

The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the *tawqīf-iṣṭilāḥ* Antithesis and the *majāz* Controversy (Part II)

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In his discerning study of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* dichotomy Heinrichs observed that the seemingly natural opposition between these two terms was not always the case.¹ Moreover, he showed that the technical meaning of the term *majāz* revealed that it had endured a distinct evolution of its own; its significance was further governed by whether it was used in linguistic or theological contexts. Heinrichs' research of this topic granted particular importance to the incisive observations of Ibn Taymiyya (661–728/1263–1328) in his *Kitāb al-īmān*.² The focus of Ibn Taymiyya's study was the appropriateness of dividing speech on a literal *contra* non-literal axis, the corollary of which was an antithesis in the way words were understood. Ibn Taymiyya took the view that the division of speech on this basis represented an insidious attempt to undermine the literal language of scripture and thereby pursue a pre-conceived theological bent. Ibn Taymiyya therefore set out to place the concept of *majāz* within an elaborate framework, showing from an historical perspective that the term *majāz* could not be linked to a developed conception of metaphor or figurative language. However, in order to achieve such an objective Ibn Taymiyya had to dispel the 'myth' that a developed notion of *majāz* was pre-eminently accepted by the earliest generations of scholars. Furthermore, he had to disprove that it was an irrefutable feature of the Arabic language, criticising the theoretical apparatus used to buttress its relevance to language. It was in these contexts that the doctrines associated with the revelationist nature of language's origin (*tawqīf al-lughā*), the conventionalist perspective (*iṣṭilāḥ*), and the concept of *majāz* were destined to cross paths. It was Ibn Taymiyya who astutely linked the three motifs, although ultimately he had to sacrifice the concept of *tawqīf al-lughā*.

Ibn Taymiyya reported that the work of Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar ibn al-Muthannā (d. 215/815), entitled *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, was the first text to employ the term *majāz*. Taking this finding into consideration, Heinrichs examined a number of contempo-

rary attempts to gauge the development and nature of the phenomenon of *majāz* and its application, particularly in the work of Abū 'Ubayda. Heinrichs was generally dismissive of Wansbrough's remarks which suggested that the term was indicative of a form of textual restoration (*taqdīr*) employed by linguists to 'alleviate the strictures imposed upon the language by Qur'anic diction'.³ Heinrichs also considered a further study of the technical meaning of *majāz* in the work of Abū 'Ubayda by Almagor. He concluded that her suggestion that the term *majāz* was used by linguists simply to denote a mode of expression required further qualification as it did not encompass the full technical extent of *majāz*.⁴ Heinrichs presented his own synthesis of the historical significance of this term, maintaining that the term *majāz* was originally part of the technical vocabulary of the earliest linguists and that it was invoked to indicate what he describes as a form of explanatory rewriting of phrases: an instrument of grammatical resolution. Heinrichs also asserted that this 'rewriting' might incidentally include transient references to figurative language; however, this was not its exclusive function.⁵ Moreover, Heinrichs reported that although the term *majāz* was synonymous with the frequently adduced phrases *ma'nā* and *tafsīr*, it was specific to issues of linguistic interpretation along with the idiomatic use of certain words and constructions.⁶

Having shown that the primitive form of *majāz* was commensurate with a specific linguistic function and that it was a term found in the nomenclature of the early Arabic linguists, Heinrichs examined the factors which brought about the seemingly spontaneous opposition between the terms *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*. He noted that the provenance of the term *ḥaqīqa* betrayed a theological character. Indeed, Heinrichs discovered that this term was germane to specific ontological discussions. He believed that the significance of the term *majāz* and its eventual pairing in opposition with *ḥaqīqa* could be attributed to the fact that theologians such as the early Mu'tazilites required a theological instrument to nullify the anthropomorphic imagery of a literal interpretation of scripture. Previously, the linguists had employed *majāz* to demonstrate that the language of the Qur'an could be subjected to explanatory rewriting, showing that the language of scripture was consistent with the idiomatic idiosyncrasies of the Arabs.⁷ Heinrichs argued that as the variation in the application of these terms crystallised, *ḥaqīqa* was 'wrested from its ontological moorings' and came to denote the literal use of a word or construction, whilst *majāz* ultimately assumed a figurative connotation.⁸ Heinrichs adds that even in the work of Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), *Ta'wil mushkil al-Qur'ān*, in which the phenomenon of *majāz* is exemplified through reference to the Qur'an, the opposition between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* was not quite developed, although his work did combine the linguistic and theological properties of *majāz*.⁹ Meanwhile, the efforts of the Mu'tazilites had meant that 'the compass of *majāz* had shrunk to metaphor and figurative usage', and the progression

to an opposition with *ḥaqīqa* ensued inexorably.¹⁰ Heinrichs declared that the classical theory of *majāz* encompassed all forms of metaphorical speech and idioms and thus in many ways the distinct contributions of linguists and theologians had been effectively assimilated. He reported that the aesthetic character of this literary theory was brought to fruition in the works of ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078).¹¹ However, one should note that amongst those who accepted *majāz* as a genuine feature of ‘*arabiyya*, there was disagreement concerning aspects of its relevance and interpretation. Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004–5) introduces *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* as antithetical features and he proceeds to offer definitions of their linguistic features. One aspect of *majāz* to which he refers states that the Arabs’ speech comprised expressions which conflicted with their apparent meaning; however, he voices criticisms of Ibn Qutayba for extending a similar principle to a particular type of Qur’anic expression. Thus, one certainly detects a lingering tension in this area of scholarship.¹²

The theoretical justification employed to underpin the developed concept of *majāz* was incidental to the principal controversy over whether scripture and religious doctrines should be interpreted through a veneer of metaphorical language. The perspectives on the concept of the revelationist origin of language (*tawqīf al-lughā*) and the opposing conventionalist (*iṣṭilāḥ*) position were assiduously imported into the discussions. According to Ibn Taymiyya, one aspect of the argument here was that whenever the proponents of *majāz* were asked to provide authority for their theoretical defence of the feature of *majāz*, they might respond by invoking the hypothesis concerning the conventionalist origin of language (*iṣṭilāḥ*). It was suggested that separate stages of assigning meanings to words had predicated that a single word could have more than one meaning and hence this justified the introduction of a figurative bias in the way that words might be interpreted. These linguistic processes seemingly furnished a single word with two possible semantic dimensions: one was *ḥaqīqa* (literal), and the other was *majāz* (metaphorical). Notwithstanding the fact that there had to be an apparent connection between the literal and metaphorical meanings of a given word, otherwise one would be speaking of two distinctly separate words. Indeed, we have noted previously the arguments cited by linguists to justify homonyms in the idiom of Arabic.¹³ Furthermore, the proponents of *majāz* would argue that a contextual clue would always be present to allow one to identify the *majāz* expression. A typical form of argument presented in this respect maintained that the *ḥaqīqa* expression reflected the use of a given word in accordance with the primordial purpose of *wadʿ* (the process of assigning meanings to words); Ibn Taymiyya provides the example of the words ‘lion’ and ‘ass’ which would be *ḥaqīqa* if used to denote actual animals. Conversely, the *majāz* word is theoretically seen as emanating from a secondary cycle of *wadʿ*, and is thereby derived conventionally. *Ex hypothesi*, it represented a word whose application did not reflect its primordial assignment. Taking the

examples of the words 'lion' and 'ass', in a *majāz* context these would be used to denote bravery or stupidity respectively.¹⁴ It is suggested that their meaning has been transferred from a primary meaning to a secondary one. On the linguistic plane the reasoning appears quite innocuous; but on the theological and legal plane the implications are quite critical. This was the rationale used to explain linguistically the origin of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* opposition: the former denoted literal language and the latter symbolised a metaphorical dimension of language.

