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The Term *sabab* "Cause" in Semantic-Rhetorical Discussions within Qur'ānic Exegesis

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Abstract

The most basic meaning of the word *sabab* is "cord" or "ligature." In Islamic sciences, it achieved the meanings of "cause," "semantic link," or "anything connected with or providing access to something else." This article examines how *sabab*, in the sense of "cause," is employed by al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) to address interpretative challenges in their Qur'ānic commentaries. Their discussions, which connect syntax and rhetoric, appear to draw on the works by Ibn Jinnī (d. 392/1002) and al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078). I analyze two types of discussions: those in which Muslim scholars recognize cause and effect replacing each other, and those in which they claim that the cause is mentioned instead of the real agent.

Keywords

sabab – cause – causality – Qur'ānic exegesis – al-Zamakhsharī – Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī – Ibn Jinnī – al-Jurjānī – metonymy

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المصطلح "سبب" في أبحاث معنويّة-بلاغيّة في تفسير القرآن

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المُستَخلص

المعنى الأصليّ لكلمة "سبب" هو "حبل". في العلوم الإسلاميّة أصبحت هذه الكلمة تستعمَل مصطلحا يحمل معاني مثل "مسبِّب،" "رابط معنويّ"، أو "كل شيء يرتبط بشيء آخر أو يُتوصّل به إلى شيء آخر". يبحث هذا المقال كيفيّة استخدام الزّمخشريّ (ت. 538/1144) وفخر الدّين الرّازيّ (ت. 606/1209) للمصطلح "سبب"، بمعنى "المسبِّب"، لمعالجة التّحدّيات التّفسيريّة في تفسيريهما للقرآن. تبدو أبحاثهما الّتي تربط بين النّحو والبلاغة متأثّرة بأعمال ابن جنّيّ (ت. 392/1002) والجرجانيّ (ت. 471/1078). أحلّل في هذا المقال نوعين من الأبحاث: النّوع الأوّل، يشير فيه العلماء إلى الاستغناء بالسّبب عن المسبَّب أو بالمسبَّب عن السَبب، والنّوع الثّاني يزعم العلماء فيه ذكر السَبب في موضع الفاعل الحقيقيّ.

الكلمات المفتاحية

سبب – سببيّة – تفسير القرآن – الزّمخشريّ – فخر الدّين الرّازيّ – ابن جنّيّ – الجرجانيّ – مجاز مرسل

1 Introduction

Sabab is a complex and multifaceted term in the Islamic culture. Carter points out that the literal meaning of the word is "'a cord or ligature', often 'a tent rope', signifying the tight structural bond between the fabric of the tent and the peg."[1]

1 See Michael G. Carter, "*Sabab*," *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, ed. Kees Versteegh et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 4: 101. Al-Khalīl (d. ca. 170/786) glosses *sabab* as *ḥabl* "rope." Al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923) in his discussion of Q. 40:36 asserts that the basic meaning of *sabab* is "something that is related to something else" (*mā ttaṣala bi-shay'in*); thus a rope is called *sabab* "because it is linked to things" (*li-annahu yūṣalu bi-l-ashyā'i*). According to al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), its basic meaning is "rope," and metaphorically it may mean "anything

He distinguishes between several meanings of the term in various Islamic sciences: in prosody it is "the name for part of a metrical unit"; in philosophy it denotes "a logical 'cause' or 'reason'", and in a more general sense (e.g. in law) it may refer to "anything connected with or providing access to something else." According to Carter, it was Sībawayhi (d. 180/796) who first used it in grammar "to refer to a semantic link between syntactic elements which produces a number of apparently irregular inflections." Carter mentions an anaphoric pronoun as the most frequent indication of this link, and *naʿt sababī* "semantically linked adjective" as the structure most frequently explained using this idea.[2]

In the sense of "cause," *sabab* is also highly relevant to grammatical literature, as it is used by grammarians to refer to causes bringing about grammatical phenomena[3] (in these contexts it seems to be sometimes interchangeable with *ʿilla*).[4] Additionally, it appears in discussions on linguistic structures expressing the idea of causality—e.g., on *fāʾ al-sababiyya* or on the relations between the clause preceding *ḥattā* "until / in order to / so that" and the clause following it.[5]

