣāʾiṣ* was largely neglected within the philological tradition itself. It had to wait for thinkers like ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 1078) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210) to be resurrected. In ways that are beyond the scope of this study and still require thorough investigation, Ibn Jinnī's take on language came to play a constitutive role in the evolution of a scientific approach that may arguably be regarded as philosophy of language.[84]

What is remarkable about Ibn Jinnī's theoretical considerations, besides their sophistication, comprehensiveness, and originality, is a feature that would be praised nowadays as 'trans-disciplinarity.' To be sure, we could describe the situation during the 9th to 11th centuries in negative terms and emphasize the absence of interest in philosophy of language within the linguistic tradition. Yet, conversely, we could just well, or perhaps even more correctly, turn the tables on this interpretation and point out, using our example, the existence of a substantial exchange; an exchange, however, which did not develop within the confines of the disciplines extant during the formative period of Islamic culture. While thinkers like Jāḥiẓ, Fārābī, and Ibn Jinnī, with their philosophical interest in language, may appear to be exceptional figures – odd men out – if one zooms in exclusively on their respective fields, seen from a broader perspective this

83 See above, our introduction with note 4.
84 Currently, there is no study available that offers a comprehensive analysis of Jurjānī's philosophy of language, nor one that takes into account the impact of the philological tradition (particularly, Ibn Jinnī). For a treatment of the theological dimension, see Larkin 1995; for a discussion centered on the poetic tradition with some digressions into *falsafa* (Ibn Sīnā), see Key 2018. On Rāzī's philosophy of language, with a view to his sources of inspiration such as Jurjānī, Ibn Jinnī, Fārābī, and others, see Najafi 2019.

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picture turns out to be myopic. For, as our sources corroborate, there was not only a strong interest in questions related to philosophy of language *across* the various sciences, but also something like an overarching discourse reflected and nourished by protagonists of such divers fields like *adab* (Jāhiẓ), *falsafa* (Fārābī), and *naḥw* (Ibn Jinnī) – not to mention *kalām*, to which we have likewise occasionally referred.

It is perhaps due to the trans-disciplinary character of this discourse that, so far, it has largely escaped the attention of modern research which usually limits itself to the study of individual disciplines and thinkers. However, as the example of Ibn Jinnī demonstrates, or so we hope, it is not only worthwhile – but even high time – to examine such a crucial issue as theories of the nature of language by crossing the boundaries of scientific disciplines. For it is this very phenomenon, language, which unlike any other possible candidate was at the center of the quest for identity of the early Arabic-Islamic society and which, therefore, offers a unique clue that can lead to a deeper understanding of the DNA of its intellectual culture.

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Alexander Key

Notes around Ambiguity: Ibn Sīnā's Logic, ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's Poetics, Rāghib's Two-Meanings-at-One-Time, and the Figures of *Ibhām*, *Istikhdām*, and *Tawriya*

Introduction

These notes are adapted from the 2018 monograph *Language Between God and the Poets: Maʿnā in the Eleventh Century*, to which an interested reader may turn in search of more detail about logic and poetics, the additional genres of lexicography and theology, and explanations of the methodology and translation strategy adopted here. The adapted sections have been rearranged around the question of ambiguity in logic and poetics, and new material concerning whether a word can have two meanings at the same time has been added, in addition to a discusssion of the rhetorical figures of *ibhām*, *istikhdām*, and *tawriya*.[1]

We begin in the eleventh century with Ibn Sīnā's discussions of two Aristotelian questions that speak to language's potential for logical ambiguity: *pros hen* and Aristotelian homonymy. Next, we look at ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's theory of lexical accuracy (*ḥaqīqa*), which takes the lexicon into the imaginary poetic image. In order to think more about ambiguity itself, we then turn to al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī's claim that a word could have two meanings at the same time, and to three figures used by critics over the next few centuries to manage and structure ambiguity: *ibhām*, *istikhdām*, and *tawriya*. In conclusion, we return to Jurjānī and syntax time.

1 *Pros Hen* and Aristotelian Homonymy

At the beginning of Book Four (*Gamma*) of his *Metaphysics*,[2] Aristotle wrote that "there are many senses in which a thing may be said to 'be,' but all that 'is' is related to one central point, one definite kind of thing, and is not said to 'be' by

1 I would like to thank this publication's anonymous reviewer for detailed and salutary comments and corrections on the first draft.

2 The following section is adapted from Key 2018, 176–182.

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a mere ambiguity."[3] There is some central principle (the Greek word is *archē*)[4] that connects the different ways the word "being" is used, just as there is some principle that connects "healthy" when it is said of different things that might preserve health ("a healthy exercise regime"), or produce health ("a healthy juice drink"), or mark health ("healthy blood results"), or be receptive of the quality of health ("the healthy child").[5] These usages all go "towards one" (*pros hen*) principle. The Greek commentary tradition, dealing with echoes of the Platonic Forms that could no longer be heard by the time philosophy moved into Arabic, had ultimately taken this passage to be part of an Aristotelian account of the different ways in which language could refer to reality.[6] The only Arabic translation of the *Metaphysics* that we have extant is by Ustāth,[7] undertaken in the ninth century for Kindī and preserved as the text on which Ibn Rushd based his commentary. When it came to other books of the *Metaphysics*, Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) had access to a later version by Isḥāq, but we cannot be sure he had read anyone other than Ustāth when he was dealing with "being is said in many ways."[8] Ustāth told Ibn Sīnā that Aristotle said existence was not a matter of linguistic homonymy, but was rather a matter of different things being related to a single first.[9]

Ustāth translated the exclusion of Aristotelian homonymy (*ouch homōnumōs*) as an exclusion of any species of Arabic homonymy (*lā … nawʿ ishtirāk al-ism*).[10] Aristotelian homonymy was an account of the relationships between things in the outside world, established in *Categories* with the example of how a man and a picture of a man are both "animal,"[11] whereas Arabic homonymy was linguistic and lexical, such as we find with "bank" and "bank" in English (or *ʿayn* and *ʿayn* in Arabic). Aristotle had been trying to explain how "being" was an appropriate subject matter for his *Metaphysics*, hence the need to exclude what he thought was an unscientific type of connection such as that exemplified by "animal" in "picture of an animal" and "man is an animal" (he made exactly the same exclusion when trying to establish "the good" as the subject matter of his *Nichomachean*

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3 Aristotle 1984b, 1003a33. Translation from Sennet 2016.
4 Aristotle 1984b, 1003b6.
5 Aristotle 1984b, 1003b2–4.
6 Proclus (d. 485) and then Porphyry (d. ca. 305); see Treiger 2012; Sorabji 2005, 74, 131, 234–235.
7 "The otherwise unknown Ustath (…) Eustathius, in all likelihood of Byzantine origin" (D'Ancona 2019, note 31).
8 Bertolacci 2006, 5–7, 14.
9 Ibn Rushd and Aristotle 1938–1948, 1:300.13–14, 301.5:
فالهُوية تُقال على أنواعٍ كثيرةٍ ولا تقال بنوعِ اشتراكِ الاسم بل تُنسَب إلى شيءٍ واحدٍ وطِباعٍ واحد (…) تلك الأنواعُ تُنسَب إلى أوّلٍ واحد.
10 Aristotle, 1984b, 1003a34; Ibn Rushd and Aristotle 1938–1948, 1:300.13.
11 Aristotle 1984a, 1a1.

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Ethics, a connection recognized by the Greek tradition).[12] But the homonymy that the pre-Avicennian Arabic Aristotelians had wanted to exclude was the homonymy of the lexicographers (a century later, Ibn Rushd would carefully exclude both the homonymy of *ʿayn* and the homonymy of "man" and "animal").[13]

What did Ibn Sīnā do with this complex of alternatives? What conceptual vocabulary did he choose to establish? In his discussions of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and *Categories*, Ibn Sīnā used *maʿnā* (mental content) to talk about the complex of alternatives presented by Aristotle's epistemological framework for words such as "being" and the commentaries thereupon. The first chapter of Aristotle's *Categories* gives three ways that things can be connected through their names (homonymous, synonymous, and paronymous, rendered in Arabic as *muttafiqa*, *mutawāṭiʾa*, and *mushtaqqa* respectively). Ibn Sīnā described how synonymy was when the "statement about the substance" is the same, so "animal" is predicated as a synonym of both "man" and "horse." A man is not more animal than a horse. He glossed "statement about the substance" as "the distinguishing vocal form (*lafẓ*) that indicates the mental content (*maʿnā*) of the substance." This gloss (introduced with *ay*, meaning "i.e.") marks his movement from one conceptual vocabulary to another, from the Greek-into-Arabic translation of Isḥāq to his own Arabic framework of vocal form and mental content.[14] He makes the same move on the next line: "if the formal definition (*ḥadd*) is one (…) from every aspect, i.e. one in mental content (*maʿnā*)."[15] With the equation between the two conceptual vocabularies established, he then divided homonymy into three: "either [1] the mental content in the different things is one in itself despite being different in some other way, or [2] the mental content is not one but there is a certain similarity between the two things, or [3] the mental content is not one and there is no similarity between the two things."[16]

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12 Aristotle 1984c, 1096b25.

13 Ibn Rushd and Aristotle 1938–1948, 1:302.14–16.

14 Aristotle 1984a, 1a; 1980, 1:33; Ibn Sīnā 1959, 9.9–10: *logos tēs ousias*:

قَول الجوهر أيْ اللفظ المُفصّلُ الدالُّ على معنى الذات.

NB: I read مفصّل as an active participle here: *logos tēs ousias* is language that says what the substance is, as opposed to *onoma*, which just gives its name. If one reads مفصّل as a passive participle, the translation of *logos tēs ousias* would be: "the separated (i.e. having more than one part) vocal form that indicates the mental content of the substance."

15 Ibn Sīnā 1959, 9.11–12:

وحدُّه واحدٌ فيها مِن كلّ وجْهٍ أيْ يكون واحداً بالمعنى.

16 Ibn Sīnā 1959, 10.4–7:

إما أنْ يكون المعنى فيها واحداً في نفسه وإنْ اختلفَ من جهةٍ أخرى وإما أنْ لا يكون واحداً ولكن يكون بينَهما مُشابهةٌ ما وإما أنْ لا يكون واحداً ولا يكون أيضاً بينَهما مُشابهة.

Cf. Alternative translation: Treiger 2012, 353.

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Ibn Sīnā's first example for [1] was Aristotle's *pros hen* "being." The mental content in itself is the same ("being" is a stable category), but the form it takes is different in different things, some of which may be prior to others (a substance is prior in existence to its accidents.)[17] The Peripatetics and the Stoics were all philosophers, but the work of the former was "more philosophical" than that of the latter.[18] Mental content is a key component in this epistemology: it is the stable form that "being" takes in the mind. While being is spoken of in many ways, and while extramental things exist in different ways, "being" stays the same in itself as a mental content, as does "philosophy;" both are stable pigeonholes.[19]

For group [2], things that Aristotle had called homonymous, but that did not share a common account and might be in completely unrelated things, Ibn Sīna held that they could still share a name if there was a mental content resemblance. He used Aristotle's example of "animal" predicated of both a horse and a picture of a horse.[20] What is it that connects the picture of the horse to a horse? Ibn Sīnā's answer is enabled, I think, by Arabic philology and literary criticism rather than by the Aristotelian tradition. He says that the name "animal" has two lexical placements in this case, one prior and one subsequent to which it has been transferred.[21] The process of transfer from an original lexical placement is commonplace in Classical Arabic lexicography. No such structures were available to Ibn Sīnā from commentators such as Simplicius,[22] whom we know Ibn Sīnā

17 Ibn Sīnā 1959, 10.8–11; Treiger 2012, 353:
فمِثْلُ معنى الوجود فإنه واحدٌ في أشياء كثيرةٍ لكنه يختلِف فيها فإنه ليس موجوداً فيها على صورة واحدة من كلّ وجهٍ فإنه موجودٌ لبعضِها قبلُ ولبعضِها بعدُ فإنّ الوجود للجوهر قبلَ الوجود لسائرِ ما يتّبِعه.

18 Ibn Sīnā 1959, 11.1; Treiger 2012, 354:
ولا تُقال الفلسفةُ على التي في المشّائيين والتي في الروّاقيين على التواطؤ المُطلَق.

19 Ibn Sīnā also introduces a new category of "modulated existence" that divides Aristotle's *pros hen* ambiguity into two. This division (also identified by Kalbarczyk in an earlier commentary by Ibn Sīnā on *Categories*) is persuasively explained by Treiger as being motivated by Ibn Sīnā's desire to reserve a category of "being" that would only apply to God and maintain his unity (Kalbarczyk 2012; Treiger 2012, 354). Ibn Sīnā, 11.3–4:
فما كان المفهومُ من اللفظ فيه واحداً إذا جُرِّد ولم يكن واحداً من كلّ جهةٍ مُتشابهاً في الأشياء المتّحِدة في ذلك اللفظ فإنه يسُمّى اسماً مُشَكَّكاً.

20 Ibn Sīnā 1959, 11.8–9:
وأما الذي لا يكون فيه اتّفاقٌ في قَولِ الجوهر وشرْحِ الاسم لكنْ يكون اتّفاقاً في معنىً يتشابه به فمِثْلُ قولنا الحيوانُ للفَرَس والحيوانُ للمُصوَّر.

21 Ibn Sīnā 1959, 12.2–4:
ويكون الاسمُ في أحدِ الأمرَين مُوضوعاً وضْعاً متقدّماً ويكون في الثاني مُوضوعاً ثانياً فإذا قِيسَ ذلك الاسمُ إلى الأمرَين جميعاً سُمّي بالاسم المتشابِه وإذا قِيسَ إلى الثاني منهما سُمّي بالاسم المَنقول.

22 Simplicius 1907, 21.1–33.20; 2003, 35–47.

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had read from what are almost verbatim quotations a couple of pages later.[23] Ibn Sīnā is in conversation with Arabic philology and poetics here. He talked about the way the constellations of Canis Major and Minor and a living animal are all called "dog," but while the connection in the latter case is lexically accurate (*ḥaqīqī*), the connection in the former is "borrowed" (*mustaʿār*, a technical term in the Arabic metaphor).[24] Like Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sīnā also carefully delineated this kind of homonymy from the complete lexical homonymy of "bank" and "bank."[25]

Ibn Sīnā had integrated *pros hen*, Aristotle's account of conceptual and logical categories that the Greek and Arabic commentators had read as being about language, into Aristotle's actual discussion of the relationship of language to reality in *Categories*. He was able to do this in part because his conceptual vocabulary included *maʿnā* – a stable mental category that both carved reality at the joints and connected immediately to language. And when it came to those connections between language and reality, Ibn Sīnā had access to a set of resources in Arabic scholarship that mapped the relationship of word use to precedent. One key resource was lexical accuracy (*ḥaqīqa*).

2 Lexical Accuracy in the Poetic Image

Jurjānī (d. 1078) held that critics could only recognize beauty in literature when they understood the mechanisms by which it moved in relation to language's lexical foundations (Stefan Sperl would reach the same conclusion as Jurjānī many centuries later; writing of "the creation of concord or discord between signifier and signified" as the defining characteristic of what he called the "mannerism" of the ninth-century poets such as Abū Tammām).[26] In order to explain how poetic imagery could be both unreal and lexically accurate, Jurjānī made a distinction

23 Ibn Sīnā 1959, 14.15:

وقد يتّفِق أنْ يكون الاسمُ الواحد مَقولاً على شيئين بالاتّفاق وبالتواطؤ معاً.

"There are, however, some things which are homonymous and synonymous with regard to one and the same name." Simplicius 1907, 21.1–33.20; 2003, 49–50.

24 Ibn Sīnā 1959, 12.7–9:

وربما كان هذا الاشتباهُ اشتباهاً حقيقياً وربما كان اشتباهاً مجازياً بعيداً مِثلَ قولهم كلْبٌ للنجْم وللكلْب الحيوانيّ وذلك لأنه لا تَشابُهَ بينهما في أمرٍ حقيقيّ إلا في أمرٍ مستعار.

25 Ibn Sīnā 1959, 12.10–12:

فما كان سبيلُ نقلِ الاسم إليه هذا السبيلَ فلا ينبغي أنْ يُجعل في هذا القِسم [الاسم المشكك] بل هو من القِسم الثالث الذي لا اشتراكَ حقيقياً ولا تَشابهَ فيه مِثل قولنا عينٌ للبصر وعينٌ للدينار.

26 Sperl 1989, 180. This section is adapted from Key 2018, 221–228.

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between lexical accuracy (*ḥaqīqa*)[27] as it applied to single words and lexical accuracy as it applied to sentences or clauses.[28] In sentences, lexical accuracy was a matter of predication: was A really B? (the single lexeme verb was included with sentences because in Arabic it contained a pronoun and therefore an affirmation; "he did").[29] This is an example of what we might assume to be scholarly cross-pollination between logic and poetics. Ibn Sīnā's work on *pros hen* and homonymy in the Aristotelian tradition was intended to safeguard the logical predication of the syllogism from linguistic ambiguity. For Jurjānī, concerned only with beauty in language, the conversations taking place about logic in eleventh-century Iran were a reminder of the importance of accuracy in predicative statements.[30]

Lexical accuracy was a quality that all words could have, right down to simple particles of comparison such as "like." If you say "Zayd is like a lion," then you are using "like" with lexical accuracy; comparison (*tashbīh*) is a mental content like any other, and it is connected by precedent to the vocal form "like."[31] Conversely, if you use "the hand" for "the blessing" because humans have tended to use their hands to give blessings, then the word can be judged to be beyond the lexicon (this is a reference to the exegetical discussion about God's hands in the Quran and anthropomorphism, and the word Jurjānī used for "beyond the lexicon" was *majāz*).[32] But even here the original lexical placement is still in play: without some maintenance of reference to the human hand the metaphorical usage makes no sense.[33]

Think, said Jurjānī, about how you use the word 'lion' to refer to the wild beast. "You will see how your statement fulfills all of its own requirements. This is because you intended that to which you know the word 'lion' connects according to lexical placement (*waḍʿ*). You are also aware that this connection does not rely on anything other than the wild beast. You are not forced by some potential con-

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27 I discuss this approach to translating *ḥaqīqa* throughout Key 2018, especially 101–109, 139–144, and 220–228.

28 See Heinrichs, who is keen to make a distinction between aesthetic and theological disciplines, a distinction that I am comfortable allowing to collapse (Heinrichs 1991–1992, 278).

29 Jurjānī 1954, 378.20–379.1:

وأما فَعَلَ فلم تَنْقُله عن الموضِع الذي وضعَتْه اللغةُ لأنه كما مَضى موضوعٌ لإثباتِ الفِعل للشيء في زمانٍ ماضٍ.

30 See Key 2018, 214.

31 Jurjānī 1954, 222.4–5:

لأن التشبيه معنى من المعاني وله حروف واسماء تدل عليه فإذا صرح بذكر ما هو موضوع للدلالة عليه كان الكلام حقيقة كالحكم في سائر المعاني فاعرفه.

32 Quran 3:26; 3:73; 5:64; 23:88; 36:83; 48:10; 57:29; 67:1. Cf. Rāghib 1992, 889/2.6f.

33 Jurjānī 1954, 365.6–12. Cf. Jurjānī 1954, 325.19f:

وهو أنْ يقع نقْلُه على وجهٍ لا يَعْرَى معه من ملاحظةِ الأصل ومعنى الملاحظة أنّ الاسم يقع لِما تقول إنه مجازٌ فيه بسببٍ بينه وبين الذين تَجعله حقيقةً فيه نحو أنّ اليد تقع للنعمة وأصلُها الجارحة لأجل أنّ الاعتبارات اللغوية تتبع أحوالَ المخلوقين وعاداتَهم وما يَقتضيه ظاهرُ البِنْيَة وموضوع الجِبِلّة ومن شأن النعمة أنْ تَصدُر عن اليد ومنها تصل إلى المقصودِ بها والموهوبةِ هي منه.

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fusion or the memory of some concept to conceive of an additional principle that could lead you to the wild beast."[34] This is Jurjānī's lexically accurate account, and its definition contains the seeds of his entire critical project. Lexical accuracy is the name for the connection between vocal form and mental content that you make when you are simply following the precedent of other language users. All language users wherever they are can be placers of the lexicon, according to Jurjānī; he says that this is why he deliberately kept the nouns in his definition of lexical accuracy indefinite ("a placement by a placer").[35] This direct connection between vocal form and mental content, enabled by precedent, can be recognized by the absence of any need to rely on any other cognitive component. As soon as some memory of the speech act's context, or some commitment to reading metaphorically, or some surface lack of clarity intervenes, the direct link is broken and the audience starts trying to connect the lexically accurate mental content to some other mental content in order for the speech act to make sense. The resultant mental gymnastics, which can be very simply or tremendously complex, are what make language beautiful.

But the lexicon was always present, anchoring the aesthetically pleasing loops of mental content. The lexicon was, for Jurjānī, the naming precedent of the speech community, constantly in development. It was communal habit that governed the success or failure of metaphor, not divine precedent. So although the prophet Muḥammad had compared the believer to a date palm (for its firm roots, etc.), one cannot simply say, "I saw a date palm" and have it mean that you saw a believer. Jurjānī borrows a phrase from Sībawayhi here: this mistake would make you: "a riddler who has abandoned the sort of speech that goes straight to people's hearts" (Sībawayhi had been talking about declensions of case and elided verbs, whereas Jurjānī was talking about metaphor, but the invective proved attractive).[36]

How did Jurjānī conceive of this lexicon's functioning? In the *Asrār*, Jurjānī provided an answer through an analogy to changes of costume. He was explaining how metaphors always had an underlying comparison, even in the absence of a particle such as "like" or "as," and this explanation relied on the concept

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34 Jurjānī 1954, 325.7–11:
فانظُرْ إلى قولك الأسدُ تُريد به السبعَ فإنك تَراه يؤدّي جميعَ شرائطه لأنك قد أردتَ به ما تَعلم أنه وُقِع له في وضْعِ واضعِ اللغة وكذلك تَعلم أنه غيرُ مستندٍ في هذا الوقوع إلى شيءٍ غير السبع أيْ لا يَحتاج أنْ يُتصوَّر له أصلٌ أَدّاه إلى السبع مِن أجلِ التِباسٍ بينهما ومُلاحَظة.

35 Jurjānī 1954, 325.11–14:
وهذا الحُكمُ إذا كانتْ الكلمةُ حادثةً ولو وُضِعتْ اليومَ متى كان وضعُها كذلك وكذلك الأعلامُ وذلك أنّي قلتُ ما وَقَعتْ له في وضعِ واضعٍ أو مُواضعةٍ على التنكير ولم أقل في وضعِ الواضع الذي ابتدأ اللغةَ أو في المواضعة اللغوية.

36 Jurjānī 1954, 227.4–5; Sībawayhi 2000, 1:308.7:
إنّ مَن رام مِثل هذا كان كما قال صاحبُ الكتاب مُلْغِزاً تاركاً لكلامِ الناس الذي يَسبِق إلى أَفئدَتهم.

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of accuracy (*ḥaqīqa*).[37] The single noun, he wrote, is a shape that indicates the class of a thing. It is like the clothing of kings, or of market-folk. You can take off those clothes, remove every indication that a person belongs to the market or the monarchy, and then dress each in the clothes of the other, leaving the audience unable to perceive the change without external corroboration. If you do this, then you have borrowed the shape and clothes of market-folk or kings, and done so "accurately."[38] If, however, you do not completely denude the person of every single mental content that indicates their status, and some indication remains that the person is in fact a king or from the market, then you have not accurately borrowed the clothes or the shape of the noun. The metaphor depends on the accuracy: all the clothes have to change in order for the audience to be forced to look outside the syntax; this is how metaphors work. There is also a difference between the way a noun behaves and the way a garment of clothing behaves: while the garment is a single thing that can have distinguishing properties, the shape of a noun actually determines a group of things together, and it is this group of mental contents that indicates the class of thing shaped by the noun.[39] Garments of clothing do not make metaphors, nouns make metaphors.

What Jurjānī has done here is explain how his accurate lexical placement works. Nouns indicate groups of mental contents, and if a noun is used to refer to the whole group of mental contents, then it is being used accurately. The lexically accurate single noun was therefore a type of connection between vocal form and mental content in which a vocal form indicated all the mental contents that precedent had associated with that noun. What this means is that a noun can be used in a make-believe and metaphorical way, but still be considered accurate because it is still indicating its full set of mental contents. We can think of Jurjānī's mental contents as bundles of qualities and ideas that are attached to vocal forms by precedent. If the whole bundle is there in the audience's mind, then the word remains accurate, however unreal the image.

This maintenance of the accurate account in a metaphor is what often gives metaphors their strength. Jurjānī ends this passage with the following example: "if someone hears you say 'Zayd is a lion' and fails to imagine that you intend lion accurately, then the name of lion will not adhere to Zayd, and you will not have

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37 Jurjānī 1954, 300.5–301.2.

38 Jurjānī 1954, 300.9–10:

كنتَ قد أَعَرْتَه هيئةَ الملك وَزِيّه على الحقيقة.

39 Jurjānī 1954, 300.15–16:

وإنما اعتبِرْ الهيئةَ وهي تَحصل بمجموع أشياء وذلك أنّ الهيئة هي التي يُشبِه حالُها حالَ الاسم لأنّ الهيئة تَخصّ جِنساً دُون جنسٍ كما أنّ الاسم كذلك والثوبُ على الإطلاق لا يَفعل ذلك إلا بخصائص تَقترِن به وتُراعَى معه.

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borrowed it for Zayd in a sound and complete fashion."[40] Metaphors depend on the accurate account remaining in play, but Jurjānī's accurate account is not a fixed and curated dictionary connection. It is rather a value that attaches to the connection made in a speech act between the vocal form of a noun and a collection of mental contents. The full bundle of mental contents that is attached to the vocal form "lion" must remain in play when we compare Zayd to a lion because he is brave: if only the bravery is in play then we are just using "lion" as a noun that means "brave," and the image is not a metaphor. The audience has to imagine that you mean "lion" accurately in order for the image to work.

Jurjānī's starting point had been that established by preceding generations of scholars: going beyond the lexicon (*majāz*) is what happens when someone uses a vocal form and intends mental content not its own.[41] And the choice to be lexically accurate or go beyond the lexicon was the speaker's; a factually or doctrinally incorrect statement could still be "accurate for the person who said it."[42] Jurjānī wrote that going beyond the lexicon was a broad category that encompassed metaphor (*istiʿāra*), metonymy (*kināya*), and analogy (*tamthīl*),[43] and this had naturally led critics to associate it with aesthetic quality: "always more eloquent (*ablagh*) than lexical accuracy."[44] But the situation was not that simple (see Heinrichs).[45] "It has been our custom to say about the difference between lexical accuracy and going beyond the lexicon the following: lexical accuracy is when the vocal form keeps to its place in the lexicon, and going beyond is when it ceases to be in that place and is used somewhere other than its lexical placement."[46] This is how Ibn Sīnā used *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*, as we saw above. But what happens is in fact the complete opposite, writes Jurjānī: when we call a brave man a lion, we have not completely moved the vocal form "lion" away from its lexical meaning, what we have done is claim that the man is included in the mental content of

40 Jurjānī 1954, 300.17–301.1:
فإذا كان السامعُ قولَك زيدٌ أسدٌ لا يَتوهّم أنك قصدتَ أسداً على الحقيقة لم يكن الاسمُ قد لَحِقَه ولم تكن قد أَعَرْتَه إيّاه إعارةً صحيحةً.

41 Jurjānī 1992, 293.4:
ذكرتَ الكلمةَ وأنتَ لا تُريد معناها.

42 Jurjānī 1954, 356.1–3:
[من حيث] أَطْلَقَه بِجهله وعَماه (...) لا يُوصف بالمجاز ولكنْ يقال عِند قائله أنه حقيقة وهو كذب وباطل.

43 Jurjānī 1992, 393.6–7:
هذه المعاني التي هي الاستعارةُ والكِناية والتمثيل وسائر ضروب المجاز.

44 Jurjānī 1992, 367.12, 427.3–4:
وأن المجازُ يكون أبداً أَبْلَغَ مِن الحقيقة.

45 Heinrichs 2016, 252–257.

46 Jurjānī 1992, 366.13–15:
وذاك أنّ العادة قد جرتْ بأنْ يقال في الفرْق بين الحقيقة والمجاز إنّ الحقيقة أنْ يُقرَّ اللفظُ على أصله في اللغة والمجاز أنْ يُزال عن مَوضعه ويُستعمَل في غيرِ ما وُضِع له.

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"lion." The metaphor is in the predication, not the word itself. The vocal form "lion" still means "lion," because it is clearly invalid to imagine that the speaker of the phrase "he is a lion" meant only and exactly "he is brave." There must be more to what the speaker meant than simply "he is brave."[47]

Jurjānī had abandoned the established consensus that lexical accuracy was a stable category of reference, and that going beyond the lexicon was constituted by any and all deviations from that category. Instead, lexical accuracy was a zone or principle that anchored and caused affect. It was not a hermetically sealed category. When we say "the man is a lion," the lexically accurate mental content of that fearsome beast is still in play (cf. Heinrichs).[48] What anchors the metaphor is the bundle of accurate mental contents for "lion," which includes the strength and fearlessness of the animal.[49] This new way of looking at the categories of lexical accuracy and going beyond the lexicon meant that Jurjānī could no longer sustain the taxonomical clarity that had led scholars to say that any elision or abbreviation was a departure from the lexicon. Such extraneous alterations in the vocal forms had no significance for Jurjānī, they did not involve the intent to communicate extra mental content.[50] What interested Jurjānī was images. Images are sentences or clauses, predications or affirmations in which the poet claims that something is something else: he is a lion, or she is a gazelle. On the level of the sentence, there is no lexical accuracy because the person in question is not actually a lion or a gazelle. But on the level of the individual word, there is lexical accuracy because the poet intends the whole bundle of mental contents that precedent has connected to the vocal form "lion" or "gazelle" to be in play. Lexical accuracy therefore helps explain why images create more affect than factual statements: it is the combination of loss of accuracy on the sentence level with maintenance of accuracy on the word level that makes "he is a lion" more beautiful than "he is brave."

Jurjānī used the standard example of "he is a lion" to establish his theory of lexical accuracy, predication, and metaphor. But the goal of this theory was not to explain such commonplace statements. The target of his criticism was the most

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47 Jurjānī 1992, 367.2–10:
فإنّ الأمر بعدُ على خلافه وذاك أنّا إذا حقّقنا لم نجِد لفظَ أسدٍ قد استُعمِلَ على القطْعِ والبتّ في غيرِ ما وُضِع له (...) فالتجوُّزُ في أنْ ادّعَيتَ للرجل أنه في معنى الأسد (...) وهذا إنْ أنتَ حصّلتَ [فهو] تَجوُّزٌ مِنك في معنى اللفظ لا اللفظِ وإنما يكون اللفظُ مُزالاً بالحقيقة عن مَوضعه ومنقولاً عمّا وُضِع له أنْ لو كنتَ تجِد عاقلاً يقول هو أسدٌ وهو لايُضمِر في نفسه تشبيهاً له بالأسد ولا يُريد إلا ما يريده إذا قال هو شُجاعٌ وذلك ما لا يُشكُّ في بطلانه.

48 Heinrichs 2016, 280.

49 Jurjānī 1992, 367.5–6:
أنه في معنى الأسد وأنه كأنه هو في قوة قلبه وشدة بطشه وفي أن الخوف لا يخامره والذعر لا يعرض له.

50 See Heinrichs 2016, 278. Jurjānī 1954, 384.11–14:
وذلك أن حقيقة الزيادة في الكلمة أن تعرى من معناها وتذكر ولا فائدة لها سوى الصلة ويكون سقوطها وثبوتها سواء ومحال أن يكون ذلك مجاز لأن المجاز أن يراد بالكلمة غير ما وضِعت له في الأصل.

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famous and complex images of Classical Arabic poetry. Let us take the toolbox we have assembled in the paragraphs above and turn to the make-believe metaphor (*istiʿāra takhyīliyya*), and a subdivision thereof in which the poet pretends that neither metaphor nor any points of actual comparison are relevant any longer. The poem is now functioning in a wholly imaginary, but still lexically accurate, sphere. When Abū Tammām (d. 845) wrote in an elegy for a general that:

> *He rose so high that*
> *the ignorant thought*
> *that up in the sky*
> *he had something to do*.[51]

He was pretending to forget the underlying comparison of physical ascent with increased social status, and was instead constructing a new comparison in the sphere of make-believe. Without the pretending-to-forget, the image has no impact.[52] Jurjānī was dealing at this point in the *Asrār* with a phrase from a poem by Farazdaq (d. 730):

> *My father is the more praiseworthy of the two rains…*[53]

Jurjānī first identified the absence of an explicit comparison made between the bountiful behavior of the poet's forefather and the bountiful impact of the rain, as if "it was not even in the poet's mind that the phrase went beyond the lexicon."[54] The poet also appears to assume that the similarity of forefather and bounteous rain is well-established and well-known. Then, Jurjānī notes that the specific grammatical structure of the phrase in Arabic forces the audience to imagine two rains together, one of which *is* the forefather. The Arabic syntax makes it very difficult for the audience to think of the forefather and the rain as two separate things (a phrase such as "he is comparable to the rain" would allow this, and thereby create less wonder).[55] It is exactly because it is difficult to get out of the image and

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51 Jurjānī 1954, 279.6; Abū Tammām and al-Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī 1994, 2:200.58:
وَيَصْعَدُ حَتَّى يَظُنَّ ٱلْجَهُوْلُ | بِأَنَّ لَهُ حَاجَةً فِي ٱلسَّمَاءِ

52 Jurjānī 1954, 279.3–8. Cf. translation: Van Gelder and Hammond 2008, 57:
ومِثالُه استعارتُهم العُلُوَّ لزيادة الرجل على غيره في الفضل والقَدْر والسلطان ثم وَضْعُهم الكلامَ وضْعَ مَن يَذكر عُلوّاً مِن طريق المكان ألا تَرى إلى قولِ أبي تمام ويصعد حتى يظن الجهول بأن له حاجة في السماء فلو لا قَصْدُه أنْ يُنسى التشبيهَ ويَرفعه بجهده (…) لَما كان لهذا الكلام وَجْه.

53 Jurjānī 1954, 293.13; Farazdaq 1987, 329.12:

أبي أحمدُ الغيثين

54 Jurjānī 1954, 293.15–16:

مَن لا يخطر بباله أنه مجازٌ فيه ومتناوِلٌ له من طريق التشبيه.

55 On wonder, see Harb 2020.

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back to the real world of comparison that this kind of poetry has aesthetic value. What matters to Jurjānī is that "departure from the lexicon is joined with lexical accuracy in the compact of the dual form of the noun."[56] Arabic nouns can have singular, dual, or plural forms. In this case, "two rains" is a single lexeme, *ghaythāni*, in which Jurjānī locates a lexically accurate rain, a rain that goes beyond the lexicon, and therefore the poetic affect itself. Next, Jurjānī turned to an image from Buḥturī (d. 897) that praised a patron's lion hunting ability:

> *You are the two hardest fighting lions*
> *I have ever seen at war...*

The patron becomes a lion in the image (beyond the lexicon) while the lion he is fighting remains a lion (lexically accurate).[57]

In these three examples (rising in the sky, the two rains, and the two lions) we can see the framework provided by grammatical structures, in syntax, for the cognitive process catalyzed by poetry; Jurjānī located the power of the image of the two rains *in* the Arabic declension of a noun as dual. We can also see his understanding of lexical accuracy as a dynamic category: these are make-believe images far removed from reality, no-one actually fought with any lions or became a downpour, and yet the epistemological category of lexical accuracy remains in play. It anchors Jurjānī's analyses. A make-believe situation can itself be read as containing accurate accounts; the poet creates a new accuracy when he makes a man into a lion that actually fights another lion. Language remains accurate throughout, even when the real world fades away and imagination takes hold. The structures of syntax are paramount.

3 Two Meanings at the Same Time?

But what if words meant more than one thing, and the audience didn't know which meaning was intended? Readers who might have grown up with twentieth-century Anglophone poetics may have heard of John Ransom, who famously wrote that ambiguity was when two different readings were possible, or when there was a certain diffuseness in the reference.[58] For him, this was a major part of

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56 Harb 2020, 295.11. Translation of this passage: van Gelder and Hammond 2008, 67–69:
أنْ يُضَمَّ المجازُ إلى الحقيقة في عَقْد التثنية.

57 Jurjānī 1954, 295.13–14; van Gelder and Hammond 2008, 68; Buḥturī 1963–1978, 1:200, line 43:
فَلَمْ أَرَ ضِرْغَامَيْنِ أَصْدَقَ مِنْكُمَا | عِرَاكاً (...) لأنّ أحد الضرغامين حقيقةٌ والآخر مجاز.

58 Ransom 1979, 102, 111.

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what made poetry good, and the attraction of multiple meanings remains part of Anglophone discussions about poetry today. But it should not come as a surprise, in light of the discussions above, that Classical Arabic literary critics were not always comfortable saying that words could refer in diffuse or imprecise ways. When al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (fl. in or before 1018) addressed a version of this question in his work on *badīʿ* (the New Style) he noted that it was controversial: while a majority of "literatteurs and legal scholars" denied that a single vocal form could be used to intend two different mental contents, he sided with the minority position that this was possible. He cited the following verse by Rabīʿa ibn Maqrūm (d. ca. 672) in which the vocal form "water" indicates both a liquid and a place at the same time:[59]

> *Water, its supply tainted, deserted.*
> *The wild beasts dig at its edges.*

The intervention of the critic, the act of identifying two separate mental contents for "water" and labelling them "water" and "place," tells us that Rāghib thought the line was improved by its having two meanings in play at the same time.

Rāghib did not give a technical label to this phenomenon, referring to it as simply "to intend two different things (*maʿnayān*) with a single word (*lafẓ*)."[60] In the methodological introduction to his exegesis, Rāghib devotes a section to this question: "On Whether One Can Intend Two Different Things with a Single Expression."[61] Concerned here with exegesis, rather than poetics, Rāghib is keen to stress that the two different meanings of a word or phrase cannot be mutually contradictory and he cites legal (Shāfiʿī) and grammatical (Sībawayhi) authorities to that effect. His initial examples are pragmatic matters of address: the masculine imperative applied to both men and women; and the Quranic verse "O Prophet

59 Rāghib, *Fī al-Badīʿ*, f.4a.1–7:

ثُمّ اختلفو [كذا] هل يصحُّ أنْ يُرادَ باللفظ الواحد معنَيانِ مختلفانِ فأبَى ذلك كثيرٌ من الأدباء والفقهاء وجَوَّزه بعضُهم وهو الصّحيحُ وعلى ذلك قولُ الشّاعر:

وَمَاءٍ آجِنِ ٱلْجَمَّاتِ قَفْرٍ | تَعَقَّمَ فِي جَوَانِبِهِ ٱلسِّبَاعُ

والمآءُ [كذا] قد يُطلَقُ على مكانه وقد أُريدَ هو ومكانُهُ في البيت لأنّ الآجِنَ من صفةِ المآءِ وقَفْرٌ من صفة المكانِ وقد وُصِفَ بالوصْفَينِ وليس هذا موضِعَ الاستِقصاءِ فيه.

Cf. Translation: Key 2012, 115. Of the line of poetry: Lane (1863–1893), *ʿ-q-m*. On the attribution of this work to Rāghib, see Key 2018, 217 (cf. 12) and Rāghib 2018; 2020.

60 Cf. Bonebakker 1966, 20, citing the related figures of *tawjīh*, *dhū al-wajhayn*, and *al-muḥtamil li-ḍiddayn*.

61 Rāghib 1984, 98–101:

فصل في جواز إرادة المعنيين المختلفين بعبارة واحدة.

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if you divorce your women…" to apply to both the prophet Muhammad and his community.[62] But the next example is poetry:

Their millstones
heavy small bowls
and tranquility
whole water mills measure out the grain for the guests'
ravenous eating.

In this image, the small bowls handed out by the host are actually heavy with grain-based food, but the calm tranquility of the host, unruffled and untiring, is only metaphorically heavy (in the positive sense of being grave, sedate, patient). The poet (Shuqrān al-Salāmānī, fl. ca. 750), uses a single word "heavy" for two different images, each made up of different mental content.[63] The next example in the methodological introduction to Quranic exegesis is the line by Rabīʿa ibn Maqrūm cited above, with the same explanation, and then comes a line by Ibn Harma (d. ca. 786) in which the word "whale" is used for both the mammal and the constellation, and a reminder that people say "the two moons (*qamarān*)" for the sun and moon.[64] Rāghib believes in ambiguity, but without confusion. Words can do double duty as a matter of regular syntax, or in order to create an image in poetry.

In the next passage, Rāghib makes three technical points. The first is that the vocal form in question must have two mental contents connected to it, one of which is accurate according to lexical precedent, and the other of which has been moved from that precedent. This is the same stable/altered binary that was used by Ibn Sīnā, a binary that in the section above we saw Jurjānī complicate. This allows a speaker to intend *both* mental contents at the same time; it is not the case that a *single* mental content is intended in two ways simultaneously.[65] Words can't mean one thing in different ways at the same time, but they can mean

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62 Rāghib 1984, 98:
والدلالةُ على جواز ذلك قولُهم إفعَلوا في مخاطبة الرجال والنساء(...) وقولُه تعالى يٰأَيُّها النَّبِيُّ إذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ وعناه والمؤمنين.

63 Rāghib 1984, 98–99:
وقال الشاعر:
ثِقالُ الجِفانِ والحُلومِ رحاهم | رَحَى الماءِ يَكتالون كَيلاً عَذَمْذَما
فوصْفُ الجفانِ بالثقل حقيقةٌ ووصْفُ الحلومِ به مجازٌ وقد نظمهما بلفظ واحد.

64 Rāghib 1984, 99.

65 Rāghib 1984, 100:
فإنْ قيل إنّ ذلك لا يصح من حيث أنّ المتكلم به يكون مُريداً استعمالَ اللفظ فيما وُضِعَ له والعدولَ به عن المَوضوع له في حالة واحدة وذانك أمرانِ متنافيانِ في المراد وهذه عمدةٌ من منعِ جوازِ ذلك قيل إنّ ذلك إنما يتنافي إذا وُضِعَ لفظٌ فاستُعمِلَ في معنىً واحدٍ على أنّه منقولٌ إليه عن غيره ومستعملٌ في موضعه [أمّا إذا استُعمل في أحدِ معنِيَيه] لا على النقل بل على الوضع له وفي الآخر على النقل إليه صَحّ إرادتُهما معاً.

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two things in different ways at the same time. It is at moments like this where we notice the difference between our Anglophone vocabulary for talking about "meaning," "words," "things," "ideas," and the Classical Arabic vocabulary of *lafẓ* and *maʿnā*. The Arabic pairing is a more minimalist account of how language works, and it also relies on the stable component of *maʿnā*: mental contents to which speakers share access through language.[66]

Rāghib's second point is that a speaker does not necessarily need to be aware of the relationship of their words to lexical precedent in order for their speech act to function.[67] This is an interesting observation, and one that shifts the responsibility for determining ambiguity or double meaning away from the speaker and towards the audience, the critic, and the exegete. His third point is that every single vocal form used in this way to communicate two mental contents always has a third more general mental content that subsumes and combines the two options. In the case of the expression, "fear the lion and the donkey," the intent can be reconstructed as: "fear the brave animal and the stupid animal." The third general mental content that allows the speech act to work here is "animal," a category that applies equally to both lions, donkeys, and humans.[68] This is another example of basic Arabic Aristotelian assumptions, in this case about categories and naming, being used across Islamicate scholarship, just as we saw Jurjānī use simple structures of logical predication for his analysis of the poetic image.

4 *Ibhām*

In the discussion above, Rāghib never talks about confusion or uncertainty. His assumption is that the audience, perhaps with the help of the critic, is always able to know what the speaker or the poet means. But that is not the case with *ibhām*, a rhetorical figure in which the meaning is unclear. A literal translation of *ibhām* would be "to make confused or vague," and few scholars saw this as a good thing. For example, Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390) wrote about the figure *al-īḍāḥ baʿda al-ibhām* (clarification *after* confusion), a figure which is part of the

66 I discuss this translation problem throughout Key 2018, especially 58–69.

67 Rāghib 1984, 100:

ثم ليس من شرط المتكلم أنْ يخطر بباله كيفيةَ وَضْعِ اللفظ من حقيقة ومجاز.

68 Rāghib 1984, 100:

وأيضاً فما مِن لفظٍ مستعمَلٍ في شيئَينِ حقيقةً فيهما أو مجازاً في أحدهما إلاّ ويَجمعهما معنىً عامٌ لهما على طريقةِ مَن يُراعي مناسبةَ الألفاظ نحو أنْ يقال اتَّقِ الأسدَ والحمارَ ويَعني بالأسد الحيوان الجرئ وبالحمار الحيوان البليد وذلك متناولٌ للبهيمة والإنسان معاً فصحّ أنْ يُرادا كما يقال الحيوانُ الجريء والحيوان البليد.

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larger category of prolixity (*iṭnāb*) and in which the feeling of being prevented from understanding is painful but the moment of realization is sweet.[69]

Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī (d. 1434) is one of the few critics to talk positively about *ibhām*. He distinguishes it from *tawriya* (which we will discuss below) by saying that whereas *tawriya* is clear in the end, *ibhām* is never clear: it is always ambiguous.[70] *Ibhām* is when someone's words communicate two different sets of contradictory mental content without providing a clue as to which is intended.[71] This is quite different from the kind of ambiguity Rāghib was discussing, where he was careful to say that contradictory content could not be intended in a single speech act. And indeed, the context in which Ibn Ḥijja is working was quite different. Rather than the confluence of exegesis and poetics, Ibn Ḥijja was writing as a professional bureaucrat interested in the aesthetics of wordplay. The book of literary criticism in which he discusses *ibhām* is structured as a commentary on his own *badīʿīya* poem. These poems were an increasingly popular genre in which each line both contained a rhetorical figure and named that figure.[72] Ibn Ḥijja looked at ambiguity – *ibhām* – as a performative mode in which a speaker wished to conceal their intent. Indeed, he states that the figure is specific to the genres of praise and blame: the audience can't tell whether someone is being blamed or praised, and this is useful for the speaker in their context.[73]

An example Ibn Ḥijja particularly likes comes from Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 1349):

Would that fate had intervened
between me and your counsel
we would both have been relieved
of the pain of suspicion.

This was intended both for a specific patron, and to ensure the patron wouldn't know for sure whether or not he was being criticized.[74] The figure of *ibhām* is about ambiguity, but that ambiguity is here on the conceptual rather than the

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69 Taftāzānī 2013, 492.

70 Ibn Ḥijja 2005, 2:124:

بل الامرُ بينهما [المعنيين] مُبهمٌ ولا يُعلم مَن هو المقصود منهما وهذا هو الفرقُ بين الإبهام والتورية إذ المراد من التورية المعنى البعيد المَورَّى عنه بالقريب.

71 Ibn Ḥijja 2005, 2:110:

وهو أنْ يقول المتكلّم كلاماً مُبهماً يحتمل معنَيَين متضادَّينِ لا يتميَّز أحدُهما عن الآخر.

72 For example, Bauer 2006.

73 Ibn Ḥijja 2005, 2:110:

والإبهامُ يختصُّ بالفنون كالمديح والهجاء وغيرهما ولكن لا يُفهم من ألفاظه مدحٌ ولا هجاءٌ البتّة بل يكون لفظه صالحاً للأمرَينِ.

74 Ibn Ḥijja 2005, 2:123:

لَيْتَ المنيَّةَ حالَتْ دُونَ نَصْحِكَ | فيَستريحُ كِلانا مِن أَذَى التُّهَمِ

هذا البيت ليس له نظير في هذا الباب (...) استعانَ بها الشاعرُ في إبهام بيته على زيد بن الخيَّاط.

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linguistic level; in English we would say that with *ibhām* what a poem *means* is ambiguous whereas what its words say is clear.

5 *Istikhdām*

With *istikhdām*, we are back into language and the way syntax and vocabulary can both obscure and clarify. *Istikhdām* is when a word (*lafẓ*) can indicate two different mental contents (*maʿnayān*) and the poet uses each in sequence; the second time substituting a pronoun for the *lafẓ*. Both meanings are in play at the same time.[75] The figure of *istikhdām* relies on syntax and the time it takes a reader or listener to finish the sentence. For example:[76]

> *When the sky comes down*
> *on a tribe's land then*
> *we graze it*
> *even if*
> *the tribe is angry.*

The word for sky (*al-samāʾ*, referring here to rain) is the subject that comes down in the first clause, and it is then referred to by an object pronoun in the second clause (*-hu*, "it"). But in its second appearance as the object pronoun, the word *al-samāʾ* has changed its meaning; it now refers (perfectly in accordance with both sense and the dictionary) to the herbage that comes up after rain, rather than the rain itself.[77] In the vocabulary of Classical Arabic poetics used here by Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (d. 1363), the *lafẓ* "sky" indicates both the *maʿnā* "rain" and the *maʿnā* "herbage."[78] The figure of *istikhdām* enables the literary critic to label this phenomenon and explain that the poet is not saying that cattle are up in the sky

75 Ibn Ḥijja 2005, 2:6:
وهو استعمالُ المعنَيَينِ وهذا هو الفرق بين التورية والاستخدام فإنّ المراد من التورية هو أحدُ المعنيين وفي الاستخدام كلّ من المعنيين مرادٌ.

76 Muʿāwiya ibn Mālik, quoted in Bonebakker 1966, 18–19:
إِذا نَزَلَ السَّماءُ بِأَرْضِ | قَومٍ رَعَيْناهُ وإنْ كانوا غِضابا

77 Bonebakker 1966, 19.

78 Ṣafadī 2014, 221.3–7, 222.7–11, cf. 222.2–3:
أنَّ الاستخدام عبارةٌ عن الاتيانِ بكلمة لها معنَيَيْنِ قد اكتَنَفَتْها كلمتانِ أو تقدّمَتْها أو تأخّرَتْها عنها واستُخدِمَ كلُّ واحدة منهما في أحد ذَينَيك المعنَيَينِ.

Taftāzānī 2013, 653:
الاستخذامُ وهو أنْ يُرادُ بلفظٍ له معنَيانِ (...) أحدُهما (...) ثُم (...) بضميره (...) الآخر.

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grazing on clouds, but rather that the sky has come down to earth, been reconstituted as herbage, and the cattle are grazing on the herbage. This is not a diffuseness in meaning, as Ransom might have it, but rather a tight formal deliniation of the operation of meaning and reference in a poem, dependent on the underlying framework of *lafẓ* and *maʿnā* and on grammatical operations in syntax.

We can use the figure of *istikhdām* to read the line by Rabīʿa ibn Maqrūm cited by Rāghib:"[79]

Water, its supply tainted, deserted.
The wild beasts dig at its edges.

What is the difference between reading this an example of "intending two different things with a single word" versus reading it as *istikhdām*? The answer is syntax: by identifying the second indication as a pronoun, the figure of *istikhdām* locates the action in word order.

6 *Tawriya*

Tawriya is closely related to *istikhdām*. But *tawriya* is when a *lafẓ* has two usages:[80] the poet introduces the *lafẓ* in one context, and then presents the second context that leads the reader to change their mind about what the *lafẓ* had meant. Unlike *istikhdām*, where both meanings are in play at the same time, in *tawriya* the audience changes their mind about the meaning during the time it takes them to hear the sentence. Ṣafadī cites al-Qāḍī ʿĪyāḍ (d. 1149):[81]

As if April gave a selection of her clothes
to December

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79 Rāghib, *Fī al-Badīʿ*, f. 4a.1–7:

وَمَاءٍ آجِنِ ٱلْجَمَّاتِ قَفْرٍ | تَعَقَّمَ فِي جَوَانِبِهِ ٱلسِّبَاعُ

80 Sakkākī 2000, 537:

ومنه الإيهام وهو أن يكون للفظ استعمالان قريبٌ وبعيدٌ فيُذكر لإيهام القريب في الحال إلى أن يَظهر ان المراد به البعيد.

See also Qazwīnī 2003, 266f., and Taftāzānī 2013, 652, where it is noted that Sakkākī called *tawriya* "*īhām*." Cf. Ṣafadī 2014, 201.

81 Ṣafadī, 2014, 202:

لِشَهْرِ كانُونَ أَنواعاً مِن الحُلَلِ | كَأَنَّ نَيسانَ أَهْدَى مِن مَلابِسِهِ
فما تُفَرِّقُ بين الجَدْيِ والحَمَلِ | أَوْ الغَزالةُ مِن طُولِ المَدَى خَرِفَتْ

I have changed the enjambment in an attempt to follow the feeling of wordplay. See also Qazwīnī 2003, 267, where the months are *kānūn* and *tammūz* rather than *nīsān* and *kānūn*.

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Or the gazelle stayed
in Autumn the whole time
So what is the difference
between a goat and a lamb?

Ṣafadī explains that the poet gives us no clue as to whether *ghazāla* means gazelle or the sun; no antelope or solar characteristics are mentioned to give us a clue, and both *jady* and *ḥamal* can indicate either a month or an animal, making for a pure *tawriya*. The alternative reading is:

As if April gave a selection of her clothes
to December
Or the sun stayed
in Autumn the whole time
So what is the difference
between October and March?

The key action of the *tawriya* lies in the time it takes the audience to re-adjust the meaning in their minds. Once again, the figure serves to structure what might otherwise appear ambiguous or diffuse. In both these figures, the meaning develops as the audience moves through the syntax of the poetic statements. *Tawriya* explains how a *lafẓ* can indicate one *maʿnā*, and then as the audience progresses through the image, another *maʿnā* comes into play. This is not ambiguity as Ransom understood it. Rather, it is a recognition on the part of literary critics that they could use syntax time to explain apparent contradictions of reference.

In the lines below, a hero loses his sword and is killed; the poet suggesting that potential victims had sought to sow dissent between sword and swordsman. Qays and Yemen were famously antagonistic tribes, while Yemen was so celebrated for sword manufacture that any good sword could be called "Yemeni." Does the word "Yemeni" mean "good sword" here, or does it mean "from Yemen"? Mutanabbī (d. 965):[82]

Shayb's sword left his hand. They'd stayed together
through times good and bad. T'was as if the necks
of his victims asked his sword: "How are you
Yemeni when your owner is from Qays?

82 Qazwīnī 2003, 146.13; Bonebakker 1966, 70:

بِرَغْمِ شَبيبٍ فارَقَ السّيفَ كفُّهُ | وكانا على العِلّاتِ يَصطحِبانِ
كَأَنَّ رِقابَ النَّاسِ قالَتْ لِسَيْفِهِ | رَفيقُكَ قَيْسِيٌّ وَأَنْتَ يَمانِي

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The application of the figure of *tawriya* to these lines is, in effect, a critical judgement that there is resolution by the end of the sentence: the audience will have decided what exactly the necks meant to say.[83]

This line was also read by Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1239) as *mughālaṭa maʿnawiyya*: mutually opposing mental content that produces a beautiful effect, usually through use of homonyms.[84] Ibn al-Athīr draws a distinction between the *mughālaṭa maʿnawiyya* and the category of riddles (*bāb al-laghz*). Once again, the figure, in this case *mughālaṭa maʿnawiyya*, is used by the critic in order to get poetry out of the realm of ambiguity or double-meaning and into the realm of managed meaning where a figure explains the mechanism by which an audience realizes which meaning is which: the figure of *mughālaṭa maʿnawiyya* is not a riddle but "a single explicit idea that comes from the indication of a vocal form whereas riddles come via conjecture and guesswork."[85]

7 Syntax Time

There are two basic approaches to ambiguity in these notes: thinking of ambiguity in terms of single words (Ibn Sīnā and Rāghib); and thinking of ambiguity in terms of syntax (*istikhdām* and *tawriya*). The figure of *tawriya*, like Taftāzānī's *al-īḍāḥ baʿda al-ibhām*, is then primarily about the resolution of ambiguity in syntax. This connection between meaning and syntax was most famously made in the work of ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, whose poetics stresses over and over again that we have to look at language as combinations of words rather than single words. In *Language Between God and the Poets* I suggested that he was influenced in this by Ibn Sīnā's work on the logical syntax of the syllogism.[86] Jurjānī's poetics was a theory of syntax, and it is in the very nature of syntax that the language user moves along the sentence as a series of discrete steps, with their cognitive processes changing along the way.[87] This meant that the passage of time, and the interface of time with mental content, was one of Jurjānī's central dynamics.

Time controlled ambiguity. Rather than Rāghib's assumption that a vocal form could indicate two mental contents at the same time, when Jurjānī dis-

83 Ṣafadī notes that some scholars identify these lines as *istikhdām*, but he decides that this is not the case because the condition of *istikhdām* [the pronoun] is not met. Ṣafadī 2014, 230–231.

84 Ibn al-Athīr 1959–1965, 3:76–77.

85 Ibn al-Athīr 1959–1965, 3:79:
وذلك معنىً ظاهرٌ يُستخرج من دلالة اللفظ عليه واللغز هو الذي يُستخرج عن طريق الحزْر والحدْس لا من دلالة اللفظ عليه.

86 Key 2018, 214.

87 The following section is adapted from Key 2018, 216–219.

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cussed a similar phenomenon in the *Dalāʾil,* he wrote that an indefinite noun at the start of a phrase could frame the audience's response by telling them that what followed would fall into a certain class of thing. So if one heard: "only evil makes a fanged animal snarl," one would be alerted upon hearing "evil" to the fact that the speaker intended to talk about something, not yet precisely defined, that was not good.[88] The use of a definite article here would have produced different, albeit equally inauspicious, mental content: "only *the* evil." But, wrote Jurjānī, one could also use an indefinite noun in a situation where the intent was not to frame what followed as belonging to a certain class of things. If you say, "Did a man come, or two men?" then the mental content that you intend with "a man" is not the class of men. With "evil," the indefinite vocal form leads the audience to consider a class of evil things. But with "a man," the indefinite vocal form leads the audience to consider a single undefined man. As Jurjānī put it: "The vocal form can indicate two matters, and then the intent can determine one of them and exclude the other. The excluded matter, because it is not part of the intent, becomes as if it is no longer part of the indication of the vocal form."[89]

Grammar provides options, and speakers choose between them. Syntax has rules. Although a vocal form can be potentially ambiguous, when the mind of the audience comes to the end of the sentence, there is no space for ambiguity or diffusion. The gap between the potential ambiguity and the eventual certainty is a gap in time. Time was what Jurjānī's theory of creative syntax exploited. He disagreed with Rāghib about the possibility of two mental contents being in play at the same time. Whereas both Rāghib and Ibn Sīnā used a model of static and paradigmatically lexical connections between vocal form and mental content, Jurjānī's model of creative syntax enabled the poet to negotiate ambiguity as the sentence developed.

Arabic grammar had an established discourse about elision, the functions it performed, and the contexts in which it occurred. But Jurjānī connected elision to poetic affect. He knew that this was a theoretical intervention, writing that a serious reader of his monograph would come to see that when "I emphasize and elevate elision to a position where it is almost magic and overwhelms the mind,

88 Jurjānī 1992, 143.9, 144.6–14:

واعلمْ أنَّا لم نُرِدْ بما قلناه مِن أنه إنما حَسُنَ الابتداءُ بالنكرة في قولهم (شَرٌّ أهرَّ ذا ناب) لأنه أُرِيدَ به الجنسُ أَنَّ معنى شرٌّ والشرُّ سواءٌ وإنما أَرَدْنا أَنَّ الغرض من الكلام أنْ نُبيّن أنَّ الذي أَهرَّ ذا الناب هو مِن جِنسِ الشرّ لا جنسِ الخير.

Cf. Sībawayhi 2000, 1:329.9–10.

89 Jurjānī 1992, 144.16–145.2:

وعكسُ هذا أنك إذا قلتَ أَرجلٌ أتاك أم رجلانِ كان القصدُ مِنك إلى كونه واحداً دون كونه رجلاً فاعرفْ ذلك أصْلاً وهو أنه قد يكون في اللفظ دليلٌ على أمرَين ثم يقع القصدُ إلى أحدهما دون الآخر فيصير ذلك الآخر بأنْ لم يَدخل في القصد كأنه لم يَدخل في دلالة اللفظ.

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the situation is in fact as I say it is."[90] It was an intervention that, as Baalbaki has shown, consciously expanded grammar into aesthetics.[91] One particular short section on elision in the *Dalāʾil* starts with a deliberate irony of presentation. With a rhetorical flourish, Jurjānī wrote that this section was only for those who were really interested in the minutiae of poetics and motivated to discover how reason works. Such people, his desired audience, "do not race to the first thing that occurs to their minds."[92] For theory requires a slower reading process. But the theory that he is talking about in this section is about the aesthetic impact of the first thing that occurs to one's mind! Jurjānī had an ethics of reading for theory and criticism that valorized slow, iterative process through long books, yet here that criticism is an ethics of reading sentences that values the speed with which images present themselves. (On that speed, see Harb and Abu Deeb.)[93] In this section, Jurjānī took the following image from Buḥturī:[94]

> *How often you defend me from*
> *the burden of each new event*
> *intensity of days that cut*
> *to the bone.*

He focused on the phrase "cut to the bone." He wrote that in the elision of "flesh" ("cut [the flesh] to the bone," the phrase not having in Arabic quite the ubiquity it has now in English) there was a "wonderful and glorious something extra."[95]

The impact of elision came from the steps of reasoned imagination that the listener no longer had to take. If the poet had included the flesh and written, "intensity of days that cut the flesh to the bone," then the audience would have imagined, after hearing the word "flesh" and before hearing the words "cut to the bone," that the cutting of flesh in question was a matter of flesh wounds, or skinning, or some other way in which flesh can be cut. Then when they heard the words "to the bone," they would have realized what type of cutting was

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90 Jurjānī 1992, 171.5–7:
أنّ الذي قلتُ في شأنِ الحذف وفي تفخيمِ أمره والتنويه بذكره وأنّ مَأْخَذه مَأْخَذٌ يُشبه السحرَ ويُبهر الفكرَ كالذي قلت.

91 Baalbaki 1983, 16.

92 Jurjānī 1992, 171.1–5:
لِمَنْ نَظَرَ نَظَرَ المُتثبِّت (...) ولا يَعْدو الذي يَقع في أوّلِ الخاطر.

93 Abu Deeb 1979, 255; Harb 2020, 99f.

94 Buḥturī 1963–1978, 3:2018, line 43:
وَكَمْ ذُدْتَ عَنِّي مِنْ تَحامُلِ حادِثٍ | وَسَوْرَةِ أَيَّامٍ حَزَزْنَ إِلى ٱلْعَظْمِ

95 Jurjānī 1992, 171.14–15:
أنّ في مَجيئه به محذوفاً وإسقاطِه له مِن النُطق وتركِه في الضمير مَزيةً عجيبةً وفائدةً جليلة.

Qazwīnī 2003, 91.

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intended. But the power of elision in this case was to "free the listener from that imagination, to make the mental content occur at the first moment and to allow the listener to conceive in his soul from the very beginning that the cut went through the flesh and nothing stopped it until it reached the bone."[96] This was the best kind of conception for Jurjānī, imagery that was in the soul and more eloquent than if it had been indicated by vocal form, and yet imagery that relied entirely on syntax creating meaning in time. His literary criticism took Ibn Sīnā's logical vocabulary of mental contents conceived in the soul and turned that vocabulary to the diagnosis of affect across the time it took to read a sentence.

8 Conclusion

These notes have told a story of engagement with ambiguity from Rāghib at the very end of the tenth century, to the eleventh-century contemporaries Ibn Sīnā and Jurjānī, then Ibn al-Athīr in the thirteenth century, Ṣafadī and Taftāzānī in the fourteenth, and finally Ibn Ḥijja in the fifteenth century. We have seen how epistemologically close the disciplines of logic and poetics were when it came to ambiguity in single words and categories, and then how syntax came to define the way literary critics thought about ambiguity in poetry. We did encounter ambiguous speech acts, but only in the performance of patronage relationships. When it came to language, the sort of ambiguity sought by Ransom was something to be figured out and explained away. Language was beautiful, complex, and effective enough on its own.

96 Jurjānī 1992, 172.6–8:
لِيُبْرئ السامعَ مِن هذا الوهم ويَجعله بحيث يقع المعنى منه في أُنُف الفهم ويتصوَّر في نفسه مِن أوّلِ الأمر أنّ الحزّ مَضى في اللحم حتى لم يَردَّه إلا العظم.

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Tony Street

The Reception of *Pointers* 1.6 in Thirteenth-Century Logic: On the Expression's Signification of Meaning

Introduction

This volume is loosely limited to the period from 800 to 1200.[1] I am grateful for the latitude the editors have given me in writing the following paper; many of the texts I consult and quote come from the late thirteenth century. They are, however, all directed to a body of doctrine that was first formulated by Avicenna in the first half of the eleventh century. The thirteenth-century treatment of that doctrine was shaped by two books written by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210) in the late twelfth century, books written to question the rigour of many of Avicenna's formulations. The thirteenth-century texts quoted here are, in short, part of a process of reception of a doctrine developed and then challenged through the last two centuries of the period on which the volume focuses. Specifically, the texts are devoted to an account of a fundamental aspect of the philosophy of language, namely, the relation of signification (*dalāla*) between an expression (*lafẓ*) and the meaning (*maʿnan*) or – nearly always – meanings (*maʿānin*) it signifies.

My study of these texts is intended primarily as a contribution to our understanding of the reception of Avicenna's logic in thirteenth-century texts on

1 Acknowledgements: My thanks to Nadja Germann, who first asked me to contribute to her excellent project on philosophy of language in the Islamic world up to 1200, and then watched without too much dismay as I spent most of my time in the thirteenth century. My thanks again to Nadja, and to Mostafa Najafi, for their careful editing of this paper. My interest in these passages was first aroused by a series of three fine papers given by Nora Kalbarczyk in the AHRC-DFG project, Major Issues and Controversies of Arabic Logic and Philosophy of Language (2011–2014). As always, I owe a tremendous amount to Riccardo Strobino for his helpful comments, all of which, along with deep insight, conveyed apoplectic outrage at Rāzī's temerity in questioning the soundness of Avicenna's formulations. Khaled El-Rouayheb shared the relevant section of his transcription of Kātibī's *Jāmiʿ al-Daqāʾiq*; this transcription is the only reason I have made the references to British Library ms. Or. 11201/2 that I have. Mohammad Saleh Zarepour offered guidance on a number of points, as did Asad Ahmed. All these colleagues, along with an anonymous referee, have saved me from many mistakes, and there is no doubt that the resulting paper is less tangled than it would otherwise have been. Earlier drafts of some or all of this paper were presented at gatherings in Freiburg (June 2017), Munich (March 2018), Jerusalem (March 2019), and Tel Aviv (March 2019); I am grateful to the organisers and participants of these meetings.

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logic, though I hope that it also serves a secondary function of introducing elements of a doctrine that plays a central role in Arabic logic after Avicenna.[2] With these goals in mind, I trace the discussion of signification from Avicenna's last statement of the doctrine, in *al-Ishārāt wa-al-Tanbīhāt* (*Pointers and Reminders*, henceforth *al-Ishārāt*),[3] to the version of the doctrine given by Najm al-Dīn al-Kātibī (d. 1277) in *al-Risāla al-Shamsiyya fī al-Qawāʿid al-Manṭiqiyya* (*Epistle on Logical Precepts for Shams al-Dīn,* henceforth the *Shamsiyya*);[4] this allows a sense of the thirteenth-century commentary tradition on Avicenna's logic to emerge, and more especially a sense of the ways each of its members contributed to logical discussions.[5] I provide two appendices, the first of which gives Avicenna's passage along with the sympathetic commentary of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1274),[6] the second, Kātibī's corresponding passage, extended to include the treatment of equivocation (for reasons noted at the end of section 2 below).[7]

I have looked in the past at other aspects of the thirteenth-century reception of Avicenna,[8] and it is clear that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and his followers are the most dynamic agents at work throughout this reception. In the early 1180s Rāzī revised his penetrating critique of Avicenna's logic, *al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī al-Ḥikma wa-al-Manṭiq (The Epitome of Philosophy and Logic*, henceforth the *Mulakhkhaṣ*), and returned soon after to offer a commentary directly on the text of Avicenna's *al-Ishārāt*, the *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* (*Commentary on Pointers*, henceforth the *Sharḥ*).[9] In these texts, Rāzī set out the burning issues to be resolved in understanding and using Avicenna's logic. His disciple Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khūnajī (d. 1248) wrote the first major response to Rāzī's assessment of Avicenna's logic, *Kashf al-Asrār ʿan*

2 The doctrine even finds its way into Roy Mottahedeh's *The Mantle of the Prophet* (at the beginning of chapter 3), and into 18th-century Christian works on logic which otherwise take all their doctrine from European works; see El-Rouayheb 2019, 260–267, at 265, speaking about Buṭrus al-Tūlāwī (d. 1745); see also the remarkable Morel 2018 for a hugely important monograph on this Christian Arab logician. The strange phrase "reception of Avicenna's logic in… texts on logic" is to make clear that my focus differs from Kalbarczyk 2018, even though we often cite the same passages.

3 Ibn Sīnā 1892, 4–5 (=Pointer 1.6); see Text 1.1.

4 Kātibī, text given in Ḥillī 2012; the edition of Ḥillī's commentary on the *Shamsiyya* by Tabrīziyān (Ḥillī 2012) gives in the lemmata the best edition we have of the *Shamsiyya* to date.

5 For those who can't stand the suspense, a summary of the discussions and the changes they heralded is given below at the beginning of Concluding remarks.