It would appear obvious that the best way of countering the theory that the processes of *iṣṭilāḥ* were responsible for the stock of *ḥaqīqa-majāz* words was to appeal to the concept of *tawqīf al-lughā*. However, the philological endeavours of the linguists had shown that the revelationist doctrine was rather fluid and subject to a plethora of interpretation, despite the fact that linguists endorsed it as a sacrosanct doctrine. Moreover, it was possible for the proponents of *majāz* to accept the general tenor of the revelationist nature of language's origin, claiming that it could also be used to substantiate a theoretical basis for the concept of *majāz*:¹⁵ Ibn Jinnī (d. 392/1002) and Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī (d. 377/987) endorsed the concept of *tawqīf al-lughā* and yet also vociferously defended the incidence of *majāz* in the language of scripture. It is within these contexts that one finds Ibn Taymiyya's references to the concept of *tawqīf al-lughā*, although Heinrichs did not refer to this fact. Weiss did present an overview of the links between these themes in his later commentary on al-Āmidī's work on the principles of jurisprudence. His former article was concerned principally with studying the development of *tawqīf al-lughā* as a doctrine; the distinct link with *majāz* was not examined. Ibn Taymiyya appreciated that given the aforementioned arguments, the perceived doctrine of *tawqīf al-lughā* would require subtle qualification. Indeed, an examination of Ibn Taymiyya's writing on this subject along with the array of arguments which he adduces in this respect shows that the theoretical justification for the division of speech into *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* was shifting. It was these subtle shifts which precipitated a re-examination of the concept of *tawqīf al-lughā* on the part of Ibn Taymiyya as he endeavoured to untangle the profusion of theoretical complexities used to justify the resort to metaphor and figurative expressions in interpreting the diction of scripture.

Ibn Taymiyya's condemnation of the developed concept of *majāz* along with the theories which were adduced to underpin its merits was outlined in two separate areas of his writing. The first of these is included in his collection of legal and religious edicts and forms part of an introduction to the principles of jurisprudence; the second, also comprised in this legal collection and published separately as a monograph, represented an extended apology for the rudiments of faith (*īmān*) and was designed to impugn Ash'arite, Mu'tazilite, Murji'ite, and Jahmite expositions of the doctrines of faith. His foray into this area follows a statement asking whether *īmān* (faith) was

contingent upon (good) works in a *ḥaqīqa* sense, as opposed to a *majāz* sense.¹⁶ Ibn Taymiyya fears that such a doctrine would seriously impinge upon the intensely integral relationship between faith and practice. But it was also the case that Ibn Taymiyya was keen to repudiate those theologians whose doctrinal statements were formulated through a profusion of references to metaphor. However, such theologians would claim that they were merely emphasising the transcendent nature of God and His attributes and their resort to the concept of *majāz* helped them achieve this aim.

It is intriguing to observe that Ibn Taymiyya was acutely aware of the rather convoluted history of the concept of *majāz*. He makes the telling observation that a division of words, or indeed the meanings they denoted, into veridical and tropical categories, whatever the terminology one resorted to, reflected a posterior development. It could not be connected with the pious ancestors.¹⁷ Ibn Taymiyya had reported that the first figure to promulgate innovatively the conventionalist (*iṣṭilāḥ*) perspective was the Muʿtazilite Abū Hāshim (d. 321/933), the son of the eminent al-Jubbāʿī (d. 303/915).¹⁸ He argues that neither the early jurists nor the first linguists had proffered a view on this topic: al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) had not proposed such a division of speech nor had the Ḥanafite jurist Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (d. 189/808). Ibn Taymiyya asserts that the first instance of this term's usage had no theological significance; it was used to highlight a linguistic function in the exegetical-grammatical treatise of Abū ʿUbayda. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya argues that the theological dimension of the developed concept of *majāz* was insidiously contrived by the Muʿtazilites or those with a propensity for dialectics. In Ibn Taymiyya's estimation these developments were innovative in a rather pejorative way. He also alludes to the fact that the proponents of *majāz* adduced statements claiming that the pious ancestors had seemingly invoked the mechanism of the phenomenon of *majāz*. He mentions statements attributed to Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (164–241/780–855) from the latter's work entitled *al-Radd ʿalā ʿl-jahmiyya waʿl-zanādiqa* in which he employs the term *majāz*.¹⁹ He suggests that Ibn Ḥanbal's reference to the term *majāz* was expressed in order to exemplify certain synecdochial features of speech. It was imperative to note that there was nothing inauspicious in Ibn Ḥanbal's use of this term because it had a strictly linguistic connotation. And it was disingenuous to imply that this paragon of orthodoxy had accepted the developed theory of *majāz* with all its theological trappings and used it in the exposition of faith. Extending the array of arguments, Ibn Taymiyya had succeeded in firmly placing distance between the pious ancestors and a developed conception of *majāz* which encompassed allusions to figurative language.

Ibn Taymiyya uses his introduction to *uṣūl al-fiqh* to approach the issue of the acceptance of a theory of *majāz* in the works of the jurists. Interestingly, he selects the epistemological preliminaries of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 630/1233) outlined in

the latter's *al-Ihkām fī uṣūl al-ahkām* in order to instigate a thoroughly meticulous refutation of the relevance of *majāz* in legal discussions.²⁰ The same stock of arguments from his *Kitāb al-īmān* is carefully adduced. Al-Āmidī's treatise had introduced the developed concept of *majāz* as an axiom of language.²¹ Here the concern of Ibn Taymiyya was that the majority of jurists were accentuating the developed concept of *majāz* in which a literal-metaphorical context to language is applied in the textual analysis of scripture. Having quoted al-Āmidī's opening remarks regarding the relative consensus of the scholars of *uṣūl* who endorse resolutely the incidence of *majāz* in the language of the Arabs, Ibn Taymiyya seeks to appeal to the appropriate religious authority for his position within the field of jurisprudence. He suggests that it was anachronistic to insinuate that the developed concept of *majāz* was approved by the earliest generation of scholars. Indeed, he argues that the pioneering masters of *fiqh* such as al-Shāfi'ī and other figures of his calibre had neither recognised nor proffered a view on the phenomenon of *majāz*. Furthermore, reiterating the arguments expressed in the discourse on *īmān*, he emphasises that the division of speech into *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* is a postulate found in the compositions of the Mu'tazilites, proponents of dialectics, and jurists who favoured emulating the methodology of the speculative theologians. Ibn Taymiyya retorts that none of these aforementioned groups could be considered authorities in *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *lughā*, and *naḥw*, adding that renowned linguists such as al-Khalīl (d. 175/791), Sibawayhī (d. 183/799), al-Kisā'ī (d. 189/808), al-Farrā' (d. 207/822), and other prominent philologists and grammarians had not offered this classification of speech (i.e. its division into veridical *contra* tropical).²² He is keen to denounce the posterior concept of *majāz* from all perspectives, emphasising the lack of scholarly authority for such a hypothesis of language. Ibn Taymiyya then moves on to recount that the grammarians had astutely contrived a technical vocabulary previously unknown to the Arabs, introducing grammatical terminology such as *fā'il*, *maf'ūl*, and *maṣdar*, yet there was nothing sinister in the wholly descriptive nature of these linguistic categories: the linguists had prudently sought to qualify the characteristics of the Arabs' language; however, the use of the terms *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* could not be viewed in the same vein: it did not proceed naturally from a descriptive approach to the language of the Arabs; it was an invidious division created by theologians keen to pursue sectarian objectives.²³ Ibn Taymiyya dismisses the fact that a number of Ḥanbalites like Abū Ya'qūb (d. 457/1066) and Ibn 'Aqīl (431–512/1040–1119) had espoused the developed theory of *majāz*, believing that Ibn Ḥanbal had spoken of the feature of *majāz*. These figures had misconstrued Ibn Ḥanbal's references to the phrase *majāz* and its semantic value in the technical vocabulary of the formative years of Islam; it was neither a reference to metaphor nor an allusion to figurative language.²⁴

The Shāfi'ite jurist Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā'inī (d. 417/1027) is recalled by both Ibn

Taymiyya and Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī as a scholar who was the principal opponent of the theory of *majāz*, bitterly disputing its relevance. Nevertheless, Abū Ishāq had endorsed a doctrine of *tawqīf* which fused the revelationist and conventionalist agents in the origin of language, as Weiss points out.²⁵ He argued that a measure of *tawqīf* provided the foundation upon which *iṣṭilāḥ* was instituted.²⁶ This appears commensurate with Weiss's suggestion that *tawqīf al-lughā* had lost its *raison d'être*, given the doctrinal revision propounded by the Ash'arites on the nature of God's speech. However, it presumably confirms that the concept of *tawqīf al-lughā* was not capable of expressly countering the theoretical justification of the concept of *majāz*, which thrived on the notion of successive waves of positing. In his *Kitāb al-imān* Ibn Taymiyya reports that a group of scholars rejected the notion that language in general, or indeed the language of the Qur'an, comprised *majāz* expressions. Moreover, Abū Ishāq was prominent in this respect, and the issue was not one of terminology as hinted by his opponents.²⁷ Ibn Taymiyya informs us that his detractors argued that if Abū Ishāq were to accept that there existed a selection of words whose usage did not correspond with primordial *wadʿ*, and that the meanings of these words were highlighted by the presence of a contextual clue, then he has implicitly acknowledged *majāz*. Ibn Taymiyya then states that a rebuttal of this argument was outlined by the supporters of Abū Ishāq, exploiting the theoretical arguments presented to justify *majāz*. It asserted that the *ḥaqīqa* expression reflected the use of a given word in accordance with the primordial purpose of its *wadʿ*: the literal use of an expression; conversely, the *majāz* expression was its opposite, an expression used for something other than its primordial purpose, although a contextual clue would elucidate the *majāz* expression.²⁸ This necessitates that a word be primarily assigned with a specific meaning for which it might be used; or that it might be used for a non-primordial purpose. This, in the view of the supporters of Abū Ishāq, creates a problem because it would mean that a *lafz* (expression) which was *majāz* required a preceding *ḥaqīqa*; however, an expression which was *ḥaqīqa* did not require a *majāz*. Moreover, Abū Ishāq's supporters added that subsequent figures who were advocates of the phenomenon of *majāz* were aware of what seemed a flaw in such reasoning and they reviewed their predecessors' definitions, stating that prior to being used, a conceived expression (*al-lafz al-mawḍūʿ*) is neither *ḥaqīqa* nor *majāz*: once it is used for a non-primordial purpose it becomes *majāz* and has no need of a preceding *ḥaqīqa*.²⁹

