Islamic Approaches to Symbolism

by Christopher Buck

Note: "Islamic Approaches to Symbolism"—Chapter Three of *Symbolic Quranic Exegesis* (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 1991, pp. 69–137)—was supervised by Canada's renowned Islamicist, the late Andrew Rippin (d. 2016), in whose memory this study is respectfully dedicated. Now published in 2017, "Islamic Approaches to Symbolism" surveys interpretations (*tafsīr*) of "ambiguous" (*mutashābihāt*) verses of the Qur'an (Q. 3:7) and offers a five-fold topology: (1) rhetorical exegesis (§ 2.0, *infra*); (2) theological exegesis (§ 3.0); (3) philosophical exegesis (§ 4.0); (4) mystical exegesis (§ 5.0); and (5) sectarian exegesis (§ 6.0). Fine scholarly monographs notwithstanding, no typology, to the best of the author's knowledge, has been offered as an overview of Islamic approaches to passages in the Qur'an that are figurative, and possibly symbolic.

1.0 Introduction

John Wansbrough had once envisioned the possibility for "semasiological analysis of the scriptural lexicon." Of "greatest significance," in his view, was the prospect of "an analysis of figure and trope in terms of archetypal patterns, that is, the *topoi* and *schemata* of monotheistic revelation."[1] Such an enterprise, though not as yet undertaken, would necessarily involve literary analysis of the Qur'ān. To "figure out" a Quranic figure of speech, and to determine its symbolic content (if any), some measure of methodological agnosticism—uncommitted to any orthodox, heterodox, or anti-religious bias—might prove fruitful. Advocating methodological plurality in the study of the Qur'ān (without necessarily sacrificing the so called "God-hypothesis" of revelation), Rippin calls for a more open approach to the study of the text, free of the trappings of "Orientalism":

> The pitfalls in approaching the Qur'ān as literature, then, I see perhaps most of all related to the failure of researchers to embrace the possibility of a plurality of methods or even a pluralistic attitude towards method. As far as I am concerned, if people wish to spend their lives looking for the author's intention or speculating over the meaning of the text to the first hearers, then so be it. The results produced by such investigations are indeed interesting, even valuable, but I fail to see them as anything more than one more link in the historical chain of reader-response to the Qur'ān, a response to be situated not back in the seventh-century origins of Islam, as many of those who champion the approach would like to have it, but rather to be situated in terms of the twentieth-century response developed by this community of historical scholarship. And this then brings me to what I see as the prospects of studying the Qur'ān as literature: I see the attempt at reconstructing the history of the reception of the text as the most valuable and most interesting approach.[2]

This chapter will attempt to reconstruct the history of the reception of the Qur'ān in its symbolic dimension. This study will look at some stated and implied relationships between figuration and symbolism in the Islamic heritage to establish an intellectual context for allegorical interpretation within modern Islam. The reader will be asked to bear with a number of terminological imprecisions as distinctions in nomenclature among the various Islamic intellectual disciplines were often blurred. The same Islamic term may have had an entirely different technical meaning for one Islamic "science" as compared to another. Overlap is also to be expected.

Following a very brief discussion of Western approaches to symbolism, Islamic concerns over anthropomorphisms in scripture will be addressed, a Sunnī dispute which became the initial driving impetus behind symbolic exegesis of the Qur'ān. In all, five Islamic approaches to Quranic figuration and symbolism will be examined, three of which involve specific—in some cases structured—modes of argumentation (dialectical, syllogistical, and parabolical), examined *infra*:

Rhetorical exegesis, which takes a strictly linguistic approach to figurative discourse, identifying various figures of speech in the process. Some important rhetoricians, it should be noted, were at the same time theologians writing in the mainstream tafsīr tradition, such as the Muʻtazilī scholar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144),[3] and the Ashʻarī writer Saʻd al-Dīn Masʻūd ibn ʻUmar al-Taftāzānī (d. 791/1322).[4] According to some opinions, rhetorical concepts of figuration (*majāz*) were taken over by Muʻtazilite theologians as a tool to smooth over Quranic anthropomorphisms. Primary mode of discourse: Psychological analysis (al-Jurjānī).

Theological exegesis, in which scholastics engaged in formal dialectical discourse (*kalām*) in order to deal with the problem of anthropomorphisms in scripture and related theological concerns. *Kalām* is the precursor to full-fledged Islamic philosophy, characterized by a "style of discussion where objections are put forth and then the response."[5] Primary mode of discourse: dialectical argumentation.

Philosophical exegesis in which reason is made a tool of metaphorical exegesis. In its extreme forms, this led to a "cult of rationalism."[6] In the symbolic method it pursued, an idea would be drawn out of metaphor, as a pearl pried from an oyster, except that no essential link was seen between the idea and figure. Symbolic language expresses truths to the masses. A gifted few (philosophers) able to penetrate the deep structure of revelation, its secrets veiled from the unworthy masses. Primary mode of discourse: syllogism.

Mystical exegesis typifies the intuitive insight of mystics, who posited a law of correspondences in which reality is enshrined in symbol and referent alike. The symbol itself hints at a higher reality beyond reason. For symbol to be fathomed, reason must defer to mystical knowing, as logic topples in the realm of the ineffable.[7] Primary mode of discourse: allusion.

Sectarian (Ismāʻīlī) exegesis may involve elements of all the above, yet is characterized historically by its heterodox origins and attempts to legitimate those origins. Issues over authority to interpret—vested in Shīʻī spiritual leaders and their cults and institutions—often dominate the interpretations themselves. As Rippin observes: "Support for dissident opinion in Islam was generally found ex post facto through the expediency of allegorical interpretation."[8] Primary mode of discourse: polemic.

Without intending oversimplification or caricature, I have attempted to present some distinctions which help earmark these five exegetical traditions. All of this activity exemplifies in an ongoing way what Rippin elsewhere characterizes as "the literary formation of Islam."[9]

Before looking into specific Islamic approached to symbolism, some general remarks on the nature of figuration and symbolism will serve to bring into bolder relief some of the interpretive issues involved in the dynamics between rhetoric and hermeneutics.

1.1 Figuration

Over the centuries, the question of Quranic figuration engaged a broad range of scholastics, rhetoricians, philosophers, mystics and Shīʻīs in Islam, within their respective disciplines. Not surprisingly, issues raised over the nature of figurative language and symbolism show that East and West are in some ways not so far apart as often thought.

Figuration and symbolism may be related but are not the same. Symbolism may or may not presuppose figuration. Of the important Western models formulated to

address this problem, only a select few will be mentioned, in an effort to suggest some theoretical moorings independent of Islamic thought.

What seems most useful at this point is simply to define figuration first, then symbolism. Once defined, descriptive theories will be introduced below, offering empirical models testing for figuration and for anthropological verification[10] of validity in the interpretation of symbolism. Generally speaking, figuration is non-literal expression. Symbolism requires interpretation. Both exhibit obliquity.[11] Figuration involves meaning; symbolism entails significance.[12] Here interpretation (asserting the opacity[13] of the symbol to disclose its intentional referent) is opposed to comprehension (based on lexically extensive or associative meanings).[14]

Some straightforward definitions of terms may be introduced and provision-ally tendered here. Bullinger defines a figure of speech as "simply a word or sentence thrown into a peculiar form, different from its original or simplest meaning or use."[15] Bullinger draws an important distinction between "resemblance" (often explicit) and "representation" (usually non-literal). Thus, a simile is "comparison by resemblance." A parable is an extended simile or "comparison by continued resemblance."[16] A metaphor is "comparison by representation" or "transference."[17] Allegory is considered an extended metaphor or "continued comparison by representation or implication."[18] A scriptural "symbol" is "a material object substituted for a moral or spiritual Truth."[19] What Bullinger has to say regarding popular misconceptions of figurative language is simple but important:

> To-day (1898) "Figurative language" is ignorantly spoken of as though it made less of the meaning, and deprived the words of their power and force. A passage of God's Word is quoted; and it is met with the cry, "Oh, that is figurative"—implying that its meaning is weakened, or that it has quite a different meaning, or that it has no meaning at all. But the very opposite is the case. For an unusual

> form (*figura*) is never used except to add force to the truth conveyed, emphasis to the statement of it, and depth to the meaning of it. When we apply this science then to God's words and to Divine truths, we see at once that no branch of Bible study can be more important, or offer greater promise of substantial reward.[20]

Western linguists have proposed some parameters whereby figurative discourse may be described. The following parameters, it should be borne in mind, are non-conclusive and may be excepted on various counts, as Sadock has argued. However, in the absence of any conclusive set of markers, the pro-posed components of figuration below seem to provide the most useful analysis which modern linguistics has so far proposed:

Tests for Figuration

(1) *Calculability:* The figurative effect of a given utterance should be cognizable through that utterance's conventional meaning;

(2) *Context dependence:* Cognition of figural meaning is context-dependent, the speaker's knowledge of which is a determining factor as to whether a given expression will convey its inherent figurative intent;

(3) *Translatability:* Figures of speech often translate successfully into other languages. Idioms do not;

(4) *Paraphrasability:* Grice's non-detachability criterion holds that figures of speech are paraphrasable *salvo sensu*. This does not hold for idioms, generally speaking;

(5) *Commitment:* Grice's cancellability test maintains that a speaker, so wish-ing, may, without oddity, deny the figurative significance which may accrue to his utterance;

(6) *Re-iterability:* An effective figurative expression can be placed apposite to another utterance whose literal content is similar, with no redundancy resulting;

(7) *Incontrovertibility:* Figural effects are non-polemical, whereas literal and even idiomatic expressions are easy to deny. Figures of speech are emotive and so are difficult to contest;

(8) *Interaction with Grammar:* Figurative effects do not suffer grammatical idiosyncrasies, whereas conventional content often does;

(9) *Normality:* Figurative expression is superficially odd; literal discourse is not;

(10) *Appropriate responses:* A figurative utterance evokes an initial response to its literal content. Criterion 10 may conflicts with criterion 6.[21]

There is an insight from the philosopher Schleiermacher rather apropos here: "The kinship of rhetoric and hermeneutics consists in the fact that every act of comprehension is the inverse of an act of speech."[22] In other words, rhetoric and hermeneutic stand at polar ends of the communication process: rhetoric analyzes the speech act, parol or written, while hermeneutics interprets speech, aural or printed. "Interpretive strategy," writes Todorov, "necessarily amounts to taking control of the semantic associations, and not to setting them free." In order to establish semantic equivalence (or "semantic motivation"), Todorov maintains that "one must find proofs justifying this motivation" ideally via "a systematic search for other segments of the text in which the word—to which a new meaning is attributed here—already possesses this meaning, and incontestably."[23]

For the exegete and not the linguist, some of these considerations may be expressed more simply. In his overview article, "Interpreting Figurative Language," Myers states the rather obvious view that "one of the greatest needs today" for performing "sound biblical exegesis" is recourse to "correct principles of interpretation," among which is the understanding of language. In the various usages of language one encounters in scripture, "nowhere has there been more difficulty" than in the incidence of figurative language.

Myers makes a statement which might well have equal force for Quranic interpretation: "To understand the Bible it is essential to to know when language is literal and when it is figurative."[24] Myers gives seven indicators for the occurrence of figurative discourse. These will be cited in full, since for each explanation is adduced an example:

(1) The sense in which the expression is used will usually indicate whether or not it is figurative. Expressions are to be understood literally unless the evident meaning forbids it. In the sentence, "The Lord is my shepherd," the word shepherd is obviously used figuratively.

(2) An expression must be figurative when a literal meaning would involve a possibility. For example, when Jesus said, "Let the dead bury their own dead" (Matt. 8:22) or "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (John (15:5), he was using language that would involve an impossibility if understood literally.

(3) An expression is figurative if it requires what is ethically wrong or prohibits that which is right. For example, to have Jesus requiring one to literally amputate his hand or pluck out his eyes, as in the statement in Matthew 18:8–9, is to abuse the sense of figurative language.

(4) A passage is figurative if a literal view would conflict with another passage that is clearly understood. Thus there would be no contradiction between "shall never die" (John 11:26) and "for as in Adam, all die" (1 Cor. 15:22). One is to be understood literally and the other figuratively or spiritually.

(5) Some texts or their context will tell you they are figurative. In John 2:19, Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." In verse 21 one is told that Jesus was not speaking of the literal temple but rather "the temple of his body."

(6) Statements that are made to ridicule or mock are generally under-stood as figurative. For example, when Jesus referred to Herod as a "fox", he was

not speaking of Herod literally, but used this language to refer to his craftiness.

(7) Sometimes common sense will suggest that the language is figurative. For example, when Jesus was speaking with the woman at the well (John 4), he told her of the "living water" that one could drink and thereby never thirst again. He was not speaking of water from that well or any other literal well.[25]

Ever since patristic exegesis, scripture in the Western tradition has been considered as having multiple meanings. The most well-known medieval formula posits meaning to be quadruple. First, there is the binary opposition between literal (or historical) and spiritual (or allegorical). Spiritual meaning was further subdivided into three categories: allegorical (or typological) meaning, moral (or tropological) meaning, and anagogical (or mystical) meaning.[26] Based on this triple scheme of spiritual meaning, Todorov relates three latter types of spiritual meaning to time: past (typological), present (moral), future (anagogical).[27]

In a thought-provoking transition from the Biblical to the Quranic exegetical tradition, Wansbrough draws a parallelism between the fourfold "quadrivium" of medieval (Christian) Biblical exegesis and Islamic exegesis. The following pairs of Arabic and Greek technical terms find the following parallels: literal exegesis (*ẓāhir/historia*); symbolic (*bāṭin/allegoria*); prescriptive (*ḥadd/tropologia*); spiritual (maṭla'/anagoge).[28] Wansbrough does not mention the parallel medieval Jewish interpretive scheme, PaRDeS ("Paradise"),[29] the acronym for: *peshaṭ* (literal meaning/historical facts), *remez* (allegorical meaning/eschatological pointers), *derash* (tropological and moral meanings), and *sod* (mystical meaning).[30] There are Talmudic parallels.[31]

We now turn to five areas of enquiry into the Islamic intellectual context of allegorical Quranic exegesis: (2.0) discovery of Quranic figuration by Arabic rhetors;

(3.0) Sunnī controversies over Quranic anthropomorphisms; (4.0) discovery of Quranic symbolism by mystics; (5.0) the philosophical synthesis of reason (viz., rhetorical reasoning leading to the symbolic method) and revelation; (6.0) Ismāʻīlī *ta'wīl*.

The following survey of Islamic theories on figuration and symbolism represents the present writer's own systematization of the available material. This is done in the relative absence of such an overview. "The Semitists," writes Geller, "have generally not entered into the arena of semiotics and 'the meaning of meaning,' because so much of the basic work of lexicography and the production of text editions remains to be done."[32] In this overview of Islamic approaches to symbolism, for the purposes of this thesis it will suffice to contextualize Bahā'u'llāh within a rich and multiform Islamic exegetical heritage.

2.0 The Discovery of Quranic Figuration by Rhetoric (with special reference to al-Jurjānī)

There has always been a need for *tafsīr*. Native speakers of Arabic at the time of Muḥammad—even his companions—were not always prepared to understand the Qur'ān. The first hearers of the Qur'ān would ask the Prophet for explanations of verses which baffled them. One tradition relates that when the verse concerning the starting time of the fast was revealed (Q. 2:187), ʻAdī ibn Ḥātim took the verse literally, failing to grasp the metaphor ("and eat and drink, until the white thread shows clearly to you from the black thread at the dawn.)[33] So he took two threads, one white and one black, hoping each would change color when the fast should begin. The Prophet told him that the Quranic metaphor referred to the first streaks of light at dawn.[34]

Calder, in a recent attempt to refine Wansbrough's typology of *tafsīr*, states categorically that "allegory and symbol are most commonly dealt with within the

Islamic intellectual tradition as part of the discipline of rhetoric."[35] This is a little confusing at first, for Wansbrough speaks of rhetorical and allegorical modes of *tafsīr* as stylistically-distinct (with some overlap).[36] In his theoretical refinement of Wansbrough, however, Calder makes a distinction between "instrumental structures" and "ideological structures" in exegesis. This distinction is useful. Relevant to this thesis is Calder's observation: "Symbolic and allegorical readings frequently coincide with *taṣawwuf*, but played a marginal role even in *kalām*-type discussions."[37] That is to say, Calder's remarks taken together, that symbolic readings ("instrumental") of the Qur'ān occur in rhetoric, philosophy, and mysticism ("ideological structures") to address the respective theological concerns of each interest group.