6 Text 1.1 with Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's commentary on it (Ṭūsī 1960, 187–188).

7 From Ḥillī 2012; reasons for choice of edition given in note 4 discussed in note 80 to Appendix 2.

8 The treatments of conversion (Street 2014), the modal syllogistic, and the subject term of a premise in a modal syllogism (Street 2016a).

9 For dating Rāzī's works, see Shihadeh 2006, 7–8.

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Ghawāmiḍ al-Afkār (*Uncovering Secrets under the Obscurities of Thoughts*, henceforth the *Kashf*). An admirer rather than a disciple of Khūnajī, Kātibī was none the less known as a direct recipient of the Rāzian tradition – he was referred to by his commentator al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī (d. 1325) as "one of the followers of Fakhr al-Dīn"[10] – , writing commentaries on both Rāzī's *Mulakhkhaṣ*[11] and Khūnajī's *Kashf*.[12] He also wrote a major independent text on logic, *Jāmiʿ al-Daqāʾiq*, not yet published.[13] At this point, however, Kātibī is still most famous for his *Shamsiyya*, a short text widely adopted for introducing law students to logic. Objections were raised against the Rāzians by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and his student Ḥillī, among others, but the extraordinary success of the *Shamsiyya* meant that the Rāzians had won the day, at least in terms of the logic that would henceforth be studied in a *madrasa* education. I hope that the material covered in this paper moves us one step closer to understanding why the *Shamsiyya* was so widely taken to convey the neatest reception of Avicenna's logic.

1 Avicenna on Signification: Basic Notions

In broad terms, the problem of signification deals with the way meanings are conveyed. As treated by Avicenna and his followers, the discussion focuses above all on the way meanings are conveyed by someone uttering an expression to someone else familiar with the conventions of the language,[14] so it is a topic that lies at the heart of the philosophy of language. One way to introduce the topic – followed by Ḥillī – was to say that the signification (*dalāla*) of a meaning may be by a gesture or by a verbal expression. Some expressions signify meanings without being imposed to signify those meanings, whether naturally (*bi-al-ṭabʿ*) like "ouch!" for

10 Ḥillī 2012, 183.4.

11 The editors of the *Mulakhkhaṣ* (Rāzī 2002), Qārāmalikī and Asgharī-Nidjād, draw extensively on Kātibī's commentary on the *Mulakhkhaṣ* for their notes; by this they demonstrate how informative the commentary is, pinning down as it does many of Rāzī's sources.

12 I am grateful to the Cambridge Humanities Research Grant scheme (2017–2018), which provided a grant for "Arabic Logic: 1180–1330," funding Mohammad Saleh Zarepour to transcribe part of ms. Süleymaniya: Carullah 1417, a good witness of Kātibī's *Sharḥ Kashf al-Asrār*; the manuscript is described in El-Rouayheb's introduction to Khūnajī 2010, liii, ms. 9.

13 Khaled El-Rouayheb is preparing an edition; he has sent me a transcription of the passage relevant to this study, which has made it infinitely easier for me to use British Library ms. Or. 11201/2.

14 So the part of the theory covered in this paper does not concern the institution or acquisition of language.

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pain, and “aw f…” for annoyance, or by mediation of intellect (*bi-al-ʿaql*), which is to say, by inference: an articulated sound signifies a voice, in that even from a word we do not understand, we grasp a meaning, that someone has pronounced the word. As noted, most philosophical discussion is directed to the case in which an expression (*lafẓ*) has been imposed (*mawḍūʿ*) for a given meaning (*maʿnan*); in this case, the sense of “an expression’s signifying a meaning” is “the meaning understood by one who is conversant with the imposition from the expression when it is uttered or brought to mind” (*fahm al-maʿnā min al-lafẓ ʿinda iṭlāqihi aw takhayyulihi bi-al-nisba ilā man huwa ʿālim bi-al-waḍʿ*).[15] Even though this kind of signification originates in a deliberate act of imposition, understanding it precisely may still be problematic. Some problems come about because expressions can be imposed for more than a single meaning, either by the original imposition (*waḍʿ*) of the first Positor (*wāḍiʿ*), or by the later convention (*iṣṭilāḥ*) of a group of language users. Other problems arise due to the containment (*taḍammun*) of one meaning in another, or the implication (*iltizām*) of one meaning by another (without the implicate meaning being contained in the implicant meaning).[16] An expression imposed to signify one meaning also signifies necessarily meanings contained in or inseparable from that meaning, and so the question arises as to the precise criteria to distinguish among these three significations and how far they ramify from the meaning for which the expression was imposed. A solution to these issues turns out to be necessary if an account – at any rate, an Avicennan account – is to be given of what signifies the quiddity, or, in other words, what signifies what the thing is.

Such is the cluster of problems activated by Avicenna in *al-Ishārāt* 1.6, “On the Expression’s Signification of Meaning.” Like so many other passages in the

15 I take this summary from a commentary on the *Shamsiyya* (Ḥillī 2012, 195.1–9), which represents a fairly standard view at the end of the period I consider here (and is clearly not exhaustive even of the few matters covered); for translation and analysis of the passage, see Kalbarczyk 2018, 146–148. All points were however vastly contested; Kātibī in his *Sharḥ Kashf al-Asrār* (7b.21–22) settles ultimately on “the meaning understood by one who is conversant with the imposition from [the expression] when it is uttered” (*fahmuhu minhu ʿinda iṭlāqihi bi-al-nisba ilā man huwa ʿālim bi-al-waḍʿ*), which he says is close to Avicenna’s *al-Shifāʾ*, *al-ʿIbāra* (Ibn Sīnā 1970, 4.8–10): ومعنى دلالة الألفاظ أن يكون إذا ارتسم في الخيال مسموع اسم ارتسم في النفس معنى فتعرف النفس أنّ هذا المسموع لهذا المفهوم فكلّما أورده الحسّ على النفس التفتت إلى معناه.

16 Ibn Sīnā 1892, 8.pu–9.1 (=Pointer 1.12.1), institutes the convention that “implication” (*luzūm*) is reserved for the relation between one meaning and another meaning extrinsic to the first, even though on ordinary usage it also referred to the relation between one meaning and another contained in the first; passage translated in Strobino 2016, 245–246, cf. comments in Kalbarczyk 2018, 85–86, notes 55, 54.

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Ishārāt, this one became a classic for later logicians, and is the ultimate model for the parallel passage in Kātibī's *Shamsiyya*. Here is the *Ishārāt* statement of the doctrine, the last of Avicenna's formulations.[17]

> Text 1.1: The expression signifies a meaning either by way of correspondence (in that the expression is imposed for the meaning as a counterpart), like triangle signifies figure enclosed by three sides; or by way of containment (in that the meaning is a part of the meaning corresponding to the expression), like triangle signifies figure, not that it signifies figure in being a name for figure, but rather as a name for a meaning part of which is figure; or by way of following and implication (in that the expression signifies a meaning by correspondence, and another meaning necessarily follows on the first meaning as an extrinsic associate, not as a part but as a necessary accompaniment to it), in the way the expression roof signifies wall, and man signifies receptive of the art of writing.[18]

So expression E signifies meaning X by signification of correspondence "in that the expression is imposed for that meaning as a counterpart."[19] Expression E signifies meaning X by signification of containment "in that the meaning is a part of the meaning corresponding to the expression" (so there is a second meaning, Y, for which E is imposed and which E therefore signifies by signification of correspondence, and X is a part of Y; in Avicenna's example, figure is part of the meaning triangle, so the expression imposed for the meaning triangle signifies figure by containment). Expression E signifies meaning X by signification of implication "in that the expression signifies a meaning by correspondence, and another meaning necessarily follows on the first meaning as an extrinsic associate, not as a part but as a necessary accompaniment to it" (so there is a second meaning, Y, for which E is imposed and which E therefore signifies by signification of correspondence, and X follows Y as an implicate; in Avicenna's example,

17 For Avicenna's developing position on signification, and his precursors, see Kalbarczyk 2018, 99–115, and especially 112–115. Briefly, Avicenna introduces his account of three-fold signification as a middle-period doctrine in the *Madkhal* (Ibn Sīnā 1952, 43.12–17 [cf. Di Vincenzo 2018, part II:60–61], where however he uses *luzūm* instead of *iltizām*); *al-Najāt* (*Salvation*) (Ibn Sīnā 1985, 11–12; cf. Ibn Sīnā 2011, 8) and *Philosophy for ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla* (Ibn Sīnā 1986, 25–35) only have the division in potentia. We find it in *al-Ishārāt* (Text 1.1) and *Manṭiq al-Mashriqiyyīn* (Ibn Sīnā 1910, 14.15–15.6).

18 Appendix 1; cf. Ṭūsī 1960, 187; Ibn Sīnā 1892, 4.apu–5.7. Neither the Arabic nor the translation marks the difference between an expression (as "triangle" is in its two occurrences) and a meaning (as "figure" is in all its occurrences); perhaps it would be more helpful (although less neat) to adopt a convention in translation to distinguish, for example, the expression 'triangle' from the meaning [triangle]. Text 1.1 is translated in Strobino 2016, 255, and Kalbarczyk 2018, 110–111.

19 The word I translate as "correspondence" comes from *ṭābaqa*, which Taḥtānī says is used of the way one sandal matches or is a counterpart for another (Taḥtānī 1988, 29.10–11); cf. Kalbarczyk 2018, 84, note 52.

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receptive of writing is not part of the meaning man, but necessarily accompanies man, and so is signified by the expression imposed for man by signification of implication).[20]

After this short statement of Avicenna's doctrine in *al-Ishārāt*, I go on to note what he has to say about two related topics which were developed through the thirteenth-century treatment of signification. Before that, however, I dwell on some remarks in Ṭūsī's commentary on the passage (given again and in full in Appendix 1) which seem to me to be helpful in understanding what Avicenna is doing. The first comment Ṭūsī offered on the signification relations that Avicenna defines to exist between an expression and a meaning is that the second two (that is, signification by containment and signification by implication) are made up of two components:

> Text 1.2: Signification by correspondence is purely a matter of imposition; signification by containment and implication are by cooperation of intellect and imposition.[21]

This strikes me as a particularly helpful characterisation. There are three simple relations assumed in Avicenna's definitions in 1.6 of *al-Ishārāt* (Text 1.1 above). The first is initiated by imposition of an expression on a meaning, while the second and the third are inferred by the intellect; the second is between a meaning and another meaning that is a proper part (*juz'*) of the first meaning (containment),[22] and the third is between a meaning and another meaning that is an implicate (*lāzim*) of the first meaning (implication). This means that although signification by correspondence is a simple relation between an expression and a meaning ("purely a matter of imposition"), signification by containment is a relative product ("by cooperation of intellect and imposition"), which is to say that it is produced by a relation of imposition between an expression and a meaning, and a relation of containment between that meaning and another meaning which is

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20 I don't think it comes up in the texts I've examined, but my colleague Riccardo Strobino suggests that there is a second and even more mediated case of signification by implication, which is when E signifies Y by containment and X follows Y as an implicate. One example would be the expression man, which signifies receptive of colour by implication by way of signifying body – and thereby surface – by containment. Cf. the related question of *per se* 2 accidents and the upper limit on the hierarchy of constituents in their definition, Strobino 2016, 192.

21 Appendix 1 (1); cf. Ṭūsī 1960, 187.15–16. Translated in Kalbarczyk 2018, 141; I believe the point I make holds for other twelfth- and thirteenth-century analyses (Kalbarczyk 2018, 134–152).

22 By "proper part" I mean that the meaning signified by containment is part of the meaning signified by correspondence, but not the whole of it (as figure is for triangle). I accept the argument in Thom 2019, section 6, that Avicenna intends *juz'* to be taken literally as part (of the meaning) against Ṭūsī's interpretation that it is only metaphorically a part (Ṭūsī 1960, 200.u–201.2).

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its proper part. The same kind of relative product is involved in signification by implication, which is produced by a relation of imposition between an expression and a meaning, and a relation of implication between that meaning and another meaning which is its implicate.

We find two more helpful observations in Ṭūsī. First, in (3) of the translation in Appendix 1, with respect to Avicenna's two examples of signification by implication (between the expression roof and the meaning wall, and between the expression man and the meaning receptive of writing), Ṭūsī pointed out that only in the second example is the relation between an expression and a meaning which is predicated of the meaning corresponding to the expression (so we are not entitled to say that a roof is a wall, but we are entitled to say that man is receptive of the art of writing), which in turn means that only the second example is directly relevant to the theory of the five predicables which is developed in the *Shamsiyya* from §15 on (because the theory only concerns what can be predicated of a subject).[23] Kātibī dropped the first example altogether, although it seems to me to underline the fact that the implicate is extrinsic to the implicant.[24] Secondly, Ṭūsī noted (in [4] of Appendix 1) that Avicenna used receptive of the art of writing and not writing, because the first but not the second follows necessarily on man. I take this to mean that for Ṭūsī (and in this he seems to me to be right), only those meanings which follow necessarily on meanings signified by correspondence are considered in Avicenna's theory of signification;[25] it may be that an expression brings to mind meanings which cannot be ordered under the tripartite division. The expression roses may bring to the mind of an Anglophone both love and war, but these meanings are contingent on acculturation or personal experience, and are excluded from the theory, at least on its Avicennan formulation.

Kātibī dealt with entailments among the various kinds of signification in §9 of the *Shamsiyya*. Avicenna offers an observation relevant to the question in *Manṭiq al-Mashriqiyyīn*:

> Text 1.3: Signification by containment and signification by implication both share in requiring the first signification [, by correspondence] (*fī anna kull wāḥid minhumā muqtaḍī al-dalāla al-ūlā*).[26]

23 Appendix 1 (3); cf. Ṭūsī 1960, 188.4–5, noted in Thom 2019, section 1.

24 And, further, that *per se* accidents are only a subset of implicates (Strobino 2016, 244). Among others, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī continues to use the example (Baghdādī 1939, 8.6–18).

25 Appendix 1 (4); cf. Ṭūsī 1960, 188.6–7.

26 Ibn Sīnā 1910, 15.5–6.

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The claim being made is this: If we have a case of signification by containment (as when triangle signifies figure), we must also have a case of signification by correspondence (such that triangle signifies three-sided rectilinear plane figure). Again, if we have a case of signification by implication (for example, when man signifies receptive of writing), we must have a case of signification by correspondence (such that man signifies rational animal). The investigation of what the different kinds of signification entail blossoms with Rāzī; I come back to the matter in section 4.

Finally, the *Shamsiyya* devotes attention to questions to do with signification by implication. I come back to one of the discussions of implication in section 5. Rāzī had proposed that signification by implication be abandoned in the sciences, and it is important to know what that might involve. The examples of what is signified by implication which Avicenna gives in *Manṭiq al-Mashriqiyyīn* make it clear that the meaning on which the expression is imposed could be a quiddity (rational animal), or it could be a denominative.

> Text 1.4: If it is said that rational sensitive (*ḥassās nāṭiq*) signifies something equivalent [to man], none the less it does not signify the quiddity, because what is understood from sensitive by way of correspondence (*ʿalā sabīl al-muṭābaqa*) is only that it is a thing which is possessor of sense (*shayʾ dhū ḥiss*), and what is understood from rational is only that it is a thing which is possessor of rationality.[27]

Avicenna (and Rāzī follows him here) is not taking signification by implication to be the only way to signify denominative meanings (as might be concluded from the examples in Text 1.1). Were that the case, then abandoning signification by implication in the sciences would exclude all scientific predicates from the sciences (these predicates follow the subject but are not part of the subject's meaning). And since everyone took Rāzī to be obviously wrong in this claim, let me finish by saying that it is at least possible to read Avicenna as holding the position that signification by implication be abandoned in the sciences:

> Text 1.5: If we say that the expression such and such signifies such and such, then we just mean that it signifies by way of correspondence or containment, not by way of implication.[28]

27 Ibn Sīnā 1910, 15.18–19.

28 Ibn Sīnā 1892, 12.11–12; cf. Ṭūsī 1960, 227.1–2. What Ṭūsī took Avicenna to be saying in Pointer 1.17.7 is that signification by implication certainly cannot be used in answer to the question what-is-it? Passage translated in Kalbarczyk 2018, 112.

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2 Equivocal Expressions and Signification

I turn now to the reception of these doctrines by Rāzī and his followers. Since it is becoming increasingly clear just how many logicians were working in the eastern Islamic world through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it is hard to say with confidence who first put forward any given argument. I have glanced at work by Rāzī's predecessor, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. ca. 1166),[29] and by Rāzī's contemporary and fellow-student at Maragha, Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl (ex. ca. 1198).[30] Neither preceded him in making the points which follow, but it may well be that someone else did. As mentioned above, Rāzī first dealt with the matters raised in Text 1.1 in the early 1180s in the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, and again a little later in his *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*; because Khūnajī in the *Kashf* focused his attention on the *Mulakhkhaṣ*, most of the material I draw on in this paper comes from the *Mulakhkhaṣ*.

Avicenna's definitions of the three kinds of signification result in the discussion I consider in this section of the paper, about what to do when the expression is equivocal between a meaning signified by correspondence and either the meaning it contains or the meaning it implies. Rāzī argued that a problem arises when one expression signifies a meaning both by correspondence and by either containment or implication.

First, to make clear what is at issue, here are two problem cases (both taken from Ṭūsī, though he was prompted in what he wrote by Rāzī).[31] Take possible as imposed for two-sided possible (the meaning of which is "possibly p and possibly not-p"); it signifies two-sided possible by correspondence, and one-sided possible ("possibly p," which is a proper part of the meaning of two-sided possible) by containment. The speaker may however intend to use the expression possible according to a second imposition by which it signifies one-sided possible by correspondence (what Avicenna in *al-Najāt* refers to as the popular usage of the term).[32] There is no stipulation in Avicenna's definitions in Text 1.1 above to distinguish between signification by correspondence and signification by containment in a situation like this. A similar problem comes up for the expression sun, which is imposed for the luminous celestial body and – by a second imposition – for the sun's light, which is an implicate of the sun. If the speaker intends to use sun to signify the sun's light by correspondence according to its second imposition, the conditions are none the less in place for the expression to signify – on Avicenna's definitions – the same meaning by implication.

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29 Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī in his *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar fī al-Ḥikma* (Baghdādī 1939, 8.6–18).

30 Suhrawardī in his *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* (Suhrawardī 1999, 5.9–u).

31 Appendix 1 (2); cf. Ṭūsī 1960, 187.16–pu; the first example is given in Rāzī 2005, 32.12–33.1.

32 Ibn Sīnā 1985, 30.7–33.10; Ahmed 2011, 25–27; cf. Aristotle 1984e, 25a.36–25b.4.

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In order to make the distinction among the kinds of signification clear in these cases, Rāzī reformulated the definitions of containment and implication offered by Avicenna. The *Mulakhkhaṣ* has what seems to me his best attempt.[33]

> Text 2.1: Signification by correspondence is signification by the expression of the complete account of the thing named. Signification by containment is signification by the expression of part of the thing named in so far as it is a part [of the thing named] (*min ḥaythu huwa juzʾuhu*); with the final restriction we guard against correspondent signification by the expression of part of what is named through equivocation. Signification by implication is signification by the expression of the implicate of what is named in so far as it is an implicate [of the thing named] (*min ḥaythu huwa lāzimuhu*);[34] by this [restriction] we guard against signification by the correspondent expression of the implicate through equivocation.[35]

Text 2.1 has it that if expression E signifies meaning X by signification of containment then we have "signification by the expression of part of the thing named in so far as it is a part [of the thing named]" (so there is a second meaning, Y, for which E is imposed, X is a part of Y and is only signified by E in so far as it is a part of Y). And if expression E signifies meaning X by signification of implication then we have "signification by the expression of the implicate of what is named in so far as it is an implicate [of the thing named]" (so there is a second meaning, Y, for which E is imposed, X follows Y as an implicate and is only signified by E in so far as it is an implicate of Y).

Writing in the 1230s or 1240s, both Ṭūsī and Khūnajī seem to have shared the view that this kind of equivocation is a problem for the doctrine of signification that must be solved. Ṭūsī never acknowledged that Avicenna's definitions are flawed, but went on in his second comment to add an extra condition to the definitions as though it is a stipulation in the original:

> Text 2.2: In both these kinds of signification it is stipulated that the noun not signify the meaning and a part of it equivocally (as possible for one-sided possible and two-sided possible); nor signify the meaning and its implicate equivocally (as sun signifies [celestial] body and light); rather the signification should be by a movement of the intellect from one to the other.[36]

33 Note the different and more limited attempt in the later *Sharḥ* (Rāzī 2005, 32.12–33.1), translated in Kalbarczyk 2018, 155; see "Inklusion vs. Homonymie" in Kalbarczyk 2018, 154–156.

34 Adopting the variant over the edition's *tabʿan li-dalālatihi ʿalā musammāhu*.

35 Rāzī 2002, 19.4–8.

36 Appendix 1 (2); Ṭūsī 1960, 187.16–u.

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What Ṭūsī has done with the added condition ("the signification should be by a movement of the intellect from one to the other") is to rule out the signification by a simple relation of correspondence inaugurated by the second imposition; both signification by containment and by implication must involve an intellectual movement from a meaning for which the expression is imposed to a second meaning which relates to the first by either containment or implication. Another way of putting this is that both signification by containment and by implication must be relative products, made up of a relation of imposition as well as a relation between two meanings (the first statement of this distinction is given in Text 1.2 above, and in the discussion which follows).

On my reading, Rāzī and Ṭūsī offered effectively the same solution: if an expression is equivocal between either a meaning and one of its proper parts, or between a meaning and its implicate, it is stipulated that any signification of the proper part or the implicate which is not by way of a relative product must be set to one side. The effect of this condition is that the second imposition of the expression on the contained or implied meaning is ignored (which is to say, for the first example, ignore the imposition of possible on one-sided possibility, and for the second, the imposition of sun on light). At roughly the same time that Ṭūsī was quietly expanding Avicenna's definition in this way, Khūnajī in the *Kashf* came up with a differently worded condition, "the expression's signification of meaning by way (*bi-tawassuṭ*) of its having been imposed for that meaning";[37] by this key phrase, all other significations are defined relative to the first imposition. Adopted by Kātibī, Khūnajī's definition has the economy of preventing the problem from arising, rather than solving it after it has crept in.

Here is the expansion of §7 of the *Shamsiyya* (see Appendix 2 below) by Kātibī's fourteenth-century commentator Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390), a cumbersome but now – I believe – completely clear definition. At the risk of making the passage even more cumbersome than it is already, I add subscripted numbers to the translation (so meaning_1 stands for the meaning signified by correspondence, meaning_2 for that signified by containment, and meaning_3 for that signified by implication); I also give the Arabic in brackets to allow the reader to share in the thrill of the anaphoric chase.

37 Khūnajī 2010, 10.16–11.2; strictly, *bi-tawassuṭ* means "by mediation of," see Kalbarczyk 2018, 145, where Khūnajī's rider is considered from a different perspective. Kātibī in *Jāmiʿ al-Daqāʾiq* uses "by reason of" (*li-*) instead; see British Library ms. Or. 11201/2 folio 11 recto.13–14: "and containment if [the signification] is by reason of [the expression] being imposed for that in which [the second meaning] is contained" (*wa-taḍammun in kānat li-waḍʿihi li-mā huwa dākhil fīhi*).

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> Text 2.3: The expression's signification of meaning$_1$ by way of that expression being imposed for that meaning$_1$ (like the signification by man of rational animal) is called correspondence (*dalālat al-lafẓ ʿalā al-maʿnā bi-tawassuṭ waḍʿ dhālika al-lafẓ li-dhālika al-maʿnā [...] tusammā muṭābaqa*), due to the expression matching the meaning$_1$ because it is imposed as its counterpart. The expression's signification of meaning$_2$ by way of the expression being imposed for something$_1$ in which that meaning$_2$ is included (like signification by man of animal by way of its being imposed for that in which animal is intrinsic, namely rational animal) is called signification by containment (*dalālat al-lafẓ ʿalā al-maʿnā bi-tawassuṭ waḍʿ al-lafẓ li-shayʾ dakhala fīhi dhālika al-maʿnā [...] tusammā dalālat al-taḍammun*), due to the signified meaning$_2$ being within the meaning$_1$ for which it is imposed. The expression's signification of meaning$_3$ by way of the expression being imposed for something$_1$ to which the meaning$_3$ signified is extrinsic (like signification by man of receptive of knowledge which is extrinsic to rational animal) is called signification by implication (*dalālat al-lafẓ ʿalā al-maʿnā bi-tawassuṭ waḍʿihi li-shayʾ kharaja ʿanhu dhālika al-maʿnā al-madlūl [...] tusammā dalālat al-iltizām*), due to the signified meaning$_3$ being an implicate of the meaning$_1$ for which it is imposed.[38]

Does any of this really matter? Nearly everyone accepted that Avicenna's definition had to be modified; if nothing else, Rāzī's problems show that there are gaps in Avicenna's formulation. We find the odd grumble that Rāzī's reading is bloody-minded obtuseness,[39] but I think there may be more at stake than fine-tuning a definition against wilful misconstrual. Kātibī, after briefly clarifying the distinction between simple and compound expressions, and the parts of speech, went on in §12 of the *Shamsiyya* (given in Appendix 2 below) to set out in what ways technical terms may be ambiguous or transferred from one meaning to another. In a number of the examples given, if the primary imposition is not abandoned (*matrūk*) after giving the expression a technical sense, problem-cases arise similar to what Rāzī put forward against Avicenna's definition. So in §12.2, the expressions with their double meanings – *dābba* for "animal" and "mount," and *ṣalāt* for "prayer" and "ritual prayer" – generate the same problem as one-sided and two-sided possibility. The tripartite division is presented directly before the account of equivocation because the reformulated definition of signification heads off any problem in newly coined terms of art before it arises.

38 Taftāzānī 2012, 121.4–12. Again, the last case should probably extend to include what is implied by what is signified by containment; see the remarks in note 20 above.
39 E.g. Shahrazūrī in his *Sharḥ Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* (Shahrazūrī 1994, 1:37.19–20): "these restrictions are elided but intended in all parts of philosophy" (*fa-hādhihi al-quyūd muḍmara murāda fī jamīʿ ajzāʾ al-ḥikma*); Ibn Kammūna 2009, 1.21.pu–u, repeats the same observation (more mildly).

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3 The Strength of Implication

The second way in which Kātibī's *Shamsiyya* differs from *al-Ishārāt* with respect to Text 1.1 is in speaking about the kind of implication involved for signification by implication in §8: "it is stipulated for implicational signification that the extrinsic implicate be such that its conception follow from the conception of the named." To coin a non-technical phrase, the relation called on in the theory of signification is a hair-trigger implication. It should be stressed that this does not go to the difference in strength of implication between containment (*taḍammun*) and implication (*iltizām*) as referred to in the tripartite distinction itself.[40] And it develops rather than makes the distinction between an implication being mental (*dhihnī*) or holding in external reality (*khārijī*).[41] The distinction here is rather between the epistemic immediacy of two kinds of mental implication in which the implicate meaning is not contained in the implicant meaning; Kātibī's provision that "its conception follow from the conception of the named" is carefully phrased. Here is how Kātibī made the distinction:

> Text 3.1: The implicate (...) is either evident (*bayyin*), such that its conception along with the conception of its implicant is sufficient for the mind to declare an implication between the two (like divisibility into two equal parts for four) (...) "Evident" may also be said of an implicate whose conception follows from the conception of its implicant; the first definition is the weaker (*aʿamm*).[42]

I don't think Avicenna, Rāzī or Ṭūsī made this distinction explicitly; on my reading, it comes up first with Khūnajī.[43] He introduced it in dealing with signification, and then came back to it again in dealing with *al-Ishārāt* 1.12, which is where Avicenna proved that every quiddity must have implicates which follow without a middle (*luzūmuhā bi-ghayr wasaṭ*). The distinction is first given in Khūnajī's *Kashf* to reject the claim that implicates signified by implication could be infinite (a claim attributed to Rāzī somewhat unfairly by Ṭūsī, but actually advanced by Ghazālī; see Text 5.2 below).[44]

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40 See note 16 above.
41 Set out in Kalbarczyk 2018, 157–158.
42 *Shamsiyya* §22 see Kātibī (Ḥillī 2012, 217.u–218.3, 218.apu–u); the distinction sounds psychologistic, but see Strobino 2016, 235, note 96, for a path to an alternative characterisation.
43 Riccardo Strobino has suggested that at *Qiyās* IX (Ibn Sīnā 1964, 416.15), Avicenna sets out a distinction which, while not used as Khūnajī uses the distinction presented here, may be the genetic inspiration for Khūnajī's distinction.
44 Appendix 1 (5); cf. Ṭūsī 1960, 188.8–u, and Rāzī 2005, 33.pu–u. The worry is not that a meaning has infinite implicates (which Avicenna explicitly takes to be possible; cf. *al-Ishārāt* 1.17.8 [Ibn Sīnā 1892, 12.12–13]), the worry is rather that the expression may be taken to signify them.

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> Text 3.2: Two notions are intended by mental implication, the first of which is that whenever there is an awareness of the implicant there is an awareness of the implicate (*kullamā ḥaṣala al-shuʿūr bi-al-malzūm ḥaṣala al-shuʿūr bi-al-lāzim*), the second, that whenever there is an awareness of both there is an awareness of the implication between the two (*kullamā ḥaṣala al-shuʿūr bi-himā ḥaṣala al-shuʿūr bi-al-luzūm*). The first is stronger than the second, and it is what is taken into account according to [the argument] just rehearsed. Nothing can have infinite implicates according to this sense, whether with a middle or without.[45]

Which is to say that implication is said to be strong in the case that, given an awareness of P, the mind is aware both of Q and that Q is the implicate of P. By contrast, implication is said to be weak in the case that, given an awareness of both P and Q, the mind is aware that Q is the implicate of P. On the weaker sense, it is possible for an implicant to have infinite implicates; it follows from the quiddity triangle that it is 2R, but it also follows that it is half 4R, one third 6R and so forth (for further examples, see after Text 4.1 below). Signification by implication, however, involves the stronger sense of implication (examples are given in Text 3.4 below).

I digress briefly to consider Khūnajī on *al-Ishārāt* 1.12. He began by summarizing Avicenna's argument (to conclude in a proposition with a quiddity as subject and one of its implicates as predicate, at least one of the premises must have an implicate in the predicate position), and went on to note that "Rāzī in the *Mulakhkhaṣ* gave a proof that every proximate implicate is evident (…)."[46] But this is a stronger conclusion than Rāzī's argument allows, ignoring as it does the distinction between strengths of implication.

> Text 3.3: We hold that every proximate implicate, that is, one without a middle, is evidently affirmed of the implicant (*bayyin al-thubūt li-al-malzūm*) in the sense that its conception along with the conception of the implicant is enough to affirm positively the relation of the implicate to the implicant,[47] otherwise it requires a middle on the understanding mentioned (and from this it is known that no implicate with a middle is evident).[48]

45 Khūnajī 2010, 13.1–5. To avoid confusion, note that Kātibī in *Shamsiyya* §22 sets them out in reverse order, weaker first.

46 Rāzī 2002, 52.pu–54.2; it seems to me that at the end of this passage, Rāzī provides material for Khūnajī's distinction when he considers a counter-argument to his own position, the implicate of the implicate.

47 My colleague Riccardo Strobino writes: "By seeing conception A and conception B, I immediately see that B is *lāzim* of A: how? Because I see that the conception (or definition) of B includes something of or is dependent on the conception of A. But that is what it is for an attribute to be *per se* 2." Though it will not always be a *per se* accident; consider the examples in note 50.

48 Khūnajī 2010, 33.14–17.

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In short, for the context of *al-Ishārāt* 1.12, a context that relates to the fundamental elements with which to build a proof, Khūnajī used the weaker sense of implication and with it the possibility of infinite immediate implicates, whereas he used the stronger sense for the treatment of signification in Text 1.1, a sense incompatible with infinite implicates; he was able to do so in a consistent manner by using the distinction set out in Text 3.2.

In his treatment of signification, Khūnajī gave an example of an implicate implied under the stronger notion:

> Text 3.4: Something like this implicate [which is evident for everyone] may follow, like one of two co-relatives on the other, as a necessary consequence of each one of the two emerging from the quiddity of the other, and the impossibility of understanding one of them without understanding the other; for this is what is meant by mental implication.[49]

It is clear that Khūnajī has in mind the stronger of the two kinds of mental implication set out in Text 3.2. Co-relatives, and privations relative to species-wide properties (e.g. blind said of a person): these are examples of strong implication.[50] In short, if we do not understand that "father" implies "child," we simply have not acquired the meaning of the expression "father."

The distinction between strong and weak implication will come into play again in both of the following sections.

4 What Each Kind of Signification Entails

§10 of the *Shamsiyya* considers whether one kind of signification entails another, a topic Ṭūsī omitted from *Ḥall Mushkilāt al-Ishārāt*. Kātibī in the *Shamsiyya* – indeed, everyone in the tradition – agreed with Avicenna's claim in *Manṭiq al-Mashriqiyyīn* (Text 1.3) that correspondence is necessarily entailed by containment and implication.[51] This is to say that if expression E signifies X by containment, there must be a meaning Y of which X is a proper part and which is signified by E by correspondence. Similarly, if expression E signifies X by implication, there must be a meaning Y of which X is an implicate and which is signified by E by correspondence. Once the question had been raised, the post-Avicennan logicians became interested in exploring comprehensively the relations among such properties.

49 Khūnajī 2010, 13.14–17.

50 Further examples are available in Ibn Sīnā 1910, 14: roof and wall, already given in Text 1.1, and creator (*khāliq*) and created (*makhlūq*); translated in Kalbarczyk 2018, 104.

51 See section one above for Text 1.3, where I also offer examples of these entailments.

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So it was that Text 1.3 raised a question as to the remaining four possible entailments (correspondence-containment, correspondence-implication, containment-implication, implication-containment). Prompted by the discussions of these post-Avicennan logicians, Kātibī went further than Avicenna, explicitly considering and then ruling out the entailment of containment by correspondence (so he is ruling out what would amount to the claim: if expression E signifies meaning X by correspondence, there must be a meaning Y which is part of X and which E will signify by containment). Kātibī rejects this claim because there may be simple quiddities which are not constituted by a genus and differentia, or other parts; he gives an example in the *Shamsiyya* §31: "an example of the simple is intellect (if we say that substance is not a genus for it)."[52] He also ruled out Rāzī's argument for the entailment of implication by correspondence (given in Text 4.1 below, an argument meant to underwrite the claim that, if expression E signifies meaning X by correspondence, there must be a meaning Y which is an implicate of X and which E will signify by implication). Kātibī in the *Shamsiyya* also ruled out the entailment of implication by containment, which is to say, he rejected the claim that if expression E signifies meaning X by containment, there must be a meaning Z signified by E by correspondence of which X is a proper part, and further, there must be a meaning Y which is an implicate of meaning Z, and E signifies Y by implication.[53] Kātibī omitted to consider whether implication might entail containment.

Again, Rāzī was one of the earliest, if not the earliest, to voice an opinion on the matter among the writers I have examined (though he was joined in the claim advanced in text 4.1 by his younger contemporary, Suhrawardī).[54] Rāzī offered an argument in the *Mulakhkhaṣ* quoted and resisted by Khūnajī, Ṭūsī and Kātibī, the claim that every quiddity must have at least one implicate.

> Text 4.1: Signification by imposition is correspondence, and the remaining two are consequences (*tābiʿatān*), not absolutely but rather on the condition that the quiddity is a compound for the first and an implicant for the second. Since the [20] part does not necessarily belong to every quiddity, but an implicate has to belong to every quiddity – at the least, that it is not other than itself (*wa-aqalluhu annahu laysa ghayrahu*) – , containment does not have to follow correspondence, but implication does. Neither is found without correspondence because it is inconceivable that the consequent occurs in so far as it is a consequent without an antecedent.[55]

52 Kātibī in *Shamsiyya* in Ḥillī 2012, 231.2–3.
53 Note that in Text 4.3 Taftāzānī states – and argues against – an argument put forward by Kātibī for precisely this claim; perhaps he had changed his mind by the time he wrote the *Shamsiyya*.
54 Aside from other places, in *al-Mashāriʿ wa-al-Muṭāraḥāt* (Suhrawardī 2006, 10.pu–u).
55 From the *Mulakhkhaṣ* (Rāzī 2002, 19.pu–20.3), rephrased by Kātibī in the *Shamsiyya* as: *inna taṣawwur kull māhiyya yastalzimu taṣawwur annahā laysat ghayrahā* (Kātibī in Ḥillī 2012, 198.8).

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What did Rāzī mean when he claimed that every signification by correspondence must entail a signification by implication, at the very least that "it is not other than itself (*laysa ghayrahu*)"?[56] At first I thought that Rāzī was claiming that the notion of self-identity follows extrinsically on every quiddity. But a passage in Avicenna's *Kitāb al-Qiyās* suggests an alternative way to understand Rāzī's position.[57] Dealing with disjunctive and conditional syllogisms, Avicenna discusses a compound proposition, part of which is "either this thing is not a plant, or it is." If something is a plant, it is not inanimate. Avicenna goes on to set out more "of the almost infinite implicates of [being a plant] put in place of ['it is not inanimate']; it may be said 'it is not a planet,' 'it is not whiteness,' 'it is not an angel'."[58] Leaving aside the main point Avicenna is making here, we may note that he is assuming that the denial of any quiddity distinct from the quiddity signified by correspondence is one of the almost infinite implicates (*min al-lawāzim allatī takād lā tatanāhā*) of being the quiddity signified by correspondence. If I understand the root of Khūnajī's objection to this claim of Rāzī (set out in Text 4.2), it lies in the distinction between an implicate of "father" like "not being a rock" and the implicate "having a child," a distinction that matters because the meaning of "father" cannot be understood without simultaneously understanding what a child is, whereas it can be understood without even adverting to a rock.[59]

I don't know whether Ṭūsī offered an assessment of Rāzī's argument that correspondence entails implication, though I doubt that he would have found it persuasive. Khūnajī was prepared to accept that every quiddity has the implicate that it is not other than itself only if the implication is taken in a weak sense:

> Text 4.2: In response to the claim that everything has an evident implicate, we say that on the stronger understanding [of implication] this is rejected, and the consideration which [Rāzī] mentions as inevitable and that follows everything is on the weaker sense not the stronger, due to the possibility of conceiving something while not paying attention to its being not other than itself (*li-imkān taṣawwur al-shayʾ maʿa al-dhuhūl ʿan kawnihi laysa ghayrahu*).[60]

56 Rāzī 2002, 20.1–2.
57 I am grateful to Riccardo Strobino for drawing my attention to this passage.
58 Ibn Sīnā 1964, 248.3–7.
59 Perhaps the first interpretation is the more likely; Mohammad Saleh Zarepour raises a worry against the second: "One might believe that 'father' implies [being not other than father] (or [being not other than itself]) without believing that 'father' implies [not being a rock]. In 'being not other than father' (and 'being not other than itself') there is no explicit reference to anything other than [father]. But in 'not being a rock' there is an explicit reference to [rock]. Therefore, it brings a commitment to the existence of rocks or at least to having a conception of them."
60 Khūnajī 2010, 13.8–10.

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But as noted in section 3 above, only the stronger sense of implication comes into play in signification theory. Khūnajī's response to Rāzī's correspondence-entails-implication argument was adopted by both Kātibī and his commentator Taftāzānī. In §9 of the *Shamsiyya*, Kātibī went even further: "From this it would also be clear that containment does not entail implication." I'm afraid that this further claim is not clear to me. The argument "correspondence, therefore implication" has a weaker premise than "containment, therefore implication," because containment entails that the quiddity signified by correspondence is a compound quiddity; it must have proper parts so that one of them can be signified by containment. In any event, it may be impossible to get any clarity on Kātibī's views on this matter, which seem to have been in flux. Taftāzānī stated in his commentary on the *Shamsiyya* that Kātibī in his as-yet-unedited *Jāmiʿ al-Daqāʾiq* held that signification by containment must have to do with a compound quiddity (because, as mentioned, a signification by containment is signification of a proper part of the quiddity signified by correspondence); and – against §9 of the *Shamsiyya* – because the conception of a compound quiddity entails the conception that it is a compound, it entails an implicate.[61] Taftāzānī's counter-argument is that the conception of a quiddity entails neither the conception that it is a quiddity nor that it is simple or compound. His argument turns on a distinction between understanding the part along with the qualification of being a part, and understanding the part by way of its being a part. Here is the argument as set out in the *Sharḥ al-Shamsiyya*:

> Text 4.3: From what we have mentioned, decisively and with certainty, about correspondence not entailing implication, it is just as decisively and certainly clear that containment does not entail implication, because there may be a compound quiddity which has no evident implicate, and the expression would signify its part by containment but without implication. What Kātibī said in the *Jāmiʿ* (*mā dhakarahu al-muṣannif fī al-Jāmiʿ*) – containment entails implication because the conception of a compound quiddity definitely entails the conception that it is compound, thus verifying implication necessarily – is to be rejected (*fa-mamnūʿ*). Rather, the conception of the quiddity does not even entail that it is a quiddity, let alone its being simple or compound; otherwise correspondence would also entail implication. [125] If you were to argue: Containment is the understanding of the proper part in so far as it is a proper part, and the qualification "being a part" (*al-juzʾiyya*) is an extrinsic implicate meaning which entails the conception "being a whole" (*al-kulliyya*) as a necessary consequence of the co-relation between being a part and being a whole, so containment without implication is impossible; we would respond: The meaning of their claim "containment is understanding the part in so far as it is a part" is not that containment consists of understanding the part along with the qualification of being a part, but

61 British Library ms. Or. 11201/2 folio 13 recto.12–13: *wa-ammā al-ḥaqq annahu yastalzimu al-iltizām li-anna taṣawwur al-māhiyya al-murakkaba yastalzimu taṣawwur annahā murakkaba jazman fa-yataḥaqqaqu al-iltizām bi-al-ḍarūra*.

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> rather that it is understanding the part by way of its being a part and by reason of that; that is, the reason for understanding it from the expression is its being a part of what is understood from the expression (*mafhūm al-lafẓ*), whether or not the qualification of being a part is noticed in that state.
>
> Implication does not entail containment due to the possibility that there may be a simple quiddity that entails an evident implicate; this is something they ignore in spite of its obviousness.[62]

5 Implication and Science

Rāzī claimed in both the *Sharḥ* and the *Mulakhkhaṣ* that signification by implication is not to be used in the sciences (it is to be "neglected," *mahjūr*).[63] There is no trace of the discussion in the *Shamsiyya*, though there is in the *Jāmiʿ al-Daqāʾiq*, where Kātibī accepted Rāzī's claim.[64] Rāzī is making a narrow claim, that signification by implication should not be used to provide the meaning of quiddities in demonstrations, which is to say, quiddities should be defined and not described. Here is Rāzī's reasoning in the *Mulakhkhaṣ*:[65]

> Text 5.1: Signification by implication is left to one side in the sciences, not due to what is said with regard to it being [merely] mental (*ʿaqliyya*) (otherwise [21] [the sciences] would be incompatible with containment), nor because implicates are infinite (because the evident among them are finite); but rather because, with respect to the signification by the expression of the implicate of what is named, if the evidence of the implication is taken into account, then it varies with different individuals, and so what is signified is not precise (*fa-lā yakūnu al-madlūl maḍbūṭan*); but it would be absurd if it were not taken into account, because the goal in using expressions is to make meanings understood, so were [such understanding] not to come about (*fa-idhā lam yaḥṣul dhālika*), the expression would fail to convey.[66]

62 Taftāzānī 2012, 124.11–125.8.
63 See Kalbarczyk 2018, 159–162 (=Die Diskussion über die Bewertung der Implikation). I am grateful to Dr. Ahmad Ighbariya for allowing me to read his forthcoming paper, "Signification by Way of Implication (*dalālat al-iltizām*): From Logic to Eloquence," which touches on issues raised here, and shows – as does Kalbarczyk 2018 – the likely impact of Avicennan signification theory on later theories of rhetoric.
64 British Library ms. Or. 11201/2, folio 12 verso.apu to 13 recto.5.
65 There is a similar but shorter passage in the *Sharḥ* (Rāzī 2005, 33.10–34.4). Text 5.1 partly translated in Kalbarczyk 2018, 160.
66 Rāzī 2002, 20.u–21.u.

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Khūnajī's consideration of this claim is tightly linked with the different senses of implication set out in Text 3.2 above, and should lead him to hold that strong implication can be used in the sciences because it will be equally evident to all competent language users, or at least equally evident to all experts in a given science.[67] Ṭūsī's comment – that Rāzī's argument may be used equally to undermine signification by correspondence – amounts pretty much to Khūnajī's response: implication used in the theory of signification is as strongly evident to the language user as the correspondent signification arising from imposition.[68]

It is important to see what is at stake with Rāzī's proposed exclusion, and what is not at stake. Ṭūsī claimed that it would mean that no description would be admitted in the sciences. That would be a considerable cost (read any thirteenth-century scientific treatise – Rāzī's, to take the most obviously relevant example – to see how destructive such an exclusion would be), but no one is claiming that implicates of the subject are excluded, which would amount to excluding the predicates required for scientific theorems. The point is simply that these predicates must be signified by signification of correspondence or containment.[69]

Both Khūnajī and Ṭūsī took Rāzī to be advancing the claim that implicative signification must be abandoned in the sciences in his own name. I think he was. But Rāzī was also trying to understand a comment by Avicenna which – on a natural reading – seems to exclude signification by implication from the sciences.[70] Ṭūsī claimed that misunderstanding Avicenna to be referring to signification *tout court* (*al-dalāla al-muṭlaqa*) "led Rāzī to take signification by implication to be abandoned in all places."[71] But in fact, and as Ṭūsī himself says, it is description that Rāzī rejected. Rāzī's position amounts to insisting that, for example, the quiddity of man has to be defined by all its parts. Rational animal is enough for that definition, because animal signifies by containment all its constitutive parts (its ultimate genus, and all the differentiae that constitute the intermediate genera), and rational signifies the remaining constituent, the differentia, by correspondence.[72]

67 Khūnajī 2010, 11.u–13.u.

68 Appendix 1 (6); cf. Ṭūsī 1960, 188.8–u. Ṭūsī's characterisation of Rāzī's argument is inaccurate; Rāzī rejected the argument based on the infinity of implicates (see Text 5.1). In this respect Ṭūsī seems to be running Ghazālī's argument (Text 5.2) together with Rāzī's.

69 To labour the point: The predicate proved to belong to a subject in science is an implicate of the subject – as the denominative 2R is an implicate of triangle – but signified by 2R, it is signified by correspondence (see Text 1.4 above [Ibn Sīnā 1910, 15.18–19]).

70 See Text 1.5 above.

71 Appendix 1 (5); cf. Ṭūsī 1960, 227.12–13.

72 See Strobino 2016, 187–188, for a helpful treatment of this point. Everything but the proximate differentia is signified by containment through the proximate genus (which, along with the proximate differentia, is signified by correspondence).

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Rational alone would only signify animal and man by implication. Kātibī clarifies this in dealing with the answer to "what is it?" asked of man in the *Jāmiʿ al-Daqāʾiq*. Animal signifies by containment body and sensitive and moving by volition; it is possible to answer "what is it?" with animal because "animal only signifies its parts, and the understanding of every one of its parts is sought in the question, so the understanding sought is not confused with anything else." But it would not be enough to signify any of its parts by implication, "because just as the expression signifies that part by implication, it could equally signify another [meaning], so what is asked about would be confused with something else."[73]

Rāzī may have been further encouraged in his position by comments of his Ashʿarī predecessors. Although Ghazālī mainly followed Avicenna's *Philosophy for ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla* for the logic section of his *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa*,[74] he struck off on his own in dealing with signification:

> Text 5.2: That which is used in the sciences and relied on to communicate ideas is correspondence and containment; implication is not used, because implicates have implicates, and invoke infinite matters, from which no understanding may be obtained.[75]

I confess that I am unsure if Rāzī is claiming that descriptions should be banned from sciences altogether, even the preliminary stages of constructing a science, or if he is making the completely Avicennan point that there can be no real definition from implicates of a quiddity. In any event, if it is true that we should understand Rāzī broadly in terms of Text 5.2, Rāzī's argument would then simply amount to further support for Ghazālī's accusation that the philosophers fail to meet the criteria they have set for demonstrative discourse.

6 Concluding Remarks

The Rāzian logicians took Avicenna's definition of signification (Text 1.1) and modified it to deal with problem cases of equivocation (Text 2.3). They clarified the strength of the implication involved in the definition of signification

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73 British Library ms. Or. 11201/2 folio 13 recto.3–5: *wa-lā yajūzu an yudhkara shayʾ min ajzāʾihi bi-lafẓ dalālatuhu ʿalayhi bi-al-iltizām li-anna dhālika al-lafẓ ka-mā yadullu ʿalā dhālika al-juzʾ bi-al-iltizām jāza an yadulla ʿalā ghayrihi ayḍan fa-yultabasu al-masʾūl ʿanhu bi-ghayrihi.*

74 Janssens 1986, 166, gives a concordance between the two texts for the logic.

75 Ghazālī 1961, 40. Compare this text against *Dānesh-Nāmeh* (Ibn Sīnā 1986, 25–35). For Ghazālī's reception of the tripartite division and his appraisal of signification by implication, see Kalbarczyk 2018, 116–120.

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by implication (Texts 3.2 and 3.4), and distinguished it from the strength of the implication involved in scientific premises taken to need no proof (Text 3.3). They took up Avicenna's observation that correspondent signification is entailed by either signification by containment or signification by implication (Text 1.4), and explored whether such entailments exist between other pairs of significations; it took more than a century for a consensus to emerge that there are no other such entailments (Text 4.3). Kātibī for one, though silent in the *Shamsiyya* about the use of implicative signification in the sciences, adopted Rāzī's view in his *Jāmiʿ al-Daqāʾiq*; this amounts to a rejection of the scientific use of description (or delineation, as Barnes would translate it), at least on the official account of how to conduct a demonstrative science. This is a view which ultimately reflects aspects of Ghazālī's assessment of how faithful the philosophers were to their formal account of demonstration (Text 5.2).

Clearly, to take Kātibī's *Shamsiyya* as the end-point in an investigation into the reception of Avicenna's *Ishārāt* is to determine at the outset that the reception will be appraised in terms of the great Rāzian logicians. None the less, it is obvious that Ṭūsī and Ḥillī[76] recognised the justice in Rāzī's call for a new definition of signification. As in the case of the modal syllogistic, all of the dynamism in these texts is coming from the Rāzians. Further, their tradition of comment on Avicenna's arguments in *al-Ishārāt* introduces and develops all the elements of the debate which come together as the passages in the *Shamsiyya*. We can see Kātibī's text once again as the crystallisation of a commentary tradition on the logic section of *al-Ishārāt*.[77]

The consideration of the thirteenth-century reception of *al-Ishārāt* 1.6 reveals that Rāzī's influence is not always direct. Rāzī's treatment of equivocation and the doctrine of signification convinced nearly everyone that Avicenna's definitions needed to be modified, and his revised definitions were a step towards the revision which came ultimately to be the most commonly adopted. It may be that the same is true of Rāzī's claims about the scientific use of signification by implication. On the other points in the theory on which Rāzī intervened – the strength of implication, and the entailments among the kinds of signification – everyone I have read accepted that either there was a problem, or a need for further clarification, but no one accepted Rāzī's solution to the problem. That said, in the doctrine of signification as in other doctrines, no one else – other than Avicenna – is quoted so much, followed so often, or resisted so frequently.

76 Ḥillī 2000, 16.1–17.7.

77 Cf. Street 2016a, 280–281.

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The second creative force through the discussions examined in this paper is, of course, Khūnajī. Given how often Khūnajī rejects Rāzī's positions, does it mean anything to be a Rāzian? One aspect of a distinctively Rāzian approach is using Rāzī's objections to Avicenna as the point of departure for a logical discussion. Although it could be argued that Ṭūsī to some extent shares this approach, Khūnajī differs in that he almost always assumes that it is pointless simply to clarify Avicenna's doctrine to answer Rāzī's objections. Further, in constructing the new, less vulnerable positions considered in this paper, he uses distinctions first introduced by Rāzī. It is true that he often modifies these distinctions, but the modification is – in the case of the different strengths of implication – prompted by connexions Rāzī has drawn between passages separated from each other in Avicenna's exposition. Rāzians also refer, however irritably, to a canon of authorities in which Rāzī comes a little below but none the less not far away from Avicenna himself. Perhaps most importantly of all, both authorities are equally open to criticism.

Let me finish by making two points. The first has to do with the *Shamsiyya* and its extraordinary success in Islamic intellectual life. The genius of Kātibī's *Shamsiyya* lies in its genesis: a laconic report of logical positions winnowed out through a century of careful debate. It not only delivers an account of the science of logic short enough to be easily memorised, it unfolds into a deeper reading of the works which preceded and produced it, phrase by phrase. Secondly, stepping back from the details of these discussions and the texts in which they are put forward, let me return to the larger themes of the volume. The passages which I have presented offer a theory on matters central to the philosophy of language. They only deal, however, with preliminary aspects of the theory. So we should understand that the passages shed light not only on the later reception of Avicenna's theories, but also on the scale and complexity of the larger theory they were written to introduce.

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Appendix 1: Avicenna and Ṭūsī on Signification

1.6 Pointer on the Expression's Signification of Meaning[78]

إشارة إلى دلالة اللفظ على المعنى

The expression signifies a meaning either by way of correspondence (in that the expression is imposed for the meaning as a counterpart), like triangle signifies figure enclosed by three sides; or by way of containment (in that the meaning is a part of the meaning corresponding to the expression), like triangle signifies figure, not that it signifies figure in being a name for figure, but rather as a name for a meaning part of which is figure; or by way of following and implication (in that the expression signifies a meaning by correspondence, and another meaning necessarily follows on the first meaning as an extrinsic associate, not as a part but as a necessary accompaniment to it), in the way the expression roof signifies wall, and man signifies receptive of the art of writing.

اللفظ يدل على المعنى إما على سبيل المطابقة بأن يكون ذلك اللفظ موضوعا لذلك المعنى وبإزائه مثل دلالة المثلث على الشكل المحيط به ثلاثة أضلع وإما على سبيل التضمن بأن يكون المعنى جزءا من المعنى الذي يطابقه مثل دلالة المثلث على الشكل فإنه يدل على الشكل لا على أنه اسم للشكل بل على أنه اسم لمعنى جزؤه الشكل وإما على سبيل الاستتباع والالتزام بأن يكون اللفظ دالا بالمطابقة على معنى و يكون ذلك المعنى يلزمه معنى غيره كالرفيق الخارجي لا كالجزء منه بل هو مصاحب ملازم له مثل دلالة لفظ السقف على الحائط والإنسان على قابل صنعة الكتابة.

(1) Signification by correspondence is purely a matter of imposition; signification by containment and implication are by cooperation of intellect and imposition.

أقول دلالة المطابقة وضعية صرفة ودلالة التضمن والالتزام باشتراك العقل والوضع.

(2) In both these kinds of signification it is stipulated that the noun not signify the meaning and a part of it equivocally (as possible for one-sided possible and two-sided possible); nor signify the meaning and its implicate equivocally (as sun signifies body and light); rather the signification should be by a movement of the intellect from one to the other.

ويشترط فيهما أن لا يكون الاسم دالا بالاشتراك على المعنى وعلى جزئه كالممكن على العام والخاص أو عليه وعلى لازمه كالشمس على الجرم والنور بل يكون بانتقال عقلي من أحدهما إلى الآخر.

(3) Avicenna's claim about implication ("in the way the expression roof signifies wall, and man signifies receptive of the art of writing") gives two examples. The first is an implicate that is not predicable of its implicant, the second, an implicate that is.

قوله في الالتزام مثل دلالة لفظ السقف على الحائط والإنسان على قابل صنعة الكتابة ذكر له مثالين أحدهما للازم لا يحمل على ملزومه والثاني للازم يحمل.

78 Translation of Avicenna's *Ishārāt*, Pointer 1.6, with Ṭūsī's commentary (Ṭūsī 1960, 187–188). I have checked Dunyā's edition against ms. Leiden Or 95 (copied from Ṭūsī's holograph) and ms. Yeni Cami 763 (collated Jumādā II 661). I am grateful to Reza Pourjavady for information on the manuscripts, and to Robert Wisnovsky for providing me with copies. There are a number of variants from Dunyā's text, but only one – in the last paragraph of this translation – seems significant enough to mention.

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(4) Avicenna says “receptive of the art of writing” and not “writer” just because the first follows man necessarily while the second does not.

وإنما قال قابل صنعة الكتابة ولم يقل الكاتب لأن الأول يلزم الإنسان والثاني لا يلزمه.

(5) Rāzī held that implication is to be abandoned in the sciences, and sought to prove this by the claim, first, that signifying all implicates is impossible since they are infinite, and secondly, that signifying the evident among them is vain, because what is evident for one individual is in some cases not evident for another. Thus it is not proper wwwto rely on implication.

وذهب الفاضل الشارح إلى أن الالتزام مهجور في العلوم واستدل عليه بأن الدلالة على جميع اللوازم محالة إذ هي غير متناهية وعلى البين منها باطلة لأن البين عند شخص ربما لا يكون بينا عند آخر فلا يصلح لأن يعول عليه.

(6) And I say this exact same argument undermines correspondence as well, because [knowledge of] imposition can differ in relation to various individuals. The truth of the matter is that, in response to “what is it?” and the like in complete definitions, implication cannot be used, as will be explained. In other places, however, it may be taken into account; were it not, nor would we use incomplete definitions and descriptions in which genera are missing,[79] since these incomplete definitions only signify quiddities of the things defined by implication, as will be explained.

أقول وهذا بعينه يقدح في المطابقة أيضا لأن الوضع بالقياس إلى الأشخاص مختلف والحق فيه أن الالتزام في جواب ما هو وما يجري مجراه من الحدود التامة لا يجوز أن يستعمل على ما يجيء بيانه وأما في سائر المواضع فقد يعتبر ولو لا اعتباره لم تستعمل الحدود والرسوم الناقصة الخالية عن الأجناس إذ هي لا تدل على ماهيات المحدودات إلّا بالالتزام كما يبين.

Appendix 2: Kātibī on Signification

The First Section, On Expressions[80]

الفصل الأوّل في الألفاظ

7. The expression’s signification of a meaning by way of its having been imposed for that meaning is correspondence; this is like man signifying rational animal. [The expression’s signifying] by way of [that

7. دلالة اللفظ على المعنى بتوسّط الوضع له مطابقة كدلالة الإنسان على الحيوان الناطق وبتوسّطه لما دخل فيه تضمّن

79 Following L and Y, I read *lam tustaʿmal al-ḥudūd wa-al-rusūm al-nāqiṣa al-khāliya ʿan al-ajnās* instead of *lam yustaʿmal fī al-ḥudūd* etc. (Ṭūsī 1960, 188.apu).

80 The numbering for the lemmata of Kātibī’s text is given in full in Street 2016b, 367–371. The texts translated are given as lemmata in Ḥillī 2012; this seems to me the best edition of Kātibī’s *Shamsiyya* available, after comparison with: al-Astāna al-Raḍawiyya 1114 (which dates back to 679 AH and includes the commentary by Ḥillī); the text given in the *Ark of Tabrīz* (*Safīna-yi Tabrīz*), a codex with a number of texts precious to Abū al-Majd Muḥammad ibn Masʿūd Tabrīzī, a scribe famous in his day, and copied between 1321 and 1323; and Trinity R.13.54, claimed in Palmer’s catalogue of Arabic manuscripts at Trinity to be a holograph (which it is not).

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imposition] what is contained in [its meaning by correspondence] is containment; this is like man signifying animal. [The expression's signifying] by way of [that imposition] what is extrinsic to [its meaning by correspondence] is implication; this is like man signifying receptive of skill in writing.[81]

كدلالته على الحيوان وبتوسّطه لما خرج عنه التزام كدلالته على قابل صنعة الكتابة.

8. It is stipulated for implicational signification that the extrinsic implicate be such that its conception follow from the conception of the named; otherwise its being understood from the expression is impossible. It is not however stipulated that the implicate be such that its concrete realisation follow from the concrete realisation of the named. This is like the expression blind, which signifies sight even though there is no implicational relation between the two in actual existence.[82]

8. ويُشترط في الدلالة الالتزاميّة كون اللازم الخارجي بحالة يلزم من تصوّر المسمّى تصوّره وإلّا لامتنع فهمه من اللفظ. ولا يُشترط فيها كونه بحالة يلزم من تحقّق المسمّى في الخارج تحقّقه كدلالة لفظ العمَى على البصَرَ مع عدم الملازمة بينهما في الخارج.

9. Correspondence does not entail containment, as emerges when considering the case of simple entities. Whether correspondence entails implication is not known for sure, because it is unknowable whether there is a mental implicate belonging to every quiddity whose conception follows from the conception of that quiddity. We have ruled out what has been said, that the conception of every quiddity entails the conception that it is not other than itself. From this it would also be clear that containment does not entail implication. Containment and implication only come about with correspondence, due to the impossibility of a consequent – in so far as it is a consequent – without an antecedent.[83]

9. والمطابقة لا تستلزم التضمّن كما في البسائط. وأمّا استلزامها الالتزام فغير مُتيقَّن لأنّ وجود لازم لكلّ ماهيّة يلزم من تصوّرها تصوّره غير معلوم. وما قيل إنّ تصوّر كل ماهيّة يستلزم تصوّر أنها ليست غيرها ممنوع. ومن هذا تبيّن عدم استلزام التضمّنِ الالتزامَ. وأمّا هما فلا يوجدان إلّا مع المطابقة لاستحالة وجود التابع من حيث أنّه تابع بدون المفرد.

10. If one intends to signify by part of what signifies through correspondence a part of its meaning, then it is a compound expression (like "stone-thrower"); otherwise it is a simple expression.[84]

10. والدالّ بالمطابقة إن قُصد بجزئه الدلالة على جزء معناه فهو المركّب كرامي الحجارة وإلّا فهو المفرد.

81 Ḥillī 2012, 194.5–8. See Text 2.3 above; it is the reason I read the paragraph as I do.
82 Ḥillī 2012, 196.u–197.3.
83 Ḥillī 2012, 197.pu–u, 198.8–11.
84 Ḥillī 2012, 199.9–10.

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11. If the expression is not fit to be a predicate, it is a particle, like "in" and "not." If it is fit to be a predicate, then if by its form it signifies one of the three tenses specifically, it is a verb. If it does not so signify, it is a noun.[85]

11. وهو إن لم يصلُح لأن يخْبر به فهو الأداة كفي ولا. وإن صلح لذلك فإن دلّ بهيئته على زمان معيّن من الأزمنة الثلاثة فهو الكلمة. وإن لم يدلّ فهو الاسم.

12.1. Thereupon, its meaning is either one or many. If it is the first, then if that meaning is for an individual, it is a proper noun. Otherwise, if its members – both mental and actual – are equal under it, as with man and sun, it is univocal. But if its occurrence in one is more eminent than, and prior to, the other – like existence in relation to the necessary and the contingent – then it is systematically ambiguous.[86]

12.1. وحينئذ إمّا أن يكون معناه واحدا أو كثيرا فإن كان الأوّل فإن تشخّص ذلك المعنى يسمّى علَمًا وإلّا فمتواطئا إن استوت أفراده الذهنيّة والخارجيّة فيه كالإنسان والشمس ومشكّكا إن كان حصوله في البعض أولى وأقدم من الآخر كالوجود بالنسبة إلى الواجب والممكن.

12.2. If it is the second, [with many meanings,] then if its imposition for each of those meanings is equivalent, it is equivocal, like *ʿayn*. If that is not the case, but rather it has been imposed in the first place for one of the two meanings, and then transferred to the second such that its first imposition has been abandoned, then: It is called a conventionally transferred expression if it is transferred by general convention, as in the case of the word *dābba*, [animal, which has come to mean mount] it is called a legislatively transferred expression if it is transferred by revealed legislation, as in the case of the word *ṣalāt*, [prayer, which has come to mean ritual prayer] and *sawm*, [fasting, which has come mean ritual fasting] it is called a technically transferred expression, if it is transferred by special convention, as in the case of the technical usage of the grammarians and theorists.[87]

12.2. وإن كان الثاني فإن كان وضعه لتلك المعاني على السويّة فهو المشترك كالعين وإن لم يكن كذلك بل وُضع لأحدهما ثم نُقل إلى الثاني وحينئذ إن تُرك موضوعه الأوّل يسمّى منقولا عرفيا إن كان الناقل هو العرف العام كالدابة، وشرعيا إن كان الناقل هو الشارع كالصلاة والصوم، واصطلاحيا إن كان هو العرف الخاص كاصطلاحات النحاة والنظار.

12.3. If the primary imposition has not been abandoned, the expression is said to be literal in relation to what it was initially imposed upon, and figurative in relation to what it has been transferred to, like lion in relation to the wild animal and the courageous man.[88]

12.3. وإن لم يترك موضوعه الأوّل يسمّى بالنسبة إليه حقيقة وبالنسبة إلى المنقول إليه مجازاً كالأسد بالنسبة إلى الحيوان المفترس والرجل الشجاع.

85 Ḥillī 2012, 200.10–12.
86 Ḥillī 2012, 201.11–apu.
87 Ḥillī 2012, 201.pu–202.3.
88 Ḥillī 2012, 202.3–5.

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13. Every expression is, when taken in relation to another expression, synonymous with it if the two agree in meaning, and distinct from it if they differ.[89]

13. وكل لفظ فهو بالنسبة إلى لفظ آخر مرادف له إن توافقا في المعنى، ومباين له إن اختلفا فيه.

89 Ḥillī 2012, 204.13–14.

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Bilal Ibrahim

Reason and Revelation in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and the Ashʿarī Tradition

Introduction

What is the relation of reason to revelation? How do rational truths relate to truths in scripture? Does the Quran assert theological truths ("God exists") in the same manner as it prescribes legal commands ("wine is forbidden")? How do the *texts* of the Quran and Sunna convey such truths? This article reconsiders the status of reason and revelation in the Ashʿarī-Sunnī tradition, the prevailing school of theology in the premodern Islamicate world.[1] The analysis focuses on what I term the "Ashʿarī theory of evidence" (*dalīl*) and its underlying epistemology, which, I argue, provides the operative definitions of reason and revelation for an influential line of thinkers, from Bāqillānī (d. 1013) to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210). Rāzī provides a systematic account of the Ashʿarī approach in two influential principles defining the relation of reason to revelation (labeled P1 and P2 below).[2] Put concisely, Rāzī asserts that (P1) "scriptural texts do not impart certitude whatsoever" (*al-dalīl al-naqlī lā yufīdu al-yaqīn al-batta*), because determining the intended meanings of a text requires the prior resolution of ten assumptions or premises (*muqaddimāt*) and that (P2) there is no *purely* scriptural argument or evidence (*al-dalīl al-naqlī*), because all scripture-based arguments involve an (implicit) premise or assumption, namely, "that this text (*naql*) is evidence (*ḥujja*) [i.e., is already established as binding or true]."[3] Rāzī's unified view of reason

1 Regarding the consolidation of Ashʿarism, see Thiele 2016.

2 For some sources that would adopt Rāzī's principles in the postclassical period, see Heer 1993. Heer focuses on aspects of P1. See additional postclassical authors discussed in part 3.

3 I use *naql* and *samʿ* interchangeably to loosely mean "scriptural texts." The precise definitions of the terms are of central importance to the analysis and I address technical definitions as we proceed. *Naql* and *samʿ* are used in our sources in various context-specific senses, which include the notion of transmitted scriptural sources, sources based on authority, and scriptural evidence or prooftext. The salient definitions of *naql* and *ʿaql* will be what I label below as the "evidence-based" definition and the "topic-based" division. To anticipate, the "evidence-based" definition corresponds to the Ashʿarī definition of *dalīl ʿaqlī* as "that which indicates in itself and does not depend on convention or agreement" and *dalīl samʿī* as that which "requires some [external] thing to establish it as evidence." Finally, for pre-Rāzian Ashʿarīs, "transmission" and "audition" are the primary senses of *naql* and *samʿ*; as such, the terms diverge from the meaning of "text." However, Rāzī's notion of *naql* more closely corresponds to our usage of "text" as the

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and revelation addresses a rising and reductive nomocentric trend within the Sunnī religious sciences, which sees legal hermeneutics as the dominant, indeed exclusive, means of understanding the speech of God.[4] This trend, in Rāzī's analysis, not only overlooks the extent of non-legal content expressed in scripture (e.g., rational and moral content) and the importance of theological inquiry in the tradition, but elides the distinction between the speech of God, as expressed in human language and texts, and the unmediated and infallible access to the intent of God. Just as the Sunnī tradition must distinguish *fiqh* – the divergent and fallible attempts of individual jurists at interpreting God's legal commands – from an ideal and singular grasp of Divine Law or *Sharīʿa*, our knowledge of scripture as linguistic texts must, according to Rāzī, be distinguished from the immediate and complete apprehension of God's speech and the intended meanings (*murād al-khiṭāb*) couched therein.[5] Rāzī's principles aim to codify, at the level of method in the religious sciences, the epistemic implications of this distinction, which were overlooked and even threatened by the approach of the jurists.

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words of an author or speaker communicated to a real or imagined audience, a point evidenced in his discussion of the epistemic role of the ten conditions in P1.