Having ruminated over the various forms of theoretical defence offered by those who believed that a concept of *majāz* was indispensable in both the fields of law and theology, Ibn Taymiyya sets out to adjust systematically the doctrine of *tawqīf al-lughā*. He admits that theoretical propositions discussed by the supporters of *majāz* were acceptable if it were possible to disentangle the intricate nature of *wadʿ*, particularly in terms of an arbitrary scheme of *muwāḍaʿa* preceding the actual application

of words. Furthermore, this position presupposes *iṣṭilāḥ*, i.e. a coterie of intelligent people gathered and conventionally assigned meanings to words, and this had occurred in all languages.³⁰ Moreover, these words and meanings were employed in secondary contexts. It is at this juncture that Ibn Taymiyya claims that this view was not known prior to the endeavours of the son of al-Jubbā'ī, Abū Hāshim, who, in the late third/ninth century, first promulgated the thesis of *iṣṭilāḥ* in distinct opposition to *tawqīf al-lughā*; and that he was opposed by Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (260–324/873–935).

Indeed, having dismissed the possibility of one's discerning the profundities of *wadʿ*, Ibn Taymiyya had effectively relinquished the doctrine of *tawqīf al-lughā*. He was therefore able to proceed with the argument that *iṣṭilāḥ* was an insidious contrivance, a tool introduced for the specific purpose of supporting the concept of *majāz*. His reluctance to endorse a rigid interpretation of the doctrine of *tawqīf al-lughā* allows him to repudiate a second view which suggested that words were designated *majāz* and *ḥaqīqa* by the Almighty at the primordial moment of language's inception.³¹ It was Ibn Taymiyya's view that the only constant in this sea of uncertainties was the factor of usage (*isti'māl*); indeed, this had to govern the whole approach to understanding language and scripture. Ibn Taymiyya does not wholly reject all aspects of *tawqīf al-lughā*. He introduces the agent of *ilhām* as a means of accommodating a divine role in the origin of language. It is described as a visceral quality bestowed by the Almighty to facilitate the acquisition of language. This explained why children were able to acquire the rudiments of language during the formative years of their childhood. Although there would be times when a child might seek clarification regarding the convention of meanings and usage, he or she possessed an innate quality which acted as a catalyst in their acquisition of language. It was also the case that a person wishing to communicate in a language with which he or she is not familiar may seek the assistance of a translator who would then convey the relevant meanings; however, it is possible for the same person to attain a level of proficiency in a target language through fraternising and without the aid of a tutor. Ibn Taymiyya finds an altogether confined role for *iṣṭilāḥ*: he states that it was restricted to the naming of a city, a book, or a newly devised mechanical contraption; nevertheless, he summarily asserts that such processes could not account for the bulk of language.³²

The principal theme which permeates the arguments of Ibn Taymiyya is the authority of linguistic usage (*isti'māl*). It takes on the status of an all-pervading *sunna* which is applied when attempting to gauge the idiom of scripture. According to Ibn Taymiyya, the doctrine of *tawqīf al-lughā* as a linear phenomenon passed from generation to generation since the time of Adam, through the period of the great flood, and then to the advent of Islam, was simply self-contradictory and could not be substantiated. Conversely, to maintain that active processes of *wadʿ* actually precede *isti'māl* was

equally fallacious. This leaves the agent of *ilhām* as the only plausible factor which could explain the capacity to articulate language: 'If one wishes to call this *tawqīf*, then let him do so.'³³ That *majāz* theoretically presupposes deliberate stages of *wadʿ*, and ultimately presages a figurative understanding of language, dictated that a selection of phrases which could only be interpreted in a *ḥaqīqa* sense required further qualification. Of course, one could dispense with this if linguistic usage were endorsed as the authoritative criterion in the interpretation of language, as argued by Ibn Taymiyya. Proponents of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* division of language were compelled to introduce three further categories of words designated as veridical (*ḥaqīqa*): i) *ḥaqīqa lughawiyya*; ii) *ḥaqīqa sharʿiyya*; and iii) *ḥaqīqa ʿurfiyya*.³⁴ The first class of words represented the core of language, emanating from the inception of *lugha*; the second class of words comprised terms which had taken on new significance with the advent of Islam, particularly words such as *zakāt*, *ḥajj*, *ṣalāt*, and *ṣawm*, for it was imperative that theologically sensitive words be removed from the sphere of *majāz* (theoretically, it was implicit that these words emanated from a secondary cycle of *wadʿ* and hence technically they were *majāz* but it was obvious that they could not be interpreted figuratively); the third class of words included terms whose meaning had been relatively modified through idiosyncratic usage to the degree that the previous meaning had been seemingly superseded. The technical vocabulary of the grammarians was an excellent example of this last category. According to Ibn Taymiyya, all of these indeterminate categories were inevitable by-products of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* dichotomy. He adds that when the Qur'an spoke of *zakāt*, *ḥajj*, *ṣalāt*, and *ṣawm*, the meanings and religious significance were plainly obvious to speakers of the Arabic language. The criterion of usage therefore rendered all such divisions futile. Moreover, he concludes that the tripartite division of the *ḥaqīqa* word was introduced to rationalise a number of anomalies created by a theory of *majāz*.³⁵

One particular argument which features prominently in Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of *majāz* relates to the propositions of his opponents that the *majāz* (tropical) expression is distinguished by the specific presence of a contextual clue (*qarīna*). And, conversely, an expression which is *ḥaqīqa* (veridical) will have no contextual clue: it was semantically self-sufficient. Ibn Taymiyya devotes a considerable amount of effort to the issue of context, both in his discourse on *īmān* and in his introduction to the principles of law.³⁶ He rejects such propositions through an intricate web of arguments, asserting that context was an intractable feature of all speech: it was not possible to isolate speech from general contexts on both the grammatical and semantic levels. By implication Ibn Taymiyya had ruled that the boundaries of the so-called opposition between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* were far too arbitrary. It was safer to use *isti'māl* in gauging the language of the Arabs. Ibn Taymiyya focuses on specific Qur'anic verses alleged to exemplify the incidence of *majāz* in the Arabic language

to illustrate the point. Seeking proof for his arguments, he refers to the three verses commonly adduced in the treatises of the jurists, exegetes, and grammarians as axioms of the *majāz* expression: Q.12:82; Q.18:77; and Q.16:112. It is implied that the context supposedly paves the way for a tropical (*majāz*) rendition in the exegesis of these verses.³⁷ Thus in the first verse, 'Ask (the inhabitants of) the village', the term *qariya* (village) encompasses its inhabitants, and, argues Ibn Taymiyya, the term is used throughout the Qur'an for the same express purpose unless the contexts dictate otherwise. He explains that although animate behaviour is attributed to or expected of inanimate matter (a village), this should not be construed as an indicator of *majāz* or indeed *ḥadhf* (ellipsis) and *taqdīr* (suppletion). Similar arguments could be extended to the other verses. Ibn Taymiyya asserts that when the Qur'an (18:77) speaks of 'a wall wanting to fall' (translated by Arberry as 'a wall about to tumble down'), it was wrong to infer that such an expression was *majāz* on the basis that a wall is not animate and that 'want' or 'will' is an attribute of animate beings.³⁸ He then suggests that 'inclination' and, moreover, the 'will' that accompanies 'inclination' can be applied to animate beings and inanimate matter. Moreover, he goes on to argue that instances of such usage incontrovertibly reflected the idiomatic application of the Arabic language. Besides, the Qur'an was revealed in this unsullied diction. The crux of Ibn Taymiyya's argument was that the Arabs would have understood this language without resorting to such superficial linguistic devices or definitions. And such approaches had a profound theological purpose: they were not descriptive attempts to appreciate the Arabic language.