Henrichs identifies four stimuli which advanced the development of Arabic literary theory: (1) the purely cultural interests of philologists, who were the chief collectors and commentators of ancient poetry; (2) concerns with Quranic exegesis, especially over the problem of anthropomorphisms in the Qur'ān and how to demonstrate the stylistic inimitability of the Qur'ān; (3) the challenge to critics posed by the appearance of a new poetic style (badī') in early 'Abassid poetry; (4) efforts to formulate a systematic and coherent presentation of literary theory.[38]

The means here justifies the end. The "hand of God" can be read as metaphor or symbol to at once demonstrate the eloquence of the Qur'ān (for the rhetor), distance God from human attributes (for the philosopher), and express divine nearness (for the mystic). For every symbolic reading of the Qur'ān, there is a theological objective. The theological objectives of rhetoricians were not uniform, and in some cases the objectives were polar opposites. Two contemporaries concerned with Quranic figuration—but for opposite reasons—were al-Rummānī (d. 384/996) and his younger contemporary and plagiarist, al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013). The former was Mu'tazilī, the latter Ash'arī. Al-

Rummānī's purpose in writing his *al-Nukat* was twofold: (1) to demonstrate the literary inimitability of the Qur'ān; and (2) to establish figurative expression not merely as an aspect of language, but as an essential part of its art.[39]

Al-Rummānī held metaphorical usage to be equally as valid as literal expression (*ḥaqīqa*) and sought to demonstrate this from the Qur'ān itself. Such an approach to language gave him greater freedom in interpretation (*ta'wīl*), justifying analysis of anthropomorphisms as metaphorical.[40] To this end, al-Rummānī gives more than a few interesting instances of Quranic figuration. In his chapter on metaphor (*isti'āra*), some Quranic exemplars given are:

> "We shall advance upon that work which they have done, and make it scattered dust" (Q. 23:25), where "scattered dust" functions as an expression "which brings forth what cannot be perceived by the senses to that which can be perceived by the senses."; "Execute (*iṣda'*) (lit. split asunder, cleave) with what thou art commanded to do" (Q. 15:94), where "splitting asunder" has a dramatic effect, "like the smashing of a bottle"; "By the wind, clamorous, furious" (Q. 69:6), where "fury" is more expressive than "strength" since in fury there is the element of "revolt"; "Verily, it (the Qur'ān) is the Mother of the Book with us" (Q. 43:4), considered more eloquent than "the origin of the Book." "My (Abraham's) head is all aflame with hoariness" (Q. 19:4), where the sudden profusion of graying hair "resembles the rapid spread of fire"; "The chastisement of a barren day" (Q. 22:55), where "barren" (*'aqīm*) is metaphorical for "devastating"; "And you were wishing that the one without thorn should be yours" (Q. 8:7), where "without thorn" (*shawka*) is metaphorical for "without weapons."
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> "By the dawn when it draws a breath" (Q. 81:18), where "breathing" (*tanaffas*) expresses "shining"; "They were … shaken" (Q. 2: 214), where "shaken" (as in an earthquake) expresses affliction; "Our Lord, pour out upon us patience" (Q. 2:250), where "pour out" (*afrigh*) is used for "bestow." "*Alif. Lām. Rā*. A Book We have sent down to thee that thou mayest bring forth mankind from darkness unto light" (Q. 14:1) meaning "from ignorance into

knowledge"; "Calling unto God by His leave, and a lighted lamp" (Q. 33:46), where "lamp" (*sirāj*) conveys the notion of "providing guidance"; "Then they were turned upside-down upon their heads" (Q. 21:65) for "confusion."[41]

Many other exemplars are given. Some of these and other exemplars became "ubiquitous in the later discussions of *isti'āra*."[42] For instance, al-Farrā' (d. 207/822)—author of the first philological commentary on the Qur'an—adduced his own exemplars of figurative language in Scripture, such as: "Eleven stars, and the sun and the moon … bowing down" (Q. 12:4); "They [the skins of God's enemies] shall say, 'God gave us speech'" (Q. 41:21); "An ant said, 'Ants, enter your dwelling places'" (Q. 27:18).[43] Abu Ubayda (d. 209/824–825), in *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, adduces further exemplars of figuration: "They (heaven and earth) said, 'Come willingly'" (Q. 41:11); "'Surely it is you …" (idols, addressed, as demanded for irrational beings/things with a plural suffix—as demanded for irrational beings/things—rather than by the feminine singular) "… who are the evildoers'" (Q. 21:65).[44] Linguists evidently were in general accord over the incidence—but not theological implications—of Quranic figuration. Theological corollaries varied and were at variance with each other. Ironically, little overt effort is made to explain anthropomorphisms. Al-Rummānī simply constructs a critical apparatus whereby taking anthropomorphisms as metaphorical rests on a critical theory of language and sacred text.

Arguably the most comprehensive term for figuration—certainly the most elastic —was *majāz* (ranging in meaning from "interpretation (of meaning)" to "idiomatic expression" to "figurative expression").[45] "*Majāz*," states Wansbrough, "had indeed become, with specific reference to the Qur'ān, a vague and general designation of all phenomena requiring to be understood other than literally. … Trope in scripture remained thus a subject of unresolved controversy."[46] Wansbrough shows that the term *majāz* referred to two distinct exegetical procedures: (1) in its pre-rhetorical sense, *majāz*

was employed in meaningful "restoration" of Quranic linguistic anomalies; and (2) in rhetorical usage, *majāz* was coined to designate figurative usage. The former is more strictly exegetical (aiming at textual clarification via periphrasis), while the latter is hermeneutical (concerned with tropical explication).[47] Not only were the theological objectives of rhetoricians at variance one with another, but their terminologies and analyses were divergent to the point that continuities are more on the order of overlap. The acknowledged genius among all rhetoricians was, incontestably, al-Jurjānī, whom we shall now consider.

2.1 Al-Jurjānī, Rhetoric and the Qur'ān

The epochal scholar 'Abd al-Qāhir Jurjānī (d. 471/1079) is recognized as "the major theorist of Arabic rhetoric"[48] and "founder of the sciences of *bayān* and *balāgha*."[49] Renown for his psychological approach to language—viewed as a system of relations—al-Jurjānī achieved a new theoretical integration of form (*lafẓ*) and content (*ma'nā*). Within his theory of composition (*naẓm*), text is taken in its totality as a network of relationships structured by experience itself.[50] This theory had decisive intellectual power.[51] Two new disciplines crystallized around al-Jurjānī's two most important works: (1) from *Dalā'il al-i'jāz* arose *'ilm al-ma'ānī* (the "science of the semantics of syntax");[52] and from *Asrār al-balāgha* derived *'ilm al-bayān* (the "science of exposition" or, more aptly, the "science of figurative expression").[53]

These were two of the three branches of study into which the science of rhetoric was divided following the systematization of al-Jurjānī by the Persian encyclopedist al-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229) in the latter's major work, *Miftāḥ al-'ulūm*. The rhetorical section of al-Sakkākī's treatise, in turn, was epitomized in the *Talkhīṣ al-miftāḥ* by al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338) which won its place as the classical textbook on rhetoric throughout the

Islamic world. Numerous super-commentaries on this text were written, receiving its final elaboration in the *Muṭawwal* (748/1347) and the *Mukhtaṣar* (756/1355) of al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1390).[54] Al-Jurjānī's systematizers, it should be cautioned, "seem interested only in presenting a skeleton of these (al-Jurjānī's) theories."[55]

Al-Jurjānī's concept of language was grounded in the principle that language is a system of relations. Its power to express springs from the structures of expression, not from words alone. The basic unit for figurative expression was the "image" (*ṣūra*).[56] Al-Jurjānī originated a theory on the relationship between proper meaning and tropical meaning, referred to as the "meaning of meaning" (*ma'nā al-ma'nā*). He was intent on discovering specific imaginative processes in metaphorical thought.[57] Al-Jurjānī's theory of imagery is, in the estimation of Kamal Abu Deeb, "unique even with reference to modern criticism."[58]

Drawing on a wide range of terms, some of which appear in rare and ill-defined usages,[59] al-Jurjānī establishes three fundamental forms of imagery from which all other figurative expressions derive: (1) the simple simile (*tashbīh*); (2) the complex, non-physical simile or conceit (*tamthīl*); and (3) the metaphor (*isti'āra*). A fourth term in our presentation will be added, (4) *takhyīl*, since this figure is largely independent of the primary three. These figures will be discussed below, in order of their decreasing indicators of figuration, to wit: resemblance, analogy, representation, transformation. Al-Jurjānī devotes an entire chapter to *takhyīl*, analyzed at length in his *Asrār*.[60]

The highlighting of these four figures reflects the present writer's interpretation of al-Jurjānī's theoretical progression from resemblance (simple and complex) to representation to transformation. This reading of al-Jurjānī, though selective, will serve to partly systematize al-Jurjānī's theory of figuration in a way that has not been treated so programmatically in the literature on al-Jurjānī. The presentation below benefits

significantly from Abu Deeb's insight that al-Jurjānī's figure, the *takhyīl*, has all the earmarks of equivalence to "symbol" (*ramz*), though "symbol" in the modern rather than traditional sense.[61]

First, a few remarks on the process of figuration itself. Al-Jurjānī correlates the atomistic meaning of words together with their composite meaning in terms of the structure of their composition. He proceeds from the premise that "since words are the bearers of meanings, it follows that their order inevitably accords with the order of meanings."[62] Moreover, words in and of themselves are not independent acts of thought: "Words were not set in the language convention in order that their meanings may be known, but in order that these meanings may be related to one another."[63]

According to Abu Deeb, this symbolic view of verbal communication sees verbal codification as originating in the declarative form (i.e., predicate-oriented), such that the process of thinking itself operates along thought-structures rather than by words alone. It is indeterminate to think of a verb without seeing it related to an explicit or implicit agent—the same principle holding true for nouns. Nor does a word of itself possess any inherent quality that renders it effective or eloquent. Once a word enters into the structure of a given construction or verbal "composition" (*naẓm*), then and only then can it be said to be expressive.[64]

It is this theoretical framework that generates al-Jurjānī's concept of the "image of meaning" (*ṣūrat al-maʻnā*). The theory is about form and content, word and context, but more emphasis is laid on their interrelationships, not their fragmentation. These interrelationships combine to produce a meaning more than the sum of lexical components. The prevailing opinion among Arab critics was that "meaning" (*maʻnā*) was the most important dynamic in poetic expression. But al-Jurjānī broadened and deepened literary criticism. Al-Jurjānī augmented his theory to include "the power of

construction, the subtleties of symbolization, and the functional nature of imagery" in the poetic dynamic.[65]

Al-Jurjānī's theory of ṣūrat al-ma'nā requires that poetic imagery be seen as involving two processes of signification (linguistic and intellectual) producing in turn two kinds of meaning, viz., "meaning" (literal discourse) and "the meaning of meaning (figurative discourse)." This analysis serves as the theoretical underpinning of al-Jurjānī's argument that the inimitability (*i'jāz*) of the Qur'ān inheres in its structured composition and harmonization (*al-naẓm wa al-ta'līf*) involving an intellectual process of comprehension not reducible to linguistic form alone.[66]

All acts of figuration in the Qur'ān derive from inseparable elements of structure, the significations of which inextricably are bound up with their special grammatical and syntactic interrelationships. What for al-Jurjānī are primary figures of speech—*tashbīh*, *tamthīl*, *isti'āra*—act as "poles around which meanings, in their various types of behaviour in their respective spheres, rotate," of which the "beauties of discourse" are "comprehended by the heart, and realized by the intellect … and not by the sense of hearing."[67] There are at work psychological factors in figurative meaning beyond cognition of literal meaning in which "you feel in your soul a thrill and a (sense of) liberation"—a specific imaginative process stimulated by "the meaning and the meaning of meaning." In al-Jurjānī's special terminology, "meaning" refers to the "immediate expression" while the "meaning of meaning" refers to a further significance to which the expression leads.[68]

Underlying all poetic imagery are the poetic values of similarity. Similarity may be obvious or remote: "[W]hen two things are said to be similar, this may be done in two (different ways): the first is where the similitude is obvious and does not require interpretation (*ta'awwul*); the second is where the similitude can be realized and

revealed only by analysis and interpretation." From similitude there is a progression of dynamics involved in the figurative process, from explicit to non-explicit similarity, then to representation, and finally to the unmarked, context-dependent symbol itself, requiring not only analysis, but interpretation.[69]

2.2 *Tashbīh* (dynamic: resemblance)

"Zayd is like the lion." *(Zayd ka-l'asad.)*

According to al-Jurjānī, the ground of all imagery is *tashbīh*, in the sense of comparison or resemblance. Thus, the basic mechanism of comparison becomes the unifying dynamic of all figurative expression. The role of simple (as distinct from abstract) analogy (*qiyās*) is at the heart of all types of pure *tashbīh*.[70] In its strictest sense, tashbīh itself is not figurative, since its own similizing is marked and explicit. Nonetheless, *isti'āra* (metaphor) derives from it:

> Anyone who is creating an explicit *tashbīh* does not think in terms of transferring the word he uses; transference is not presupposed by the nature of his aim. When one says, "Zayd is like the lion," … no transference of the term from its designated referent is involved. Otherwise, every *tashbīh* on earth would be a majāz, which is impossible because *tashbīh* is "a kind of meaning" and it has particles and nouns which refer to it. … The discourse (use of *tashbīh*) is literal as it is in other kinds of meanings.[71]
>
> In the case of *tashbīh*, the imagination is acting upon two simple entities, the perception of whose similarity is immediate due to their explicit identification. There is no transference or fusion between the two entities as occurs in figurative discourse. A *tashbīh* usually has the "subject-predicate" statement as its linguistic form, i.e., "Zayd (is) as a lion."[72]

Quranic exemplars abound and in many cases, apart from their analysis as similes, require little interpretation as they are quite self-evident. But this is not always true. Al-Sakkākī, who was al-Jurjānī's systematizer, analyzes God's commands to heaven (to withhold rain) and earth (to "swallow up" Noah's flood) in Q. 11:44, in terms of an inexplicit *tashbīh*:

> God, Whose power is great, … built this verse (*al-kalām*) on a *tashbīh* of His own intention with what He commanded because of the great fear of disobedience to God and *tashbīh* of God's intention with the idea of a clear, binding order to carry out what is intended. (This brings to mind) the great power of God, because indeed, the sky, the earth and these great bodies follow His intention since they recognize and submit to it completely. It is as if they were sentient, discerning creatures (*'uqilā'*) who knew and understood Him.[73]

This exegesis addresses only the verbal component of the verse. From the verbs themselves al-Sakkākī is able to draw out their signifying potential. The *tashbīh* is constructed on an implied comparison with servitude. In the servant: Master relationship, the servant's obedience is required. This is the figurative dynamic in Q. 11:44, since one cannot speak to an insentient object, the direct address of inanimate bodies (earth and sky) is therefore figurative.

2.3 ***Tamthīl* (dynamic: analogy)**

> *As if the stars appearing in the darkness (are)*
> *Religious customs amongst which innovation is glimmering.*[74]

Al-Jurjānī draws a sharp distinction between two basic modes of similarity: physical and imaginative. In the former, the point of similarity is obvious; in the latter, remote. *Tashbīh* plays off the former, while *tamthīl* demands the latter, and here is where interpretation is exercised by the faculty of imagination. "The visual representation," he

explains, "is that in the case of *tamthīl* you are like someone who sees one image only, but who sees it one time in a mirror, one time in its actuality; whereas in *tashbīh* you see two images in reality and actual fact."[75] No interpretation is needed in appreciating the shared quality of the attribute of ruddiness in the simile (*tashbīh*): "The cheek is like a rose." But in the case of a *tamthīl*, there is a certain degree of subtlety, requiring some effort of analysis, as in: "They were like a cast ring whose ends are not recognizable."[76]

As pointed out, a *tamthīl* is more complex than a *tashbīh*. A *tamthīl* involves more complex imaginative activity, and often demands a high degree of interpretation. A *tamthīl* is a compound comparison, a parable in many cases. Al-Jurjānī states that a "*tamthīl* (is) defined as a relation of similarity revealed (between an object and) a unified group of other objects. Such similarity can only be conveyed by one or more sentences."[77] In fine, a *tamthīl* exercises the reader's powers of abstract analogy. It can even bring into relationship pairs of opposites, i.e., reversed similarities. A subcategory of *tamthīl* is the figurative sentence (*mathal*)[78] acknowledged by critics as expressly symbolic.[79]

Al-Jurjānī considered the *mathal* as having significant aesthetic and psychological effect. He analyzed the Qur'ān's self-description as "light" as a *tamthīl* so employed as a *mathal* for the Qur'ān.[80] Here the overlap—a transition perhaps—between rhetorical and allegorical exegesis of the Qur'ān is struck by the symbolism which inheres in every Quranic parable. A parable is at once figurative and symbolic: it is (1) a figure of speech; with (2) symbolic value. Two approaches as to the nature of the Quranic parable obtain: (1) a rhetorical device, the *mathal* is seen as operative within a linguistic context (synthetic approach); (2) as an exegetical technique, the *mathal* is treated as a figure with expressly symbolic purport (analytic approach).[81]

This recognition was informed by the explicit witness of the Qur'ān itself (Q. 29:43). From the concept of *mathal*—coupled with its presumed polarity to truth (*ḥaqq*)—was derived "a number of interpretative procedures designed not only to locate figurative usage in the text of scripture but also to justify there several levels of symbolic meaning."[82] Exegetically, the 'parable'—according to Wansbrough—"could be symbolic, even allegorical, but did not require analysis as metaphor."[83]

Sometimes the obviousness of figurative discourse, after all, obviates the need for explication. Hence, the Quranic *tamthīl* at Q. 62:5:

> The likeness of those who have been loaded with the Torah,
> then they have not carried it,
> is as the likeness of an ass carrying books.[84]

Here it is the situation that is analogous and not the donkey itself, i.e. both carry books but are at a loss to understand them. The analogy must be interpreted to a certain extent before it is fully grasped. Recourse to analysis by *tamthīl* was useful in resolving Quranic anthropomorphism, such as: "Make the ark before Our eyes!" (Q. 11:37). Al-Jurjānī notes that commentators were bewildered by this verse.[85]

2.4 *Isti'āra* (dynamic: representation)

"I saw a lion." *(raʿaytū asadan).*

The term *isti'āra* dominates the entire range of Islamic treatises on rhetoric. The terminological history of this term can hardly be systematized, but rather, sketched out in a series of sometimes disconnected and inconsistent usages. For comparison and contrast, two examples should suffice. First, in the *Ta'wīl mushkil al-Qur'ān* of Ibn

Qutayba—an opponent of Mu'tazilī *kalām*—the term *isti'āra* denoted "metaphor" but connoted any figurative use of a word (e.g. metonymy).

He begins his discussion of various types of figuration (*majāzāt*) with the chapter on *isti'āra*, since "most cases of *majāz* fall into it."[86] To instantiate metaphor, Ibn Qutayba cites the verse, "upon the day when the leg shall be bared" (Q. 68:42), explaining that the significance of "leg" (*sāq*) in this verse is that of a "momentous affair" (*shidda min al-amr*). The origin of this expression, Ibn Qutayba continues, is that one tucks up one's garments when faced with a crisis. He then adduces two lines of poetry to substantiate his analysis.[87]

The term *isti'āra* was subsequently narrowed down to "metaphor" by al-Rummānī (d. 384/994).[88] The Mu'tazilī rhetorician characterizes metaphor as "connecting an expression with something it was not originally created for in the language."[89] Originating with al-Rummānī, rhetorical definitions of metaphor prior to al-Jurjānī involved notions of object-borrowing, i.e., the transfer (*naql*) of terms or themes between the donor and receptor of the word borrowed.[90]

This was at first attacked by al-Jurjānī as fallacy and later accepted with reservations.[91] And in so doing, al-Jurjānī presented a reformulated and psychologically precise theory of transference (viz., of attributes).[92] Al-Jurjānī defines a metaphor as when "one can dispense, by the borrowed term, with the original one, and where the expression is transferred to a place other than its own."[93] A clearer definition is this: the *isti'āra* is, generally speaking, the incidental use (*naql ghayr lāzim*) of a term in a sense different from its original sense, so that it appears like a loan (*'ariya*). (This draws attention to the etymology of the term, *isti'āra*.)