4 Regarding Rāzī's opposition to nomocentric trends and its assumptions, it can be noted here that, in various places, Rāzī states such things as: "Know that many jurists (*fuqahāʾ*) hold that the Quran contains none of the sciences that the *mutakallimūn* investigate; rather, there is nothing in it [they claim] except legal rules and law (*fiqh*). This is a serious error because, while there is not a single lengthy chapter devoted to legal rules, there are many chapters, especially the Meccan ones, which exclusively address the signs of God's unity, prophecy, resurrection and judgment, all of which constitute the sciences of the *uṣūliyyīn* [i.e., theologians]. And whoever reflects knows that there is nothing in the hands of the theologian but expanding (*tafṣīl*) on what the Quran expresses in a concise manner (*ijmāl*)." Rāzī 1990, 23:223. Ashʿarī already states that *kalām* is the expansion or elaboration (*tafṣīl*) of non-legal aspects of scripture. I address the connection of Rāzī's view of theology and *tafṣīl* to Ashʿarī's works below. See Frank 1972. Cf. Jaffer 2015, 77–83. Jaffer discusses the role of P1 and effectively locates central concerns that motivate Rāzī's view that theology ought to concern *hermeneutics* and not simply apologetics. However, I see the central distinctions and concerns of Rāzī as grounded in earlier Ashʿarī theories of language and evidence, which stand in opposition to Muʿtazilī views.

5 The Ashʿarīs make an important but oft-overlooked distinction between "revelation," communicated ideally and infallibly, as is the case with prophets and angels, and "scriptural texts" that are read by fallible interpreters, which is all that is available in Sunnī law and theology. In contrast to *fiqh*, the relevant distinction concerns the requirement of adequately grasping the language of the Quran. Ghazālī states, "If an angel or prophet hears (*samiʿahu*) it from God, the Sublime, then it [i.e. revelation] is neither letter nor sound nor language by convention (*lugha mawḍūʿa*), such that *the [angel or prophet] grasps its meaning in virtue of having prior knowledge of linguistic convention (muwāḍaʿa)*." Ghazālī 2015, 21–22. I set aside the question of *taṣwīb*. On Razī's view, see Fadel 2019, 92–94.

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Rāzī's statement that scriptural texts do not impart certitude makes the rather radical claim that *all* scriptural texts are in principle open to alternate interpretations. Departing from his predecessors' approach to the most definitive category of texts in legal hermeneutics, namely, *naṣṣ*, Rāzī rejects earlier definitions and states, "For there is *no* expression that is posited for a meaning but that a figurative [understanding] of it is possible so that what is *intended* is other than what it was posited for."[6] Rāzī's view has been characterized as an "extreme" position, departing from established opinions in the Sunnī tradition. In his criticisms of Rāzī and later Ashʿārīs, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) states, "As for Rāzī and his likes, they have gone beyond the Muʿtazilīs in this, because even the Muʿtazilīs do not say that scriptural evidence does not engender certitude."[7] But how could the Ashʿarīs, known to be the opponents of more rational trends in the premodern Islamic world, hold consistently to such a radical view of scriptural hermeneutics? In the following, I argue against Ibn Taymiyya's reading, which characterizes Rāzī and the Ashʿarīs as betraying the tradition and adopting a rationalism that is largely derivative of *falsafa* and Muʿtazilism. This view has been influential in recent scholarship.[8] The true import of Rāzī's two principles, and their roots in earlier Ashʿarī views of evidence and inference, have been largely

6 Ghazālī, by contrast, views *naṣṣ* as equivalent to the most certain category of conventional signification (*dalālat al-waḍʿ*) and admissible in logic. According to Rāzī, one should distinguish between linguistic signification and the hermeneutic categories of legal interpretation that apply to (divine) speech. Cf. Zysow 2013, 52–54, 58–59.

7 Ibn Taymiyya 1991, 5:275. Ibn Taymiyya accurately reproduces P1 with Rāzī's ten conditions: "Let the rational believer consider this discussion [from the *Nihāya*], and though [Rāzī] might [seem to] downgrade [his claim] and claim that [*samʿ*] does not furnish certainty simply on account of the possibility of opposing rational [evidence] (*tajwīz al-muʿāriḍ al-ʿaqlī*); but he and others, however, in other places deny that *samʿī* evidence provides certainty in virtue of it being dependent on probable premises (*muqaddimāt ẓanniyya*), like the transmission of language, grammar and morphology; lack of figurative uses, ambiguity, coined usages, ellipses, and particularization; and the lack of *samʿī* counter-evidence in addition to *ʿaqlī* counter-evidence" (Ibn Taymiyya 1991, 5:328). Ibn Taymiyya understands that the status of "rational counter-evidence" is only one element in Rāzī's P1 and that P1 makes a more far-reaching claim than Ghazālī's universal rule. See El-Tobgui 2020, 132–176, especially 156–163. According to El-Tobgui, Ibn Taymiyya sees the Ashʿarīs as affirming a fundamental dichotomy between reason and revelation. As the following shows, Ibn Taymiyya's view is a misreading of the Ashʿarī theory. I argue that Ibn Taymiyya advances a strawman view of Ashʿarism, which distorts the relevant definitions of reason and revelation as articulated by the Ashʿarīs.

8 El-Tobgui 2020, 23–77, 141–147; Michot 2001; Griffel 2018; Griffel 2015. El-Tobgui describes a rather precipitous trajectory (El-Tobgui 2020, 23–77, especially 39–40 [=Table 1]).

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overlooked.[9] Here, the historical and conceptual context of Rāzī's principles is especially significant. I argue that Rāzī's seemingly extreme view is in fact rooted in earlier approaches to reason and revelation in the Ashʿarī tradition. More specifically, the following analysis shows that Rāzī's principles are best understood as the culmination of what Vishanoff has called the "principle of ambiguity" in Bāqillānī, which in turn builds on Shāfiʿī's (d. 820) emphasis on the ambiguity of language.[10] Regarding Bāqillānī, Vishanoff notes that the former aims to demonstrate that "an Ashʿarī view of the nature of God's eternal speech dovetails beautifully with Shāfiʿī's exploitation of the ambiguity of revelation."[11] P1 aims to codify the core intuitions behind this approach, which remained unclear in the earlier jurists' analysis of hermeneutic terms. Rāzī scrutinizes the Ashʿarī theory of meaning and its relation to the certainty or immediacy of meanings as conveyed by speech-texts (*naql*). More specifically, Rāzī clarifies the epistemic implications of the distinction between language as a system of signification and language as communicated speech, which remained implicit in earlier Ashʿarī theorists.[12] While the former ensures immediate and transparent meanings, the latter requires attention to context and the intent of a speech-text (*murād al-khiṭāb*).[13] This approach has been viewed as coming to an end with a "traditionalist Sunnī resurgence," with "the marginalization of theology from the curriculum of the endowed colleges in favor of law," and after "the radical suspension of judgment advocated by Ashʿarī (d. 935) and Bāqillānī have been utterly eclipsed."[14]

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9 Scholarship has addressed the principles almost entirely in the context of earlier Ashʿarī debates on the conflict of reason and revelation and the reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*) of specific texts, which, as shown below, is peripheral to the broader aims of P1 and P2. Relevant sources include: Heer 1993; El-Tobgui 2020, 23–77; El-Tobgui 2018; Griffel 2018; Griffel 2015; Anjum 2012, 196–215; Abrahamov 1998, 32–51; Jaffer 2015, 77–83.

10 Vishanoff 2011, 152–189.

11 Vishanoff 2011, 152.

12 The distinction is of central significance to Ashʿarī views and is not available to their opponents, including the extreme Ḥanbalīs and Muʿtazilīs. By "Ḥanbalīs," I mean more specifically non-Ashʿarī Ḥanbalīs, like Abū Yaʿlā ibn al-Farrāʾ (d. 1065), who are often labelled *ḥashwiyya* by the Ashʿarīs. Ashʿarī-Ḥanbalīs, like Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350), distance themselves from Abū Yaʿlā and the literalist Ḥanbalīs. To be sure, Ibn al-Qayyim and others felt so strongly as to state that Abū Yaʿlā and his peers "disgraced" the school with their works. Cf. Vishanoff 2011, 232–253.

13 Ghazālī 2015, 2:22; and sources discussed in part 1.3 below.

14 Vishanoff states, "Theorists affiliated with the Ashʿariyya continued to affirm an eternal divine attribute of speech expressed by created words (…) but the hermeneutical systems that fourth/tenth-century theologians had grounded in those theories of speech *were discarded*. Legal theory was deliberately severed from the discipline of theology, and the law-oriented hermeneutic triumphed, *largely without the benefit of a coherent epistemological or theological foundation*." (2011, 252; italics mine). The view that traditionalists reigned and Ashʿarī theology

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Against the thesis that early theory was discarded in later Sunnism, I argue that Rāzī and his successors view the two principles as a unified expression of the Ashʿarī account of knowledge and evidence.[15] Critically, the principles are articulated in his major curricular works of theology (*ʿilm al-kalām*), legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and exegesis (*tafsīr*) and become a topic of commentary for a long line of Ashʿarī thinkers. That is, unlike Ghazālī's (d. 1111) more limited and context-specific discussions of reason and revelation, Rāzī's principles are meant to redefine central concepts and, indeed, restructure how Ashʿarī-Sunnī scholars view evidence and methods in the religious sciences.[16]

A final but critical aspect of the study concerns Ashʿarī views of reason and logic. Ibn Taymiyya criticizes the Ashʿarīs for what he views as maximal or inflated definitions of reason and rational proof; he is particularly critical of the assimilation of Aristotelian syllogistics by Ghazālī and later Ashʿarīs. The view that the Ashʿarīs adopt, pretty much wholesale, Aristotelian syllogistics as the standard of reasoning has been widely accepted.[17] However, I propose an alternative reading, relying on how Ashʿarīs themselves define, on rather precise terms, rational evidence and inference (*dalāla*; *dalīl*). In these sources, I argue that we find a general definition of rational proof as logical consequence or implication (*iṭṭirād*), which corresponds loosely to the notion of a conditional (i.e., If *F*, then *G*). The notion of *iṭṭirād* – which Juwaynī (d. 1085) expresses as the relation of

was eclipsed in the postclassical period requires revision in the context of recent findings. That is, the sheer magnitude of sources on Ashʿarī theology and the rational sciences that have been uncovered in recent studies, stretching from the 12th to the 19th centuries, casts serious doubts on the view. See for example Wisnovsky 2004b, which is now outdated and simply the tip of the iceberg. Notably, many if not the majority of authors identify, in one way or other, as Ashʿarīs.

15 Rāzī's redefinition of *naql* in P1 and his rejection of *naṣṣ* as epistemically basic and certain challenges Robert Gleave's interpretation that "groups and tendencies commonly called 'literalists' (*ḥashwiyya, ẓāhiriyya, salafiyya* and so on) are simply applying rules concerning non-deviation from the literal meaning with a greater level of rigidity than other so-called 'non-literalists.' The various groups are not, in truth, operating in a different hermeneutic context." (Gleave 2012, 2). Rāzī's arguments are sometimes directly pointed against the *ḥashwiyya* and aim to articulate an epistemology that distinguishes the immediate apprehension of Divine Speech (as in direct revelation to prophets) from our reading of scriptural texts.

16 The major textbooks of postclassical theology and legal theory address Rāzī's P1 and P2. See Griffel 2015.

17 El-Tobgui 2020, 66–70. Griffel states that this is basically what *ʿaql* means: "Their dispute [i.e., Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyya] is further complicated by the fact that they have different understandings of the meaning of the word "reason" (*ʿaql*). For Ghazālī and also Fakhr al-Dīn, this word refers to an inquiry that is guided by Aristotelian logic and by an Aristotelian understanding of demonstration (*burhān*). These two expect every credible scholar in Islamic theology and its adjacent disciplines to be firm in Aristotelian logic" (Griffel 2018, 38).

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luzūm – aims to capture the original sense of *dalīl* as a one-directional "indicant," whether linguistic, conventional, or rational.[18] To be sure, contrary to Ibn Taymiyya's claims, the early Ashʿarīs contrast their definition of rational evidence directly against the more robust conditions placed on reason by the Muʿtazilīs, including co-implication (*al-inʿikās*) and causal necessity (*al-ʿilla al-mūjiba*).[19] Even more, Juwaynī challenges knowledge of natures and essences in *falsafa*, anticipating Rāzī's more thorough-going anti-essentialism.[20]

With respect to the narrative of assimilation, I address two central claims of Ibn Taymiyya regarding the adoption of Aristotelian syllogistics. First, Ibn Taymiyya believes that, in adopting Aristotelian syllogistics, the Ashʿarīs commit to the essentialism of the *falāsifa*, and particularly the Aristotelians who believe that real definitions identify the essences of things. Those Ashʿarīs who directly address the question of essences – i.e., that there are real essences that exist beyond discrete atoms and accidents – explicitly deny that we have any knowledge of underlying natures, essences or bodies. Second, and more importantly, in affirming Aristotelian syllogistics, Ibn Taymiyya believes that the Ashʿarīs adopt categorical syllogistics as the ideal and exclusive method of reasoning. The Aristotelians, of course, held that Aristotle's categorical syllogism is the pinnacle of deductive reasoning and that *all* valid arguments must be reducible to one of the valid syllogistic figures. That is, in contrast to the sentential logic of the

18 *Iṭṭirād* glosses the Ashʿarīs' main definition of rational evidence as that "which indicates in itself" (*mā dalla fī nafsihi*). This definition is what they will use to distinguish rational evidence from scriptural evidence, as discussed below. Ibn Taymiyya will misread "indicates in itself" as implying an essentialist epistemology. Ibn Taymiyya suggests that the definition means reason provides absolute knowledge or correspondence, 1991, 1:191–194. Abrahamov notes that Ibn Taymiyya states, "being known through reason or not is not an inherent attribute of a thing but rather a relative one" (1998, 21). The Ashʿarīs explicitly clarify that they mean none of this by their definition. The *falāsifa* studied conditionals but always as subordinate to categorical syllogistics.

19 I expand on aspects of Ayman Shihadeh's insightful study (Shihadeh 2013). Cf. El-Tobgui 2020, 23–77.

20 For example, regarding knowledge of essences and natures, Juwaynī states, "We respond to the natural philosophers (*al-ṭabāʾiʿiyyīn*): we do not observe singular natures which are not composite [i.e., the essential constituents of composite observable things] so we must hold to the falsity of the elements (*al-ʿunṣur*). And we respond to those who affirm prime matter: we do not observe a simple body denuded of accidents" (Juwaynī 1981, 62). On Rāzī's anti-essentialism, see Ibrahim 2013. That Rāzī (and earlier Ashʿarīs) anticipate Ibn Taymiyya's central criticisms of Aristotelian logic has not been addressed in recent works. Shihadeh shows that pre-Rāzian Ashʿarīs held to a rather radical nominalism, addressing examples such as human and soul. See Shihadeh 2012, especially 458–461.

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Stoics, for example, the Aristotelians did not consider conditionals or implication arguments (like *modus ponens*) valid on their own; such argument forms are only productive and valid when reduced, in some way or other, to syllogistic form.[21] Rāzī offers a different analysis of the status of the categorical syllogism. Arguing against what he calls the "proponents of categorical syllogisms," who prioritize the latter over conditional arguments, Rāzī states: "The result then is that the categorical syllogism is not productive except in virtue of it being a conditional argument in potentiality. *Hence, the conditional argument must be prior in order and power to the categorical syllogism*."[22] Postclassical thinkers would recognize this as Rāzī's standard definition of deduction. Rāzī's approach, I propose, aims to preserve the basic notion of *dalīl* as implication (*iṭṭirād* or *luzūm*) found in earlier Ashʿarī views, which makes the notion of logical consequence more basic than Aristotelian categorical syllogistics.[23]

In the following, I begin in part 1 with an analysis of Rāzī's central principles regarding reason and revelation and their correspondence to earlier Ashʿarī views. I argue that P1 and P2 aim to synthesize earlier Ashʿarī distinctions regarding reason and revelation. Part 2 focuses on definitions of reason and revelation in pre-Rāzian Ashʿarī texts. Part 3 addresses Rāzī's P1 and P2 in his works of legal theory.

1 Rāzī and Classical Ashʿarism: The Theory of Evidence and Inference

To begin with some rough distinctions, Ashʿarīs are characterized as setting up the following dichotomy between reason and revelation.[24] Ibn Taymiyya states the view thus: "They make *uṣūl al-dīn* (the science of theology) of two

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21 Regarding the prevelance of Aristotelian syllogistics, van Ess astutely notes, "But in spite of all this, if we were to study their practical use of logic in detail, I am convinced we would find many cases where they still trod the old paths. Aristotle never completely vanquished the Stoics in Islam" (1970, 50). On the differences between Stoic and Aristotelian logic, see Bobzien 2020.

22 Rāzī 1996, 1:162.

23 The point is proposed tentatively here. The basic claim of my argument is that the Ashʿarī view of rational evidence is preserved and expressed without requiring any robust view of categorical syllogistics.

24 With differing emphases: El-Tobgui 2020, 156–164; Griffel 2018 14–30; 2015, 89–120. Abrahamov addresses more systematically the foundations of rationalism and traditionalism; however, there is no clear reference to Ashʿarī definitions of reason; see Abrahamov 1998, 32–33.

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kinds: rational (*ʿaqliyyāt*) and scriptural (*samʿiyyāt*) and make the first part *that which cannot be known* through the Quran and Sunna."[25] That is, one begins with reason *independently* to prove the principal points of belief, including the existence of God, the possibility of prophecy, and (according to some interpretations) the truth of the prophecy of Muhammad. This is usually taken to mean that the believer must first use reason independently of scripture to believe in God, divine unity, and the truth of prophecy or scriptural sources. This role of reason I will refer to as "independent reason."[26] From here, one sets aside independent reason and turns to scripture for theological and legal doctrines (e.g. the nature of the afterlife and what is legally permitted and forbidden), beginning with definitive texts of the Quran and Sunna. This view is attributed to the major thinkers in the Ashʿarī tradition, including Bāqillānī, Juwaynī, and Ghazālī.

In this context, Ghazālī has been viewed as the turning point in Ashʿarism. Griffel has argued that Ghazālī marks a radical departure in the tradition regarding his view of reason and revelation, which "can only, in the context of Ashʿarī theology, be regarded as a rationalist innovation."[27] Griffel's analysis centers on a work devoted to the interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of scriptural texts and the conflict of reason and revelation. More precisely, the context concerns a question posed to Ghazālī regarding a *purported* conflict between the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) of scriptural texts and a rational counter-evidence (*al-muʿāriḍ al-ʿaqlī*). In response, Ghazālī invokes "the rule of interpretation" (*qānūn al-taʾwīl*), which becomes the object of Ibn Taymiyya's attack. Remarkably, it is unclear what precisely Ghazālī's rule is.[28] It should be noted that Ghazālī does not offer us any clear definition of reason and revelation. Rather, he first identifies five approaches, including a "middle position" that divides into three groups: (a) those who make reason primary or foundational (*aṣl*) and revelation posterior or secondary (*tābiʿ*), (b) those who do the reverse and make revelation the foundation and reason secondary, and (c) those who make "each one a foundation" and seek to harmonize the two.[29] Ghazālī identifies his own approach with the latter position, (c), where reason *and* revelation are foundations, and not with the more rationalist position (a), which holds that reason is the foundation.

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25 Ibn Taymiyya 1991, 1:199.

26 See Griffel 2018, 19–29. I set aside for the moment the question of the role of miracles in proving the truth of prophecy.

27 Griffel 2018, 114.

28 Griffel 2018, 23.

29 Griffel 2015, 108–109; the translation is mine.

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As the following shows, Ghazālī's discussion of the rule of interpretation has almost nothing to do with Rāzī's more radical and foundational principles regarding the relation of reason to revelation (most importantly, P1 and P2 below).[30] The two principles will be the subject of analysis and debate by postclassical Ashʿarīs, who attribute the view exclusively to Rāzī. In contrast to Ghazālī, Rāzī unequivocally states in several places that, "Reason is the foundation of revelation," which places him in group (a) above.[31] In any case, this principle, as it stands, is of little consequence according to Rāzī, as clarified below. More importantly, Rāzī advances two clearly articulated principles in nearly all of his major works, from *kalām* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* to his expansive work of exegesis, the *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*. The principles, usually posited in the introductory section, articulate, as I argue, the operative definitions of reason and revelation in the religious sciences:

> P1: Scriptural texts do not impart certitude whatsoever (*al-dalīl al-naqlī lā yufīdu al-yaqīn al-batta*), because *texts* depend on *ten* premises (*muqaddimāt*) that need resolution prior to determining the intended meaning of a text.[32]
>
> P2: A proof that is purely scriptural is impossible (*al-samʿī al-maḥd muḥāl*); all scriptural evidence assumes one additional premise, i.e., "this text is true."[33] (Rāzī: "Hence, it is established that a proof that is *naqlī* in all premises is impossible and invalid.")

30 Griffel reads Rāzī's approach as informed primarily by Ghazālī's discussion of the universal rule and the status of miracles. The following shows that Ghazālī's view of the status of miracles, his view that reason is a foundation of revelation, and that reason is a character witness (*muzakkī*) of revelation are all marginal, even irrelevant, to the central questions addressed by Rāzī's P1 and P2.

31 Rāzī 1987, 9:116; 1990, 2:52, 22:7.

32 P1 is repeated in various texts with some variation in terms of the number and kind of preconditions listed: "Textual evidence *(dalāʾil naqliyya)* does not impart certain [knowledge], because it is based on the transmission of language, the transmission of grammar and rules of inflection and conjugation; it depends on the absence of synonymy, the absence of figurative usage, the absence of ellipsis (*iḍmār)*, the absence of new usages [of expressions], the absence of advancement or postponement [of a command], the absence of specification (*takhṣīṣ*), the absence of abrogation, and the absence of contradicting rational evidence (*ʿadam al-muʿāriḍ al-ʿaqlī*). The absence of these things is probable (*maẓnūn*) and not known [with certainty] and that which depends on probable knowledge is probable" (Rāzī 2007, 22). See also Rāzī 1986, 2:251–54; 1999, 151–156; n.d., 50–51; 1990, 1:28; 1987, 9:113–118; see additional references in part 3.

33 A concise expression of P2 is: "A proof (*dalīl*) is either [1] composed of premises that are all rational, which exists; or [2] [composed of premises] that are all textual (*naqliyya*), and this is absurd (*muḥāl*), because one of the premises of that proof is *that that text (naql) is evidence (ḥujja)*. And it is not possible for a text to establish a text [as evidence]. Or some of the premises are rational and some textual and that exists" (Rāzī 2007, 22). See, also, Rāzī 1986, 2:251; n.d. 50–51; and sources cited below.

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I begin with P1, which Rāzī elaborates in works of *kalām* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*. P1 concerns the epistemic status of any transmitted *text*, be it scripture or otherwise. Rāzī argues, rather forcefully, that texts, in virtue of ten premises or preconditions (*muqaddimāt*), fail to independently impart certitude (*yaqīn*).[34] The preconditions concern various linguistic, historical and communicative aspects of texts. Remarkably, this includes the most definitive categories of scriptural text as defined by the legal theorists (e.g., *naṣṣ, qaṭʿī*). The principle has broad consequence for legal theory. By contrast, P2 concerns the very structure of rational and scriptural *evidence* or proof in theology and legal theory. P2 reveals Rāzī's view of how we ought to treat the relation between reason and revelation at the fundamental epistemological level of evidence and knowledge (see diagram 1 below).

The plain texts of Rāzī's principles already suggest that they concern a broader claim than Ghazālī's rule of interpretation, which focuses on the more limited discussion of *taʾwīl* and the proper contexts of interpretation. Ghazālī does not approach anything like the above principles of Rāzī. In fact, to Rāzī, the question of conflict between reason and revelation is of limited interest. He subsumes the question of a "rational counter-evidence" – at the heart of Ghazālī's rule of interpretation – under P1 as only one of the ten preconditions that must be accounted for prior to determining the precise meaning of a text.[35] That is, it is more or less on par with several other requirements that have epistemic consequences, including the text's transmission and knowledge of grammatical rules. Notably, Ibn Taymiyya himself distinguishes the view of Rāzī and his followers from Ghazālī and earlier thinkers. In his major work on the topic, *The Rejection of Conflict between Reason and Revelation* (*Darʾ Taʿāruḍ al-ʿAql wa-al-Naql*), Ibn Taymiyya states:

> One does not know the intent (*murād*) of the speaker by a scriptural proof (*al-dalīl al-samʿī*) as Rāzī and his followers say, who believe that scriptural proofs do not impart certain knowledge with respect to the intent of the speaker. For them, there is no *sharʿī* evidence that imparts knowledge of what the Prophet has reported, so *how can they consider that in conflict with reason* (*ʿaql*).[36]

> [Rāzī] might [seem to] downgrade [his claim] and claim that [*samʿ*] does not impart certitude simply on account of the possibility of opposing rational [evidence] (*tajwīz al-muʿāriḍ al-ʿaqlī*). However, he and others in other places deny that *samʿī* evidence provides certainty *in virtue of it being dependent on probable premises (muqaddimāt ẓanniyya*), like the transmission of language, grammar and morphology, lack of figurative uses, ambiguity, coined usages, ellipses, particularization, and the lack of *samʿī* counter-evidence in addition to *ʿaqlī* counter-evidence.[37]

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34 *Muqaddimāt* here is better understood as preconditions or assumptions than premises.
35 See text of P2 in note above; it is usually the tenth principle.
36 Ibn Taymiyya 1991, 5:342.
37 Ibn Taymiyya 1991, 5:335.

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Ibn Taymiyya correctly locates P1 as a central principle for Rāzī's approach in a manner that makes the question of the conflict of reason and revelation irrelevant. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya underscores the critical point that a proper reading of Rāzī shows that it is not even correct to say that reason conflicts with revelation, not simply because such a conflict is raised only as a hypothetical possibility but more importantly because, on Rāzī's view, *all* scriptural texts fail to impart certitude on their own.[38] Ibn Taymiyya is correct but, as we will see, he overlooks the importance of P2. Notably, Ibn Taymiyya associates a whole school of thought to Rāzī with respect to the epistemology of scriptural texts.

As the following shows, the central argument of the *Darʾ* is based on a persistent conflation of what Rāzī and the Ashʿarīs mean by reason and revelation. In particular, though Ibn Taymiyya reads P1 rather accurately, he overlooks the central definitions of reason and revelation at play in Rāzī's theory of evidence (P2) and its roots in earlier Ashʿarī views. As the title of the work suggests, Ibn Taymiyya assumes that the Ashʿarīs affirm a clear dichotomy between reason and revelation. To be sure, Ibn Taymiyya's main innovation, as El-Tobgui has argued, is to break down the alleged dichotomy of reason and revelation that is developed by the rationalizing Ashʿarīs, and to replace the latter with a newfangled view of reason and scripture.[39] I begin with clarifying why the above view of a dichotomy between reason and revelation is a misinterpretation of Ashʿarism, beginning with Ashʿarī himself.

It has been overlooked that Richard Frank has shown, fairly long ago, that the sharp dichotomy between reason and revelation attributed to Ashʿarī, chiefly by the Ḥanbalīs, is erroneous.[40] In an incisive analysis of the former's approach, Frank argues that, "reason and revelation in the doctrine of Ashʿarī are, thus, inseparably bound together."[41] Importantly, Frank shows that Ashʿarī's view is not simply a token nod to scripture, which is used as prooftext to validate the science of *kalām* and independent rational inquiry. Rather, Ashʿarī establishes a deeper "reciprocal" relation between reason and revelation. As Frank aptly

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38 In his recent study, El-Tobgui states, "It is partly in pursuit of this goal that al-Rāzī (following al-Ghazālī and others) articulated the universal rule of interpretation, which explicitly prioritizes reason over revelation when adjudicating any possible conflicts between the two" (2020, 77). As Ibn Taymiyya himself points out, Rāzī believes that scriptural evidence cannot come into conflict with reason on account of P1. Cf. Griffel 2018.

39 El-Tobgui 2020, 132–141.

40 Frank's immediate aim is Makdisi's argument that Ashʿarī's "traditionalism" in the *Ibāna* is incompatible with the latter's endorsement of rational inquiry expressed in other works. Frank argues, convincingly, that the difference between the two works is in form and not in substance. See Thiele 2016, 227, note 2; Frank 1975, 136–154.

41 Frank 1975, 143.

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puts it: "In taking the position specifically as [Ashʿarī] does he puts between the authority of revelation and the mind's innate claim to autonomous judgment a bond of reciprocity by which each simultaneously grounds the functional authority of the other (…) *the probative use and intelligent understanding of either [reason or revelation] can be achieved with certainty only through the guidance of the other*."[42] It should be noted that, in his discourses on the validity of the science of *kalām*, Ashʿarī directly addresses the criticisms of the Ḥanbalīs. Ashʿarī goes to lengths to show how the primary aim of rational inquiry, and indeed the discipline of theology, is based on the very model of the Quran and Sunna. As Frank shows, the theologian, in Ashʿarī's view, attempts to explain and model not only the Quran's arguments but the Sunna of the Prophet in engaging in discourse with non-believers. This component, i.e., discourse with those who do not *already* assume the truth of scripture, is for Ashʿarī a central part of the content of revelation and is overlooked by the Ḥanbalīs. As Frank states, the function of reason and "the science of the *uṣūl ad-dīn* [theology] is to systematically recapitulate [the Quran and Sunna] and, so doing, to explain the teaching of the Prophet. To follow the way or method (*ṭarīqa*) of the Prophet is 'to *learn to use the reports as a demonstration*' and to carry out the investigation (*naẓar*)."[43] The words in quotes belonging to Ashʿarī are especially instructive. That is, the function of theology to systematically recapitulate and use scriptural evidence in non-legal contexts will be codified in the later Ashʿarī theory of evidence. Frank's analysis of Ashʿarī undermines not only what he calls the "superficial" reading of Ashʿarism as positing a unqualified dichotomy between reason and revelation, but it also rebuts further claims that are attributed to the latter by the Ḥanbalīs, including the view that the texts of Quran and Sunna are not sufficient for the individual believer to believe in God's existence and the truth of the Prophet.[44] As noted above, Ibn Taymiyya characterizes the Ashʿarīs as claiming that one cannot know such truths by means of the Quran and Sunna. All this results from a conflation of the relevant senses of reason and revelation.

Frank's study, and the relevant sources in which Ashʿarī defends his views, have been largely overlooked in more recent contributions. It is unclear why the view is left unaddressed, especially in studies on Ibn Taymiyya and Ashʿarism.[45] After all, Ibn Taymiyya's major criticisms in the *Darʾ* is based on the assump-

42 Frank 1975, 147; italics mine.
43 Frank 1975, 143; italics mine.
44 Frank 1975, 144.
45 El-Tobgui refers to Frank's study in a note, stating that Ashʿarī's argument follows the Quran in contrast to the approach of later Ashʿarīs (2020, 275). I take it that Ashʿarī's approach renders

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tion of such a dichotomy on the part of the Ashʿarīs. Perhaps the thought is that Ashʿarī's harmonizing view of reason and revelation is overshadowed by later Ashʿarīs, who take a sharp turn down the path of dogmatic rationalism and the assimilation of *falsafa*. Importantly, later Ashʿarī authors quote, sometimes in full, the relevant works of Ashʿarī in this regard, including the *Ḥathth*. To be sure, against this misinterpretation, Bāqillānī in his work on the Quran's inimitability affirms precisely Ashʿarī's view of reciprocity: "This shows, according to us, the falsity of the position of those who claim that it is not possible to know the unity [and existence] of God by means of the Quran (…) It is not the case that if a thing can be known by means of reason that it is impossible to know it by means of the Quran. *Rather, it is possible to know it by means of both.*"[46] This is precisely what Ibn Taymiyya urges in the *Darʾ*.[47] However, in his work of *kalām*, Bāqillānī seems to affirm the dichotomy imputed by Ibn Taymiyya: the existence of God is a problem "that is known by reason *without* revelation" (*bi-al-ʿaql dūna al-samʿ*).[48] Do the Ashʿarīs simply adopt an inconsistent approach to the relation between reason and revelation?

In the following, I argue that the Ashʿarīs provide a systematic view in their analysis of evidence and inference. The central distinctions regarding reason and revelation developed by later Ashʿarīs aim to codify the core intuitions of Ashʿarī's view. These distinctions clarify the foundational epistemic relations between various kinds of evidence and knowledge. However, the formal and epistemic relations between *ʿaql* and *naql* remain unclear in pre-Rāzian authors. Rāzī's P1 and P2 aim to systematize earlier distinctions and set the Sunnī religious sciences on a clearer footing.

Ibn Taymiyya's central argument otiose. As demonstrated here, later Ashʿarīs subscribe to and expand on this precise view of rational proofs.

46 Bāqillānī 1954, 23. From the topic-based discussion addressed below, it is clear that by "unity" (*tawḥīd*) Bāqillānī means the relevant rational beliefs, including the *existence* of God.

47 After noting that the Ashʿarīs hold to a strict dichotomy, he states, "This is an error on their part. The Quran indicates rational evidence, clarifies it (*bayyanahā*), and points to it" (1991, 1:199). The Ashʿarīs agree on all this except that "clarifies" means that the theologian must "elucidate" the evidence pointed to in the Quran.

48 Bāqillānī 1998, 228; Ghazālī 2012, 271. See part 2 for further details on this division of *ʿaql* and *samʿ*.

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1.1 Scriptural Evidence: The Quran and Sunna

I begin with Ashʿarī views of revelation after Ashʿarī and prior to Rāzī. We can turn to the question posed at the beginning of the article: Does the Quran assert theological truths ("God exists") no differently than it prescribes legal commands ("wine is forbidden")? The Ashʿarī approach to this question is especially revealing. First, they point out that much of the Quran comprises verses that refer to "signs" or evidence that aim to demonstrate not only the existence and unity of God but various other theological truths, including arguments for the possibility of resurrection and lessons in the Quranic narratives.[49] For example, Abū al-Qāsim al-Anṣārī (d. 1118), who was the teacher of Rāzī's father, begins his work of *kalām* with extensive quotations from the Quran regarding those truths proven in theology. He subsequently provides an exhaustive discussion of the relation of specific rational proofs elucidated in kalām to Quranic verses, citing Ashʿarī's *Ḥathth* on this topic.[50] I return to the latter work in part 2. According to later Ashʿarīs, if we properly attend to the *content* of such verses, we see that they differ in an important way from verses that concern commands or prohibitions. To understand the difference, we can turn to specific examples used by the Ashʿarīs:

> A. Verses that refer the reader to *ʿaqlī* evidence: "In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variation of night and day, there are surely *signs* for those possessing understanding" (Quran 3:190); "Say, 'Consider that which is in the heavens and on the earth'" (Quran 10:101); "Say, 'He who brought them into being in the first place will resurrect [them]'" (Quran 36:79).[51]
>
> B. Verses that are *samʿī* evidence: "[God] has but forbidden to you carrion, blood, the flesh of swine, and what has been offered to other than God" (Quran 2:173); "When you agree upon a debt with another for a named term, then write it down" (Quran 48:29).[52]

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49 See Gwynne 2004, 26–40, 152–169. The Ashʿarī approach differs in making their notion of evidence central.

50 Anṣārī 2010, 219–220, 232–270; many precedents for this is found in Bāqillānī; see for example his 2000, 19–29. Rāzī's arguments for the validity and superiority of *kalām* in the *Mafātīḥ* corresponds closely to this; but I have not verified whether it is direct. Jan Thiele has established a close link between the *Ghunya* and *Nihāyat al-Marām* of Rāzī's father, which the former studied. See Thiele 2017, 135–166. The point is significant in understanding the continuity of the Ashʿarī view of reason and *kalām* in Rāzī.

51 Quoted, for example, by Anṣārī at the beginning of the discussion of *naẓar* and *dalīl* in his 2010, 1:219.

52 Rāzī 1990, 2:80. See discussion below of *naṣṣ*.

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What, if anything, distinguishes the two sets of verses? The Ḥanbalīs deny any foundational distinction between the two. They are both commands or statements from God regarding religious duties; it is just that the first concerns belief in God and the second concerns legal acts.[53] The Ashʿarīs hold that conflating the two leads to denying an important aspect of the claim that the Quran aims to make in A and *how* it makes it. I provide an overview and address details in part 2. Drawing on their view of meaning and inference, the Ashʿarīs are able to distinguish the verses with respect to the meaning or *referent* (*madlūl*) of their expressions and how they are *intended* to constitute evidence for a particular statement. Verses in A point to "signs" or externally existing evidence for proving certain claims, including the existence of God and the resurrection of humans after death. This evidence is true independently of the specific verses that appeal to that evidence. That is, this evidence is supposed to be available to all humans and evaluated independently, whether or not one already affirms the truth of the source itself, i.e., the Quran. In the above verse, it is the world and its features that constitute independent evidence for belief in God. To be sure, the verses consider this evidence as "proof" establishing certain truths to all, whether or not one already believes in the Prophet or truth of a scriptural text. It is of importance to note that the verses in A do not claim that the world is evidence for God's existence *in virtue of the world being a miracle* – at least, not in the relevant sense of miracle. That is, the features of the world that are proofs of God are not apprehended immediately – like the witnessing of the splitting of the moon – but rather require some level of consideration or "reflection" (*naẓar*).[54] Nor can one view such truths as the existence of God as self-evident (*ḍarūrī*) or innate (*fiṭrī*), if the latter is taken to exclude reflection and drawing evidence (*istidlāl*).[55] It is this Quranic content that sanctions for the Ashʿarīs *naẓar*, their term for rational inquiry.

Such verses are distinct from verses in category B, which claim no independent evidence or content that supports the truth or normativity of a claim but rather assumes the normative nature of the text. As such, our authors note that most such verses begin with "O you who believe (…)"; that is, the commands

53 Abū Yaʿlā 1993, 131–135.

54 Importantly, the Ashʿarīs affirm that, from an ontological perspective, God is the "establisher" *(nāṣib*) of external signs. However, this assumption is not intended to be relevant to the evidence appealed to in the verses in A. Ibn Taymiyya suggests that the Ashʿarīs view such signs as independent of God and scripture. The Ashʿarīs simply make an epistemic and methodological distinction that aims to capture the very hermeneutic logic of the Quran.

55 Ibn Taymiyya's own proof conflates these distinctions. See Hallaq 1991, 49–69.

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speak to one who *already* presumes the truth or bindingness of the Quran.[56] The Ashʿarīs view this distinction as central to the hermeneutic logic of the Quran.

These distinctions are misread and conflated by the Ḥanbalīs to mean mutually exclusive sources of evidence and knowledge, i.e., the sharp dichotomy read into the Ashʿarī view where rational evidence excludes the Quran and Sunna. Verses in A are read by the Ashʿarīs as the commitment and, indeed the command, of the Quran and Sunna to engage with others on some minimal or common ground of evidence and not on the basis of the authority of scripture or one's own belief.[57] They distinguish between (1) the personal duty established by the Quran to ground one's own belief in evidence rather than on received authority (*taqlīd*) and (2) the collective duty to *prove* basic theological claims to others on general standards of truth.[58] Though there are some differences of opinion, it is the latter that requires the systematic analysis and elucidation of rational arguments on their own terms, since one assesses the validity of arguments in a neutral domain of discourse. Anṣārī highlights the point that individuals are responsible to know rational proofs in a general manner (*jumlatan*), whereas the expert theologian is responsible for elucidating (*tafṣīl*), expounding proofs, engaging in debate, and so forth.[59] The distinction between knowing rational evidence in a general manner and knowing it in detail is an important distinction that is found in the tradition from Ashʿarī to Rāzī.[60] It is directly aimed at the Ḥanbalī objection to the (allegedly) Ashʿarī position that the ordinary believer cannot rely on scripture and must begin exclusively with reason. Moreover, the Ḥanbalīs argue that the believer is not commanded to know and set forth detailed rational arguments and that the Prophet and the Companions did not do so, which I address below.[61]

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56 Such a distinction is not made by the Ḥanbalīs in any systematic way. See Vishanoff 2011, 251–253.

57 Even here, it might be noted, the categories are not static and mutually exclusive. Verses in category A are read by the Ashʿarīs as also *samʿī* evidence for the command to engage in *naẓar*, i.e., establishing or reaffirming one's belief on the basis of evidence.

58 Anṣārī 2010, 1:235; Bāqillānī 2000, 20.

59 Anṣārī 2010, 1:235–260. This distinction is already clear in Ashʿarī; see Frank 1988, 137, 138.

60 Anṣārī states, "Whoever holds that the Companions did not look into (*lam yanẓurū*) the signs of God after God commands them to inquiry (*naẓar*) into them and [that] they did not make clear what God made clear for them (...) equate the Companions of the Prophet and the leaders of the *salaf* (pious predecessors) with the disbelievers who turn away from the signs of God" (2010, 1:254–255). Anṣārī's point is that denying the commandment of *naẓar* in the minimal sense denies the basic meaning of the verses. *Naẓar* is minimal with respect to how the meaning or content is exposited (i.e., whether through clearly expressed premises or implicitly expressed beliefs) but clear in terms of what the content of evidence is.

61 Anṣārī 2010, 1:220.

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It can been noted that, in responding to the Ḥanbalī view that such beliefs are acquired by scripture, Bāqillānī states that the Ashʿarīs do not deny this, which accords with his statement in *Iʿjāz al-Qurʾān* noted above. However, he states that when one supports or reaffirms one's belief on the basis of scriptural texts, the texts function as a "pointer" (*tanbīh*) to the evidence and is not the evidence in itself.[62] If one reads the verses in the above manner, one need not posit any fundamental cognitive divide between verses in category A and rational evidence for truths like the existence of God.

In this regard, the Ashʿarīs develop a more foundational distinction than found in Ashʿarī himself, assessing what the relevant definitions of evidence and inference are that correspond to verses in category A and B.

1.2 Rational Evidence versus Scriptural Evidence

As the above suggests, the Ashʿarīs believe that scripture requires belief to be not simply *true* but *evidence-based* or *justified*. The Ashʿarīs offer their definitions of evidence in their analysis of *dalāla* and *dalīl*, which carry the lexical senses of "to point to," "to guide," "to be a sign or symbol for," and "to indicate."[63] Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfāhānī (d. ca. 12th century) identifies the main senses of *dalāla* which the Ashʿarīs rely upon: "That by means of which one arrives at knowledge of a thing, like the signification of expressions of meanings, the indications of gestures and signs, allusions, measures for calculation, whether or not that is in virtue of the intent of one who makes it a sign (*dalāla*)."[64] As shown below, the Ashʿarī definition of rational inference as *iṭṭirād* (implication) seeks to capture this core sense of *dalāla*.

62 This is assuming that one does not experience the verse as a miracle.
63 *Dalīl* serves as an overarching concept, the basic sense of which is an "inference" from a known to an unknown. For example, Bāqillānī defines *dalīl* as that which "leads to knowledge of what is absent from immediate knowledge (*al-ḍarūra*) and the senses, including signs (*amārāt*), indications (*ʿalāmāt*), and states (*aḥwāl*)" (Bāqillānī 1987, 33–34). With respect to specific usages and my translations in the following, *dalīl* is used in varying senses depending on context, including the *signification* of a meaning by a linguistic term, a sign or token, evidence in the sense of *argument* or *proof*, and evidence, more broadly, as the *justification* for a judgement or belief. I will translate the term in its nominal form with "evidence" generally, or "proof" if *dalīl* refers to an argument. In the verbal form, *dalla*, I translate the term generally as "to indicate" but will also use "to signify" or "to prove" when the context is clear. See part 2 for further texts regarding the concept. See van Ess 1970, 26–29.
64 Rāghib 2009, 316–317.

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In their definition of evidence, the Ashʿarīs define *dalīl* as "an inference from a known to an unknown" in a general and minimal sense, including linguistic inference (i.e. an expression's *signification* of a meaning), arguments (i.e. from known things to conclusions), and deriving or setting up evidence as proofs (*istidlāl*). The most important division of *dalīl* provided by the Ashʿarīs for our discussion concerns the manner in which each category constitutes evidence and knowledge:

1. Rational evidence (*al-dalīl al-ʿaqlī*) is evidence that connects with a belief *in virtue of itself* (*fī nafsihi*; *bi-ʿaynihi*); that is, "[rational evidence] does not depend on agreement or imposition *for it to be evidence*."[65]
2. Evidence that is evidence not in virtue of itself but in virtue of an external condition or imposition;
   a. Scriptural evidence (*al-dalīl al-samʿī*) is evidence in virtue of something establishing it as evidence (*bi-naṣb nāṣib iyyāhā adilla*).[66]
   b. Language or linguistic signification (*dalālat al-lugha*) is evidence in virtue of imposition (*waḍʿ*), and "were it not for a people's imposition (*muwāḍaʿat ahlihi*) of a meaning (*dalāla*) it would not indicate [at all]."[67]

I highlight the central concepts as they relate to Rāzī's principles and discuss the Ashʿarī texts in fuller detail in part 2. Attention to the Ashʿarī definitions reveals that their analysis of kinds of *dalīl* concerns foundational questions of epistemology, focusing in particular on the grounds or justification of an inferred belief.[68] The overarching distinction between knowledge based on evidence in category 1 (rational evidence) and that in category 2 is that knowledge in the former is in some minimal sense non-arbitrary or independent (i.e., "is evidence in itself"), while in the latter case the evidence is conditional or dependent on agreement, convention, or some external factor. I will call the latter category evidence based on convention or "convention-based evidence."[69] The two overarching categories

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65 Juwaynī states: "*Hiya tadullu li-anfusihā wa-mā hiya ʿalayhi min ṣifātihā*" (Juwaynī 1979, 1:155). For further definitions, see Bāqillānī 2000, 15; Anṣārī 2010, 1:241; Ghazālī 1998, 1:61, and discussion below.

66 Juwaynī 1979, 1:155 and sources discussed below. I set aside the question of whether what is meant by *nāṣib*, the "establisher," is God himself or knowledge of the truth of the Prophet. That is, once one recognizes that the speech is from God, its bindingness need not be "established" by God but is immediately known.

67 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:205.

68 This should be no surprise as evidence broadly construed has been central to questions of epistemology. See Kelly 2016.

69 The Ashʿarīs view scriptural evidence as analogous to language insofar as it requires an external condition to constitute it as evidence but they differ in various ways, including their posi-

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of evidence are defined with respect to their epistemic grounds.[70] I begin with the more nuanced analysis of category 1, i.e., the definition of rational evidence. I then turn to the definitions of 2a and 2b.

The Ashʿarī definition of rational evidence as that which indicates or is evidence "in itself" is read by Ibn Taymiyya in a maximalist sense to mean a foundational or infallible connection of reason to objects of knowledge (*madlūlāt*).[71] Attention to what is meant by the definition of rational evidence is central to understanding the Ashʿarī view of reason and revelation. The Ashʿarīs parse this definition of rational evidence rather finely to distinguish it from various other definitions and misinterpretations, including the stronger claims and conditions placed on rational knowledge by the Muʿtazilīs.[72] In his more elaborate discussion of rational knowledge in *al-Shāmil*, Juwaynī clarifies that "in itself" does not mean knowledge of rational causes (*ʿilal ʿaqliyya*), necessitation (*ījāb*), co-implication (*inʿikās*), or causal explanation (*taʿlīl*).[73] Rather, beginning with Bāqillānī, the basic requirement in the definition of rational evidence is a one-way implication (*iṭṭirād*), which adheres closely to the original meaning of *dalīl*. I argue that *iṭṭirād*, which I translate as "implication," is something like a conditional statement (i.e. If F, then G) applied more loosely to terms and sentences.[74] I begin with the conditions that the Ashʿarīs reject and exclude from the definition of rational evidence.

The Ashʿarīs state that "in itself" should not be confused with the maximal notions of rational evidence given to it by the Muʿtazilīs and, unknowingly, by the jurists. Juwaynī castigates those theologians who "conflate rational causes with [rational] evidence and make them the same thing, just as some jurists

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tion that the meaning of scripture construed as Divine Speech is not conventional at all but real (*ḥaqīqī*) in contrast to the arbitrary connection of utterances and meanings (Ghazālī 2015, 1:193). The parallels and differences are discussed below.

70 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:204–205: "Know that evidence is of two kinds: a kind that is rational (*ʿaqlī*) and a kind that is conventional (*waḍʿī*)."

71 Abrahamov 1998, 21. *Madlūl* is identified with objects of knowledge in various ways; see Bāqillānī 1998, 1:206; 1987, 33–36.

72 Ayman Shihadeh's study on the argument of ignorance highlights important aspects of the Ashʿarī view. I am focusing on the concept of *iṭṭirād* and rational evidence. See Shihadeh 2013; and van Ess 1970.

73 Juwaynī 1981, 60–73; Shihadeh 2013, 204–205.

74 Van Ess discusses the term as it applies to cause (*ʿilla*), "With *ṭard* and *ʿaks* together one reaches, thus, the security of intensive (and, at the same time, reciprocal) implication: if, and only if, the *ʿilla* exists, the object is a sign in the sense implied by it" (1970, 39). He does not treat *ṭard* in the more basic sense advanced by the Ashʿarīs as the definitive feature of rational evidence.

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speak loosely in calling inferred analogies (*qiyās*) in juristic interpretation as 'causes.'"[75] That is, they conflate the *ratio legis*, or *ʿilla* in the legal sense, with rational evidence. Remarkably, Juwaynī even states that "in itself" can be somewhat misleading because that which has "no self" or existence can nonetheless indicate (*idh qad yadullu mā lā nafsa lahu*), a position that departs from the view of the Muʿtazilīs that even the non-existent is a thing.[76] To be sure, Shihadeh has already shown that Juwaynī views *dalīl* independently of extra-mental import: "There is, hence, no *real* and intrinsic connection between the evidence and what is evidenced."[77] What Juwaynī means is that the content of rational knowledge need not refer to real or external entities, i.e., have existential import, for it to serve as evidence or a source of inference.[78] Juwaynī even addresses the question of whether rational evidence relies on knowledge of the natures and essences of things.[79] I return to further details of this in part 2 and focus on *iṭṭirād*.

Significantly, the examples they provide are cases such as the relation of smoke to fire and an action to an agent. The Ashʿarīs, as is well known, deny any real ontological connection between a cause and effect, including between an action and agent contrary to the Muʿtazilīs. How, then, is the relation of smoke to fire a model for rational evidence or inference? The Ashʿarī view of implication allows them to understand rational inference independently of deeper epistemic and ontological claims, to which I now turn.

For the Ashʿarīs, the basic requirement in the definition of rational evidence is "implication" (*iṭṭirād*), which, as suggested, is like a conditional argument. This excludes as a requirement co-implication, which as van Ess notes suggests something like "if, and only if"; it also excludes causal explanations (e.g., the

75 Juwaynī 1981, 69.

76 Juwaynī 1981, 71; Bāqillānī 1987, 34–36. Shihadeh notes that Bāqillānī holds a similar view (Shihadeh 2013, 203). Examples of nonexistent terms or premises include the assumption of, say, partners with God in a proof or conditional argument. See Gwynne 2004, 170–183.

77 Shihadeh 2013, 205. My reading of Juwaynī's approach differs. As discussed below, Juwaynī has in mind the notion of implication and logical consequence (as highlighted by Shihadeh), which anticipates Rāzī's view of rational argument. That is, Juwaynī's view is not a radical departure but an articulation of the central notion of *iṭṭirād*.

78 Juwaynī 1981, 65.

79 Juwaynī addresses the natural philosophers (*al-ṭabāʾiʿiyyūn*) and those who believe in prime matter (*al-hayūla*) by stating that we do not observe the relevant natures or substrates. In the *Burhān*, Juwaynī states, "Most of the predecessors held that apprehension of the [essential] properties of bodies and their *realities* [*ḥaqāʾiq*] is the limit of intellects, for it is not possible to perceive by means of reason a specific property by which a magnet attracts iron" (Juwaynī 1979, 1:143). This is not to say that Juwaynī treats essentialism in a systematic way as found in Rāzī.

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Muʿtazilīs require 'structure' as a precondition or cause for life).[80] It is important to note that the notion of *iṭṭirād* as the definitive feature of rational evidence is already addressed in Bāqillānī.[81] Bāqillānī affirms the importance of viewing rational evidence as implication *simpliciter*, excluding cause and co-implication. He states, "It is true for the *dalīl* that is connected to its consequent [*madlūl*] and knowledge that is connected to the object of knowledge (…) to follow (*tābiʿ*) the obtaining of the consequent (…) but without making anything of that the cause (*ʿilla*) or reason (*sabab*) for the obtaining of the consequent as it is, because if it does not obtain as it is, it is not valid for the proof to be a proof for it [i.e., the absence of the antecedent is not proof of the absence of the consequent]."[82] The latter point is briefly expressed and remains unclear in the text. However, if we turn to a parallel discussion in Juwaynī, the point is made more explicit, "What confirms this [i.e., the invalidity of co-implication] is that origination indicates an originator rationally but does not indicate its absence [i.e., the absence of an originator is not indicated by the absence of origination] and skilled action (*itqān*) indicates knowledge but its [i.e., skilled action] absence does not indicate the absence of knowledge."[83] That is, the antecedent implies the consequent but the absence of the antecedent does not imply the absence of the consequent. The point is to clarify that a rational *dalīl* does not permit the following inference: If F, then G; but not F, then not G (i.e., the latter is invalid). The notion that a rational *dalīl* is fundamentally defined as implication in the above sense is significant in understanding the basic meaning of rational knowledge in the Ashʿarī tradition. It can be noted that the definition of rational evidence as *iṭṭirād* captures the core senses of *dalāla*. If we return to Rāghib's examples, a sign indicates an object, a term a meaning, a number a measure and so on in the sense that the antecedent is connected to the consequent in the form of a conditional argument. The presence of a sign or symbol indicates the signified thing but the absence of a sign does not entail the absence of the object. *Iṭṭirād* is not strictly a conditional or material implication in modern propositional logic, which is one of many valid inference rules; rather, it functions more like a general notion of logical consequence.[84]

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80 Van Ess 1970, 39; Shihadeh 2013, 204–206.

81 El-Tobgui views Bāqillānī as advancing something closer to the Muʿtazilī view; see El-Tobgui 2020, 188–189.

82 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:206. Though it does not seem to be of immediate relevance, Bāqillānī seems to have affirmed the argument from ignorance in certain instances in the *Taqrīb*, as Shihadeh states (Shihadeh 2013, 200–202).

83 Juwaynī 1981, 69.

84 See discussion of consequence in Normore 2015.

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How this core sense of rational evidence and proof coheres with the various proof-methods that are advanced and tested prior to Rāzī requires further investigation. It can be noted that in discussing the concept of *dalīl* and the connection between *dalīl* and *madlūl* van Ess aptly notes, "That does not mean that the sign must correspond in its nature and essence to the thing indicated."[85] He then states, "The similarity with Stoic logic is striking, not only in the system, but also in the vocabulary."[86] Stoic logic and Aristotelian (Peripatetic) logic were of course the main, rival schools of logic. Setting aside the details, the two systems differed in fundamental ways. The Stoics developed a propositional logic as well as a deductive system based on axioms and inference rules.[87] The Aristotelians took the categorical syllogism to be a complete theory of deductive inference and the pinnacle of logical theory. The Aristotelians believe that all valid arguments must be reduced to one of the valid syllogistic figures. Importantly, for our discussion, the Aristotelians did not consider argument types like conditionals and modus ponens (If F, then G; F; therefore, G) as independently valid. Van Ess states that the parallel between Islamic logic (*naẓar*) and the Stoics is ultimately overturned by the rise of Aristotelian syllogistics in Islamic sources, including in *kalām*. However, van Ess concludes with the following suggestion that "Aristotle never completely vanquished the Stoics in Islam."[88] Of course, there is no genetic connection to the Stoics but van Ess suggests that earlier approaches that parallel the propositional logic of the Stoics might be retained.

I cannot show here that the there is a consistent line of thinking on logic and epistemology that can be discerned from Bāqillānī to Rāzī. However, I offer the following points, which should, at the least, be considered in contextualizing the assimilation of syllogistics.[89] That is, it is worth considering the terms and nature of the assimilation of Aristotelian syllogistics from the eyes of the Ashʿarīs. Ibn Taymiyya holds that the later Ashʿarīs, from Ghazālī onward, take the categorical syllogism as the exclusive model of inference. Ibn Taymiyya devotes a section to refuting "the doctrine that no judgment may be known except by means of syllogism."[90] However, first, it has been shown that the epistemic and essentialist

85 Van Ess 1970, 27. Cf. El-Togui 2020, 188–189.
86 Van Ess 1970, 27.
87 See Bobzien, 2020.
88 Van Ess 1970, 50.
89 As recent studies have shown, the assimilation of syllogistics by later Ashʿarīs departs not only from Aristotle and the Peripatetics but from Ibn Sīnā. See for example, El-Rouayheb 2010.
90 Hallaq 1993a, 30.

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claims that Ibn Taymiyya attributes to the Ashʿarīs are in fact clearly opposed by Ashʿarīs like Rāzī. Rāzī for example argues specifically against real definitions and knowledge of essences, and advances nominal definitions, all of which are Ibn Taymiyya's primary contributions in his critique of logic.[91]

In this regard, Rāzī states a more revealing point regarding his own view of the alleged preeminence of categorical syllogisms. Rāzī directly addresses a central tenet of Peripatetic philosophy from late antiquity, namely, the priority of the categorical syllogism over the conditional arguments or "hypothetical syllogism."[92] In this context, he refers directly to Aristotle's definition of deduction and its reception by the Peripatetics, who he suggests are the "proponents of the categorical syllogism."[93] In arguing against the latter, who prioritize the categorical syllogisms over conditional arguments, Rāzī concludes: "The result then is that the categorical syllogism is not productive except in virtue of it being a conditional argument in potentiality. *Hence, the conditional argument must be prior in order and power to the categorical syllogism*."[94] Rāzī articulates the point in the context of a larger discussion of the underlying semantic interpretation of categorical sentences, which must be set aside. In any case, the statement at face value turns the Peripatetic doctrine of deduction on its head by viewing the categorical syllogism as dependent, in some way or other, on a higher-order conditional argument.[95] Moreover, Rāzī seems to distance himself from the "proponents" of the categorical syllogism. To be sure, as noted in his articulation of P1 discussed below, his view of a basic inference or rational proof does not specify a syllogistic argument. Rather, he characterizes it thus: "*If all its premises are certain, then the conclusion is certain*, for the consequent (*lāzim*) of true premises

91 Hallaq 1993a, 15–21. Ibn Taymiyya admits that Rāzī and others oppose real definitions.
92 Ibn Taymiyya is correct in imputing this doctrine to Ibn Sīnā and the *falāsifa* but not to Rāzī.
93 Ibn Sīnā states, "In sum, hypothetical syllogisms are only completed by categorical syllogisms if what is aimed for is for the deduction to be productive (…) For the analysis in the old *Analytics* is only the syllogism that is productive of predicative sentences, so the meaning of 'categorical' (*iqtirānī*) there and 'predicative' (*ḥamlī*) is one" (Ibn Sīnā 1964, 415, 425).
94 Rāzī 1996, 1:162.
95 In the preceding, Rāzī states, "One can state [against the argument for the priority of the categorical over the hypothetical syllogism]: The definition which you have mentioned for the categorical syllogism entails that the conditional syllogism is [in fact] prior in order to the categorical syllogism. And that is because you have accepted that what implies the conclusion *is* the syllogism. So that it is as if the one adherent to categorical syllogisms is saying: "If this categorical syllogism (*qiyās ḥamlī*) is true, then the conclusion is true, but this predicative syllogism is true, therefore the conclusion is true" (Rāzī 1996, 1:162).

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(insofar as it is a valid consequence), must be true."[96] In this regard, it has been overlooked that, in his standard works of *kalām*, Rāzī does not stipulate *categorical syllogisms* but provides this broader definition of deduction.[97] Crucially, this is not the notion of categorical syllogistics as held by the Aristotelians, who stipulate that there be the relevant connection between the terms of the premises. It is for this reason that Aristotelian logic is called "term logic." Rāzī's notion of proof can be viewed as the notion of *iṭṭirād* writ large.[98] Remarkably, this notion of *luzūm* was already identified by Juwaynī, as Shihadeh has shown. Juwaynī calls a *dalīl* nothing other than "the establishing of a consequent on the basis of an antecedent (*bināʾ maṭlūb ʿalā muqaddam*)."[99] Now, the larger implications of all this requires a more comprehensive treatment and my aim is not to show here that the Ashʿarīs develop an alternative logical system consistent with earlier views of *dalīl* and *naẓar*. Rather, the above simply shows that Ibn Taymiyya's characterization of Ashʿarī thought as a wholesale adoption of categorical syllogistics needs to be attenuated, if not, entirely reconsidered.[100]

Returning to the above division of categories of evidence, the Ashʿarīs draw an important contrast between the two categories, i.e., rational evidence and conventional evidence. Rational evidence indicates "in itself," which as noted is the minimal concept of implication capturing the basic senses of *dalāla*. Rational evidence draws on the minimal level of self-evident knowledge (*ḍarūriyyāt*) available to all human beings. The precise content of this may be disputed but not the basic definition of this category of knowledge. In the case of knowledge of empirical things, a connection – say, between smoke and fire – is first established by repeated experience. In all this, the content and evidence is independent of any prior imposition of how the evidence indicates or connects with objects of knowledge. This contrasts directly with the definition of category 2, which is not evidence "in itself." Rather, category 2 is dependent on the agreement or convention of a specific group or community. The example they will use is that of language,

96 Rāzī 1986, 2:251. On *lāzim*, see van Ess 1970, 29. Van Ess suggests that Ibn Sīnā's notion of *luzūm* differs.

97 Rāzī 1986, 2:251; n.d. 40–41; 2015, 1:121–124. This is especially surprising in the *Nihāya,* which he considers his most advanced work of *kalām*.

98 Rāzī of course addresses the idea with systematic clarity not found in earlier sources. This latter is certainly an outcome of his engagement and assimilation of ancient logic and *falsafa*. That is, there seems to be a critical aspect of the assimilation and appropriation of categorical syllogistics that retains the earlier *kalām* notion of *iṭṭirād*.

99 Quoted in Shihadeh 2013, 205. Juwaynī states: "The way of establishing a proof for contradiction, is the way of establishing a proof for everything. And that is not how one established a cause at all" (Juwaynī 1981, 69). See Karimullah 2014.

100 I set aside Ghazālī's adoption of Aristotelian syllogistic, which requires scrutiny.

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where "symbols" (*kitābāt; rumūz*) indicate in virtue of a prior agreement or imposition. As Bāqillānī states, "If it were not for the agreement of a people (*ahlihi*) on what [signs] indicate, they would not indicate [anything]."[101] That is, the word 'tree' is assigned by a language community to indicate or signify an external object; but we could have very well assigned an entirely different set of letters. Moreover, it is not our knowledge of the very letters that tells us that 'tree' signifies the object, tree. Rather, it is by established convention. However, once the symbols are assigned we will immediately apprehend that a specific word indicates a specific object. This immediacy is *posterior* to assigning a sign, in contrast to the case of rational evidence. The difference is that rational evidence is in some sense independent of our choices or conventions, i.e., is non-arbitrary, whereas category 2 cannot indicate without some prior stipulation or assumption.

The point that language signifies in an *immediate* manner, but only after imposition, is important to understanding Rāzī's view of the epistemic nature of texts (*naql*), as discussed below. That is, he will address the question of whether the most immediately apprehended meanings of *naql*, or speech texts is as epistemically basic as our apprehension of signified meanings.

Regarding scriptural evidence (2a), the Ashʿarīs define it as that which "requires something that establishes it as evidence." They offer additional descriptions of scriptural evidence, which are examined in part 2. Scriptural evidence falls under category 2 because it does not indicate in itself. As noted, the authors draw an analogy between language which indicates by convention and scriptural evidence. However, scriptural evidence differs in two important senses. First, it is already coherent speech, i.e., texts comprise meanings and do not begin as arbitrary signs that are assigned meanings. As such, scripture does not require an external agent to establish it as meaningful but, rather, the "establisher" ensures that the text is normative or binding, i.e., its expressed rules and truths must be accepted. I return to details of pre-Rāzian definitions of *samʿ* in part 2.

Second, the definitions of the various categories of evidence are relatively clear. However, there are two remaining ambiguities. First, as noted, it is unclear what the relation between linguistic signification (2a) and scriptural evidence (2b) is with respect to epistemic certitude. Second, an overarching question remains regarding the very relation between category 1 and category 2. That is, if rational evidence is defined in the most minimal sense of implication, capturing the basic usages of *dalīl*, then in what sense does category 2 exclude *iṭṭirād*? That is, what makes the two categories mutually exclusive? Are they distinct kinds of evidence

101 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:205.

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because they are two distinct forms of *reasoning* or are they distinct simply in virtue of the content of the evidence?

In this regard, Bāqillānī and Juwaynī make a remarkable claim that suggests that *iṭṭirād* or implication is the general notion of inference that applies to both categories, rational and conventional. Bāqillānī views implication as a general category applying to both rational and conventional evidence. He states, "It is no doubt necessary for the *dalīl* to [possess] implication and for it to go through, whatever the state of its judgment [i.e., the content of its premises], whether rational or conventional."[102] Bāqillānī expands on this point in his discussion of how many ways we can derive a proof (*istidlāl*), i.e., how many kinds of proofs or argument-types there are. He states that one cannot delimit the kinds of rational proofs, but there are relied upon methods.[103] Towards the conclusion, he discusses how language and convention can apply to rational proof:

> One can also derive a proof by the stipulation (*tawqīf*) of the linguists upon us that "All fire is hot and burning" and that "All humans have this figure," on the basis that every truthful person who reports that he saw a fire or person, and the latter is a speaker of our language (*ahl lughatinā*), intends to make us understand that he observed only what is named fire or human in our presence [i.e., experience]. We do not assert some of that for others.[104] *But [this applies only] by the necessity of the name and the imposition of language and the necessity of speech usage according to how it is used and by convention (waḍʿ) as it is established*.[105]

Bāqillānī underscores what parallels our notion of "truth by convention."[106] Setting aside the details of the above, Bāqillānī views proof as implication as a general category that *includes* inferences with purely "rational" content, e.g., immediately known truths that do not depend on convention but also include inferences the truth of whose premises are established by convention. The latter of course should fall under 2a. In other words, proof as implication, according to Bāqillānī's closer analysis, is more general than purely rational arguments based on rational premises. Here, the question is then what excludes scriptural evidence from being a kind or subcategory of rational evidence defined as implication.

Rāzī's P1 and P2 address these two ambiguities in the earlier tradition. P1 addresses the question of what precisely a scriptural text is as a linguistic phenomenon and what its relation is to linguistic signification. P2 addresses the more

102 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:205.
103 Bāqillānī 1987, 31–33.
104 This seems to mean that the stipulated meaning does not apply to some things, i.e., it should not be taken to apply absolutely.
105 Bāqillānī 1987, 32–33.
106 See Rescorla 2019.

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overarching question of what the relation is between rational evidence (category 1) and scriptural evidence construed, in one way or another, as evidence in category 2.

Before turning to the relation of Rāzī's view to the above authors, I conclude with a note on the initial dichotomy between reason and revelation attributed to the Ashʿarīs. It is becoming clear that the categories of evidence, and particularly the division between (1) rational evidence and (2a) scriptural evidence, does not aim to distinguish two mutually exclusive sources, where there is reason on the one hand and scripture on the other. Rather, the divisions concern how evidence is used and articulated. For the Ashʿarīs, the division between rational evidence and scriptural evidence does not mean that rational knowledge is independent and exclusive of the content of scripture. As noted above, verses in category (A) refer to rational evidence. However, they hold that those verses themselves are not meant to be *the evidence itself*, in contrast to other verses that stipulate and thus establish the verses themselves as the proof of a ruling or truth. Moreover, according to our authors, the *methodological* distinction between (1) rational evidence and (2) scriptural evidence is validated by the Quran and Sunna and the division between verses of category (A) and (B).

1.3 Rāzī's Unified Theory of Ashʿarī Epistemology

Rāzī's view is a systematization of the central distinctions highlighted above concerning Ashʿarī definitions of rational and scriptural evidence. This becomes clear if we consider more closely how the distinction between (1) rational evidence and (2a) scriptural evidence are related to knowledge, and particularly certitude. We can begin with some relevant questions that can be asked about the distinction, and then turn to how it is addressed by Rāzī.

First, are the most definitive categories of scriptural texts epistemically *immediate* and *certain* in the same way that basic human knowledge (e.g. *ḍarūriyyāt*) is certain? It can be recalled that the Sunnī view is standardly interpreted as stating that the two sources of reason and revelation impart (*yufīd*) certitude independently (given that one has already proven the general truth of the latter). It is for this reason that Ibn Taymiyya is so disturbed by Rāzī's claim in P1 that scriptural texts fail to impart certitude. The claim is not simply beyond Sunnism but beyond even Muʿtazilism as he states. In terms of what counts as certain knowledge in each category, with respect to rational knowledge, the Ashʿarīs offer a list of (1) immediately known certitudes (*ḍarūriyyāt*), on the one hand, and (2) validly inferred truths (*naẓariyyāt*), on the other. With respect to scriptural evidence, we are given a ranking of categories of texts with respect to how clearly and definitively they convey a meaning (e.g., *naṣṣ*, *ẓāhir,* etc.). In the authors we examine below, the

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most definitive text is usually called *naṣṣ*. They define *naṣṣ* as that which "independently imparts meanings in a definitive manner" (*al-istiqlāl bi-ifādat al-maʿānī ʿalā qaṭʿ*) and "such that avenues of *taʾwīl* are terminated, and paths of alternative [meanings] (*iḥtimālāt*) are cut off."[107] Bāqillānī defines *naṣṣ* as "that which is independent in itself in disclosing all that it encompasses [in expression], without any ambiguity in any of its meanings."[108] Against his predecessors, Rāzī explicitly opposes this view: "It is claimed that [*naṣṣ*] is that which imparts a meaning in a definitive manner such that it is not open to *taʾwīl*," and after stating that that is an incorrect definition, he states, "For there is *no expression* [of speech] that is posited for a meaning but that a figurative [understanding] of it is possible so that what is *intended* is other than what it was posited for."[109] This clearly implies Rāzī's P1, which however is a definition of *naql* at a fundamental methodological and epistemic level. Rāzī distinguishes speech texts, like *naṣṣ*, which involve *intended* meanings, from directly established signification, to which I return shortly.