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by which one can reach the goal" (*kullu mā yutawaṣṣalu bihi ilā maqṣūdin*). See Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, ed. Mahdī al-Makhzūmī and Ibrāhīm al-Sāmirrāʾī (N.p: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, n.d.), 7: 203; Ibrāhīm ibn al-Sarī ibn Sahl Abū Isḥāq al-Zajjāj, *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān wa-Iʿrābuhu*, ed. ʿAbd al-Jalīl ʿAbduh Shalabī (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1988), 4: 375; Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* (*al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*) (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1420H), 21: 495. This research was supported by the Israel Science Foundation (grant No. 1989/19). I extend my gratitude to Dunia Khateeb and Yosef Abuhab for their assistance in preparing this article for publication.

2 See Carter, "*Sabab*," 101. See Michael G. Carter, "The Term *sabab* in Arabic Grammar," *Zeitschrift für Arabische Linguistik* 15 (1985), 53–66 for a discussion of the term *sabab* in the sense of "semantic link" as used by Sībawayhi and later grammarians. See Werner Diem, Fa-waylun li-l-qāsiyati qulūbuhum. *Studien zum arabischen adjektivischen Satz* (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998) for a discussion of *naʿt sababī* and related constructions.

3 For instance, al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078) uses the term *sabab* to refer to the cause for a *bināʾ* ending in nouns (that should in principle take *iʿrāb* endings) and to the cause for a vowel in *bināʾ* endings (that should in principle be vowelless). See, respectively, ʿAbd al-Qāhir ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Muqtaṣid fī Sharḥ al-Īḍāḥ*, ed. Kāẓim Baḥr al-Marjān (Iraq: Dār al-Rashīd li-l-Nashr, 1982), 131; 126–127.

4 The term *ʿilla* can be translated as "(linguistic) cause" (in one of its senses; another refers to the effect of the "weak consonants"). See Kees Versteegh, "*Illa*," *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, ed. Kees Versteegh et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 2: 308–311 for a discussion of the term's senses and their possible relation to Greek grammatical theories; see Yasir Suleiman, *The Arabic Grammatical Tradition: a Study in* Taʿlīl (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) for a study of grammarians' theories of argumentation.

5 According to Sadan, the term *sababiyya* "is used mainly in reference to the *naṣb* mood following the conjunction *fa-*, but also in the context of *kay* and *ḥattā*." He chooses to interpret *sababiyya* in the context of the subjunctive as "the connection between two actions, in which one of them is the cause of the other," viewing causality as a type of connection; Arik Sadan,

In this paper, I explore the term *sabab* in the sense of "cause" in semantic-rhetorical discussions by Qurʾānic commentators, where it is used to resolve interpretative difficulties and may thus be viewed as an exegetical tool that allows analyzing a category of non-literal usages.[6] In such discussions two main distinctions are made: between cause and effect (the linguistic representations of those two are frequently interchangeable), and between the cause of an action and its real agent (the linguistic representation of the former may replace the linguistic representation of the latter in the sentence). I focus on discussions by al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, as representatives of the Muʿtazilīs and the Ashʿarīs, presenting Ibn Jinnī (d. 392/1002) and al-Jurjānī as possible sources of their ideas.

I choose to translate *sabab* as "cause" (while *ʿilla*, in my view, is more accurately rendered "reason"), given that the relevant medieval discussions deal with the idea of causality (events or things that lead to other events)—whereas "reason" seems more appropriate to explanations, which may or may not be directly related to the explained event or action.[7]

The Subjunctive Mood in Arabic Grammatical Thought (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 313. See William Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*. 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896–1898), 2: 30–32 and Sadan, *Subjunctive*, 127–172 for a discussion of conditions determining the mood of the verb after *fa-*; see Sadan, *Subjunctive*, 134 for a discussion of the term *fāʾ al-sababiyya*. As for *ḥattā*, this word has several meanings and syntactic behaviors: it can be followed by a verb, in the perfect or in the imperfect, which may be either subjunctive or indicative. See Wright, *Grammar*, 2: 29–30 and Sadan, *Subjunctive*, 197–248 for a discussion of *ḥattā* that is followed by a verb; see Wright, *Grammar*, 2: 146–147 for a discussion of *ḥattā* that is followed by a noun.