"*Isti'āra*," writes al-Jurjānī, "relies on *tashbīh* and *tamthīl*."[94] Despite this common origin, *isti'āra* is verifiably distinct from the other two figures. The outward linguistic difference between an *isti'āra* and a *tashbīh* is that the former involves imaginative "transference" while the latter is a literal (explicit) comparison. In the case of the expression, "I saw a lion," this is a bare metaphor. Unlike the *tamthīl*, the *isti'āra* is an expression capable of a double meaning, at once explicit, yet figurative. According to al-Jurjānī therefore, the *isti'āra* is an expression that has a double meaning, valid both literally and metaphorically.[95]

There are, moreover, three types of metaphors: (1) metaphors based on comparison of notions which have close affinity: "flying" for "running"; (2) metaphors based on a comparison of objects that share certain qualities: "sun" for "beautiful face"; (3) metaphors based on similarity that can only be fathomed intellectually, as (a) sensual qualities for intellectual concepts: "darkness" for "ignorance"; (b) sensual images for other sensual images to evoke an idea: "green plants on a dung-hill" for beautiful but evil women"; (c) ideas for other ideas: "death" for "ignorance."[96]

The isti'āra is one of various types of trope (*majāz*), in which there is assumed to be an underlying conceptual "substratum" (*dhāt*).[97] The concept of fusion is important here—a fusion, taking place in the imagination, between the original referent of a word and its metaphoric sense. In the expression, "I saw a lion," al-Jurjānī argues that the hearer has for an instant the impression that the speaker is referring to a real lion, since both elements must be present imaginatively. The expression momentarily brings into fusion both man and lion. An ambiguity is created—indeed, a double meaning. Context makes clear, however, that it is the quality of courage that both man and the king of beasts share. It is only the context that causes the hearer to realize that a real lion is not in fact intended, but rather a man. The *isti'āra*, in such a case, "evokes in the imagination

(the impression) that the referent is a man and a lion at one and the same time, both in image and in character."

This concept of imaginative fusion—the intercourse of meanings—shapes the whole of al-Jurjānī's theory of metaphor, in that, when a metaphor is struck, it is coined as an expression of a relation between given qualities or attributes of two objects.[98] The richness of the metaphor, according to al-Jurjānī, is often more than a shared trait of one dominant attribute. An entire field of associations may be transferred. The value and power of metaphor is such that it intensifies our perception of the man's leonity (*asadiyya*) and "impresses on the recipient's psyche (or imagination) the image of the lion in his daring, courage, power, attacking force, and all the innate attributes in the lion related to his daring."[99]

The underlying poetic logic or "transference" is analyzed by al-Jurjānī so: "We attribute the man with leonity … and create the impression or belief that … he is one of the species 'lion' who has changed his image (as a lion) into the image of a human being."[100] By such analysis, it becomes possible to explain problematic Quranic anthropomorphisms, such as Q. 39:67: "The whole earth is in the grip of His hand on the Day of Resurrection." Such verses can be read as analogies for intellectual concepts, though al-Jurjānī cautions against hazarding arbitrary interpretations.[101]

2.5 *Takhyīl* (dynamic: transformation)

… nor had I seen a man whom the lions stood up to embrace.[102]

Historically, the term *takhyīl* was first introduced as a specific figure of speech[103] by Abū Hilāl, though several decades later al-Jurjānī was to give it a different meaning, viz., fantastic aetiology.[104] According to Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363), *takhyīl* etymologically

derived from *khayāl* ("dream image").[105] Later interest in the term had more to do with analysis of the poetic process than conventional aesthetic or rhetorical criticism.[106] Al-Jurjānī is careful to differentiate the *takhyīl* from the *isti'āra*, as the former is transformative while the latter remains distinctly metaphorical:

> Know that metaphor does not enter in the class of imaginative creation (*takhyīl*); for the one who uses it does not intend to assert the real meaning of the expression metaphorically used; rather he proceeds to establish a similarity found there in such a way that its intrinsic meaning is not in contradiction with that which is being predicated. And how can anybody doubt that metaphor has no place in this art, since, as nobody can ignore, it is frequently found in the Revelation?[107]

The vested theological interest here of course is that the Qur'ān abounds in metaphors, yet is not considered poetry.[108] The *takhyīl* has transformed, in effect, the metaphorical into the symbolic, in which there is the element of non-verifiability.[109] Moreover, Abu Deeb argues that al-Jurjānī's use of *takhyīl* is the equivalent for symbol (*ramz*):

> (C)an the term *takhyīl* be interpreted as being al-Jurjānī's equivalent of "symbol"? It may be that al-Jurjānī has not used the term '*ramz*' (symbol) to describe this form of imagery because it was already an established term, signifying a process different from the one involved here. According to a modern writer, *ramz* in the work of al-Jurjānī's predecessors was defined in terms of concision ('*ījāz*) and suggestion (*ishāra*), as can be seen in Qudāma's work. *Ishāra*, by its nature, may involve symbolic elements, but its definition in terms of the compactness of the expression and its capacity to express *ma'ānī kathīra* ("many meanings"), whatever this may have meant to Qudāma, had made it a process different from *takhyīl*, which may explain al-Jurjānī's introduction of this term in preference to ramz, although the process of *takhyīl* is a symbolic one.[110]

If this equivalence can be accepted, it is not the case that al-Jurjānī's definition of *takhyīl* should agree with the definition of *ramz* by Qudāma ibn Ja'far (d. 337/948), nor with that of any other rhetorician. (In a work falsely ascribed to Qudāma, Isḥāq ibn Wahb (d. 4th-/10th-c.) defines *ramz* as "hidden obscure meaning").[111] Al-Jurjānī treats *takhyīl* as a figure independent of the aforementioned three. There are a number of types, but one which is particularly distinctive is defined as "pretending to forget the process of comparison (*tanāsī al-tashbīh*)."[112]

The dynamic underlying the use of this form of *takhyīl* is one in which "the poet loses all awareness (lit., 'makes himself forget') of the presence of *isti'āra* or *majāz* (*ansā nafsahu anna hāhunā isti'āratan wa majāzan*)" and acts "as if the process of *isti'āra* and analogy has not occurred to him at all and not even a shadow of it has passed before his eyes."[113] Thus, the process involved in the use of this *takhyīl* is that of "forgetting the figurative intention (*tanāsī al-majāz*)"[114] and, in the most artistic and subtle of cases, "treating the *majāz* as a reality or literal statement (*ḥaqīqa*)."[115] As in the verse:

> *The sun resides in the sky, therefore console your heart as best you can,*
> *For you cannot ascend to it, nor can it descend to you.*[116]

What had been a metaphor has now become poetically reified. We enter here into a new dimension of creativity. The beloved is now so completely identified with the sun that it is the sun's inaccessibility, not the beloved's, that dissuades the lover.

Certain post-Jurjānī commentators, aware of the danger of implicating the Qur'ān as poetry, did steer clear of analyzing certain anthropomorphic passages as instances of takhyīl. For instance, the Persian[117] encyclopedist al-Sakkākī (d. 626/1221) in his *majāz* systematology of al-Jurjānī, performs an extensive rhetorical criticism on the verse at Q. 11:46, which reads:

> And it was said, "O earth! swallow up thy water;"
>
> and "Cease, O Heaven!"
>
> And the water abated,
>
> and the decree was fulfilled,
>
> and the Ark rested upon Al-Jūdī;
>
> and it was said,
>
> "Avaunt! ye tribe of the wicked!"

Al-Sakkākī comments: "When God says, "the word went forth" (*qīla*) he uses *majāz*. He figuratively indicates His intention by pointing to the statement which is the result of that intention. (He makes) the figurative context the direct address of an inanimate body, which is, 'O Earth!' and 'O Sky!'"[118] Note that, earth and sky fall shy of being accepted as symbols or instances of *takhyīl*. By contrast, al-Zamakhshārī did not hesitate to apply the term *takhyīl* to an eschatological passage at Q. 39:67 ("and they do not esteem God as He ought to be esteemed when He grips the whole earth on the Day of Resurrection and the heavens are folded in His right hand.") Accordingly, al-Zamakhsharī analyzes this anthropomorphic passage so:

> The purpose of these words, if one takes them as they are in their totality and as a whole, is to give visible form to His greatness and to make people acquainted with the essence of His glory, nothing else. … The hearer will not be brought to understand this (i.e., God's great deeds which perplex his mind) unless the mode of expression follows this path which consists of setting his imagination to work (*takhyīl*). And in the theory of rhetoric one does not find a mode of expression more refined, more delicate, and more subtle than this, and more useful and helpful when one undertakes to explain the dubious passages (*al-mushtabihāt*)[119] in the word of God—exalted is He—in the Koran, the other heavenly books, and in the words of His prophets, since the greater and more important part of it consists of phantasic images (*takhyīlāt*) on which the feet used to slip in former

> times. And those who slipped cared little for research and careful investigation.[120]

This is a remarkable passage for documenting the impact rhetoric had on Qur'ān interpretation. As will be shown below, Wolfhart Heinrichs and others have noted the appropriation of rhetorical criticism by the Muʻtazilites, as a tool for resolving the problem of anthropomorphisms. The fact that this is an eschatological passage seems incidental. Had there not been the *deus ex machina* of God's hand in this scene of the eschatological drama, the scientific implausibility of the passage may have gone wholly unchallenged.

But a great many Quranic anthropomorphisms are also eschatological or inversely cosmological (especially in terms of cosmic events which are effectively located in pre-existence). Wansbrough has identified other verses also classified by al-Zamakhsharī as *takhyīl*. Wansbrough adduces these exemplars in connection with al-Zamakhsharī, to illustrate problems raised by rampant inconsistency in classification at the hands of rhetoricians, who often confused dynamics of resemblance, analogy, representation, and transformation of metaphor into symbol:

> The notion of "likeness" inherent in *mathal* rested thus not upon the apprehension of metaphor, but upon assent to the author's intention. The 'parable' could be symbolic, even allegorical, did not require analysis as metaphor. Related to the technical use of *mathal* in exegesis, and the source of some terminological confusion, was the description of certain types of metaphor as *tamthīl*. That practice can be justified by the semantic element of 'representation' common to most if not all formations from the root *m-th-l*, but is none the less misleading. Moreover, the precise nature of the metaphor(s) qualified (as?) *tamthīl* was never satisfactorily defined.

> Al-Zamakhsharī, for example, *ad* Q. 33:72: 'We offered (Our) covenant: trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains', sought to distinguish two kinds of image (*taṣwīr*): (a) *tamthīl*, derived from empirical data (*muḥaqqaqāt*), and (b) *takhyīl*, derived from hypothetical data (*mafrūḍāt*), the two being equally conceivable and equally dependent upon an exercise of imagination. If Q. 33:72 exhibited, in the opinion of Zamakhsharī, the *takhyīl* variety, other verses admitted of both interpretations, e.g. Q. 41:11, 'He addressed Himself to heaven while it was still smoke and said to it and earth "Come willingly or unwillingly",' which contained a trope that could either be *tamthīl* or *takhyīl*: (Arabic text) or Q. 59:21: 'Had We allowed this Qur'ān to descend upon a mountain you would have seen it humbly collapse from fear of God', which was both: (Arabic text). It might well be argued that the operative factor in all three examples is not metaphor at all, but prosopopoeia: *fictio personae*. Acceptance of the image as empirically or as hypothetically derived was not a problem of rhetoric but of dogma.[121]

To be sure, Wansbrough's comment on the role of dogma is a methodologically ubiquitous concern in Islamic studies. With vested Mu'tazilī interest in conserving the transcendence of Deity, al-Zamakhsharī's explanation might have sufficed on its own logical merit (but only for those who accepted the use of reason in exegesis). Nonetheless, his explicit reference to rhetorical criticism and his praise (in the superlative!) for its exegetical utility seems, for the most part, to have fallen on deaf ears, as little formal crossover from rhetoric to *tafsīr* appears to have taken place. True, there was incipient cross-fertilization between rhetorical criticism and classical *tafsīr* (Wansbrough's notice of "overlap" among various *tafsīr* disciplines), but the rhetorical tradition itself declined after al-Jurjānī. Commentators simply proliferated the classification of rhetorical figures until they became almost meaningless for exegetical purposes.

The present writer does not know of al-Sakkākī's or al-Qazwīnī's religious persuasions, but al-Jurjānī's other important systematizer, al-Taftāzānī, was Ashʻarite, and so would have downplayed any potential application of rhetorical criticism to Quranic anthropomorphisms on a scale equal to Zamakhsharī. In retrospect, this was to be expected, Ashʻarī scriptural fundamentalism having won the day. A brief sketch, in bold strokes, of the Mu'tazilī/Ashʻarī debate will be presented in the next section.

Al-Zamakhsharī was not alone in his analysis of certain Quranic verses as exemplars of *takhyīl*. Badr al-Dīn ibn al-Naḥwiyya, quoted by Ṣafadī, cited Q. 39:67 (supra) and Q. 37:62–63 (on the "Tree of Zaqqūm") as incidences of *takhyīl*, defining it as "depicting the essence of a thing in such a way that one imagines it to have a visible form."[122] The naming of two verses might seem insignificant, but the added assertion that "most dubious verses in the Koran belong to this category" has rather far-reaching interpretive implications. As the wealth of such verses resides in difficult eschatological passages of the Qur'ān, non-closure on their interpretation renders their potential to produce new meaning certain.

3.0 The Sunnī Debate over Quranic Anthropomorphisms: Traditionalists, Muʻtazilites, Ash'arites[123]

"*Theophor*"[124] or literal reality? Anthropomorphisms in scripture have always been problematic for interpreters. Controversies over Quranic anthropomorphisms were as much about interpretation as about theology, and indeed the two were inseparable. The contours of these debates, though complex, are reducible. Reviewing the important schools of thought in these controversies, the following typology is offered:

3.1 The Traditionalist Thesis

Traditionalists, the so-called *ahl al-sunna* ("People of the Sunna"), are associated with the figure of Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855). This theological school favored the use of tradition over reason. Ibn Ḥanbal reportedly put the essence of his faith in this nutshell: "Faith consists in verbal assent, deeds and intention and adherence to the sunna. Faith increases and decreases."[125] Ibn Ḥanbal's torch of orthodox traditionalism was carried forward by Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 935), who succeeded in pressing rationalism into the service of orthodoxy, while the figure of Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) achieved a stunning and convincing synthesis of orthodoxy and mysticism. The latter, reflecting Ḥanbalī and Ash'arī emphases on literal interpretation (sometimes thought of as non-interpretation!), draws some basic lines of interpretive demarcation so:

> The man most remote from interpretation was Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal—God's mercy be upon him! And the most bizarre of interpretations and that farthest removed from reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*) is that you make the thing said a trope (*majāzan*/figure of speech) or a metaphor (*isti'āra*/borrowing), this being mental existence and analogical existence. But even the Ḥanbalite is compelled to it and professes it.[126]

Theology, not exegesis, is the controlling principle here. Not slavish as to method, Ibn Ḥanbal's inconsistency in his interpretations shows that he was not devoid of all consciousness of metaphorical reality. This is borne out by his interpretation of the celebrated Verse of Light. The Light Verse begins, "God is the light of the heavens and the earth" (Q. 24:35). Ibn Ḥanbal advances the curious but compelling logic that, if God is in every place and is Himself light at the same time, why then will a candle light up a room while God does not?[127] Other exceptions to Ibn Ḥanbal's preference for literal interpretation may be cited to "prove the rule" that it is Traditionalist theology that is the governing exegetical principle and not method alone. It is reported that there were

three anthropomorphic traditions that were so problematic as to oblige Ibn Ḥanbal to concede a figurative understanding of them. Al-Ghazālī relates:

> I have indeed heard certain trustworthy Ḥanbalite leaders of Baghdad say that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal—God have mercy on him!—was explicit about the interpretation of only three traditions. One of them is the saying of Muḥammad—God's blessings and peace be upon him!—"The Black Stone is the right hand of God upon the earth." The second is his saying—God's blessing and peace be upon him!—"The believer's heart is between the two fingers of the Merciful." The third is his saying—God's blessings and peace be upon him!—I shall surely find the Merciful Himself from the direction of Yemen."[128]

These traditions more or less forced Ibn Ḥanbal into metaphorical interpretation by the sheer impossibility of these traditions being literally true. But this rationale, it must be added, is not the rational method of the Muʻtazilī *kalām* or of later Islamic philosophy. Klein characterizes Ibn Ḥanbal as "a fundamentalist, an obscurantist, an authoritarian."[129]

Orthodoxy is officially represented in its credal statements. On beatific vision, Ḥanbalī jurist-theologian Ibn Qudāma (d. 337/1223) issued his pronouncement:

> Believers will see God on the day of resurrection with their eyes and will hear His speech. … According to the sunna accepted by Muslims concerning the attributes by which God described His Self or by which the Messenger of God described Him, it is required that one have faith in these attributes such that they are unrejectable, uninterrruptable, not subject to doubt nor allegorical interpretation nor anthropomorphisation nor comparison. We know that, "There is nothing like unto Him. He is the Hearing, the Seeing" (Qur'ān 42:11), which is similar to God's saying in Qur'ān 5:67, "Rather, His hands are outstretched," and in 55:27, "The face of your Lord remains," and in 54:14, (The Ark of Noah) "floats under Our eyes," and in 5:119, "God will be pleased with them," and in 48:6, "God has cursed them." … Both modality and anthropomorphisation are rejected

> and allegorical interpretation is disdained. The learned ones of the pious ancestors … acknowledge the attributes in a plain sense.[130]

The Quranic promise and threat of divine encounter at the eschaton led to much speculation along interpretive lines.[131] There is some evidence to suggest that there were currents in early Islam which had an interest in keeping God[132] scripturally anthropomorphic, perhaps to ensure the possibility of beatific vision.[133] "Anthropomorphism," states van Ess, "ensures that man may experience Him as a visible reality." Elder states that it may well have been the Beatific Vision which served as "the starting point for working out their (Muʻtazilī) doctrine of Allāh's absolute uniqueness."[134]

Quranic promises of Paradise assured believers the eschatological requital of "meeting God." But those who held to a strict literal interpretation of Quranic anthropomorphisms were accused of *tashbīh* (assimilation) of human attributes to the Deity. Both sides of the dispute have a certain logic, and we presume that pious motives were at heart. The Traditionalist was not without a Quranic basis, for God is portrayed in scripture as endowed with a face, eyes and hands.