I begin with a text of P2 as expressed by Rāzī in the *Maʿālim* and *Arbaʿīn*, which are curricular works of theology and legal theory:

> A proof (*dalīl*) is either [1] composed of premises that are all rational, which exists [i.e. this is a valid proof]; or [2] [composed of premises] that are all textual (*naqliyya*), and this is absurd (*muḥāl*), because one of the premises of that proof is *that that text (naql) is evidence (ḥujja)*. And it is not possible for a text to establish a text [as evidence]. Or [3] some of [the premises] are rational and some textual, and that exists (…).[110]

> Prior to delving into this inquiry, it is necessary to know that a proof (*dalīl*) is either [1] rational (*ʿaqliyyan*) with respect to all its premises, [2] textual (*naqliyyan*) with respect to all its premises, or [3] composed of both categories. As for [1], the first division, which is if it is rational with respect to all its premises, *if all its premises are certain, then the conclusion is certain, for the consequent (lāzim) of true premises, insofar as it is a valid consequence (luzūman ḥaqqan), must be true*. As for if the premises are probable (…).

> As for [2] the second division, which is the proof that is textual with respect to all its premises, this is impossible. Because using evidence (*istidlāl*) from the Quran and Sunna is dependent on knowledge of the truth of the Prophet and this knowledge is not derived from textual knowledge because that would be circular. Rather, it is derived from rational proofs, and there is no doubt that *this premise is one of the parts [of the proof] that is considered in the validity of a textual proof*. Hence, it is established that a proof that is *naqlī* in all premises is impossible and invalid.[111]

107 Juwaynī 1979, 1:415; see also 1979, 1:160–166; Ghazālī 2015, 2:48–50; Anṣārī 2010, 1:242–243.
108 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:340.
109 Rāzī 1992, 34.
110 Rāzī 2007, 22, 153.
111 Rāzī 1986, 2:251.

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I limit myself to the following comments and return to details of P2 in part 3. First, it should be noted that Rāzī begins with *dalīl* without qualifying it as rational or scriptural in both texts. Properly speaking a proof or inference is a proof regardless; "rational" and "scriptural" describe a proof with respect to its premises. However, elsewhere, Rāzī considers the notion of proofs in a broader sense as falling into the category of rational knowledge, i.e., not as something that is conventional. Crucially, Rāzī provides the above definition of rational proof: "if all its premises are certain, then the conclusion is certain, for the consequent of true premises (insofar as it is a valid consequence), must be true." This, as noted, may include the notion of categorical syllogistics but it certainly does not require it.

With regard to (2), namely, a proof whose premises are purely scriptural texts, Rāzī puts in clearer terms what is implicit in the earlier Ashʿarī theory, particularly their view of scriptural evidence as requiring something establishing it as evidence. He states that a proof whose premises "are all textual (*naqliyya*) is absurd (*muḥāl*), because one of the premises of that proof is *that that text (naql) is evidence (ḥujja)*." In the *Arbaʿīn*, he states, "There is no doubt that this premise [i.e., that the text is true or authoritative] is one of the parts [of the proof] that is considered in the validity of a textual proof." That is, Rāzī considers the earlier definition of *samʿī* evidence as stipulating a conceded premise regarding the truth or evidentiary nature of a text. Critically, Rāzī explicitly combines the two kinds of proof under one general theory of inference.

In Rāzī's view, a proper reading of the earlier Ashʿarī distinction between rational evidence and scriptural evidence demands that we treat the two as falling under a general category of inference or proof. The pre-Rāzian Ashʿarīs distinguished between rational and scriptural evidence. At the same time, it remained unclear why the two are distinct if we take the basic understanding of evidence as an inferential move from a known thing to an unknown thing. They understood this move, moreover, as a one-way implication. For Rāzī, this is best captured by the notion of a proof with at least two premises, which is perhaps the commitment that is most influenced by Aristotelian logic. Rāzī resolves this ambiguity by considering a rational inference as a general category under which purely rational, scriptural, and conventional arguments fall. That is, all inferences are similar insofar as they are inferences; the difference concerns the nature of the premises.[112] Here, if we look at the definition of scriptural evidence

112 Notably, Rāzī need not involve himself here in the more complex question of the relation of the form of a syllogism to its matter.

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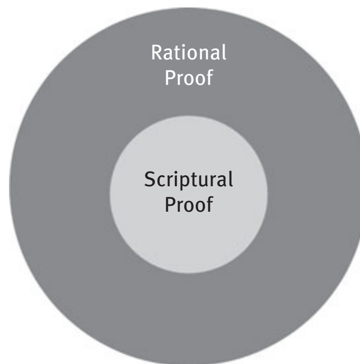
in (2a), we can see that it is in fact an argument that is in form no different than a rational argument. When we speak of scriptural evidence, or *al-dalīl al-samʿī*, we are speaking of how specific *texts* constitute evidence for a claim or belief, i.e., prooftexts. Importantly, we are not speaking, for example, of the inimitable quality of the Quran's language, which is, in some sense, evidence in itself.[113] Rather, scriptural evidence is understood as when a certain *text* in the Quran or Sunna is identified and used as a proof (*istidlāl)* for a certain claim. However, any such inferential use of a text must be distinguished from the text itself. Rāzī states that any use of a text as proof involves the implicit premise or claim that "this text is evidence." This is precisely what the distinction between (1) rational evidence and (2) conditional evidence amounts to. That is, evidence in (2a) is true posterior to some prior belief or claim about the source of the evidence.

According to Rāzī, if we properly attend to the structure of the Ashʿarī view of evidence and knowledge, scriptural evidence should be viewed as falling under an overarching or general category of evidence and proof:



This restructuring is an important methodological point for Rāzī as it captures the central distinctions in the tradition.[114] As discussed, the distinction is implicit in the earlier Ashʿarī analysis of evidence and inference, but Rāzī is the first to put it in systematic terms. It seems that this was not conceived by earlier thinkers in part because of the division of labor between the theologians and jurists. It would

113 Juwaynī 1979, 1:35, and discussion below.

114 Cf. Griffel 2018, 26, who provides a Venn diagram representing partial overlapping between the domains of reason and revelation.

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make little sense to the jurists that when they use a text from the Quran as a prooftext one always implicitly assumes an additional rational premise, namely, that the source as a whole is normative evidence. To the jurist, all the relevant interlocutors accept the Quran as evidence. But Rāzī's claim makes clear what is implicit in the division of the religious sciences. That is, all the postulates of law assume a prior proving of its sources as evidence. This is not the case in theology. As we will see, this is an important methodological distinction that concerns not simply the standards of engagement with those who have not accepted the truth of revelation but has important consequences for the function of theology and non-legal hermeneutics.

But how does the above lead to Rāzī's first principle, P1, the claim that texts fail to provide certitude at all? This leads us back to the question above regarding the certainty of the most definitive category of scriptural texts. Rāzī's view, I suggested, is the culmination and systematization of what Vishanoff calls the "principle of ambiguity" of Bāqillānī, which in turn is a more systematic view of Shafiʿī's emphasis on hermeneutic ambiguity.[115] Vishanoff highlights a critical point:

> Al-Bāqillānī insisted that God's speech is similar to human speech in the sense that it abides by the human Arabic lexicon, but because God's speech cannot convey its own meaning *immediately* to humans, al-Bāqillānī argues that the words of the Quran can only function as a piece of evidence that must be deciphered without *the benefit of immediate understanding* that characterizes interpersonal address.[116]

A central aspect of Bāqillānī's view relates to the Ashʿarī theory of meaning and speech. I limit myself to the following points. As noted, the Ashʿarīs distinguish between the "meaning" of a term or expression and its vocable (or written) form (i.e. "tree" signifies the meaning, tree). The view opposes the Muʿtazilī and Ḥanbalī view, which equates meanings with their linguistic expressions. As Vishanoff shows, this leads the latter to a more rigid and literalist view.[117] I argue that that the Sunnī-Ashʿarī view begins with a more basic and foundational analysis of language, which need not invoke the more contentious arguments concerning the status of Divine Speech.

115 Vishanoff 2011, 186: "But at the level of his interpretive rules and his overall model of interpretation, he left the meaning of revelation so radically underdetermined (…) it is hard to see how anyone could have put his hermeneutic into practice as a positive method for constructing law."

116 Vishanoff 2011, 183; italics mine.

117 Vishanoff 2011, 150.

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As noted, the Ashʿarīs sharply distinguish between a linguistic expression (*lafẓ*) and its meaning (*maʿnā*). The distinction is meant to be intuitive and evidenced by the fact that the same meaning can be signified by different expressions and in different languages (i.e., tree and *shajar* are expressions that signify the same meaning).[118] This view of language, which prioritizes meanings over expressed forms, leads to two aspects or analyses of meaning: language as a system of signification (*dalālat al-waḍʿ*) and language as speech (*khiṭāb*). In the former sense of language, meanings are assigned by convention (*waḍʿ*) to terms in a clear and immediate manner. This aspect of language will be treated by Rāzī and later thinkers almost as a closed system of signification, where there is a one-to-one correspondence between expressions and meanings. By contrast, language construed as speech involves more than mere linguistic signification. That is, language as speech presumes a speaker and audience, where linguistic expressions aim to capture the intent (*murād*) of the speaker in addition to a basic layer of given meanings. The first sense of language is in certain ways more basic to and presumed by the latter, as Ghazālī (d. 1111) states: "The path to comprehending the intended meaning (*fahm al-murād*) [of scripture] is preceded by apprehending the given [meanings] of language (*taqaddum al-maʿrifa bi-waḍʿ al-lugha*), by means of which communicated speech (*mukhāṭaba*) occurs."[119] For the Ashʿarīs, scriptural texts must be construed as divine *speech*, not reducible to a system of signification. Though this distinction is clear and might be conceded even by the Ḥanbalīs, the implications are not fully addressed by earlier thinkers. To be sure, the point raises a critical question in Rāzī's eyes about the relation of *certitude* (*yaqīn*) to scriptural texts, and texts more generally construed. What ensures our certitude with respect to the speaker's intent? Put otherwise, what are the conditions for a text to exclude alternate readings of authorial intent? Do some texts *independently* ensure and convey a univocal reading? Finally, are our text-based certitudes on par with direct linguistic signification or our most basic human certitudes, e.g., immediately known truths (*ḍarūriyyāt*)? Rāzī's two princi-

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118 Rāzī 1999, 1:187–189. Vishanoff states, "This 'principle of ambiguity' offered precisely what the Muʿtazilī 'princple of clarity' failed to provide: great flexibility in determining the intertextual relationships that were the key to Shāfiʿī's hermeneutical project. Bāqillānī thus provided a highly sophisticated restatement of Shāfiʿī's hermeneutic of ambiguity" (2011, 178).
119 Ghazālī 2015, 2:22; Bāqillānī 2000, 15; Juwaynī 1979, 1:169–173. Jurjānī's analysis of grammar and language is of central importance to Rāzī. I discuss aspects of this below in part 2. See Vishanoff 2011, 116–122. Bāqillānī states regarding *samʿī* evidence: "That which is evidence in virtue of speech *after* meanings are imposed [by convention], and in sofar as a meaning is derived from speech (*Dāll min ṭarīq al-nuṭq baʿda al-muwāḍaʿa, wa-min jihat maʿnā mustakhraj min al-nuṭq*)" (Bāqillānī 1987, 15).

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ples aim to address these latter questions, which remain rather unclear in earlier views. Especially revealing in this regard will be Rāzī's discussion of the relation of *naṣṣ*, the most definitive or certain hermeneutic category, to our more basic epistemic and linguistic certitudes.[120]

The Ashʿarī analysis of language draws an important distinction between language as a system of "signification" (*dalāla*) and language as speech or "communicated" meaning *(khiṭāb*), where the latter involves a speaker communicating to a real or imagined audience. In the former, language is treated as a transparent system, where there is a one-to-one correspondence between expressions and meanings. Signification by correspondence (*dalālat al-muṭabāqa*) is viewed as the basic kind of signification, where the primary sense of a term is apprehended with certitude.[121] The distinction is clear in Ghazālī and later thinkers; in part 2, I return to the question of how earlier thinkers address this. Speech, by contrast, requires the additional element of grasping the *intent (murād al-khiṭāb*) of the author, which involves attention to various aspects of the usage and context of expressions and speech acts. Properly understood, legal and scriptural hermeneutics – and its store of terminology, e.g., *naṣṣ*, *ẓāhir*, etc. – treat scripture as (divine) speech and not simply as a system of signification. I discuss the full text of P1 in part 3 but highlight the following points.

It was noted that Rāzī holds that even the most definitive category of text, *naṣṣ*, is subject to interpretation, contrary to Ghazālī. In fact, Ghazālī states *naṣṣ* "admits no ambiguity at all (…) like 'five,' for example, which is *naṣṣ* in its meaning and does not admit 'six,' 'four,' or any other number."[122] However, does Rāzī hold that there is a basic level of language use that is not subject to ambiguity? In various places, Rāzī affirms that signification of correspondence (*dalālat al-muṭābaqa*) is the only kind of signification that is impervious to any ambiguity. Below I discuss his treatment of the problem in legal theory. However, in his work of rhetoric, which draws on the earlier work of ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 1078),

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120 This marks a critical distinction between Rāzī's and Ghazālī's approaches. Ghazālī views *naṣṣ* as equivalent to the most basic category of direct signification (*dalālat al-muṭābaqa*) and admissible in logic. He states, "Hence, only *naṣṣ*, in the second posited sense [i.e., *naṣṣ* in the strict sense distinguished from *ẓāhir*], can be relied upon in rational inquiry (*ʿaqliyyāt*)" (Ghazālī 2015, 2:50). According to Rāzī, this amounts to a category error. *Naṣṣ* is a hermeneutic term and applies to texts (*naql*) and is not limited to purely semantic signification and inferences. Juwaynī also states that *naṣṣ* is that which is not possibly open to interpretation (*taʾwīl*); see Juwaynī 1979, 1:512. Cf. Zysow 2013, 52–54, 58–59.

121 Ghazālī 2015, 1:74–78; 2:22. See Tony Street's chapter in this volume on the kinds of signification in Ibn Sīnā (=Chapter 5).

122 Ghazālī 2015, 2:48.

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after a discussion of the various kinds of conventional signification (*dalāla waḍʿiyya*), Rāzī states,

> Know that the aim of speech is conveying (*ifāda*) meanings and this conveyance, as you know, is of two kinds: expression-based conveyance (*lafẓiyya*) and meaning-based conveyance (*maʿnawiyya*) (…). It becomes clear from this investigation that it is impossible that [such things as] conciseness, brevity, prolixity, omission (*ḥadhf*), and ellipsis (*iḍmār*) can encroach on conventional signification (*dalāla waḍʿiyya*). And for this nuance, nothing is used in the rational sciences but conventional signification because of its being devoid of possessing increase or decrease [in meaning] which places [one] in error and doubt.[123]

Three points may be highlighted in this section. First, by *dalāla waḍʿiyya*, Rāzī means what he calls elsewhere correspondence (*dalālat al-muṭābaqa*).[124] To be sure, Rāzī draws a sharper distinction than that between linguistic signification and speech. He excludes other kinds of signification as well, which in logic is called implicative signification (*dalālat al-iltizām*) and containment (*dalālat al-taḍammun*).[125] Second, Rāzī connects the clarity and basicness of conventional signification with the ambiguity of intended speech, which is subject to "error and doubt." Some of the terms, such as omission and ellipsis, are included in the ten conditions that prevent texts from imparting certitude.[126] These connections between signification theory and speech are not always clear when he posits P1 and P2 in his introductory or methodological discussions of theology and legal theory. Finally, Rāzī reads these distinctions into Jurjānī's work. I set aside the connection of these distinctions with the Arabic linguistic tradition and its relation to Aristotelian linguistic theory.[127]

If we turn back to the distinction between (2a) scriptural texts and (2b) language, we find some important implications with respect to the nature of certainty. As noted, in (2b), when a meaning is assigned to a linguistic term, the signification is, thereafter, understood immediately. However, this is not the case with speech, as it involves apprehending the intent of the speaker. Speech relies undoubtedly on a system of signification but involves more on the part of

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123 Rāzī 2004, 32.

124 Rāzī states, "Conventional signification (*dalāla waḍʿiyya*) is [precisely] correspondence (*muṭābaqa*), and the latter two [i.e., external implication (*dalālat al-iltizām*) and internal implication (*dalālat al-taḍammun*)] are dependent [on the former]" (Rāzī 2002, 19). See also Rāzī 1999, 1:219–234.

125 Ibn Sīnā notably does not exclude the latter two in logic; see Tony Street's chapter in this volume (=Chapter 5).

126 An important difference here is that the work on rhetoric concerns language usage more generally and does not focus on Quranic hermeneutics.

127 See the insightful analysis of Najafi 2019.

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the audience, specifically in terms of how one claims to achieve certitude with respect to the speaker's intent. This is particularly so when the communicated meaning is not direct or live conversation and, moreover, is extended, i.e., statements are embedded in a larger message that is not only presumed to be cohesive but, in our case, constitute the speech of an Omniscient Author.

In his analysis of P1, Rāzī clarifies and systematizes these distinctions, which remained somewhat ambiguous in earlier discussions. An especially revealing question in this context concerns the epistemic nature of *naṣṣ*, as noted. That is, is *naṣṣ* epistemically certain in the same way that the most basic kind of linguistic signification is certain, namely, *dalālat al-muṭābaqa*? While earlier thinkers are rather unclear, Rāzī articulates the distinction between two aspects or analyses of language. I return to the details of Rāzī's analysis below. However, before doing so, I conclude with some final questions that remain unresolved.

The above has addressed the question raised earlier regarding how Rāzī's radical hermeneutic principles, which, as Ibn Taymiyya states, go beyond even the Muʿtazilīs, is in fact a synthesis of central distinctions within the Ashʿarī tradition. Indeed, the Muʿtazilīs could not have developed such a view given their restrictive view of meaning and their more robust requirements of rational inference. Their view of rational evidence would seem to require them to sharply distinguish rational evidence from scriptural or text-based evidence, though this requires examination. The various nuances of the Ashʿarī analysis of language and knowledge lie at the heart of this view. But this still leaves the question of how such a view can be taken to be consistent with, indeed definitive of Sunnī theology and legal theory. To that end, we turn to Rāzī's various curricular works of theology and legal theory, where he not only advances this view but argues forcefully that this is the correct view according to the principles of Ashʿarī-Sunnism.

As I have argued, Rāzī's hermeneutic principles advance a radical underdetermination between intended meanings and speech texts. There are various concerns that motivate Rāzī's approach to scriptural texts. I focus on two points. First, Rāzī believes that there is a nomocentric tendency in the Sunnī tradition that effaces a central aspect of the tradition, namely, theology construed broadly. That is, the jurists have convinced us that theology and hermeneutics as applied to non-legal texts is marginal or supplementary. Rāzī emphasizes the point in various places and especially in his commentary on the Quran:

> The verses that mention legal rulings are less than 600. As for the rest, they concern God's unity, prophecy, and refutations of the idolaters and other kinds of polytheists. As for the verses that are mentioned regarding narratives (*qaṣas*), the aim of them is knowledge of the wisdom of God and His power as He states, "There is surely in their narratives a lesson for

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> those who possess understanding." This indicates that this science [*ʿilm al-kalām*] is more noble [than law]. Here, we refer to the central points of proofs [in the Quran]. As for that which proves the existence of God, the Quran is full of that."[128]

Rāzī asserts the primacy of theology against a nomocentric trend in the tradition. This primacy concerns not simply the proving or defending of theological beliefs, which is the standard view of the function of *kalām*. Rather, *kalām* is required for a proper understanding of the (non-legal) content of the Quran. The point will be of relevance when we turn to Rāzī's view of hermeneutic terms of legal theory. That is, the hermeneutic terms of legal theory are not exhaustive of the terms or tools of interpretation but are limited to deriving legal rules. This primacy of *kalām* is grounded in the Ashʿarī view regarding the nature of the rational content of the Quran itself, though earlier *mutakallimūn* limited its role to theological proofs. That is, the bulk of the Quran is non-legal and, thus, demands a more expansive hermeneutic approach. It seems that this expansive view of *kalām*, as a kind of theological hermeneutic, has roots in earlier Ashʿarī trends regarding the role of the rational content of scripture, particularly in their discussions of *iʿjāz* (inimitability of the Quran). What is relevant to note in this context is that Rāzī's view is articulated as an extension of Ashʿarī's view of *kalām* as grounded in the Quran and Sunna.[129] That is, Rāzī, much like his predecessors (perhaps with the exclusion of Ghazālī) does not require any robust assimilation of reason in *falsafa* or Muʿtazilism. A central point that Rāzī notes above and is repeated throughout various works is: "And whoever reflects knows that there is nothing in the hands of the theologian but elucidating (*tafṣīl*) what the Quran expresses in a concise manner (*ijmāl*)."[130] The point brings us full circle as it reflects Ashʿarī's validation of theology in *al-Ḥathth* as having a relation of reciprocity with scripture. Ashʿarī states that even if the Companions of the Prophet did not speak specifically to such problems, "their principles are specified and existent in the Quran and Sunna in a concise manner (*jumlatan*) but not in detail (*mufaṣṣalatan*)" and "every discourse expanding on (*tafṣīl*) problems of divine unity and justice is taken *only* from the Quran."[131] The later Ashʿarīs articulate the view in more

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128 Rāzī 1990, 2:80. See also 1990, 23:223; 2:107.

129 Ashʿarī already states that *kalām* is the elucidation (*tafṣīl*) of scripture. See Frank 1988, 138. Here, *tafṣīl* differs from legal hermeneutics because the content of scripture at issue in theological inquiry and hermeneutics is not strictly legal rulings.

130 Rāzī 1990, 23:223.

131 Frank 1988, 137, 138. Anṣārī quotes Ashʿarī's work extensively; see Anṣārī 2010, 1:220. Rāzī states, "The Quran is the source of all knowledge, so *ʿilm al-kalām*, all of it, is in the Quran" (1990, 2:107).

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systematic terms, beginning with their view of rational evidence and proof. How precisely Rāzī imagines a more comprehensive theological hermeneutic in his *Mafātīḥ*, that expands on the principles of Ashʿarism, requires further study.[132]

2 Reason and Revelation in Pre-Rāzian Ashʿarism

In this section, I examine Ashʿarī views of the relationship between reason and revelation, focusing on the works of Bāqillānī, Juwaynī, Ghazālī and others writing prior to Rāzī. The discussion examines the Ashʿarī theory of evidence in works of *kalām* and legal theory. I show that Ghazālī adopts, broadly, the same analysis as his predecessors, though there are differences. Rāzī's synthesis of earlier views leads to some important divergences.

We can begin by asking the following questions: How, precisely, do earlier Ashʿarīs define *ʿaql* and *samʿ*?[133] Does *samʿ*, for example, refer to the very sources or texts of scripture (specifically, the Quran and Sunna) or is it a concept or category distinguished from the texts themselves? If the latter, how is the concept defined, what is its function, and what is its relation to the concept of *ʿaql*?

In addressing the relation of reason to revelation, the Ashʿarīs use the terms *ʿaql* and *samʿ* (and sometimes *naql* for the latter). I will use the transliterated terms or refer to the latter terms respectively as "reason" and "scriptural source" in a general sense, before specifying more technical senses of the two. In pre-Rāzian sources, we find that there are three distinct contexts in *kalām* and legal theory in which *ʿaql* and *samʿ* are defined or discussed as concepts or categories. All three aspects of *ʿaql* and *samʿ* are usually discussed in the introductory sections of works of *kalām* and *uṣūl*:

> (1) The *facultative* definition of *ʿaql*: The early Ashʿarīs discuss the ontological status of *ʿaql* as an entity or human faculty. Juwaynī broadly follows Bāqillānī in holding that *ʿaql* is nothing more than the very instances of knowledge, i.e., "knowledges" (*al-ʿulūm*). Others hold that *ʿaql* should be viewed as a power or independent faculty.[134] (Note: in this discussion of *ʿaql* as a faculty, *samʿ* is not discussed as a contrasting concept, whether as an object or kind of knowledge).

132 The above modifies Jaffer's analysis which suggests Muʿtazilism as a chief influence on Rāzī; see Jaffar 2015, 77–83.

133 Though *naql* is used, *samʿ* seems to be more prevalent in the earlier sources.

134 See, for example, Juwaynī 1979, 1:111–113; 2009, 21–22. See Juwaynī's reference to other views, including Muḥāsibī's well-known definition of *ʿaql* as disposition or instinct.

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(2) The *topic-based* division *ʿaql* and *samʿ*: They use the terms *ʿaql* and *samʿ* as dividing kinds of *problems* or fields of inquiry. For example, the unity of God is known by "means of" *ʿaql*, whereas the nature of the Afterlife is known by "means of" *samʿ*.[135]

(3) They discuss *ʿaql* and *samʿ* as kinds or categories of *evidence* (*dalīl*) and inference (*naẓar*).[136]

First, I have not found an instance or discussion where one's position on (1), i.e., the facultative definition of *ʿaql*, is relevant to one's position on the relation of reason and revelation. As such, the following analysis will set aside discussions of *ʿaql* as a faculty or ontological category.[137]

In the following, I begin with the second sense of *ʿaql* and *samʿ*, (2), which concerns how problems are addressed vis-à-vis reason and revelation. I have referred to this category above as the "topic-based" sense of *ʿaql* and *samʿ*. I then turn to the third view of the two sources, which concerns *ʿaql* and *samʿ* as kinds of evidence. I discuss the notion of *muʿjiza* in the context of (3).

In their exposition of theology, Ashʿarī authors divide beliefs in theology into three categories. They state "the principles of belief (*uṣūl al-ʿaqāʾid*) divide into" or "what is not known immediately divides into": (i) that which is known independently through reason (*yudrak bi-al-ʿaql lā ghayr*), (ii) that which is known independently through scripture (*bi-al-samʿ lā ghayr*), and (iii) that which is known through either reason or scripture.[138] As our authors explain, the first category, reason, independently establishes such points of belief as the generation of the world and the existence and unity of its Creator.[139] The second category, scripture, independently establishes such things as legal rulings and knowledge of past events. And the third category applies to questions that do not depend solely on reason, e.g., the nature of the vision of God and the question of free will and determinism. The topic-based division raises several questions.

In these passages, it is clear that we do not have *definitions* of reason or revelation. Rather, as indicated in their phrasings, the division concerns objects of knowledge (*maʿlūm; mudrak*) and specifically how one comes to know or prove

135 This sense is often discussed in the early works in the transition from the rational problems of *kalām* to the problems based on revelation. This section is labelled *samʿiyyāt*.
136 These are the relevant discussions and I do not mean to suggest that these are the only discussions of *ʿaql* and *samʿ*.
137 Juwaynī, for example, notes that he himself has much to say on the nature of *ʿaql* but it is not relevant to the discussion of sources of knowledge and evidence; Juwaynī 1979, 1:113.
138 Juwaynī 2009, 280–282; 1979, 1:136; Bāqillānī 1998, 1:228; Ghazālī 2012, 271; 2015, 1:32–33. Bāqillānī introduces the division by stating that "all the rulings of religion are known only through three paths (*ḍarb*)." See, also, Abrahamov 1998, 60.
139 Juwaynī 2009, 280–282; Bāqillānī 1998, 1:228–230; Ghazālī 2012, 271–272.

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the various kinds of beliefs that are discussed in the religious sciences. More precisely, the division clarifies the *ordering* of proving problems in the religious sciences. Bāqillānī states, "It is necessary that knowledge of God and the prophecy of his prophets is rationally known (*maʿlūman ʿaqlan*) *prior to* knowledge of the validity of revelation (*ṣiḥḥat al-samʿ*)."[140] The authors address various other points that reveal additional reasons that motivate the division, including the point that all knowledge in the religious sciences derives from one or both of *ʿaql* and *samʿ*.[141] Clarifying the ordering of how problems are discussed and proven in Ashʿarī discourse is the primary concern. In setting out this topic-based division, our authors will say such things as the following: the problem of proving, say, the existence of God is a problem "that is known by reason *without* revelation" (*bi-al-ʿaql dūna al-samʿ*)[142] or "that which is known by the evidence (*dalīl*) of *ʿaql* without *sharʿ* (i.e., revelation) are all things, if unproven [by *ʿaql*], the *sharʿ* remains unproven (*lam yuthbat*)."[143] These and other such phrasings strongly suggest that category (i) *excludes* the Quran and, even more, they make the validity of the Quran or scripture *itself* dependent on reason.[144] As discussed in section 1 above, this language leads critics, like Ibn Taymiyya, to mischaracterize the Ashʿarīs as affirming a superficial dichotomy between reason and revelation. For clarification, we turn to nuances that our authors add to the topic-based distinction.

In his discussion of (2), Bāqillānī, for example, addresses a traditionalist's objection, who holds that "I know God, the Exalted, and the prophecy of his prophets by *samʿ* (the report) of someone other than the word (*qawl*) of God or His Prophet."[145] That is, the traditionalist objects to the Ashʿarī view by stating that knowledge of God's existence and the veracity of the Prophet need not be known by reason but rather is known in virtue of a report from "someone," i.e., such knowledge is obtained through a transmitted report and not from the direct word of God or the Prophet. Bāqillānī first notes that one does not have immediate knowledge (*ḍarūratan*) of the veracity of any reporters (*mukhbirūn*) and that such knowledge is only obtained directly from God and the Prophet, a point that

140 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:228; Juwaynī 2009, 280–282.

141 Bāqillānī begins his section by stating, "Know, may God have mercy on you, that every judgment [i.e. belief or legal ruling] in religion that is known does not exceed three kinds (…)." Bāqillānī 1998, 1:228.

142 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:228; Ghazālī 2012, 271.

143 Juwaynī 1979, 1:153–54; 2009, 280–282; Bāqillānī 1998, 1:228–30; Ghazālī 2012, 271. Cf. Ghazālī 2015, 1:36–38; 1998, 1:62.

144 Ghazālī 2012, 210.

145 Bāqillānī 1998, 228.

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corresponds to Ghaẓālī's distinction between revelation and scriptural texts.[146] Bāqillānī then states that it is also *not* possible for the traditionalist to claim that the truth of the reporters is known in virtue of the rational evidence that the report comprises regarding the existence of God and the prophecy of his Prophet. Bāqillānī explains: "Because that entails that that [rational] proof *is* the proof by means of which divine unity and prophecy is known and not the report of the one who reports the two [points of belief]. Rather, his report of the two is like a *notice* (*tanbīh*) for the two [points of belief], and *they are the proof (dalāla) not his statement (dūna qawlihi*)."[147] Bāqillānī states that it is in virtue of *the content* of what is reported that one comes to believe in those points of belief and it is not in virtue of the reporter or report itself. This content is in reality the proof or *dalāla* "not his statement." The reporter's statement is merely a "notice" or pointer. The point is nuanced but of critical significance. It corresponds to the Ashʿarī distinctions regarding the *content* of scriptural texts, where some verses point the reader to content that is true independently of one's belief in the truth of scripture and other verses presume the truth of the source. Bāqillānī's point directly addresses and dissolves the dichotomy that is read into the topic-based distinction; that is, it is possible to obtain beliefs in category (i) through scriptural texts but it is not in virtue of those texts qua transmitted reports (*samʿ*) that one comes to believe in the existence of God or the possibility of prophecy. It can be noted that Abū al-Qāsim al-Anṣārī makes a similar point. Anṣārī begins his *kalām* work by stating, "The way to knowing God, the Exalted, is by inquiry into His signs and proofs that point to Him, and they are His acts. That is because if a thing is not known by sense perception or by immediate knowledge, the way to knowing it is by signs and pointers that are evidence for it (*dālla ʿalayhi*). And God has introduced those with intellects to his signs and proofs in various sources of the Quran (...)."[148] Anṣārī then cites over a dozen places in the Quran that establish various proofs, from God's existence to His unity. He then states, "These [verses] and their like are *indicators* (*taʿrīfāt*) from God, the Exalted, for those of intellect, making known to them by means of these signs who He is."[149] Anṣārī's view of such verses as "indicators" parallels Bāqillānī's term.

A final point can be noted regarding the topic-based division. As pointed to in section 1, in his work on *iʿjāz*, Bāqillānī states, "It is not the case that if a thing can be known by means of reason then it is impossible to know it by means of the

146 Ghazālī 2015, 2:21.
147 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:230.
148 Anṣārī 2010, 1:219.
149 Anṣārī 2010, 1:220.

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Quran. *Rather, it is possible to know it by means of both.*"[150] As noted, the point he opposes seems to be precisely what he states in his own topic-based division of category (i): "As for what is properly known only through reason and not through revelation."[151] Just as he addresses the mistaken view of the traditionalist in his topic-based discussion, Bāqillānī, I propose, in the latter text is addressing misreadings of the Ashʿarī topic-based division, which imputes a false dichotomy of reason and revelation.

The topic-based division of reason and revelation, on its own, remains rather ambiguous.[152] Moreover, it does not provide definitions of reason and revelation but establishes a relationship between *ʿaql* and *samʿ* as sources of evidence, on the one hand, and points of belief that are discussed and demonstrated in the religious sciences, on the other. I argue that the topic-based discussion is informed by, and is posterior to, the definitions of reason and revelation developed in the Ashʿarī analysis of evidence and inference, to which I now turn.

In addition to the topic-based usage, then, the terms *ʿaql* and *samʿ* are discussed in the context of kinds of evidence and inference. In this context, the terms *ʿaql* and *samʿ* qualify or define *dalīl*.[153] As discussed above, *dalīl* is used in a variety of senses, including the notion of the signification of a meaning, a sign, and an argument or proof; the focal sense of *dalīl* is an inference from a known to an unknown. The discussion of evidence aims, first, to demarcate minimal notions of inference in various kinds of human knowledge, whether linguistic, rational, or conventional. Second, the Ashʿarīs are interested in how this analysis informs their definition of reason and revelation. It is important to note that, in contrast to the topic-based discussion of reason and revelation, the definitions in this context are meant to *distinguish ʿaql* from *samʿ*, that is, these are definitions that aim to identify distinct concepts.

In his discussion of evidence, Juwaynī states: "As for the *samʿiyyāt,* they [are evidence that] indicate (*tadullu*) in virtue of something establishing them as

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150 Bāqillānī 1954, 23. From the topic-based discussion, it is clear that by "unity" (*tawḥīd*) Bāqillānī means the relevant rational beliefs, including the existence of God.

151 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:228.

152 Many questions can and have been raised here regarding the topic-based division. For example, what is the precise nature of category (3)? If an overlap is possible in (3), why are all the categories not overlapping? Why is (1) not an overlapping category with (2), which is Ibn Taymiyya's objection. Much of this will be resolved by the fact that this is not a definition of reason and revelation but a division regarding the *order of proving* problems and principles in theology. Aladdin M. Yaqub raises several questions as well in his comments; see Ghazālī 2013, 209–210.

153 Bāqillānī divides evidence into (1) that which engenders true and certain knowledge and not just probable belief (*ghalabat al-ẓann*) and (2) that which engenders belief that a thing is probable or very likely. See Bāqillānī 1998, 1:221–222.

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evidence (*bi-naṣb nāṣib iyyāhā adilla*), and they are analogous (*mumaththala*) to languages (*lughāt*) and expressions that point to meanings, either by God endowing [knowledge of that] or by convention made through [human] choice."[154] Bāqillānī states, "*samʿī sharʿī* [evidence (*dalīl*)] indicates in virtue of speech after the imposition [of meanings] and from the perspective of a meaning derived from speech. Linguistic [evidence (*dalīl*)] indicates in virtue of agreement and imposition of the meanings of speech."[155] Bāqillānī's point is especially significant as it corresponds to the distinction noted in section 1 regarding language as a system of signification and language as speech. I return to further aspects of this shortly. Elsewhere, Juwaynī states, "*samʿī* [evidence] is that which relies on a truthful report or a thing that must be followed (*amr yajibu ittibāʿuhu*)."[156] I turn now to their view of language to better understand the analogy our authors draw between *samʿ* and language. A key distinction in the above concerns their view that *samʿ* is evidence "in virtue of something [else] establishing it as evidence," which will contrast with their definition of rational evidence.

The Ashʿarīs take language to be established in virtue of the "imposition" (*waḍʿ*) of linguistic terms or utterances (*lafẓ*) for meanings, which, at base, means that linguistic terms do not signify meanings *intrinsically* but do so in virtue of some external cause. To illustrate what they mean, we can take the markings on this page, "t-r-e-e," which do not *intrinsically* designate the object, tree, or anything else for that matter. Rather, the markings are arbitrary and we could just as well have assigned the markings, ش-ج-ر, to point to the same meaning (and, in Arabic, the markings *do* signify the object, tree). For English speakers, "t-r-e-e" refers to a kind of plant not in virtue of the *markings* but in virtue of our agreement on designating that specific marking type as a symbol or signifier (*dalīl*) for the intended meaning (*madlūl*). Hence, as Juwaynī states above, the relationship between the signifier and signified object obtains in virtue of a "prior imposition," be it divine will or human choice. Significantly, according to the early Ashʿarīs, this kind of evidence includes language but is a broader category comprising other kinds of evidence, which our authors call evidence by convention

154 Juwaynī 1979, 1:155. See also Juwaynī 2009, 15; Anṣārī 2010, 1:241. Here, the Ashaʿrites are not concerned with whether language is divinely imposed or established by human convention. As Juwaynī's statement suggests, their view is that language is conventional, be it divinely or humanly instituted, and that there is no natural or necessary relation between terms and things, as held by the Muʿtazilīs. See Shah 2011; Weiss 1974.

155 Bāqillānī 2000, 15. Bāqillānī states for *samʿī sharʿī*: "*Dāll min ṭarīq al-nuṭq baʿda al-muwāḍaʿa, wa-min jihat maʿnā mustakhraj min al-nuṭq*."

156 Juwaynī 2009, 15; Juwaynī 1979, 1:155; Ghazālī 1998, 61.

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or imposition (*dalīl waḍʿī*; *muwāḍaʿa; muwāṭaʾa, ittifāq*).[157] I will refer to this category as "conventional evidence," as the Ashʿarīs will treat it as evidence that is established *after* agreement. Distinguishing between *ʿaqlī* and *waḍʿī* evidence, Bāqillānī states that conventional evidence can be expanded to include writings (*kitābāt*), signs (*rumūz*), physical expressions (*ishārāt*), markers of quantities or measurements, and so forth.[158] What distinguishes such evidence from rational evidence is that the former requires prior knowledge of certain facts or rules established by convention or agreement of people. Bāqillānī states, "If it were not for the imposition [of a people (*ahlihi*)] for what [signs] indicate, they would not indicate [anything]."[159] Bāqillānī underscores a critical point, namely, that linguistic expressions would not indicate, or be evidence, at all were it not for the prior act of imposition. In other words, linguistic signifiers are arbitrary. There is no direct or natural relation between linguistic signs and their objects. The Ashʿarī theory aims to distinguish between arbitrary and non-arbitrary knowledge, as discussed. One neither immediately grasps nor deduces the object, tree, from mere markings or sounds, which contrasts with what we will see is their definition of rational evidence as truth-bearing *in itself.* Juwaynī defines conventional evidence, under which he includes language as "that which does not indicate in virtue of an attribute that it has *in itself*, rather, it indicates only in virtue of an imposition."[160] There is no immediate cognitive error or violation if a non-English speaker fails to grasp what "tree" refers to; moreover, in the case of linguistic and conventional evidence, the signifier and signified thing can be changed (a point that, again, will distinguish this category from *ʿaqlī* evidence).[161] This, then, provides us with what makes language "analogous" to *samʿ* in some minimal sense. That is, language is similar to *samʿ* insofar as both indicate things not intrinsically but in virtue of something else. At this point, the analogy of language with *samʿ* will fall apart, since *samʿ* is not an arbitrary assignment of symbols. Rather, it is one whose *truth* or *authority* is established in a prior manner (i.e., Juwaynī's second definition above).

The authors define the evidentiary category of *ʿaql* in direct opposition to *samʿī* and *waḍʿī* evidence. *ʿAqlī* evidence is that which signifies "in virtue of

157 Bāqillānī 2000, 15; Juwaynī 1979, 1:155; Ghazālī 1998, 61.

158 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:205. He makes the same point in 1998, 15, following the point above. Juwaynī also distinguishes between *ʿaqlī* and *waḍʿī* evidence in this way; see 1996, 120. Here, Juwaynī also treats language as only one kind of *waḍʿī* evidence.

159 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:205.

160 Juwaynī 1996, 1:120.

161 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:205; Juwaynī 1996, 1:120.

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itself" and "does not depend on agreement or imposition for it to be evidence."[162] Rather, *ʿaqlī* evidence constitutes evidence irrespective of the aim or choice of an agent in designating it as evidence.[163] The example they provide is that of our knowledge of an action which points to an agent, or the relation of smoke to fire. Bāqillānī states, "[*ʿaqlī* evidence] has a connection to its signified thing (*madlūl*) in the manner that an action signifies its agent (*fāʿilihi*)."[164] As discussed, the phrase, "in itself," is significant and needs careful parsing. With this qualification, the Ashʿarīs aim to register a critical distinction, namely, that it is the very *content* of rational evidence that indicates its result or conclusion. Rational evidence is not arbitrary or contingent on the conventions of an individual or group. We come to associate an action with an agent, or fire with heat, in virtue of our very experience of those items. This contrasts with our experience of sounds or symbols, which yield no such doxastic state. In the *Mankhūl*, Ghazālī states, "The evidence of *ʿaql* connects to their objects in themselves (*adillat al-ʿaql tataʿallaqu bi-madlūlātihā li-aʿyānihā*) (...) and *samʿiyyāt* do not indicate in themselves, for they are expressions that are understood by convention (*bi-al-iṣṭilāḥ*)."[165] In contrast to *ʿaqlī* evidence, conventional evidence or signifiers are not truth-bearing and do not signify in virtue of their cognitive content. We need not repeat the above discussion of how the Ashʿarīs distinguish their view of rational evidence from the Muʿtazilīs and *falāsifa*. It can simply be noted that "the requirement of [rational] proofs is implication (*al-iṭṭirād*) and what is not a condition is co-implication (*al-inʿikās*)."[166]

The Ashʿarī definitions of rational and scriptural evidence establishes the foundational senses of reason and revelation in their analysis of theological and legal problems. What is notable is that in these discussions reason and revelation are treated as epistemological categories. In particular, what the categories assess is a central element of knowledge in the context of Ashʿarī theology, that is, what proves or justifies a belief. However, an important question in the context of Rāzī's P1 and P2 that remains concerns how *certitude* corresponds to reason and revelation, to which I now turn.

162 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:205; Ghazālī 1998, 61.
163 Juwaynī 1979, 1:155; Ghazālī 1998, 61; Anṣārī 2010, 1:241; Bāqillānī 1998, 1, 205. Juwaynī states, "*tadullu li-anfusihā wa-mā hiya ʿalayhi min ṣifātihā (...) idhā waqaʿat hādhihi al-adilla dallat li-aʿyānihā, min ghayr ḥājatin ilā qaṣd qāṣid ilā naṣbihā adillatan.*" (Juwaynī 1979, 1:155).
164 Bāqillānī 2000, 15.
165 Ghazālī 1998, 61. He adds: "They do not go beyond their conventional [usage] of them to their contradictory."
166 Juwaynī 1981, 69.

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2.1 The Certainty of Naql versus the Certainty of ʿAql

The Ashʿarīs categorize certain or definitive knowledge (*yaqīn*; *qaṭʿī*) with respect to each category of *ʿaql* and *naql*. As noted, Rāzī thinks that we cannot divide knowledge in this way, i.e. *ʿaqlī* certainty on the one hand and *naqlī* certainty on the other. Rāzī does not think *naqlī* sources impart certitude at all (P1). Moreover, according to him, there is no such thing as purely textual evidence or proof (P2). In the following, I focus on how Ashʿarīs prior to Rāzī address the question of certitude and what the relation is between the certitudes of *ʿaql* and the certitudes of *naql*.

In the case of *ʿaql*, we have seen that certain knowledge includes immediately known principles (*ḍarūriyyāt*) and knowledge gained through valid inferences. With regard to scriptural evidence, the Quran, Sunna, and consensus (*ijmāʿ*) are viewed as imparting certainty.[167] Scriptural sources are not, however, treated as a single epistemic category. That is, the certainty they furnish and their evidentiary status varies with respect to the nature of specific texts.[168] How scriptural texts constitute definitive knowledge or evidence turns on discerning the expressed and intended meanings of specific texts, which is the primary function of legal hermeneutics. The most definitive category of text that our early theorists specify is *naṣṣ*, or the self-evident text, which they define as that which "independently imparts meanings in a definitive manner" (*al-istiqlāl bi-ifādat al-maʿānī ʿalā qaṭʿ*).[169] Juwaynī adds "such that avenues of *ta*ʾ*wīl* are terminated, and paths of alternative [meanings] (*iḥtimālāt*) are cut off."[170] Bāqillānī defines *naṣṣ* as "that which is independent in itself in disclosing all that it encompasses [in expression], without any ambiguity in any of its meanings."[171]

In addition to the epistemic status of texts, the classical Ashʿarīs assess the nature of meanings, i.e., how expressions are determined and how they signify meanings. Their analysis addresses (1) determining the received vocabulary and grammar of a language as well as (2) determining the *intended* meanings and uses of speech (*murād al-khiṭāb*).[172] Bāqillānī states, "Our saying, *khiṭāb* (speech),

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167 The nature of the evidentiary certainty of *samʿ* is expressed in various ways. See, for example, Juwaynī 1979, 1:146–147.

168 Regarding the degrees of certainty of scriptural texts, see Juwaynī's summary of views in 1979, 1:160–165.

169 Juwaynī 1979, 1:415; see also 1:160–166; Anṣārī 2010, 1:242–243. See notes above for Ghazālī's definitions of *naṣṣ*.

170 Juwaynī 1979, 1:415

171 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:340.

172 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:204–205, 335–336; Juwaynī 1979, 1:196–198; also 1:169–180. The distinction between the two fields of analysis is not as sharp as found in the later tradition.

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requires that [there is] a listener (*mukhāṭab*) addressed by it (…) and that [speech] is only possible with two [interlocuters], both of whom exist."[173] The former (1) is established prior to (2) the latter, which they treat as something like speech acts. As such, they begin their analysis with the basic elements of the Arabic language, focusing on the signification of terms and grammatical structure (e.g., noun, verb, and particle).[174] As noted, according to the Ashʿarīs, the meanings of terms are given in language in virtue of convention (*waḍʿ al-lugha*), rather than being predetermined by a natural or essential connection between a term and its meaning.[175] As such, the most basic layer of scriptural meaning is not acquired by reason independently but established through the transmitted uses of language.[176] Since the Quran and Sunna are expressed in the "speech of the Arabs," scriptural interpretation relies on a received tradition of Arabic grammar and lexicography in determining the given meanings and forms of scriptural texts. This point will be significant for Rāzī, who interrogates the parallel between the requirement of historically verifying *ḥadīth* literature and determining the status of meanings of terms and grammatical rules as transmitted in the Arabic linguistic corpus. Returning to the above discussion, this basic layer of language, i.e., grammar and signification, is the starting-point of the richer analysis of meaning that, according to the early Ashʿarīs, is required for legal and exegetical interpretation, including the nature of figurative speech and commands. That is, the texts of the Quran and Sunna cannot be understood with reference to lexical meanings and grammar alone, but require an understanding of the contextual uses of language. That is, a hermeneutics of the Quran involves communicative aspects of language: the ways in which a speaker can communicate meaning to an audience. The bulk of the hermeneutic apparatus of the legal theorist – including the analysis of commands (*amr*), literal and figurative usages (*ḥaqīqa/majāz*), etc. – addresses how the intended meanings of scriptural texts are to be determined and interpreted.

But we have a certain ambiguity. The early Ashʿarīs distinguish speech from a basic layer of linguistic signification. Meanings in the latter sense are established by convention (*waḍʿ*) and, when all definitions and terms are clarified, the primary senses are known with certainty. *Naṣṣ*, however, does not concern

173 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:335. Ghazālī 2015, 2:22. See Juwaynī 1979, 1:196. The latter states that the linguists divide speech into such things as nouns, verbs, and particles, while the *uṣūlī*s add such things as commands, reports, and so forth "according to their aims."
174 Juwaynī 1979, 1:196.
175 Juwaynī 1979, 1:171; Bāqillānī 1998, 1:319–329. On the linguists, and Muʿtazilī views, including their embracing the doctrine of *tawqīf*, see Shah 2011, 27–46.
176 Juwaynī 1979, 1:169.

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meanings that are established by *waḍʿ*. Rather, *naṣṣ* certainly requires the latter but then involves the additional conveyance of an intended meaning between speaker and listener. Is there a way to know the certitudes conveyed in speech in the same way that we know the certitudes of *waḍʿ*, e.g., signification of correspondence (*dalālat al-muṭābaqa*)? I turn to the answer provided by Ghazālī, who makes the epistemic connection between *samʿ* and *ʿaql* clearer than earlier Ashʿarīs.

With respect to *al-Mustaṣfā* and other works of *kalām* and legal theory, Ghazālī departs little from the earlier theorists. Though we find a more systematized and comprehensive treatment of rational methods, particularly with the inclusion of syllogistic logic, his discussion of the relation between *ʿaqlī* and *samʿī* evidence follows the basic stance of earlier thinkers, by which I mean the following points.[177] First, as noted above, Ghazālī distinguishes between *ʿaqlī* evidence and *samʿī* evidence, invoking the tripartite topic-based division of inquiry noted above. He states, "What is not immediately known is divided into: that which is known through a proof of reason without (*dūna*) revelation, that which is known through revelation without reason, and that which is known through both."[178] He uses the term *samʿ* in the varying senses noted above, including to refer to a category of evidence and the problems based on such evidence. Regarding *ʿaql*, the sources of certain knowledge include the principles of demonstration expounded within Ghazālī's adaptation of syllogistics.[179] These include first principles (*awwaliyyāt*), internal states, sense perception, experience-based knowledge (*tajribiyyāt*), and mass-transmitted knowledge. Of more importance to the following is his approach to *samʿ*.

Ghazālī's approach to *samʿ* follows the line of thinking of earlier authors discussed above. With respect to the hermeneutic context of determining definitive scriptural texts, Ghazālī follows the linguistic analysis above, assigning *naṣṣ* to the highest category of linguistic clarity. He defines *naṣṣ* with similar terms, e.g., "independently imparts meaning in every respect" and "that which does not admit alternate meanings (*iḥtimāl*) in any respect."[180] He also states, "*Naṣṣ* is that which is not subject to *taʾwīl*" in contrast to the *ẓāhir*, which is subject

177 Ghazālī 2015, 1:35–43. Ghazālī provides a more expansive approach to the classification of religious versus rational sciences but the analysis of the relation between *ʿaql* and *samʿ* remains the same.

178 Ghazālī 2012, 210–211; see, also 2015, 1:37–38.

179 See his discussion of "certainty in itself" (*yaqīn fī nafsihi*) in 2015, 1:93. A closer reading of Ghazālī's analysis of syllogistics is required to make any judgment on the nature his assimilation.

180 Ghazālī 2015, 2:48–49; 2:19–21.

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to interpretation.[181] Importantly, Ghazālī is careful to distinguish this precise usage – which he labels the second "coined" sense – from other senses. For example, *naṣṣ* is used to refer more loosely to a term whose meaning is apparent and understood "without being definitive" (*min ghayr qaṭʿ*).[182] In this case, he states that its meaning corresponds to that of the "apparent text" (*ẓāhir*). Ghazālī urges the reader to adhere to the former definition to avoid confusion.[183] Ghazālī takes the point to be significant, as we will see. To be sure, this is not simply a terminological quibble: the distinction is central to Ghazālī's view of the relation of reason to revelation and his application of the "universal rule."

First, it should be noted that Ghazālī draws a revealing connection between *naṣṣ* and *ʿaql*, which earlier theorists leave open. That is, *naṣṣ*, in his view, is the only category of terms or statements that is used in rational proofs (*adilla ʿaqliyya*), as it admits no degrees of clarity in the apprehension of meaning. He states, "A remote possible meaning is the same as a proximate possible meaning in rational inquiry, because a rational proof cannot be contravened in any way. It is possible for a remote possible meaning to be intended (*murād*) by the term in some way. Hence, only *naṣṣ*, in the second posited sense [*bi-al-waḍʿ al-thānī*, i.e., *naṣṣ* in the strict sense distinguished from *ẓāhir*], can be relied upon in rational inquiry (*ʿaqliyyāt*)."[184] This is a critical move for several reasons. First, one implication is that there are speech-texts that impart certitude and do so in the manner that Rāzī would reserve for linguistic signification of correspondence. To be sure, Ghazālī admits the hermeneutic term, *naṣṣ*, into the apparatus of logic. To Rāzī, this amounts to a category error. Rāzī will explicitly oppose this view of placing the epistemic status of *naṣṣ* in parallel with *ʿaqlī* knowledge. He states,

> *Naṣṣ* [is] every word or speech that independently imparts the understanding of the intent of the speaker from it [i.e., the word or speech] by itself. This is its definition. It is claimed that [*naṣṣ*] is that which imparts a meaning in a definitive manner such that it is not open to *taʾwīl*. And the first [definition] is more suitable. Rather, it is the correct position. *For there is no expression that is posited for a meaning but that a figurative [understanding] of it is possible*, so that what is *intended* is other than what it was posited for.[185]

One might think this is simply a terminological quibble in legal theory. However, Rāzī is making a critical distinction between the *hermeneutic* analysis of language, specifically when used in the context of a communicative act (which, inter

181 Ghazālī 2015, 2:48.
182 Ghazālī 2015, 2:48.
183 Ghazālī 2015, 2:50.
184 Ghazālī 2015, 2:50.
185 Rāzī 1992, 34.

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alia, addresses the speaker's intention), versus the basic analysis of linguistic meaning and signification. The latter kind of linguistic analysis is as he states relevant to rational evidence and argument but the former is not. More significantly, Rāzī, in contrast to Ghazālī, makes explicit the distinction in the very definition of *naṣṣ* in *al-Maḥṣūl*:

> *Naṣṣ*: it is every speech (*kalām*) whose imparting of its meaning is apparent and which does not admit more than that [i.e., the apparent meaning]. By our stating [in the definition of *naṣṣ*], "speech," we [aim to] exclude two things. The first of which is that the evidence of reason [*adillat al-ʿuqūl*] and actions are not named *nuṣūṣ*.[186]

Rāzī distinguishes between the hermeneutic term, *naṣṣ*, which assesses "speech," from evidence and knowledge based on reason and actions.[187] I turn now to Rāzī's analysis of P1 and P2.

3 Rāzī: Redefining *ʿAql* and *Naql*

Rāzī reiterates P1 in various places in his most influential works, including *al-Maʿālim*, *al-Maḥṣūl*, *Muḥaṣṣal*, *al-Arbaʿīn*, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, and *al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliya*. In these texts, he affirms the principle that "textual evidence does not engender certain [knowledge] in virtue of it depending on ten premises."[188] In his *Mafātīḥ*, he states unequivocally, "There is no doubt that belief in these assumptions involves pure probability, and that which is dependent on probable knowledge is a fortiori probable."[189] The phrasing of P1 varies only slightly from text to text. Following his definition of *ʿaqlī* versus *naqlī* evidence where he articulates P2 in the *Maʿālim*, Rāzī discusses the relation of *naqlī* evidence to certainty:

> P1: Textual evidence *(dalāʾil naqliyya)*[190] does not impart certain [knowledge], because it is based on the transmission of language, the transmission of grammar and rules of inflection

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186 Rāzī 1999, 1:381–382.

187 Notably, Rāzī adds "actions," which is relevant to legal theory. That is, actions of the Prophet are distinguished from his speech in various respects. See 1999, 1:413–431.

188 Rāzī 1986, 2:251; 1999, 1:151–152; n.d., 50–51; 1990, 1, 28; 1987, 9:113–118.

189 Rāzī 1990, 1:28.

190 It should be noted that, in the above passages, Rāzī uses various terms to refer to this category of proof, including *adilla* or *dalāʾil lafẓiyya*, *naqliyya*, *dalālat al-alfāẓ*, and *dalāʾil samʿiyya*. It is clear that he means the same category of proof, and I return shortly to how the various fields overlap, given that they were distinct in the approach of earlier thinkers. Though there are some details I will have to gloss over, including Qarāfī's interpretation that Rāzī views even *waḍʿī* signification as open to interpretation and uncertainty. See Qarāfī 1997, 2:527.

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> and conjugation; it depends on the absence of synonymy, the absence of figurative usage, the absence of ellipsis (*iḍmār)*, the absence of new usages [of expressions], the absence of advancement or postponement [of a command], the absence of specification (*takhṣīṣ*), the absence of abrogation, and the absence of contradicting rational evidence (*ʿadam al-muʿāriḍ al-ʿaqlī*). The absence of these things is probable and not based on certain knowledge and that which depends on probable knowledge is probable. If that is established, it becomes apparent that textual evidence is probable and that rational evidence is certain and that which is the probable does not contradict the certain.[191]

This text has been commented upon by dozens of thinkers, including Najm al-Dīn al-Kātibī (d. 1267) and Ibn Kammūna (d. 13th century). Indeed, a legion of jurists and theologians will comment on this passage in a variety of works, including commentaries on the above sources of Rāzī as well as in new works of *kalām* and *uṣūl*. Some critical points regarding the text can be registered here. First, the above is not the *universal rule* of Ghazālī. Indeed, the question that the universal rule centers on, i.e., the status of a "rational counter-evidence" and the role of *taʾwīl*, is only *one* of the ten assumptions that Rāzī lists.

In his influential work of legal theory, entitled *al-Maḥṣūl fī ʿIlm al-Uṣūl*, Rāzī devotes the first of thirteen books to the central features of language (*lugha*). As he states in his introduction, the work begins with language, "because relying on [authoritative] texts (*manṣūṣāt*) is only possible by means of language, so it is necessary that the chapter on language precedes all [other chapters]."[192] The implication is that the analysis of scriptural texts, and its interpretation, is dependent on a prior analysis of language. He begins with a general analysis of language, signification and meaning. This, as discussed above, is the division broadly between language as a system of signification and speech. In the first of nine chapters of the book on language, Rāzī discusses "general rules" (*aḥkām kulliyya*) concerning language, which include the essence of language (*māhi yyat al-kalām*), signification, and whether terms signify things by convention or by nature. In the fifth inquiry of the first chapter, Rāzī discusses how we come to have knowledge of the meanings of terms and the grammatical rules specifically of the Arabic language. That is, he states that since both the Quran and reports (i.e., *ḥadīth*), on which knowledge of the *sharīʿa* is dependent, are couched in the language of the Arabs, including their grammar and morphology, knowledge of both sources is dependent on knowledge of the Arabic language. But from where do we acquire knowledge of the language of the Arabs? Here, he considers three possible sources: reason (*ʿaql*), "transmitted" sources or texts

191 Rāzī 2007, 22.
192 Rāzī 1999, 1:167.

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(*naql*), or evidence composed of the two.[193] Rāzī immediately dismisses reason as a source of knowledge, because language is a matter of convention and reason cannot independently apprehend matters determined by convention, a central Ashʿarī tenet as discussed above. This leaves the latter two sources: transmitted text and some combination of text and reason. The rest of the chapter provides a sustained discussion of problems (*ishkālāt*) raised regarding the status of our knowledge of the transmitted Arabic lexicon and the rules of grammar. Here, Rāzī underscores the parallel between verifying transmitted *ḥadīth* reports and our knowledge of the meanings and uses of the Arabic language. He states,

> What wonder it is that the legal theorists (*uṣūliyyūn*) have shown that an individually-transmitted report (*khabar al-wāḥid*) constitutes evidence (*ḥujja*) in the law (*sharʿ*) and have not established that with respect to language (*lugha*), and the latter is more [significant], because establishing language is [like] a principle for adhering to individually-transmitted reports. And if it is granted that they have established a proof for that [i.e., evidential status of language], it would be required of them to investigate the conditions of the narrators of the linguistic corpus and grammar, and to verify the evidence for their reliability and unreliability (*jarḥ* and *taʿdīl*), as they did with respect to the narrators of [*ḥadīth*] reports. But they have neglected that entirely despite the acute need for it. For language and grammar play the role of a principle in the derivation of scriptural evidence (*li-al-istidlāl bi-al-nuṣūṣ*).[194]

Rāzī raises an important distinction that was only implicitly acknowledged by earlier theorists: the verification of the *transmitted texts* of the Quran and Sunna does not ensure the certainty of the *meaning* of those texts, which depend on an established and stable corpus of vocabulary and grammar. Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 1285), in his commentary on the *Maḥṣūl*, accepts Rāzī's point but states in response that there is nothing to wonder about in that (*laysa fī dhālika ʿajab*) and provides a reason as to why the jurists might have been unconcerned with the transmission of language: he states that while there was a systematic attempt of lying about the Prophet, no such worry existed with regard to language.[195] Qarāfī's response does not quite get at Rāzī's point, which centers on the fundamental epistemic status of the certitude of texts. Qarāfī simply suggests that it is unlikely that the transmission of meanings is subject to weaknesses or inaccuracies. In the passage, and throughout the inquiry, Rāzī presses the point regarding the foundational status of language, which, as he states, is a principle – or serves "like" a principle – for interpreting scriptural sources. The point suggests that each of the ten points in P1 serve as principles that are epistemically

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193 His example of a composite of *naql* and *ʿaql* is knowledge of the grammatical rule that the plural form indicates generality, which is derived from two transmitted sources of knowledge.
194 Rāzī 1999, 1:212.
195 Qarāfī 1997, 2:527.

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prior to the analysis of the texts of the Quran and Sunna as it is generally assumed or understood. This is evidently very different from how our earlier theologians view the epistemic status of *samʿ* and *ʿaql* and the hermeneutic status of *naṣṣ*.[196] Significantly, Rāzī will invoke the results of this chapter in his general account of P1, incorporating them under the label, "the transmission of languages" (*naql al-lughāt*) as one of ten principles that need addressing in scripture-based arguments. I turn to the latter discussion now.

Rāzī invokes P1 in the ninth section of the book on language, entitled, "On how to draw evidence from the speech (*khiṭāb*) of God and the speech of the Prophet in [determining] rulings."[197] The only difference of note from the list in the *Maḥṣūl* from that above is that he views "counter-evidence" as general and inclusive of rational or textual evidence. Regarding the transmission of language, he states,

> As for clarifying that the transmission of language [leads to] probable knowledge, it is because the basis of it relies on the masters of language, and those of intellect (*ʿuqalāʾ*) are in unanimous agreement that they are not such that their infallibility [in transmitting language] is known definitively, so their transmission of language only imparts probable knowledge. And the complete discussion of this matter has preceded.[198]

That is, Rāzī makes clear that this point regarding *naql*, which falls under P1, includes his broader criticisms of the transmission of the Arabic linguistic corpus. Rāzī registers further doubts regarding that status of deriving grammar from ancient poetry, which I will set aside. Rāzī then moves on to discuss each of the nine other principles individually. At the conclusion of the section, Rāzī sums up his own view:

> Hence, adhering to *naqlī* evidence produces only probable knowledge (*ẓann*) (…). But know that the fair position (*inṣāf*) is that there is no way to acquire certainty from linguistic evidence unless one attaches to it accompanying evidence (*qarāʾin*) that imparts certainty, whether that accompanying evidence is due to direct experience (*mushāhada*) or transmitted by mass-transmission (*tawātur*).[199]

196 See, for example, Juwaynī 1979, 1:169–172. Rāzī's own response to the problem suggests that the point in and of itself is not so significant in terms of how the received linguistic corpus will be used. In brief, his response is that the bulk of the vocabulary and grammar of the Arabic language is the same as it was in the time of the Prophet in virtue of self-evident knowledge and those aspects of Arabic that are questionable are inconsequential. However, he includes this principle as one of the ten principles of P1, which leads him to assert that texts fail to impart certainty on their own.
197 Rāzī 1999, 1:385.
198 Rāzī 1999, 1:391.
199 Rāzī 1999, 1:408.

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In the *Arbaʿīn*, which is perhaps the next most extensive discussion of P1, Rāzī states the point thus:

> This point left without qualification is not correct [i.e., that *naqlī* evidence does not impart certainty at all], because it may be that *naqlī* evidence combines with things that are known to obtain by *mutawātir* reports. And those things negate these possibilities. And on this supposition, *samʿī* evidence, combined with accompanying evidence established by *mutawātir* reports, imparts certainty.[200]

In the *Arbaʿīn*, Rāzī lists P1 and P2 as the 38th of 40 problems of *kalām*. That Rāzī affirms the principles in such works as the *Arbaʿīn*, an intermediate work on creedal theology, and in the *Maḥṣūl* strongly suggests that Rāzī is arguing for the view to be incorporated into the Ashʿarī exposition of reason and revelation. It should be noted that Rāzī's radical claims, which Ibn Taymiyya regards as "founding the principles of disbelief (*ilḥād*)," turns out to be rather limited with respect to challenging the received status of scriptural sources and meanings.[201] Moreover, it does not have the rationalizing agenda of certain Muʿtazilī approaches. Rather, what is radical about P1 and P2 is the clarification and articulation of how Sunnī thought ought to be understood at an epistemological and methodological level. His point is that it is not *texts* as God's words that ensure knowledge and are the fundamental sources of certitude.[202] Moreover, Rāzī opposes the nomocentric trend in the tradition and argues to reestablish the centrality of theology, expanding the latter's scope from the perspective of Sunnī thought. Rāzī's claim that it is by "accompanying evidence" that texts become certain is significant and has important epistemic implications, particularly regarding the textualism of the Ḥanbalīs and jurists. I turn now to P2.

Prior to his discussion of P1, Rāzī often discusses the kinds of evidence or proofs that are possible. Here, Rāzī establishes two foundational points: (1) that evidence in this context is an inference or argument; (2) there is no such thing as a purely scriptural argument. In the section above of *Arbaʿīn*, which as noted is devoted to P1 (entitled, "On whether adhering to linguistic evidence imparts certainty or not"), he states,

> Prior to delving into this inquiry, it is necessary to know that a proof is either [1] rational (*ʿaqliyyan*) with respect to all its premises, [2] textual (*naqliyyan*) with respect to all its premises, or [3] composed of both categories (…) As for [2] the second division, which is the proof that is textual with respect to all its premises, this is impossible. Because drawing evidence (*istidlāl*) from the Quran and Sunna is dependent on knowledge of the truthfulness of the

200 Rāzī 1986, 2:254.
201 Ibn Taymiyya 1991, 5:336.
202 See Hallaq 1990.

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> Prophet, and this knowledge is not derived from textual knowledge because that would be circular. Rather, it is derived from rational proofs, and there is no doubt that *this premise is one of the parts [of the proof]* that is considered in the validity of a textual proof. Hence, it is established that a proof that is *naqlī* in all premises is impossible and invalid.[203]

As discussed above, the early Ashʿarīs methodologically distinguish between the use of *samʿ* as evidence. What they mean is that a *valid samʿī* argument relies on prior established principles or arguments. That is, to simply read or quote the verse, "Muhammad is the Messenger of God," is not an argument. And if one intends to use it as evidence one assumes, according to the Ashʿarīs, that the text in which the statement is embedded has been established as truthful speech. However, the early theologians are not entirely clear on what the connection is between a valid argument and the *samʿī* argument in form and content. Rāzī, here, clarifies the precise connection: a *naqlī* argument always assumes at least one additional premise. As such, it is in the form of a two-premise argument. Rāzī in fact puts the point more effectively in the more advanced *Maʿālim*,

> [It is impossible for all the premises to be *naqliyya*] because one of the premises of the proof is that *naql* is a proof (*ḥujja*) and it is not possible to prove *naql* with reference to *naql* (…) The rule then is that every premise that must first be proven for a *naql* to be proven cannot be proven by *naql* and everything that is a report of something that is possible to obtain or not obtain can only be known by sense perception or by a report.[204]

Rāzī's approach is part of his larger analysis of the nature of *ʿaqlī* proofs and arguments in his works of philosophy. Here, for the theologian, Rāzī considers what an argument or proof is in its most basic sense. He argues, in his more extensive discussions, that an argument must be composed of at least two premises.[205] By drawing on this distinction, Rāzī is able to more precisely distinguish the Ashʿarī view of the relation between *ʿaql* and *naql*, as an evidentiary and epistemic category. Though Rāzī's reinterpretation seems – at first blush – radically different from the classical Ashʿarī view, it is largely consistent with the deeper analysis of *ʿaql* and *naql* that the early theologians of the school asserted. His reinterpretation will have far-reaching consequences for the philosophical and hermeneutic connections that are drawn between exegesis and the rational sciences in the postclassical period.

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203 Rāzī 1986, 2:251.
204 Rāzī 2007, 72.
205 Rāzī 2002, 331–332.

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David R. Vishanoff

Informative and Performative Theories of Divine Speech in Classical Islamic Legal Theory

Introduction

The Quran describes God's speech as powerful and creative: "When he decrees something he merely says to it 'Be!' and it is."[1] Just as impressively, when he desires to make an action obligatory he merely says "I oblige you to do it," or even just "do it!" and it becomes obligatory, according to some Muslim legal theorists. Such an utterance is just as powerful and creative as God's speaking into being the heavens and the earth. Rather than describing an action as obligatory, it renders the action obligatory, and thus brings about a new state of affairs in which the addressee finds herself under a new moral and legal obligation.