6 I use the term "non-literal" in its broadest sense, referring to all kinds of linguistic usages that cannot be understood at face value and require some kind of interpretative process.

7 Troupeau (as cited in Versteegh, "*ʿIlla*", 309) translates *ʿilla* as used by Sībawayhi as "*raison*," whereas Versteegh himself translates *ʿilla* as "cause" and *sabab* as "reason." Gimaret translates *sabab* in theological discussions as "*cause*," and *ʿilla* as "*motif*," "*preuve*" or "*cause*," depending on the context—see Daniel Gimaret, *Théories de l'acte humain en théologie musulmane* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J.Vrin, 1980), 408, 411. Erlwein translates both *sabab* and *ʿilla* as "cause"—see Hannah C. Erlwein, *Arguments for God's Existence in Classical Islamic Thought. A Reappraisal of the Discourse* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 51, 57, 58, 59. She presents al-Ghazālī's discussion where a distinction is made between "a choosing agent" (*fāʿil mukhtār*) and *ʿilla* (see Erlwein, *Arguments*, 195), which is somewhat similar to the distinction between *fāʿil* and *sabab* that we shall see below. The use of the terms *sabab* and *ʿilla* in the medieval Arabic grammatical and exegetical literature does not seem consistent and calls for additional research. Moreover, there are varying opinions in modern philosophy regarding the distinction between reasons and causes. See the discussion in M. Smith, "Reasons and cause," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Taylor and Francis. https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/reasons-and-causes/v-1. doi:10.4324/9780415249126-V030-1 (accessed on 27/3/2024).

2 Interchanging Cause and Effect

This phenomenon is related to the CAUSE FOR EFFECT and EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymies that can be viewed as belonging to the "general metonymic concepts" category recognized by Lakoff and Johnson (who point out that in our speech the part systematically tends to replace the whole, etc).[8] Radden and Kövecses state that "cause and effect are so closely interdependent that they tend to imply each other," which explains reversible metonymies.[9] In fact, the phenomenon described by Muslim scholars is broader than metonymy, which is traditionally defined as "a figure of speech that consists in using the name of one thing for that of something else with which it is associated."[10] The examples below include both metonymies and instances where an explicitly mentioned cause or effect allows reconstructing an implicit effect or cause, respectively (which may be a verbal clause).

2.1 *Mentioning the Effect Instead of the Cause*

2.1.1 Ibn Jinnī

Ibn Jinnī seems to have been the first to systematically treat this phenomenon. He dedicates a chapter of his *Kitāb al-Khaṣā'iṣ* to "being content with the cause

8 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 37–39. According to Wolfhart Heinrichs, "Contacts between Scriptural Hermeneutics and Literary Theory in Islam: The Case of *majāz*," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 7 (1991–92), 279, al-Jurjānī was the first to distinguish between metonymy and metaphor as two types of *majāz lughawī*, without assigning a term to the former. See Ibid., 279–280 for a discussion of this distinction according to al-Jurjānī. Heinrichs maintains that, for al-Jurjānī, metonymy (unlike metaphor) does not belong to the figures of speech. He also observes that metonymy is referred to in the later textbooks as *majāz mursal* (without pointing out when or by whom the term was coined). Aḥmad Maṭlūb, *Mu'jam al-Muṣṭalaḥāt al-Balāghiyya wa-Taṭawwurihā* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān Nāshirūn, 2007), 595 mentions *majāz mursal* as a synonym of *majāz ifrādī*, noting that, to his knowledge, al-Sakkākī (d. 626/1229) was the first to use this term. Maṭlūb surveys sub-categories of *majāz mursal* discerned by later scholars, including those based on causality (see Ibid., 595–597). According to J. Stewart Robinson, "*Maǧāz*: In Turkish," *EI2*, in Modern Turkish stylistics the category of *majāz mursal* is divided into sub-categories, one of which is *sababiyya-musabbabiyya*.

9 Günter Radden and Zoltán Kövecses, "Towards a Theory of Metonymy," *The Cognitive Linguistics Reader*, ed. Vyvyan Evans, Benjamin Bergen and Jörg Zinken (London: Equinox, 2007), 346.