It should by now be obvious to the reader how theological motives govern interpretation. Seale underscores that very truism in stating that Muslim recourse to allegory was pursued in order to interpret God's attributes in a way befitting His majesty, and that this "was the maxim which underlay the use of allegory" and "was the principle which lay behind the use of the method and its ultimate justification."[135]

Traditionalist "literalism," however, was not so unsophisticated as to be unaware of the fact that language, even literally understood, was at best an analogy for God's attributes. As one Ḥanbalī—ʻAwn al-Dīn ibn Hubayra—put it: "One must not understand the attributes either literally (*ḥaqīqa*), that would be equivocation, or

figuratively (*majāz*), which would be invention."[136] This is, of course, an intermediate position, *tanzīh*, keeping (God) pure.[137]

3.2 The Muʻtazilī Antithesis

The Muʻtazilites are credited (and accused) with having Hellenized Islam. Certainly the role of reason became prominent under Muʻtazilī influence. The Qur'ān began to look different under the eye of reason, especially when such reason dictated that God was both One and Just (see below). The emergence of the Muʻtazilīs encouraged speculation in general, and in so doing, adopted logic, philosophy and rationalism.

One of the famed verses in the Qur'ān is the celebrated "Throne-Verse" (Q. 2:255). If taken literally, this verse would suggest that God is visibly seated upon a royal throne, from which His omnipotent decrees emanate. It is up to the interpreter to keep God visible, or to render God invisible. To "explain away" such verses as highly allusive or metaphorical is the task of allegorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of the Qur'ān.

The Muʻtazilites proved crucial to the emergence of non-literal interpretations of the Qur'ān, but were not alone in so doing. On the thrust of *ta'wīl* in early Islam, Stetkevych writes:

> Especially as a scriptural/qur'ānic hermeneutical method, ta'wīl was a natural challenge to an orthodoxy that based itself on literal textuality. Its methodological embrace by the Muʻtazilah was an escape from the anthropomorphist entrapment of a literal reading of the qur'ānic text ("the hand of God"/"the power of God"). It might have been no more than an apology for an underlying, reasoned-out orthodoxy. Instead, it was rejected as heresy. Its further elaboration by the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'), although interesting, was only a fleeting cultural-historical episode. In the hands of the

> Shīʻah it remained an imaginative and searching tool of "covert and virtual meaning" only for as long as Shīʻism had not become the prisoner of its own sense of dogmatic textuality. It was mostly in mystical (Ṣūfī) hermeneutics that ta'wīl developed its methodological potential more fully and uncompromisingly. Ṣūfī ta'wīl left behind quite easily the literal meaning and infused new energy into the allegorical one, to which Shīʻī interpretation had only given limited attention.[138]

The so-called "Secessionists" or Muʻtazila—whose reputed founder was Wāṣil Ibn ʻAṭā (a Persian disciple of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī)—preferred to be known as the "People of Unity and Justice." According to Muʻtazilī doctrine, God is Just, and does not predestine. Man is endowed with free will, and the actions of man are not compelled by God. God is also pure Unity, transcendent above essence, element, and accident. Emphasis on the unity of God brought Muʻtazilī belief into conflict with orthodoxy on two counts: (1) orthodoxy held that God's attributes were coeval with God; and (2) orthodoxy held the Qur'ān to be "uncreated." From the Muʻtazilī antithesis to these perceived encroachments on the exclusivity of God emerged the two principal divisions of Muʻtazilī thought: the unity and justice of God.

The Muʻtazilī retort to the unsophisticated dogmas of the Traditionalists was that even the most subtle and sublime notions imputed to the Godhead or equated with God was tantamount to *shirk* (joining partners with God). This position is solid negative theology. In Muʻtazilī metaphysics, God has no eternal predicates. As for the Qur'ān, holding it to be co-eternal with God was a comparable form of blasphemy. The Muʻtazilī position on the Qur'ān finds a faint echo in the parallel Arian position on The sole uncreatedness of God. The Mutazilī catalyst in large part brought into being the science of *kalām* (scholastic theology) which became an integral part of Islamic society.[139] The Muʻtazilī mode of argumentation—and that of *kalām* generally—has been described by Massignon as follows:

> The dialectical (topical) process, *tarīqa jadalīya* (*qiyās jalī*, *i'lām*), particular to the theologians. It starts with a positive hierarchy, established a priori between the two facts considered (*taqaddum*, *afdalīya*). It passes from the "trunk" to the "branch" (far') and concludes *a fortiori* (argumentations *a minori ad majus*, a *majori ad minus* ...). And it brings back to the solution of a new question to that of the general problem thus resolved (*radd al-ghā'ib ilā al-shāhid*). It points out only the order of the two facts, "it is that," *inna*, "that is." It envisages in the two things only their incommunicable hecceity, their vestige, *rasm*; and it denounces their real distinction (*ghayr*): more vast than the contradiction (*'aks*), or their total identity (*itrād*). *Nafy* or *ithbāt*: no middle way between these two alternatives.
>
> And so the preferred form of the dialecticians is argumentation by dilemma: *ibtāl*, to push as far as the absurd; *mutālaba*, to show that the comparison is deficient on one side; *mu'ārada*, to point out an internal contradiction—or demonstrate, by evidence, *tahqīq*, the univocity. … The positive hierarchy of facts, which serves as the basis of this method, rests on the acceptation of a teaching authority.[140]

As van Ess rightly observes, the Mu'tazilīs tried to put an end to anthropomorphism in early Islam, "but failed when they attacked the eternity of the Qur'ān."[141] What of the Mu'tazilī influence on the interpretation of the Qur'ān? In their zeal to resolve problematic Quranic anthropomorphisms, Heinrichs writes of the Mu'tazilites:

> The Mu'tazilites, of course, needed a theological tool to keep the notion of God free from all anthropomorphisms and for this they adopted the general principle implied in the *majāz* of the grammarians: the idea that the text of the Koran cannot always be taken at face value and that it may sometimes be in need of explanatory re-writing. They would extend the principle of the intended meaning underlying the surface meaning to cases which were linguistically quite clear … , such as metaphors that were only theologically objectionable. It seems, thus, possible to account for the compass of *majāz* having shrunk to "metaphorical language" after having been taken over by the Mu'tazilites.[142]

It could safely be said the influence of the Muʻtazilī interpretive stance persisted in Islam largely through the influence of rhetorician and exegete al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), due to his profound importance as Qur'ān commentator. As shown in our discussion of rhetoric (*supra*), al-Zamakhsharī was an expert in rhetoric,[143] and pressed this discipline into the service of exegesis. Ibn Khaldūn informs us that "the non-Arabs (Persians) who constitute the majority of the population of the East occupy themselves with the Qur'ān commentary of al-Zamakhsharī, which is wholly based on this discipline" (viz., *'ilm al-ma'ānī wa'l-bayān*).[144] According to Rahman, al-Zamakhsharī's commentary is the only surviving Muʻtazilī *tafsīr*:

> *Al-Kashshāf* is the only extant Muʻtazilite commentary on the Qur'ān. It is also the first and by far the most successful effort to apply the principles of Arabic rhetoric to Qur'ānic exegesis with a view to laying bare bases of the *i'jāz*, the inimitability of the Qur'ān. …
>
> He, for the first time in the history of Qur'ānic exegesis, produced an explication of the entire Qur'ān on the groundwork of rhetorical principles exposing thereby the roots of the inimitability of the Qur'ān and establishing its *i'jāz* on literary grounds.[145]

On Q. 41:10–11, al-Zamakhsharī lives up to pietistic Mutazilī strictures, and presses rhetoric into the service of eliminating anthropomorphisms:

> God's commanding of heaven and earth to come into being and the fact that both submitted (and obeyed his command) have the following meaning: God wished to call both into being and they did not refuse him. They were called into being as God wished them to be, and they responded (to his command) like someone who obeys a command from one in authority over him just as soon as the effect (*fi'l*) of the command makes its impression on him. What is involved here is a metaphor (*majāz*) which one characterizes as simile (*tamthīl*). It can (however also) pertain to a fanciful image (*takhyīl*). … The meaning is to be seen exclusively in the fact that God's power (*qudra*) upon the things which had been established

is described clearly, without implying that an actual statement and answer are meant.[146]

Wansbrough remarks that "the operative factor" here "is not metaphor at all, but *prosopopoeia/fictio personae*"[147]—adding further to the complexity of analysis on this verse. *Ad* Q. 4:125, where Abraham is called the "Friend of God," al-Zamakhsharī states: "'Friend' is a trope indicative of Abraham's election and his being favoured with esteem."[148] Even where the passage in question is partly non-anthropomorphic—e.g., the "seal" upon the hearts of the unbelievers at Q. 2:5—al-Zamakhsharī invokes rhetoric to explain that "there is a trope (*majāz*) whereby both kinds of the trope are taken into consideration, namely, metaphor (*isti'āra*) and simile (*tamthīl*)."[149]

The Mu'tazilites were opposed by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, the last of the four great Sunnī jurisconsults, whose exegesis we have already discussed in the previous section. The Mu'tazilites were subsequently opposed by the Sunnī champions of Ash'arī *kalām*. Later Ash'arī tradition included such figures as al-Ghazālī (credited with having won the day for Ash'arī thought in the West), Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī and Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī. But it was al-Ash'arī himself who originally formulated the doctrinal position of what would emerge as orthodox Islam. Through his staunch opposition, the Mu'tazilī crisis crystallized the dogma of Islam. But nothing remained set in exegetical stone.

3.3 The Ash'arī Synthesis

Abū'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935) had studied under the leading Mu'tazilīs of his day, having accepted their methods and conclusions until he was around forty. At that time of life al-Ash'arī had been a disciple of the Mu'tazilī leader, al-Jubbā'ī (d. 303/915). The age of forty was decisive for al-Ash'arī, at which time he broke with his Mu'tazilī master and reverted to the traditionalism Ibn Ḥanbal.

Thereafter, al-Ashʿarī vowed to expose the falsity of Muʿtazilī belief. He held categorically that all the so-called allegorical verses of the Qurʾān all bore literal truth. Such truth ought to be accepted on faith, *bilā kayf* (without asking how).

Unlike Ibn Ḥanbal, whose traditionist/literalist stance brooked no recourse to rationalism, al-Ashʿarī used Muʿtazilī methods to defeat his opponents by their own weapons in defense of the Ḥanbalī position. By so doing, al-Ashʿarī paved the way for the intellectualization of orthodoxy. His reaction against perceived Muʿtazilī subjection of God to reason led to the formation of normative Islamic thought, as Rippin states: "It is in that reaction that the foundations of Muslim orthodoxy are to be found."[150] According to the rhetorician and Ashʿarī theologian al-Taftāzānī (d. 791/1389), the Ashʿarī school accepted Quranic anthropomorphisms, unless there were compelling reasons to do otherwise:

> The statutes of the Qurʾān and the Sunna are (to be interpreted) according to their literal meanings, unless a decisive proof sets them aside, as in the case of the verses the literal meaning of which refers to a direction or to corporeality (on the part of the Deity) and the like.[151]

Taftāzānī appears to strike here the Ashʿarī compromise between *tashbīh* ("assimilating" God to man) and *taʿṭīl* ("emptying" God of all attributes) to assert a doctrine of *tanzīh* ("keeping" God pure). Non-theological literalism must prevail if explicit Quranic laws and doctrines are not also to be explained away by unchecked allegorical liberties with sacred text:

> The Bāṭinīya are heretics because they claim that the verses should not be taken in their obvious meanings and that they have hidden meanings known only to the teachers. The object of their claim is to reject the Sharīʿa altogether. But the Sufi attitude is that the verses, apart from having obvious spiritual meanings, in

addition have deep meanings discernible only by those who are inspired. A harmony between the normal understanding of the verses and the hidden meaning is possible. This kind of understanding is the result of perfect faith and pure inspiration.[152]

Notice that Taftāzānī, who reflects the post-Ghazālī reconciliation of tradition and mysticism, conspicuously excludes rationalism from the authenticating interpretive process. A "decisive proof" might overturn a particular reading, but it remains for "perfect faith and pure inspiration" to validate that reading. Traditionalists invested heavily in the hope that they might see God in Paradise. Al-Ghazālī remarks that "the Ashʻarite avers that there is no apodeictic proof of the impossibility of the ocular vision of God."[153] By contrast, al-Ghazālī criticizes the Muʻtazilī "denial of the ocular vision of God Most High" as "innovation, not unbelief."[154]

A God who cannot be seen is often too abstract for popular religion to accept. A Deity who cannot be personally, even sensuously, experienced is too far removed for the cravings of simple faith. Al-Ashʻarī's refutation of Muʻtazilī thought bears out the singular importance of the beatific vision for faith. Underlying this certainty in beatific vision is the Ashʻarī position that "God has eternal and existent attributes superadded to His essence. He is, thus, knowing through knowledge, powerful through power, willing through will, and so forth."[155] The very first chapter of al-Ashʻarī's *al-Ibāna* addresses the topic: "The *kalām* to prove the visibility of God to sight (*abṣār*) in the next world."[156] In the end, Ashʻarī thought prevailed for, as Van Ess observes:

> In a certain sense, anthropomorphism could never die. And as a matter of fact it did not; the Muslims still believe that they will see God in Paradise, and they still respect most of the traditions I mentioned, albeit sometimes with a salvatory clause, the *bilā kayfa*, we do not know how. Whether this slightly agnostic turn is a satisfying theological solution is for the Muslims to decide.[157]

3.4 The Shīʿī Revival of Muʿtazilī Interpretation

Shīʿism took over important interpretive elements of the Muʿtazilī *kalām* prolonging it to this day. There remained important differences between Muʿtazilī and Shīʿī thought, and the extent of Shīʿī assimilation of Muʿtazilī thought and method continues to be disputed.[158] Though Ibn Bābūya of Qum (d. 381/991) was clearly influenced in later life by Mutazilī thought, it was a trio of Shīʿī jurist-theologians in Baghdad who effected the Shīʿī adoption of Muʿtazilī *kalām*: al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044), and Shaykh al-Ṭāʾifa (d. 460/1067).[159] Thus it is later implied by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728 A.H.) in retrospect that it was Shaykh al-Mufīd who was the first of the Imāmīs to borrow doctrines from the Muʿtazilīs.[160] Nonetheless, it was to be al-Murtaḍā's formulation of theology, based on the Baṣran school of Mutazilī thought, that would form the basis of Shīʿī theology for centuries to come.[161]

Quranic anthropomorphisms are treated in much the same fashion by Shīʿīs as by Muʿtazilīs. For example, God's "two hands" (Q. 38:75), Ibn Bābūya al-Qummī construed them to mean God's *quwwa* and *qudra* (power). His disciple, Shaykh al-Mufīd, takes the Qurʾān's reference to God's "breath" (Q. 15:29) as the bestowal of honor on the one upon whom God breathes.[162] Ibn Bābūya had dismissed the possibility of ocular vision of God:

> The meaning of "vision of God" occurring in traditions is knowledge. … So on the Day of Resurrection God's signs and His reward and His punishment will be unveiled to men in such a way as to dispel doubts about Him and teach the reality of God's power.[163]

Theological controversies often pitted reason against tradition, logic against literalism. The tools of investigation, however, varied in other disciplines. We shall next consider the role of philosophy in Islam, and how its own appeal to reason was applied to Quranic interpretation. Bound up with such appeal to reason was the Hellenistic tradition which lay behind it. Inevitably, controversies over cultural contamination flared up, with the irony that reason itself, being too closely identified with the Greek philosophical tradition, was opposed as a rival to the authority of revelation, and was viewed as a kind of humanism in lamb's clothing.

4.0 Philosophical Truth as Syllogism or Symbol: Al-Fārābī, Avicenna, Averroes

Islamic philosophy had much to say about symbolism. Discussions of this kind went far beyond rhetoric. Philosophy also had much to say that provided alternative perspectives on Islam, and, in this sense, philosophy went beyond Ash'arī *kalām* as well. It could also be said that Islamic philosophy fought, on new turf, some old Mu'tazilī battles. Rahman is positive on this point: "The Islamic philosophical movement, … from the point of view of its amplification of Islamic doctrine, was an outgrowth of the Mu'tazila *kalām*."[164] In this chapter, the views of three of the greatest philosophers in Islam on the problem of Quranic symbolism will be presented: al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), Avicenna (d. 428/1037), and Averroes (d. 594/1198).