This is an example of what some modern theorists of language call performative speech, which brings about a new state of affairs rather than just conveying information about what is already the case. Since the term performative has a range of very different yet related meanings in various contemporary discourses,[2] I should specify that I use it here in the basic and admittedly porous sense coined by J. L. Austin, who distinguishes constative utterances that truly or falsely describe states of affairs from performative ones that do other things such as promising, contracting, or marrying.[3] I do not restrict it to explicit performatives, which name the speech act they are performing, as in "I promise to pay you tomorrow."[4] Rather, I use the term performative in the broader sense in which the term *inshāʾ* is generally used in classical Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), which is similar to that coined (and then deconstructed) by Austin: whereas an assertive or constative utterance (*ikhbār* or *khabar*) has an external referent which it truly or falsely describes, a performative utterance (*inshāʾ*) cannot be evaluated

1 Quran 2:117; 3:47; 19:35; 40:68. Cf. Quran 3:59; 6:73; 16:40; 36:82. Translations from the Quran are my own unless otherwise indicated.

2 See Miller 2007, 219–235.

3 Austin 1962, 1–6, 54–55, and *passim*. That Islamic legal theory deals with questions analogous to those of modern pragmatics was pointed out by Ali. His book dealt with legal theory as pragmatics in the broad sense of the study of language use and its understanding in particular speech contexts, and did not focus on performative speech acts *per se*. See Ali 2000, 3, 6.

4 See Austin 1962, 32, 56–73; Larcher 1991, 259.

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as true or false with respect to some external state of affairs, but only as more or less felicitous, effective, sincere, or the like. It matters not to the legal theorists whether those speech acts take the form of indicative statements that name the speech act, such as "I divorce you" or "I obligate you to pray," or other forms, in the indicative or some other mood, such as "you are divorced" or "pray!"[5] To put it in Austin's terms, by performative speech I mean utterances – specific locutionary acts by particular speakers – whose illocutionary force includes some speech act other than a statement, e.g., Zayd saying to ʿAmr "I'll pay you tomorrow" and intending thereby a promise. In addition to illocutionary acts such as promising or obligating, God's performative locutions may also constitute perlocutionary acts such as engendering hope or motivating obedience, but the legal theorists' discussions of *inshāʾ* focused on their illocutionary dimension.[6]

The distinction between *khabar* and *inshāʾ*, and its use across multiple Arabic and Islamic disciplines, is the subject of numerous publications by Pierre Larcher. He notes the connection between *inshāʾ* and the theologians' debates about God's speech,[7] but focuses on the term's use in legal theory, grammar, and rhetoric, where he says it appeared rather suddenly in the 13th century.[8] He suggests that the legal theorists' distinction between *ikhbār* (or in later works *khabar*) and *inshāʾ* originated in *fiqh* discussions about human contracts such as "I sell you this" or "you are divorced,"[9] which were the focus of a sophisticated analysis of human language among Abū Ḥanīfa's early followers;[10] but Larcher does not investigate that early history. In fact the term *inshāʾ* was not commonly employed to denote performative human speech in Sunnī *fiqh* works before the 11th century, when the jurist Abū Muḥammad al-Juwaynī (d. 1046) and his son Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 1085) both used it regularly in discussing divorce formulas, debt acknowledgments, and other legally binding utterances.[11] This essay does not address the *fiqh* literature, which is mainly concerned with human speech; instead it considers the emergence of the concept of performative speech in the legal theory works of four contrasting thinkers of the late 10th and early 11th centuries, well before the period indicated by Larcher and well within the period that is the

5 See for example Āmidī 2005, 1:253, 366–367; Ibn al-Ḥājib 2007, 1:511–514; Larcher 1991; cf. Austin 1962, 132–149.
6 See Austin 1962, 94–121; Larcher 1991.
7 Larcher 1992, 368–369.
8 Larcher 1991, 247–250; 1992, 366–367.
9 Larcher 1991, 250–251; 1992, 358; 2011.
10 Vishanoff 2011, 27–29.
11 So far as can be ascertained by searching for *inshāʾ* in all *fiqh* works in al-Maktaba al-Shamela as of May 25, 2017.

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focus of this volume. The debate over whether to regard God's speech as informative, performative, or both, is presented as part of an ongoing argument over the nature of law, the nature of God's speech, and the relationship between them.

After a brief discussion of the earlier figure Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820), who may rightly be considered the instigator if not the founder of Islamic legal theory and thus of the debates this essay addresses, I will present the Shāfiʿī jurist and Muʿtazilī theologian ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025), who treated God's speech as a purely informative description from which human beings may deduce the details of an ontologically and epistemologically prior moral order. I will then present the Ḥanbalī Abū Yaʿlā Ibn al-Farrāʾ (d. 1066), who took the opposite tack, treating God's speech as a performative speech act that brings about obligations with the immediacy of a master's face-to-face orders to a slave. Next will be the Mālikī jurist and Ashʿarī theologian Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013), who sought to have it both ways, as did also the Ḥanafī Abū Zayd al-Dabūsī (d. ca. 1039), who appears to have introduced the term *inshāʾ* into Sunnī legal theory.[12] These last two thinkers sought, in very different ways, to affirm that legal obligations are brought about by God's speech; yet they treated the language of revelation as a source of information and indicative evidence from which human interpreters could reconstruct the law through a flexible interpretive process. Subsequent legal theorists continued to accommodate the concept of performative speech and the category of *inshāʾ*, but the very structure of the discipline demanded that all revelation be translated into indicative statements about human actions. Since the point of law (*fiqh*) is to evaluate the legal status of each human action by assigning it one of five legal values (*aḥkām*) – obligatory, recommended, permitted, disapproved, or forbidden – legal theory has to explain, for example, why the divine imperative "Pray!" should be converted into the indicative statement "Prayer is obligatory" rather than some other statement such as "Prayer is recommended." This translation project isolates the informative content of God's speech, ascribing an indicative function to every utterance while setting aside any performative function it may have.[13] This reduction of God's speech to its indicative or informative dimension is deeply embedded in Islamic legal theory, and has not been fundamentally challenged, despite the widespread desire to give God's speech some performative role in establishing the law.

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12 Dabūsī's *Taqwīm al-Adilla* is the first work of Sunnī *fiqh* or *uṣūl al-fiqh* in which *inshāʾ* is used for performative speech, so far as can be ascertained by searching in al-Maktaba al-Shamela as of May 25, 2017. The one work listed before it, *Uṣūl al-Shāshī,* has been falsely ascribed, and must postdate Dabūsī; see Bedir 1999, 18–21.

13 On this reduction of revelation to statements of law, see Larcher 1992, 361–362; Vishanoff 2011, 6, 143–145, 183.

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1 Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī

Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820) was the first to promote successfully the idea that Islamic law consists of a comprehensive system of legal statements that can be derived in its entirety from revelation, and is all contained, implicitly, in the Quran itself.[14] This idea met with resistance from rationalists, traditionists, and scripturalists, but by the 10th century it had come to be widely accepted,[15] and legal theorists were starting to explore it more theoretically: what does it mean to say that legal values are revealed? Were they unknown or unknowable until God disclosed them, or did they not exist until God spoke them into being? How may they be known, from God's speech or otherwise? What is God's speech, anyway, and what role does it play in establishing or making known the law?

Shāfiʿī himself never articulated detailed theoretical answers to these questions. He has been interpreted as holding what Kevin Reinhart calls the "no assessment" position that in the absence of revelation human actions simply have no legal value; but this was not a question he pursued theoretically.[16] Whatever he may have thought about the nature and origin of legal values, it seems to me that in effect he treated God's speech as providing information about existing legal values, rather than performatively bringing them into being. He does say that God imposes duties by means of the Quran, which sounds as though his speech is what makes them obligatory;[17] but his main theoretical claim about the Quran is that it functions as *bayān* of the law, revealing it and making it abundantly clear to all those who understand the subtleties of Arabic and who know the clarifying evidence that God has provided alongside it.[18] He uses the term *bayān* to mean disclosure of a law that already exists, that God has previously required and decreed and that his speech subsequently reveals, rather than the establishment of new legal values through the very act of speaking.[19] Shāfiʿī also likes to refer to the Quran and the Prophet's Sunna as sources of knowledge (*ʿilm*)[20] or pieces of evidence (*dalīl*)[21] that indicate (*dalla ʿalā*) God's requirements, or that indicate

14 Vishanoff 2011, chapter 2, especially 37–40 and 62–65.

15 See further El Shamsy 2013, chapter 8.

16 Hourani 1971, 11–12; Reinhart 1995, 12, 62–63.

17 E.g., Shāfiʿī, 1990, 22 (§§57–59), where he refers to "*mā aḥkama farḍahu bi-kitābihi*."

18 Shāfiʿī 1990, 18 (§40), 21 (§§53–54), and *passim*; Vishanoff 2011, 38–40; 2017, 251–253.

19 See in particular Shāfiʿī 1990, 17 (§40), 21 (§55). The second passage refers to "what God made clear to His creatures in His Book of the things He required of them due to His prior decision":

ما أبان الله لخلقه في كتابه ممّا تعبّدهم به لما مضى من حكمه.

20 E.g., Shāfiʿī, 1990, 19 (§§43–46).

21 E.g., Shāfiʿī, 1990, 20 (§48).

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and clarify (*bayyana*) what is meant by other verses or Prophetic reports.[22] From the perspective of the interpreter, at least, revelation should be regarded as a source of information and a piece of evidence about a law that is not itself directly available to human beings, and that can only be discovered through the complex process of interpreting revelation. Wherever legal values come from, the function of God's speech is to convey information about them.

2 Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār

Legal theorists in the Baṣra school of Muʿtazilī theology readily adopted Shāfiʿī's idea of a coherent set of legal values (*aḥkām*) existing independently of, and indicated by, God's speech. Beginning with Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 915) and culminating with the work of ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025), they formulated a coherent theological conception of how God's speech relates to the law.[23] ʿAbd al-Jabbār felt it necessary to allow God some role in establishing legal obligations, so he said that God "imposed" (*taklīf*) certain requirements by willing them, but he ascribed no performative function to either God's will or his speech, reducing them to sources of information about a prior moral reality.

Unlike the traditionalists and the Ashʿariyya, most of whom came to hold that revelation assigns to human actions legal values that they did not have in the absence of revelation,[24] ʿAbd al-Jabbār held that particular actions are good or bad, as well as obligatory, recommended, permitted, or forbidden, by virtue of certain characteristics of those actions, or because of the manner in which they occur, not because of some extrinsic consideration such as God's will or his speech.[25] Even before the advent of revelation human beings can know by unaided reason that certain actions are bad, good, recommended, or obligatory;

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22 E.g., Shāfiʿī 1990, 29 (§§87–88), 79 (§257), 168 (§§469–470), 207 (§§557–558), 230 (§640), 341 (§923).
23 See Vishanoff 2011, chapter 4.
24 Hourani 1971, 3, 11–13; Reinhart 1995, 62.
25 See ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 6/1:52–114, especially 58 and 61; 11:84; 17:141; Frank 1978, 132–135; Hourani 1971, 29–36, 62–70, 103–126; Vasalou 2008, 72–74. When ʿAbd al-Jabbār says that an act is bad because it occurs *ʿalā wajh al-ẓulm* (for example), he means that it occurs in such a manner and under such circumstances as to constitute an instance of injustice (or of some other fundamental and necessarily known evil such as lying). Good acts are a bit more complex; see Vasalou 2008, 87–89. See also Reinhart 1995, 139–151. Al-Attar (2010, chapter 6) attempts strenuously but unpersuasively to reduce ʿAbd al-Jabbār's ethic solely to considerations of harm and benefit; ʿAbd al-Jabbār specifically rejects this (ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 14:28–30).

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all things being equal, beneficial actions are known to be permissible.[26] Actions do not become good because God wills or commands them, or bad because he dislikes or prohibits them; rather, God imposes, commands, or prohibits them because they are good or bad, beneficial or harmful, obligatory or recommended or forbidden, and deserving of praise or blame and reward or punishment.[27] God does impose some additional duties, such as the five daily prayers, that are more specific than what reason imposes, but ʿAbd al-Jabbār insists that this "imposition by revelation" (*taklīf samʿī*) does not actually make anything obligatory; God merely informs people that these additional duties are in their best interest because they help and motivate people to perform other duties already known by reason, thereby maximizing the eternal reward that is due them.[28] God does not arbitrarily choose to impose these revealed duties; he must impose precisely those actions that he knows are conducive to the performance of other duties.[29] In some cases God's instructions are not precise enough to yield certainty about the law, and then whatever conclusion a jurist reaches through independent interpretive reasoning (*ijtihād*) is correct, but this does not mean the jurist has been given authority to establish a new legal obligation;[30] he[31] only chooses to make binding

26 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 11:33, 43–44; 15:44; 17:145–148; Hourani 1971, 30, 35, 104–126; Eissa 2017, 187–200. Cf. Reinhart 1995, 39–43, 153. See also Emon 2010, 26–27, 42–44, 52–56, 65–66, and 72–73.

27 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 6/1:59, 64–65, 85–86, 102–105, 113; 11:82–83, 175, 293, 299, 503; 13:48, 344; 14:14, 22; 1965a, 1–4; Hourani 1971, 33–34, 57, 118–121, 131–132. See also Emon 2010, 11, 13, 24, and al-Attar 2010, chapters 5–6; these two works make interesting and closely related overall arguments, but neither is sufficiently careful or precise to serve as a reliable guide to ʿAbd al-Jabbār's thought. On p. 116 al-Attar reproduces without attribution four sentences from Vishanoff 2004, 64.

28 On *taklīf samʿī* see ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 6/1:64–65, 187; 11:85, 293–300, 503; 13:48; 14:14; 15:23, 36–44, 62, 117–119; 1965a, 1–4; 1965b, 510–511; Frank 1971, 14–16; 1977, 124–129; 1982, 337, 348–349; Hourani 1971, 120–121; Vasalou 2008, 49–51. ʿAbd al-Jabbār insists that *taklīf* is not just making moral or legal values known, but when he says it provides additional motivation he means that it strengthens one's belief that obedience will be in one's best interest (ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 13:297–299; cf. ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 6/1:196; Hourani 1971, 82–83; Vasalou 2008, 75); this is not very different from making known the benefit of the required act (which is how Ibn Mattawayh understands his definition of *taklīf* in ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1965a, 1, and Mānkdīm in ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1965b, 510, where the definition of *taklīf* is corrupted). I failed to grasp and articulate this theory of *taklīf* adequately in Vishanoff 2011, 135.

29 See, e.g., ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 13:187:

وأما التكليف الشرعي، فمتى علم تعالى أنه صلاح في التكليف العقلي أو بعضه، فلا بدّ من أن يكلف جميعه، حتى لا يدخل فيه ما لا يكون صلاحا، ولا يخرج عنه ما هو صلاح.

30 As Muways ibn ʿImrān reportedly held; see ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 17:123, 372.

31 All the medieval scholars studied in this essay take for granted that jurists are male. It would be a distortion to express their views in gender-neutral language.

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for himself (*iltazama*), and for all who follow his interpretations, one of several obligations that God has imposed as alternatives because he knows that any one of them will be to his servants' eternal benefit.[32] To say that God imposes such revealed requirements is simply to say that he wills them,[33] and since God is just he wills only what is by nature good and obligatory (or at least recommended) and abhors only what is bad.[34] Moreover, according to the Muʿtazila God commands only what he wills, so if he commands something then it must be good and either obligatory or recommended, though the command itself is not what makes it so.[35]

One can rely on God's commands as evidence of moral and legal values, ʿAbd al-Jabbār reasoned, only if one accepts the distinctive Muʿtazilī doctrine that God's speech is one of his temporal and created acts.[36] If God's speech were not one of his acts its meaning would not be determined by his will,[37] and then it could not serve as evidence of the law.[38] Moreover, if God's speech were not his act, it would not be governed by his justice – which is a characteristic of actions, not of persons – so there would be no guarantee that his speech is clear or even truthful.[39] The Muʿtazilī doctrine of God's created speech was the only way, ʿAbd al-Jabbār claimed, to guarantee revelation's role as an indicator of the law.

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32 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 17:345–379; 20/2:260–262. ʿAbd al-Jabbār speaks mainly of doubtful cases of analogy, but it is clear from 17:348 that his reasoning applies equally to ambiguous language. Cf. Eissa 2017, 260–261, 270–274, 286–294, 302–303. Eissa understands ʿAbd al-Jabbār to mean that legal values for which there is no conclusive evidence do not exist prior to the jurist's *ijtihād,* but are created by it. This does not take into account ʿAbd al-Jabbār's view that legal values are determined by the features and manner of occurrence of actions, not by extrinsic considerations or even by God's imposition (*taklīf*). ʿAbd al-Jabbār says that such uncertain requirements are imposed as alternatives, not devoid of legal value altogether (ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 17:345–346).

33 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 11:293–300. Cf. ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1965a, 1–4; 1965b, 510–511.

34 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 11:296; 17:107, 114.

35 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 6/1:103, 105; 6/2:224; 17:107.

36 See Vishanoff 2011, 145–150; ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1965b, 527–528, 531–532; 1960–1969, 7:109:
لا سبيل للقوم إلى أن يثبتوا أن كلامه تعالى يفيد أو يُعرف ما يفيده إن كان قديما.

37 According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār the meaning of an utterance is one of those attributes of actions that are determined by the will of the person who performs the action. See Richard Frank's presentation of the classical Baṣra Muʿtazilī theory of "attributes determined by the agent who causes the existence of the thing" (Frank 1978, 124–135). See also ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 6/2:94–96; 7:48.

38 Indeed, it could not serve as evidence of anything, since evidence has to be intended as such. See Peters 1976, 59–60, 65; ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 16:347.

39 See ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 16:347–351, 358; 17:30–31, 35; 1969, 1:1–3; 1965b, 527, 531; Schwarb 2007, 137*–139*.

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In fact, ʿAbd al-Jabbār reasoned that this was the only role God's speech can have: all it can do is inform people about the law, thus enabling and motivating them to obey it. ʿAbd al-Jabbār defined commands in such a way that they necessarily indicate that the speaker wills that the addressee perform the commanded action, and in God's case this in turn indicates that the action has a legal value.[40] By definition a statement (*khabar*) indicates that the speaker wills to convey some information,[41] and in God's case that information can only be about certain kinds of things. His speech cannot indicate truths that humans already know by reason, or basic facts about God and the world that they must know before they can understand or trust God's speech.[42] There are some actions, however, such as rituals, that lead toward good or evil in ways that humans cannot discern on their own, and God, being just, must facilitate their wellbeing by informing them of the legal values of those actions through prophetic revelation. That is the purpose of his speech.[43] ʿAbd al-Jabbār acknowledged that the Quran also reiterates things already known by reason, makes promises and threats, describes heaven and hell, and tells stories about past prophets and peoples who were destroyed; but he reasoned that all this ultimately serves the same purpose as explicit legal discourse, pointing and thus inciting people toward what is in their own best interest.[44] "There is nothing mentioned by the Quran that does not relate to the imposition of God's requirements."[45]

To say that the Quran indicates (*yadullu ʿalā*) the law means that it serves as evidence (a *dalīl*) from which humans can reason to a knowledge of that law.

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40 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 6/2:223–224; 17:107; Zarkashī 1988, 2:348.

41 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 15:323; Frank 1978, 127–131.

42 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 16:354; 17:93–94, 101; 1969, 1:1–5.

43 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 6/1:64; 15:19–58, especially 26–29; 17:101, 148; 1965b, 563–566; Hourani 1971, 131–136; Peters 1976, 96–97; Reinhart 1995, 158–159.

44 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 17:23–24, 94; Hourani 1971, 136; Peters 1976, 101, 418. Hourani sharply distinguishes the Quran's informational and motivational components, but by motivation ʿAbd al-Jabbār principally means information about the consequences of one's actions.

45 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 17:24.18:

لا شيء ذكر من القرآن إلا وله تعلق بالتكليف.

"*Lā shayʾ dhukira min al-Qurʾān*" could also be translated "there is no part of the Quran that has been mentioned," which would have the same import since ʿAbd al-Jabbār has just given an exhaustive categorization of God's speech. See also ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 17:23.13–14:

فالخبر الذي لا يتضمن طريقة التكليف لا بد من أن يعود على التكليف بضرب من ضروب المصلحة.

See also 94.18, 151.4–5:

الذي ترد به أدلة السمع لا بد من أن يكون متضمنا للأحكام التي ذكرناها، أو له بها تعلق.

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God's speech cannot be understood immediately and unreflectively, as human speech can, because the immediate understanding that we sometimes experience in human conversation depends on direct perception of the speaker, with all the contextual and non-verbal clues that help to convey meaning; but God cannot be perceived. Since the meaning of God's speech cannot be known immediately and necessarily, it can only be deduced through rational inference.[46] "[God] (he is exalted) must speak in such a way that his speech is an indicator (*dalāla*) for us, and the legally responsible person must reason from the indicator and [from his] knowledge of it."[47] Revelation does not have the same variety of informative and performative illocutionary functions as human interpersonal address; it is only a piece of evidence, created by God and placed in the world so that humans might derive legal information from it.

This conception of divine speech entails a fundamental hermeneutical principle: God's speech should always be interpreted as an indicative statement, regardless of its grammatical form. ʿAbd al-Jabbār reduced all of revelation to the indicative mood, and to its informative dimension. He recognized that even indicatives can have a performative effect in human speech, as when a person brings about a new legal situation by declaring that he has freed his slave.[48] God's speech, however, can only describe what is already true; it functions only as an indicative, informative statement.[49] ʿAbd al-Jabbār explicitly ruled out the kinds of speech acts that in modern pragmatics are considered paradigmatic of performative speech. A promise is just a statement about the future; it does not bring about any new obligation.[50] Commands and prohibitions are virtually equivalent to statements about the obligatory or evil properties of acts, since such statements, like commands and prohibitions, indicate that God wills or abhors the act

46 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 7:109, 182–183; 15:162–163; 16:348, 350; 17:12, 31, 34, 49–50; Peters 1976, 95, 386–387; Larkin 1995, 36–38; Schwarb 2007, 135.

47 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 17:12:

إنه تعالى لا بدّ من أن يخاطب من حيث كان الخطاب عندنا دلالة، ولا بدّ للمكلف من الاستدلال من الدلالة والعلم بها.

See also 17:35. ʿAbd al-Jabbār also allowed that some of God's speech may serve not as an indicator in its own right, but as confirmation of some other indicator, as long as it strengthens the evidence for what was already known through that other indicator (ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 17:12–13).

48 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 17:105, 141.

49 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 6/1:64–65, 105; 17:23, 141. For example, on 6/1:105 ʿAbd al-Jabbār says:

فكما أنَّ الخبر يدل على أنَّ المخبر عنه على ما تعلق به، لا أنه بالخبر صار على ما هو به، وهو كالعلم في هذا الباب، فكذلك الأمر والنهي.

50 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 11:427–428; 17:21.

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in question.[51] "As for that which is not an indicative statement, but has the form or function of command and prohibition, it only indicates the legal values of acts; promise and threat are included in this, because they indicate God's choice to do what the legally responsible person deserves."[52] The task of the interpreter, therefore, is to take all the different types of speech found in the Quran – commands and prohibitions, promises and threats, warnings and entreaties, questions, oaths, and narratives – and translate them into indicative statements of the form "this action by this person at this time under these circumstances is obligatory (or recommended, permitted, or forbidden)."

For ʿAbd al-Jabbār, therefore, the category of *inshāʾ* was simply not relevant for God's speech; it could only apply to human speech. God's speech could only function as a piece of evidence (*dalīl*) or a report (*khabar*) about the law. This was not a problem, since ʿAbd al-Jabbār regarded the law as an independent moral truth that preexisted God's created speech. Even those parts of the law that were not clearly indicated in revelation, and were left to the discretion of jurists, were not to be established performatively: the properly reasoned decisions of qualified jurists could never be wrong, but neither could they bring about a new objective moral truth that would bind other jurists. Neither God nor a jurist can create law through performative speech. ʿAbd al-Jabbār does seem to have felt that God ought to be allowed at least some minor role in establishing the law, because he did say that God "imposes" (*kallafa*) its more burdensome requirements, and that this means something more than merely giving evidence or information about them; but then he reduced that "imposition" to God's willing them, which is not what makes them obligatory; and he insisted that God's speech, through which his will may be known, has a purely informative function.[53] In Austin's terms, God's imposition of requirements has the perlocutionary effect of motivating people, but its illocutionary function is strictly informative.[54]

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51 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 15:60; 17:23–24, 149.

52 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 17:94:

فأما ما ليس بخبر لكنه يجري مجرى الأمر والنهي وما شاكلهما فإنما يدل على أحكام الأفعال فقط، والوعد والوعيد داخل فيما ذكرناه لأنهما يدلان على ما يختاره تعالى من فعل المستحق بالمكلف.

53 ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 11:293–299. God's will may also be known by reason (ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 11:299), so God's speech plays no essential role in *taklīf*.

54 See notes 28 and 44 above.

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3 Abū Yaʿlā Ibn al-Farrāʾ

On the other side of the debate about how God's speech relates to the law we find the Ḥanbalī Abū Yaʿlā Ibn al-Farrāʾ (d. 1066). He seems to have been less concerned than ʿAbd al-Jabbār with the theological underpinnings of his legal theory, and he did not formulate a systematic theory of communication, but beneath his arguments we can discern a fairly consistent set of basic assumptions about how God's speech works: he regarded revelation as an act of interpersonal communication – a performative speech act by which God eternally addresses each person across the ages, bringing about legal obligations with an intuitive immediacy that makes interpretive reasoning largely unnecessary.[55] One can hardly imagine an outlook more at odds with ʿAbd al-Jabbār's.

Abū Yaʿlā did not reject entirely the Muʿtazilī idea of rationally known moral values predating revelation. He agreed that a hypothetical person on a desert island, with no knowledge of revelation, would have only reason to go by, and could conclude that picking fruit from a tree to stave off starvation must be permissible but that eating it simply for enjoyment might not be, since its owner, God, might not have permitted it. Reason dictates that out of caution this and many other actions of uncertain status must be treated as forbidden. Once revelation is given, however – and Abū Yaʿlā notes that it was given at the outset to Adam – it takes over from reason, permitting many things that otherwise would have been forbidden, explicitly prohibiting or requiring others, and leaving some things unmentioned and thus, by default, still forbidden. Reason (*ʿaql*) can no longer permit or forbid, and the law is determined entirely by revelation (*sharʿ*).[56]

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55 See Vishanoff 2011, 236–250.

56 See Abū Yaʿlā 1990, 1:263; 2:422; and especially 4:1238–1260. It is important to note how the latter passage is structured. After listing the three main views on the status of useful actions before revelation (proscribed, permitted, or "no assessment," to use Kevin Reinhart's terms), Abū Yaʿlā proceeds to discuss the question twice, formulated in two different ways (*tutaṣawwaru hādhihi al-masʾala* on 4:1243, *yutaṣawwaru al-khilāf* on 4:1250). First, for a person created in a desert without knowledge of revelation, are the good things God has created permitted, forbidden (*maḥẓūr*, proscribed), or neither? Abū Yaʿlā replies by giving three proofs for the proscribed position, rebutting objections to them, and then refuting several proofs for the other two views. Second, what would the status of an action be if revelation did not reveal it? Abū Yaʿlā answers "proscribed," and defends the question's relevance for establishing the default legal value of actions on which revelation is silent, but then instead of giving his own proofs and refutations he gives a long summary (4:1252.7–1257.11) of a Karrāmī opponent's arguments defending the view that actions are by default permitted both before and after revelation, and refuting the other two views including Abū Yaʿlā's own stated view. Abū Yaʿlā then closes with a long quote from a fellow Ḥanbalī defending a view of rational and revealed law very like that of ʿAbd al-Jabbār, which Abū Yaʿlā then flatly rejects, denying that reason can establish legal or moral values. The fact

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For Abū Yaʿlā, then, the law that humans now have is not just a confirmation or elaboration of what was already known by unaided reason, as it was for ʿAbd al-Jabbār; rather, the law is a new set of legal values brought about by God's speech.[57] When God makes actions obligatory, permissible, or forbidden, he does not do so because of their intrinsic moral value, the manner of their occurrence, their consequences, or even because he wills or dislikes them – since Abū Yaʿlā held that God wills everything that actually happens, including human actions that he has forbidden.[58] Rather, actions are obligatory because God commands them, and he can command whatever he pleases, even if it causes harm rather than benefit to his creatures.[59]

Abū Yaʿlā regarded God's commands, and indeed all speech, as a kind of action – an interpersonal speech act.[60] For example, he defined a command not as a verb in the imperative mood, but as the act of verbally demanding or requesting (normally by means of an imperative verb) that a person of inferior status perform some action.[61] It was somewhat paradoxical for Abū Yaʿlā to treat God's speech as one of his acts in his work on legal theory, when he also affirmed the traditionalist theological view that God's speech is eternal,[62] but this paradox had a purpose. It allowed Abū Yaʿlā to say that the Quran is transcendent and eternal, yet functions in the same immediate fashion as human speech acts, as though God were addressing his servants face to face. ʿAbd al-Jabbār thought that because God cannot be perceived, his speech cannot possibly communicate in

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that Abū Yaʿlā offered his own arguments while discussing the first formulation of the question, but quoted a Karrāmī opponent's discussion of the second, was not remarked by Kevin Reinhart (1995, 34–37) or Mohamed Eissa (2017, 208–222), who consequently found this passage somewhat ambivalent; but their conclusions are congruent with my own.

57 Reinhart (1995, 36) notes that Abū Yaʿlā "does not assume the continuity of pre-Revelational and post-Revelational times. Illicit acts become licit and even obligatory when Revelation comes, and Muslim epistemology – in which *ʿaql* misleads without *sharʿ* – is upheld." Abū Yaʿlā (1990, 1:213) explains that speech, rather than reason or nonverbal reality, is the basis and starting point of law.

58 Abū Yaʿlā 1974, 80.

59 See Abū Yaʿlā 1990, 1:163, 221, 245–246, 299; 2:397, 421–423.

60 See Abū Yaʿlā 1990, 1:157.15.

61 Abū Yaʿlā 1990, 1:157, 214, 218, 223, 256, 263. Note how he carefully distinguishes between a command, which is an interpersonal speech act (1990, 1:157: *"al-amr iqtiḍāʾ al-fiʿl aw istidʿāʾ al-fiʿl bi-al-qawl mimman huwa dūnahu"*), and the imperative verbal form by which that speech act is normally performed (1990, 1:214: *"li-al-amr ṣīgha mubayyina lahu fī al-lugha tadullu bi-mujarradihā ʿalā kawnihi amran idhā taʿarrat ʿan al-qarāʾin wa-hiya qawl al-qāʾil li-man dūnahu ifʿal kadhā wa-kadhā"*). Cf. 1990, 1:169, where he defines statements by comparing them to other kinds of action. In 1990, 2:478 he mentions that non-verbal actions can also entail obligation.

62 Abū Yaʿlā 1974, 44, 86–93; 1990, 2:388.

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the same immediate way as human speech, but must be the starting point for a process of rational inference; but Abū Yaʿlā saw no need for such a deliberative interpretive process. He treated the whole corpus of revelation as a single eternal speech act by which God addresses all his servants at once, across all of time and space, as if they were right there in his presence,[63] within the context of each person's relationship of inferiority to God. When a legally responsible person hears God's speech recited today, he is like a slave who hears the sound of his master's voice and immediately recognizes it as a direct and personal summons that imposes upon him an obligation to obey.[64]

God's speech acts accomplish their purpose not primarily by conveying information, but by bringing about new states of affairs performatively. Abū Yaʿlā did not use the term *inshāʾ*, or articulate an explicit theory of performative speech. Neither did he deny that God's speech conveys information[65] – any more than a modern speech act theorist would. But his definitions and arguments often assume a performative rather than informative view of speech. Unlike ʿAbd al-Jabbār, who reduced all revealed language to statements, Abū Yaʿlā considered the most fundamental form of speech to be commands,[66] which do not convey information and cannot be true or false.[67] He defined commands as interpersonal speech acts, and when he argued that they should be interpreted as obligations by default, he did not argue about whether commands indicate (*dalla ʿalā*) obligations, as ʿAbd al-Jabbār did, but about whether they entail (*iqtaḍā*) obligations.[68] Indeed, he argued that they entail a great deal more than the obligatoriness of the commanded act: a single command, all by itself, imposes an obligation to obey immediately,[69] continually,[70] and in whatever manner may be

63 See Abū Yaʿlā 1990, 2:348–368, 386–392. On 2:354 Abū Yaʿlā says:

وإذا صح هذا وكان خطاب الله تعالى في صورة افعلوا خطاباً لجميع الناس لأن هذا خطاب الحاضر وجب أن يكون متناولاً لسائر المكلفين من الرجال والنساء.

64 See Vishanoff 2011, 242–250. Abū Yaʿlā argues in 1990, 1:238.13–15, that a master commanding his servant from behind a veil (an image associated with divine revelation) would bring about an obligation, even though the servant could not see him directly and thus would have no contextual clues to indicate that his master intended to impose an obligation. The end of the paragraph is corrupted, and should be a question (*fa-hallā yajūzu an yuddaʿā taʿalluq al-wujūb bi-ʿabdihi?*).

65 God is eternally stating or informing (*mukhbir*) as well as commanding (*āmir*); Abū Yaʿlā 1974, 44. In 1990, 1:347, Abū Yaʿlā accepts, at least for the sake of argument, his opponent's premise that a command makes known the obligatoriness of an act.

66 Abū Yaʿlā 1990, 1:213.

67 Abū Yaʿlā 1990, 1:221.

68 Abū Yaʿlā 1990, 1:224; cf. ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1969, 17:104–115.

69 Abū Yaʿlā 1990, 1:281–293; also 2:428 on prohibitions.

70 Abū Yaʿlā 1990, 1:264–280; also 2:428 on prohibitions.

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stipulated elsewhere in revelation.[71] Moreover, that same command simultaneously imposes an obligation to believe that the action is obligatory, to resolve to do it,[72] and to complete any other acts that might be necessary for performance of the commanded act.[73] All those obligations are brought about by the original command itself, not inferred from it by logical deduction. It would have been difficult for Abū Yaʿlā to prove that the linguistic meaning of an imperative verb includes all these additional requirements, but he was not thinking of commands as words; he was thinking of them as complex interpersonal events, with all the social ramifications that they entail.

Consequently, Abū Yaʿlā downplayed the need to reason from the words of revelation to discover the legal values of actions. The interpretations of jurists are not the product of a long chain of inferences (*istidlāl*) starting from the evidence of revelation, as ʿAbd al-Jabbār claimed; they are the obvious literal meaning of the text, immediately effective and intuitively grasped (*maʿqūl*) by anyone who hears that text in the situational context of his own relationship of inferiority to God, and in the textual context of the rest of revelation. By packing as much legal meaning as possible into the linguistic meaning of revelation, as he did with commands, Abū Yaʿlā minimized the amount of interpretive reasoning required of the interpreter. He allowed jurists to reach broad and rigorous interpretations by default, without having to look for evidence that might modify their conclusions. And because he treated revelation as a single eternal speech act, he considered every part of it to be the context of every other part, so that when interpreters departed from the strong default meaning of a passage they could still claim to be following its obvious, literal, contextual meaning. He was not preventing a flexible process of interpretation; he was just concealing that process within what he regarded as an immediate understanding of the plain meaning of the whole text. Read as a whole, he thought, revelation always means just what it says. Interpretation, in his eyes, was as intuitive and immediate as a servant's ineluctable knowledge, upon hearing his master ask for a glass of water, that he is now obligated to bring him a drink.[74]

By defining commands as performative speech acts rather than informative evidence, Abū Yaʿlā inverted, at least in principle, the "reduction to the indicative" that characterizes classical legal theory. He did not pursue all the hermeneutical possibilities opened up by his performative view of speech; he remained committed to the basic Shāfiʿī project of translating revelation into informative

71 Abū Yaʿlā 1990, 2:384–386.
72 Abū Yaʿlā 1990, 1:269, 285.
73 Abū Yaʿlā 1990, 2:419–421.
74 See Vishanoff 2011, 238–250.

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statements about the legal values of human actions. But his implicitly performative conception of divine speech did break open a small space – quickly closed by his Ḥanbalī successors[75] – for a less reductive conception of revelation. It also enabled him to justify a more intuitive, less deliberative approach to interpretation, which was later championed and developed by the Ḥanbalī reformer Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328),[76] and which still characterizes legal argument among fundamentalist scholars today.

4 Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī

The Mālikī judge and Ashʿarī theologian and legal theorist Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013) would gladly be held up as the middle way between the Ḥanbalī Abū Yaʿlā and the Muʿtazilī ʿAbd al-Jabbār. More precisely, we should say that he wanted to have it both ways – for God's speech to be both performative and informative. Like Abū Yaʿlā, he wanted to assert that God decrees the law simply by speaking it; but like ʿAbd al-Jabbār he wanted to make room for a human interpretive process in which revelation functions as indicative evidence, rather than concealing that interpretive process, as Abū Yaʿlā did, by claiming that much of the meaning of revelation is immediately obvious. He was able to justify having it both ways thanks to his Ashʿarī theory that God's speech has both eternal and created dimensions.

Bāqillānī rejected the view that revelation merely confirms and elucidates a natural moral or legal reality that can be known by reason.[77] He was instrumental in formulating the alternative view that before the advent of revelation human actions simply had no legal value at all. This view, which Kevin Reinhart calls the "no assessment" position in the "before revelation" debate, was championed by Ashʿarī theologians and eventually came to dominate the Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī schools.[78] Legal and moral values, Bāqillānī said, are not intrinsic properties of acts; human actions would not be obligatory, forbidden, good (*ḥasan*), or bad (*qabīḥ*) if God did not evaluate them (*ḥakama*) as such or impose requirements

75 See Vishanoff 2011, 251.
76 See Ali 2000, chapter 4.
77 See Bāqillānī 1998, 1:171–172, 193, 231, 278–285; Emon 2010, 92, 101–102 (though on page 102 Emon misinterprets Bāqillānī 1998, 1:284–285).
78 Reinhart 1995, 25–26, 65.

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(*kallafa*) on humanity.[79] Those values (*aḥkām*) are not determined by benefit or harm; prayer is beneficial, but there is nothing about it that necessitates its being obligatory rather than merely permissible or even forbidden.[80] Nor do legal values stem from God's will (since he wills even disobedience) or from his promises of reward or threats of punishment. Rather, God's law stems solely from his command.[81] Bāqillānī said that the moral values of acts arise from God's command to praise or blame those who perform them (which may be indicated indirectly by a simple command to perform or avoid the act).[82] God speaks the law into existence *ex nihilo*.

God's command, however, cannot function quite like a human interpersonal speech act, as it did for Abū Yaʿlā, because according to Bāqillānī God's speech itself is not an act, nor is it directly accessible or immediately comprehensible to its human audience. God's speech itself is not to be equated with the recited or written words of the Quran. According to Bāqillānī's Ashʿarī doctrine, God's true speech is his inner speech, an eternal attribute subsisting in his essence; it is made outwardly manifest through spoken or written words that serve as created expressions (*ʿibārāt*) and evidences of the speech itself.[83] This view was opposed to the views of the Muʿtazila and the traditionalists, who, despite their disagreement about whether God's speech is created or eternal, at least agreed that the words, letters, and sounds of the Quran are themselves God's speech.[84] Bāqillānī held instead that God's speech is a single, eternal, indivisible, nonverbal[85] entity

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79 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:274, 278–279:

واعلموا أنه ليس تحت وصف فعل المكلف بأنه حسن أو قبيح صفة هو في نفسه عليها يستحقها لذاته وجنسه، أو لمعنى يقوم به، أو لوجه هو في العقل عليه على ما يقوله القدريَّة (...) وإنما يجب وصف فعل المكلف بأنه حسن وقبيح انه مما حكم الله بحسنه أو قبحه.

80 Bāqillānī 1998, 2:160–161:

لا صفة عند الله لما أوجبه وفي معلومه يقتضي وجوبه دون حظره وإباحته.

81 See Bāqillānī 1998, 2:31–33. This view was succinctly summarized by Ghazālī 1998, 63:

ليست أحكام الأفعال صفات ذاتية وإنما معناها ارتباط خطاب الشارع بها نهياً وأمراً، وحثّاً وزجراً، فالمحرم هو المقول فيه لا تفعلوه، والواجب هو المقول فيه لا تتركوه.

"The legal values of actions are not attributes of their essences; the meaning of legal values is only that the lawgiver's address refers to actions by way of prohibition, command, encouragement, and rebuke. The forbidden is that of which it is said 'do not do it,' and the obligatory is that of which it is said 'do not neglect to do it.'"

82 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:279–280.

83 For his doctrine of God's speech, see Bāqillānī 1963, 26, 71–143; 1998, 2:88–89; 1:316–317:

الكلام معنى قائم في النفس يُعبَّر عنه ويدل عليه بهذه الأصوات.

84 Bāqillānī disapprovingly noted this agreement in 1963, 78–80, 108, and in 1998, 2:25–26.

85 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:430; 2:25–26.

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that is both an attribute (*maʿnā*) of his essence and the meaning (*maʿnā*) of the words of revelation.[86] This single *maʿnā* eternally consists of a multiplicity of speech types or speech-meanings such as commands and prohibitions, of which the words and sounds of the Quran are but created expressions.[87] So even though God's inner commands bring about the law, we cannot properly call them speech acts because they are eternal attributes, whereas acts, in the discourse of the theologians, are temporal creations.

Commands, prohibitions, statements, and questions all exist eternally in God's mind (so to speak) as classes of speech-meanings, completely independent of the many verbal forms that may from time to time be used to express them, and independent of language itself.[88] Commands, for example, are defined simply as "speech by which the commanded person is required to act out of obedience."[89] No interpersonal context, such as Abū Yaʿlā's stipulation that a command be to a subordinate, is specified.[90] A given command may or may not be expressed by an imperative; in fact, most of God's inner commands are conveyed in the form of indicative statements such as "I have commanded (or required) you to do such and such."[91] The verbal form of an utterance does not determine whether the utterance constitutes a command, because a command is a speech-meaning (*maʿnā*), not a speech-expression (*ʿibāra*); it is the inner speech-meaning of command that brings about the law, functioning as performative speech even though it is not an act. The actual words of the Quran, whether in the imperative or indicative mood,

86 On the double meaning of *maʿnā*, see Vishanoff 2011, 179–180; Key 2018, 2, 131–137.

87 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:316, 335; 2:25, 198, 202, 318. Cf. Schwarb 2007, 122–123.

88 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:316–317; 2:5, 25–26.

89 Bāqillānī 1998, 2:5:

وحقيقة الأمر (...) ومعنى وصفه بأنه أمر أنه القول المقتضى به الفعل من المأمور على وجه الطاعة.

90 Bāqillānī explicitly rejects that stipulation in 1998, 2:24, 7–8:

وقد قيل انه لا يصح الأمر إلّا لمن هو دون [القائل] في المرتبة ولذلك امتنع أمر الخلق لله تعالى وأمر الولد لوالده (...) والأولى أنه يصح عندنا أمر الآمر لمن هو مثله وفوقه في الرتبة والنظر في هل تجب طاعة من هذه حاله فيما أمر به أم لا.

Al-maʾmūr bihi is clearly a corruption of *al-āmir* or, more likely, *al-qāʾil*, which appears in the same sentence.

91 Bāqillānī 1998, 2:7:

وقد يعبّر عن [الأمر] بالقول افعل (...) وربما دلّ عليه وخبّر عنه بما صورته صورة العبارة عن الخبر [عن] وجوبه نحو قول القائل قد أمرتك بكذا وفرضته عليك وكتبته وألزمته وحتمته (...) وأكثر أحكام الشرع ثابتة بما صورته صورة الخبر عن الأمر.

The edition has *wa-ʿan wujūbihi*, but this is probably an alteration by a scribe who did not understand that Bāqillānī had in mind an expression of an inner command taking the form of an expression of an inner statement about an act's obligatoriness.

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do not bring about anything; they are only expressions of, and evidence of, God's inner legislative command.[92]

This means that the words of the Quran serve a purely informative, indicative, evidentiary function. The task of legal interpretation is to discover what eternal performative commands are indicated and expressed by the created words of revelation. This is no easy task, however, because for Bāqillānī a word has no necessary connection to its meaning. Meaning is completely independent of language; it resides in the mind of the speaker, who has at his disposal certain conventional signs by which he may express and make known his inner speech-meaning.[93] What a verbal sign means in any given utterance is determined not simply by its verbal form, and by the previously established lexicon, but also by the speaker's intent (*qaṣd*) or will (*irāda*) to convey a certain meaning.[94] In God's case, that intent cannot be known directly from the words the speaker uses, because Bāqillānī, like ʿAbd al-Jabbār, held that the verbal expression of speech can be understood immediately only if one directly perceives the speaker.[95] Since God cannot be perceived, his intents and inner speech-meanings cannot be understood unreflectively and intuitively, and the words that express his commands cannot themselves bring about obligations in the same immediate fashion as human speech acts. Instead, God's utterances can be understood only through a process of inference (*naẓar, istidlāl*) that starts from the verbal evidence of the Quran.

That interpretive process is not simple. Rachel Friedman has argued that Bāqillānī emphasized the clarity of Quranic language,[96] but Bāqillānī did not say

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92 Bāqillānī 1998, 2:8:

لم نقل إن الأمر ما دلَّ على اقتضاء المأمور به، وإنما قلنا هو اقتضاء المأمور به، والأصوات والرموز والإشارات والعقود والخطوط دلالات على القول المقتضى به الفعل.

93 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:205; 2:25:

قد بينا فيما سلف أن الإباحة والأمر والنهي والسؤال والرغبة وغير ذلك من أقسام الكلام معانٍ في النفس مختلفة الأجناس، وأنها (...) لنفسها تتعلق بمتعلقاتها ومن هو آمر وناهٍ بها ولمن هي أمر ونهي له من المكلفين وبما هي أمر به ونهي عنه من اكتساب العباد وإنما العبارات عن أقسام الكلام هي التي لا تكون مفيدة ودلالة على ما هي دلالة عليه إلّا بالمواضعة والاتفاق.

"We have previously explained that permitting, commanding, prohibiting, asking, requesting, and other types of speech are different kinds of speech-meanings in the mind, and that each speech-meaning refers to its referents – to the people who are thereby commanding or prohibiting, to the legally responsible persons to whom the command or prohibition is addressed, and to the human actions that are thereby commanded or prohibited – by virtue of its own [nature]. [...] It is only the expressions used for the various types of speech that require [linguistic] convention and agreement in order to be meaningful, and to indicate that which they indicate."

94 See Bāqillānī 1998, 1:331, 424–428; 2:9.

95 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:192, 429–436; 3:285; Vishanoff 2011, 181–182.

96 Friedman 2015; 2016. Friedman's argument rests on numerous misreadings of passages in Bāqillānī's *Taqrīb*.

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that God's speech was clear at first blush. On the contrary, he regarded many verbal expressions, including imperatives, as ambiguous, and said that interpreters should suspend their interpretive judgment about the meaning of all such verbal expressions until they found supplemental evidence to clarify each one's intended meaning. I have shown elsewhere how this policy of suspending judgment (*waqf*) endowed Bāqillānī's hermeneutic with tremendous flexibility;[97] here I just want to point out that Bāqillānī's whole theory of Quranic language reduces it to its purely informative dimension: the words of the Quran are treated as evidence from which humans may derive information about the law through a complex process of inference. The eternal speech-meanings that bring about the law can only be known by reasoning from evidence.[98]

Bāqillānī, then, like ʿAbd al-Jabbār, imagined the words of the Quran as indicative evidence rather than as performative address. Even though Bāqillānī held that legal values are brought about performatively by God's speech, his Ashʿarī theory of divine speech, with its distinction between speech-meaning and speech-expression, led him to a highly informative theory of how the actual words of revelation function to reveal the law. This consequence of the Ashʿarī doctrine of divine speech was already noted by Aron Zysow: "The tendency of the doctrine of *kalām nafsī* was to reduce all language to the descriptive level, that is, *istikhbār, amr,* and *nahy* to *khabar*."[99] Like so many doctrines that have acquired the status of "orthodoxy" throughout the history of religions, the Ashʿarī theory of divine speech allowed Bāqillānī to "have it both ways": it allowed him to attribute the law to the performative effect of God's speech rather than to a natural moral reality, while continuing to treat revelation as the evidentiary starting point of a flexible process of deriving legal information from revelation.

5 Abū Zayd al-Dabūsī

The Transoxanian Ḥanafī legal theorist Abū Zayd al-Dabūsī (d. ca. 1039) likewise sought to give God's speech a performative role in establishing the law, while still treating revelation as an informative statement subject to a flexible interpretive process by which it could be reconciled with law. Because his legal theory was

97 Vishanoff 2011, 162–165, 171–172, 178.

98 Bāqillānī 1998, 1:171, 431:

طريق معرفة جميع البشر من النبيين وأممهم بكلام الله وبالعبارة عنه والوحي الذي ليس بقرآن ما ذكرناه من النظر والاستدلال، إذ كانوا غير مضطرين إلى معرفته ومعرفة كلامه ومراده به، بل مكلفون مأمورون بذلك.

99 Zysow 1984, 183, note 86.

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influenced by the Iraqi Ḥanafī tradition of Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ al-Rāzī (d. 981), he was sometimes accused by his Māturīdī Ḥanafī colleagues of harboring Muʿtazilī views,[100] but his discussions of performative speech (*inshāʾ*) in two sections of his work on legal theory send mixed messages, sometimes recalling ʿAbd al-Jabbār's emphasis on revelation's informative description of a preexisting law, and sometimes recalling Abū Yaʿlā's emphasis on revelation's performative role in bringing about law.

Dabūsī's very original *uṣūl al-fiqh* work *Taqwīm al-Adilla* appears to have been the first work of Sunnī legal theory to discuss the distinction between *khabar* and *inshāʾ* explicitly.[101] He mentions it first when, in discussing the language of revealed proofs (*ḥujja*), he divides utterances (*takallum*) into four types: informing (*ikhbār*), asking a question (*istikhbār*), commanding (*amr*), and prohibiting (*nahy*).[102] The last two would seem the most obvious candidates for the category of performative speech, but surprisingly Dabūsī mentions *inshāʾ* only as a subtype of *ikhbār:* "[The point of] informing (*ikhbār*) someone of what you [know] is to convey to someone else knowledge of what was the case, or of what is the case, or of what you are committing yourself to (*ījāb*) if you make [your informing] performative (*inshāʾ*), as when you say 'I sell my slave' or 'I free him' or the like."[103] It sounds as if he is distinguishing *inshāʾ* from *ikhbār,* especially since he goes on to define a *khabar* (statement) as "speech (*kalām*) that indicates a state of affairs that was or will be, whose coming to pass is not dependent on the *khabar* itself, as when you say 'Zayd has come' or 'ʿAmr is coming' and the like."[104] This definition of *khabar* clearly excludes *inshāʾ*, in which the coming to pass of what is said *is* dependent on its being said. A statement (*khabar*), then, cannot be performative (*inshāʾ*). But a statement is merely speech (*kalām*), a meaningful sequence of letters, which Dabūsī is distinguishing from the act of uttering (*takallum*) such a sentence.[105] Although the words of a *khabar* only indicate states of affairs, the act of uttering a statement is an act of informing (*ikhbār*),

100 Zysow 2002, 239, 254; Bedir 1999, 26–27, 29; 2004, 229–230, 235, 244.

101 See note 12 above.

102 Dabūsī 2001, 34.2–3.

103 Dabūsī 2001, 34.7–8:

الإخبار بما عندك لتفيد غيرك العلم بما كان أو يكون أو بما توجبه إن جعلته إنشاء كقولك بعت عبدي أو أعتقته ونحوهما.

104 Dabūsī 2001, 34.17–18:

والخبر الكلام الدال على أمر كان أو سيكون غير مضاف كينونته إلى الخبر كقولك جاء زيد أو يجيء عمرو ونحوه.

See also Dabūsī 2001, 175.

105 This distinction is made explicit in Dabūsī 2001, 34.16 and 34.19:

فالإخبار تكلم بكلام يسمى خبراً، والخبر (...)، والإخبار تكلمك به.

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which can be performative if you make it such, that is, if you intend it as such. The utterance's purpose (*fāʾida*) is still to inform the other person of what you are committing yourself to by your performative utterance, so it remains a kind of *ikhbār* even though it is also *inshāʾ*.

This amounts to recognizing the category of performative speech while declaring its purpose and function to be informative. Indeed, Dabūsī says that the whole point of speech (*kalām*), and the reason for which language was established (either by God or by some other wise person) is to convey information.[106] Accordingly, Dabūsī defines commanding (*amr*) and prohibiting (*nahy*) as utterances whose purpose is to make clear (*bayān*) that something should or should not be.[107] This reduces commands – the very element of God's speech by which Abū Yaʿlā and Bāqillānī said God performatively brought about the law – to a purely informative role. Later scholars often classified commands as a type of *inshāʾ*, but this passage shows that Dabūsī, like ʿAbd al-Jabbār, regards God's commands as a way of informing human beings about an independently existing moral and legal truth. Dabūsī's examples in this section are drawn from human speech, but since his topic is the language of revealed proofs his analysis must apply to God's speech as well, which it appears he will treat as informational in function and purpose, even when it contains commands or performative utterances.

This reduction of all God's speech to its informative dimension is not surprising, given Dabūsī's affinity with the thought of the Baṣra Muʿtazila on a number of points.[108] He explicitly affirmed the value of rational proofs[109] and argued that unaided reason can discern intrinsic moral values,[110] the permissibility of useful actions,[111] and the general obligation to know God and one's own subjection to him.[112] Revelation cannot forbid what reason conclusively permits, and when it does prohibit something that reason deemed presumptively permissible it does so for the sake of human welfare.[113] Like ʿAbd al-Jabbār, Dabūsī regarded revealed law as an adjustment, based on considerations of harm and benefit, to a

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106 Dabūsī 2001, 34.4–5; see also Dabūsī 2001, 175.

107 Dabūsī 2001, 35.13–29, 34.10–11:

والأمر بفعل لبيان أنه مما ينبغي أن يوجد والنهي لبيان أنه مما ينبغي أن لا يكون وأن يعدم.

108 Bedir notes that this affinity does not make Dabūsī a Muʿtazilī; it only illustrates that in his time Sunnism had not yet come to be identified with Ashʿarism and Māturīdism, and Ḥanafī law still had a relatively rational outlook (Bedir 2004, 244).

109 Rational proofs (*ḥujaj ʿaqliyya*) constitute the last two of his four categories of proof, treated in Dabūsī 2001 starting on page 442.

110 Dabūsī 2001, 462; Bedir 2004, 241, 243.

111 Dabūsī 2001, 458–460; Bedir 2004, 239–241.

112 Dabūsī 2001, 446, 451, 462; Bedir 2004, 234, 238, 241.

113 Dabūsī 2001, 458–459; Bedir 2004, 239–240.

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fundamental underlying morality.[114] Also like ʿAbd al-Jabbār, he defined speech (*kalām*) as sounds and sequences of letters rather than as inner speech,[115] he held that the meaning of those sounds depends on the speaker's intent, and he believed that God would not leave his intent unclear.[116] All this is very reminiscent of the Baṣra Muʿtazila, and fits well with Dabūsī's reduction of performative speech to its informative dimension. Some general moral and legal values exist independently prior to revelation, and the point of God's speech is to convey information about them.

However, the second section of Dabūsī's book in which he discusses *inshāʾ*[117] gives a very different impression. It comes at the tail end of his long section on revealed proofs that give knowledge, which is mainly about the language of revelation and how it reveals the various types of legal values (*aḥkām*). He is discussing the particle *aw* (the conjunction or) which, he points out, means different things in *ikhbār,* where it basically indicates doubt, and in *inshāʾ,* in which there cannot be doubt. In a command, for example, "do A or B" does not mean that the speaker doubts which you should do; it means that you may choose which to do. Dabūsī lists several types of *inshāʾ,* including commanding and prohibiting, making something obligatory (*ījāb*), forbidding (*taḥrīm*), and permitting (*ibāḥa*). All of these impose new legal values (*aḥkām*), and they do so *de novo* (*mubtadiʾan*); they do not describe preexisting legal values, concerning which the speaker might be wrong or in doubt.[118] This time, rather than making *inshāʾ* a subcategory of *ikhbār* and reducing it to its informative dimension, he treats it as an entirely separate class of speech from *ikhbār,* and treats it as entirely performative. Here his examples include not only human but also divine speech, which is in fact his main interest, given that he is in the midst of analyzing the language of revealed proofs. The obligations, prohibitions, and permissions of the revealed law are all brought about by God's speech.

Dabūsī's treatment of God's speech as informative in one passage and performative in another may be explained by a subtle distinction he makes between two kinds of obligation, one of which is known through a combination of rational and revealed evidence while the other is brought about by God's commands. In elaborating his ingenious theory of the occasions (*asbāb*) of obligations, which has

114 Bedir 2004, 240, 243–244.

115 At least in the visible realm. Dabūsī 2001, 175.

116 Dabūsī 2001, 100.

117 Dabūsī 2001, 165–166.

118 Dabūsī 2001, 165.29–166.3:

إذا استعملت [كلمة أو] في الإيجابات والأوامر والنواهي والإنشاءات لم توجب شكاً لأن الشك إنما يتحقق عند التباس العلم بشيء وذلك إنما يكون في الإخبارات، وأما الإنشاءات من إيجاب وأمر ونهي وتحريم وهي لإيجاب حكم مبتدأ فلا يتصور فيهما شك ولا التباس.

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been studied by Aron Zysow,[119] Dabūsī distinguishes between two types of obligation.[120] "Covenantal obligation" (*al-wujūb fī al-dhimma,* also called *al-wujūb fī ḥaqq Allāh* and, among later Ḥanafīs, *nafs al-wujūb*) consists of the innate responsibility of all human beings to do whatever God requires; this general obligation, together with the specific details of what God has in fact required, is "built into the natural order of time and place."[121] The "obligation to fulfill" (*wujūb al-adāʾ*) is the obligation for a specific person to perform a certain action; it depends on that person being specifically addressed and commanded to perform the action, as well as being able to understand and obey the command.

Covenantal obligations arise not by God's command but from the occurrence of some circumstance that God has instituted as the *sabab* or occasion for the obligation, such as the arrival of the time for prayer, which makes prayer obligatory,[122] or God's decree that a person should live a certain number of years, which gives rise to economic regulations providing for the orderly acquisition of one's means of subsistence.[123] The most general and basic of these covenantal obligations, Dabūsī says, are established by reason;[124] other more detailed rules, such as the times for prayer, are known through revelation,[125] but they are known through its functioning as evidence (*dalīl*), not through commands (*amr*) functioning as performative interpersonal address (*khiṭāb*).[126] Commands can serve as evidence of what should be, and thus of what is good,[127] but only if the commands are treated as *ikhbār,* not as *inshāʾ;* this is what he had in mind when he said that

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119 Zysow 2002, 257–263.

120 See Dabūsī 2001, 16, 61–66, 417–419, 451, 462; Bedir 2004, 235 and *passim*.

121 Zysow 2002, 259.

122 Dabūsī 2001, 61–62.

123 Dabūsī 2001, 66.

124 Bedir 2004, 235, 238, 242; Dabūsī 2001, 451, 462:

على العبد بمجرد العقل أن يؤمن بالله تعالى ويعتقد وجوب الطاعة على نفسه لله تعالى على أوامره ونواهيه وانه خلقه لعبادته لكنه يقف نفسه للبدار إلى ما يأمره وينهاه من غير أن يقدم على شيء منه بالاستباحة تعظيماً لله تعالى، لا لقبح هذه المشروعات قبل الأوامر بل مع معرفة حسنها بدلالات العقل.

125 Dabūsī 2001, 417–418:

وجوب الحقوق الشرعية كلها بأسباب جعلها الشرع أسباباً للوجوب دون الأمر والخطاب.

126 Dabūsī 2001, 61:

إن أصل الدين وفروعه من العبادات والكفارات والحدود والمعاملات مشروعة بأسباب عرفت أسباباً لها بدليلها سوى الأمر، وإنما الأمر لإلزام أداء ما وجب علينا بسببه، كما يقول البائع للمشتري اشتريتَ فأدِّ الثمن كان الأمر طلباً للأداء لا سبباً للوجوب في الذمة. وقد بيّنا (...) أن أداء الواجب في الذمة لا يجب بحق الوجوب بل بالطلب من مستحقه، وذلك بالخطاب، والوجوب بأسباب شرعية غير الخطاب عرّفنا شرع الله تعالى على هذا بدليله مع استقامة الإيجاب بمجرد الأمر.

127 Dabūsī 2001, 47, 44:

الأمر لغة لبيان أن [المأمور به] مما ينبغي أن يوجد (...) فلا نجد بداً من معرفة صفة الحسن فيما أمرنا به.

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inshāʾ is just a kind of *ikhbār*.[128] Revelation may serve as evidence of God's law, but God's speech does not bring it about performatively; it exists independently of any direct address to particular human beings, and indeed humans were aware of it in a general way even before revelation, and were already required to know that God's servants owe him some kind of obedience, and that when he does address them with a performative command it will then be obligatory for them to obey.[129]

The second kind of obligation, the "obligation to fulfill" a specific covenantal obligation, is personal and arises from one's being directly addressed by God's interpersonal address (*khiṭāb*) and command, which brings about a kind of obligation that would not exist without that *khiṭāb*. It is just as when a seller says to a buyer "you have bought, so pay": the command is not what makes the payment obligatory, since the agreed-upon price has been due ever since the sale was concluded, but it does place upon the buyer an immediate onus to go ahead and perform what was already required of him as the buyer.[130] This is the kind of obligation which Dabūsī says cannot exist without revelation[131] – by which he means God's interpersonal address and command.[132] This must be the kind of performative speech Dabūsī is talking about when he classes commanding, prohibiting, obligating, forbidding, and permitting as categories of *inshāʾ*, in contrast to *ikhbār,* and points out that the conjunction "or" means different things in the two classes of utterance.[133]

By this perhaps overly subtle distinction between types of obligation Dabūsī manages to keep God's law grounded in the nature of things, and knowable in a general way by unaided reason, as the Muʿtazila did, while making the individual believer's personal responsibility a product of God's speaking to each believer directly, personally, and performatively. This shows something of what was at stake for Dabūsī in introducing the notion of *inshāʾ*, apparently for the first time, into a legal-theoretical discussion of God's speech; and it helps to make sense of his seemingly inconsistent application of that new category in different parts of his *Taqwīm al-adilla*.

128 Dabūsī 2001, 34.

129 Dabūsī 2001, 61, 451, 462.

130 Dabūsī 2001, 61, 418:

إن وجوب الحقوق الشرعية كلها بأسباب جعلها الشرع أسباباً للوجوب دون الأمر والخطاب (...) ثم الخطاب بعد ذلك لطلب أداء الواجب بسببه نحو قولك اشتريت عبداً بألف درهم فأد ثمنه فيكون وجوب الثمن في الذمة بالشراء لا بقوله أدِّ الثمن بل إنه طلب للخروج عن الواجب بالأداء إلى مستحقه فكذا قوله تعالى (فَمَن شَهِدَ مِنكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ) أي فليؤد الواجب عليه بشهود الشهر.

131 Dabūsī 2001, 451.

132 See Dabūsī 2001, 61, 418.

133 Dabūsī 2001, 165–166.

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Dabūsī's two-part theory of the relationship between revelation and law recalls Bāqillānī, who also tried to have it both ways. Why did these two thinkers, with their very different theories of law and divine speech, both work so hard to acknowledge simultaneously an informative and a performative dimension to God's revelation of the law? And looking further down the road, why did the terminological distinction between *khabar* and *inshāʾ* eventually come to be seen as important enough to discussions of the legal interpretation of God's speech that it became a standard part of the technical terminology of legal theory?

Perhaps there was something attractive, in the 11th century, when the tides were turning in favor of traditionalist doctrines, about applying the emerging legal category of *inshāʾ* to God's speech, because it captured so well the view of the "no assessment" camp that God's law was brought about by revelation alone, and was not determined by some prior moral order. The pressure to conform to such a view, even within the Ḥanafī school, was not lost on Dabūsī,[134] and later in that century he was criticized by the Ḥanafī-turned-Shāfiʿī Abū al-Muẓaffar al-Samʿānī (d. 1095) for departing from the view of *ahl al-sunna* that all obligations arise from God's speech or *khiṭāb*.[135] Yet Dabūsī also found it appealing to think of the world as having a natural, rational structure that could be investigated by rational inquiry into the natures of things, even in matters of ethics. And like Bāqillānī, he wanted to approach revelation as an object of rational investigation, open to a flexible process of interpretation. Rumee Ahmed has demonstrated that Dabūsī's legal theory rested on a highly flexible, circumstantial approach to the legal application of revealed texts.[136] He was not interested in eliminating scriptural interpretation, or in concealing it, as Abū Yaʿlā did, while claiming to have an intuitive and unreflective comprehension of God's direct interpersonal address. Regarding God's speech as an informative statement (*khabar, ikhbār*) and indicative evidence (*dalīl*) of a moral and legal order grounded in nature (*al-wujūb fī al-dhimma*) allowed and indeed required the kind of deliberative interpretive process that he wanted to justify. At the same time, by regarding revelation as performative speech (*inshāʾ*) that brings about personal responsibility (*wujūb al-adāʾ*), he was able to accommodate, at least at a theoretical level, the increasingly popular view that the law arises from God's commands.

134 Murteza Bedir describes how this pressure led to a certain ambivalence in Dabūsī's writing on reason and revelation (Bedir 2004, 230–237, 243).

135 Zysow 2002, 259–260.

136 Ahmed 2012, 66–67, 109–110, 147, and *passim*. On the flexibility in practice of his outwardly rigid interpretation of general expressions, see Vishanoff 2011, 220–221.

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6 Conclusion

The discipline of legal theory has long been framed in such a way as to make it almost inevitably reductive. The "reduction to the indicative" articulated so thoroughly by ʿAbd al-Jabbār seems to be inextricably intertwined with Shāfiʿī's and many subsequent Sunnī thinkers' vision of the discipline of legal science (*fiqh*) as an attempt to tease from the language of revelation an exhaustive and systematic set of statements about the legal values of human actions. This conception of the law requires that God's speech be treated in some respect as a piece of indicative evidence, even if it is not actually imagined as such. The traditionalists and the Ashʿariyya generally considered the legal values of acts to be instituted, rather than merely described, by God's speech, and Abū Yaʿlā managed to embody that idea in his performative theory of God's commands, but all the classical legal theorists were constrained by their conception of law to treat the words of revelation as reducible to indicative statements of the legal values of acts. This orientation lay behind the legal theorists' debates over the legal values entailed by commands and prohibitions, and it was deeply embedded in their constant concern to define the precise scope of reference of revealed words. It was and remains a virtually universal and unchallenged feature of Islamic legal theory.

Yet the notion that God's speech is not merely informative but also creative, bringing into being both the natural world and human morality, proved attractive. The concept of *inshāʾ* provided a way for Dabūsī and later generations of legal theorists to conceive of the production of legal values by divine pronouncement. Fitting that performative notion of divine speech into legal theory, however, proved difficult, precisely because the discipline had been, ever since it was launched by Shāfiʿī, oriented toward the exploitation of revealed texts as evidence that could be transformed, through a flexible process of interpretation, into indicative statements of the law. That, it seems to me, is one important reason why such very different figures as Bāqillānī and Dabūsī both tried to retain simultaneously the informative and performative dimensions of God's speech, giving each one a place in their conceptions of how Islamic law is epistemologically and ontologically related to revelation.

Pierre Larcher's studies, which begin with Ghazālī and focus on the 13th century, show that the distinction between *khabar* and *inshāʾ* eventually became a commonplace in discussions of the language of revelation. The notion that God's speech somehow brings about the law was here to stay, though it remained in uneasy tension with the need to treat revelation as a source of legal information. But that later history, and the largely unexplored possibility of contemporary legal interpretation that takes seriously the performative dimension of divine speech, are beyond the scope of this paper and this volume.

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Robert Gleave

Understanding Divine Intention: "Conversational Maxims" and the Legal Theory of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 1067)

Introduction

In the Muslim religious sciences, works of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) probably contain the most detailed discussions around questions falling under the rubric of "the philosophy of language." A typical work of *uṣūl al-fiqh* contains discussions on the origins of language (including discussions of Arabic and its supposed special linguistic status), the purpose of language as a form of communication and issues in interpretation theory (which might be called "issues of hermeneutics"). There are, typically, lengthy discussions of metaphor and non-literal meaning, and the issues of inaccurate and untruthful use of language. *Uṣūl al-fiqh* is, then, an obvious place to look when attempting to understand the different philosophies of language in the elaboration of classical Islamic thought. The reason why one finds such extensive discussions of issues in the philosophy of language in works of *uṣūl* is linked to the underlying purpose of the genre itself. The law (*sharīʿa*) is, supposedly, based on textual sources. These textual sources are classically described as Quran, the statements and actions of the Prophet (*sunna*, found in collections of *ḥadīth*) and statements agreed upon by the community (*ijmāʿ*, normally understood as the "community of scholars"). These "texts" require interpretation, and for any interpretative activity, a notion of what is and what is not a "correct" method of interpretation is necessary. Any such theory of interpretation will include discussions which contemporary philosophers label "philosophy of language." The overriding purpose of these discussions is to construct a system whereby the intention of the speaker can be discerned from the statements he or she makes. Once acquired, such a system enables the recipient of the statement (the "hearer," one might say) to deduce what the speaker intended the hearer to understand from the statement; this can then be applied to the texts of legal significance in the sources of the law (Quran, *sunna, ijmāʿ*). The point, then, of the philosophy of language found in works of *uṣūl* is to provide a mechanism whereby the "Divine Intention" (as preserved in the "texts" of Quran, *sunna* and *ijmāʿ*) can be understood and thereby put to use in the derivation of the law.