The exegesis of Q.12:82 presented by al-Qurṭubī declares that it proves the incidence of *majāz* in the Qur'an, a view, he states, shared by the *jumhūr*.³⁹ He relates that if animate behaviour is associated with inanimate matter, this indicates figurative usage or *isti'āra* (stylistic borrowing). However, he mentions that Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd, Abū Ishāq (al-Isfarā'inī), and others rejected this, stating that the speech of the Prophet and the Qur'an had to be understood in literal terms. It is clear, *prima facie*, that there was little to choose between the interpretation of this particular verse by Ibn Taymiyya and the exegesis presented by the proponents of *majāz*. However, the reasons why the latter's approach was expressly rejected will become obvious below. To the upholders of a stern religiosity, *majāz* came to denote an opprobrious term which provided umbrage for a selection of theological assaults on a perceived religious orthodoxy, ranging from the controversy regarding the non-created nature of the Qur'an, to the issue of the Divine attributes, and the integral nature of the relationship between faith and practice. Ibn Taymiyya was able to relinquish the so-called radical interpretation of the doctrine of *tawqīf al-lughā* because it meant that the reference to stages of language positing (*wadʿ*), used to explain the origin of a tropical expression, could not be proven. The only dependable constant was that of language

usage (*isti'māl*), which in his view rendered a theory of *majāz* irrelevant. Ibn Taymiyya was impervious to the arguments about the aesthetic value of a theory of *majāz* as elaborated upon in the works of the rhetoricians. His trepidation was for its theological import and that it was exploited to obfuscate the true diction of scripture; it had to be rejected without reservation.

The substance and spirit of the arguments on the theory of *majāz* were pursued with great vigour by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (690–750/1292–1350), the pupil of Ibn Taymiyya, in a work entitled *al-Ṣawā'iq al-mursala 'alā 'l-Jahmiyya wa'l-Mu'tazila*.⁴⁰ Ibn Qayyim trenchantly refers to the theory of *majāz* as a tyranny used to defend an heretical explication of scripture. Ibn Qayyim enters upon a refutation of the prominently applied definitions of *majāz*, initially taking his reader through a labyrinth of detail relating to the perceived theoretical shortcomings of a concept of *majāz*.⁴¹ The general thrust of the reasoning set out by Ibn Taymiyya regarding the role of figures such as Abū 'Ubayda, Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Shāfi'ī, and other early scholars is presented in Ibn Qayyim's synthesis of this issue.⁴² He confirms that when these figures had spoken of *majāz*, they were not alluding to figurative language. Taking the example of al-Shāfi'ī, he states that despite his many compilations none of these works comprised references to the feature of *majāz*. Indeed, he adds that his *risāla* on the subject of *uṣūl al-fiqh* contains not a single reference to this presumed feature of language.⁴³ Ibn Qayyim, like his mentor, suggests that the evolved concept of *majāz* was a deplorable development and, moreover, it was the contrivance of theologians whose religious integrity was dubious. He endeavours to refute *majāz* through references to the primary status of usage (*isti'māl*) and the deceptive nature of the opposition inherent in the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* division, whether one is suggesting that this was a momentary condition applied to words, meanings, or indeed usage.

Ibn Qayyim makes a categorical appeal to orthodoxy by claiming that the division of speech into *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* had no religious, logical, or indeed linguistic bases: it occurs after the third/ninth century.⁴⁴ Ibn Qayyim then introduces what he describes as the axiomatic definition of *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* proffered by its advocates: a *ḥaqīqa* word is one whose usage reflects primordial assignment; and a *majāz* word is one whose usage does not reflect primordial assignment. Ibn Qayyim adds that some advocates of *majāz* introduced a further category of *ḥaqīqa lughawiyya*, *shar'īyya*, and *'urfīyya*. He was clearly mindful that this category was introduced to keep theologically sensitive words within the compass of *ḥaqīqa*: the aforementioned definitions had placed them within the sphere of *majāz*.⁴⁵ It is at this juncture that he introduces the doctrine of *tawqīf al-lughā*, as this prevented the use of stages of successive *waqf* in the matrix of arguments used to explain theoretically the origin of a *majāz* term. He states that the revelationist view of language's origin (*tawqīf al-lughā*) was adopted by the majority (*jumhūr al-nās*); whilst the *iṣṭilāḥ* view was

articulated by Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī and others.⁴⁶ Ibn Qayyim hypothesises that, however one defines words, meanings, or usage concerning *iṣṭilāḥ*, one has to presuppose two successive stages of *wadʿ*, but the only indisputable constant across the spectrum of arguments was actual usage (*istiʿmāl*). If it were possible to ascertain that *alfāz* (words) which constitute the language of Arabic were initially assigned meanings in which contexts they were employed, then at a subsequent juncture the same *alfāz* were assigned a further meaning through a second stage of *wadʿ*, then the incidence of *majāz* in the language of the Arabs would be irrefutable. However, the only ascertainable constant was the actual application of words and this had to form the basis of any investigation into language and the diction of scripture.

He presents a definition of *iṣṭilāḥ* which suggests that a group of intellectuals gathered and conventionally started the processes of denomination, positing words with meanings. These words were then used in appropriate contexts before being subjected to a further stage of deliberate positing, although in this cycle these same *alfāz* were used for other meanings which were loosely connected with the previous meanings. However, in this framework of *iṣṭilāḥ* the words were designated *majāz* and *ḥaqīqa*. Ibn Qayyim ascribes this definition of *iṣṭilāḥ* to Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī, stating that it was a manifest expression of mendacity.⁴⁷ He adds that in reality people were only aware of the usage of words and the meanings that they denoted. The contradictions perceived by Ibn Qayyim as inherent in the definitions of *majāz* were fastidiously seized upon. He refers to a number of words which were used figuratively and purportedly had no *ḥaqīqa* precursors; he deduces that if they are used for only one meaning, then this given meaning would have been posited at a presumed stage: by the criteria defined by the proponents of *majāz*, one stage of *wadʿ* must point to a *ḥaqīqa* expression, as each *majāz* requires a *ḥaqīqa* which precedes it.⁴⁸ It was the case that the proponents of *majāz* would suggest that not every expression of this nature requires a preceding *ḥaqīqa* and vice versa. The strength of Ibn Qayyim's case rested on the fact that the primordial phases of the origin of language were unfathomable and tracing *wadʿ* was an utterly elusive exercise, although he did elevate the status of *tawqīf al-lughā* in his structured attempt to dislocate the arguments adduced by the proponents of *majāz*.

The symmetry in the arguments of Ibn Qayyim and Ibn Taymiyya is all too expected, yet with the former the implications for an accepted orthodoxy are made so much more apparent and the examples he quotes whilst vitiating the theories of *majāz* are particularly detailed. His line of argument allows him to allude to the issue of *ish-tiqāq* (derivation) and the issue of whether language was subject to *qiyās*: this was not the case for it would result in inception and invention. He reports that if it were possible for a *mutakallim* to form analogies on the basis of spoken words and thereby create a stock of further phrases which he might use in everyday speech, it would

be highly unfeasible to extend such analogies to the speech of the Almighty, his Prophet, or indeed, the diction of the Arabs. The principal point here is that one could not use derived forms of language as instruments for the theological interpretation of scripture; it was tantamount to *iṣṭilāḥ*. Moreover, its ultimate corollary was the incidence of *majāz* in the language of the Arabs.⁴⁹