First, a word should be said about their philosophical method of discourse. On the mode of argumentation peculiar to Islamic philosophers, Massignon describes their vaunted and disciplined "syllogistic process" so:

> The syllogistic process, *tarīqa burhānīya* (*qiyās khafī*, *tamthīlī*, *ta'līlī*; *istisān*), of the Hanifite jurists and the Hellenistic philosophers: this is the extrication of a middle term (*ta'līl*) between two considered facts, taken respectively as a major and minor of a syllogism. It concludes a simile, from the same cause (middle way), to the two similar effects. … It formulates the diagnosis, poses the "why," *lima*; it is no longer the silhouette of the two things that it considers, but a common general relation (*qarīna*) that it extricates from them, by which it compares them, an analytical method of investigation (*secundum quid*, *min wajh dūn wajh*) providing information on their essences. "In the same way as, just as ..." (*ka*, *mithl*). Inventorying thus, one by one, these simple analogous elements that these two concepts have, or do not have (*jam'*, *farq*; *qat' wasl*), it concludes with their incomplete identity, by equivocation: "It is not that, and that is no other than it, *Lā hiya huwa, wa lā hiya ghayruhu*": such is the classic formula of the formal distinction (*bayn*, *dūn*): which is conceivable as distinct. This is the rational argumentation par excellence.[165]

4.1 Al-Fārābī (d. 339/950)

Al-Fārābī held that the imaginative faculty—considered a spiritual organ translating between spiritual and concrete realities—must express religious truth in figurative language. Since the organ of imagination is not an immaterial faculty, it could scarcely grasp the universal and the immaterial realities otherwise. "Figurization and symbolization," summarizes Rahman, "is a function peculiar to the imaginative faculty."[166] This presumably applies to the content of revelation as well, for, as al-Fārābī explains, "in the mind of the Lawgiver himself, too, these figurizations exist, but not as images and persuasions. … It is, indeed, he who has invented these images and persuasive symbols not in order to understand himself the higher realities as a religion but as symbols and images for others."[167] Al-Fārābī has defined religion as that which "symbolizes philosophy"; ergo, he can speak of "religion's figurization of the rationals by the sensibles."[168]

Religions universally represent higher realities in this way, not just Islam:

> Either a man rationally conceives the principles of existence and their ranks, the salvation and the government of good states, or understands them only figuratively. Their rational conception is that their essences impress themselves upon the (rational) soul of man, just as they are; their imaginative understanding is that their images and symbols impress themselves upon the soul. … Most men are unable—either by nature or by custom—to understand these things by rational conception. These men should be furnished with imaginative symbols of the principles of existence. … Now, the essences of these things are one (among all nations) and unchangeable, but their symbols are many and different. …
>
> Therefore the symbols of these realities current in one people differ from those current in another, and so the religions even of good societies and states come to differ, even though they all believe in an identical type of salvation (or happiness), since religion is only the imaginative symbols in the minds of a people.[169]

The view that "prophets communicate … truth … in materialistic symbols and metaphors" is one "abundantly found among Muslim philosophers," Rahman concludes.[170] The implication of al-Fārābī's position that religions are symbolic universes raises the question of interpretation, for symbols require it. This is all fine and good, but how should interpretation proceed? This is left as a Socratic question, which al-Fārābī was disinclined to profane.

4.2 Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā, d. 428/1037)

The Persian-born philosopher Avicenna was arguably the greatest Islamic philosopher in history.[171] This "philosopher of being" and exponent of Islamic Peripatetic (*mashshā'ī*) philosophy showed a keen interest in symbols, even in the esoteric symbolism of letters and numbers.[172] For Avicenna, an informed appreciation of

symbols was part of the quest for wisdom (the goal of Islamic philosophers). Avicenna discoursed on the symbolic method in his *Ilāhiyyāt*:

> The prophet … should let men know that they have a maker, one and omnipotent. … He should inform them about God's majesty and greatness through symbols (*rumūz*) and images (*amthila*) derived from things that for them are majestic and great, and present in addition to that only this much, namely, that God has neither equal, nor companion, nor likeness. Similarly, he must establish for them the doctrine about the (final) Destination (of the soul) in a way that they will be able to conceive how it happens and that will reassure them, and he must strike images (*amthāl*) for the eternal bliss and misery that they will understand and conceive. Of the true nature of these matters he should intimate to them (what) … 'no eye has ever seen...'. … It makes no difference that his (the prophet's) address includes symbols (*rumūz*) and pointers (*ishārāt*).[173]

Avicenna certainly held an elitist view of knowledge, the masses (*al-ʻāmma*) deemed incapable of fathoming lofty truths directly, being equally as incapable of performing what such truth requires. Moreover, there are some truths which the masses are scarcely prepared to receive. The truths enshrined in symbols are superior to the symbols themselves. Nonetheless, symbols are the most effective means whereby God has chosen to reveal truth through the Prophets. For those endowed with such capacity, symbols invite further inquiry into the truth, in all its potent demonstrative nakedness.[174]

According to Gutas, Avicenna's symbolic method of imparting truth had four functions—two positive and two negative, to wit: (1) to impart a degree of knowledge to the masses (by prophets and by philosophers of yore) necessary for their social and eschatological well-being, to wit, of God, soul, and the Hereafter; (2) since correspondences between Revelation and philosophy are there for the discovering, symbols draw out from the masses those gifted individuals capable of propounding the

demonstrative marrow of allegory; (3) at the same time, symbols serve an obfuscatory function, not only to reveal truth but to conceal it, that is, some of the higher truths which, in the hands of the ignorant, could only result in harm; (4) symbols in a sense fool people into sensing that nothing has been withheld from them, when, in fact, a great deal has.[175] How, then, does this bear on Quranic interpretation? Avicenna, in his *Risāla al-Aḍḥawiyya*, explains:

> As for religious law, one general principle is to be admitted, *viz.*, that religions and religious laws, promulgated through a prophet, aim at addressing the masses as a whole. Now it is obvious that the deeper truths concerning the real Unity (of God), viz., that there is one Maker (of the Universe) Who is exalted above quantity, quality, place, time, position and change...that neither is He transcendent nor immanent. … (T)hese deeper truths cannot be communicated to the multitude. For … the bedouin Arabs … would have refused straightaway to believe. This is why the whole account of the Unity (of God) in religion is in anthropomorphisms. …
>
> Some people may say: "Arabic language allows … metaphorism; anthropomorphisms like the hand, the face (of God), His coming down in the canopies of clouds, His coming, going, laughter, shame, anger are all correct (in linguistic use), only the way of their use and their context show whether they have been employed metaphorically or literally."
>
> Now, in the passages which these commentators bring to show the metaphorical use of phrases, this may be admitted. … But as for the saying of God the Exalted, "in the canopies of clouds" (Q. 2:210) and, again, His saying, "Do they (the infidels) then await … that the Lord … should come to them?" (Q. 6:159)—with regard to these, the use of metaphor or allegory—to employ these categories (of the commentators)—cannot even be imagined. … But as for the saying of God the Exalted, "God's hand is upon theirs" (Q. 48:10) and "(Woe betide me) for having fallen short (in my duty) to God" (literally, to the side of God) (Q. 39:56), these do admit of latitude for metaphorical expression and no two persons versed in the art of Arabic rhetoric dispute this. …

> But let us even grant that the Arabian Revelation is metaphor and allegory according to the usage of the Arabic language. What will they (the commentators) say about the Hebrew Revelation—a monument of utter anthropomorphism from the beginning to the end? … All this shows that religions are intended to address the multitudes in terms intelligible to them, seeking to bring home to them what transcends their intelligence by means of metaphor and symbol.[176]

In this light—given the symbolic nature of scripture for the stated purposes of edification—Avicenna undertook to interpret the Qur'ān and in the process wrote three allegorical works.[177] Avicenna's exegesis of the Light Verse (Q. 24:35) is representative of his industry in this field.[178]

A similar mode of relating truth, according to Avicenna, is the "indicative method" by means of pointers (*ishārāt*). It differs also from the expository method in that truths are disclosed as though from behind a veil. The demonstrative method is explicit, the indicative method is implicit. This form of disclosure likewise protects knowledge, but not in so obscure a way as do symbols. The philosopher Aristotle is a prime example of how truths can be expressed both openly and covertly. This view of Aristotle's compositional technique evidently follows al-Fārābī's description of it, such that Avicenna as well "omits the necessary premiss, omits the conclusion, and presents the entire argument in an order different from the syllogistic one" as did Aristotle.[179]

From these "Pointers" the worthy can then extrapolate insights into the syllogistic structure of the universe. Avicenna's last philosophical *summa* was thus appropriately entitled, *Pointers and Reminders* (*al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*), implementing his philosophical praxis of deriving corollaries on the basis of fundamental principles through intuition as well as logic.

4.3 Averroes (d. 1198)

Among Muslim thinkers, Averroes appears to have made the greatest impact on European thought.[180] For centuries 'ulāma' have attacked philosophy—a foreign import from the Greek pagan tradition—as teaching doctrines about God and the universe which are at variance with revealed truth. Al-Ghazālī, after reading the works of Avicenna and al-Kindī as well as the works in translation of Greek philosophers "came to the conclusion that they were not explaining, but were rather explaining away, Islamic beliefs."[181] Around eighty years after al-Ghazālī's attack on Avicenna as part of his campaign against philosophy, Averroes (Ibn Rushd) took up his pen to cross swords with the orthodox Imām in defense of philosophical enquiry. Faced with the challenge of reconciling apparent contradictions between philosophy and scripture, Averroes wrote:

> If Scripture speaks about it, the apparent meaning of the words inevitably either accords or conflicts with the conclusion of demonstration about it. If this (apparent meaning) accords there is no argument. If it conflicts there is a call for allegorical interpretation of it. The meaning of "allegorical interpretation" is: extension of the significance of an expression from real to metaphorical significance, without forsaking therein the standard metaphorical practices of Arabic, such as calling a thing by the name of some-thing resembling it or a cause or consequence or accompaniment of it, or other things such as are enumerated in the accounts of the kinds of metaphorical speech.[182]

As Hourani points out, this still leaves unresolved the question as to whether to interpret allegorically or not. Linguistic rules at best can only set limits. To judge the proper mode of interpretation, Averroes does accept the system propounded by al-Ghazālī, according to which there are five possible levels of meaning (essential, sensible, imaginary, intellectual, and metaphorical).[183] Based on these, allegorical interpretation is warranted only if the literal meaning proves impossible. Impossibility is indicated when

a passage is in apparent contradiction with another Quranic text having unequivocal force. In such a case, the passage in question may be explored for its deeper purport allegorically if this brings it in line with the more explicit and thus authoritative Quranic text, since the Qur'ān cannot contradict itself. Yet this only provides a check upon "rash and arbitrary" interpretation.

Here is where credentials come into play, as the authority to interpret should derive from an ability to do so. Averroes implies that philosophers possess an ability to interpret scripture superior to that of theologians (*mutakallimūn*), to wit, the Mu'tazilīs and the 'Ash'arīs, each of whom are incapable of performing sound *ta'wīl*. Averroes invokes the Qur'ān's reference to "those who are well-grounded in learning" (Q 3:7) as having the authority to interpret. Naturally, in Averroes' view, the Qur'ān can only refer to those possessing demonstrative knowledge. As a further verification of sound interpretation, Averroes proposes another criterion, which really is a positive use of al-Ghazālī's negative rule regarding contradiction: if the allegorical interpretation is valid, it will be confirmed by a direct statement elsewhere in Scripture.[184] This is an argument from possibility rather than impossibility.

In a discussion of the Hereafter, Averroes cites two sound (ṣaḥīḥ) traditions related by al-Bukhārī, which should give pause for allegorical thought, in which the Prophet is reported to have said: "There is nothing that I have not seen, but I have seen it already in this place of mine—even Paradise and the Fire;" and, "Between my basin and my pulpit there is one of the gardens of Paradise, and my pulpit is close by my basin." Averroes concludes: "It is easy to perceive that all these sayings are symbolic, but difficult to perceive what they symbolize."[185] The interpretive dilemma here is to steer clear of two extremes: slavish literalism and allegorical fancy.

How then should the views of these three great philosophers of Islam on symbolism be received? Do they add to our understanding of the Qur'ān, or to Islam's understanding of its own creative Word, in any substantive way? Fazlur Rahman renders a negative verdict:

> Nor would the orthodox thinkers quarrel with the philosophical view that the anthropomorphic expressions in the Koran about God are not meant to be taken literally. But it is on the positive side as to what they do mean that the orthodox violently disagree with the philosophers and tend to place their reliance chiefly upon the metaphorical use of the language rather than on allegorization. But the basic trouble was the philosophical conception of the religion—both its beliefs and its laws—as mere symbols from which there is no escape for the masses. Not only did this symbol-reality dichotomy cut at the roots of traditional Islam: it sought to introduce a distinction of the naturally privileged and the naturally barred to a society to which essential egalitarianism was a cardinal article of faith.
>
> The philosophical distinction, in fact, was incurable and far more ominous than the mystic distinction between those having an inner spiritual life and those who were content only with the external observances of the law, for, a para-mystical distinction—that of Islam and Īmān—was accepted by the orthodoxy, as expressing a distinction within a whole, between the spirit and the letter of the law, and not an absolute separation and disengagement of the two.[186]

It seems that the elitism of philosophy did it a disservice. The fact that Averroes accused al-Ghazālī of attempting to profane the esoteric purport of the Qur'ān and other scriptures[187] exposes his ambivalence towards that type of Quranic exegesis that would articulate from text demonstrative truths and, in so doing, profane them. By contrast, mystical Quranic exegesis made the profane sublime through an emotive rather than mental elitism.

5.0 The "Discovery" of Quranic Symbolism by Mystics: Al-Tustarī, Ibn al-ʻArabī, al-Ghazālī

It has been said that "the more esoteric a commentary, the fewer Quranic verses it covers."[188] Some exegetical writings by Ṣūfīs are more than esoteric—they are lost. For instance, al-Ḥallāj d. 309/922) had composed a treatise on symbolism and figuration, al-Kayfiyya wa'l-majāz ("Analogy and Figurative Meaning") (not extant).[189] This lost work would have been most relevant to our present study. The title of al-Ḥallāj's lost work, however, is fortuitous, since it implies that, in the mind of at least one Ṣūfī of note, there did exist a relationship between trope and symbol.

It should come as no surprise that the ontological moorings of *majāz* as a hermeneutical concept shifted considerably from that of the rhetoricians and philosophers to the Ṣūfī worldview. In Ṣūfī mystical outlook, *majāz* took on overtones beyond its received hermeneutical implications to express a truth about the language of phenomenality. To Ibn al-ʻArabī (d. 638/1240), for instance, even to speak of the "existence" of the cosmos could only be done in a relative, non-absolute way. For the cosmos is only a metaphor (*majāz*), not a reality, just as a reflection may be said to exist, but only in a mirror.[190] For Sanā'ī (d. 1131) and later mystics, real love (*ʻishq-i ḥaqīqī*) was love directed towards God, differentiated from its worldly counterpart, "figurative love" (*ʻishq-i majāzī*), at best only an ersatz substitute for the true object of mystical longing.[191]

Such an orientation determined mystical interpretation of the Qur'ān.[192] Concerning Ṣūfī *tafsīr*, Jullandri draws a distinction between *al-tafsīr al-ishārī* or *al-ramzī* (symbolic *tafsīr*) and *al-tafsīr al-naẓarī* (speculative *tafsīr*).[193] Wansbrough summarily dismisses this distinction as "simple and misleading."[194] But Jullandri has in view speculative Ṣūfism—deeply influenced by Neoplatonism—as distinct from the

uncomplicated path taught by its earliest mystics. There is common ground, though, between Wansbrough and Jullandri.

Symbolic exegesis, at its primitive level, proceeded from "the acceptance of extended simile" as the substratum of symbolism.[195] Metaphorical reality underlies allegory. Theoretically then, symbolic exegesis presupposes rhetorical analysis, or a perspective parallel to it. Tustarī's (d. 283/896) explication of *lawḥ maḥfūẓ* in Q. 85:22 as the breast of the believer, in which truth might abide, parallels al-Jurjānī's analysis of the traditional symbolic value of separate words in Arabic, exemplified by the understanding of *yad* as the "hand" of God, and *qudra* as "power."[196] Symbolic parallelism, as extended simile, is "the necessary substratum of all allegory."[197]

Though at times Wansbrough appears to use "symbolic" and "allegorical interpretation" interchangeably,[198] he does differentiate.[199] He contrasts two poles of Ṣūfī *tafsīr*: (1) symbolic interpretation as in Tustarī's mystical *tafsīr* (substitution/transfer); (2) allegorical interpretation as in Ibn al-ʿArabī's dramatic narrations (imagery transfer—to which Sūras 12 and 18 are susceptible).[200]

Is mystical, intuitive, or inspired exegesis valid? In narrower terms, does allegory take more liberties with the text than does symbolic exegesis? Is either one artificial or arbitrary? Corbin himself maintained the distinction between symbol and allegory, holding that mystical *ta'wīl* inherently possesses a safeguard which makes it less arbitrary or not so at all: viz., the symbol is the only possible expression of the symbolized, due to the ineffable nature of experience.[201] Bausani endorses this analysis: "Corbin seems to me to be perfectly right when he writes: 'Symbol is there to announce something which cannot be expressed otherwise: it is the only possible expression of the thing symbolized; allegory is a more or less artificial figuration of generalities or abstractions that can be perfectly expressed and known by other ways'."[202] Corbin is not

alone among Ṣūfīs in this regard, for al-Ghazālī had already set up an extrinsic standard of interpretation: personal mystical experience.[203]

The Ṣūfīs called themselves the *ahl al-ishāra* (the "people of allusion" or the allusionist school). Mystical knowledge is ineffable. It cannot be reduced to literal discourse. It can scarcely be represented symbolically. Mystical experience can only be alluded to, known only by those who "become."