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There is some debate in the secondary literature around when *uṣūl al-fiqh* emerged as a distinct genre of Islamic religious literature.[1] The writings of Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī (d. 820), particularly his "Treatise" (*al-Risāla*), appear as the first sophisticated discussion of hermeneutic issues, and there are certainly elements of linguistic philosophy in his presentation there.[2] A full working out of a philosophy of language and its relationship with legal interpretation in Islamic legal thought, though, would take a little time. The earliest surviving works of *uṣūl* date from the late 10th century, some 150 to 200 years after Shāfiʿī – with *Ikhtilāf Uṣūl al-Madhāhib* by al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān (d. 974) and the surviving fragments of the *Fuṣūl fī al-Uṣul* of Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d. 981). Whilst there were certainly works of legal theory written in the interim, research into their titles and content continues to be the subject of some debate.[3] It seems likely that dedicated works of *uṣūl al-fiqh* were popular amongst the emerging Sunnī intellectual elite, and that other groups, including the Twelver Shīʿī jurists, only began writing *uṣūl* works in the 11th century. The author whose work of *uṣūl* is the focus of this chapter – Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 1067) – belongs to this "second wave" of *uṣūl* writings in the 11th century. The *uṣūl* genre had become established and was becoming the subject of increasingly complex elaboration by successive generations of scholars. In the Shīʿī tradition, Ṭūsī marks the beginning of the full exposition of the Twelver school – as he wrote in all the major genres of the religious sciences (including Quranic commentary, *ḥadīth* and its commentary, law, legal theory, theology, even philosophical theology). He is credited with founding the Shīʿī system of religious learning (later to be known as the *ḥawza*) in Najaf after leaving Baghdād following sectarian Sunnī-Shīʿī conflict. The high esteem with which he is held in the Twelver tradition is signified by his usual moniker *Shaykh al-Ṭāʾifa* – "The Leader of the Sect."

In his extended work of *uṣūl al-fiqh* titled *ʿUddat al-Uṣūl* (*The Utensil for the Principles*: that is, the principles of jurisprudence, *uṣūl al-fiqh*), Ṭūsī covers all the areas of the philosophy of language which had become standard in works of Islamic legal theory by his time. My focus in this chapter is an unusual chapter titled "Discussion of what it is necessary to know of the qualities of God, his Prophet, and Imāms such that one can come to know their intended meaning in a sound manner."[4] The fundamental question addressed here is "How does

1 See, for example, Hallaq 1993b.

2 Lowry 2007.

3 Stewart 2002; 2004.

4 Ṭūsī 1997, 42. Being a Twelver Shīʿī writer, the Imāms here refer to the twelve successor Imāms to the Prophet, whose statements are as much counted as revelation as those of the Prophet himself. However, it is clear also that Ṭūsī is referring here to the position of the Imām

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one discern the intended meaning of a speaker from their verbal utterances?" In Western philosophy of language, this is the subject matter of the discipline of Pragmatics. As will become clear, there is some overlap between the focus of Pragmatics and Ṭūsī's discussions in this section. The overlap is not limited to this chapter – indeed the philosophy of language as found in works of *uṣūl* has much in common with Pragmatics. For example, in the academic study of Pragmatics, many theorists make a clear distinction between sentence meaning (sometimes called "literal" meaning) and the intended meaning (sometimes termed the speaker's "communicated meaning"). The distinction is not uncontroversial – and has been subject to numerous critiques.[5] In similar vein, in most works of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) a distinction is made between the meaning assigned to the words in an utterance (*al-maʿnā al-mawḍūʿ lahu*) and the intended meaning of the speaker (*murād al-mukhāṭib*).[6] For Islamic legal theorists, the distinction is part of a wider theory designed to facilitate a reader's understanding of the intended meaning of the Lawgiver (*shāriʿ* – that is God, communicating through his Prophet) which can be discerned from his recorded utterances (namely, Quran and the *ḥadīth* corpus).

Within the discipline of Pragmatics, Paul Grice has famously proposed a list of conversational maxims which, he claimed, enable participants in a communicative exchange to discern the intended meaning of the other speaker. These maxims, he claimed, are assumed (and not necessarily explicitly vocalised) to be operative by the participants. By adopting these maxims (usually unconsciously, it should be said), participants in conversations recognise each other's intended meaning, even when the literal meaning of the words and phrases uttered do not, in themselves, reveal a speaker's intended meaning.[7] Similarly, in works of Islamic legal theory, the authors clearly have in mind a set of presumptions, whether they are vocalised or not, which are considered to underpin meaningful speech; these are discussed, but rarely articulated as a list of "maxims" (analogous to Grice's list) in my experience. It should be noted

more theoretically (and not merely the historical Imāms and their statements). His point is that given the establishment of the position of Imām alongside that of the Prophet, the principles for understanding the intended meaning of both category of emissaries can be bracketed together.

5 The distinction, which was most influentially put forward by Grice (see below), has been analyzed and critiqued by many – including the forceful argumentation of Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (see, for example, Sperber and Wilson 2002). The critique of Grice's distinction continues in most contemporary discussions in pragmatics (see for example, Bezuidenhout 2015).

6 Ali 2000, 59–63.

7 Grice 1989a (first published in 1975, and much reprinted, and with further notes from Grice in this volume, 41–60).

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that the discussion in works of *uṣūl* is usually focussed on the communication of the Lawgiver (*shāriʿ*, a sort of catch-all phrase for God, the Prophet, and for Shīʿī jurists like Ṭūsī, the Imāms also). Whilst this might not appear to be a "conversation" in the usual sense of the word, the discussion in works of *uṣūl* proceeds as if the communication between the *shāriʿ* and his servants (i.e. the recipients of his communicative utterances, humankind in general) is usually envisaged as operating on the same basis as human-human communication. That is, the *shāriʿ* uses language, broadly speaking, in the same way as human beings do when communicating between themselves. Therefore, if we can grasp how humans can understand each other's intended meanings during acts of communication, we have an excellent starting point understanding the *shāriʿ*'s intended meaning. In this sense, Grice's list of maxims can run parallel to the (often unarticulated) assumed principles of communicative understanding found in works of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. This was the basis for Yunis Ali's important study of Pragmatics and Islamic legal theory, where Grice's contribution to pragmatics forms the basis of his analysis of the *uṣūl* writers' philosophy of language.[8]

A stock example of this can be seen when the Islamic legal theorists use the example of the bedouin man who breaks his Ramadan fast by having sexual intercourse with his wife. He comes to the Prophet and says, "I am doomed and I have caused another to be doomed." The Prophet asks what he has done, and the man replies that he has had sexual intercourse with his wife during the day in the month of Ramadan. The Prophet replies simply: "Free a slave." In interpreting this exchange, the legal theorists work with an implicit "maxim of relevance," assuming that the Prophet's statement has a close connection with the man's confession of having broken the fast. The "maxim of relevance" was formulated by Grice as "expect a partner's contribution to be appropriate to immediate needs at each stage of the transaction."[9] That is, the Prophet's order to free a slave is a response to the man's confession of a legal transgression, and stipulates a required course of action – outlining the expiation required for the man's transgression. Furthermore, the relationship between the man's description of his sin and the Prophet's statement is one akin to causation – the Prophet's ruling concerning expiation is "caused" by the man's confession. Finally, there is an assumption that the Prophet's rule is not specific to this particular man asking the question, but is generalisable – it is as if the Prophet had said: "Anyone who has sexual intercourse with his wife

8 Ali 2000.
9 Leech 1983, 94.

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during the day in Ramadan must expiate this sin by freeing a slave."[10] Each of these exegetical steps emerge from presumptions about the nature of conversation involving relevance, causation and generalisability which all form part of the language system (*lugha*). Importantly, the bedouin desert dwellers (like the *aʿrābī* man in the report) are mythically said to be repositories of perfect Arabic language (*kalām al-ʿarab*) in Arabic linguistic theory. Hence the conversation is presented as a prime example of the perfect functioning of the *lugha*. The assumption of something akin to Grice's "maxim of relevance" is present in the analysis of such revelatory statements. They are not, to my knowledge, usually extracted and presented as a simple list as Grice had done. Now it might be argued that this is not a "conversation" in the usual sense of the term, and in the sense that Grice envisaged it. That is, we have here someone asking the Lawgiver for his legal edict on a situation which has come about; the power dynamics of the two participants (the superiority of the Prophet as against the bedouin man). However, for most *uṣūl* writers considering this and similar examples, understanding the intended meaning of the Lawgiver is guided by the rules of proper linguistic use – that is the science of language (*ʿilm al-lugha*). The system of language is the same whether it is employed by the Lawgiver or by any other language user, and therefore the rules of interpretation should not vary.

Whilst there are clearly maxim-like principles underpinning *uṣūl* discussions of language and its interpretation, they are rarely formed as a list (as in Grice's formulation). A close parallel to Grice's maxim list, though, can be found in the above mentioned chapter of Ṭūsī's *ʿUddat al-Uṣūl*. In that chapter, he lists (and justifies) three sets of principles of which the interpreter needs to be aware before understanding the intended meaning of the recorded statements of (1) God, (2) the Prophet and (3) the Twelve Imāms. The last of these (i.e. the Imāms) reflects, of course, Ṭūsī's Twelver Shīʿī commitment and would be absent from any similar Sunnī set of principles. As we shall see, the principles for understanding the Imāms' speech are viewed as identical to those for the Prophet's speech (there are no "special" principles for the Imāms). Not all Sunnī writers would see these as essential assumptions for understanding the utterances of God and the Prophet (and, as will become clear, some would not subscribe to them on theological grounds), but there is nothing particularly Shīʿī about the principles in themselves. It is possible that the very act of listing them is peculiarly Shīʿī, though I am not sure why this might be the case, and

10 This is a stock example in works of legal theory, used to illustrate the functioning of language. For a standard, summary, discussion, see Zarkashī 2000, 2:352ff.

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certainly Ṭūsī did not establish a major precedent of "listing" conversational maxims in Twelver Shīʿī works of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, as far as I can ascertain. The list here appears as an interesting "one off" in the history of Imāmī *uṣūl*.[11]

In this chapter, I consider these principles, including those needed for understanding utterances made by God (the principal source being the Quran), the Prophet and the sinless Imāms of Twelver Shīʿī doctrine. One is required to know these principles and assume them to be operational before attempting to discern the meaning the Lawgiver intends to convey by his statements (for the purposes of analysis, *uṣūl* writers often conflate God, the Prophet and the Imāms under the term *shāriʿ* – the Lawgiver). The bulk of my analysis focuses on the principles for understanding God's intended meaning (from divine utterances). This is partly because Ṭūsī devotes much attention to them himself; but also, because they provide the most obvious parallel with Grice's conversational maxims. I should note at the outset, the analogy between Ṭūsī's list and Grice's maxims is not perfect. For example, the principles are presented as applying to the communicative utterances of Lawgivers (in the first case, God himself, in the latter his Prophet and the Imāms). Whilst some of them (as outlined below) could apply to human exchange as well, some are exclusive to Lawgiver-humanity communication. Furthermore, they are imagined not in the course of a communicative exchange, as presented in Grice's model (that is, there is no back and forth between the parties in the conversation). Addressing divine utterances directly: God's statements are not really viewed as part of a dialogue, but instead are viewed, theologically, as pronouncements. Context can help discern the intended meaning, but God's intended meaning in his legal pronouncements is not viewed as dependent on context – since that would make his contribution partial and specific. Instead, God, when making statements, is revealing his message for humanity, to which they must respond. This message has an eternal character, and therefore is beyond the contingencies of human conversation.

Nonetheless, there are similarities with Grice's conversational maxims which merit highlighting, and my use of Grice's model as a counterpoint is to inform, rather than dictate, my analysis of Ṭūsī's aims. Ṭūsī aims, I would argue, to outline the assumptions (or "principles") that the addressee (*mukhāṭab*) needs to adopt in order to be able to identify (successfully) the meaning the Lawgiver intends to convey (*murād Allāh, murād rasūlihi*) through his pronouncements, or his "discourse" (*khiṭāb*). They are not, then, hermeneutic principles of interpretation *per se*, since they do not detail which types of inferential pro-

11 The other possible similar "list" is the genre of *al-qawāʿid al-uṣūliyya*, on which see below.

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cesses are legitimate, and which are not.[12] Rather they are, like Grice's maxims, postulated principles, to which the listener must commit in order to understand the speaker's (i.e. Lawgiver's) intended meaning. Below, I examine Ṭūsī's typology of principles, their foundation in conceptions of revelatory language found within the Muʿtazilī school at the time. I point out their similarity, when appropriate, to Grice's maxims. Ṭūsī, as a Baghdād-based scholar, had studied with adherents of the many different intellectual tendencies present in that city in the eleventh century. This group included, of course, many Muʿtazilīs (of both Baṣra and Baghdād schools) with whom various Shīʿī scholars of the time studied (most notably, Ṭūsī's teacher al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, d. 1022). The adoption of Muʿtazilism by Imāmī thinkers from the eleventh century onwards has been widely documented;[13] the thorough-going nature of that adoption is evident in Ṭūsī's principles.

1 Ṭūsī's Principles for Understanding the Lawgiver's Intended Meaning

Ṭūsi's three sets of principles are laid out in a section titled:

> Discussion of what it is necessary to know of the qualities of God, the qualities of his Prophet, and the qualities of the Imāms such that one can come to know their intended meaning in a sound manner.[14]

---

12 I use "principles" for Ṭūsī's set of theological assumptions, and reserve "maxims" for Grice's conversational maxims. Islamic legal theorists did, at times, list these hermeneutic principles, sometimes labelling them *al-qawāʿid al-uṣūliyya* ("theoretical principles"). They were at times distinguished from (and at other times confused with) "legal principles" or "legal maxims" (*al-qawāʿid al-fiqhiyya*). These latter were principles underpinning the existing laws, and by which the laws might be extended to new circumstances. They were not, strictly speaking, devised in order to aid the interpretation of texts. See Heinrichs 2002, 365–384. Ali (2000, 61) lists a series of characteristics of idealized (*waḍʿ*-based) discourse in Muslim legal theory. These are very close to the principles laid out by Ṭūsī here, though they derive, in Ali's exposition, from later texts. This similarity is, undoubtedly, linked to the notion that Ṭūsī considers divine speech as idealised, *waḍʿ*-based speech, with which everyday language cannot compete, neither for import nor clarity.

13 The classic article on the incorporation of Muʿtazilism in Twelver Shīʿism is Madelung 1970. The process has been further described in Ansari and Schmidtke 2017.

14 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:42:

في ذكر ما يجب معرفته من صفات الله تعالى، وصفات النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم وصفات الأئمة عليهم السلام حتى يصحّ معرفة مرادهم.

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The term I have translated here as "qualities" is *ṣifāt*, which could be (and often is) translated as "attributes." Ṭūsī's exposition, though, can be distinguished from the much-discussed theological debate around whether or not God's attributes are identical or coexistent with the divine essence.[15] In this section of Ṭūsī's work of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *ṣifāt* (qualities) are characteristics that God, the Prophet and the Imāms have in their collective role of the "Lawgiver" (*shāriʿ*). They are not attributes which God, the Prophet and the Imāms might have in themselves, as theological entities. Indeed, as will become clear below – these "qualities" are more like operational principles for God's communication with humankind. The Lawgiver's declarations are styled as being issued by a speaker (*mukhāṭib*) aiming to convey information to an addressee (*mukhāṭab*). Their recorded words take the form of an "utterance" (in the sense of a communicative statement), or a "discourse" (both of which could be translations of *khiṭāb*) in the straightforward (pre-Foucauldian) sense of the term: that is, words which aim at conveying a meaning within a communicative language system (*lugha*).

In this section, then, Ṭūsī's main concern is to lay out the principles one must necessarily adopt in order to understand the intended meaning of revelatory utterances (that is the recorded statements of God, the Prophet and the Imāms), because it is on the basis of these principles that the Lawgiver initiates communication in the first place. These assumptions are items of knowledge which must be established in one's mind (i.e. adopted) before one can (legitimately) come to know the intended meaning of God, the Prophet and the Imāms (*maʿrifat murādihim*). Ṭūsī's subsequent discussion is, naturally, divided into three sections, focussing on the utterances of God, the Prophet and the Imāms respectively. Whilst these assumptions underpin one's understanding of revelatory pronouncements from each of these three infallible sources, they cannot always be assumed to play this role in other language contexts. Unlike some other discussions of language and communication in works of *uṣūl*, these appear as particular features of revelatory discourse – as has been noted by others, usually the discussions in works of *uṣūl* focus on how the mechanism for understanding revelatory statements is, in large part, informed by the mechanisms for understanding non-revelatory (everyday, ordinary) speech.[16] As will become clear through Ṭūsī's discussions, these principles do operate in everyday speech (they are not exclusive to the Lawgiver's communicative utterances). The difference is that God (and in respect to the other sets of principles, the Prophet and the Imāms also) *must*

15 This is much discussed in the secondary literature, so a full bibliography is not necessary. The most cited English language study of divine attributes remains, probably, Frank 1978. In relation to Sunnī theology, see Wisnovsky 2004a.

16 See Weiss 2010.

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act in this way. It is impossible for God not to embark on making an utterance (i.e. entering into discourse, *khiṭāb*) without these principles being operative, and therefore the listener must know them, and take them into consideration when analysing God's statements.

If, by proceeding on the basis of these principles, an understanding of the Lawgiver's intended meaning in his utterances becomes possible, then accepting these principles becomes the prerequisite for successful communication. Turning to Grice, he understands the speaker's intention operating as follows:

> [Individual] A intended the utterance x to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention.[17]

Similarly, in Ṭūsī's theory, and in the wider discussions of language meaning and use in early *uṣūl*, God's intended meaning (*murād Allāh*) is the principal object of enquiry when approaching the revelatory texts. Ṭūṣī's principles are supposed to establish the ground rules whereby this intention might be deduced, and therefore produce an "effect" (to use Grice's language) in the readers – namely knowledge of what the law requires of the Lawgiver's subjects. For Grice, speakers, when engaging in conversation, commit (implicitly it should be said) to a number of principles. In his initial iteration, four conversational maxims were identified by Grice:

1. Try to make your contribution one that is true.
2. Make your contribution as informative as is required and no more.
3. Be relevant.
4. Be perspicuous.[18]

When one engages in conversation, one assumes that one's interlocutor is not lying (Maxim 1), and is aiming to provide sufficient (Maxim 2), relevant (Maxim 3) information expressed in an accessible (i.e. clear) manner (Maxim 4); the speaker's intended result is the creation of knowledge of his/her intention in the mind of the audience. This is not to say speakers do not lie, or provide insufficient (or superfluous), irrelevant information, or sometimes speak in an ambiguous manner. These things happen, often deliberately. However, they cannot be the basis for communication: lies, irrelevance, superfluity and ambiguity are deviations from the norm. Effective communication must have come first (logically prior, if not also chronologically so) in order for deviations to be what they are.

17 Grice 1989a, 27.
18 Summarised in Grice 1989a, 27.

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They require truth, relevance, sufficiency and clarity to have already been established as the basis of communicative exchange.

2 Principles Required for Understanding Divine Utterances

Ṭūṣī's principles relating to "the utterance of God" (*khiṭāb Allāh*) are, it appears, specific to divine discourse. There is a separate set of principles for Prophetic discourse. This distinction in itself is noteworthy. Classical Islamic legal theorists may have distinguished between the provenance of the words of God and the words of his Prophet, but once established as authentic, these two categories of revelatory utterance tended to be wrapped up together in the category of the pronouncements of "the lawgiver" (*shāriʿ*). Ṭūsī's approach here is to make understanding these two categories dependent on two distinct sets of principles – thereby distinguishing their hermeneutical procedures. Clearly, understanding direct divine communication requires different assumptions and procedures to understanding the utterances of the Prophet and the Imāms. I return to the significance of this distinction in the conclusion below.

Focussing on the divine utterances, he describes these as follows:

> One should know that it is only possible to know the intention [or "intended meaning"] by God's utterance (*al-murād bi-khiṭāb Allāh*) after knowledge of a number of items is already established.

For Ṭūsī, the deduction of intended meaning from divine utterances can only be done after it has been established that certain "items" (*ashyāʾ*) are known. It is these items which constitute the principles referred to above:

Amongst these [items] are the following:

1. That we know that the utterance in question is an utterance by [God] himself – for if we do not know that this utterance is [God's], then it is not possible for us to deduce any knowledge of his intended meaning.
2. That we know that it is not possible for him to mean nothing at all by his utterances.
3. That we know that it is not possible for him to make an utterance in a way which is morally repugnant.
4. That [we know that] it is not possible for him to mean, by his utterance, something other than the meaning for which it was coined, except when he gives an indication of this [change of meaning].

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5. When these things are known, then deducing what [God] means when he speaks becomes valid. If you do not know them all, or you only know some of them, then [such deduction] is invalid.[19]

The first of these four principles is not subjected to further discussion in Ṭūsī's chapter. How one establishes that an utterance recorded in, say, the Quranic revelation is a statement of God himself appears to be, for Ṭūsī, a separate discussion. That the Quran may not be a record of God's utterances is not entertained – demonstrating that it is God's word is deemed unnecessary for the argument to proceed. Once again, though there may have been Shīʿī thinkers who were willing to question the prevalent dogma that the Quranic text was the *khiṭāb Allāh*,[20] this debate (internal to Shīʿī thinkers, to an extent) is closed down by Ṭūsī. To open it might prevent him from using the resources of the *uṣūl* genre more widely, since in *uṣūl* works, there is a presumption that the Quranic text we have is a record of God's precise utterances.

The remaining three principles (numbered 2.–4. in the above quotation), each of which receives a sustained discussion relating to validity and legitimacy, clearly emerge out of existing discussions in legal theory. To be precise, they are related to the theological-legal debate around possible requirements on God to communicate clearly. The lines of the debate were well-established by the time of Ṭūsī's composition of *al-ʿUdda*. Muʿtazilīs, generally, were unconcerned by the notion that God be rationally required to be or do something. As soon as God enters into the business of communication (i.e. by sending prophets with messages), he is committed to conveying information to his chosen audience, so they argued. If he were to embark on such a project but formulate his message in an unclear manner, then he would be performing a pointless action, and pointlessness is not possible for the supremely rational being, namely God. Ashʿarīs, on the other hand, objected to the notion that God be compelled to do anything; compulsion would undermine his freedom and omnipotence. For Ashʿarīs, God may, if he wishes, send prophets, but he need not ensure the message he sends them with is comprehensible. God cannot be obligated to speak clearly. This does not mean

19 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:42 (the numbering is mine):

لا يمكن معرفة المراد بخطاب الله تعالى الا بعد ثبوت العلم بأشياء:
منها أن يعلم أنّ الخطاب خطاب له، لأنا متى لم نعلم أنه خطاب له لم يمكنّا أن نستدلّ على معرفة مراده.
ومنها أن نعلم أنّه لا يجوز أن لا يفيد بخطابه شيئا أصلا.
ومنها أن نعلم أنّه لا يجوز أن يخاطب بخطابه على وجه يقبح.
ومنها أنّه لا يجوز أن يريد بخطابه غير ما وضع له ولا يدلّ عليه.
فمتى حصلت هذه العلوم صحّ الاستدلال بخطابه على مراده، ومتى لم يحصل جميعها، أو لم يحصل بعضها لم يصحّ ذلك.

20 See, for example, Kara 2016.

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that, in Ashʿarī theology, God does not address his audience in a manner they can understand – many Ashʿarīs believed his discourse was understandable. He is not, though, forced to do this by reason or any theological dogma. The clarity in his message comes from his goodness and mercy. The contours of this debate have already been well explored in the secondary literature, and there were many variants on these positions, including compromise views which incorporate elements of each position.[21]

Ṭūsī's principles whereby God's intended meaning might be understood to function as interpretive assumptions on the part of the exegete are, then, similar to Grice's maxims. The difference lies, in this case, in that the interlocutor is God and the qualities of the speaker are established as rationally necessary theological dogma, namely:

1. God's discourse must be, with certainty, attributable to him.
2. The discourse cannot be pointless or nonsense.
3. He cannot intend, by his discourse, to achieve a result which is morally repugnant (*qabīḥ*).
4. He, in his discourse, must inform his audience if he is deviating from the designated meaning of the words within his utterance.

By positing principles 2., 3. and 4., Ṭūsī is (at least in theory) restricting the possible interpretations of God's discourse. Human beings might speak without the aim of communication (indeed, they might talk nonsense), and they may intend evil results; they may be deliberatively obscure, intending meanings which are not signified by the words, but not hinting that this diversion is occurring. However, these actions, Ṭūsī argues, are not possible (theologically or rationally) with respect to God, and if one approaches his discourse without recognising these principles, then it will be impossible to discern God's intended meaning. His utterance will have meaning, in the sense that it will have propositional content derived from a comparison of the utterance with the grander linguistic system known as the *lugha*. However, one will not be able to discern God's intention (the *murād Allāh*) if one proceeds without first adopting these principles.

Some of the principles run parallel with Grice's maxims, despite being elevated to theological dogma in Ṭūsī's schema of four maxims outlined above:

> [Grice] Try to make your contribution one that is true.
>
> [Ṭūsī, 3.] That we know that it is not possible for [God] to make a statement in a way which is morally repugnant.

21 Gleave 2018. See also the detailed discussions of Vishanoff 2011, 112–113, 138–140, 225–229.

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To lie is, for Ṭūsī, morally repugnant, therefore God's "contribution" must be "true."

> [Grice] Be Relevant.
>
> [Grice] Make your contribution as informative as is required and no more.
>
> [Ṭūsī, 2.] That we know that it is not possible for [God] to mean nothing at all by his statement.

The phrase I have translated as "mean nothing at all" here is, perhaps, license on my part (since the use of the verb *yufīd* – "provide a benefit" – is usually understood as "give a meaning/understanding" when describing instances of discourse). It could alternatively (and perhaps more literally) be phrased: "it is not possible for his utterance to have no *utility* at all" (*lā yajūzu an lā yufīda bi-khiṭābihi shay'an aṣlan*). Here, one would find the most explicit link with Grice's maxims, which could be expressed as: "don't say things which are entirely off topic"; "don't give irrelevant and (therefore) useless information," "don't speak nonsense." Finally, one has:

> [Grice] Be perspicuous.
>
> [Ṭūsī, 4.] That [we know that] it is not possible for him to mean, by his statement, something other than the meaning for which it was coined, except when he gives an indication of this [change of meaning].

Using words in the manner in which they were originally designated is presumed by Ṭūsī to be the most perspicuous means of communication. God has, like everyone else, inherited this system of name-meaning designation (that is, *lugha*). If a speaker uses a word (or even a phrase or sentence) in a way other than the designated meaning of the word/phrase, the speaker's intended meaning is obscured. Clarification only comes through the discovery of an indication that the word is not being used in the designated manner. Behind Ṭūsī's requirement of God to indicate when he is using words in a diverted manner, there is a more fundamental requirement for God to "be perspicuous" (in Grice's words).

The justifications for each of these principles will be familiar to those who read early Islamic theology and legal theory; the argumentation is a reiteration of ideas attributed to early Muʿtazilīs, some of which have already been transferred into an Imāmī context. This was thoroughly achieved (though with differences) in the writings of Ṭūsī's teachers and contemporaries, al-Shaykh al-Mufīd and al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍa. Ṭūsī recognises that his exposition of the four principles is really part of a much wider theological discussion, and hence he commits to explaining the principles in general terms:

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> To explain these [four principles] is another topic, which would probably lead to us over-extend the discussion here. However, we can indicate here, in general, the ways in which knowledge might be reached in this matter.[22]

Omitting the first topic (i.e. confirming that the discourse under investigation is actually that of God, which Ṭūsī does not discuss in detail), one is left with the remaining three principles which Ṭūsī tackles in turn, and each of which deserve separate exposition here.

2.1 The Prohibition on God Making Meaningless Statements

For Ṭūsī, God cannot (logically, rationally or theologically) produce discourse which is not designed to inform (i.e. provide meaning to) his servants. In this he is developing an established principle of Muʿtazilī theology: namely that God does not carry out pointless actions (*ʿabath*). Pointless actions have no utility (*lā fāʾida lahu*); God's attempt at communication must be useful to the audience. For Ṭūsī, God embarks on the communicative process (i.e. he produces utterances – *khiṭāb*) in order to inform his servants (he would have no reason to speak otherwise); if he produces discourse with no utility, meaning or benefit, then he would be frustrating the very reason for the action – not the acts of a supremely rational being, one could say:

> We only say, *[2. …] it is not permissible for him to mean nothing at all by his statement* because [meaning nothing] would be pointless, and without any benefit: God, may He be exalted, is higher than such [an act].[23]

This position was not universally accepted in either theological or legal discourse. Apart from the theologically suspect notion that God be required to do anything by the dictates of human reason and human understandings of logic, there are the limitations of human understanding (i.e. merely because an individual does not acquire any meaning from a statement does not make it pointless).[24]

For Ṭūsī it is not merely that God must convey meaning when making a statement; there must also be an available mechanism (a "way" or "means" – *ṭarīq*) for the hearers to understand the meaning God is conveying. The "means of understanding [God's] intention through his discourse" (*ṭarīq ilā maʿrifat al-murād*

---

22 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:43:

ولشرح هذه الأشياء موضع غير هذا يحتمل أن نبسط الكلام فيه، غير انا نشير إلى جمل منه موصلة إلى العلم.

23 Ṭūsī 1998, 1:43:

انما قلنا: أنه لا يجوز أن يخاطب ولا يفيد بخطابه شيئا أصلا، لانّ ذلك عبث لا فائدة فيه، تعالى الله عن ذلك.

24 On Muʿtazilī application of reason to communication, see Vishanoff 2011, 110ff.

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bi-khiṭābihi) is, for Ṭūsī as important as there being an intended meaning in the first place. It is unthinkable, theologically speaking, for God to make a statement, and for that statement to have meaning, but for the audience to be unable to understand. God cannot speak in an unbreakable code or a private language, for to do so is to ask something impossible of his legal subjects, and this is impossible of a just god. These discussions became linked with the phrase *taklīf bi-mā lā yuṭāq* – "ordering something which it is not possible to perform" – and for Muʿtazilīs, it was rationally impossible for God to order the impossible: that is, whilst revelation also indicates that God does not ask the impossible of his legal subjects, this is merely a confirmation of a logically prior establishment of that fact by reason. Speaking in an unbreakable code is effectively the same as God speaking meaningless nonsense. For Ṭūsī, God is required first to speak with meaning, and second to ensure that his audience has at least the practical possibility of understanding his words.[25]

Ṭūsī's exposition here clearly builds on earlier Muʿtazilī positions. Whilst no Muʿtazilī texts from the earliest expressions of Muʿtazilism emerging in the ninth/tenth century have yet come to light, their views are recorded in the writings of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 935–6), and given fuller exposition in the earliest Muʿtazilī writings which have survived, including *al-Mughnī* of ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025). Despite being an anti-Muʿtazilī exposition, Ashʿarī's *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* preserves the various Muʿtazilī opinions on theological matters, including the hermeneutic principles used for interpreting divine utterances. On the issue of whether an utterance which has the linguistic characteristic of being general in reference (*ʿumūm*) can be assumed to be intended as general, Ashʿarī records various Muʿtazilī views. The question here is whether or not a statement such as "The thief, male and female, cut off their hands"[26] refers to all thieves however much they may

25 There are then two arguments here – (1) that God must pronounce statements which have meaning, and (2) that he must provide a mechanism for the audience to understand these statements. It might be argued that this is, in effect, a single argument – that God must pronounce statements or engage in discourse, which is clear and understandable for his audience. Ṭūsī prefers to distinguish between, on the one hand, God saying something meaningful, and, on the other, God ensuring that his hearers understand his argument. The distinction represents a clear commitment to the notion that a statement can have the qualities of being clear and unambiguous, and that having these qualities is distinct from the audience recognising it as such. That is, language has meaning independent of any human recognition of that meaning: language is conceived here are a reified, external system of signs which produce meaning even when not heard by the potential addressees. The question of whether the addressees have the means (or are provided with the means) to understand that meaning is distinct from the system having meaning in itself. On the development of the *waḍʿ* system in Islamic legal thought, see Weiss 1974, and Shah 2011.
26 Quran 5:38.

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have stolen and whatever the circumstances in which they commit the act of theft. Whilst the linguistic properties of the statement are general, most writers consider the intended meaning to be specific (i.e. it only refers to thieves who steal over a certain amount, or can be demonstrated to have stolen without just cause). When one finds such "general" statements should one assume them to be of general reference (applying to all thieves)? Ashʿarī describes the theological debate:

> [The Muʿtazilīs] differ over the one who hears a piece of news, the obvious meaning of which is of general reference, and there is nothing, rationally speaking, which indicates that it should be understood as specific…
>
> Some say that one suspends judgement over whether it is general or not until one has consulted the Quran, the consensus of the community and the reports [from the Prophet]. If one finds nothing in Quran, consensus and in the reports which particularises this piece of news, then one rules that it is of general reference. This is the opinion of Naẓẓām.
>
> Others say that if a piece of news comes and its mode of expression (*makhraj*) is general, then the hearer must apply this to all individuals to which the name applies…. Then one who holds this opinion claims the following: if it is known by God that the one who hears this verse whose apparent meaning is general, does not also hear the thing that particularises it, then it is not permitted for [God] to reveal it without also revealing the particularizing element alongside it… it is obligatory for anyone who hears a verse with an apparent general meaning, and does not hear a particularising element, to assess [the verse] to be general in reference. This is the view of Abū al-Hudhayl and Shaḥḥām.[27]

Ashʿarī's description of the Muʿtazilī views is not formulated as a principle, but as a dispute over hermeneutic assumptions: does one need to search for a particularising element before declaring the intended meaning of a general expression to be general reference? Whilst Naẓẓām (d. ca. 836) says one must search, Abū al-Hudhayl (d. ca. 841) and Shaḥḥām (d. after 871) say that unless the particularising element is right alongside the general element, one must declare it general. Underlying both views is the notion that if God does not intend a general meaning when he uses the general form of words, he must provide a particularising utterance. God is required to provide this particularising utterance, for without it the believer would be unable to understand God's intended meaning, and this would be rationally and theologically repugnant: it would, in effect, be demanding obedience to an unknown rule – an impossible task. The debate recorded by Ashʿarī here concerns how easy it must be for the individual to access the element which establishes that the speaker's intended meaning is not the utterance's literal meaning. For Naẓẓām it need simply be somewhere within the sources of legal knowledge (Quran, *ijmāʿ*, *akhbār*); for Abū al-Hudhayl and Shaḥḥām, is must be alongside the general verse.

27 Ashʿarī 1969, 1:336–337.

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As Vishanoff has demonstrated, the debate here was superseded by other debates in Muʿtazilī thinking (most notably the debate around the "delay of clarification" [on which see below]).[28] However, the dispute between Naẓẓām and Abū al-Hudhayl/Saḥḥām and outlined by Ashʿarī a century before Ṭūsī had not completely lost its relevance. Ṭūsī argued that God must not only reveal that the intended meaning is different to the literal meaning; he must also provide a means (*ṭarīq*) of understanding that modification has taken place and how the (new, non-literal) intended meaning might be. It would appear most closely aligned with Abū al-Hudhayl's view, in that the easiest way for God to provide an indication of deviation from the intended meaning is to reveal the modifying element immediately. On the other hand, that there is a remote modifying element, revealed somewhere else in the revelatory sources is (pace Naẓẓām), one might argue, to provide such a "way" of accessing modification, but it would add another laborious layer to the deduction of the law (something which might contravene other theological principles with regard to God and his requirements from his servants). In formulating this principle, Ṭūsī is drawing on debates within the earliest expressions of Muʿtazilism, even when those debates had become viewed as hackneyed by more recent Muʿtazilī thinkers.

Ṭūsī fields some objections to this second principle, the first is that it is permissible for God to give meaningless statements, and that this is not a violation of his quality of goodness. It is through this quality of goodness that God provides benefits for his followers. Ṭūsī argues that this is not possible:

> No one can say that it is permitted for him to both [a.] make totally meaningless utterances, and [b.] that his [quality of] goodness remain a general benefit. If this were so, it would lead to there being no way of knowing what he means by his discourse at all. Every statement by him would be possibly like this, and this is unacceptable.[29]

This is a *reductio ad absurdum* argument, aimed at an unnamed opponent (probably a caricature of Ashʿarī views). If it is permissible for God to make meaningless statements, then every statement by him would be potentially meaningless. If this were the case, then listeners would be unable to understand anything he says, and his position as a benevolent God who provides with a means of obeying him, and thereby gaining reward, would be comprehensively undermined.[30] If messages

28 Vishanoff 2011, 113.

29 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:43:

وليس لاحد أن يقول يجوز أن لا يفيد بخطابه شيئا أصلا ويكون وجه حسنه المصلحة، لانّ ذلك يؤدّي إلى أن لا يكون طريق إلى معرفة المراد بخطابه أصلا لأنه لا خطاب الا وذلك مجوّز فيه وذلك فاسد.

30 Ṭūsī says the argument here follows the same argument as that found around the purpose of miracles. Miracles, he argues, cannot be enacted in order to provide benefit for the people – they

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from God are potentially meaningless (i.e. without intended meaning), there would be no means for us determining the intended meaning of any of his utterances.

The second objection to Ṭūsī's assertion that God cannot give meaningless statements involves the notion that God revealed the Quran (at least in part) for recitation, not simply to convey the meaning of his message. That is, the Quran is a ritual document, understanding the meaning of which is unimportant. Ṭūṣī's counter arguments are as follows:

1. To establish that one must recite the Quranic verse in question would require another verse in which the recitation is established as obligatory – and how does one know that one has understood what that verse means? One is left with an infinite regress.
2. Reciting what one does not understand is, in itself, pointless – it would be like reciting a yell or a shout – for it to have religious value, the thing being recited has to have meaning.
3. Recitation is only permissible if it provides a means of understanding God's intended meaning – it should encourage the individual to do obligatory things, and discourage him from doing wrong. If this is not the case, then mere recitation itself could not be considered a "good" thing to do.
4. If verses were revealed simply for recitation, then there would be no benefit in some of them being orders, others prohibitions, some giving information, others giving warnings. It would make no difference whether it was addressed to one group over another. The actual content of revelation would be irrelevant if revelation was simply for the benefit of recitation, and one would be left with the question as to why God has revealed the Quran with these different characteristics.

Following on from these arguments, Ṭūsī believes he has demonstrated that the argument that revelation could simply be for the religious benefit gained from recitation is fallacious and unfounded.

The conclusion, then, is that God cannot make meaningless statements, for to do so would not only be pointless, it would also violate the requirement that

can only occur in order to establish the truthfulness of the Prophet who performed them. If the miracle was for a benefit, and not to enable us to determine a truthful prophet from a liar, then there would be no means for us to make that distinction. Miracles are the mechanism whereby humankind knows that a person who claims to be a prophet is actually sent by God. In addition to this, for the Muʿtazilīs, if miracles occurred simply as a benefit, then the question would rightly be asked why God allowed the situation to become such that the miracle became necessary. To say a miracle is for a benefit is to actually impugn God for creating the situation where a beneficial miracle is needed in the first place. See Giacaman and Bahlul 2000.

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he communicate clearly to his servants what it is he wishes them to do. This latter theological principle, fundamental as it was for the Muʿtazilī position on revelatory language, can also be seen as being the basis for the other two principles discussed by Ṭūsī in this section.

2.2 The Prohibition on God Making Morally Repugnant Statements

Just as God cannot make meaningless statements, he also cannot make statements which are morally repugnant in one way or another. Ṭūsī expresses the principle as follows:

> It is not permitted for [God] to utter something which is morally repugnant providing it is demonstrated that he also knows it to be morally repugnant.[31]

One knows, rationally, that God cannot perform a morally repugnant act, and one knows also that he knows all things: therefore, one knows that God cannot make an utterance which is morally repugnant whilst knowing it to be so. Furthermore, God would not, for example, lie – not merely because he is essentially good, but also because there is a rational reason not to lie. If one intends by communicating to convey meaning, then lying frustrates that purpose, and is therefore illogical and “it is not possible for one to prefer lying over telling the truth. One must know thereby that it is wrong to lie.”[32] So it is with God – it is illogical for him to tell a lie – which would be a morally repugnant utterance – because to do so would frustrate his very purpose in communicating. It is ruled out as a possibility within the principles of interpretation, and therefore becomes a fundamental assumption in the act of understanding divine speech.

The discussion here resonates with the Gricean maxim “Try to make your contribution one that is true.” This Grice labels as the “maxim of Quality.” Of course, for human participants in a conversation, there is always the possibility that whilst they believe their contribution to be true, it might be in some way inaccurate. What is important though is that in order for the communication to be successful, there must be an assumption that the participants are attempting to deliver accurate and true information. Grice clearly felt this was a fundamental

31 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:42:

ومنها: أن نعلم أنه لا يجوز أن يخاطب بخطابه على وجه يقبح.

32 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:43.

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maxim of any conversation – so fundamental that it may even surpass being a maxim and become a condition of successful communication:

> The maxim of Quality, enjoining the provision of contributions which are genuine rather than spurious (truthful rather than mendacious), does not seem to be just one among a number of recipes for producing contributions; it seems rather to spell out the difference between something's being and (strictly speaking) failing to be, any kind of contribution at all. False information is not an inferior kind of information; it just is not information.[33]

As can be seen from Ṭūsī's argument concerning his own condition of truthfulness, it is more than the fact of deception which makes lying morally repugnant. There is also the argument that by not telling the truth, the aim of any communicative utterance is frustrated:

> ...when someone speaks the truth, they provide a way to [access] their intended meaning. In accordance with this, when they lie, a way is provided which operates at a limited level which is not what would have been reached, had they told the truth...[34]

A lie ceases to be a conversational contribution, since it does not aim to convey information (*stricto sensu*) but falsehood. For God's *khiṭāb* to be an attempt to convey information, the possibility of intentional untruth must be ruled out. There is then a logical precedence to telling the truth: without it, the utterance ceases to be a "contribution" (as Grice terms it) to any communicative exchange. In this sense, the term "morally repugnant" (*qabīḥ*) is a term used to apply to utterances which God could never make, both in the sense of them being morally wrong (such as lying as deceptive), but also of them being counter to the aims of issuing utterances in the first place (and therefore without point – the sort of activity in which God also does not engage).

2.3 The Prohibition on God Making Unmarked Non-Literal Utterances

The final principle whereby a valid understanding of God's intended meaning might be acquired is:

> It is not possible for [God] to mean, by his utterance, something other than the meaning for which it was coined and not give an indication of this [change of meaning].[35]

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33 Grice 1989b, 371.
34 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:44. Note here the phrasing of the principle in terms of conversational contributions generally, and from that, a principle relating to God is extrapolated.
35 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:42:

لا يجوز أن يريد بخطابه غير ما وضع له ولا يدلّ عليه.

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Behind this principle is an explicit commitment to the prevalent conception of the origins of language found in premodern Islamic legal theory – namely, that sounds (*alfāẓ*) were assigned meanings (*maʿānī*) at some point in the past (by God or by convention).[36] When a speaker uses a sound as part of an utterance, and intends by this usage the meaning posited in this act of assignation (*waḍʿ*, sometimes translated as "coining"), he is said to be speaking "literally" (*ḥaqīqatan*). In the phraseology of the principle, he is using the sound to mean that "meaning for which it was coined" (*mā wuḍiʿa lahu*). The presumption is, then, that the words within any conversational contribution are used "literally" (i.e. in accordance with their coined meaning). Clearly, though, there are occasions when God does not use words literally (indeed Muʿtazilī hermeneutics is thoroughly accepting of figurative and metaphorical meaning of Quranic passages when literal meanings are deemed rationally problematic). The principle establishes an obligation on God to notify the listeners whenever he uses words in a non-literal manner. He must mark it: as the principle expresses it, he must "give an indication of this" (*yadullu ʿalayhi*). There is a requirement for God to mark non-literal usage.

If God were to make an utterance and intend a non-literal meaning thereby, it would lead to epistemological problems:

> It is not permissible for him to intend by his utterance something which is at variance with its designated meaning and not indicate this to be the case. The thing that proves this is that were this so, we would be unable to know anything at all by his utterance, because this [i.e. him intending something other than its designated meaning] would be possible for all [his] utterances. It would then, necessarily, be impossible to claim knowledge of [God's] intended meaning for some of his utterances.[37]

As in the case of meaningless utterances above, as soon as it is admitted that there is a possibility of non-literal intended meaning in God's utterances, then God is required to mark this in some way. If he is permitted to intend something other than the designated meaning and *not* mark it, then understanding any of his utterances with certainty becomes impossible. The end result is that the notion that God requiring obedience from his servants (*taklīf*) is undermined, since in order for this to be the case, the orders must be available to God's servants such that obedience becomes possible.

36 On *maʿnā* in early Islamic thinking generally see Key 2018.

37 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:44:

وأما الذي يدلّ على أنه لا يجوز أن يريد بخطابه غير ما وضع له ولا يدلّ عليه، فان ذلك يؤدي إلى أن لا نعلم بخطابه شيئا أصلا، لأنه لا خطاب الا وذلك يجوز فيه، ولا يمكن أن يدعى العلم بقصده ضرورة في بعض خطابه.

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Ṭūṣī entertains two objections to this principle, and refutes them both. The first involves the point that God could, by using words in an unmarked non-literal manner, do so simply for emphasis. Behind this objection is the notion that the speaker's intended meaning is often expressed more powerfully through non-literal meaning. This, one might argue, is a fundamental rule of rhetoric.[38] A non-literal meaning might be said to drive home or emphasise the meaning conveyed in another utterance, where the intended meaning is expressed literally. Ṭūsī responds that the emphatic utterance is also an utterance, and must be subject to the same rules as all utterances. One cannot apply one rule to understanding literal utterances and another rule to non-literal utterances. The single hermeneutic procedure requires there to be some sort of indication (i.e. a marking) that the second utterance is an emphatic re-expression of the first utterance. Without indicators, there is no way of making this distinction.

Ṭūsī's rejection of the second objection further develops this notion:

> They cannot say, "He is making an utterance in which there is no possibility of an alternative interpretation" because every utterance could possibly have an intended meaning which is not its apparent meaning in a non-literal manner. As soon as one permits there to be no indication of a non-literal meaning, then this necessarily entails that we do not understand anything at all by [God's] utterance.[39]

Ṭūsī, next, has to admit that there are, at times, words used in revelation in which a non-literal meaning is intended but which are not signalled. These instances cause an issue for Ṭūsī's requirement of God to provide an indication when a non-literal meaning is intended, because so often they appear in revelation without any indication. Here he is referring to the phenomenon known in *uṣūl* as *ḥaqīqa sharʿiyya*[40] though he does not use the term.

The classic example of *ḥaqīqa sharʿiyya* is the term for prayer (*ṣalāt*) which means, in a literal manner, "supplication." However, in revelatory texts – in particular the Quran – it can also mean specifically the ritual prayer of the Muslims (consisting of a series of specific prayers, bows and prostrations). It is used so often to mean this second (strictly speaking, non-literal) meaning that no immediate indicator is necessary to establish this as the intended meaning. This, in Islamic legal theory, is an accepted case of adding a new (divine) coining to a word: the word now has two literal meanings: its original meaning (*ṣalāt* = sup-

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38 Heinrichs 1991–1992, 253–284.

39 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:45.

40 See Gleave 2016, 12–32.

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plication) and the divinely coined meaning (*ṣalāt* = ritual prayer of the Muslims). The word has become, through force of revelation, a homonym (*mushtarik*). Generally, *uṣūl* writers preferred this formulation of how *ṣalāt* means ritual prayer to the idea that *ṣalāt* means supplication literally and it means ritual prayer by some form of diverted (*majāz*) meaning; the reason for this preference is, as I have mentioned elsewhere, the assumed superiority of the literal over metaphorical expression; to have God use non-literal meaning for something as fundamental as prayer would be to weaken his stipulation to perform the ritual prayer.[41]

The solution to the problem (as was presented in later legal theory works) is to re-designate the unmarked non-literal meanings (such as *ṣalāt* = ritual prayer) as alternative literal meaning. The procedure for deciding which of two literal meanings is meant is slightly different to the procedure for deciding between a literal and non-literal meaning. For the latter, some sort of indication is required. For the former, no indication is required because by definition, literal meanings are those which require no indication. If God issues an utterance, and a word in that utterance has two literal meanings (such as *ṣalāt* – one designated by language and the other by God himself), then, according to Ṭūsī (and many other writers of *uṣūl al-fiqh* it should be added), there is no need for an explicit indication as to the intended meaning (as there would be in the case of a non-literal meaning being intended). Rather a new hermeneutic principle comes into play: when God (or the Prophet) speaks then it is assumed that the meaning intended is the new, divinely coined meaning unless there is an indication otherwise. That is, the broader context of God speaking establishes a preference for the new literal meaning, and the original literal meaning becomes almost non-literal.[42]

Though Ṭūsī makes reference to this line of argumentation here, it is not outlined in detail. The argument is found in a preceding chapter, where Ṭūsī explains that when God effects a transfer (*intiqāl*) of meaning between a linguistic and a new meaning (i.e. from supplication generally to the prescribed movements of prayer for *ṣalāt*), then he must inform his servants of that transference.[43] However, once informed, the servants must assume that he means the newly coined meaning every time he uses the term. The support for this hermeneutic principle is rational: if God were to institute a new meaning, and then continue to ordinarily use the old meaning, this would hinder the communication process (and entail a contradiction in God's actions). If God has instituted a new meaning,

41 Gleave 2012, 113ff.

42 The phenomenon is discussed in Weiss 2010, 142–143.

43 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:40ff.

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he did it because that is the meaning he is going to use, and because he wants us to take the new literal meaning as the natural meaning:

> If a word has a literal meaning in language or in common usage, and then, by revelation, it gains a literal meaning for something else, then it is obligatory to understand it in accordance with how it is used in revelation… the utterances of God, and also the utterances of the Prophet must be understood as intending a meaning which is required by the *sharīʿa*.[44]

The case of special, divinely-designated literal meanings does not, then pose a challenge to the general need for God to signal a non-literal intended meaning, Ṭūsī argues. The reason such usages do not pose an issue is that these words already have a contextual indicator (a *dalīl* of sorts) – they are being spoken by the one who instituted the new literal meaning, and therefore, the justified (rational and theological) presumption is that the new literal meaning is the intended one, until there is evidence otherwise.

Aside from the special case where God institutes a newly coined literal meaning, Ṭūsī, through these various arguments, demonstrates his position to his own satisfaction: God must provide an indication if he is not going to speak literally. Ṭūsī's principle here is parallel to Grice's "maxim of manner" ("Be perspicuous"). The model assumes that maximum perspicuity is achieved when words are used in accordance with their literal meaning. This latter point may be debateable (and has been subject to criticism in Pragmatics following Grice).[45] The prevalent use of nonliteral language use has led to a proliferation of categories of "literal meaning" in the study of Pragmatics.[46] Carston gives the following useful example:

> Max: "How was the party? Did it go well?"
>
> Amy: "There wasn't enough drink and everyone left early."[47]

If taken on a literal level, there is violation of Grice's maxim "Be perspicuous," for Amy's response is not a direct answer to Max's question. The literal meaning of her statement does not make clear it was a bad party – to deduce that one needs to know that a good party is one where there is enough drink and people stick around for the whole evening. The fact that there is a maxim violation here, and the

44 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:41:

ان كان له حقيقة في اللغة أو العرف وقد صار بالشرع حقيقة لغيره وجب حمله على ما يعرف بالشرع (...) خطاب لله تعالى خطاب النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم ينبغي أن يحملا على ما تقتضيه الشريعة.

45 "Arguing about what was said – both its content and its truthfulness – is a social practice conducted within the framework of 'folk-linguistics.' What is said and literal meaning are folk-linguistic notions" (Sperber and Wilson 2002, 626).

46 Carston 2012.

47 Carston 2012, 474.

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assumption that the exchange must make sense (cf: the maxim "Be relevant"), is itself an indication that the literal meaning is insufficient and a non-literal meaning is intended. Once it has been indicated that we are moving into the realm of the non-literal, so the argument goes, one begins to search as to what Amy might mean in her (so-called) answer to Max's question. Her response, one could argue, would normally be taken as a negative (that is, even though she does not explicitly say so, she means "the party did not go well"). Assuming the listener has deciphered her intended meaning correctly, he/she can only understand this non-literal meaning when he/she already knows that good parties are ones where there is enough drink and people stay a long time. These assumptions are crucial to understanding Amy as giving a negative response. So, there is the literal meaning (i.e. what Amy says) and the non-literal meaning (the party went badly).

However, as Carston demonstrates, there is an intermediate level between Amy's response and Amy's intended meaning. Amy's response "There wasn't enough drink and everyone left early" has within it some more immediate implied meaning (new implications capitalised):

> There was not enough ALCOHOLIC drink TO SATISFY THE PEOPLE AT THE PARTY and SO everyone WHO CAME TO THE PARTY left IT early.[48]

The insufficient drink is assumed to be alcoholic; the insufficiency is relative to some required amount for the people who attended; everyone is not everyone in the whole world but everyone who came to the party etc. This new explication on Amy's response is in one sense non-literal: her use of drink stands for (by implication) alcoholic drink and not, as it might "literally" all liquids (which can, by definition be drunk, one supposes). It is non-literal but not in the same way as the explication "the party went badly" is non-literal. Recanati considers this explication, which is somehow closer to what Amy actually said, as another, second type of literal meaning which exists before the non-literal implied meaning is deduced.[49]

These discussions in Pragmatics were, to an extent, prefigured in Islamic legal theory, and form the background to Ṭūsī's formulation of the literal/non-literal division here. The dividing line between literal (*ḥaqīqa*) and figurative/tropic (*majāz*) usage was the subject of much debate in works of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Famously, Ḥanafī legal theorists wished to include in strictly linguistic meaning numerous elements which others (stereotypically, the Shāfiʿīs) wished to exclude.[50] In this example, the Ḥanafīs might consider the explication of Amy's response (drink = alcoholic drink

48 Carston 2012, 474.
49 See Recanati 2003 for his classifications of t-, m-, and p-literal meanings.
50 Zysow 2013, 97–100.

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etc.) as remaining a linguistic or literal meaning of the sentence. It is only when one deduces from this that the party did not go well that one moves outside of the literal. Shāfiʿīs (if their portrayal is to be trusted) would consider even the "filled-out" version of Amy's response as a deviation from literal usage. Both groups, it should be added would probably differ with Amy over what might constitute a good party.

With Ṭūsī's principle-based understanding of interpreting God's speech, one sees a (perhaps) telling shift in the final formulation of the principle:

> Once what we say has been established, then whenever an utterance comes from God, one must understand it in accordance with its *apparent* (*ẓāhir*) meaning according to what language requires, and if not, then there must be an indication which demonstrates that something else is intended.[51]

The reader should note here both the shift from the "meaning instituted for it in language" and the insertion of *apparent* (italicised above). The "apparent" meaning of a word might be quite different from the meaning coined for it in the language. It would be natural, at first, to suggest that an "apparent" meaning is *apparent* to someone (and potentially not apparent to someone else). It is, it might be argued, not a quality of the perceived item, but a subjective element of the item's perception by an individual: an utterance only has an apparent meaning when it is heard by someone and understood as such. However, Islamic legal theorists generally did not intend the term *ẓāhir* to imply any subjectivity by its use[52] – the *apparent* meaning of an utterance is a quality which a meaning has by virtue of its obviousness. This obviousness is, for most *uṣūlīs*, an indisputable fact pertaining to the utterance and is not dependent on the ability of the hearer to recognise it. Individuals may differ over what an utterance's *zāhir* meaning might be – but they are disputing a quality which was considered external to their perception. Of course, there is an implication that all sensible hearers would recognise the meaning as obvious to them, but that is not essential to it being categorised as *ẓāhir*. The notion is marginally looser than the meaning "for which [a word] was coined" (*mā wuḍiʿa lahu*). One might, for example, say that the *ẓāhir* of Amy's response "There was not enough drink and everyone left early" is:

> There was not enough ALCOHOLIC drink TO SATISFY THE PEOPLE AT THE PARTY and SO everyone WHO CAME TO THE PARTY left IT early.

---

51 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:45:

فمتى ورد خطاب من الله تعالى وجب حمله على ظاهره فيما تقتضيه اللغة، إلا أن يدلّ دليل على خلافه.

52 Whilst possible, I do not think Ṭūsī is using the term *ẓāhir* here in its strictly (Shāfiʿī) technical sense: the meaning of a word which has no other possible literal meanings, see Weiss 2010, 134. I feel Ṭūsī is using the term in a more general manner – the obvious, plain sense of the text.

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But this is certainly not, strictly speaking, the meaning for which the words were coined.

Now if the use of *ẓāhir* in this final formulation represents a broadening of the category of what is "in" the text for Ṭūsī, then this is a process identified in modern pragmatics by the institution of categories of "literal meaning" (or between "literal meaning" and "what is said," or between "primary speaker's meaning and pragmatically-inferred speaker's meaning" – there are various terminological variations).[53] Whilst God is required to give us an indicator that he means something which is clearly non-literal, if the category of literal is somewhat expanded in the case of God (e.g. *ṣalāt* now *literally* means prayer), the rational requirement for him to provide constant indicators is reduced. That is, God is required to provide an indicator if his intended meaning deviates from the *ẓāhir*, and this would be a larger category (including perhaps non-designated but apparent possible meanings). This, in turn, places on him a less stringent requirement than if his intended meaning deviates from the designated (*waḍʿī*) meaning.

3 Divine and Prophetic Speech Compared

The principles for understanding divine utterances form, for Ṭūsī, a distinct category. They differ from those required from the utterances of the Prophet and the Imāms. The last two categories can, for the purpose of my analysis here, be treated as a single category since Ṭūsī himself rolls them up together:

> *Concerning what is required with respect to the Imām, such that one can legitimately know his intended meaning by means of his utterance on those occasions when this can only be known via this mechanism:*
>
> All the conditions which we placed on the Prophet evidently apply also to the Imām. The way [of gaining an understanding of their intended meanings] is the same in both instances, and there is no point in repeating the discussion here.[54]

For Ṭūsī, there is no difference (in terms of the principles required for understanding intended meaning) between the utterances of the Prophet and those of the Imāms. In a Shīʿī context this is not an uncontroversial statement. I think it

53 I run through a series of examples of these different sub-categories of literal meaning in *Islam and Literalism* (Gleave 2012, 1–25).

54 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:48:

وأما ما يجب أن يكون الامام – عليه السلام – عليه حتى يصحّ أن يعلم مراده بخطابه فيما لا يعلم الا من جهته فجميع الشرائط التي شرطناها في النبي صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم لا بد أن [تـ]ـكون حاصلة في الامام فالطريقة فيهما واحدة فلا معنى لإعادة القول فيه.

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is accurate to say that there is a general tendency in early Shīʿī legal theory to neutralise the potentially disruptive effects of certain distinctive Shīʿī doctrines. The doctrine of the Imām's perfect knowledge of the *sharīʿa*, and the notion that the Imām's statements are an extension of the revelatory moment beyond the Prophet's life were, of course, problematic for Sunnī jurists.[55] Where possible (without denying Shīʿī theological dogma completely), Shīʿī jurists (Ṭūsī included) attempted to play down the effects of Shīʿī doctrine on *uṣūl* discussions. In the case under examination here, one can see this in the merging of the discourses of the Prophet and the Imāms, through Ṭūṣī's assertion that there is no inherent difference (in terms of the prerequisite principles for understanding) in the discourse between the statements of the Prophet and those of the Imāms. They form, in effect, a single category; in both cases, the hearers need to acquire the same items of knowledge before legitimately deducing meaning. Eliminating the distinction between the Prophet's and Imāms' statements would be unacceptable for most Sunnī writers. For them, theological dogma dictates that the Prophet's access to knowledge of God's will is qualitatively different from that of non-Prophetic individuals. It might also be problematic for some Shīʿī writers for one of (at least) two reasons. First, the Prophet's statements were (unlike the statements of the Imāms) not subject to dissimulation (*taqiyya* – in which the intended meaning of the speaker is quite distinct from, and at odds with, the meaning conveyed by the speaker's discourse).[56] Second, the Prophet's statements were conceived by some as explained and elucidated by the statements of the Imāms; if they are categorised together, then the individual characteristics of Prophetic and Imām-derived discourses are lost, and this might be seen as theologically problematic. Ṭūsī's scheme, in which the principles required for understanding the two categories of statements are identical, brings them closer together, treating them both, if you like, as equal revelatory material.

By creating this single category, Ṭūsī gains access to the resources of the genre of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, mainly developed up to this point in a Sunnī theological environment. He avoids significantly altering the fundamental epistemology of the discipline. By making the utterances of the Prophet and the Imāms almost indistinguishable from a jurisprudential point of view, Ṭūsī (along with all those Shīʿī jurists who engaged in these *uṣūl* discussions) is able to discuss the topics and questions (*masāʾil*) of *uṣūl al-fiqh* on the same terms as his Sunnī contemporaries. And since these two categories of utterance fall into the category of *khabar/akhbār*, Ṭūsī and subsequent writers can include them in sections of their

55 See Bayhom-Daou 2001.

56 On Shīʿī juristic treatments of *taqiyya* see Gleave 2013.

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uṣūl works including the established discussions of “reports.” That is, all the substance of works of *uṣūl al-fiqh* – from the hermeneutic methods (including the understanding of the imperative form, the operation of implication and the resolution of conflicting indicators) to the epistemological debates (including the *khabar al-wāḥid* debate, the theory of *tawātur* and the analysis of *isnāds*) – become available for discussion in a Shīʿī work of legal theory, and the contentious theological questions (such as the infallibility of the Imāms alongside the Prophet and the extension of the revelatory moment beyond the Prophet’s lifetime) are put to one side. Ṭūsī is not always able to entirely marginalise Shīʿī theology in his *uṣūl* discussions (the debate around consensus, *ijmāʿ*, for example, is one area where specific Shīʿī doctrine is unavoidably brought to the fore), but generally speaking, his *uṣūl al-fiqh* writings do not read as being thoroughly Shīʿī at every turn. It is, in part, this approach which makes the broader (non-sectarian) context of emerging *uṣūl* discussions the appropriate intellectual background in which to analyse Ṭūsī’s principles for understanding revelatory utterances.

Above, I provided an analysis of the principles required to understand both God’s intended meaning by his communicative utterance (*murād Allāh bi-khiṭābihi*). Those of the Prophet (*murād al-rasūl bi-khiṭābihi*) cover also, for Ṭūsī, the utterances of the sinless Imāms. There are, therefore, two categories:

(1) principles one is required to know before understanding divine utterances;

(2) principles one is required to know before understanding the Prophet’s/Imāms’ utterances.

For Ṭūsī, when discussing the latter, a distinction must be made between those who actually witness the utterances of the Prophet/Imām, and those who do not. For the former (i.e. the actual attendees of the Prophet or the Imāms’ presence), apparently, the intended meaning of the Prophet/Imām is clear.[57] They know the Prophet’s intended meaning “by necessity” (*ḍarūratan*) – meaning that it is a form of indisputable (almost irresistible) knowledge which the individual is unable to doubt. They have no need of principles – the communication is pure and unambiguous. Ṭūsī does not elaborate why this might be the case – perhaps there is some special mechanisms for understanding the Prophet’s meaning directly from his speech. This might make him different from other human beings, or it might be a feature of real communicative exchanges for Ṭūsī – namely that the intended meaning is always simple to acquire, and the Prophet is no different in this respect. The reason for this stipulation, though, is likely to be that, as with

57 For the sake of ease of reference, I will refer to the Prophet hereon, though the reader should bear in mind the rules are the same for the utterances of the sinless Imām.

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God, the Prophet is required to be perspicuous to his immediate hearers – therefore it is rationally required for his intended meaning to be completely clear to his audience when he speaks. Post-enunciation, the transmission of his words is the responsibility of others, and therefore the moral and rational requirement is less keenly applied. The distinction seems unproblematic for Tūsī and is discussed no further, though one can imagine it being challenged by an attentive interlocutor.

For those relying on oral reports of the Prophet's words, (even when those reports are committed to writing), a series of new principles come into play, and are laid our briefly in the rest of Ṭūsī's chapter. One must assume these when analysing the Prophet's statements, and Tūsī names three such principles:

a. He cannot lie concerning whatever he has received from God.
b. He cannot hide anything which was required to be revealed.
c. He cannot say something in such a way that it requires an explanation (*tafsīr*) – and if one has a number of (unspecified) skills, one can understand his meaning from his statements; and if one does not have these skills, one cannot.[58]

These are primarily theological questions: Can a Prophet lie? Can he conceal the truth given to him by God? Must his message be understandable to everybody? The answers provided by Tūsī build upon the same Muʿtazilī theological bases as his exploration of the principles for understanding divine speech – namely, that the Lawgiver is placed under an obligation (rationally speaking) to reveal his message (particularly when it has legal consequences) in a clear and accessible manner. It is therefore rationally impossible for him to lie, or to withhold crucial information, or to be ambiguous. One must assume these principles to be operative before turning to any particular utterance to deduce what the Prophet's intended meaning might be. As with the divine utterances, these principles also map neatly onto Grice's maxims: respectively, the maxims of "quality" (be truthful); "quantity" (giving as much information as required); and "clarity" (be perspicuous).

Ṭūsī's principles of understanding Prophetic utterances can be compared with those required for understanding divine intention. These latter were:

1. That we know that the utterance in question is an utterance by [God] himself – for if we do not know that this utterance is [God's], then it is not possible for us to deduce any knowledge of his intended meaning.
2. That we know that it is not possible for him to mean nothing at all by his utterances.

58 Ṭūsī 1997, 1:45.

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3. That we know that it is not possible for him to make an utterance in a way which is morally repugnant.
4. That [we know that] it is not possible for him to mean, by his utterance, something other than the meaning for which it was coined, except when he gives an indication of this [change of meaning].

It could be argued that the Prophetic principles (a.–c. above) are all, in effect, subcategories of principle 3. in divine discourse (God cannot make morally repugnant utterances), since lying, deception and ambiguity are all morally repugnant (rationally speaking) when applied to sinless beings. The other categories (unmentioned in relation to Prophetic utterances) reveal some interesting implied doctrines, namely:

(i) Whilst God must always reveal a contextual clue when he uses words in a non-literal manner (4.), this is not required of the Prophet.

The implication being that whilst the Prophet always speaks clearly for those present, when the speech is reported by others, the contextual clues as to non-literal intended meaning may be lost and this is not the fault of the Prophet, nor a requirement placed upon him. For God, though, revelatory speech (i.e. the Quran) must come with these contextual clues – he must guarantee that the utterance is accompanied by clues which means the intended meaning is available. This implicitly places the Quran on a higher level in terms of being self-explanatory, than the Sunna.

(ii) Whilst we are required to know an utterance is from God (1.), we are not required to know it is from the Prophet before attempting to discern the intended meaning.

The implication here being that whilst one can be unsure of the authenticity of Prophetic statements (given that their transmission does not guarantee their reliability), there is no such slippage when discussing the Quran. Such a position meshes with the standard accounts of the doctrine of the multiple transmission (*tawātur*) of the Quran, and therefore there being no doubt as to its origin.

(iii) It appears that whilst one must know that it is impossible for God to utter meaningless statements (2.), this is not required with respect to Prophetic statements.

This seems unusual, at first blush, since one would naturally assume that just as it is rationally impossible for God to utter nonsense, so it also should be for the Prophet. One reason for this difference may be related to the manner in which one might demonstrate the two propositions: it may well be the case that it is impossible for the Prophet to utter nonsense, but this is not a *rationally* provable proposition: rather it is established through non-rational proofs. That is, the theological

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dogma that the Prophet did not utter meaningless statements is deducible not through reason but by revelatory (Quranic) evidence, which is only considered evidence because then truthfulness of God's utterances has already been established. It cannot therefore form a principle one is required to know before interpreting his utterances. Alternatively, one might think that the prohibition on the Prophet speaking nonsense is covered by the impossibility of his utterances being lies, insufficiently informative and excessively ambiguous (a.–c. above). Meaningless utterances, though, appear to have a particular rational impossibility for God but not for the Prophet. God, as a rational divine being, must mean something by his utterances, otherwise they would not exist – and not only because they would be pointless (and this is morally repugnant of God). More importantly, this is because God's utterances emerge from a will to communicate – that is their prompt. The emission of meaningless utterances has no prompt; when a prompt is impossible, there can be no cause of an utterance, and without a cause it cannot come into existence. This is not the case with human beings (like the Prophet), where, due to the imperfect operation of causality within their psychological make up, effects can exist without causes. It is not, therefore, rationally impossible, for prophets to make meaningless utterances, though it may be established by revelatory proofs.

(iv) There is a problematic stipulation in c. concerning the impossibility of the Prophet uttering something which is not *universally* available for comprehension (i.e. something which only certain people with certain skills can comprehend).

It is impossible for the Prophet's utterances to be selectively available – that is, the role of the Prophet is to reveal the law to all humankind with equal levels of availability. For the Prophet not to do this is to violate a rational requirement of prophethood – namely to reveal the required law to humanity so they can respond. It is not a requirement of God that he make his message universally available through his utterances. The reasoning here is not made explicit by Ṭūsī. It could involve the notion that if God's message was perfectly clear from his utterances, then there would be no need for the Prophet or Imāms to bring additional elements of God's message, or to explain existing elements. For the Prophet and Imāms to have a role, all people must have access to the intended meaning of their utterances; this is not so with God, since to stipulate this would render Prophets and Imāms unnecessary.