According to Ibn Qayyim, a number of terms were shrewdly designated as emanating from secondary cycles of *wadʿ* and classified as *majāz*. In the definitions of *majāz* repudiated by both Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim a term such as *raʿs* (head) could only be *ḥaqīqa* when there were no contextual indicators or restraints: thus when the word *raʿs* is uttered the upper part of the human anatomy containing the brain springs to mind. Once this particular term is used in a situation which is reconciled with secondary usage, the tendency was to seek a *majāz* rendering; the enigma was how does one establish which instance represents the primary or primordial use of a specific term? There was also the issue of contextual restraints: in these figures' view all speech was governed by the parameters of context and convention. Ibn Qayyim argues that this was the case for the attributes of the Almighty in relation to the *ṣifāt al-aʿāl* (attributes of acts) such as anger, pleasure or perceived anthropomorphic characteristics such as the face, the hands, hearing, sight, speech, and will; Ibn Qayyim tells us that these attributes were perceived by the Jahmites as *majāz* and were interpreted figuratively.⁵⁰ He argued that the semantic compass of these terms when applied to Creator and created is inevitably determined by the very contexts of speech, so that a distinction in comprehending such terms was natural. The primacy of *istiʿmāl* in these arguments circumvents any need for an elaborate history of the application of words, inferring that their significance had been shaped by the vicissitudes of time. The term *baḥr* (sea) refers to all things displaying vastness and expanse; it was not a specific quality of oceans, but could also refer to the recondite nature of a scholar's knowledge; similarly the term *dhawq* (the experiencing of a sensation) refers to all things savoured, be they delightful or agonising. There was nothing to dictate that it was *ḥaqīqa* in respect of the mouth and *majāz* in all other situations.⁵¹

Ibn Qayyim stresses that the Almighty's speech was indisputably veridical (*ḥaqīqa*) and that this was evident in his revealed scripture: the Torah, the Gospel, and the Qur'an: His speech has neither beginning nor end.⁵² He also recalls that the Almighty had not established a relationship between words and meanings to transfer them at a subsequent time to other meanings; moreover, the speech of God could not be governed by the *wadʿ* of created beings. It follows that within such confines, a theory of *majāz* was difficult to uphold. It is the Jahmiyya who are Ibn Qayyim's specific targets, although obviously that such theological spins were indulged by some of his contemporaries and predecessors indicates the significance of his comments. It was indeed the Muʿtazilites who agreed with the Jahmiyya on both the issue of a created

Qur'an whilst also upholding the transcendent nature of the Almighty, although the Mu'tazilites did reject the deterministic penchant of their cohorts. The device of *majāz* was invoked to uphold these appropriate doctrinal positions. The Ash'arites were the heirs to maintaining a transcendental approach to the attributes of the Almighty and invoking the device of *majāz*. Indeed, it was inevitable that the Ash'arites would over the ensuing years find themselves criticised and censured by figures such as Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim.⁵³

It was apparent that the revelationist interpretation of language's origin was not going to suffice in the battle to suppress the resort to metaphor in the interpretation of scripture. It might be perfunctorily invoked, but on a more theoretical plane there were flaws in this concept. Although Ibn Qayyim speaks of *tawqīf al-lughā* as a doctrine accepted by *jumhūr al-nās* in the early parts of his diatribe, he gradually moves on to maintain the line of argument outlined by his mentor Ibn Taymiyya. Indeed, he initially introduces the same stock of statements, frequently quoting his mentor's opinions verbatim. The doctrine of *iṣṭilāḥ* is totally rejected, following the general thrust of arguments presented by Ibn Ḥazm (384–456/994–1064) in his *Iḥkām*.⁵⁴ He suggests that *tawqīf* was an innate quality cultivated by the Almighty, calling it *ilhām*.⁵⁵ This alone accounts for the ability of *nuṭq* (articulation) in language; no stages of *muwāda'a* conventionally established by groups of intelligent people can be substantiated as a preceding process. Ibn Qayyim has to refute a logical premise which predicates that *wujūd al-malzūm bi-dūn lāzimihī muḥāl* (the existence of an entity without its concomitant is inconceivable), namely that *iṣṭilāḥ* and stages of *wad'c* were important pre-conditions for *isti'māl* in any language; if there were no phases of *iṣṭilāḥ* and *wad'c*, then *isti'māl* would not exist. Ibn Qayyim confronts this thesis by suggesting that it was not religiously binding, and that the empirical facts verify the impetus provided through *ilhām* in the acquisition of language.⁵⁶ Moreover, *iṣṭilāḥ* had only a minor role in these processes, being restricted to the customary augmentation of terminologies. The strength of the arguments of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim was made all the more convincing when the defenders of *majāz* asserted that one of the ways of determining whether a word was *ḥaqīqa* or *majāz* was to refer to authorities on language such as al-Khalīl, al-Aṣma'ī, and Abū 'Ubayda who, according to al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1084), revealed such cases of *majāz* in his aptly entitled work *Majāz al-Qur'ān*; such arguments were anachronistic.⁵⁷ It was no coincidence that Ibn Taymiyya elected to begin his own survey of the issue with a reference to the innocuous activities of Abū 'Ubayda and the fact that in this figure's terminology the term *majāz* had a purely linguistic function.

Ibn Qayyim was scathing of Ibn Jinnī and his mentor Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī, who much to the surprise of Loucel and Kopf endorsed the doctrine of *tawqīf al-lughā*.⁵⁸ In a selection of these linguists' statements provided by Ibn Qayyim one can observe the

manner in which linguistic facts were furtively serving as preludes to theological discussions. Thus, Ibn Jinnī asserts that upon reflection the majority of language was *majāz*, including the bulk of verbs.⁵⁹ This was because the actions denoted by verbs were never thoroughly accomplished by the subject of the verb: when one says ‘Zayd stood up’, not every physical aspect of standing up is experienced by the body; it is a perfect example of *wadʿ al-kull mawḍiʿ al-baʿd* (the whole functions as an emplacement for the part), which was a linguistic vehicle of emphasis. Accordingly, it is argued that such an expression is *majāz*. Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī used a similar rationale to stress this point: when one says ‘I emerged to (find) the lions’, it is obviously not the case that all the lions of the world were in the vicinity. But for reasons of emphasis the expression is phrased in this form. A number of further examples are cited to illustrate the argument; however, the focus is shifted to the acts of the *Qadīm* (The Eternal One), who as the *Khāliq* (Creator) of the heavens and the earth, is not the *khāliq* (author) of our deeds, for if He were the author in the *ḥaqīqa* (veridical) sense, he would have been the author of disbelief and aggression, alongside other deeds which are initiated by man; the same is also said of the Almighty’s ʿilm (knowledge).⁶⁰ The corollary of such argumentation was obvious. Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim endeavour to repudiate the reasoning, dismissing the arguments initially on a linguistic level and supporting this with an appeal to religious orthodoxy.

Ibn Qayyim refers to Ibn Jinnī and Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī as prominent proponents of *bidʿa* and *iʿtizāl*: they had rejected the veritable speech of the Almighty, denied that He would speak on the Day of Judgement, and asserted that He had no substantive attributes which subsisted in Him – no knowledge, no power, no life, no will, no hearing, and no sight. They had also claimed that He is unable to create the deeds of men and that He has no will over their acts. Ibn Qayyim reconciles this sectarian bent with their pursuit of *majāz*. It was an instrument which allowed them to circumvent a literal approach to the language of scripture. He adds that these two linguists were able to circulate such contentious views due to the political ascendancy of the Buwayhids and ʿAḍud al-Dawla (ruled 338–72/949–83). The state endorsed the tenets of *iʿtizāl* and *rafḍ*, promoting figures such as Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAbbād as the state’s *wazīr* and al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār as the chief jurisconsult.⁶¹ Ibn Qayyim then proceeds to expose the supposed frailties in the arguments of these linguists by using the various definitions of *majāz* to highlight the inconsistencies in their positions. The typical fashion in which this is achieved is to refer to the stages of *wadʿ* in which a contrived term is transferred for use in secondary contexts; that the words *khalq*, ʿilm, and other attributes were first coined by the Almighty creates a *hysteron proteron* as they are assumed to be *majāz*: by implication they must be *ḥaqīqa*.⁶² Similar arguments pervade throughout the text as contradictions in the argumentation are identified.