Mystical discoveries can be expressed only by approximation.[204] The "people of allusion" approach the Qur'ān as a book of secrets. Kalābādhī (d. 380/990) refers to Ṣūfīs who had "published the sciences of allusion in books and treatises."[205] Ṣūfī exegesis, the so-called "sciences of allusion," involved what Massignon called "parabolical" argumentation, described as follows:

> The poetic parable, *tarīqa khitābīya*, *shī'rīya*, dear to the mystics, involves a process of argumentation admitted by al-Ghazālī as susceptible of leading to truth, which Ibn Rushd denies. This is, indeed, relative to its point of departure, the humblest, the most difficult to grasp, of the processes of argumentation. It does not take as its departure, as does the dialectic, an order of fact, posed *a priori*; nor, like the syllogism, the search for a common "cause" (*'illa*) of an analogical middle term, but simply an undetermined rapport (*nisba*, *nasab*) of a hypothetical proportionality sketched out between the two facts considered.
>
> The parable proposes the real explication of a figurative meaning; it is the inverse of the metaphor: an adjuvant to reflection, a sudden adequation of the idea to the real; an integration, a spiritual vivification. It is by a sort of transport, *tajāwuz*, that stimulates the passage from the figurative meaning to the literal meaning, from the image to reality; transfiguring the subject in order to transform it into its object. It starts from a distinction that it knows to be real, to propose an identification, a union to be realized.[206]

If mystics are the "people of allusion," Ibn al-ʻArabī's definition of *ishāra* is equally elusive. In answer to the question, "What is revelation (*waḥy*)?" the Andalusian mystic replied: "It is that in which is born the allusion which replaces the expression (*ʻibāra*) without expression. In the *ʻibāra*, one 'passes' from it to the sense which it aims at; and this is why it is called *ʻibāra*, passage, while allusion which is revelation is the very essence of that which is alluded to."[207] Simply stated, al-Jāmī (d. 898/1492) explains that "the basis (*mustanad*) of the position taken by the Ṣūfīs (as opposed to kalām and philosophy) is mystical revelation and insight (*al-kashf wa-al-ʻiyān*) rather then reason and demonstration (*al-naẓar wa-al-burhān*)."[208]

Wansbrough observes that Ṣūfī commentary, with al-Tustarī the earliest, starts with simple symbolic exegesis of symbol and referent, while allegorical *tafsīr* is basically extended metaphor with symbolic value. Now, what "allusions" do Ṣūfīs see in the Qur'ān as pointing to mystical experience? Does revelation (Qur'ān and tradition) support some form of mystical encounter with God?

Beatific vision, alongside divine audition, was really the pinnacle of the mystic quest. The celebrated "*ḥadīth* of the vision," which reports one of the Prophet's mystical experiences, must have caused considerable speculation:

> I have seen my Lord in a form of the greatest beauty, as a youth with abundant hair, seated on the Throne of grace; he was clad in a garment of gold (or a green robe, according to a variant); on his hair a golden mitre; on his feet golden sandals.[209]

Though mysticism is in many ways elitist, still the pious in popular Islam had as much at stake in the eschaton as the mystic few. The mystics had a mission, which was to awaken the believers. One of the effective ways of renewing interest in the contemplative life was to make the possibility of beholding God real. Encounter with

God is assumed by the twin authorities of Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, though the nature of such encounter requires interpretation.

Wherever there is interpretation, controversy is sure to flare, with various attempts at resolution. To be sure, the ultimate anthropomorphism is a visible Deity invested with human attributes. But what of the other way around? God, wishing to imbue man with divine attributes, appears in a modality familiar to man. Forms of this "theomorphic" encounter were experienced by a number of Ṣūfīs.

How did mystics resolve the actual experience of beatific vision with the burning issue of anthropomorphism? Al-Ḥallāj suffered martyrdom over the bare mention of oneness with God, without the Qur'ān to defend him. Ṣūfī exegesis subsequent to this event produced commentaries on selected Quranic verses. It is safe to say that mystical exegesis has its classic exemplars in al-Tustarī, and in al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-Anwār*,[210] while speculative exegesis finds its hallmark in Ibn al-'Arabī.[211]

Referring to al-Tustarī, Wansbrough observes "it is precisely … straightforward substitution:transfer which characterized this earliest symbolic exegesis" while the "technique of dramatic allegorization found later" finds its "full expression in the writings of Ibn 'Arabī."[212] Below follow the interpretive strategies of three illustrious Ṣūfīs, on the question of the Vision of God. Al-Tustarī and Ibn al-'Arabī are presented here as a link to Wansbrough's theoretical discussion of rhetorical and allegorical interpretation.

5.1 The Paradox of Beatific Vision and Anthropomorphism

As mystical exegetes, al-Tustarī and Ibn al-ʻArabī are prime exemplars of the Ṣūfī approach to tafsīr, while a third representative—al-Ghazālī—is the perfect choice from an orthodox Islamic perspective. In a study extending the work of Massignon—*Exégèse Coranique et langage mystique*—Nwyia asserts that ecstatic utterance, known as *shaṭḥ*, is the pinnacle of Ṣūfī mystical experience: "*A de tels sommets on ne parvient, certes, qu'à de très rares moments privilégiés*."[213] But "divine audition" is really overshadowed by another phenomenon[214]—quested for and attested within Ṣūfī tradition: beholding the Face of God.

Surprisingly little attention has been devoted to beatific vision. Western scholarship on Ṣūfīsm has not accorded beatific vision the importance it surely held for Ṣūfīs themselves. One might look to Annemarie Schimmel's magisterial *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (1975). This classic study fails to treat beatific vision as a distinct topic within Ṣūfīsm, and thus we read about it only in passing, though it commanded a great deal of attention for Ṣūfīs. Elsewhere, though, Schimmel does acknowledge: "The central experience they (mystics) hoped for when think-ing of Paradise was *ru'yā*, the beatific vision, as they understood it from Sūra 75:22."[215] Mystics themselves did not see eye to eye when it came to seeing God. Ṣūfī literature is a little confusing suffused as it is with intoxication, paradox, metaphor and ruse.

The so-called "sober" versus "drunken" schools of Ṣūfīsm offer a tempting framework of analysis for differentiating those Ṣūfīs who saw God from those theorists who would "see red" at the thought. This distinction may contain partial truth. Another possible analytical approach would be to classify claims to beatific vision as either of two experiential types: (1) a state of "transforming union"; or (2) internalized monistic gnosis. From either perspective, how God appears in the Qur'ān is still a matter of

interpretation. In a broader Islamic context, Gardet sums up the theological dimension of the controversy so:

> The vision of God (*ru'yat Allāh*) is understood as being through the eyesight, *bi'l-absār*. The pious traditionists accepted it absolutely, interpreting in this sense Q. 75:22–23, and numerous *ḥadīths*. The Mu'tazilites denied it no less absolutely, interpreting the Kur'ānic text by a philological *ta'wīl*. Ash'arites and Hanifite-Māturīdites upheld the vision of God, but emphasizing the *bilā kayf*: every man will see God with his eyesight on the Day of Judgment, the elect will see Him (transiently) in Paradise—but they will not see Him as one sees an object spatially situated and limited, and it is impossible to specify the manner of this vision.[216]

5.2 Sahl Al-Tustarī (d. 283/896)

Al-Tustarī's mystical Qur'ān commentary, on around one thousand selected verses, is the earliest extant Ṣūfī *tafsīr*. His authority to write such a treatise was doubtless born of his mystical experiences. An added element of authority enters into this text: al-Tustarī proclaimed himself to be "the proof of God" (*ḥujjāt Allāh*).[217]

The Qur'ān, at this early stage of mystical tradition, serves as a source of inspiration for choice but disjointed meditations on the text. The Qur'ān is not drawn upon as a quarry for proof-texts. Its interpretation has five dimensions:

> God sent down (*anzala*) the Qur'ān five times five (verses) at a time, five self-explanatory (*muḥkam*), five "metaphorical" (*mutashābih*), five "lawful" (*ḥalāl*), five "unlawful" (*ḥarām*) and five "parabolic" (*amthāl*) verses. The believer, possessed of mystical knowledge, acts according to its self-explanatory (verses), believes in its metaphorical (verses), declares allowed its "lawful" and forbidden its "unlawful" (verses), and comprehends its parables.[218]

Böwering's study on Tustarī's tafsīr extends Wansbrough's discussion of symbolic interpretation of the Qur'ān.[219] The "star" in the Quranic oath, "By the star when it plunges" (Q. 53:1) is the Prophet, on his return from heaven (*samā'*).[220] The process of interpretive substitution is evident from Tustarī's comment on the Verse of Light (Q. 24:35). Böwering glosses Tustarī's *tafsīr* as follows:

> The candle (*sirāj*) of the lamp (*miṣbāḥ*) is the gnosis (*ma'rifah*), its wick (*fatīlah*) is the religious duties (*farā'iḍ*), its oil (*duhn*) is purity of intention (*ikhlāṣ*), and its light (*nūr*) is the light of spiritual attainment (*ittiṣāl*). For whenever the purity of intention increases in purity (*ṣafā'an*), the lamp increases in brightness (*ḍiyā'an*); and whenever the religious duties increase in reality (*ḥaqīqatan*), the lamp increases in its light (*nūran*).[221]

As to beatific vision, on the Quranic keynote Q. 42:20, Tustarī explains the vision of God (*al-naẓar ilayhī*) as "the share (*ḥaẓẓ*) of the intuition of the spiritual self (*dhihn nafs al-rūḥ*), the understanding of the intellect (*fahm al-'aql*) and the discernment of the heart (*fiṭnat al-qalb*)."[222] On the same verse, Tustarī remarks that man's share (*naṣib*) in the world to come (*ākhirah*) is "the sight of God (*ru'yat al-ḥaqq*) forever (*'ala'l-abad*)."[223] On Q. 75:23, the promise is reiterated: "The recompense (*jazā'*) of the profession of God's oneness (*tawḥīd*) is the vision of God (*al-naẓar ila'l-ḥaqq*)."[224] As intimate as it is certain, this vision of God, in the final analysis, is more aptly described as insight rather than sight. Tustarī's overall concept of *tajallī* has in mind a picture of Paradise, not a terrestrial vision of God.[225] Tustarī continues:

> Do you not consider, that man only visually beholds God (*yanẓura ila'l-ḥaqq*) by reason of a subtle substance (*laṭīfah*) from God (*al-ḥaqq*) which He united with his heart (*qalb*). It pertains to the qualities (*awṣāf*) of the Essence (*dhāt*) of His Lord (*rabb*) and is neither existentiated (*mukawwanah*) nor created (*makhlūqah*), nor is it conjunct (with God, *mawṣūlah*). It is an absolute secret (*sirr min sirr ilā sirr*) and an ultimate mystery (*ghayb min ghayb ilā ghayb*).[226]

Here Tustarī starts with a mystery, but keeps it secret. He makes clear one thing in particular: the Qur'ān symbolically validates visionary life. From the standpoint of our interest in interpretation, Tustarī betrays a relationship between anti-anthropomorphism (Tustarī describes God metaphorically as supernal Light), and symbolic Quranic interpretation.

5.3 Al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)

Following the martyrdom of al-Ḥallāj, it was expedient for Ṣūfīs not to enounce mystical doctrines which might alarm mainstream Muslims. There were several major efforts by Ṣūfī writers to reconcile "the Path" (*ṭarīqa*) with "the Road" (*sharī'a*). The most successful of these efforts at reconciliation was that of al-Ghazālī.

Prior to al-Ghazālī, the Ṣūfī didact, al-Kalābādhī (d. 385/995), also had attempted a reconciliatory synthesis. In his treatise *Kitāb at-ta'arruf*, this acclaimed Ṣūfī of Bukhārā (Transoxiana) had sought "to bridge the chasm between orthodox theology and Ṣūfīsm, which the execution of Hallāj had greatly widened."[227] This treatise provides an excellent background to the controversy which al-Ghazālī had to resolve. Al-Kalābādhī summarizes Ṣūfī *ta'wīl* on both sides of the controversy over beatific vision. As mentioned, all this reflects a wider theological as well as popular debate.

That vision of God is possible is argued by some Ṣūfīs on the basis of Q. 7:139, where the petition of Moses to behold God was conditional on Mount Sinai literally remaining steadfast. The mountain was unable to sustain the presence of God, however. This casts doubt on man's ability to do so. But possibility becomes certainty in the case of the righteous in Paradise, who, on the assurance of Q. 75:22, are granted the promise: "Upon that day faces shall be radiant, gazing upon their Lord."

On the other side of the coin, there were Ṣūfīs who took "gazing on their Lord" as signifying "gazing on the reward of their Lord" on the grounds that a reward from God is perforce other than God. Anti-anthropomorphic Ṣūfīs would also find Moses' wish to see God (Q. 7:139) as a petition for a denied and thus impossible sign. The stated limitation, "No vision taketh Him in" (Q. 6:103), is taken by some Ṣūfīs as asserting vision of God to be impossible in both worlds. In any event, had vision been possible in this life, utter and complete surrender would have been "axiomatic."[228]

In al-Ghazālī, we find an explicit conceptual progression from metaphor to "reality" in the Quranic description of God as pure light (the Verse of Light). "Light" is described so: "The Real Light is Allāh; and the name 'light' is otherwise only predicated metaphorically and conveys no real meaning."[229] On Light as metaphor, al-Ghazālī states:

> Nay, I do not hesitate to say boldly that the term "light" as applied to aught else than this primary light is purely metaphorical. … But to call the borrower by the same name as the lender is mere metaphor. Think you that the man who borrows the riding-habit, saddle, horse, or other riding beast, and mounts the same when and as the lender appoints, is actually, or metaphorically, rich? The latter, assuredly! … It is from this starting-point that Allāh's gnostics rise from metaphors to realities.[230]

Not everything can be expressed by recourse to light-metaphors. There are a host of other metaphors and symbols from which to draw. The most convincing analogy al-Ghazālī makes in support of scriptural symbol is the dream-symbol—a source of intense interest in popular Islam:

Let us now return to the pattern we selected for illustrating the symbolic method. The science of the interpretation of Visions determines for us the value of each kind of symbol; for "Vision is a part of Prophecy." It is clear, is it not, that the sun, when seen in a vision, must be interpreted by (as?) a Sovereign Monarch, because of the mutual resemblance. …

The antitype of the moon will be that Sovereign's Minister; for it is through the moon that the sun sheds its light on the world in its own absence. … Again, the dreamer who sees himself with a ring on his finger with which he seals the mouths of men and the secrets of women, is told that the sign means the early Call to Prayer in the month of Ramadan. Again, for one who sees himself pouring olive oil into an olive-tree the interpretation is that the slave-girl he has wedded is his mother, unrecognized by him.

But it is impossible to exhaust the different ways by which symbols of this description may be interpreted. I can merely say that just as certain beings of the Spirit-World Supernal are symbolized by Sun, Moon, and Stars, others may be typified by different symbols, when the point of connexion is some characteristic other than light.[231]

There exists the danger of literalizing and metaphysically reifying metaphor. Al-Ghazālī tries to counter this interpretive extreme by criticizing "extremists":

Pray do not assume from this specimen of symbolism and its method that you have any licence from me to ignore the outward and visible form, or to believe that it has been annulled. … The annulment of the outward and visible sign is the tenet of the Spiritualists (*Bāṭiniyya*), who looked, utterly one-sidedly, at one world, the Unseen, and were grossly ignorant of the balance that exists between it and the Seen. … In other words, whoever abstracts and isolates the outward from the whole is a Materialist (*Ḥashawiyya*), and whoever abstracts the inward is a Spiritualist, while he who joins the two together is catholic, perfect.[232]

Al-Ghazālī judges as heretical innovation the Mu'tazilī denial of ocular vision of God in the afterworld.[233] The nature of the Vision in the world to come is, however, indeterminate: "God is One, the Ancient of Days." "The fact of His existence is apprehended by man's reason and He will be seen as He is by that gift of spiritual vision, which He will grant unto the righteous, in the Abode of Eternity, when their beatitude shall be made perfect by the vision of His glorious Countenance."[234] And further: "The onset of God's epiphany came upon them with one rush, so that all that is apprehensible by the sight of Sense or by the insight of Intelligence was by 'the splendours of His Countenance utterly consumed'."[235]

On Vision of God in this life, al-Ghazālī, discoursing on fanā' (evanescence), states: "This absorption at first will be like a flash of lightning, lasting but a short time, but then it becomes habitual and a means of enabling the soul to ascend to the world above, where pure and essential Reality is manifested to it, and it takes upon itself the impress of the Invisible World and the Divine Majesty is revealed to it and at last, it looks upon God, face to face."[236] And further: "When the mystic enters into the pure and absolute Unicity of the One and into the Kingdom of the One and Alone, mortals reach the end of their ascent. … This is the final degree of those who attain, but some of them did not in their ascent follow the gradual process we have described, nor was the ascent long for them. … The Divine Epiphany broke in upon them all at once, so that all things perceptible by sight or by insight were consumed by the glory of His Countenance."[237]

But the revelation of God is also concealment: "Glory be to Him, Who is concealed from sight by the brightness of His light. If He had not veiled Himself with Seventy Veils of Light, the splendours of His Countenance would surely consume the eyes of those who contemplate the Beauty which is His."[238] Al-Ghazālī judiciously

conserves the language of seeing: God is "seen," but veiled from sight by light. "Countenance" is not "Face" literally, but aspect. The language of light—so pronounced throughout al-Ghazālī's mystical writings—is the com-promise with (if not, then clarification of)—visionary discourse, such that the visibility of God is also invisibility.

The relevance to Quranic exegesis here cannot fail to impress the reader. We find Quranic support for some form of beatific vision. At the same time, God cannot be seen. The modality, then, is what is in question, but only if the Quranic promise of beholding God is divested of its unmitigated literalism. The exegetical implications of al-Ghazālī's tafsīr are about the same as for Tustarī: the promise of beatific vision is an assured requital, yet God, veiled by light, is never seen directly. This qualified doctrine of vision is anti-anthropomorphic. Instead, it is theomorphic. The exegetical way in which this non-anthropomorphic Deity is seen is entirely metaphorical: "HE IS THAT HE IS, none but He has ipseity or heity at all, save by metaphor."[239]

5.4 Ibn al-ʻArabī (d. 638/1240)

An apparent polemic against Ṣūfī claimants to beatific vision is developed in Ibn ʻArabī's Bezels of Wisdom (*Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*). "Those who know God in the true sense," he writes, "assert that there can never be self-manifestation in the state of Unity." Ibn al-ʻArabī sustains a distinction always—even in the pinnacle of mystical experience—between the beholder (*nāẓir*) and the object of vision (*manẓūr*). The mystic claim of "becoming one with God" is tantamount to fallacy, a Ṣūfī expression of which is "I have seen God through Him" (*naẓartuhu bihi*). Even if the experience is granted as authentic, nevertheless the distinction holds, between the experiencer and the object of the experience. The same applies to the mystical claim, "I have seen Him through myself" (*naẓartuhu bī*) or, "I have seen Him through Him and myself" (*naẓartuhu bihi*

wabī). There is no escape from the subject:object duality, according to Ibn al-ʻArabī.[240] These distinctions do not, however, preclude a rich visionary life.