4 Conclusions

The close relationship between the theological requirement for the Lawgiver to be clear (i.e. to provide utterances which communicate God's will to his servants) and

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the exegete's operational principles (the principles one might say, in line with the discipline of Pragmatics) is particularly striking in the chapter of Ṭūsī's *ʿUddat al-Uṣūl* analysed here. The presentation reveals the requirement for a specific, theologically-informed hermeneutic found in some works of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, where the Lawgiver's speech requires a distinctive set of assumptions to be operative before any investigation of intended meaning can commence. Of course, some of the principles outlined here are, to an extent, operational in the everyday language system (*lugha*). One assumes that when someone says something, they are announcing their own personal view unless they indicate otherwise (1. above); also one assumes they communicate something (2.). The difference with regard to the Lawgiver is that he is rationally required to follow these principles – there can be no instances of deviation (i.e. no playing devil's advocate, and no meaningless speech). This is, of course, not the case with human beings, who can (and, experience has shown, do) say meaningless, duplicitous, morally repugnant and irrational utterances, and do not indicate these qualities to the listener, often in order to deceive. This, it should be added, is a Muʿtazilī/Shīʿī position. In this chapter, Ṭūsī characterises the Ashʿarīs (and, through the catch-all term *al-mujbira,* other non-Muʿtazilī Sunnī schools) as unconcerned by the notion that it is logically possible for God to lie or speak with reduced clarity. Nonetheless, *uṣūl* writers, be they Shīʿī or Sunnī, know that the rules of divine language use cannot be entirely separate from those employed in everyday language, otherwise there would be no possibility of understanding revelation at all. The Lawgiver would speak some sort of private language. In this sense, the ideas of language and revelation, as proposed in Ṭūsī's chapter on discerning the Lawgiver's intended meaning, permeated much of Shīʿī legal theory in subsequent centuries. This was realised in much later centuries in the debate around *ḥujjiyyat ẓawāhir al-Qurʾān* ("the probative force of the apparent meaning of the Quran"). In the nineteenth century, the system of understanding the verses of the Quran was subjected to detailed legal theoretical discussion, with the principal question being "why should the apparent meaning of a Quranic verse in a piece of legal argumentation have a privilege over other possible meanings?" One answer that was given was that this is how language usually works: in everyday conversation, one takes the apparent meaning of the statement as the default meaning and if that does not "fit" or makes no sense, one turns to alternative (non-apparent) possible meanings. The privileged status of the apparent meanings (*ẓawāhir*) of the revelatory texts in the exegetical process is rooted in the rational and moral requirement for God to speak clearly; if he does not do this, then he cannot hold his servants responsible for any disobedience. It was these theological principles which were laid down in Shīʿī *uṣūl al-fiqh*, with Ṭūsī being probably the most influential of the early writers, and this view, of the probative force of the apparent meanings of Quranic

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verses in legal argumentation is the commonly held view amongst contemporary Twelver Shīʿī legal theorists (normally referred to as Uṣūlīs).[59]

In later centuries (and particularly from the 16th to the 18th centuries), some Shīʿī scholars, particularly those with Akhbārī tendencies made God's utterances in the Quran (and, for some, the sayings of the Prophet also) incomprehensible in terms of their real meaning.[60] In this sense, this position is also a development of Ṭūsī's stipulation here concerning the "special" and particular principles for understanding God's speech (a position which, it could be argued, distances God's revelation, and to a lesser extent that of the Prophet also, from the reader). The Akhbārīs were aware that someone could read the Quran and think they understand the message God is communicating, but, they argued, the real meaning – the intended meaning – would not be available to them. For them, it was only the Imāms who were "bilingual" in the language of revelation and the human language. This linguistic dogma formed part of the Akhbārī notion that the Quran and Sunna can only be properly understood through the saying of the Imāms.[61] This is not a proposition Ṭūsī could have agreed with on the basis of the principles put forward in the chapter analysed above, and yet interestingly both Akhbārīs and their Uṣūlī opponents count Ṭūsī as a supporter of their own positions.

What is clear, from the above analysis, is that Ṭūsī, perhaps more than any of his contemporaries, was aware that all hermeneutic devices require a set of underpinning principles, and these principles, when dealing with revelatory pronouncements, need to be *theologically* justified. That is, they need to be based on a serious attempt to tie in language to theology, and without that, interpretation becomes a wholly human endeavour, resulting in an unacceptable arbitrary element in legal derivation. In later Shīʿī legal theory, the entire edifice of legal hermeneutics was accepted as a human endeavour, and therefore irreducibly fallible. Ṭūsī's system of interpretation of Quran and Sunna was, in a sense, the last articulation of a Shīʿī theory in which the exegete can know, with certainty, the message that the Lawgiver intends to convey by the utterances found in the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet and Imāms. After him, Twelver Shīʿī legal theorists became more suspicious of those who claim to "know" the intended meaning of the utterances of the Lawgiver.[62]

59 See, for example, Khūʾī 1981, 397–399.

60 On the Akhbārī tendency in Shīʿī thought, see Gleave 2007.

61 See, Gleave 2007, 216–244.

62 Research for this chapter formed part of the Law, Authority and Learning in Imami Shiʿite Islam project (www.lawalisi.eu, ERC project no.695245). Thanks are particularly due to the LAWALISI-IAS Princeton Summer School on Shi'i Legal Theory participants (convened August 2019) for their helpful comments and critiques of a chapter draft.

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Feriel Bouhafa

After Adam: Ibn ʿAqīl on Language Origin, Change, and Expansion

Introduction

The Arabic tradition played host to a lively intellectual debate on the theories of language, which includes discussions on the origin of language, the process of language imposition, and theories of meaning, as well as a variety of other linguistic issues since at least the 9th century.[1] Still, the early genesis of such linguistic inquiry remains underexplored and its diffusion among the different sciences like grammar, rhetoric, Quranic exegesis, Islamic jurisprudence, dialectical theology, and philosophy awaits scrutiny.[2] Among the listed queries, the issue, which has already attracted some scholarly attention, is the question of the origin of language, as discussed among theologians and jurists.[3] The debate centered around advocates of the human origin of language: the conventionalists and champions of the divine origin of speech: the revelationists.[4] Given the religious context of the debate, Modern scholars have concluded that the discussion ended up in deadlock.[5] In this vein, Kevin Reinhart claims, when looking at our protagonist, the prolific Muʿtazilī and Ḥanbalī scholar of Baghdād Abū al-Wafāʾ ʿAlī ibn ʿAqīl (d. 1119), that he was rather impatient with the whole debate between the

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1 Some early insights into discussions on Arabic linguistic thought in the Arabic-Islamic tradition can be found in the following literature: Kopf 1956, 33–59; Hasnoui 1988, 218–240; Weiss 1966; Versteegh 1997; Bohas and Kouloughli 2006. For more recent studies which explore theories of meaning in Arabic thought see Ali 2000; Gleave 2012. *Acknowledgements:* I would like to thank Baber Johansen for introducing me to Ibn ʿAqīl's work during my tenure as a visiting fellow at the center for Middle East Studies at Harvard in 2012–2013. Also, I extend my gratitude to Nadja Germann, Catherine Pickstock, Tony Street, Mostafa Najafi, Enass Khansa, and Johannes Stephan for their help and insightful feedback on earlier drafts. This research was partly done under the auspices of the Research Project LiDiAC, an interdisciplinary contribution to the history of ideas centered on the disciplines of grammar, logic and rhetoric in Arabic-Islamic culture 800–1100, directed by Nadja Germann at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg.

2 Hasnaoui 1988, 218.

3 For the first study to put the spot on these discussions in Islamic jurisprudence see Weiss 1974, 33–41.

4 An elucidation of the conventionalist and the revelationist positions on the origin of speech is provided in the first section of this chapter.

5 Weiss 1974, 38–41. On how Islam places strictures on linguistic reflection on language see Versteegh 1997, 75–83.

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conventionalist and revelationist positions and maintained 'there is no resolution to it [i.e., the debate].'[6] Another parallel assumption as to the impact of the religious context on linguistic reflection upheld that Medieval Muslims were committed to preserving the intact meaning of the Quran and therefore had to erect Arabic as a fixed linguistic system imposing a strict bond between expression (*lafẓ*) and meaning (*maʿnā*) in order to circumvent any change in the meaning of the revelation.[7] This semantic fixity, guarding the sanctity of the Quran, implied that meaning could not evolve and language could not undergo change.[8] To our purpose, these claims meant that Arabic linguistic thought makes no room for a dynamic view of the evolution and expansion of language.

Paying close attention to Ibn ʿAqīl, in his discussion of the origin of language in *al-Wāḍiḥ fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, challenges the above contentions.[9] Although admitting both the divine and the human origin of language, Ibn ʿAqīl erects a dynamic conception of the origination of speech and its evolution through renewal (*tajaddud*) and expansion (*ittisāʿ*).[10] Such fertilization is predicated upon a teleological account of the innate role of natural human disposition (*qarīḥa* or *fiṭra*), which allows speech to continue to evolve commensurately with people's changing

6 Reinhart 2008, 169. As I shall demonstrate in this chapter Ibn ʿAqīl adopts a dialectical view where he first raises his objections and then fleshes out his position attesting that language origination involves four means: divine legislation, inspiration, linguistic expansion through the use of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) as well as through human conventions.

7 A manifestation of this assumption can be seen in the statement: "By definition, the language itself could not change: it had been used by God in His last revelation, and this meant that it was sacrilege to allow for the possibility of any changes" (Versteegh 1997, 77); also see Weiss 1966, 2.

8 Weiss 1966, 2.

9 Makdisi 2012.

10 The question of the evolution of language has not been given much attention except for Versteegh's (1990) study on the concept of the spaciousness of language, *ittisāʿ*, among grammarians. More recently, Jeannie Miller in "What it Means to be a Son: Adam, Language, and Theodicy in a Ninth-Century Dispute," touches on the question of the evolution of language. However, I have a different reading of some of the evidence she proposes to back up her reading of Jāḥiẓ's view on language which reads as follows: "*wa-al-kalām idhā ḥurrika tashaʿʿaba wa-idhā thabata aṣluhu kathurat funūnuhu wa-ittasaʿat ṭuruquhu*." She translates this concluding statement as follows: "When Language moves, it proliferates. While its root is stable, its branches multiply and its pathways broaden" (Miller 2016, 75). When Jāḥiẓ refers to *kalām*, he clearly means the argument or the discussion tackled in the chapter and not "language" or "speech." Therefore, I suggest the following reading: "And when discussion is provoked it spreads out and when its foundation is established it becomes variegated and its pathways broaden." What confirms this reading is his reference in the next sentence to how he does not want to bore the reader further and therefore he reminds us that he shall limit himself to the aim of the book which is to challenge Christianity. On this basis, I conclude that linking this passage to a definition of language and its change is wishful thinking at best. For the Arabic reference see Jāḥiẓ 1964, 3:341.

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needs. In so doing, Ibn ʿAqīl's exposition goes beyond justifying first impositions in language to account for changes fostered by new realities and inventions as well as the expansion of language through synonyms, antonyms, metaphors to ensure a certain flexibility.

In what follows, I shall first provide a brief overview of the inception of the debate on the origin of language, emphasizing how some conclusions on its deadlock need reconsideration. Secondly, I shall flesh out how, according to Ibn ʿAqīl, God's modalities to communicate with human beings are manifold, attesting His ability to bestow us with different types of language including spoken, unspoken, and mental. In fact, this broad conception of how God communicates with human beings will help us disclose Ibn ʿAqīl's objections to both the conventionalists and revelationists, which in turn will enable us to unpack the role of human disposition in language. Finally, I shall analyse Ibn ʿAqīl's construal of the scriptural basis for the origin of language, the Quranic verse "He taught Adam all names," [11] and his response to those who confined the teaching of speech to memorization. This, I argue, will enable us to understand our scholar's purpose as not merely to expand the scope of teaching for Adam, but also to account for the situation of language evolution after Adam.

1 Overview of the Origin of Speech in the Islamic Context

The inception of the origin of language in Greek philosophy is often rooted in Plato's dialogue *Cratylus* and Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, which variously sketch the contours of the debate between the naturalist and conventionalist view of human speech in ancient philosophy.[12] Some of these philosophical discussions found resonance in the writings of Fārābī (d. 950) and Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) through the Arabic reception of Aristotle's *Organon*. The peripatetic philosopher Fārābī, known as the second teacher after Aristotle, seems to endorse the Stagirite's position on the conventional nature of language, although he also attributes

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11 This is a reference to the scriptural verse from the Quran 2:31, which states that God revealed language as names (*asmāʾ*) to Adam: "And He taught Adam all the names (*asmāʾ*), then showed them to the angels, saying: inform me of the names of these, if ye are truthful." Those who advocated that language is divinely revealed often quote this verse in Muslim discussions. All the Quranic verses provided in this paper will be based on the Muhammad Abdel Haleem's translation (See Abdel Haleem 2010).

12 Druart 2015, 7.

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its development to the role of the lawgiver.[13] However, the interrogation of the nature of human communication in the Islamic context was not limited to philosophers but also thrived among both theologians and legal theorists since at least the ninth century. While few scholars held the naturalist position of language, the debate in the Islamic context centered around whether the origin of speech is a social convention or a divine inspiration.[14] In this section, I shall briefly provide an overview of the debate and its trajectory with theological discussions.

The task of reconstructing the instigation of the debate on how human language materialized is fraught with difficulties, particularly given the dearth of early textual sources (from the eighth century) available to us on this topic. Scholars, therefore, relied on later sources to reconstruct the genesis and evolution of the debate on the origin of language, mapping out the diverse stances.[15] The dominant viewpoint traces the inception of the debate on the origin of language between the late eighth and early ninth century and coming to an end by the eleventh century.[16] The different postures on the origin of language can be succinctly summarized into three main standpoints.[17]

The first stance ascribed a naturalist outlook to the origin of language. The Muʿtazilī theologian ʿAbbād ibn Sulaymān (d. 864) championed this viewpoint, contending that the origin of language materialized through the human inclination to imitate natural sounds.[18] More specifically, he upheld that the vocables which were seen to refer to things were indicative of their essence. Hence, the human role in instituting language was seen as limited to observing this natural link.[19] The identification of a nexus between words and meanings is reminiscent of the early discussion of onomatopoeic language by some philologists, such as Khalīl ibn Aḥmad (d. 791).[20] Nevertheless, Ibn Sulaymān's stance did not gain

13 Fārābī 1990, 138; Druart and Hodges 2019. See Langhade 1994, 191–214.

14 Shah 2011, 314.

15 The early discussions on the origin of language from the eighth and ninth century are mostly found in later sources. One of the most comprehensive accounts is extant in the prominent fifteen-century scholar, Suyūṭī (1970, 1:8–62). For the first reconstruction of the history of the Muslim debate on the origin of language see Weiss 1974, 33–41 and for a more updated contribution, which nuances some of Weiss's conclusions see Carrera and Chiabotti 2011, 81–126.

16 Versteegh 1997, 107.

17 Here for the sake of brevity, I shall focus on the main positions. Weiss (1974, 34–35) outlines five positions: the naturalists, the conventionalists, the revelationists, the revelationist-conventionalists, and the non-committal view.

18 Weiss 1974, 34–35.

19 Carrera and Chiabotti 2011, 86.

20 Weiss 1974, 37.

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prominence in later debates, that is, unless new textual sources proving otherwise are unearthed.[21]

The second stance was known as the "conventionalist" and held that language originated in an agreement or convention secured between human beings. In order to refer to language as a human convention, scholars used the terms *muwāḍaʿa* or *iṣṭilāḥ* interchangeably to affirm the socially cooperative nature of such endeavor. One of the early champions of the conventionalist view is the Muʿtazilī scholar Abū Hāshim (d. 933).[22] Other central figures, among Muʿtazilī theologians, later propounded this view, such as ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1026) and Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 1044). Abū Hāshim's partisans stipulated that before sending the revelation, God needs a medium to communicate with human beings. On this account, they concluded that the institution of language is required first.[23] To substantiate this claim, they referenced scriptural evidence to canvass the anteriority of the institution of language to the divine revelation, citing the following verse: "We sent no Prophet unless with the tongue of his people, in order that he enlightens them."[24]

The third stance was known as the revelationist view, according to which, language is divinely-inspired. Such a position, often referred to as *tawqīf*, *waḥy* or *ilhām*, was endorsed by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 935).[25] Its proponents often grounded their argument in the scriptural evidence asserting that God "Taught Adam all the names,"[26] and more generally that "He taught man what he did not know."[27] While this perspective seems to be attributed mostly to Ashʿarīs, it also appealed to some Muʿtazilīs such as the grammarian Fārisī (d. 987).[28] From the last two positions, a sub-view developed which upheld a middle position

21 Weiss (1974, 36) argues that this position was probably abandoned before the time of Abū Hāshim. For a different reading on the historical origin of the naturalist view of language origination in the Islamic tradition see Carrera and Chiabotti 2011, 86–87.

22 Weiss 1974, 34–35.

23 Vasalou 2009, 220.

24 Cf. Bohas and Kouloughi 2016, 110–111; Quran 14:4.

25 Vasalou 2009, 203.

26 Quran 2:31. As Carter (2004, 444–447) explains, the Quranic reference to Adam as the first human user of speech remains sparse as it does not provide an elaborate account of the language Adam spoke before and after the fall. These answers as Carter adds can be found in the historical and exegetical material (*Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ* of al-Thaʿlabī). In fact, Adam is reported to have spoken hundreds of languages but spoke Arabic with God. For an account on Adam in Islamic literature see Schöck 1993.

27 Quran 96:5. Cf. Bohas and Kouloughi, 110–111.

28 Vasalou 2009, 205. Weipert (2012) explains that one of Fārisī's books *Kitāb al-Tatabbuʿ li-Kalām Abī ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī fī al-Tafsīr* suggests his Muʿtazilī leaning.

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that the origin of language is rooted in divine revelation and social conventions. This middle-ground has been espoused by the theologian Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāʾīnī (d. 1027).[29]

Nonetheless, the commitment of the Muʿtazilīs to the conventionalist and the Ashʿarīs to the revelationist position was linked to the impact of their respective theological dogma concerning the nature of the Quran on the debate of the genesis of language. After all, the scrutiny of the origin of language emerged against the background of early Muʿtazilīs' discussion of the simplicity of the divine in the ninth century,[30] as attested in their polemic on the divine attributes and the nature of the Quran.[31] The theological polemic circled specifically around whether the Quran is eternal with God, or it is only contingent on God's will.[32] Given the Muʿtazilīs' commitment to the oneness of God – a central tenet of their theology – they could not admit the co-eternity of any other entity with God. Adhering to a pure monotheistic stance, they rejected the eternity of the Quran.[33] Instead, they held that the divine speech was created to communicate with humanity within a limited span of time. This conclusion also meant that the Quran pertains to the genus of human speech, a position that was championed by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, a proponent of the conventionalist view.[34]

Ashʿarī and his followers, rejected the Muʿtazilī dogma on the nature of the Quran upholding that the divine attributes of knowledge, power, will, life, hearing, sight, and speech are real.[35] In so doing, the Ashʿarīs confirmed that God's speech is both indicative of His act of speech and His essence and therefore the Quran is uncreated. This position gained momentum among later Sunnī scholars, and developed further to what came to be the dominant Ashʿarī position through scholars such as Bāqillānī (d. 1013), Jūwaynī (d. 1085) and Ghazālī (d. 1111). More specifically, they endorsed the eternal nature of God's speech through proposing a distinction between two aspects of divine language in the

29 Weiss 1974, 35.
30 More recent evidence examined by Carrera, however, suggests an earlier genesis of the debate also in theological debates around the status of the divine names during the eighth century. He argues that theologians discussed language as either divine or a human invention and already employed technical concepts, such as *tawqīf* referring to the divine inspiration of language and *muwāḍaʿa* meaning language as a social convention. Carrera and Chiabotti 2011, 82–88. Similarly, Vasalou, focusing on the Muʿtazilīs, argues that linguistic theory developed to support the view on divine names and the criteria used to predicate attributes of God. Vasalou 2009, 206–207.
31 Cf. Vasalou 2009, 201; Versteegh 1997, 107; Carrera and Chiabotti 2011, 82.
32 Martin 2020; Gardet 2012.
33 El-Bizri 2008, 123.
34 Larkin 1995, 29–30.
35 Watt 2012.

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Quran: the internal speech of God (*kalām nafsī*) and its external linguistic expression in sounds and speech (*kalām lafẓī*). In so doing, they postulated that the eternal attribute of speech inheres in the internal speech of God, which bears no multiplication or contingency. Hence, they deemed the external linguistic expression subsisting in the letters and sounds as pertaining to the world of creation.[36] With regards to the origin of language, some Ashʿarīs leaned towards endorsing the divine origin of language.[37] On this account, modern scholars have concluded that the theological dogma shaped the direction of the debate on language and deemed the conventionalist stance to be more commensurate with defending the contingency of divine speech. In contrast, a revelationist view is more fitting to a theistic position that holds the eternity of the divine speech. On this account, Bernard Weiss affirms that once the theological discussion of the createdness of the Quran had lost its vitality after the eleventh century, the question of the origin of language reached a stalemate.[38] He thereby concludes that the discussion was left pending as Bāqillānī came to recognize that language is both a human and a divine invention. Finally, Weiss argues that around the eleventh century, the suspension of judgement '*waqf*' on language inception had become generally accepted among most jurists and theologians after Bāqillānī.[39]

While the role of theological discussion on eliciting interest in the nature of human communication rests on steady ground, presuming its leading force on the demise of the debate after Bāqillānī might be overstated. This conclusion fails to account for the later interest among jurists such as Ibn ʿAqīl, Juwaynī, Ghazālī, and Rāzī (d. 1210).[40] Besides, such inference rests on some assumptions, which attribute the conventionalist stance to Muʿtazilī rationalism and the revelationist to the Ashʿarīs' literalism, ignoring the fact that some scholars with Muʿtazilī leanings, such as Fārisī and Ibn Jinnī (d. 1002), did not necessarily admit a purely conventionalist view.[41]

To this end, revisiting Ibn ʿAqīl's discussion of the origin of language will both showcase the continuing interest among jurists in the question, and serve to contest the tidy divisions which pit the Muʿtazilīs against Ashʿarīs. In fact, our protagonist, for whom the question of the origin of language had not lost momentum, is known for both his Muʿtazilī leanings, which cost him a public inquisition, and

36 Gardet, 2012; Triton 1972, 15.

37 For a discussion on the nature of the Quran see Madelung 1985, 504–525.

38 Weiss 1974, 38–41.

39 Weiss 1974, 35; 40.

40 Carrera and Chiabotti 2011, 96–97.

41 I would like to thank Noel Rivera for providing me with the reference to Ibn Jinnī. See Ibn Jinnī 1952, 1:40–47; Weiss 1974, 39; Vasalou 2009, 221, 205; Shah 1999, 31.

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a commitment to the Ḥanbalī traditionalist legal school.[42] Although a Muʿtazilī, Ibn ʿAqīl does not support the createdness of the Quran. Still, he also criticizes the Ashʿarīs' division of God's speech into internal and external speech as merely a cover-up to yield to Muʿtazilī dogma and indirectly admitting the contingent nature of the Quran. More importantly, he advances a compelling argument, which recognizes both the divine and human origin of language, but constructs a teleological view of the role of natural human inclination to originate language. In so doing, Ibn ʿAqīl's account not only reflects a continued interest in the origin of language but also advocates a dynamic perspective on the origination and evolution of language. As I shall now demonstrate, Ibn ʿAqīl is not impatient to leave the debate unresolved, but rather takes a scholastic approach painstakingly to construct his objections, and then to lay out his own position on the subject.[43]

2 Ibn ʿAqīl on the Divine Discourse *(Khiṭāb)* and Its Modalities

Ibn ʿAqīl tackles the question of the origin of language at the beginning of his *Kitāb al-Khilāf* (*The Book of Dissent*) in his great *summa*: *al-Wāḍiḥ fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (*The Manifest in the Principles of Jurisprudence*).[44] Before discussing Ibn ʿAqīl's stance, I will first adumbrate his construal of how God conveys meaning to human beings in forms of sounds, clear speech or unspoken language, which will prove central to grasping his view of the origin of language formation. To this end, I focus on the following: first, his definition of the divine discourse, and, secondly, the modalities of God's communication with the different prophets and with His last messenger Muhammad, and finally, the modality used by Muhammad to convey the revelation to humanity.

At the outset of his *Kitāb al-Khilāf*, Ibn ʿAqīl clarifies that he aims to discuss the foundation of the principles of jurisprudence, which is called *khiṭāb*. Here one should underline that the task of explaining *khiṭāb* is at the very core of any juridical enterprise. By addressing *khiṭāb*, a jurist aims to identify the scope and tools to decipher the divine intent to derive legal rulings, which are the normative

42 For details on Ibn ʿAqīl's inquisition see Holtzman 2016, 1–2.
43 As I noted in my introduction, Reinhart assumes that Ibn ʿAqīl was impatient with resolving the question of the origin of language and adopted a non-committal position. Reinhart 2008, 169.
44 As mentioned by Reinhart (2008, 166), Makdisi proposes to call *al-Wāḍiḥ fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* a great *summa*. In fact, Reinhart seems to object, asserting that it should be seen as curriculum notes for his lectures.

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basis for the actions of the Muslim community.[45] Thus he starts with a definition of *khiṭāb*:

> Know – may God give you success – that since the foundation (*mabnā*) of the principles of jurisprudence is God's – the exalted – discourse (*khiṭāb*),[46] the prophet's discourse, their indicative meaning (*faḥwā*), their evidence (*dalīl*), their unstated meaning (*laḥn*), the inferred meaning (*al-maʿnā al-mustanbaṭ*), and the use of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) from the unspoken to the spoken in accordance with the inference from the *ratio legis* (*taʿlīl*), it behooves us first to introduce the elucidation of discourse and provide an exhaustive treatment. For the discourse encompasses the elements of commands and prohibitions as well as reports and its derivatives; including the obligatory, the recommended, the disapproved, the prohibited, the qualified and unqualified, the general and particular, the abrogating and the abrogated, and the indicative meaning; its evidence and its meaning. These are all branches of the main principles.[47]

According to Ibn ʿAqīl, the foundation of principles of jurisprudence rests on the divine discourse which, as he adumbrates, encompasses not only the Quran and the prophetic tradition, but also the different interpretive tools used in jurisprudence, including indicative meaning, unstated meaning, inferred meaning, and the use of analogical reasoning and its justification (*qiyās* and *taʿlīl*). The reference to interpretive tools implies that divine speech is not limited to the literal sense, but extends to the vast domain of implicature, which involves semantic and inferential operation. This domain, which falls within the realm of human interpretation, seems to form an integral part of the scope of divine meaning. As Reinhart notes:

> It is clear that Ibn ʿAqīl does not understand by *khiṭāb* only the speech of God but all aspects of communication that can, using any possible analytic tool, be understood to convey information. "Discourse" comes closest to approximating the semantic field of the word *khiṭāb* as it is used in Islamic jurisprudence.[48]

In addition to Reinhart's remark, I would further specify that including the different hermeneutical tools as part of the scope of the divine discourse implies that the boundaries of divine speech are not restricted to the literal speech conveyed

45 Gleave 2012, 28–29.

46 The term used here *khiṭāb* bears some nuances. In fact, its use in this instance carries a broad implication referring to all types of meaning that God conveys to human beings, which is not limited to articulated speech and could include non-verbal or mental language. But there are instances where it is used simply to refer to speech. Depending on the context, I shall translate *khiṭāb* accordingly as either discourse or speech.

47 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 1. All the passages provided from *al-Wāḍiḥ* are my own translation.

48 Reinhart 2008, 167.

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by God to the prophet, but also include the semantic domain of the recipient. In other words, Ibn ʿAqīl espouses a manifold scheme of how meaning is conveyed, ranging from verbal communication, implicature, signs, to analogical operation. Ascribing an expansive view to the divine discourse allows for the creation of malleable boundaries whereby the divine intent can be stretched to bear upon the vicissitudes and changing reality of Muslims. To our purpose, however, this conception of the divine discourse will have significant bearings upon discerning the nature of God's communication with human beings.

To examine this outlook on the divine discourse, I shall proceed to his outline of the modalities used by God in communicating His discourse. Ibn ʿAqīl distinguishes between three different modes through which God communicates with His prophets and messengers: (1) direct audition, (2) angelic mediation, and (3) delivery to their hearts:

> Know that God's discourse – glory to Him – to whom He addresses among His creatures is of three modes: audition from Him – glory to Him – without any intermediary such as His discourse to Moses and Muhammad – prayers to them. And His discourse through the intermediary of the angel, such as His discourse to a group of prophets – prayers to them. And all of these are letters and sounds that frame the meanings of the discourse. These are either commands or prohibitions for actions or reports on the past or future; [they are] imparted from the very presence of God – honor to His greatness – or from the angel as it is pronounced in the Holy Book. And the third (mode) is through delivery to the hearts of the messenger either through inspiration in a state of sleep or wakefulness. And all three are accounted for to our Prophet – prayer to him.[49]

With regards to the first modality, Ibn ʿAqīl underpins God's ability directly to address human beings by invoking both Moses and Muhammad. He admits the use of revelation as a second modality of divine communication via angelic mediation. In both cases, meaning is conveyed through letters and sounds. As to the third modality, this takes place through inspiration in the heart and does not depend on letters and sounds. Such inspiration transcends direct and indirect communication, which implies that meaning is delivered without mediation into the inner self, without using a verbal channel.[50] Sketching the three different methods reveals that God is not confined to one communicative modality in conveying His intention. More importantly, he underlines that Muhammad's revelation uniquely encompasses all these different channels.

A similar reading can be found in another discussion by Ibn ʿAqīl in his treatise *Rasāʾil fī al-Qurʾān wa-Ithbāt al-Ḥarf wa-al-Ṣawt* (*Letters on the Quran and*

49 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 1.
50 Cf. Reinhart 2008, 167.

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Establishing its Letter and Sound) where he warns against the confusion of the Ashʿarī theologians for their failure to distinguish between the revelation through the angel (*waḥy*) and direct speech (*taklīm*).[51] Ibn ʿAqīl challenges the Ashʿarīs' presupposition that God's discourse is only revealed through inspiration as they assumed that He does not speak in sounds and letters.[52] As discussed above, while the Muʿtazilīs admitted that the Quran is created, the Ashʿarīs held it to be eternal, a view also espoused by Ibn ʿAqīl, while nonetheless contesting the Ashʿarīs' evidence on the matter.[53] Specifically, he refuses the Ashʿarīs' distinction of two facets of the Quran: external speech and internal speech. More importantly, they ascribed the eternal attribute to the internal facet of the Quran, which leaves no room for God's direct communication with human beings in sounds and letters.[54] From this vantage point, Ibn ʿAqīl deems that the Ashʿarīs' view fails to account for Muhammad's exceptional position.[55] Thus, he underlines how God's direct speech to Muhammad and Moses was privileged.[56]

Putting this together with the above passage, Ibn ʿAqīl is committed to sustaining the distinction between the different modalities to maintain Muhammad's privilege. Hence, according to his interpretation, the modality of speech is an indicator of the special status of prophets, as seen in the case of Moses and Muhammad, the only prophets whom God addressed directly. Ibn ʿAqīl adds that Muhammad was bestowed with this very privilege, yet graced with the two other modes of communication as well. Communication with Muhammad happened on a wide scale from direct speech, mediation by angels, and psychic inspiration. For our purposes, Ibn ʿAqīl's perspective comes mostly to underline the unrestricted nature of the modality available to God in his communication with prophets, hence his objection to Ashʿarī theologians. These modalities include verbal, mediated, and inspired meaning.

Finally, Ibn ʿAqīl moves on from discussing God's modalities of discourse with prophets to elucidate the channels available to the Prophet Muhammad to convey the divine discourse to human beings. He underlines the diverse modes in the following passage:

> As for the modes of discourse from the Prophet – peace be upon him – to us are speech (*nuṭq*), the apprehended sign (*al-ishāra al-mafhūma*) to those present with him, or through writing to those who were absent; "Say, people of the book, let us arrive at a statement that is

51 Ibn ʿAqīl 1971, 90–91.
52 Ibn ʿAqīl 1971, 85.
53 Makdisi 1997, 113.
54 Ibn ʿAqīl 1971, 91.
55 Ibn ʿAqīl 1971, 90–91.
56 Ibn ʿAqīl 1971, 90–91.

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> common to us all," and His saying "If they turn away, say, 'Witness our devotion to Him';"[57] and the tacit agreements that were made as indicants such as the statement or the permission to say and to act, which were consented upon. And God – glory to Him – compounded the merits of the discourse in His saying: "We did not send a Messenger except with the speech (*lisān*) of His people to make it manifest to them."[58] The merit of what is disseminated and collected of the discourse together is to make manifest the divine legal obligation.[59]

The prophet's communication of the divine intent follows three modes: first, direct speech; secondly, intelligible signs to those who are present with the prophet, or inscribed at a later time, and, finally, the communication of divine intent through actions performed by the prophet or by others with his consent. This final modality pertains to a tacit agreement, which includes actions that were permitted by the prophet without explicit instruction, i.e., activities permitted by default.[60] Accounting for these variegated modes of communication, he asserts that the prophet also conveys meaning in multiple ways. In other words, the divine discourse imparted to human beings through the prophet also goes beyond verbal speech or written words, and encompasses signs and actions, as well as tacit agreement.

Several implications are to be drawn at this juncture. First, Ibn ʿAqīl discloses how divine meaning is not limited to the fixed message in the scripture and the prophetic tradition. Rather, it encompasses other possibilities of transmitting divine intention. In fact, the parameters of divine intention have been delineated in jurisprudence to comprise explicit meaning, signs, unstated meaning and extension of meaning through the use of analogical reasoning. Also, Ibn ʿAqīl ascribes to God three different methods of communication used with prophets: direct speech, intermediate revelation, and divine inspiration into the hearts. More importantly, he rejects any attempt to restrict God's communication of meaning to one modality. The broad scope of the divine discourse is also reflected in his sketch of how the prophet conveyed meaning to his community which again encompasses direct verbal communication, comprehensible signs, and finally, conveying meaning through actions such as testimony of the prophet's tacit agreement to certain acts performed in his presence. This shows that Ibn ʿAqīl follows the same course to underpin the expansive scope of divine discourse and its diverse channels. In other terms, Ibn ʿAqīl envisions a broad conception of the possible means by which God communicates His intentions to human beings. Such construal allows for the possibility to receive meaning through mediation,

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57 Quran 3:64.
58 Quran 14:4.
59 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 2–3.
60 Cf. Reinhart 2008, 168.

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inexplicitly through signs, and unstated meaning or analogies, and even through direct inspiration into one's heart. Accounting for various modes to convey meaning will prove instrumental to Ibn ʿAqīl's view on the origin of language later on, above all to his interpretation of scriptural evidence underlining that God taught names to human beings. However, I shall first turn to Ibn Aqīl's critical reflections on the leading positions on the origin of language.

3 Beyond the Origin of Language

In the same chapter of the *Book of Dissent*, Ibn ʿAqīl first introduces the revelationists, then the conventionalists, and finally a third group, identified as the critical scholars who admitted both the human and divine origin of language. While he names the proponents of the first two positions – the jurists and some theologians for the revelationist, and Muʿtazilīs and some other theologians for the conventionalist view – he does not identify the advocates of the third position, which, as I shall argue, represents his own critical view. For my purposes in the present essay, the significance of the third stance is not that it focuses on who originates language, but rather, that it provides insights into how language evolves. To delineate his perspective on these different positions on the inception of speech, we shall turn our attention to the following statement:

> People disagreed on the origin of speech (*khitāb*) imposed (*mawḍūʿ*) for the communication between human beings and pertaining to naming things in every language. One group said: language is acquired and received by means of divine legislation,[61] either through a revelation (*waḥy*) or speaking to whom He [i.e., God] has chosen to address, or through inspiration to His creatures. These are the Ẓāhirīs and a group of jurists and some dialectical theologians.[62] Another group said: speech is received through an agreement among members of language communities and their establishment of a convention over it. And these are the Muʿtazilīs and other dialectical theologians. And the critical scholars (*muḥaqqiqūn*) said: Many are the vehicles to the origination of speech. Some speech is originated by (1) means of the divine imposition (*waḍʿ al-sharʿ*) or God's – Almighty – (2) inspiration (*ilhām*) to some creatures and (3) some by the analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) deduced from

61 Here Ibn Aqīl uses the term *tawqīf* which is often translated as divine revelation, but just in this instance I opted to render it as divine legislation to avoid the repetition here between translating *tawqīf* as divine revelation and then *waḥy* as revelation. In fact, I also use the translation divine legislation for *waḍʿ al-sharʿ*.

62 Here he refers to the Ẓāhirīs who are the followers of the legal school founded by Dāwūd ibn Khalaf (d. 844) and known for their rejection of the use of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) in law (Turki 2012). Also, the reference to the dialectical theologians pertains for the most part to the Ashʿarī theologians, those who embraced that the origin of speech is from God.

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> the ingenious human gifts; by extending the imposed name to what was not named and drawing an association between them on the basis of their accordance in genus, specificity (*khaṣīṣa*) or form (*ṣūra*), and (4) some by means of convention. The convention may accord with what came by means of the divine revelation and inspiration and thus the human imposition might agree with the divine or may not. And this matter can neither be resolved nor rejected. For both vehicles to language origination are supported by scriptural evidence. The evidence for divine teaching to whom He taught is His saying: "And He taught Adam all names," and this also supports divine inspiration. For God almighty's teaching, to whom He taught, occurs sometimes by inspiration and other times by speaking as evidenced in His saying: "We taught him how to make coats of mail for the benefit of you [i.e., people] to protect you in your wars;"[63] "We softened iron for him"[64] and "make coats of chain mail and measure the links well."[65] The proof of language imposition on the basis of convention is the semantic extension (*istiʿārāt*) [66] used by Arabs on figurative names (*al-asmāʾ al-majāziyya*) from their true origins, based on a resemblance and approximation between the applied expression and the borrowed one; such as in their naming of the generous, the knowledgeable, and the stallion 'a sea' for its profusion, acquisition, and width and their naming of the courageous 'lion' and 'brave.' And this imposition is nothing other than a transfer of an imposed name to something other than what it was originally imposed for through a type of analogical reasoning (*qiyās al-muqāyasa*). And this was reported by them and is proliferate in their reports and composition.[67]

This outline of the different positions serves as an interlude for Ibn ʿAqīl to lay out the debate before raising his objections, but it is also an opportunity for him to introduce some valuable insights, which will prove instrumental to establish his own position. It does not escape one's attention, moreover, that although Ibn ʿAqīl adumbrates the basic ground for the conventionalist and revelationist views, he is chiefly concerned with the view of the critical scholars. Hence, he briefly mentions the scriptural evidence invoked by the revelationists to corroborate the divine origin of language: "He taught Adam all the names," and merely affirms that the conventionalist scholars validated the conventional human origin of language. His focus goes to the critical scholars to explain how they substantiated the ground for language origination on a variety of modes. These include (1) divine legislation, (2) divine inspiration, (3) analogical reasoning (*qiyās*), which he links to natural inclination, and (4) human convention. One might be tempted to consider this position as merely a conciliatory one, accounting for both divine

63 Quran 21:80.
64 Quran 34:10.
65 Quran 34:11.
66 *Istiʿāra* can be translated as metaphor, but in this context it should be rendered as semantic extension to better fit Ibn ʿAqīl's definition as shall be explained in this section. Bonebakker 2012.
67 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 3–4.

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and human intervention in the process of the origination of human speech. While such a conclusion might be acceptable, it is significant that this position unpacks a complex perspective of not only how language is originated, but also how it evolves, expands, and undergoes changes or transfer in meaning. To grasp the significance of these views, I shall now consider them more closely.

First, the exposition of the critical scholars refers to God's role in teaching speech to human beings. Herein, he outlines two modes pertaining to (1) divine legislation, and (2) inspiration. This passage should be read alongside the earlier statement, which attests that divine communication takes place through both direct speech and divine inspiration.[68] Essentially, it implies that the act of divine teaching bears a broad compass, which is not limited to memorizing words but also includes inspiration. As will become clear below, ascribing a broader understanding to teaching, beyond the memorization of names, is the stance adopted by Ibn ʿAqīl himself. At this stage, already, he explains how teaching amounts to learning a new craft, referencing the scriptural evidence on how God instructed David to forge iron. Again, this affirms that teaching is not limited to the memorization of names but encompasses the development of a knowledge which could generate a skill or craftsmanship. His allusion to a mental capacity to fulfill specific aims seems to attribute intentionality to the process of giving names to new things.[69] To put it more simply, Ibn ʿAqīl opines that the act of signifying is motivated by an intention generated by a given need: God not only bestows upon us the capacity to ascribe a referent to things, but also inspires knowledge into human beings' hearts to develop skills and name them. Such a process is reminiscent of the essence of human invention, something I shall return to below. The broad conception of divine teaching should not come as surprise to us, however, for as we have already seen, Ibn ʿAqīl endorses the diversity of modalities available to the creator to communicate with people, and this informs his construal of the divine teaching of speech as well.

Coming to the third mode of originating speech identified with the critical scholars, Ibn ʿAqīl refers to the process of a semantic extension, which he identifies with analogical reasoning that is *qiyās*. This reference to *qiyās* calls for further elucidation. In Islamic jurisprudence, *qiyās* relates to the interpretive method of judicial reasoning to erect rulings for new cases that were neither foreseen nor explicitly addressed in scripture. It is achieved by inferring judgment from similar cases, which were addressed in the divine discourse, through establishing a *ratio*

68 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 1.
69 Jacob 2019.

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legis (*ʿilla*).[70] The term *qiyās* is also employed in Arabic grammar to refer to the norm used to regulate the morphological and syntactical behavior of unknown words based on transmission or audition.[71]

Taking cues from Ibn ʿAqīl himself, *qiyās* is defined as a means to extend the use of a name, which was already imposed, to refer to something that has not yet been named. This definition showcases how he relates the process of semantic extension used to transfer a meaning from first impositions to new ones to a process of analogical reasoning in law. To elucidate such a parallel, Ibn ʿAqīl draws from the register of Islamic jurisprudence as he links linguistic *qiyās* to *istinbāṭ*, which often means an inference drawing out the unknown from what is known based on some shared element. He then adds an important consideration to illustrate that the extension of one name to another is achieved on the basis of either a genus of specificity (*nawʿ khaṣīṣa*) or a form (*ṣūra*). This clarification suggests that the relation established through *qiyās* is regulated according to the property associated with a genus or a mental form of some sort. This line of analysis is logical in the loose sense of that word, and not in the strict sense of being part of the traditional Aristotelian discipline.[72] Identifying terms such as genus and property, and using them as reference points in *qiyās* concerning how they relate two expressions, as – for example – literal and metaphorical, is a process which runs parallel with the logical analysis of meaning and its use in syllogism. Indeed, this is a process which Ibn ʿAqīl would have seen frequently in the works of other jurists. The typical case presented by Ghazālī is the extension of the prohibition of grape wine to other intoxicating drinks such as date wine.[73] The prohibition is predicated upon a cause or *ratio legis* (*ʿilla*), which pertains to the property of inebriation.[74] Furthermore, while *qiyās* is sometimes translated as analogy, such rendition only reflects one aspect of *qiyās*. As Hallaq explains, it should be used as an umbrella term, covering a wide range of juridical inferences, including both *a fortiori* argument and a *reductio ad absurdum*.[75] Essentially, *qiyās* is a mental operation, which draws on the principles of the law in order to

70 Bernards and Troupeau 2012.

71 Bernards and Troupeau 2012.

72 I would like to thank Tony Street for his help to elucidate this remark.

73 Opwis 2019, 100–101.

74 Bou Akl 2019, 48.

75 Hallaq 1989, 289. A case of *a fortiori* argument is found in the Quranic interdiction of being disrespectful to one's parents, which is taken to mean that all actions such as insulting or beating one's parents are also prohibited. Ghazālī underlined that if the interdiction of striking one's parents is understood from the *ʿilla* of the prohibition of "fie" then this is an *a* fortiori *qiyās*. A *reductio ad absurdum* argument is a *qiyās* where the opposite of a given rule of a case is applied to another on the basis that the *ratio legis* of the two cases are contradictory (Hallaq 1989, 289).

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transfer them to new cases on the grounds of similitude as well as contradiction. For our purposes, this aggregation of evidence shows us that Ibn ʿAqīl gleans an epistemic similarity between legal *qiyās* and the process of the extension of meaning to new usages in figurative expressions.

Linking the above statements to his discussion of the figurative speech also confirms our conclusion. In fact, in the example of semantic extensions, he refers to the transfer of the term 'sea' (*baḥr*) denoting the ocean, to designate someone who is a generous individual. The proposed extension is premised on a link between the expansiveness of the sea to the profusion of generosity of an individual towards others. Similarly, he gives the example of the 'lion' (*asad*), which is transferred figuratively to refer to a brave person. Like legal *qiyās*, these figurative meanings are premised on some attributes being transferred from the literal to the figurative meaning on the basis of a shared property. Later on, he discusses the same examples pertaining to the sea and the lion under the chapter on literal and figurative speech (*ḥaqīqa* vs. *majāz*). In this instance, he defines *ḥaqīqa* as an expression used in accordance with the initial imposition, and *majāz* as the use of an expression not in accordance with its initial imposition.[76] He also remarks that, in the same way, without literal meaning, one cannot have a figurative meaning, a *qiyās* is not possible without an original case. So *qiyās* and the semantic extension, as seen in figurative expressions, necessitate an original case or meaning that can be transferred to a new one.[77] This understanding of both legal or semantic extension underlines the importance of establishing relations, which link the original case to the new one. He attests that the *majāz* is, at its core, a *qiyās* operation in which the meaning of what is spoken (*manṭūq*) is extended to what is unspoken (*maskūt*).[78]

Ibn ʿAqīl, however, anticipates an objection that language imposition is different from *qiyās*. He notes how language imposition allows for reference to things that have shared attributes through the positing of different names, as is the case of the names given by Arabs to animals that are black and white: the spotted (*abqaʿ*) for the crow, the piebald (*ablaq*) for the horse and the leprous (*abraṣ*) for the human being.[79] To this objection, he answers that in Islamic jurisprudence, *qiyās* also admits relations that are not only based on similitude, but might differentiate between similar things, and even establish some correspondence between

76 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 18. For a discussion of *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* among jurists see Gleave 2012, 35–48. Also for an account on the emergence of the concept of *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* see Heinrichs 1984, 111–140.

77 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 23.

78 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 27.

79 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 28.

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contradictory things.[80] If we take the statement a step further, this means that both in law and language, the correlation between an original and a new case can be predicated upon a wide scope of considerations. If *qiyās* and *majāz* are deemed to be identical operations, they can both be premised on a simple analogy of similitude as well as contradiction.[81]

On this account, the link of semantic extension to *qiyās* affirms the role of human agency in the process of language origination and expansion. By the same token, the role of human convention is not simply limited to establishing a referent to a signified, but also its extension to other meanings on the basis of a relation, or shared features premised on logical properties. Such inference refines how one accounts for the role of human agency in the process of language expansion, such as through the use of metaphors, synonyms and even antonyms.

The final remark that we must attend to is Ibn ʿAqīl's elucidation of the relation between words based on revelation and those established by convention. Admitting both a divine and human origin requires a clarification of how to regulate the relation between an imposition that occurred on divine or human basis. Here, he acknowledges how names founded on a conventional ground may either accord with what is based on revelation, or they may differ from them. His observation recalls the discussion among jurists on the legal names (*al-asmāʾ al-sharʿiyya*), names which, in their original imposition, had one meaning and after the revelation had acquired another. To illustrate this point, one can refer to the example of Islamic legal obligation, such as the words for prayer (*ṣalāt*), fasting (*ṣawm*) and pilgrimage (*ḥajj*).[82] These words existed before the revelation but underwent alterations in meaning to reflect the Islamic character of these ritual acts. In fact, admitting whether an actual change in signification occurred is a point of contention between some Muʿtazilīs and some Ashʿarīs.[83] Ibn ʿAqīl reminds us that while Muʿtazilīs admitted the transfer of meaning, some Ashʿarīs denied it. Still, Ibn ʿAqīl himself advises that legal names acquire new meaning after the revelation and provides the example of alms giving (*zakāt*). Originally, *zakāt* meant addition, as illustrated in the example of "*zakā al-māl*," which meant to expand money. After Islam, *zakāt* denoted a different meaning, to subtract from your money by giving some of it to the poor to fulfill God's command. This example showcases a transfer of one meaning to its apparent opposite, namely, from increasing your money to decreasing it. On this basis, he concludes that God renewed rituals for Muslims (*jaddada al-ʿibādāt*), and compares the renewal of

80 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 28.
81 Cf. Ellis 1993, 33–40.
82 Bou Akl 2015, 420.
83 Bou Akl 2015, 420.

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meaning in rituals to that of the craftsman's renewal of tools and instruments.[84] This again affirms the role of language in giving new meaning to things both in mundane and religious contexts.

To conclude, Ibn ʿAqīl's exposition alerts one to the fact that, regardless of whether one accepts that language is a divine inspiration or human convention, one must still account for the process of extension or change of meaning. The continuity of the process of signification as a basis for linguistic evolution implies an interesting take on language as a complex system, which is predicated on logical properties or semantic relations in order to expand its scope and renew meaning.[85] Such discussion also unravels the influence of Islamic jurisprudence on Ibn ʿAqīl's approach to linguistic enquiry through his adoption of *qiyās* to explain the extension of meaning in language and his reference to legal names. Overall, the discussion goes beyond the polemics of who originated language to further discern the process of the evolution of language. While this overview serves to draw some preliminary conclusions, the discussion is also instructive for a reviewing of the objections he raises against the conventionalist and the revelationist views, respectively.

4 Objections Against the Conventionalists and the Revelationists

Before outlining his own position, Ibn ʿAqīl raises few objections against both the conventionalist and revelationist camps. While his critique of the conventionalists centers upon their stipulating the need for a human convention before God can communicate with humanity, his critique of the revelationists focuses on their rejection of the social origin of language. More importantly, Ibn ʿAqīl puts forward significant notions such as comprehension (*fahm*) to depict how God communicates with human beings, and draws on the role of natural inclination (*naḥīza*) in the origination of speech. To flesh out some of these ideas, I shall first consider his arguments against the revelationists, as summarized in the following passage:

> The proof for the incorrectness of their judgment is that God – Almighty – is capable of leading them to comprehend (*fahm*) what he communicates to them and inspire them the comprehension of His meanings. Once this is verified and is set right, then the judgment of

84 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 46.

85 The relational view to language reminds us of Wittgenstein's conception of family resemblance. For more see Ellis 1993, 33–40.

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> conditioning the precedence of linguistic convention over God almighty's discourse to them is void. The sign for this is that the Almighty inspires them with divine guidance to things that are not inferred from deductive sciences; such as the example of inspiring a child to take the breast [i.e., its mother's breast], and to swallow it up, which so far does not point the child to the fact that the milk can only be released through some kind of sipping or sucking. So God inspired him [i.e., the child] to swallow it [i.e., the breast] and then suck it. And He inspired the bees to make hexagons, which many among the experts in geometry are incapable of doing (…) And this explains that delivering the comprehension (*fahm*) of the meanings of the discourse (*khiṭāb*) is not something God would have failed to notice. With all this in mind, there is no reason for us to stipulate the anteriority of human convention to His discourse to people – that is what He communicates to them regarding their benefit. For comprehension is nothing more than delivering in the heart of the addressee the internal perception (*wijdān*) of the intended meaning of the discourse. And that is indeed the inspiration of the hearts on the variety of tools of crafts, actions and prohibitions, and avoidance on the basis of benefit that befalls the inspired animal and its kind (…) And in general and detailed sense, all comprehension (*fuhūm*) that produced benefits is bestowed by Him to His creatures. In the same way, He created beneficial things and inspired creatures' comprehension to turn to and reach their purposes and ends, He descended (from heaven) the discourse and inspired them the comprehension of its meaning. Also, if one cannot presuppose the precedence of empirical things over the divine gift of the knowledge of benefits and attaining purposes; then one cannot presuppose the anteriority of human communication over the divine discourse.[86]

In order to disclose Ibn ʿAqīl's justification against the conventionalists' stipulation for the need for the establishment of a language before God can communicate with humanity, elucidation is needed to decipher his use of the notion of *fahm* (pl. *fuhūm*) to denote God's conveyance of meaning to human beings, which I have translated as "comprehension." Here comprehension is not confined to the usual communicative value, which highlights the recipient's understanding of another person's message. Ibn ʿAqīl's use of "comprehension" is more complex, for it includes the delivery of 'meaning' into people's hearts – which inclines them toward certain things related to their benefit. In fact, he adds that God can deliver an inner meaning when he communicates people's benefit (*maṣāliḥ*).

To corroborate his view, Ibn ʿAqīl elucidates how God's creation of benefit to human beings did not require an antecedent knowledge of the creator. To be more specific, he maintains that, as children and bees are divinely inspired to what sustains their interest and survival, so adult human beings inspired to understand the divine meaning in order to achieve their human benefit without prior knowledge.

The reference to the child's instinctual desire to suck his mother's breast is also found later in Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), which the latter associates with the

86 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 5–6.

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concept of the natural human disposition or *fiṭra*.[87] Ibn ʿAqīl also has *fiṭra* in mind, something that will become clearer in the next discussion. I should also note that a similar view of the divine inspiration to animals, like the bee's capacity to make hexagons, is also found in Jāḥiẓ's discussion in *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān,* where he venerates the phenomenal aspect of the natural inclination bestowed on animals such as spiders and bees.[88] Animal and human inclination discloses God's capacity to endow His creatures with benefit. Ibn ʿAqīl may be drawing on the discussion related to human disposition in order to buttress his conception of how God conveys meaning to human beings. This indicates that meaning here transcends linguistic speech addressed to human beings, realising a mental meaning linked to human benefit. This follows from, as I have shown earlier, his conception of the different ways by which God communicates through direct speech, inspirations or delivering the intended meaning of things into people's hearts. God does not need to establish a linguistic convention before He communicates, given that His discourse and its modalities surpass the limited scope of articulated speech. Ibn ʿAqīl's reading discloses a manifold outlook on language communicated by God to human beings, ranging from spoken to mental language. In addition, this inference has far-reaching implications for an understanding of meaning as such, as tantamount to a mental language, bearing a latent potential in human beings waiting to be realized so as to fulfill their needs. This holds the promise that natural inclination fulfills human intention and could lead to new inventions, and consequently, new expressions.

Two implications require attention: First, the comprehension of the divine discourse is meant to fulfill human interest; secondly, just as God spurs animals and children to satisfy their needs without previous knowledge, similarly He can inspire human beings to meet their needs by providing them with 'meaning' before the establishment of a linguistic institution. Both these points suggest that comprehension is a process of conveying 'meaning' to the contingent world in order to direct creatures towards the fulfillment of their social benefit. He thus ascribes a teleological view to the human capacity to originate speech, something he shall continue to piece together in what follows.

Looking at his objection against the revelationists, Ibn ʿAqīl's discussion of the human inclination will come to full view. I shall return to the concept of natural inclination (*qarīḥa*, *naḥīza*) and its relation to human benefit, and finally, I shall discuss his elucidation of the process of the renewal of names, which

87 Vasalou (2016, 82) provides this reference from Ibn Taymiyya's *Darʾ Taʿāruḍ*: "A child is formed by nature (*mafṭūr*) to drink milk through a drive of its own, so that given access to the breast, it will certainly suckle." For the Arabic reference see Ibn Taymiyya 1991, 8:488.
88 Jāḥiẓ 1938, 1:32.

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I argue not only explains the origin of language, but also affirms how it continues to evolve based upon contingent social needs.

> The evidence for the incorrectness of the judgment of he who said that speech, communication, and names are all based on divine revelation and that if it were not for that, then they [i.e., the people] would neither be able to establish agreement on speech nor a communication to exchange with each other is the following: when God created people as human beings endowed with speech, also as living capable creatures, there was in the power of their creation and their proper natural inclination (*qarāʾiḥ*) the agreement on naming about the forms (*ṣuwar*) they have acquired of senses based on their motives and the conditions of their needs. The examples here are the carpentry of the door or the machinery or the craftsmanship of the sword or the chainsaw or to twine strings into ropes to bring up water from the bottom of wells and similar things. There was in the faculty of speech that He bestowed on them, an ability to signify, through sounds and letters. These significations help them attain their purpose of understanding and communication, in what occurs to them in terms of the materialized motives between each other and in their seeking help from one another. And the first sage has said, "need is the mother of invention,"[89] and this is a good saying for the motives behind things that drive living creatures towards achievement. So the hungry knows how to attain food, and perhaps the need for food opens up for him doors to obtain it (...). As it was a necessity for the living creatures to understand and communicate, likewise, it was necessary to attain food and drinks and all benefits. And they had in their natural inclination what caused them to attain their goals regarding their different needs without any precedence of teaching or explanation from someone else to them. There was in their capacity of speech something that led them to establish a convention for what they needed in terms of communication and understanding. For their need for each other is like the need of the living creature to what he takes for survival, such as taking food, drink and sleeping place, comfort, war, and shelter and driving away harm, and further aims (...) And what proves the accuracy of this is that we find today those who renew (*yujaddid*) recently developed crafts produced by natural inclination, machines, and tools that did not exist, and impose on them names based on convention. So we understand from this imposition the aim of the names. Similarly, when new actions occurred, later jurists had to derive new rulings for them, as these did not exist in early Islam, as well as the case of the creation of building, images, musical instruments, and other things that gained new names on the basis of their novelty and what was extracted of sounds to move the four temperaments.[90] Then they coined music: one to raise sadness or to arouse happiness and another to encourage and push to war (...). This example and others explain what we have mentioned about the capacity and natural disposition (*naḥīza*).[91]

89 This is an old Arabic saying which is recorded in the collection of Arabic proverbs in Naysābūrī 1955, 1:330.

90 The four temperaments refer to blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile, used by God to create human beings. Bernand 1980, 61.

91 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 7–8.

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In this passage, Ibn ʿAqīl intimates how human invention crystallizes. Driven by necessity, human beings form images about physical objects to fulfill their particular needs and then ascribe a referent to them, as seen in the example of carpentry: the human being needs to shelter; and so the need for protection prompts both the image of a door and its fabrication, as well as the coinage of an expression to refer to it as 'door.' This act is instigated by our natural inclination or *qarīḥa,* which, as I noted, is linked to the concept of *fiṭra*.[92] *Fiṭra* refers to human nature (*ṭabʿ*) and has been employed to designate the four humours, or human desires.[93] Reading Jāḥiẓ will help us to understand this notion. Like Ibn ʿAqīl, he relates terms such as *ṭabʿ*, *jibla*, and *fiṭra* to denote natural dispositions in both human beings and animals to fulfill benefit and avoid harm.[94] Thus in Jāḥiẓ's conception, natural inclination is induced to guarantee human survival and benefit. God bestowed us with *fiṭra* as a stimulus for human beings in order to invent new things to answer to their changing needs. By underlining the universal nature of the human disposition, Ibn ʿAqīl does not allude to a stable noetic dimension, which establishes categorical truth. Rather, such stimulus generates intentions that lead to actions and new expressions to describe them. This explanation sets natural inclination and social needs as a primary drive for human beings in order to adopt new inventions or establish new names.[95] To put it differently, the process of coining new expressions is premised on a teleological argument, which is further validated by the maxim, "need is the mother of all invention." Moreover, coining names is not limited to direct divine teaching; it is also triggered by the natural human inclination to respond to contingent necessity. While the natural inclination accounts for the divine role in conferring upon humans a capacity to fulfill their needs, it also warrants the role of human agency in the inception of speech on solid and eternal ground. For as long human beings continue to exist and fulfill their changing needs, they will continue to develop speech.

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92 Vasalou (2016, 2) shows that this concept has a scriptural origin in Islam, and bears a complex trajectory. The scriptural evidence that draws a link between human natural disposition *fiṭra* and religious state is Quran 30:30 and the following prophetic report: "Every infant is born according to the *fiṭra* (*ʿalā al-fiṭra*; i.e., Allāh's kind or way of creating), "on God's plan," then his parents make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian" (Macdonald 2012).

93 Bernand 1980, 61–62. Vasalou (2016, 74) argues that for Ibn Taymiyya natural disposition is associated with desires or pleasures necessary for our welfare, through establishing a balance between pleasure over pain.

94 Jāḥiẓ 1983, 131–134.

95 A similar view, which associates human inclination to develop collective actions or crafts, is also found in Fārābī 1990, 138. On Fārābī's philosophy of language see Germann 2015–2016, 146–147.

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More importantly, Ibn ʿAqīl calls the ongoing process of originating and developing speech "a renewal" (*yujaddid*). He, therefore, reiterates that human needs continue to develop new inventions, such as tools, machines, buildings and different types of music reflecting different emotional states, among other things. This observation implies that the constant need to respond to the vicissitudes of human life, via the invention of machines, tools and modes of expression in turn requires the renewal of linguistic conventions. Such renewal again affirms the role of human agency in the inception of speech. To validate his outlook, Ibn ʿAqīl draws on the authority of Islamic jurisprudence, which continually has to negotiate new cases of human actions requiring new rulings unforeseen during the life of the Prophet. Under this prism, one could surmise that the fulfillment of human benefit is the ultimate aim of the law as well as the origination of human language, and therefore both processes require renewal. This explains Ibn ʿAqīl's earlier insinuation, which linked natural inclination to analogical reasoning.[96] Accordingly, the use of analogical reasoning is also premised on the human inclination to fulfill new requirements, in turn necessitating the expansion of divine norms to accommodate new actions. To conclude, this account attests that the origin of language and its renewal, as such, remain guided by the natural disposition of necessity.

These comments already indicate that Ibn ʿAqīl gestures towards establishing the divine origin of language, but that he affirms the eternal role of human beings in language formation and its renewal.[97] This conclusion will be further defended in his hermeneutical construal of the scriptural evidence related to the origin of speech where the role of *fiṭra* will be further warranted through the Quranic outlook of Adam as the first human speaker.

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96 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 3–4.

97 Tony Street has drawn my attention to some resonances to Ibn Sīnā's view in the *De interpretatione* on the continuity of language development. More specifically, Ibn Sīnā underplays the importance of the different positions on theories of language origin, which he only briefly notes. Instead, he underlines the contingency of how language comes to be. He, therefore, holds that the use of sounds (*al-ṣawt*) is convenient to fulfill the human need for communication and sociability, given that they are neither stable nor fixed. So sounds are useful for they can be used to convey something but can also be omitted if the need seizes to exist. He also adds that the process is dependent on the continuing acceptance among subsequent language users. In a nutshell, Ibn Sīnā deems the origination and continuation of language to be contingent on chance and divine will and the natural world. This being said, one should note that he also admits that the interrelation of the meanings once it exists is necessary. See Ibn Sīnā 1970, 2–4.

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5 Language Change and Expansion

Revisiting the scriptural evidence, "And He taught Adam all the Names," often involved to endorse the divine origin of language statement, Ibn ʿAqīl validates his own stance using a hermeneutical approach to corroborate the role of human agency on Quranic ground. To this end, he discusses how to interpret the reference to teaching and names, linking it to natural inclination. His exposition underpins the significance of the process of language expansion (*ittisāʿ*) as a free act of speakers linked to the drive of renewal (*tajdīd*) of language.[98] Both concepts have bearings on configuring the process of language evolution, and therefore deserve our consideration.

After referring to different scriptural evidence at times used to affirm the revelationist view, Ibn ʿAqīl starts by explaining what teaching Adam meant. He writes as follows:

> And there is no proof in the verse [i.e., "He taught Adam all names"] against our judgment or to theirs [i.e., those who admitted that all language is a divine revelation]. For we also do not reject that God almighty taught Adam names. But who does restrict teaching to speech or the audition of the names of things? What is it that precludes teaching to occur: by speech (*khiṭāb*), comprehension (*tafhīm*), inspiration (*ilhām*), and makes it commensurate to the state of he who renews (*yujaddid*) names through analogical reasoning (*muqāyasa*) on the basis of what he knows in communication (*mukhāṭaba*). Or what prevents the creation of names to be by convention in addition to inspiration or communication?
>
> And the praise to Adam, in line of what we say, is more faithful to His acclaim and estimation than that of the opponents' view. For the verse is derived to articulate the estimation of Adam over others in knowledge. The path we assert is that Adam derives names through inferring them from the form of the named things (*ṣūwar al-musammayāt*), creating names for what was unnamed based on an analogy to what was named, and bringing each existing name in consonant with what is named on the basis of divine revelation. And that conveys the power of opinion, independent reasoning (*ijtihād*), and the use of comparison (*tashbīh*), which is more faithful than memorization through instruction. And for that reason, He praised the intelligibles (*maʿqūlāt*) and said: "and only the wise can grasp them,"[99] and comprehension (*fuhūm*) and He said: "He made Solomon understand the case [better]."[100] And He blamed those who gained nothing from the book except recitation: "Who do not know the scripture except in wishful thinking,"[101] which means recitation and He said "And

98 The explanation of *ittisāʿ* shall follow later. Here I should note that I borrow the expression, 'freedom of speaker' in relation to the expansion of language, from Versteegh's study of the concept of *ittisāʿ* as a process of semantic expansion focusing on the Arabic grammarians. For more, see Versteegh 1990, 281–293.

99 Quran 29:44.

100 Quran 21:79.

101 Quran 2:78.

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> only the wise can grasp them."[102] The ultimate virtue in the cognizance of names is in the way of comprehension (*fahm*) of meaning and the capacity to join what is unnamed to what is named on the basis of correspondence (*mushākala*) in meaning from the previous to the latter. And this, in the matter of names, is only similar to the case of discerning prophetic reports in addition to its memorization. For the expert of the meaning of prophetic reports, who derives rules on the basis of the meaning drawn from the principles, is better than the memorizer of prophetic reports.[103]

Again Ibn ʿAqīl affirms the value of the scriptural statement: "And He taught Adam all names," as a proof for the divine origin but challenges how the act of divine teaching has been apprehended. In this passage, he shows his endorsement of the critical scholars' outline, which admits the four modes to originate speech, including communication, comprehension and inspiration, as well as the use of analogical reasoning to extend the meaning of already established names to new ones.

More importantly, he suggests that this position attests to Adam's divinely esteemed position as God's delegate on earth. On this basis, he links Adam's esteemed status to his rational capacity, which amounts to the ability to form mental images and ascribe referents to things, as well as the use of analogical reasoning and comparison. To be more precise, such esteemed capacity is translated into the ability to grasp intelligibles and individual judgments, and cannot be solely based on memorizing names. The confinement of teaching to memorizing names is flawed, for it does not do justice to Adam's highly esteemed position. Hence, human intellectual capacity is attributed to the ability to fulfill one's needs, but also to link intelligible forms to names and expand meaning by forming relations between what was originated to new things. Again, we see Ibn ʿAqīl drawing on Islamic sciences to justify his view of Adam's esteemed status. Thus, he attests that a reciter of prophetic tradition is less esteemed than the one who can comprehend the meaning of reports and derive new rulings. In Islamic jurisprudence, such distinction is also associated with the *mujtahid*, the qualified jurist, who can extract principles from the law, and the *muqallid,* the mere imitator, who is limited to transmitting previous opinions from the prophetic tradition.[104] Ibn ʿAqīl uses this distinction to bolster the authority of Adam as a *mujtahid*. To live up to the divine grace, Adam cannot be confined to the ability of memorizing words but has to draw on his endowed capacity to create meaning. While God plays a role in the origination of language through a variety of teaching

102 See note 99.
103 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 9–10.
104 Calmard 2012.

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modalities, Adam's role as a *mujtahid* confirms his capacity to develop language beyond what he memorized from God. The question that arises is what happens after Adam?

In another passage, Ibn ʿAqīl continues to provide his reading of God's teaching to Adam in order to corroborate the latter's esteemed position further. For this reason, he comes back to the concept of natural inclination as the impetus for the evolution and expansion of language after Adam's times.

> From another point, their [i.e., angels] question was about the corruption on earth, when they were told that God put a delegate on it.[105] In fact, the memorization of names through speech neither contrasts with causing corruption, nor does it prevent it. Whereas the comprehension of meaning and the imposition of each name is the proof for the virtue of knowledge that prevents corruption on earth not to mention that the delegate is cognizant of the benefit of people on earth. For if the verse meant 'teaching Adam,' it does not preclude that the people on earth after Adam shall establish on the basis of their natural inclination a convention over names and communication, which is in congruence to what Adam has taught them. Nor does it preclude that they shall establish for themselves an imposition, to what was in Adam's time or to their renewed needs (*tajaddada*) after Adam. So God added to them a path and provided them with a direction for what was renewed to them in terms of occurrences that did not exist in Adam's time. Also, He – almighty – renewed to the community of Muhammad – peace be upon him – the precision of independent reasoning to produce analogical arguments for instances that bore no judgment from what was spoken by the prophet. And had the Prophet seen or heard these analogical arguments, he would have sanctioned them. However, the prophet was in no need for these [i.e., *qiyās*] as he received the revelation from God almighty. So the renewed names become expansive (*muttasiʿa*) to match the extensiveness of the people of Adam's needs (*bi-ittisāʿ ḥawāʾij banī Ādam*) in the same way analogical reasoning and the renewed sciences expand after the death of our Prophet – peace be upon him. So there is no contradiction here. We shall juxtapose the Quranic verse on Adam to the saying of our Prophet – peace be upon him – related to Adam's right: "Today I perfected to you my religion";[106] and "We have sent the Scripture down to you explaining everything."[107] Then when occurrences ensued after him [i.e., the Prophet], the natural inclination of the users of analogical reasoning emerged to extend what is unspoken to what was spoken. For the initial perfection does not preclude the inference of what is subsequent. That is also true in the matter of names and what was taught by Adam in terms of names. There is no difference between the speech of the verse and the truthfulness of the direction that we took – by God's gratitude and grace. Nor is there an opposite direction to rebuke what we have proved in terms of establishing communication

105 This is a reference to the verse (Quran 2:30) which precedes "and He taught Adam all names." The verse refers to the Angels' skeptical attitude over the viceregency of Adam on earth: "And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth; they said: Wilt thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee? He said: Surely I know that which ye know not."