The classical theory of *majāz* also encompassed several sub-mechanisms, including *ḥadhf* or *iḍmār* (ellipsis) and *taqdīr* (suppletion). It is noticeable that Ibn Taymiyya was keen to dismiss the relevance of *iḍmār* in his analysis of Q.12:82. Ibn Qayyim emulates his mentor's analysis with a number of further examples accentuated as axioms of *majāz al-ḥadhf* or *taqdīr*. These devices were identified as aesthetic instruments which also functioned on a theological plane, and Ibn Qayyim was keen to pour scorn on an assertion by Ibn Jinnī that examples of *ḥadhf* in relation to parts of the genitive construct occurred in the text of the Qur'an in three hundred places.⁶³ Whilst grammarians used *taqdīr* and *ḥadhf* to reconcile speech within their own models of grammar, Ibn Qayyim suggested they were circumlocutory devices which impaired the clarity of language, although he does concede that in clear-cut cases such devices were useful. However, it was precarious when ellipsis and suppletion were being practised within the framework of *majāz* to alleviate an assumed anthropomorphic symbolism supposedly inherent in the language of scripture. The contentious application of *ḥadhf* was identified by Ibn Qayyim in the following verses: Q.89:22, Q.2:210 and Q.22:7. The first part of the first verse was textually restored to *wa-jā' a (amr(u)) rabbika* in place of *wa-jā' a rabbuka*. It was hypothesised that the *muḍāf (amr)* was ellipsed, and this was the case for the second verse. The use of restoration (*taqdīr*) seemingly obviated the connotation of physical movement on the part of the Almighty. The proponents of such a view might suggest that identical verses to the one restored did occur in the Qur'an: Q.11:101.⁶⁴ Yet for Ibn Qayyim the issue was one of theological importance; such a theory emanated from a Jahmite approach to language which aimed at negating the acts of the Almighty and, moreover, the sentences in question were not grammatically deficient. In the case of the third verse it is suggested that the ellipsed term was *arwāh (souls)*; thus the souls of the dead are raised from their graves. According to Ibn Qayyim, all such interpretation of this kind removes speech from its apparent contexts.⁶⁵ Ibn Qayyim is perplexed by the fact that Ibn Jinnī should suggest that Q.4:164 was a *ḥaqīqa* expression (i.e. that God had spoken to Mūsā). In propounding this view he had contradicted the principles which had led him to state that God's creation of the heavens and the earth was *majāz* and that God's 'ilm was *majāz*; he contrasts this with the view of the Jahmiyya and Kullābites who reported that in the context of Q.4:164 His speech was *majāz*. He adds that those who argued that the Qur'an was created were of two opinions: some suggested God's speech to Mūsā was *ḥaqīqa* and others claimed it was *majāz*. It is intriguing to note that amongst the Baṣran grammarians one finds Abū Ja'far al-Naḥḥās (d. 337/948) suggesting that a figurative spin of the verse was untenable due to the presence of the *maṣḍar (taklīm)* in the verse and, furthermore, this was the opinion of the majority of Baṣran linguists.⁶⁶ His predecessor in the Baṣran school al-Akhfash al-Awsaṭ does forward what was subsequently identified as a *majāz* interpretation, saying that God's address to Mūsā was created and

conveyed through a medium. It appears that Ibn Jinnī was adhering to the opinion of his Baṣran colleagues in this respect.

The second section of Ibn Qayyim's diatribe against *majāz* is principally devoted to the specific Qur'anic verses in which a tropical exposition is sought. All attempts to provide scripture with a figurative bent through a theory of *majāz* are actively disparaged. Having set out to show that this controversial device was contrived by the exponents of *i'tizāl*, Ibn Qayyim refuses to sanction the activities of those who wished to pursue the literary merits of the features of *majāz*; it was also deemed to be a superfluous device in the hands of the jurists as it was not an indispensable instrument for the analysis of scripture. He quotes both al-Shāfi'ī and al-Rāzī and their view that the explicit (*zāhir*) meaning of texts of legal significance must form the basis of juristic abstraction, a figurative approach to such texts would render the greater part of law virtually redundant.⁶⁷ The religious significance of the issues here and the implications for an unyielding religious orthodoxy were enormous. The allusions to the theory of *majāz* embodied all that was heretical in the theology of the Jahmites, the Mu'tazilites, the Murji'ites, and, indeed, the Ash'arites. It had become the conduit for a host of speculative theology, which according to figures of the mettle of Ibn Taymiyya, could not be reconciled with the spirit of orthodoxy upheld by the pious ancestors. A considerable amount of the second part of the text is devoted to an in-depth analysis of the term *istiwā'* (the ascent of the Almighty). Ibn Qayyim examines its occurrence in the Qur'an, dismissing the suggestion that it was a *majāz* expression and, furthermore, ridiculing the attempts to equate *istiwā'* with the term *istawlā* (gaining ascendancy), a subtle metaphorical shift as advanced by a number of Mu'tazilites. This figurative explanation is described as a menacing extension of the thesis of *majāz*.⁶⁸

ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī elegantly ruminates over the extremes in the various approaches to these issues, highlighting the aforementioned selection of verses which dominated discussions on the subject of the incidence of *majāz* in scripture and the language of the Arabs. He insists that it was an indispensable tool for apprentices of faith.⁶⁹ He intimates that the rejection of such a phenomenon was perilous: the developed concept of *majāz* embodied indisputable characteristics and stylistic features of the diction of Arabic. In respect of some of the verses discussed by Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim, al-Jurjānī argues that arrival and advent, as seemingly implied in the language of such verses, predicate movement; these qualities were *per se* attributes of physical bodies. It was imperative to accept a *majāz* interpretation of such verses. Regarding the issue of *istiwā'*, if it were interpreted literally, it would only be correctly applied to a corporeal body which occupied space and was restricted to locality: not true of the Eternal Creator. He also speaks of the antics of advocates of the other extreme: some proponents of *majāz*, who in essence pursued a deviantly arcane objective, and whose intent was dissimulation. Al-Jurjānī argues that whilst

one had to appreciate the essential features of the Arabic idiom, it was erroneous to perceive scripture as something steeped in esoteric vagaries and indiscernible meanings.⁷⁰ Ultimately, the views defiantly expressed by Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim were perceived as too conservative. The consensus amongst orthodox scholars who preceded these two figures, and indeed, those of later generations, was to endorse pre-eminently the posterior concept of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* dichotomy in all aspects of their approach to language, whether the format was theological, juristic, exegetical, or linguistic. Thus the general perception was that these two scholars and those who subscribed to their views were altogether radicals and certainly in a minority, although their supporters would continue to see them as defenders of religious rectitude. Moreover, some orthodox theologians who countenanced a seemingly rational approach to theology, felt that denying the concept of *majāz* served no real purpose. The fears of sectarian attacks against orthodoxy had subsided. Hence one finds Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (449–505/1058–1111) re-evaluating Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā'īni's denial of *majāz* to suggest he had implicitly endorsed its incidence in the language, whilst also pronouncing that the Qur'an comprised *majāz* expressions.⁷¹ Amongst the scholars of the Qur'anic sciences such as Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī and al-Suyūfī, a robust defence of the occurrence of *majāz* in the Qur'an was articulated; they suggested that a theory of *majāz* had to be applied to the interpretation of the language of scripture.⁷² The Egyptian man of letters Muṣṭafā Šādiq al-Rāfi'ī wrote that those who rejected *majāz* had denied a necessity and invalidated the beauty of the language of the Arabs. He had also observed that those who endorsed *tawqīf al-lughā* had reacted out of a false sense of religious piety.⁷³ However, the theological background to such arguments had been inexorably obscured. The linguistic implications of the discussions were now in the ascendancy; and given such circumstances, the developed concept of *majāz* was no longer so controversial.

Conclusions

The attenuation of the doctrine of *tawqīf al-lughā* was an inevitable consequence of the philological endeavours of the linguists who had paradoxically endorsed this belief in their linguistic treatises. They developed a hybrid selection of impressive theories such as *ishtiqaq*, *ishtirāk*, *tarādūf*, and *addād*, which undermined the import of an accepted doctrine. The doctrine of *tawqīf al-lughā* was, as suggested by Weiss, engendered by the need to suppress Mu'tazilite doctrines on the nature of the Qur'an. Moreover, those who had subscribed to this doctrine were initially trying to place distance between themselves and the Mu'tazilites. Figures such as Ibn Taymiyya had concluded that the texts of scripture had never defined in a categorical fashion the doctrine of *tawqīf*. It was clear that *tawqīf al-lughā* could not be advanced to explain the linear development of the diction of 'arabiyya. Yet there was no denying a role for divine revelation in language's origin.

The situation had become precarious with the crystallisation of a theory of *majāz*, which was a potentially tendentious instrument in the hands of the speculative theologians. In the formative years it was a device which was purely linguistic and incidental to theological speculation. It evolved simultaneously with *iṣṭilāḥ* as a mechanism employed to alleviate the angularities imposed by a literal approach to language; it was also applied to buttress prefigured theological predilections which provoked the defiant response of those of a stern religiosity. Far from endorsing an extreme interpretation of the revelationist origin of language, not only did Ibn Taymiyya realise that the proponents of *majāz* were exploiting the theory of *iṣṭilāḥ*, suggesting it substantiated their explanations of the *majāz* phenomenon, they might also retort that the processes of *tawqīf* engendered words which were designated as *majāz* at the primordial point of language's inception. Accordingly, the only effective way of countering such reasoning along with the theological suppositions which flowed from this was to relinquish the former doctrine on language's origin and emphasise a more pragmatic approach to this predicament; hence the reference to linguistic usage (*isti'māl*). The acceptance of the doctrine of *tawqīf* did initially hinder a theoretical elaboration of *majāz* by ridiculing successive stages of *wadʿ*. However, a more effective defence was mounted on the issue of linguistic usage (*isti'māl*), which curiously diffused the significance of *tawqīf al-lughā*. However, both Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim were concerned only for the theological gravity of accepting a theory of *majāz*; it is this concern which shaped their contributions to the debate on *tawqīf* and *iṣṭilāḥ*. Scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim were in a minority regarding the validity of the resort to metaphor in resolving the language of scripture: the device of *majāz* was able to leave an indelible mark on the currency of a developing Islamic theology.