What is seen by the mystic is a "phenomenal" God, what Ibn al-ʻArabī terms "God as created in various religious beliefs." "The God who is in a faith," the mystic observes, "is the God whose form the heart contains, who discloses Himself to the heart in such a way that the heart recognizes Him. Thus the eye sees only the God of the faith."[241] To reinforce this point, Ibn al-ʻArabī takes as case in point the universal Muslim conviction (based on a famous *ḥadīth*) that God will appear on the Day of Resurrection in diverse transformations:

> You must know for sure, if you are a real believer, that God will appear on the day of Resurrection (in various forms successively): first in a certain form in which He will be recognized, next in a different form in which He will be denied, then He will transform Himself into another form in which He will again recognized. Throughout this whole process, He will remain He; in whatever form He appears it is He and no one else. Yet, on the other hand, it is also certain that this particular form is not the same as that particular form.[242]
>
> The cosmos is two worlds … , the Unseen ... and the Visible. The second world is perceived by sight, while the world of the Unseen is perceived by insight." "God says, 'Sight perceives Him not' (Q. 6:103), that is, the sight of any eyes, whether of the faces or the eyes of hearts. For hearts perceive only through sight, and the eyes of faces perceives only through sight. … Just as eyes do not see Him through their sight, so also insights do not see Him with their eyes.[243]

One of Ibn al-ʻArabī's successors explains what his master meant in a verse which runs: "Every time (the Absolute) appears to the eye (in a sensible form), Reason expels (the image)." Just as Reason "purifies" the appearance (*tajallī*) from being perceived as a sensible object, so also does the Absolute transcend what Reason "purifies" It from, so that the Absolute is in no wise bound by reason.[244]

Visions of God, if true, cannot be of God except in a theophanic modality meaningful to the believer. Vision events of this nature are said to transpire in spiritual interworld referred to as *ʻālam al-mithāl*. Though Ibn al-ʻArabī was no anthropomorphist (one who ascribes human predicates to the Godhead), he is neither an allegorist (interpreting vision-images as principles or symbols).[245] The faithful mystic will, if strenuous in discipline and so blessed, will progress from mental vision by typification (*tamthīl*) by way of dream vision (*rū'yā*) to vision of the heart (*shuhūd bi'l-qalb*) which is vision through the inner eye (*baṣīra*).[246]

Hujwīrī (d. 1075) sums up the entire controversy very nicely: "Real mystics do not try to analyze themselves nor care about describing their ecstatic states."[247]

6.0 Trees as Men: The Ismāʻīlī ta'wīl of al-Sijistānī

In Momen's work on Shiʻism, the following historical overview emerges as to the incidence of Shīʻī recourse to allegorical interpretation: (1) the *Hāshimiyya*, centered around the figure Abū Hāshim (d. 98/717), are "said to have introduced the allegorical interpretation of the Qur'ān; (2) the *Janāḥiyya*, followers of *Dhū'l-Janāḥayn* (the "possessor of two wings"), who lead a revolt in 127/744; (3) the *Manṣūriyya* (or *Kisfiyya*), followers of Abū Manṣūr, who believed himself to be the piece (*kisf*) of heaven falling down at Q. 52:44 and who is said to have held that the "heavens" symbolized the imāms and the "earth" their followers;[248] (4) the *Khaṭṭābiyya*, followers of Abū'l-Khaṭṭāb executed in Kūfa in 138/755; (5) thereafter Shīʻīs generally.[249] According to Hodgson: "Presumably it was from the *Khaṭṭābiyya* that such elements of the *bāṭinī ta'wīl* entered the Ismāʻīlī movement, where the *ta'wīl* was elaborated till it became the hallmark of that movement."[250]

Modern Shīʿism is not only influenced but is defined by its allegorical heritage, if Ayoub's pronouncement (based on Ṭabāṭabāʾī) is normative: "The most important principle of Shīʿī *tafsīr* therefore is that 'the Qurʾān has an outer dimension (*ẓahr*) and an inner dimension (*baṭn*); its inner dimension has yet another dimension, up to seven inner dimensions'."[251] As Hodgson points out, in Ismāʿīlī thought: "*Taʾwīl*, the educing of the *bāṭin* from the *ẓāhir* text, was therefore as fundamental as *tanzīl*, the revelation of the literal sacred text itself, and was equally dependent upon divine intervention."[252]

One of the fronts on which that champion of orthodoxy al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) had to fight was that of Ismāʿīlī symbolic exegesis. In his attack on alleged Shīʿī liberties with the text, al-Ghazālī cites a few Shīʿī symbols and their referents, which are open to a series of never-ending equivalences. His appeal to absurdity aside, here are some of the "symbols" the Ismāʿīlī exegetes of his day are known to have divined from the Qurʾān:

Exemplars of Ismāʿīlī taʾwīl according to al-Ghazālī

Qurʾān 47:16	rivers of milk	inner knowledge.
Qurʾān 47:16	rivers of wine	exterior knowledge.
Qurʾān 47:17	rivers of honey purified	Imāmī tradition.
Qurʾān 20:72	the staff of Moses	his proof over sophisms.
Qurʾān 21:79	the praised mountains	men of knowledge.
Miracles of Jesus	quickening the dead	giving the spirit new life.
Miracles of Jesus	healing the blind	blindness of error.
Miracles of Jesus	making lepers whole	leprosy of unbelief.[253]

Is al-Ghazālī's recapitulation of Ismā'īlī ta'wīl correct? This question, as a rule, has to be asked since, in heresiography, the tendency is for the defender of orthodoxy to distort the views of his opponents. In the case of al-Ghazālī, his Ismā'īlī opponents are faceless. We can, however. put a face on one important Ismā'īlī commentator whether or not al-Ghazālī had this particular Ismā'īlī in mind. This individual, whose views are quite representative of Ismā'īlī exegetes, is the very interesting yet understudied exegete Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī (d. 360/971), who represented the Persian school of Ismā'īlī thought, and formulated a fresh synthesis of reason and revelation along Neoplatonic lines.

Al-Sijistānī puts his rationalism to work and leads his reader along in the reasoning process. By process of elimination, al-Sijistānī appeals to the common sense of the reader to rule out a literal reading for an entire class of Quranic verses. Those verses which are candidates for allegorical interpretation are those verses which are not only ambiguous (*mutashābihāt*) but problematic, since their literal reading poses absurdities:

> When the listener hears the *mutashābihāt* verses, his intelligence dis-approves of (their obvious meaning), and he becomes confused, because (their meaning) departs from (the accepted) norms and customs, such as the ant's speech to Solomon, the hoopoe's bringing the news about the personal religious beliefs of the Queen of Sheba, the cooling off of fire for Abraham, the gushing forth of twelve fountains when Moses struck his staff on a rock, etc., in the stories of the apostles (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*). … When an intelligent person is presented with those *mutashābihāt* verses, his faith is not reassured, because he finds (those stories) surrounded by an element of impossibility.[254]

This argument from implausibility is quick to point out that literal under-standing of unusual phenomena violates natural law. The Creator, Who has willed these laws as the natural order of the universe, did so according to His wisdom. Were these laws to be suspended, God would, in effect, be annulling His own wisdom. Creation is

then invalidated.[255] Cosmology can certainly figure into hermeneutical principles, and Ismā'īlī *ta'wīl* follows a Neoplatonic parallelism of spiritual, religious and physical hierarchies.[256] Al-Sijistānī also considered verses with physical objects as another category inviting *ta'wīl*.

On a verse which has elements both of impossibility and natural imagery as well (each physical object read as a "likeness" (*mathal*)), al-Sijistānī offers an allegorical exegesis of some interest due to its rationale. The verse at Q. 27:82 reads: "When the word falls on them, We shall bring forth for them out of the earth a beast that shall speak to them." The beast here, al-Sijistānī observes, has been the subject of much controversy among commentators, but to little avail.

The apparent meaning of "earth" is a coarse, motionless body, on which flora and fauna thrive. The earth is thus the abode of all "generated beings" (*al-mawālīd al-tabī'iyya*), which would all cease to exist without its ground of life support. Likewise, the soul and indeed all "spiritually-generated beings" (*al-mawālīd al-rūḥāniyya*) derive life from true, spiritual knowledge. "Earth," therefore, signifies "knowledge." The "word" which "falls" is the "proof" or truth which indicts a people, so that they will see the falsehood of their beliefs. Consistent with this interpretation, al-Sijistānī glosses the "beast" as a spiritual leader inspired with divine knowledge who will bring guidance to the people and lead it from doubt into certainty. This is surprising, as a beast is usually as pejorative image.

Ad Q. 50:7, "And the earth We have stretched it forth, and have flung firm mountains therein, and have caused every lovely pair to grow thereon," al-Sijistānī explains that the idea of "stretching" presupposes contraction, and, poetic though this is, mountains could not have been literally flung onto the earth, as this implies

mountains were external to the earth and of a different substance. Following this argument from implausibility, al-Sijistānī goes on to explain:

> Mountains have sprung up from the earth itself. … Its *ta'wīl* is realized when the word 'earth' is exchanged for 'knowledge,' or 'the one who is the source of knowledge.' Thus, the setting up of the asās (lit. "foundation," viz., the successor to the prophet, in turn succeeded by the imām) and (his) promulgation of the *ta'wīl* is analogous with the earth's stretching, while the casting of firm mountains is similar to appointing religious dignitaries to disseminate knowledge among the deserving. 'Causing of every lovely pair to grow thereon,' means the growth of two-fold knowledge, exoteric and esoteric.[257]

As to Q. 21:105, "On the day when We shall roll up heaven as a scroll rolled up with the writings," this alludes to the cancellation of the *sharī'a* and its abrogation. Another verse which does not make literal sense is Q. 21:79: "And with David We subjected the mountains to give glory." Al-Sijistānī notes that David was an imām, obedience to whom was obligatory. The mountains therefore represent various spiritual leaders under David's authority. The mountain at Q. 59:21 ("If We had sent down this Qur'ān upon a mountain, thou wouldst have seen it humbled, split asunder out of the fear of God,") is explained as a learned, god-fearing and pious *mu'min* (one who is faithful).[258] It is important to mention here the law of correspondences which underlies most allegorical exegesis of the Qur'ān.

With these parallels in mind, Wansbrough suggests that more work ought to be done on figuration and symbolism: "Finally, and in my view of greatest significance, would be an analysis of figure and trope in terms of archetypal patterns, that is, as the *topoi* and *schemata* of monotheistic revelation."[259]

ENDNOTES

[1] John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 238–239 (edition cited, *passim*). See John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, Foreword, Translations, and Expanded Notes by Andrew Rippin (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2004).

[2] Andrew Rippin. "The Qur'an as Literature: Perils, Pitfalls and Prospects," *Bulletin of the British Society of Middle Eastern Studies* 10 (1983): pp. 38–47 [p. 44].

[3] Lutfi Ibrahim, "Az-Zamakhsharī: His Life and Works," *Islamic Studies* 19 (1980): pp. 95–110.

[4] Wadi Z. Haddad, "Taftāzānī," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. by M. Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), Vol. 14, p. 244; and C. A. Storey, "Al-Taftāzānī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden, 1913–1934).

[5] Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices. Volume 1: The Formative Period* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 65.

[6] Victor Danner, "The Early Development of Sufism," *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. by Sayyid Hossein Nasr (New York: Crossroad, 1987), pp. 239–264 (p. 254), with respect to the Neoplatonism of al-Kindī.

[7] Alti B. Rodal, "Response to David R. Blumenthal," *Studies in Jewish Mysticism: Proceedings of Regional Conferences held at the University of California, Los Angeles, and McGill University in April, 1978*, ed. by Joseph Dan and Frank Talmage (Cambridge, Mass.: Association for Jewish Studies, 1982), pp. 178–179.

[8] Andrew Rippin, "Tafsīr," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), Vol. 14, p. 239.

[9] Rippin, *Muslims*, p. 129.

[10] The assertion that symbolism excludes direct methods of empirical investigation, but may undergo anthropological verification as to validity is made by David M. Rasmussen, *Symbol and Interpretation* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), p. 4.

[11] Jon Whitman, *Allegory: The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 266–267.

[12] See Tzvetan Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, tr. by Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 18 and 21.

[13] George B. Caird explains: "A language is transparent insofar as its meaning lies open to any intelligent but uninstructed observer, and opaque insofar as it has to be learnt." See chapter on "Opacity, Vagueness and Ambiguity," in Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980), pp. 85–108 (85).

[14] Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, p. 98.

[15] E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, Explained and Illustrated* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1968 [London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1898; New York, E. & J.B. Young & Co., 1898]), pp. 727 and 735.

[16] Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, p. 751.

[17] Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, p. 769.

[18] Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, p. 748.

[19] Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, p. 769.

[20] Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, p. vi.

[21] Summary of parameters for testing for figuration, developed by British linguist, Herbert Paul Grice, et al., given by Jerrold M. Sadock, "Figurative Speech and Linguistics," *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. by Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979; Second Edition, 1993), pp. 42–57 (pp. 51–53).

[22] Cited by Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, p. 25.

[23] Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, p. 106.

[24] Edward P. Myers, "Interpreting Figurative Language," *Biblical Interpretation: Principles and Practices: Studies in Honor of Jack Pearl Lewis*, ed. by F. Furman Kearley, Edward P. Myers, and Timothy D. Hadley (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986), pp. 91–100 (pp. 91–92).

[25] Myers, "Interpreting Figurative Language," pp. 92–93.

[26] Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, p. 112.

[27] Todorov, *Symbolism and Interpretation*, p. 114.

[28] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 243.

[29] Though he does refer, in passing, to *pesha* (Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 152 and p. 246.) See also R. Loewe, "Jewish Exegesis," *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden. London: SCM Press, 1990), pp. 346–354 (pp. 351–352).

[30] For a discussion of *remez* alone, see Michael Fishbane, *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 116–118. In medieval Jewish exegesis, there were no hard-and-fast boundaries between figuration and symbolism. In the patristic and medieval Christian context, a verse of Scripture could be read and interpreted at one of four levels, or on all four once.

[31] "The Talmudic application of *mashal* also included, in addition to parable, allegorical interpretation, e.g. the fables of Jotham (Judges 9: 7–20) and Joseph (2 Kings 14: 8–14)." (Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 242.) The classic Renaissance work on biblical rhetoric is: Judah Messer Leon, *The Book of the Honeycomb's Flow: Sépher Nópheth Ṣūphīm*, tr. and ed. by Isaac Rabinowitz (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983).

[32] M. J. Geller, "Introduction." *Figurative Language in the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. J. Geller, M. Mindlin, and J. Wansbrough (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1987), pp. iii–xiii (p. ix).

[33] Arberry's translation.

[34] R. Jullandri, "Qur'anic Exegesis and Classical Tafsīr," *Islamic Quarterly* 12 (1968): pp. 71–119 (p. 76, citing Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, chapter on fasting).

[35] Norman Calder, "Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr: Problems in the Description of a Genre, Illustrated with Reference to the Story of Abraham." *Approaches to the Qur'an*, ed. by G. Hawting and A.-K. Shareef (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 101–140, citing Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, pp. 239–246.

[36] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 119.

[37] Calder, "Tafsīr from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr."

[38] Seeger A. Bonebakker, "Ibn al-Mu'tazz and Kitāb al-Badī'," *'Abbasid Belles-Lettres*, Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, Vol. 1, ed. by J. Ashtiany, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 404–405.

[39] al-Jemaey, Awad Muaiwed, *Rummānī's "al-Nukat fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān": An Annotated Translation with Introduction*, Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University (University Microfilms International (now ProQuest Dissertations Publishing), 1987), p. 53. Of the Qur'an's unsurpassed eloquence, Ibn Qutayba (d. 889) had previously argued that the Prophet Muḥammad had come at a time in history to a people for whom eloquence (bayan) was the pinnacle of human ability.

[40] al-Jemaey, *al-Rummānī's "al-Nukat fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān,"* p. 53.

[41] al-Jemaey, *al-Rummānī's "al-Nukat fī I'jāz al-Qur'ān,"* pp. 130–148. For other Quranic exemplars of Quranic metaphors, see G. von. Grunebaum, *A Tenth-Century Document of Arabic Literary Theory and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950/1974), pp. 2–114, *passim*.

[42] Wolfhart Heinrichs, “On the Genesis of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* Dichotomy,” *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984): pp. 111–140 (p. 120).

[43] Personal communication, Naftali Kinberg, University of Calgary, 22 March 1990.

[44] Personal communication, Naftali Kinberg, University of Calgary, 22 March 1990.

[45] Heinrichs, “On the Genesis of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* Dichotomy,” pp. 134–135.

[46] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 237.

[47] John Wansbrough, “*Majāz al-Qur'an*: Periphrastic Exegesis,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33 (1970): pp. 247–266 (p. 265).

[48] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 232.

[49] Kamal Abu Deeb, “Literary Criticism,” *'Abbasid Belles-Lettres. Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*, Vol. 1, ed. by J. Ashtiany, et al. (Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 381.

[50] See further, Abu Deeb, “Literary Criticism,” pp. 379–387.

[51] Ritter, “Introduction,” al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-Balāgha: The Mysteries of Eloquence*, p. 7.

[52] So named in the article, S.A. Bonebakker and B. Reinert, “*al-Maʿānī wa 'l-Bayān*,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Second Edition), edited by: P. Bearman, et al., Vol. V, p. 899.

[53] In my opinion, this the most expressive and, generally, most accurate description of the discipline of Quranic rhetoric. See Bonebakker and Reinert, “*al-Maʿānī wa 'l-Bayān*,” p. 898.

[54] Ritter, “Introduction,” al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-Balāgha: The Mysteries of Eloquence*, p. 7.

[55] Bonebakker and Reinert, “*al-Maʿānī wa 'l-Bayān*,” p. 900.

[56] K. Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery* (Warminster: Aris, 1979), p. 53.

[57] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 76.