106 Quran 5:4.

107 Quran 16:89.

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> and acquiring understanding on the basis of a convention in addition to what was already received from the divine legislation and the notification of the revelation. A third answer is that it is justifiable that His saying “all names” refers to what is created by God in Heaven, including angels and paradise, and what is in it. And His reference to the name ‘all’ is to these above-named things that He – almighty – had created while the crafts of the people of Adam, the instruments, and tools of their labor were not yet in existence. Thus he delegated the renewal of the naming of things to His sons [i.e., Adam’s sons] when the opening of the doors of their natural inclination to infer these things occurs (…).[108]

First, Ibn ʿAqīl refers to the instance when the angels addressed God about the risk of delegating to Adam on earth. He attests that such delegation was linked to Adam’s capacity to prevent corruption on earth, which cannot be fulfilled only by the memorizing of names. In doing so, he links Adam’s capacity to comprehend meaning and to name things with his merit as God’s delegate on earth, who would prevent corruption and guarantee benefit. Two crucial categories can be seen here: renewal (*tajaddud*) and expansion (*ittisāʿ*). Both attest to the human capacity to guarantee the constant need to change and broaden the scope of language so as to fit human benefit and therefore prevent corruption after Adam.

Human beings after Adam might establish different conventions from those they had been taught, so as to fit new needs that were absent during his times. Ibn ʿAqīl asserts that God laid out the direction for human beings to renew things (*tajaddud*). As shown already, the path to renewal is triggered by natural human inclination, which fulfills changing needs. This natural inclination plays a role in generating new inventions and new names. In so doing, he reiterates the link between the process of renewal of language and natural inclination. Again, Ibn ʿAqīl takes this occasion to advocate the need for *tajaddud* to draw a parallel between Islamic jurisprudence as a science, which developed after the Prophet’s death, and the evolution of language after Adam. He contends that, as the community had to deal with new cases in the law, they had recourse to analogical reasoning. In a similar vein, naming things had to be renewed, and new things needed to be named after Adam’s time. Thus, human language evolves to fulfill the changing realities, and similarly Muslims were naturally inclined to fulfill human benefits, and so adopted analogical reasoning to extend laws to new cases of contingent reality. To corroborate his view regarding the necessity of *tajaddud*, he underlines that the Prophet’s tradition, which concludes that Muhammad perfected the revelation, cannot be an argument against the use of independent reasoning or analogical reasoning. On the contrary, he asserts that despite the initial perfection, there is still need for human reasoning.

108 Ibn ʿAqīl 2002, 10–11.

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While drawing this conclusion, Ibn ʿAqīl identifies the evolution of language to name new things with *ittisāʿ*. This term is also used by philologists and jurists to refer to figurative expression as a process of semantic expansion.[109] Versteegh defines *ittisāʿ* as "a process by which a word is placed beyond its proper boundaries, as an extension of its normal domain."[110] He shows how this concept was defined by the grammarian Sībawayhi (d. 796) as a natural process of Arabic language, which allows for its spaciousness. Later the grammarian, Sīrāfī (d. 979), seems to link the concept with the transfer of literal meaning to figurative meaning (*ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*).[111] Overall, Versteegh's scrutiny of *ittisāʿ* demonstrates how the concept developed from a "specific syntactic term with a restricted domain, to a general term indicating the individual choice as well as the flexibility of the Arabic language."[112] Mapping a genealogy of this concept goes beyond the scope of this study. However, Versteegh's insights help us to understand Ibn ʿAqīl's construal of this notion. Earlier, we have seen that he equates *majāz* as a process of semantic expansion to *qiyās*. Still, the above passage gives us some indications as to his conception of expansion, which is not confined to figurative expression. He admits that the renewal of names expands to be commensurate with the expansion of human needs (*bi-ittisāʿ ḥawāʾij banī Ādam*), adding that such a constant need to expand also encompasses the needs for the expansion of *qiyās* and new sciences. The renewal of language through expansion seems to account for developing new signification, but it also generates what Carter called latitude in language.[113] In addition, the process of renewal could attest to 'the speaker's freedom' to develop language through analogical reasoning so as to produce new significations, and expand the use of certain expressions to synonyms and metaphors.[114] Still, such freedom is not arbitrary; it must be premised on some relations through *qiyās*. This conclusion is also underlined by his exegesis of what God meant by "all names."

Ibn ʿAqīl holds that the phrase 'all names' does not only refer to the creation at the time of Adam, and that it included heaven, the angels and paradise, but it

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109 As admitted by Versteegh (1990, 288), the notion of spaciousness of the language has attracted a lot of discussion, which shows how it was perceived by both grammarians and jurists as an important feature of the Arabic language to illustrate its poetic richness and the vast range of synonyms as also a proof of flexibility and latitude in language.

110 Versteegh 1990, 283.

111 Versteegh 1990, 282–283; Heinrichs 1984, 139.

112 Versteegh 1990, 288.

113 Carter 1981, 353.

114 See note 94.

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also covers the later development of human crafts in this world.[115] More importantly, he reaffirms the role of the natural inclination as a catalyst for human beings to infer new things and to impose new names. In so doing, Ibn ʿAqīl not only grounds the value of natural inclination on scriptural evidence, but also leaves unrestrained the human possibilities to generate new signification beyond Adam's time. While this conclusion validates the divine role in the continuous process of naming new things, it also ensures the role of the natural human inclination to change reality. We come full circle, where language origination is not simply a process of establishing original names that are transmitted unchanged from one generation to another. The process makes provision for new expressions to reflect new inventions, tools and music to express different realities and emotions, but also to expand the existing meaning in order to fulfill a variety of ways in which we can express things by means of synonyms, antonyms, and metaphors. To push this further, such expansion and latitude allow for the emergence of rhetoric and poetics as well as also for the development of new sciences.

In a nutshell, Ibn ʿAqīl espouses a complex configuration of the formation of meaning hinging on a broad conception of God's modalities to communicate with the human teleological capacity to signify. Language imposition and production of meaning prove to be a complex process, which cannot fully be accounted for through opting either for the divine or the human origin of language. One needs to address the way in which human beings deal with their changing realities and needs. For Ibn ʿAqīl, language formation entails a continuous renewal and expansion in order to ensure its evolution and latitude. Such expansion is not arbitrary; it is motivated by the needs and the rational human capacity and premised on analogical relations between intentions and significations. Also, it follows that the process of expansion and renewal accounts for not only the imposition of new expressions but also the extension of expressions to form synonyms, antonyms, and metaphors. This process anticipates the emergence of figures of speech, fostering the development of rhetoric and poetics. Fārābī's account of language in *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* arrives at this conclusion by admitting that after the first stage of language imposition, languages expand to allow for the emergence of rhetorical and poetical speech.[116]

115 Some revelationists such as Ibn Fāris (d. 1004) argued that all language is originated based on divine revelation. Speech was revealed by different prophets and messengers but it was all finalized with the Prophet Muhammad. This meant after Muhammad no names were added. For more see Ibn Fāris 1997, 14.

116 Fārābī 1990, 139–142. Again the resonance of Ibn ʿAqīl's view with both Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā prompts us to ponder if we might be underplaying the impact of philosophers' input on philosophy of language in other disciplines.

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6 Conclusion

Ibn ʿAqīl's approach to the origin of language advances a compelling argument, which shows that Muslim debate on the topic did not necessarily lose momentum in the eleventh century. Rather, I argue that Ibn ʿAqīl takes the debate to the next level, which is that, regardless of whether language is divine or human in origin, one should account for how language evolves, changes and expands. Espousing both the divine and human origination, Ibn ʿAqīl adopts a teleological notion so as to highlight the role of the innate human capacity in the origination, renewal, and expansion of language to fulfill human existence and benefits. To be more specific, language changes to reflect new realities and to expand its semantic scope through synonyms, antonyms and metaphors as well as other properties of speech. The process of expansion is predicated upon analogical relations, which could draw on similitude, comparison, as well as contradictions. All these factors show that an understanding of language inception has to account for how evolution occurs. To justify his point regarding the necessity of renewal and expansion of language after Adam, Ibn ʿAqīl draws on the authority of Islamic jurisprudence. Like law, language has to develop in order to extend the limited divine commands to account for the changing reality of the Muslim community. From this vantage point, law and language are perceived as two normative systems that deal with contingencies, yet remain rooted in principles that allow for extending divine meaning for new cases. After all, stability is required in any of these two semiotic orders, but this does not determine a fixity in their process.[117] Finally, the natural human disposition remains an open door for new languages, emotions, ways of expressing oneself, as well as for new sciences to develop after Adam.

117 This comes to challenge Weiss's conclusion on the fixity of Arabic language. See Weiss 1966, 2.

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Reclassification of Linguistic Meaning: An Integrated Approach

Introduction

The notion of meaning (*maʿnā*) has always been controversial and is still considered to be one of the unanswered questions. Although there are many theories dealing with the nature of meaning and its types, none of these theories has survived from criticism.

This work will offer a new classification of meaning based on an integrated approach, which seeks to combine the insights of the Medieval Muslim Legal Theorists (MMLTs) with those of Modern Linguists (MLs) into the question of how to classify "meaning." One of the most important reasons behind following this approach is the existence of unfilled gaps in all of the already known classifications, since each of them incorporates some, but not all, types of meanings and is, therefore, incomprehensive. The second reason is the attempt to reveal a highly developed classification made by the MMLTs and integrate it with the MLs' proposals in a cohesive way. This attempt requires some amendments and modifications in the intensions and extensions of the types of meanings involved in the new classification.

At least four basic high-level classifications of *maʿnā* (meaning) or *dalāla* (signification) can be found in the pertinent literature of Arabic.

Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn ibn Sīnā's (d. 1037) tripartite division between *muṭābaqa* (equivalence), *taḍammun* (inclusion) and *iltizām* (implication), which will be the focus of our discussion in this chapter. This classification is primarily based on the distinction between what is internal and what is external to the definition of a concept.[1]

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[1] I am grateful to Nadja Germann and Mostafa Najafi for their valuable comments and effort to improve the manuscript. According to Ibn Sīnā, who seems to be the first to have made this classification: "Form signifies meaning in three ways: the signification of equivalence, the signification of inclusion and the signification of implication (…). The signification of equivalence is as when the word 'human' signifies a 'rational animal.' The signification of inclusion is such as that 'human' signifies 'animal' or signifies 'rational,' since each of them is part of what 'human' correspondingly signifies. The signification of implication is just as the creature signifies the Creator, a father signifies a son, a ceiling signifies a wall, and a human signifies the laughing." The original Arabic text reads as follows (Ibn Sīnā 2010, 1:14):

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Ibn Sīnā's division of *dalāla* in this way was highly influential in the Muslim legal theory.[2] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210), for example, makes it as the starting point of his significational taxonomy by putting it in the highest level of his classificational scheme. *Waḍʿ*-based signification (which is the extensional synonym of conventional meaning) is placed under *muṭābaqa* while *taḍammun* and *iltizām* are regarded as rational.[3] Sayf al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Āmidī (d. 1233), as we will see, distinguishes between *manẓūm* (literally: the structured, which is equal to *manṭūq*) and *ghayr manẓūm* (the unstructured) and places *muṭābaqa* and *taḍammun* under *manẓūm*. Jamāl al-Dīn Abū ʿAmr ibn al-Ḥājib (d. 1248) follows the same procedure by subsuming *muṭābaqa* and *taḍammun* under what he calls *manṭūq al-ṣarīḥ* (that which is explicitly said).[4]

The distinction of ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 1078) between *maʿnā* (meaning) and *maʿnā al-maʿnā* (the meaning of the meaning) assumes that not only expressions have meanings, but also meanings have meanings. The dichotomy is therefore tantamount to be a differentiation between the meaning of the expression and the meaning of the expression's meaning. The relationship between an expression and its meaning is conventional while the relationship between a meaning and its intended meaning is of rational type. According to ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, if you say *balaghanī annaka tuqaddimu rijlan wa-tuʾakhkhiru ukhrā*[5] (literally: I hear that you put one foot forward and the other backward), "you are not conveying your intention by the expression alone, but rather the expression

أصناف دلالة اللفظ على المعنى ثلاثة دلالة المطابقة ودلالة التضمن ودلالة الالتزام. (...) أما دلالة المطابقة فمثل ما تدل لفظة الإنسان على الحيوان الناطق. وأما دلالة التضمن فمثل دلالة الإنسان على الحيوان وعلى الناطق فإن كل واحد منهما جزء ما يدل عليه الإنسان دلالة المطابقة. ودلالة الالتزام مثل دلالة المخلوق على الخالق والأب على الابن والسقف على الحائط والإنسان على الضاحك.

2 Tony Street discusses Ibn Sīnā's division of *dalāla*, and Rāzī's reformulation of the definitions of inclusion and implication offered by Ibn Sīnā from a logical perspective. See his chapter in this volume (=Chapter 5).

3 Rāzī 1997, 1:219. Under *iltizām* Rāzī subsumes *dalālat al-iqtiḍāʾ* (the required meaning), *dalālat al-ishāra* (the alluded meaning), *mafhūm al-muwāfaqa* (the congruent implicature, in Latin: *argumentum a fortiori*) and *mafhūm al-mukhālafa* (the counter implicature, in Latin: *argumentum e contrario*). See Rāzī 1997, 1:232–234.

4 There seems to be no disagreement concerning subsuming *muṭābaqa* under *manṭūq* (or *waḍʿ*-based) and considering all other rational meanings as implicational, but *taḍammun* was a bone of contention among the MMLTs whether to be incorporated under what is said or what is implicated. While Āmidī and Ibn al-Ḥājib hold that *taḍammun* is part of what is said, Rāzī and his followers regarded it as a product of a rational inference as it falls outside the scope of what is considered by the establisher of the language when an expression is assigned to a particular meaning and beyond the scope of what is said by the user of the expression in any communicative situation. See Zarkashī 2013, 1:163.

5 It is an idiom for expressing hesitation.

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will signify its apparent meaning and then the hearer infers from this meaning – by implication – another meaning [which he calls the meaning of meaning] which is your intention."[6]

The distinction between *manṭūq* (what is said) and *mafhūm* (what is implicated) can be traced back to Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 1085). As it will be illustrated, this particular dichotomy attracted the mainstream MMLTs and became a basic part of their classification schemes. In modern philosophy of language and linguistics, Paul Grice (d. 1988) offered a similar distinction, which, for the purpose of comparison, will be discussed later in this chapter.

The distinction between *mafhūm* (intension) and *mā-ṣadaqa-ʿalayhi* (extension) can most probably be traced back to ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 1355). This classification distinguishes between two aspects of meaning: the theoretical or mental aspect represented by the sum of the defining semantic components denoted by a concept and the practical or external aspect represented by the individuals to which this concept applies.[7] In our investigation of the historical origin of the *manṭūq* and *mafhūm* dichotomy, we have not found any mention of it in the related works of many Muslim authors who preceded ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī, including Juwaynī, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), Āmidī and Ibn al-Ḥājib. Even Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), who died less than thirty years before Ījī's death, did not mention these two terms despite his extensive knowledge of the Greek philosophy and Islamic theology as well as his familiarity with the logical and philosophical terms in his different polemics. Ījī mentioned the dichotomy many times in his book *al-Mawāqif fī ʿIlm al-Kalām*, but we found the following quotation conspicuous since it contains a clarification of the difference between the two terms of the dichotomy: "this mistake is due to the lack of the distinction between the intension of the object, which is called the denotation of the object and the extension of that intension, i.e. that which is called the denotatum of that object."[8]

6 Jurjānī 1983, 184:

لا تفيدُ غرضَكَ الذي تعني من مجرَّدِ اللفظِ ولكنْ يدلُّ اللفظُ على معناه الذي يوجبهُ ظاهرهُ ثم يَعْقلُ السامعُ من ذلك المعنى على سَبيلِ الاستدلالِ معنًى ثانياً هو غرضُك.

7 In the history of Western philosophy and linguistics, we can find similar distinctions such as the dichotomy found in the logic of Port-Royal (in 1662) between comprehension and denotation. John Stuart Mill (d. 1873) also offered a similar dichotomy, namely connotation and denotation, and then Gottlob Frege (in 1892) suggested a distinction between sense and reference. Finally, this dichotomy has settled on Rudolf Carnap's (d. 1975) scheme: intension and extension.

8 Ījī and al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī 1998, 8:

(وهذا الغلط منشأه عدم الفرق بين مفهوم الموضوع الذي يسمى عنوان الموضوع وبين ما صدق عليه) هذا (المفهوم) أعني (الذي يسمى ذات الموضوع).

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However, it should be stressed that although there appears to be no mention of this dichotomy in the pertinent literature of Arabic before ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī, a more comprehensive research is needed to verify this claim.

1 Modern Classifications

There are several classification schemes of meaning in modern philosophy of language and linguistics. The most important of those schemes are Geoffrey Leach's proposal on the word level and Paul Grice's proposal on the utterance level. In the following sections, we will outline both schemes and then move on to have a look at the main different approaches for the classification of meaning offered by the MMLTs. Finally, we will discuss the definition-based classification (DBC), which constitutes the core of this chapter.

1.1 Leech's Classification of Word Meaning

In modern semantics and pragmatics, Geoffrey Leach distinguishes between seven types of meaning: conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocative meaning and thematic meaning.[9] The main concern of all these types of meaning is word meaning except thematic meaning, which has to do with how words are arranged in a sentence.

1.1.1 Conceptual Meaning

Conceptual meaning is the central content of an expression, which is also called cognitive or denotative meaning. It is the first meaning that occurs to the speaker's mind when the expression is used in the actual communication, and the primary import that speakers convey in their utterances. By virtue of the conceptual meaning, the word "man" is defined as "HUMAN, MALE, ADULT" and 'woman' as "HUMAN, FEMALE, ADULT." All these defining features are intrinsic rather than extrinsic properties, since they are regarded as essential constituents of the definition of man and woman.[10]

9 See Leech 1981, 9–23.
10 See Leech 1981, 9–12.

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1.1.2 Connotative Meaning

Connotative meaning is "the communicative value an expression has by virtue of what *refers to*, over and above its purely conceptual content."[11] Leech employs the term 'connotation' in a wide sense such that it covers all the concomitants associated with the referent of the concept. In doing so, his technical sense of the term becomes almost equivalent to what the MMLTs call the signification of implication. Both refer to the extrinsic features of the definition of a particular concept such as 'experienced in cookery,' and 'skirt or dress wearing,' which cannot be regarded as essential components of the definition of 'woman.'

According to Leech, connotations of a particular word are not constant across history and cultures. They rather vary from age to age, culture to culture and individual to another. Moreover, they are indeterminate and open-ended. Conceptual meanings are, by contrast, stable, determinate and codifiable.[12]

1.1.3 Social Meaning

By social meaning, Leach refers to the aspect of meaning that indicates the social background of the speaker and his style. Once we hear the pronunciation of a particular utterance or the style used in the communicative situation, we might be able to recognize the regional or social origin of the speaker and his relationship with the hearer.[13]

1.1.4 Affective Meaning

Affective meaning is intended to reflect the personal feeling of the speaker and his attitudes towards the addressee or the theme of the talk. This type of meaning is dependent of the previous ones inasmuch as expressing the feeling and attitudes are usually the byproduct of conceptual, connotative and stylistic meanings.[14] Utterances like (1) and (2) reveal the emotional aspects and personal attitudes regarding the hearer in the former and the referent of the pronoun in the latter.

(1) I hate you.
(2) She is the cream of my coffee.

11 Leech 1981, 12.
12 See Leech 1981, 12–13.
13 See Leech 1981, 14.
14 See Leech 1981, 16.

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1.1.5 Reflected Meaning

This type of meaning is usually found in homonyms where the use of the intended meaning conjures up the other meaning of the homonym. The word ‘intercourse’ may rarely be used to refer to ‘communication’ in its innocent sense without evoking its sexual connotations.[15]

1.1.6 Collocative Meaning

As the name suggests, collocative meaning arises from the meaning of the expression that frequently co-occurs with the used word. Words very often acquire certain associative imports from their habitual contextual juxtaposition with other words. The central meanings of handsome and pretty, for instance, are almost the same since they both mean ‘good looking,’ but they connote different kinds of allurement and attractiveness.[16]

1.1.7 Thematic Meaning

Thematic meaning is the product of the ordering of the words of the utterance in a way which reflects the speaker’s focus and emphasis.[17] The resort to the passive instead of the active voice in (3) could be interpreted as giving prominence to the object ‘the reflecting telescope’ to make it the topic of the utterance while Newton is the focus of the speaker in (4).

(3) The reflecting telescope is invented by Newton in 1671.
(4) Newton invented the reflecting telescope in 1671.

In short, Leech’s distinctions are based on how expressions are related to the contents of the world, the participants, the relevant expressions in the linguistic system, the internal context of the utterance and the situation.

15 See Leech 1981, 16–17.
16 See Leech 1981, 1.
17 See Leech 1981, 19.

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1.2 Grice's Classification of Utterance Meaning

Paul Grice has developed the most common classification of utterance meaning. According to his proposal, meaning is divided into two main categories:

I "What is said," which covers the propositional content of the sentence that is conventionally determined.

II "What is implicated," which refers to the import of the utterance indirectly inferred from the speaker's utterance (conversational implicature) or from some conventional elements of the linguistic structure (conventional implicature).

According to Grice, speakers follow rational rules of conversation, which he calls "maxims of cooperation" and summarizes them in four maxims. Conversational implicatures in his scheme are typically generated by obeying these maxims but can also arise by the violation of one of them. These maxims include:[18]

A. Maxims of Quantity:
   1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
   2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.[19]

If you answer the question "where do you live?" by saying: "somewhere in London," you will be violating the maxim of quantity, since your reply falls short of what the asker requires. The implicature here will be something like "I do not want to tell you about the exact location of my residence." If the same question concerns anybody else, (e.g. "where does John live?") and you provide the same answer, your contribution might be interpreted as you are implying that "you do not know where John exactly lives."

B. Maxims of Quality: Be truthful;
   1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
   2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence."[20]

If an annoying colleague (who knows that you are fed up with his behavior) asks, "Do you really love me" and you reply: "Yes, very much so," you will be – according

18 See Grice 1975, 41–58, especially 45–47.
19 Grice 1975, 45.
20 Grice 1975, 46.

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to Grice's theory – flouting the maxim of quality; thus generating the implicature that "you do not like him."

C. Maxim of Relation: 'Be relevant';

If a particular university approaches you to write a recommendation letter for one of your students and you write, "S/He is extremely polite and punctual" without referring to her/his research skills and educational performance, your remarks will usually be taken to mean "S/He is not suitable for the job."

D. Maxims of Manner: 'Be perspicuous';
   1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
   2. Avoid ambiguity.
   3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
   4. Be orderly."[21]

Thus, if a husband suggests (5) to his wife and the wife replies by using (6) in an ambiguous way, the wife is violating the maxim of manner and conveying the implicature: It is better to avoid mentioning 'ice cream' in the presence of the kids.

(5) Let us get the kids something.
(6) Okay, but I veto I-C-E C-R-E-A-M-S.[22]

Hence, what is said, in the Gricean theoretical framework is intended to cover all elements that are lexically and grammatically coded, including reference assignment and contextual disambiguation. What is implicated, on the other hand, is designed to cover all meanings that are not directly expressed. He subdivides what is implicated into two main categories: what is conventionally implicated and what is non-conventionally implicated using the term 'conventional implicature' for the former and 'conversational implicature' for the latter.

Conversational implicature includes two types: generalized conversational implicature and particularized conversational implicature (see figure 1). Both of these types of meaning are not signified by any structural elements in the utterances associated with them. They are in fact triggered by the conversation maxims.

21 Grice 1975, 46.

22 See Levinson 1983, 104.

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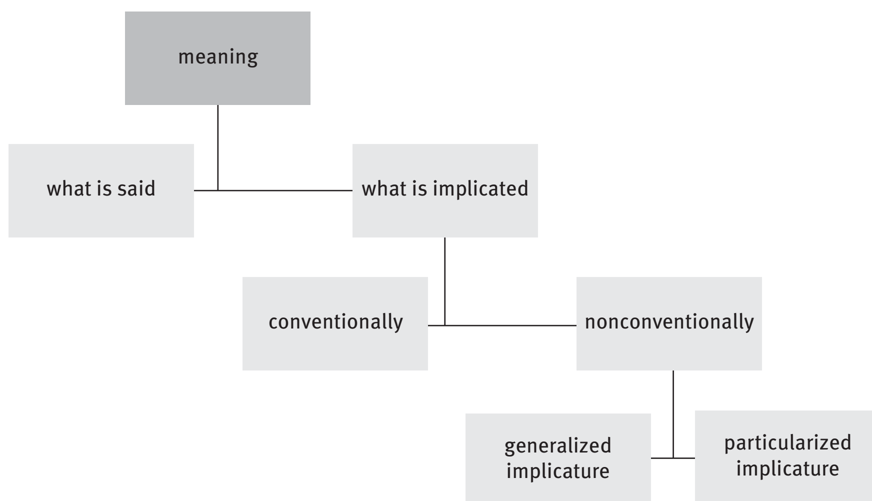

Figure 1: Grice's classification of utterance meaning.

2 The MMLTs Classifications

Although the MMLTs use both terms 'meaning' (*maʿnā)* and 'signification' (*dalāla*) in their classification schemes, they generally prefer to apply the word "signification" which indicates the 'action' or the 'process' rather than 'meaning' which denotes its 'product' (the signified). They suggested several schemes for the classification of signification. Among them are

1. The classification of Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī (d. 1085).
2. The classification of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111).
3. The classification of Āmidī (d. 1233).
4. The classification of Ibn al-Ḥājib (d. 1248).

Following the general framework of Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, Ibn al-Ḥājib proposed one of the most advanced taxonomies. Both scholars distinguished between 'what is said' (*manṭūq* which literally means 'the pronounced') and 'what is implicated' (*mafhūm* which literally means 'the understood'). By 'what is said,' they refer to the meaning that is understood from what is actually stated (that is to say, from the linguistic structure used in the utterance). They assume that in some communicative situations especially when qualified expressions are involved, the speaker says something and keeps silent for other related issues,

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but the audience can infer a ruling (*ḥukm*) concerning the issue not talked about. If you say (7), you are actually implicating (8).

(7) Senior students are invited to the party.
(8) Junior students are not invited to the party.

The status (or the ruling [*ḥukm*] of) the unstated subject (which is 'the junior students' in this example) will have an opposite ruling from the stated subject (which is 'the senior students'). Hence, the Islamic legal term *mafhūm al-mukhālafa* (the counter implicature) is used. On the other hand, if the status (or the ruling of) the unstated subject is the same as the status (or the ruling of) the stated subject, they use the term *mafhūm al-muwāfaqa* (the congruent implicature). If you say (9) for example, your addressee will – with a stronger reason – infer (10)

(9) Students who obtain "B" in the final exam will be granted valuable prizes.
(10) Students who obtain "A" in the final exam will be granted valuable prizes.

Both Juwaynī[23] and Ibn al-Ḥājib use the term 'what is implicated' (*mafhūm)* exclusively for the counter and congruent implicatures. Any other meaning is referred to as a 'what is said' (*manṭūq*). Juwaynī subsumes two categories under 'what is said': *ẓāhir* 'the apparent,' which has more than one possible interpretation and *naṣṣ* (the unequivocal), which is certain, determinate and, therefore, not open to any non-literal interpretation (see figure 2).[24] However, Juwaynī seems to believe that the characteristics of being 'apparent' or 'unequivocal' for a particular text are not confined to 'what is said,' but they are applicable to 'what is implicated' as well. This is tantamount to regarding these two characteristics as levels of readability and clarity of a text rather than being types of meaning. In doing so, he is not only in conformity with the common practice in the Islamic legal theory, but also in line with Sadock, who criticized Grice for considering reinforceability and cancellability to be valid tests for conversational implicatures as being indeterminate meanings. Sadock points out that reinforceability and cancellability do not "distinguish conversational additions from privative ambiguities."[25]

The majority of congruent implicatures, according to Juwaynī are unequivocal and consequently not open to other interpretations while most counter implicatures are of the apparent type, which makes them subject to cancellability.[26] Correspondingly, Sadock states clearly, "Some conversational implicata are fully determinate," while reference assignment, which is usually regarded as part of

23 See Juwaynī 1997, 1:165.
24 See Juwaynī 1997, 1:176.
25 Sadock 1991, 365–376, especially 374.
26 See Juwaynī 1997, 1:176.

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the explicit communication, is indeterminate.[27] Both Juwaynī and Sadock are therefore of the same view that implicatures are not always indeterminate. If this is proven to be true, it will cast doubt on one of the essential criteria on which Grice based his distinction between what is said and what is implicated and its subdivisions.

Juwaynī argues that the cancellability of implicatures is due to the fact the implicature is not part of the utterance *per se* (*laysa juzʾan min al-khiṭāb bi-dhātihi*), and at the same time it is not independent from it (*al-mafhūm laysa mustaqillan bi-dhātihi*). Implicature, therefore, can be cancellable while the explicit massage remains.[28]

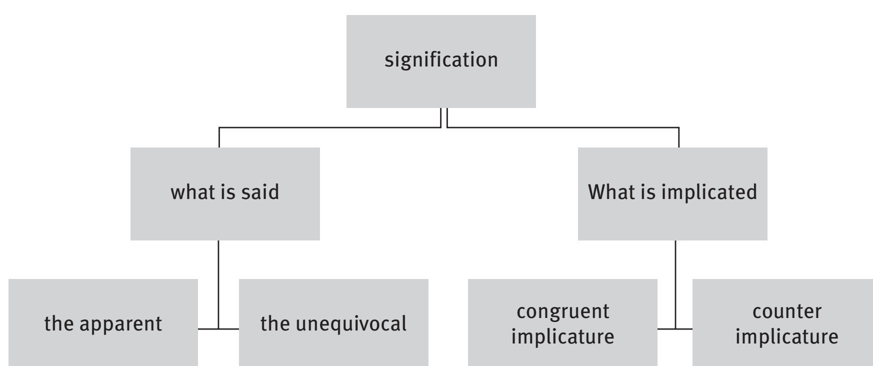

Figure 2: Juwaynī's classification.

Ibn al-Ḥājib, on the other hand, subdivides 'what is said' into two categories: the explicitly said and the implicitly said. Implicitness here is inherently ambiguous and usually meant to catch a heterogeneous set of meanings. Presupposition and multilateral entailment in the modern semantic and pragmatic sense will fall within the scope of the 'implicitly said.' Other types of meaning such as *iqtiḍāʾ* 'the required,' *al-īmāʾ* 'the indicated' and *al-ishāra* 'the alluded' or 'the incidental' (which will be explained in 5.3) are also covered by this term (see figure 3).[29]

Some MMLTs extend *mafhūm* to cover all types of signification that are not included in *manṭūq*. Hence, *dalālat al-ishāra*, *dalālat al-iqtiḍāʾ* and *dalālat al-īmā'* are subsumed under *mafhūm*. There are at least two justifications for this procedure: a) the assumption that they are not structurally stated and b) the

27 Sadock 1991, 367.
28 Juwaynī 1997, 1:176.
29 Ibn al-Ḥājib 2006, 924–941.

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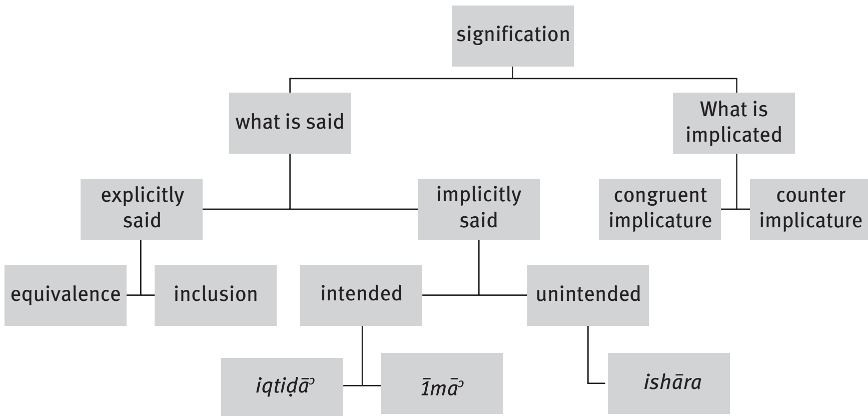

Figure 3: Ibn al-Ḥājib's classification.

assumption that there is no difference in this respect between them on the one hand and the counter and congruent implicatures on the other hand. Among MMLTs who follow this procedure are Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī and Āmidī.

Ghazālī has his own tripartite classification. Initially, he believes that signification can be structured (*manẓūm*), implicated (*mafhūm*), or rationalized (*maʿqūl*).[30] He refers by the latter category to non-linguistic analogy known as *qiyās*. *Manẓūm* in his proposal is equal to *manṭūq* in the Muslim legal mainstream framework. *Mafhūm* captures all the remaining implied types of meaning including counter and congruent implicatures. What distinguishes Ghazālī's classification in its initial version from the other MMLTs' schemes is the inclusion of *qiyās* under the linguistic signification, which is uncommon practice in the pertinent *uṣūlī* classifications of *dalāla*. However, Ghazālī did not maintain this classification consistently. In the chapter allocated to the non-structured meaning, he includes five categories: *dalālat al-iqtiḍāʾ* (the required meaning), *dalālat al-ishāra* (the incidental or alluded cc), *dalālat al-īmāʾ* (the indicated meaning), *mafhūm al-muwāfaqa* (the congruent implicature) and *mafhūm al-mukhālafa* (the counter implicature) (see figure 4).[31]

Āmidī, who seems to be influenced by Ghazālī, also divides meaning into a structured meaning (*manẓūm*) and an unstructured meaning (*ghayr manẓūm*), reducing Ghazālī's tripartite classification into a dichotomy by subsuming *iqtiḍāʾ* under *ghayr manẓūm* and omitting *qiyās* from the linguistic signification. Unlike

30 Ghazālī 1993, 1:180.
31 Ghazālī 1993, 1:263–265.

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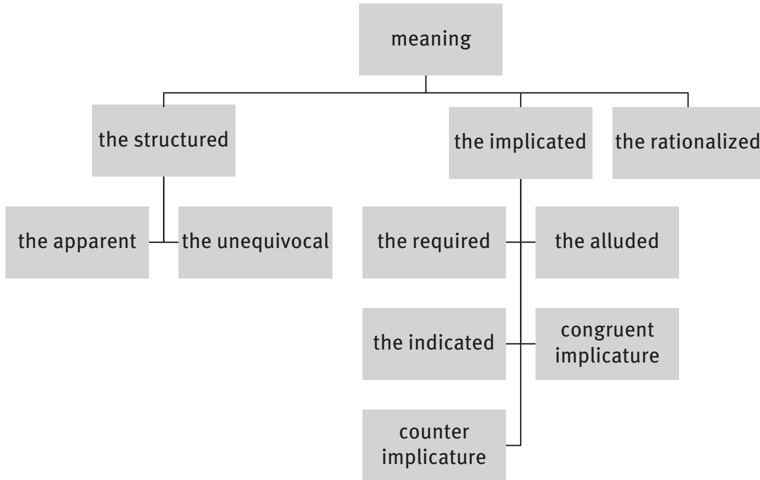

Figure 4: Ghazālī's classification.

Ghazālī, he divides the structured meaning into the signification of equivalence (*dalālat al-muṭābaqa*) and the signification of inclusion (*dalālat al-taḍammun*) instead of *ẓāhir* 'the apparent,' and *naṣṣ* 'the unequivocal' (see figure 5).[32]

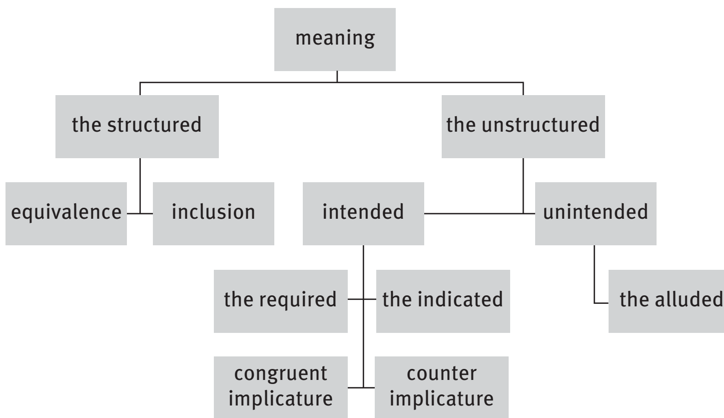

Figure 5: Āmidī's classification.

32 Āmidī 1983, 3:64. We should note here that Āmidī also used the two terms: *manṭūq* and *mafhūm*. See for instance 2:257, 328; 3:66, 71, 74, 78, 80, 84, 85, 142, 166; 4:254, 257, 262.

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3 The Definition-Based Classification (DBC)

I will not go into the details of each one of the above-mentioned proposals;[33] instead, I will concentrate on the commonly accepted trichotomy in the traditional Arabic logic and rhetoric (see figure 6). This threefold proposal, which is fundamentally a definition-based classification (DBC), postulates that the signifier (*dāll*) either designates the total components of the concept (or the proposition) or entails one of its components that constitutes its definition or indicates an 'implicate,' which cannot be one of the elements that constitutes its definition. In what follows, we will deal with each one of these three meanings, but let us first start with equivalence *muṭābaqa*.

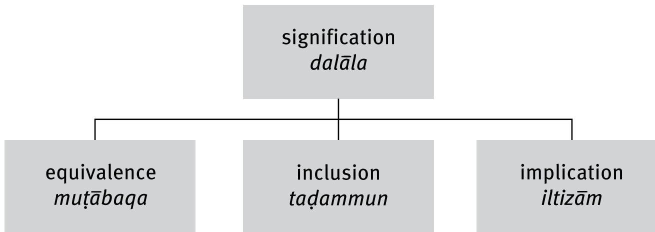

Figure 6: Ibn Sīnā's definition-based classification (DBC).

3.1 The Signification of Equivalence

If we use the word 'woman' for example to refer to an 'ADULT FAMALE HUMAN,' that would be called 'the signification of equivalence' (*dalālat al-muṭābaqa*; literally: the signification of a complete correspondence), since the signifier covers the total components of the concept for which it stands. Therefore, (11) correspondingly signifies (12).

(11) There is a woman in the room.
(12) There is an 'adult female human' in the room.

3.2 The Signification of Inclusion

If we use the word 'woman' to denote anyone (but not the total) of the three components 'ADULT,' 'FAMALE' or 'HUMAN' alone, the signification would be called

33 For an extended discussion of those proposals, see Ali 2013, 142–224.

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'*dalālat al-taḍammun*' (the signification of inclusion), since the word 'woman,' in this case, is not used for its complete correspondence but to include only one of its three components. This type of signification is usually a potential kind of meaning and is not realized unless it is stimulated by some contexts. To make this idea clear, let us imagine a situation where the pest control agent is asking the housekeeper (13) to make sure that nobody is in the house and the housekeeper answers (14), his utterance (14) is usually interpreted as (15), which means that 'woman' inclusionally signifies 'human' as its one of its three semantic components.

(13) Is there any human being in the house?
(14) There is a woman in the house.
(15) There is a human being in the house.

The signified *"madlūl"* in the signification of inclusion (*dalālat al-taḍammun*) is typically more general than the signifier. In other words, this type of signification takes the form of a relationship between the more specific (or a hyponym) and the more general (its superordinate concept). It is quite similar to what is known in modern semantics as 'hyponymy' and "regarded as a simple class of inclusion and unilateral entailment."[34]

There are four rules formulated in the works of MMLTs regarding this type of relationship:[35]

A. The assertion of the more specific logically *entails* (*yastalzim*) the assertion of the more general. Sentence (16) necessarily gives rise to sentence (17).
   (16) There is a bird in the cage.
   (17) There is an animal in the cage.

B. The negation of the more specific *does not* logically *entail* the negation or the assertion of the more general. Sentence (18) does not necessarily give rise to sentence (19) or (20).
   (18) There is no bird in the cage.
   (19) There is no animal in the cage.
   (20) There is an animal in the cage.

C. The assertion of the more general does not logically entail the assertion or the negation of the more specific. Sentence (21) does not necessarily bring about sentence (22) or (23).

34 Riemer 2016, 260.
35 Ghazālī 1993, 1:34.

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(21) There is an animal in the cage.
(22) There is a bird in the cage.
(23) There is no bird in the cage.

D. The negation of the more general logically entails the negation of the more specific. Sentence (24) necessarily gives rise to sentence (25).
(24) There is no animal in the cage.
(25) There is no bird in the cage.

Some researchers in modern semantics and pragmatics raise several issues regarding the classificational consistency of hyponymy; among them is the transitivity failure. Consider the following example:[36]
(26) A car seat is a type of seat.
(27) A seat is an item of furniture.
(28) *A car seat is an item of furniture.

They claim that sentence (28) here is invalid although both sentence (26) and sentence (27) are acceptable, but a moment of reflection would show that the problem is not a transitivity failure, in fact; it has to do with the acceptability of sentence (27). Therefore, the argument should go in the opposite direction. That is to say, since a car seat is not an item of furniture, it would not be reasonable to say: "A seat is an item of furniture," unless we believe that "A seat is an item of furniture" is not equal to "all seats are items of furniture," which means, in this case, that there is no issue with the transitivity *per se*.

Another problem in the first rule is that it is not applicable to sentences like (29) and (30), where the subject in the entailed sentence, 'animals' in (30), is more general than the predicate, 'mammal' in both (29) and (30).
(29) Cats are mammal.
(30) *Animals are mammal.

If we apply the first of the previous four rules to (29), the inference (30) will be invalid, since not all animals are mammal.

In the same way, if we apply the first rule to the sentence (31), it will entail that "S/He became a Muslim," which is obviously false, since s/he could have been already a (non-Sunnī) Muslim. Similarly, becoming a woman does not entail becoming a human if we talk about a girl who became a woman as in (32).

36 See Riemer 2016, 260. See also Croft and Cruse 2004, 144–145.

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(31) She became a Sunnī.
(32) She became a woman.

Thus, one possible solution to the last mentioned problems that face the syntagmatic relationships of *dalālat al-taḍammun* is to exclude from the first rule:

I Cases of transition (and any change from subclass to another under the same superordinate);

II Cases where the subject is more general than the predicate in affirmative universal propositions (*qaḍāyā mūjaba kulliyya*).

3.3 The Signification of Implication

The third type of signification in the DBC is *dalālat al-iltizām* 'the signification of implication.' The signified in this type of signification is called "*lāzim*"[37] (the implicatum or the entailed, literally: concomitant, necessary or binding). Unlike the signified in the signification of equivalence and inclusion, the signified in the signification of implication must not be any of the constituent components of the definition. That is to say, it should not be a defining feature of the signifier but has to be a relevant implicate of the defined concept. Courage, for example, is a relevant 'implicate' associated with lion, which makes it a potential implicatum for it (although it is not a defining feature of lion). Similarly, man may implicatively signify 'a potential smoker.' Therefore, when somebody says (34) as an answer to (33), s/he could be taken to implicate (35).

(33) I smell cigarette smoke in the house.
(34) There is a man in the house.
(35) There is a potential smoker in the house.

The justification for accepting the feature 'potential smoker' as a possible implicatum for 'man,' but not as an 'inclusionally signified import' is the fact that this feature is not one of the defining characteristics of 'man.' Hence, as we have seen, the tripartite distinction between the signification of equivalence, the signification of inclusion and the signification of implication is based on whether the signified is considered to be internal or external to the definition of the signifier.

37 Following the logicians, the MMLTs unusually use the active participle '*lāzim*' (which is derived from the verb *lazima*) to indicate the passive participle 'the implicatum' or 'the entailed' while using the passive participle *malzūm* to denote the active participle 'the implicating' or 'the entailer.'

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As it is generally accepted in both Muslim legal literature and linguistics, the relationship between the two parts of the "sign" in the signification of equivalence is arbitrary[38] and *waḍ*ʿ-based while it is logical in the signification of inclusion. The relationship between the signifier and the signified in the signification of implication, however, is neither logical in the strict sense of the term nor arbitrary. It is largely determined by communicative inferential processes supported by the communication principles and the relevant contextual information such as shared knowledge and some cultural elements (see Figures 7, 8 and 9).

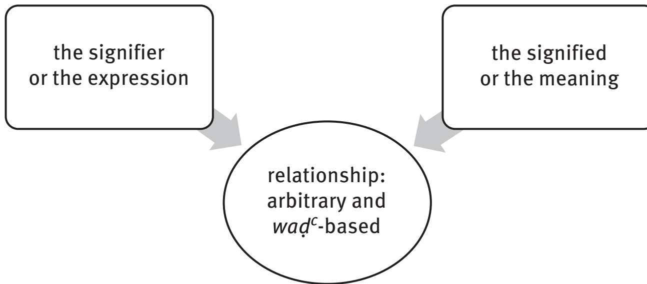

Figure 7: The relationship between the signifier and the signified in equivalence.

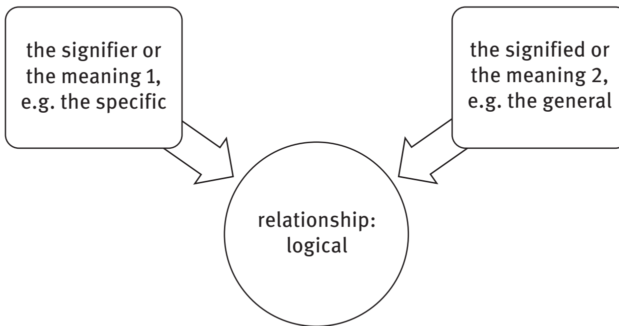

Figure 8: The relationship between the signifier and the signified in inclusion.

38 For the arbitrariness of the relationship between the signifier and the signified in the legal literature, see for example: Rāzī 1997, 1:183; Ibn al-Ḥājib 1983, 1:192; Isnawī 1999, 1:80; Ījī 1983, 1:192–193.

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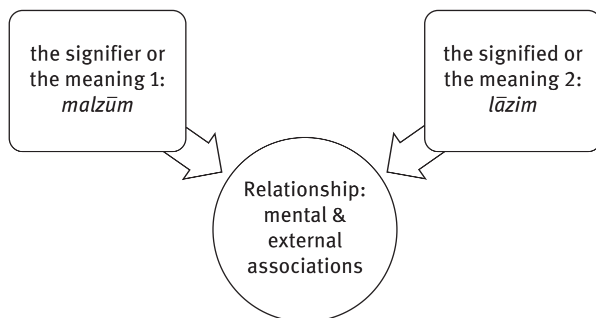

Figure 9: The relationship between the signifier and the signified in implication.

3.3.1 The Triggers of the Signification of Implication

If we attempt to explore the ways in which the signification of implication is triggered, we may find that implication could typically be the result of one of the following processes:

As it is shown in Figures 10 and 11, each type of the inferential process produces a particular type of meaning. In the following sections, I will discuss each type of implicational meaning and the way in which it is trigged, but – before that – we have to bear in mind the difference between the maxims (like relevance, quantity and quality) that generate implicatures (implicature generators) and the processes that trigger implicatures (implicatures triggers) like the ones mentioned above.

3.3.2 Types of the Signification of Implication

As we have seen, we can distinguish between at least six types of meaning which arise from the signification of implication: required meaning, connotative meaning, incidental meaning, figurative meaning, indicated meaning and analogical meaning. In the following sections, we will explain each type of these meanings, which are triggered by the above-mentioned processes, to justify its being subsumed under the signification of implication.

3.3.2.1 Required Meaning

There is no exact counterpart for the modern term ‘presupposition’ in the works of MMLTs, but their notion of *dalālat al-iqtiḍāʾ* (the required signification) partially

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The process	meaning
To postulate that a part of the proposition is omitted for the utterance to be true. The task of the addressee is to retrieve the missing element in order for the utterance to be conditionally true, logically attainable, or legally acceptable.	Required meaning
To postulate that something is presupposed for the utterance to be true.	Presupposition
To conjure up some psychological or social associations with one or more elements in the utterance.	Connotation
To combine two or more utterances together and infer a new proposition that is not articulated in any of the stated utterances.	Incidental meaning
To substitute one conventional linguistic sign with a non-conventional one based on some type of relationships as well as some contextual evidence.	Figurative meaning
To indicate a causal relationship between two utterances relying on the maxim of relevance.	Indicated meaning
To make a harmonic analogy by assuming that the relevant unstated subject more eligible to the status (or the ruling) of the stated subject.	Congruent implicature
To make a contrary analogy by assuming that the relevant unstated subject has an opposite status (or ruling) of the stated subject depending on the maxim of quality and the maxim of relevance.	Counter implicature

Figure 10: The process of triggering the signification of implication.

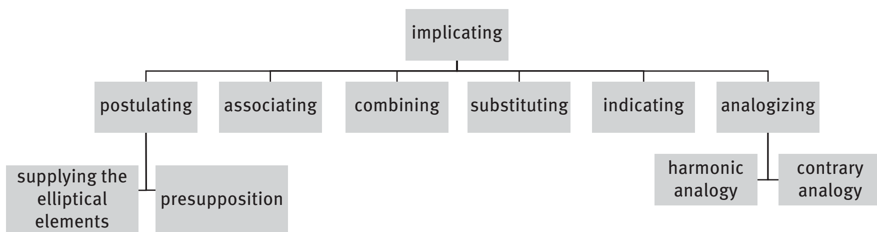

Figure 11: The triggers of the signification of implication.

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overlaps with its technical sense. Required signification is noticeably more general than presupposition, since it signifies other semantic imports, which fall outside the semantic scope of the latter term. Their notion of *iqtiḍāʾ* is based on the assumption that there is a missing element in the speaker's utterance, which is essential for the addressee to interpret it properly. The task of the addressee when s/he receives an utterance involving *dalālat al-iqtiḍāʾ* is to retrieve the missing element in order for the utterance to be

A. true;
B. logically attainable; or
C. legally acceptable.

What is initially understood from the utterance (36) is that overcooked food is harmful by itself, but the intended meaning here is that the eating of the overcooked food (but not the food itself) is harmful. Therefore, in order for the utterance to be true, we need to retrieve the seemingly omitted elements 'the eating of' before the word 'overcooked.'

(36) Overcooked food is harmful.

In utterance (37), the hearer has to supplement the presumably omitted elements 'the people of' before the word 'township' in order for the clause "Ask the township" to be logically adequate since people do not typically ask the townships themselves, but the inhabitants of the townships.

(37) "Ask the township where we were and the caravan with which we travelled hither."[39]

The utterance (38), on the other hand, legally presupposes that the speaker is the owner of the car (or her/his legal representative), since ownership is a precondition for legally selling any goods.

(38) I would like to sell the car.

Only the last one of the three types of *dalālat al-iqtiḍāʾ* mentioned above can be regarded as a presupposition in the modern technical sense of the term.

As we have already seen, two types of meaning are included in what the MMLTs call *dalālat al-iqtiḍāʾ* (the required meaning):

A. Presupposition in the modern linguistic sense of the term; and
B. What might be called 'elliptic meaning.'

39 Quran 12:82.

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The common feature of these two types of meaning is that both postulate that part of the proposition has been omitted or presupposed and should be retrieved for the utterance to be true and logically or legally acceptable.

Thus, the required meaning in its general sense is based on the maxims of quality and of plausibility. For 'elliptic meaning,' it is clear that the concerned utterance would not be true without recovering the assumedly ellipted parts of the proposition. For presupposition, on the other hand, the presumably missing part of the proposition is usually a precondition for the utterance to be true. For example, the utterance (39) would not be true unless we assume the truth of (40).

(39) The driver got out of the car.

(40) The driver was in the car.

3.3.2.2 Connotative Meaning

Connotative meaning is a unique type of meaning since it denotes the marginal aspect of the communicative import of utterances. In most communicative situations, the participants normally focus on the denotative sense and regard it as the intention of the speaker's utterance. Any other social, cultural or psychological aspects associated with the words or any linguistic structures would usually vary from person to person and perhaps according to other non-linguistic factors and tend to get less focus than the main denotation.

Connotations should be regarded in one way or another as *lawāzim* (implicates) that are related to 'the signified' through *dalālat al-iltizām* 'the signification of implication.' In other words, the connotative shades of the words whether they are social, cultural or psychological are not parts of the constituent components of the concept's definition, but rather potential implications that could be – like any other types of 'implicates' – stimulated and realized by some contextual elements in the actual communicative situations.

Most of the emotional associations of the words, clauses and sentences are incidental to the central or denotational import of the utterance, which may well qualify them to fall within the incidental meaning. The word "mother" and its synonyms (mom, mama, mamma, mommy and mum) – for example – are usually associated with psychological and social connotations such as love, sacrifice and altruism, but those associations are rarely intended by the speaker as part of the central communicative import of her/his utterance. In the same time, the above synonyms vary in terms of their connotations although they are denotationally synonymous. The variations of the connotative import of these words are mainly related to the age of the child.

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3.3.2.3 Incidental Meaning

Incidental meaning is the product of interpreting a combination of two or more non-simultaneous utterances together. If a speaker says: "I have been a teacher for twenty years" and on other occasion, he says: "I started work when I was 19," it would be reasonable for his audience to infer that his age is thirty-nine.

This type of meaning, which is known by MMLTs as 'the alluded signification' (*dalālat al-ishāra*) can also be called 'the detected meaning'; since it depends heavily on the processing efforts made by the receiver. In any case, unlike other types of meanings, it is usually unintended by the speaker although it could be part of his unconsciousness. It can also be indirectly leaked out by the speaker for a particular communicative purpose. In the last example, it could be the case that the speaker wanted to imply proudly that "he has a long experience in teaching though he is still young."

Although the addressee combines two or more utterances together and infers a new proposition that is not articulated in any of the stated utterances, but his inference is undoubtedly plausible. The validity of his inference is derived from *dalālat al-iltizām* 'the signification of implication' on the grounds that the combination of the two stated utterances implicates a new relevant proposition.[40]

3.3.2.4 Figurative Meaning

Figurative meaning is used here to encompass both metaphoric meaning and metonymic meaning. Both metaphor and metonymy are regarded as figures of speech,[41] but the main difference between them is that metaphor is based on similarity while metonymy is based on association.

The notion of figurative meaning is commonly said to be based on the act of implying something by stating something else. This type of act is viewed in the works of MMLTs as a transfer (*naql*), borrowing (*istiʿāra*) or substitution (*tabdīl*). According to them, in *majāz* – like any other instances of *dalālat al-iltizām* – 'the signification of implication,' the speaker either says the implying (*malzūm*) and intends the implicatum (*lāzim*) as in *majāz*; or says the implicatum and intends the implying as in *kināya*. This act of substitution in metonymy might – given the relevant contextual evidence – take some forms like: [42]

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40 See Rāzī 1997, 1:410–411.

41 There are many definitions of metonymy and the following seems to be one of the best: "Metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same idealized cognitive model." Kövecses and Radden 2007.

42 For a discussion of the types of metonymy relationships recognized by MMLTs see Taftāzānī 1983, 2:313. See also Ali 2013, 76.

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1. CAUSE FOR EFFECT;
   (41) Unlock the prisons (meaning 'set the prisoners free').[43]
2. EFFECT FOR CAUSE;
   (42) Body heat for anger.[44]
3. PART FOR WHOLE;
   (43) "And among them are those who abuse the Prophet and say, 'He is an ear.'"[45]
4. WHOLE FOR PART;
   (44) We need a couple of strong bodies for our team (=strong people).[46]
5. PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT;
   (45) He bought a Ford.[47]
6. OBJECT USED FOR USER;
   (46) The sax has the flu today.[48]
7. INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE;
   (47) The Army wants to reinstitute the draft.
8. THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION.[49]
   (48) The White House has released a photo of President Trump, surrounded by top aides.
9. ACTUAL FOR POTENTIAL;
   (49) He is an angry person. For 'he can be angry.'[50]
10. POTENTIAL FOR ACTUAL;
   (50) I can see your point. For 'I see your point.'[51]
11. THE UNQUALIFIED FOR THE QUALIFIED;
   (51) Mother for a housewife mother.[52]
12. THE FUTURE STATUS FOR THE CURRENT STATUS;
   (52) "Indeed, I have seen myself [in a dream] pressing wine."[53]

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43 Janda 2011, 383.
44 Kövecses 2002, 156. The following is a similar example from the Quran 4:10: "Indeed, those who devour the property of orphans unjustly are only consuming into their bellies fire."
45 Quran 9:61.
46 Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 37.
47 Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 39.
48 Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 39.
49 Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 39. See also Kövecses and Radden 1999, 27.
50 Kövecses and Radden 1999, 33.
51 Kövecses and Radden 1999, 34.
52 Gibbs 1999, 66.
53 Quran 12:36.

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Unlike the relationship between the signifier and the signified in the non-figurative signs, which tends to be arbitrary and conventional, the relationship between the implying (*malzūm*) and the implicatum (*lāzim*) must always be inferential. The decisive factor for determining which one of the possible implicata is the intended one is the contextual evidence provided in the actual communicative situation.

In MMLTs, modern linguistics and philosophy of language, there seems to be no principle by which one can explain how to move from the signifier to the signified in figurative language. As Searle puts it, "The question, 'How do metaphors work?' is a bit like the question, 'How does one thing remind us of another thing?' There is no single answer to either question."[54]

3.3.2.5 Indicated Meaning

Indicated meaning is intended by the MMLTs to refer to the pragmatic import generated from propositions by the maxim of relevance and usually indicating a causal relationship. In the teacher's reply to the student's utterance in the below example, we commonly infer a causation in their dialogue as illustrated in (53–55).

(53) Student: I have three absences.
(54) Teacher: You are not allowed to take the exam.
(55) Your three absences are the cause for not allowing you to take the exam.

In modern pragmatics, Grice refers to this type of inference as part of what he calls the 'particularized conversational implicature.' His typical example is the following extract of conversation, where B alludes to C.

(56) A: Smith doesn't seem to have a girlfriend these days.
(57) B: He has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately.
(58) C: Smith has, or may have, a girlfriend in New York.[55]

It is clear that the indication of causation in the above conversation is arising from the observing of the relation between the New York visit and his girlfriend.

Sentences containing the indicated meaning may take different shapes. The noun phrase 'the wealthy' in a sentence like (59) suggests a causal relationship between wealthiness (richness) and the increase of taxation and consequently the understandability of the action. Similarly, the deservingness of death penalty in (60) is due to the terrorism of the actors/subjects.

(59) The US increases taxes on the wealthy.
(60) Terrorists deserve death penalty.

54 Searle 1979, 104. See also Ortony 1993, 102.
55 See Grice 1989b, 32.

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3.3.2.6 Analogical Meaning

The term 'analogical meaning' is used here to refer exclusively to the meanings that concern the statute of the analogue or the opposite of what is said. This term – as already explained in section 2 – covers two categories: *mafhūm al-muwāfaqa* (the congruent implicature, *argumentum e fortiori*) and *mafhūm al-mukhālafa* (the counter implicature, *argumentum e contrario*). Both these types of meanings are generated by type of analogy relying on some communication maxims. Congruent implicature is engendered by identical analogy depending on the maxim of relevance while counter implicature is stimulated by opposite analogy by resorting to the maxim of quantity. Let us start with the former type.

3.3.2.6.1 Congruent Implicature

Congruent implicature is the product of a harmonic analogy by which it is assumed that the similar relevant unstated subject is more eligible to the status (or the ruling) of the stated subject. The term encompasses two types:

A. Implicating the higher by stating the lower as in (61) and (62).

(61) Blindness is not a disability.

(62) One-eyedness is not a disability.

The analogy process here is based on the assumption that if blindness is not a disability, then with a stronger reason, one-eyedness is not a disability.

B. Including the lower by stating the higher as in (63) and (64).

(63) Students who obtain less than a 2.00 average in their first semester shall be dismissed automatically.

(64) Students who obtain less than a 1.99 average in their first semester shall be dismissed automatically.

It is usually the case in the congruent implicature – as in the above examples – that the point of resemblance is more relevant to the unstated subject than to the stated subject, which may provide a plausible justification for the MMLTs to call the basis by which this kind of meaning is engendered *qiyās al-awlā* 'a fortiori analogy' (with a stronger reason).

3.3.2.6.2 Counter implicature

Counter implicature is the product of an opposite analogy by which it is assumed that the contrary relevant unstated subject must have a contrary judgment to the

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status (or the ruling) of the stated subject.[56] Therefore, the addressee can infer that the speaker of (65) will not attend the party if he is not invited since the speaker committed her-/himself to attend the party if the addressee sends her/him an invitation and kept silent about the truth conditions of (66).

(65) If you send me an invitation, I will attend the party.
(66) If you do not send me an invitation, I will not attend the party.

The MMLTs include several kinds of inferences under what they call 'counter implicature.'[57] Among them are:

A. The implicature of a restrictive attribute: *Mafhūm al-ṣifa* as in (67) and (68) where the former implicates the latter.
   (67) Senior students are invited to the party.
   (68) Junior students are not invited to the party.
B. The implicature of a condition: *Mafhūm al-sharṭ* as in (65) and (66).
C. The implicature of a stated numeral: *Mafhūm al-ʿadad* as in (69) and (70).
   (69) I have three children.
   (70) I have only three children (no more than three).
D. The implicature of a time limit: *Mafhūm al-ghāya* as in (71) and (72).
   (71) The collection will continue until the end of the financial year.
   (72) The collection will not continue after the end of the financial year.

Both congruent and counter implicatures involve the following pillars:

Firstly, five premises:

1. The mentioned case (*manṭūq*);[58] as 'sending an invitation' in (65) and 'students who obtain less than a 2.00 average in their first semester" in (63).
2. The qualification 'the *ratio legis*'; as the condition in (65) and 'getting less than a 2.00 average in their first semester' in (63).
3. The unmentioned case (*maskūt ʿanhu*); as 'not sending an invitation' in (66) and 'students who obtain less than a 1.99 average in their first semester' in (64).
4. The ruling of the mentioned case (*ḥukm al-manṭūq*);[59] as 'the attendance of the party' in (65) and 'the automatic dismissal' in (63).
5. The ruling of the unmentioned case (*ḥukm al-maskūt ʿanhu*); as 'the non-attendance of the party' in (66) and the non-dismissal' in (64).

56 It is called in Latin: *Unius positio est negatio alterius*.
57 For a detailed discussion of these and similar inferences, see Ali 2013, 192–224.
58 It is the antecedent in a conditional statement.
59 It is the consequent in a conditional statement.

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Secondly, the process (analogical reasoning), which is either the identical analogy in the congruent implicature or the opposite analogy in counter-implicature.

Thirdly, the conclusion: determining the ruling of the unmentioned case; as the inference that the speaker will not attend the party as in (66) and the inference that they shall be dismissed automatically as in (64).

It could be worth noting here that some types of what the MMLTs call counter implicatures are similar to what is called in the Neo-Gricean Pragmatics ‘scalar Implicature.’ However, the difference between the MMLTs’ approach and the Western Pragmatists’ approach in dealing with this type of implicature seems to be that the MMLTs regard the relevant no talked about case as an opposite case and therefore should be assigned an opposite judgment. The Pragmatists, on the other hand, conceive the talked about case as a level in a scale, which varies in its strength. So, whenever a weaker value in the scale is asserted, the negation of all the stronger values on the scale is implicated. Therefore, if one says (73) s/he would be taken to implicate (74).

(73) Some passengers on the cruise have suffered from motion sickness.

(74) Not all of the passengers on the cruise have suffered from motion sickness.

3.3.3 The Generators of the Signification of Implication

As we have seen, in order to give rise to one of the types of meaning subsumed under the signification of implication we need to rely on triggers and generators. The triggers have already been dealt with in section 3.3.1. In this section, we will assign each type of meaning the communication maxim that generates it. Required meaning – as shown in 3.3.2.1 – involves the assumption that some elements have been omitted from the speaker’s utterance and we have to retrieve those elements in order for us to recover the speaker’s intention. The argument here is that the literal interpretation of the speaker’s utterance seems to be either untrue or implausible, but since speakers tend to be truthful, the hearers have to look for other possible interpretations until they find one. This action on the hearer’s part is based on two maxims:

A. “*Ṣidq al-mutakallim*” or the maxim of quality, according to which speakers usually commit themselves to tell the truth.
B. “*ṣiḥḥa ʿaqliyya*” or the maxim of sensibleness, according to which speakers’ contributions usually tend to make sense.

The hearer is also obliged by virtue of the principles of cooperation to what the MMLTs call *iʿmāl* (which literally means ‘to operate something,’ ‘to activate something’ or ‘to cause something to work or function’). This essential communication

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maxim provides the justification for the tendency of the hearer to continue searching for other possible interpretations when the speaker's utterance seems odd or implausible.

In section 3.3.2.5, we have stated that the indicated meaning is generated by the maxim of relevance. This applies also to connotative and figurative meanings as well as congruent implicature. Counter implicature, however, is generated by relevance and quantity while incidental meaning is generated by relevance and cohesion. The following table (in figure 12) is designed to show the maxims that generate each type of implicated meaning.

For successful communication, 'the implication' has to be valid and relevant to the context. Validity here is a relative and vague concept since it covers all possible mental and external associations attached to the word or the proposition, but only what is relevant to the communicative situation can probably be taken to be intended by the speaker. As a general criterion: the more prominent (*ashhar*), stronger (*aqwā*) and more salient (*aẓhar*) the relation between the two parts of the implication is, the more appropriate the interpretation will be.[60]

Meaning	**Maxim**
Required meaning	Quality & plausibility
Presupposition	Quality & plausibility
Connotation	Relevance
Incidental meaning	Relevance and cohesion
Figurative meaning	Relevance
Indicated meaning	Relevance
Congruent implicature	Relevance
Counter implicature	Quantity and relevance

Figure 12: The maxims generating implicated meanings.

60 See Ali 2013, 75.

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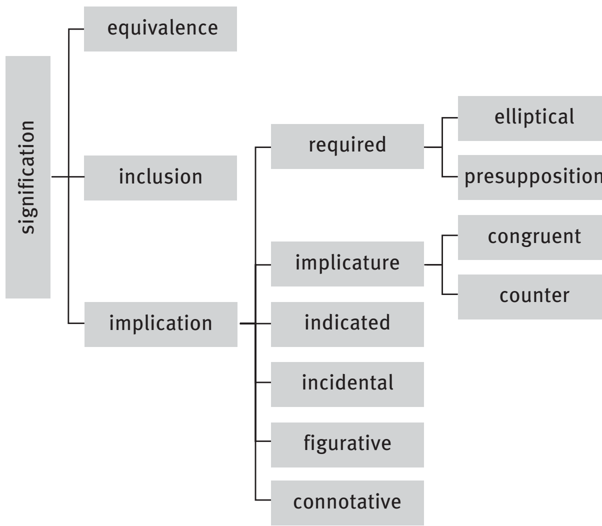

Figure 13: Integrated classification of signification.

4 Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed a number of philosophical and semantic issues concerning the problem of meaning and presented some of the MMLTs's answers to crucial questions such as: How and on what basis are meanings classified? What is the reference and legitimacy of each type of meaning? How are different types of meaning derived and generated?

We have also presented a number of the MMLTs' schemes of classifications of meaning. At least one of these classifications seems to have no counterpart in Western philosophy and modern linguistics, namely Ibn Sīnā's classification of *dalāla*. His threefold classification can in one way or another be linked to the Aristotelian theory of *per se* attributes, but he managed to develop it into a semantic theory of signification hence offering a highly reliable, solid, and coherent definition-based classification of meaning. Ibn Sīnā's scheme is relevant not only to logic and philosophy but also to the legal theory since it explores the ways in which different types of meaning are generated and distinguished. It is also adopted by some MMLTs to justify the manners in which the legal rulings are derived.

The integrated classification of signification discussed in this chapter is based on whether the derived meaning is considered to be an intrinsic or extrinsic property of the definition. The former type covers two categories: a) equivalence, where the signifier denotes the total components of the concept for which it stands

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and b) inclusion, in which the signifier entails only one of its defining features. The signified in the signification of implication, on the other hand, should not be any of the constituent components of the signifier, but has to be a valid relevant implicate of the defined concept. Although it is not always easy to distinguish between what is intrinsic and what is extrinsic to the definition, the tripartite classification is based on a relatively solid criterion. There are at least six processes by which the addressee can proceed from saying to implying: postulating, associating, combining, substituting, indicating and analogizing. By resorting to these processes and relying on some cooperation maxims, at least six distinct types of implicational meanings can be produced: required meaning, connotative meaning, incidental meaning, figurative meaning, indicated meaning and analogical meaning (see figure 13).

Cancellability and reinforceability are not always valid tests for what Grice calls 'conversational implicatures' since multiple literal readings for ambiguous utterances can also be cancellable. Moreover, some instances of the signification of implication are proved to be non-cancellable, which diminishes the importance of Grice's criteria and confirms the criticism directed at him in this respect.

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