This brings us again to the endeavours of the earliest linguists and the question of whether they were hindered by religious doctrines in elaborating their own linguistic abstraction. It is clear from the examples we examined in Part I that linguists set out their theories of language without necessarily taking into account fully the implications for religious orthodoxy. This was certainly the case for many linguists of the Baṣran and Kūfan traditions. The earliest linguists were essentially readers (*qurrāʾ*) who advocated an altogether functional approach to language predisposed to the service of scripture. That subsequent generations of linguists elected to focus on material of a more profane nature, reflects a shift which had occurred within the linguistic tradition. Although such a revolutionary approach was primarily extended to resolve linguistic aspects of scripture, particularly in relation to the body of *lectiones* (*qirāʾāt*), it ironically becomes the standard for justifying the linguistic idiosyncrasies of scripture. It was an unacceptable development in the eyes of the upholders of orthodoxy. Furthermore, Kūfan linguists, who are traditionally associated with

confining their linguistic endeavours to the text of the Qur'an, made substantial contributions to the elaboration of philological theories; indeed, they were as radical as their Baṣran counterparts in their approach to the phenomenon of language.

NOTES

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1 W. Heinrichs, 'On the Genesis of the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* Dichotomy', *Studia Islamica*, 59 (1984), pp.111–140 esp. p. 111 and p. 138.

2 Ibn Taymiyya, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm, *Kitāb al-īmān*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1983), pp. 82–6. This is reproduced from his *Majmū' fatāwā shaykh al-islām*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim, (30 vols, Riyādh, AH 1381–4/1961–4).

3 J. Wansbrough, *Qur'anic studies: sources and methods of scriptural interpretation*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 254; cf. J. Wansbrough, '*Majāz al-Qur'ān*: Periphrastic Exegesis', *BSOAS* (1970), pp. 247–66.

4 E. Almagor, 'The Early Meaning of *majāz* and the Nature of Abū 'Ubayda's Exegesis', *Studia Orientalia*, Memoriae D. H. Baneth Dedicata (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979), pp. 307–26.

5 Heinrichs, 'Genesis', p. 127 and pp. 138–9.

6 Wansbrough concluded that there was no uniformity in the usage of the term to prove it was plainly synonymous with *tafsīr* and *ma'nā*; although it is not difficult to see why he equated *majāz* with *taqdīr* as the latter is in essence a device for grammatical resolution.

7 Heinrichs, 'Genesis', p. 139.

8 Ibid., pp. 137–9.

9 Ibid., p. 138; cf. Ibn Qutayba, Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh Ibn Muslim, *Ta'wīl mushkil al-Qur'an*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣaqr, 2nd edn, (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1973), pp. 103–34. Note on p. 132 the arguments over *majāz* in the Qur'an.

10 Ibid., p. 139. I have rephrased this quotation ever so slightly.

11 Ibid., p. 140.

12 Ibn Fāris, Abū 'l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad Ibn Fāris Ibn Zakariyyā, *al-Ṣāḥibī fī fiqh al-lughā al-'arabiyya wa-sunan al-'Arab fī kalāmihā*, ed. A. Ṣaqr, (Cairo: Dār Ihyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, n.d.), pp. 321–6. Cf. Ibn Qutayba, *Ta'wīl mushkil*, p. 275. We should also be aware that Ibn Qutayba was criticised by Kūfans such as Ibn al-Anbārī for ridiculing one of their readers, Ḥamza ibn Ḥabīb, in addition to a number of other related incidents which irritated Kūfan linguists.

13 See Part 1 of this article, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, vol. I: iss. 1 (1999), pp. 36–8.

14 Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, p. 81. See B. G. Weiss, *The Search for God's Law: Islamic Jurisprudence in the Writings of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī*, (Utah: University of Utah Press, 1984), chapter 3, pp. 117–50, in which Weiss offers a synopsis of the *majāz* issue. He makes the telling point that one has to distinguish between the *assignment* of meanings to words and the very *use* of these words in both *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* contexts, pp. 137–8. Ibn Taymiyya, referring to arguments of the supporters of *majāz*, provides the

examples 'lion' and 'ass' which, in *ḥaqīqa* terms, are references to beasts; and, in *majāz* senses, they symbolise bravery and idiocy respectively.

15 Weiss makes the point that there are problems in translating the term *majāz* as metaphor, figure of speech, or trope due to the semantic extent of the term. He points out that amongst early scholars the issue here is one of 'movement' in meaning. However, for a scholar like Ibn Taymiyya this term was invoked in attempts to explain away the apparent language of scripture (Weiss, *The Search*, p. 135 ff.).

16 Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, pp. 79–80.

17 Ibid., p. 80.

18 Ibid., pp. 82–6.

19 Heinrichs also refers to this work in some detail, see 'Genesis', p. 116 and p. 140 (footnotes). Cf. *al-Radd 'alā 'l-Jahmiyya wa'l-Zanādiqa*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-'Umayra, (Riyād: Dār al-Liwā', 1977), p. 101; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'*, vol. XII, pp. 481–96.

20 Weiss, *The Search*, chap. 3, pp. 117–50, esp. p. 149. Cf. Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām*, ed. I. al-'Ajūz, 2 vols, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1991), pp. 17–56.

21 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'*, vol. XII, pp. 400–97. Cf. Weiss, *The Search*, chap. 3, *passim*; al-Āmidī, *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām*, vol. I, p. 34. Ibn Taymiyya criticises all the theoretical aspects of the doctrine of *majāz*.

22 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'*, vol. XII, pp. 400–4.

23 Ibid., p. 452. Whether one wished to call this *majāz fī'l-tarkīb* or *majāz fī'l-mufrad*, it was wrong.

24 Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, pp. 80–1. Heinrichs, 'Genesis', p. 116, also footnotes. Cf. *al-Radd 'alā 'l-Jahmiyya wa'l-Zanādiqa*, p. 101; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'*, vol. XII, pp. 481–96, and a study by Ibn Taymiyya of some of Ibn 'Aqīl's statements on *majāz* from his *Kitāb al-funūn*.

25 B. G. Weiss, 'Medieval Muslim Discussions of the Origin of Language', *ZDMG*, 124:1 (1974), pp. 33–41.

26 Al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. I, p. 58; cf. Weiss, 'Mediaeval', p. 35; Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, p. 80.

27 Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, p. 81.

28 Ibn Fāris states that a *ḥaqīqa* expression did not comprise simile, figure of speech or hyperbaton: *al-Šāḥibī*, p. 321. There is a correlation between the two meanings of a *ḥaqīqa-majāz* phrase, otherwise they would be distinctly separate words: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl fī 'ilm al-uṣūl*, 2 vols (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1988) vol. I, p. 112.

29 Weiss offers an excellent explanation of the ambiguous status of 'waḍ' prior to usage'. It implies that words are in a unique state of being assigned *mawḍū'*: subsequently their application in phrases governs whether they are *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*. This obviates the need for a *majāz* phrase to depend on a preceding *ḥaqīqa* one. Cf. Weiss, *The Search*, p. 137.

30 Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, p. 82. Note Ibn Ḥazm sets out a similar stance as recorded by Loucel. Cf. *al-Iḥkām*, vol. I, p. 32.

31 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'*, vol. XII, p. 452. Cf. Weiss, *The Search*, pp. 145–6, in which he debates the view that words were designated *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* at the primordial moment of language's inception.