[58] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 62–63.

[59] To illustrate, while discoursing on the “mysteries” (*asrār*) of the “alchemic” or evocative power of *ṣan'ah* poetry, strings together a series of unreferenced terms: “But if an image (*ma'nā*) … is approached through the use of metonymy (*kināya*), allusion (*ta'rīḍ*), symbol (*ramz*) and suggestion (*talwīḥ*), then it will enter … the domain of the special which can be comprehended … only by strenuous effort, cogitation, reflection, and consideration.” Tr. by M. Ajami, *The Neckveins of Winter: The Controversy over Natural and Artificial Poetry in Medieval Arabic Literary Criticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), pp. 57–58.

[60] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, pp. 157–164.

[61] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 164.

[62] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 27.

[63] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 40.

[64] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 40.

[65] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 6, n. 19.

[66] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, pp. 58 and 60.

[67] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, pp. 66–67.

[68] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, pp. 74–75

[69] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 105. In a similar vein, Bullinger (*Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, p. 735) makes this differentiation: "While, therefore, the word 'resembles" marks the simile, 'represents' is the word that marks the metaphor."

[70] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 67.

[71] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, pp. 154–155.

[72] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 145.

[73] William Earl Smyth, *Persian and Arabic Theories of Literature: A Comparative Study of al-Sakkākī's Miftāh al-'Ulūm and Shams-i Qays' al-Mu'jam fī Ma'āyīr Ash'ār al-'Ajam* (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1986; ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1986), p. 270. Part of Al-Jurjānī's exegesis of the verse may be found in Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, pp. 41–42.

[74] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 147.

[75] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 121.

[76] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 105.

[77] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 155.

[78] Ritter, "Introduction," al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-Balāgha: The Mysteries of Eloquence*, p. 14.

[79] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 239.

[80] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 241.

[81] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 246.

[82] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 240.

[83] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 240.

[84] Cf. Q. 2:17, 29:41. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 240.

[85] Ritter, "Introduction," al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-Balāgha: The Mysteries of Eloquence*, p. 11.

[86] Heinrichs, "On the Genesis of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* Dichotomy," p. 131.

[87] George J. Kanazi, *Studies in the Kitāb aṣ-Ṣināʿatayn of Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), p. 43.

[88] Wolfhart Heinrichs, "*Isti'ārah* and *Badī'* and their Terminological Relationship in Early Arabic Literary Criticism," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 1 (1984): pp. 180–211, states that al-Rummānī "was the first, according to our knowledge, to define *isti'ārah* and *badī'* in terms of their mutual relationship" (p. 186).

[89] Kanazi, *Studies in the Kitāb aṣ-Ṣināʿatayn of Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī*, p. 149.

[90] Heinrichs, "*Isti'ārah* and *Badī'* and their Terminological Relationship," p. 184.

[91] S. A. Bonebakker, "Istiʿāra," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Vol. 4, pp. 248–52.

[92] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 179.

[93] Kanazi, *Studies in the Kitāb aṣ-Ṣināʿatayn of Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī*, p. 149.

[94] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 151.

[95] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 155.

[96] Bonebakker, "Istiʿāra," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Vol. 4, pp. 250–251.

[97] Bonebakker, "Istiʿāra," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Vol. 4, pp. 250–252.

[98] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 180.

[99] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 187.

[100] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 188.

[101] Bonebakker, "Istiʿāra," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Vol. 4, p. 251.

[102] A verse from the elegist, al-Mutanabbī, cited by al-Jurjānī, in Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 160. See Michael Winter, "Content and Form in the Elegies of al-Mutanabbī," *Studia Orientalia Memoriae D. H. Baneth Dedicata* (Jerusalem, 1979), pp. 327–345.

[103] A lampoon in the form of praise, or vice versa.

[104] Kanazi, *Studies in the Kitāb aṣ-Ṣināʿatayn of Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī*, p. 188.

[105] Seeger A. Bonebakker, *Some Early Definitions of the Tawriya* (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), p. 78. Vicente Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics in the Golden Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), pp. 80–81, gives a different etymology, based on the lexicographer, Jamāl al-Dīn Manṣūr (d. 1311).

[106] Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics in the Golden Age*, p. 81.

[107] Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics in the Golden Age*, pp. 166–167.

[108] Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics in the Golden Age*, p. 95.

[109] Abu Deeb, "Literary Criticism," p. 385, gives al-Jurjānī's definition of *takhyīl* as that in which a poet "affirms something which is not certain at the outset, and makes a claim that cannot be verified."

[110] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 164.

[111] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 163, n. 101.

[112] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 159.

[113] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 160.

[114] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 162.

[115] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 161.

[116] Abu Deeb, *Al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, p. 161.

[117] Writing, of course, in an Arabic literary tradition. For a representative work in the Persian literary tradition, see Niẓāmī 'Arūḍī, *Chahār Maqāla: The Four Discourses*, tr. E. G. Browne (London, 1921). But the first true poetics in Persian is Shams-i Qays-i Rāzī, *Al-Mu'jam fi ma'āyir ash'ār al-'ajam* (Compendium on the Rules of Poetry in the Persian East, circa 1258, Iran), ed. Muḥammad Qazvīnī (London: Leiden, 1909).

[118] Smyth, *Persian and Arabic Theories of Literature*, p. 272.

[119] I think this is an error in transliteration, although I have not yet consulted the *Kashhāf*. Bonebakker (*Some Early Definitions of the Tawriya*, pp. 26–27) mentions, in passing, that the term, *al-mutashābihāt*, was a key word in the text.

[120] Zamakhsharī, *Kashhāf* (Cairo, 1945), Vol. II, pp. 305–306, cited in Bonebakker, *Some Early Definitions of the Tawriya*, pp. 25–26.

[121] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, pp. 240–241.

[122] Cited by Bonebakker, *Some Early Definitions of the Tawriya*, pp. 78–79.

[123] This section will survey the classical *kalām* controversy over Quranic anthropomorphisms

[124] Term used by L. Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj, Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, tr. by H. Mason (Princeton University Press, 1982). 4 vols., vol. III, pp. 78, n. 169.

[125] Cited by Rippin, *Muslims*, p. 63.

[126] al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, tr. by R. McCarthy (Boston: Twayne, 1980), p. 155.

[127] Morris S. Seale, *Muslim Theology: A Study of Origins with Reference to the Church Fathers* (London: Luzac, 1980), pp. 55–56. In this study, Scale has translated Ibn Ḥanbal's *Refutation of the Dualists and the Anthropomorphists*.

[128] al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, pp. 155–156.

[129] W. Klein, "Introduction," in *Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī's Al-Ibānah 'an uṣul ad-diyānah* (The Elucidation of Islām's Foundation) (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1940), p. 1.

[130] Andrew Rippin and J. Knappert, editors and translators, *Textual Sources for the Study of Islam* (Manchester University Press, 1986), pp. 122–123.

[131] See al-Ṭabarī on Q. 6:102 f., in H. Gätje, *The Qur'an and its Exegesis: Selected Texts with Classical and Modern Muslim Interpretations*, tr. and ed. by A. Welch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 156–162.

[132] J. van Ess, *The Youthful God: Anthropomorphism in Early Islam* (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1988), p. 9.

[133] van Ess, *The Youthful God: Anthropomorphism in Early Islam*, p. 5.

[134] Earl Edgar Elder, "Introduction," in Sa'd al Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *A Commentary on the Creed of Islam*, tr. by E.E. Elder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), p. xiii.

[135] Seale, *Muslim Theology*, p. 54.

[136] Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, Vol. III, p. 129, n. 33.

[137] A. Strothman, "*Tashbīh*," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, First Edition, p. 685. At the other extreme of anthropomorphism is pure negative theology, *ta'ṭīl* (divesting God of all attributes).

[138] Jaroslav Stetkevych, "Arabic Hermeneutical Terminology: Paradox and the Production of Meaning," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 48 (1989): pp. 81–96 (pp. 92–93).

[139] Hasan M. Balyuzi, *Muḥammad and the Course of Islām* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1976), p. 228, includes Shī'ī literary thought as part of the analysis.

[140] Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, Vol. III, pp. 84–85. Cf. M. Cook, "The Origins of *Kalām*." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43 (1980): pp. 32–43, who argues that *kalām*-style argumentation is not of Muslim origin.

[141] van Ess, *The Youthful God: Anthropomorphism in Early Islam*, p. 13.

[142] Heinrichs, "On the Genesis of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* Dichotomy," p. 139.

[143] al-Zamakhsharī extended rhetorical analysis even into lexicography, in which he wrote a lexicon of proper and figurative meanings in his dictionary entries, *viz.*, in his *Asās al-balāgha* (The Basis of Eloquence). See Bohas, Georges, Jean-Patrick Guillaume, and Djamel Kouloughli, *The Arabic Linguistic Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 118.

[144] Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, tr. by Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), Vol. III, p. 337. (See all pp. 402 ff.)

[145] Fazlur Rahman, cited and translated from the Urdu by N. Faruqi, "Review of Fazlur Rahman, *An Analytical Study of al-Zamakhsharī's Commentary on the Qur'an: Al-Kasshāf*," *Islamic Culture* 63 (1989): pp. 114–116 (p. 115).

[146] Gätje, *The Qur'an and its Exegesis*, p. 151.

[147] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 241.

[148] J. Baljon, "Qur'anic Anthropomorphisms," Islamic Studies 27 (1988),: pp. 119–127 (p. 126).

[149] Gätje, *The Qur'an and its Exegesis*, p. 221.

[150] Rippin and Knappert, "Introduction," *Textual Sources for the Study of Islam*, p. 19.

[151] al-Taftāzānī, *A Commentary on the Creed of Islam*, p. 158.

[152] al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id al-Nasafiyyah*, Vol. I, p. 204; tr. by Jullandri, "Qur'anic Exegesis and Classical Tafsīr," p. 158.

[153] al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 157.

[154] al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 163.

[155] al-Jāmī, *The Precious Pearl*, tr. by N. Heer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), p. 43.

[156] al-Ash'arī. *Al-Ibānah 'an uṣūl ad-diyānah: The Elucidation of Islam's Foundation*, tr. by W. Klein (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1940/1967), pp. 56–65.

[157] van Ess, *The Youthful God: Anthropomorphism in Early Islam*, p. 13.

[158] W. Madelung, "Imāmism and Mu'tazilite Theology," in idem, *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam* (London: Variorum, 1985), pp. 13–29.

[159] Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 76–82.

[160] M. McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd* (Beirut, 1978), p. 2.

[161] Momen, *An Introduction to Shiʻi Islam*, p. 79. Rippin (*Muslims*, p. 112) calls al-Murtaḍā "the Shiʻite al-Ashʻari in the sense that his writings became the basis for all later Shiʻite exposition of theology, being the virtually unquestioned source."

[162] McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd*, pp. 339–340.

[163] McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd*, p. 339.

[164] Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 94.

[165] Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, Vol. III, pp. 85–86.

[166] Fazlu Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam: Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 36.

[167] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, p. 44.

[168] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, p. 61.

[169] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, pp. 55–56.

[170] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, p. 40.

[171] A. Welch, "Islam," *A Handbook of Living Religions*, ed. by J. Hinnells (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 152.

[172] Sayyid Hossein Nasr, "The Cosmos and the Natural Order," *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. by idem (New York: Crossroad, 1987), pp. 352–353.

[173] D. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), pp. 300–301.

[174] See Gutas's remarks on this passage, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, pp. 301–302.

[175] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, pp. 306–307.

[176] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, pp. 42–44.

[177] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 302, not specifying the works to which he refers.

[178] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, p. 304. This interpretation is translated on pp. 164–165.

[179] Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, pp. 308–310.

[180] Welch, "Islam," *A Handbook of Living Religions*, p. 152.

[181] A. Doi, "Sunnism," I*slamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. by S. Nasr (New York: Crossroad, 1987), p. 156.

[182] Ibn Rushd, *Kitāb faṣl al-maqāl*, tr. by G. Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (London: Luzac, 1961), p. 50. Zzz

[183] Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, p. 80.

[184] Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 23–25.

[185] Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, p. 80.

[186] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, p. 64.

[187] Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, p. 42, citing Averroes, *Kitāb faṣl al-maqāl* (Cairo: 1317 edn.), pp. 18 and 29.

[188] A. Habil, "Traditional Esoteric Commentaries on the Qur'an," *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. by S. Nasr (New York: Crossroad, 1987), p. 41.

[189] Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, Vol. III, p. 276.

[190] W. Chittick, "Microcosm, Macrocosm, and Perfect Man in the View of Ibn al-'Arabī," *Islamic Culture* 63 (1989), pp. 1–11 (p. 3).

[191] J. de Bruijn, "*Madjāz* (in Persian Literature)" *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Vol. 4, p. 1027.

[192] Massignon (*The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, Vol. II, p. 411, n. 12) refers to a letter by al-Ghazālī on "*majāzī* Islam," although he does not elaborate on what this means.

[193] Jullandri, "Qur'anic Exegesis and Classical Tafsīr," p. 105.

[194] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 244, n. 8.

[195] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, pp. 244–245.

[196] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, pp. 244 and 236, where the parallelism is drawn by the present writer, rather than by Wansbrough himself.

[197] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 243.

[198] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 245, first and last lines of the second paragraph.

[199] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 240: "The 'parable' could be symbolic, even allegorical, but did not require analysis as metaphor."

[200] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 245

[201] Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, p. 27.

[202] Alessandro Bausani, "Continuity and Break in the Literary and Cultural Tradition of Iran," *Proceedings of the 26th International Congress of Orientalists* (New Delhi, 1968), Vol. 2, p. 187.

[203] Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, p. 27.

[204] Nwyia, "Ishāra," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Vol. IV, p. 114.

[205] Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: The Qur'anic Hermeneutics of the Ṣūfī Sahl at-Tustarī (d. 283/896)* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), p. 9.

[206] Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, Vol. III, pp. 87–88.

[207] P. Nwyia, "Ishāra," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Vol. IV, p. 114.

[208] al-Jāmī, *The Precious Pearl*, tr. by N. Heer, p. 37.

[209] Ibn al-'Arabī, in H. Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*, p. 272.

[210] Jullandri, "Qur'anic Exegesis and Classical Tafsīr," pp. 111–112.

[211] Jullandri, "Qur'anic Exegesis and Classical Tafsīr," p. 105.

[212] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 245.

[213] P. Nwyia, *Exégèse Coranique et Language Mystique* (Beirut: Dar el-Mashreq, 1970), p. 4

[214] Often concomitant with "divine audition."

[215] Annamarie Schimmel, "Creation and Judgment in the Koran and in Mystico-Poetical Interpretation," *We Believe in One God: The Experience of God in Christianity and Islam*, ed. by idem, et al. (New York: Seabury, 1979), p. 172.

[216] L. Gardet, "Allāh," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Vol. 1, p. 411.

[217] Böwering, *The Mystical Vision*, p. 64.

[218] Böwering, *The Mystical Vision*, p. 138.

[219] Böwering, *The Mystical Vision*, pp. 135–142.

[220] Böwering, *The Mystical Vision*, p. 213.

[221] Böwering, *The Mystical Vision*, p. 218.

[222] Böwering, *The Mystical Vision*, p. 248.

[223] Böwering, *The Mystical Vision*, p. 170.

[224] Böwering, *The Mystical Vision*, p. 170.

[225] J. Baldick, *Mystical Islam: An Introduction to Sufism* (London: Tauris, 1989), p. 38.

[226] Böwering, *The Mystical Vision*, p. 170.

[227] A.J. Arberry, "Kalābādhī," *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. by H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers (Leiden: Brill, 1953), p. 210.

[228] A.J. Arberry, tr., *The Doctrine of the Ṣūfīs: Kitāb al-ta'arruf li-madhab ahl al-tasawwuf* (by Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 27–28.

[229] al-Ghazālī, "The Niche for Lights (*Mishkāt al-Anwār*)," *Four Sufi Classics*, tr. by W. Gairdner (London: Octagon, 1980), p. 107.

[230] al-Ghazālī, "The Niche for Lights," pp. 119–120.

[231] al-Ghazālī, "The Niche for Lights," pp. 134–135.

[232] al-Ghazālī, "The Niche for Lights," pp. 138–139.

[233] I. Bello, *The Medieval Islamic Controversy between Philosophy and Orthodoxy: Ijmā' and Ta'wīl in the Conflict between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), p. 62, n. 39.

[234] M. Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islām* (London: Luzac, 1972), p. 60.

[235] al-Ghazālī, "The Niche for Lights," p. 158.

[236] Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islām*, p. 70.

[237] Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islām*, pp. 70–71.

[238] Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islām*, p. 67.

[239] al-Ghazālī, "The Niche for Lights," p. 124.

[240] T. Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 24.

[241] Ibn al-'Arabī, in H. Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*, trans. by R. Manheim (London: Routledge, 1970), p. 197.

[242] Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, p. 83.

[243] W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 223.

[244] Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, p. 51.

[245] Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*, p. 377.

[246] Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*, p. 232.

[247] Massignon, *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj*, Vol. III, p. 346.

[248] M. Hodgson, "Bāṭiniyya," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Vol. I, p. 1099.

[249] Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, pp. 47–48, 51–53, and 216–217.

[250] Hodgson, "Bāṭiniyya," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Vol. I, p. 1099.

[251] M. Ayoub, "The Speaking Qur'an and the Silent Qur'an: A Study of the Principles and Development of Imāmī Shī'ī *tafsīr*," *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 187.

[252] M. Hodgson, "Bāṭiniyya," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, Vol. I, p. 1099.

[253] al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, pp. 209–210.

[254] I. Poonawala, "Ismā'īlī *ta'wīl* of the Qur'an," *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, ed. by Andrew Rippin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 210–211.

[255] Poonawala, "Ismā'īlī *ta'wīl* of the Qur'an," p. 211.

[256] Poonawala, "Ismā'īlī *ta'wīl* of the Qur'an," p. 212.

[257] Poonawala, "Ismā'īlī *ta'wīl* of the Qur'an," pp. 213–214.

[258] Poonawala, "Ismā'īlī *ta'wīl* of the Qur'an," pp. 215–216.

[259] Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, p. 239.