- 32 Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, p. 83.
- 33 Ibid., p. 86. Heinrichs reported that Ibn Taymiyya came very close to describing the *ḥaqīqa-majāz* terminology as a *bid'a*, in actual fact he does just that when denying that the Qur'an comprised *majāz* expressions, stating that 'the division of language into *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* is a division which is an innovation and a post-*salafī* development' (p. 102); cf. Heinrichs, 'Genesis', p. 117.
- 34 Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, p. 87; Weiss, *The Search*, pp. 142–7. These terms are discussed regarding Āmidī's *Iḥkām*.
- 35 Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, pp. 98–9. Cf. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'*, vol. XII, pp. 465–9 (Weiss says the issue of foreign words in the Qur'an is addressed therein); Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl fī ta'liqāt al-uṣūl*, ed. M. H. Haytū (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1971), pp. 72–6.
- 36 Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, pp. 87–103.
- 37 Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, pp. 87–97. Cf. Ibn Qutayba, *Ta'wīl*, pp. 132–33. Other references to *majāz* such as Q.19:4, are also repudiated in his synopsis: see *Majmū'*, vol. XII, pp. 464–6.
- 38 A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, (Oxford World Classics: OUP, 1964), p. 297; Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, pp. 97–8.
- 39 Al-Qurtubī, Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-Anṣārī, *al-Jāmi' li-ahkām al-Qur'ān* (21 vols., Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1988), vol. IV, pp. 19–20. He also speaks of *isti'āra*.
- 40 Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, *Mukhtaṣar al-ṣawā'iq al-mursala 'alā 'l-Jahmiyya wa'l-Mu'tazila*, abridged by Muḥammad ibn al-Mawṣilī, 2 vols in 1, (Riyādh: Maktabat al-Riyādh al-Ḥadītha, n.d.) vol. II, pp. 2–446. For further discussions of these divisions of the *ḥaqīqa* see al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl*, vol. I, p. 117–29, and al-Shawkānī, *Irshād al-fuḥūl*, p. 21 ff. These are also examined in al-Ghazālī's *al-Mustasfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl*.
- 41 In the early part of his diatribe, he derides fifty-one theoretical definitions adduced to support *majāz*.
- 42 Abū Bakr, *Ṣawā'iq*, pp. 2–4.
- 43 Ibid., p. 3.
- 44 He implicitly links this with the *ḥadīth* which declares that the best of centuries is the Prophet's century and then the following two centuries; the division of speech in terms of *majāz* and *ḥaqīqa* occurs after that blessed period and is therefore lacking in authority.
- 45 The implications of this were already discussed by Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, cf. Weiss's observations on the subject in *The Search*, pp. 142–3 and pp. 147–8.
- 46 Ibn Qayyim, *al-Ṣawā'iq*, vol. I, pp. 6–7. Cf. Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī's *al-Taḥṣīl*, vol. I, pp. 221–29 for a discussion of the significance of *ḥaqīqa lughawiyya* and *ḥaqīqa shar'iyya*; the rhetoricians had no interest in these divisions; also Ibn Fāris, *al-Ṣāhibī*, pp. 78–86, for a discussion of terms such as *mu'min* and *kāfir* and their Islamic provenance. Ibn Qayyim refers to Abū Hāshim and al-Jubbā'i as one person.
- 47 Ibid., p. 7.
- 48 Ibn Qayyim, *al-Ṣawā'iq*, vol. II, pp. 8–9. Proponents of *majāz* argued that a *majāz* expression could be negated; however, negation could not be applied to a *ḥaqīqa* expression. Ibn Qayyim adduces a selection of terms which were undoubtedly *ḥaqīqa* but it was also possible to negate them, hence the statement: 'He is not a *mu'min*' or: 'He is not fast-

ing'. Furthermore, if one insists that *majāz* is distinguished by the presence of a contextual clue, then all speech is subject to contextual restraints such as grammatical function within the parameters of speech, which in turn govern the semantic value of words and accordingly must be *majāz*; it also follows that the Qur'an was *majāz*, and this was a fallacious statement contrary to the *aṣl* (p. 22 ff.). Cf. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'*, vol. XII, p. 491 ff.

49 Ibid., vol. II, p. 24 ff. Cf. Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, p. 88, and *Majmū'*, vol. XII, pp. 416–20.

50 Ibn Qayyim, *al-Ṣawā'iq*, p. 29. He also applies similar arguments in analysing context in the application of words such as *makr* (plotting or trickery) and the fact that there had to be an abject disparity in the semantic compass of these terms when applied to the Almighty, and when such terms were used to describe the activities of human beings (see pp. 30–6).

51 Ibid., p. 42–3. Cf. Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān*, pp. 98–9. The same principle is extended to words like *janāh*, *raḥma*, and *rīsha*. These arguments are covered extensively in Ibn Taymiyya's *Majmū'*, vol. XII, p. 472 ff., also p. 436 for the discussion of individual words.

52 Ibn Qayyim, *al-Ṣawā'iq*, p. 42.

53 Cf. Sāmī al-Nashshār, *Nash' at al-fikr al-falsafī fi'l-islām*, 7th edn, (3 vols, Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1977) vol. I, pp. 328–380.

54 See Part I of this article, *JQS* I:1, p. 35.

55 Ibn Qayyim, *al-Ṣawā'iq*, p. 69.

56 Ibid., vol. II, p. 71.

57 Al-Shīrāzī, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn 'Alī, *al-Luma' fī uṣūl al-fiqh* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1985), p. 8. Cf. W. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) p. 42–3.

58 See Part I of this article, *JQS* I:1, p. 31.

58 Ibn Qayyim, *al-Ṣawā'iq*, pp. 76 ff.

60 Ibid., p. 77 ff. He argues that when one says 'I hit 'Umar', the assault does not affect the entire body, it may apply to his fingers, or just a part of his body. In an identical figurative vein the same was true of an amīr's cutting off the hand of a thief.

61 Ibid., p. 83. Ibn Taymiyya also expresses his dismay at the endeavours of Ibn Jinnī, suggesting that one of his works was an excellent testimony to his learning and it was therefore hard to understand his lapses in respect of these doctrines (*Majmū'*, vol. XII, p. 486); also of interest was the fact that Ibn Fāris devoted his *Ṣāhibī* to the aforementioned Ismā'īl Ibn 'Abbād.

62 Ibid., p. 90.

63 Ibid., p. 98. He is speaking of *ḥadhf al-mudāf*, allegedly exemplified in Q.12:82.

64 Ibid., p. 100. It is reported by Ibn Kathīr that Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal also supported this rendition, although we should note that he was also mistakenly associated with an endorsement of *majāz*. See the biography of Ibn Ḥanbal in Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāya wa'l-nihāya*. Cf. analysis on pp. 106–7 of *al-Ṣawā'iq*.

65 Ibid., p. 101. Reference is made to the use of abbreviation, elision, circumlocution and emphasis as selected features of Arabic; their use did not immediately render speech *majāz*.

66 Al-Naḥḥās, Abū Ja'far Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, *I'rāb al-Qur'ān*, ed. Z. G.

Zāhid, 3rd edn, (5 vols. Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1988) vol. I, p. 507; al-Akhfash al-Awsat, Abū 'l-Ḥasan Sa'īd ibn Mas'ada, *Ma'ānī 'l-Qur'ān*, ed. Fā'iz Fāris, 3rd edn (2 vols, Kuwait: Dār al-Bashīr, 1981).

67 Ibn Qayyim, *al-Ṣawā'iq*, pp. 72–3.

68 Ibid., pp. 126–52. See my forthcoming article 'The Controversy Regarding *istiwā'*: Linguistic Contributions to Islamic Theology'. The term *istiwā'* was the subject of a profusion of paraphrase by linguists. The context in relation to the Qur'an highlights God's directing Himself either metaphorically or veridically to the heavens and earth, or to His throne; this is also applied to turning His attention to the affairs of something. Indeed, some scholars insisted on a veridical interpretation of the verse speaking of a 'rising', a 'mounting', or a 'climbing': *'alā 'alayhā* and *irtafa'a*.

69 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-balāgha fī 'ilm al-bayān*, ed. M. A. Ridā (Cairo: Dār al-Maṭbū'āt al-'Arabiyya, n.d.), pp. 339–42. He speaks especially of simile, figure of speech, ellipsis, and magnitude of expression.

70 Al-Jurjānī, *Asrār*, p. 342.

71 Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, *al-Mankhūl fī ta'liqāt al-uṣūl*, pp. 74–6. This is also the case in *al-Mustasfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl*, 2nd edn (2 vols, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, n.d.) vol. I, pp. 105 and 211. Cf. M. Kamālī, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991), pp. 116–9.

72 Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū 'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (4 vols, Cairo: Maktabat Dār al-Turāth, 1981) vol. II, pp. 254–99; al-Suyūfī, *al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* (2 vols, Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, n.d.) vol. II, pp. 47–64.

73 M. A. al-Rāfi'i, *Ta'rīkh ādāb al-'Arab*, 4th edn (3 vols, Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1974) vol. I, p. 183.