10 See Ibid., 335–336 for a discussion of the difference between this standard definition and a cognitive approach that views metonymy as "a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity is mentally accessed via another entity." Avigail Noy, "Review of *Arabic Poetics: Aesthetic Experience in Classical Arabic Literature*. By Lara Harb. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xviii+298," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 143. 3 (2023), 738 stresses that "metonymy is typically a stand-in for a topic or real-word object—a noun."

to the exclusion of the effect and being content with the effect to the exclusion of the cause" (*al-iktifāʾ bi-l-sababi ʿan-i l-musabbabi wa-bi-l-musabbabi ʿan-i l-sababi*), where he discusses the phenomenon in the Qurʾān and in poetry. He mentions that Abū ʿAlī (al-Fārisī, d. 377/987) accepted such cases, was interested in them, and mentioned some examples,[11] but I was not able to locate such discussions in al-Fārisī's extant writings; Ibn Jinnī may refer here to a work that has not survived, or to something he heard from his teacher personally.

Ibn Jinnī's first example is *fa-idhā qaraʾta l-Qurʾāna fa-staʿidh bi-llāhi* [*min-a l-shayṭāni l-rajīmi*] "When thou recitest the Koran, seek refuge in God [from the accursed Satan]" (Q. 16:98).[12] Ibn Jinnī explains that *fa-idhā qaraʾta l-Qurʾāna* should be interpreted as "When you intend to recite"[13] (because the *istiʿādha*, i.e., saying the formula *aʿūdhu bi-llāhi min-a l-shayṭāni l-rajīmi* as a safeguard against misspeaking etc., should precede the actual reading).[14] According to Ibn Jinnī, here the effect, i.e., the reading, is mentioned instead of the cause, i.e., the intention. He mentions another interpretation of the verse that changes the word order, claiming that the intention is: *fa-idhā staʿadhta fa-qraʾ* "When you seek refuge, recite!". He maintains that this interpretation is inferior to his own, because it includes an unnecessary word-order change, and also because not everyone who seeks refuge in God recites the Qurʾān. He points out a similar phenomenon in *idhā qumtum ilā l-ṣalāti fa-ghsilū wujūhakum* "… when you stand up to pray wash your faces …" (Q. 5:6), which can be interpreted as "when you intend to stand up to pray,"[15] as the ablution is performed before the prayer. He provides a third example, a poetic verse transmitted by Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933):

qad ʿalimtu in lam ajid muʿīnan	*la-akhliṭanna bi-l-khalūqi ṭīnā*
I knew, if I do not find someone to help me,	I will mix [her] perfume with mud

11 ʿUthmān Abū l-Fatḥ Ibn Jinnī, *Al-Khaṣāʾiṣ*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Najjār (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 1986–1988), 3: 176.

12 This and subsequent translations of Qurʾānic verses are taken from Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), unless stated otherwise.

13 Ibn Jinnī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ*, 3: 176.

14 See Wolfhart Heinrichs, "*Taʿawwudh*," *EI*[2] for a discussion.

15 Ibn Jinnī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ*, 3: 176. Al-Rāzī (*Tafsīr*, 11: 297) mentions "a decisive will" as a cause of performing an action in his discussion of Q. 5:6, although he surprisingly calls the phenomenon *iṭlāq ismi l-sababi ʿalā l-musabbabi* (adding to that another possible interpretation).

Ibn Jinnī explains that the poet means to say that if he does not find anyone to help him water the camels then his wife will have to go and water them with him, so that the perfume on her hands will be mixed with mud. The poet mentions the effect (the perfume mixed with mud) instead of the cause (watering the camels).[16]

A similar phenomenon is found in *innī arānī aʿṣiru khamran* "I dreamed that I was pressing wine"[17] (Q. 12:36). In fact, grapes are pressed and then turn into wine. Here the result (the wine) is mentioned instead of the cause (the grapes). In this context, Ibn Jinnī also mentions a poem by al-Farazdaq (d. ca. 110/728), that includes the sentence *qataltu qatīlan lam yara l-nāsu mithlahu* "I killed a dead man, the like of whom people did not see." In fact, the poet could kill only a person who was alive, and became dead after the killing. Ibn Jinnī says that the poet "mentions the effect instead of the cause" (*iktafā bi-l-musabbabi min-a l-sababi*)[18]—although the person's being alive is not a cause of his death, strictly speaking, but rather a state that necessarily precedes his death. Ibn Jinnī (and others, as we shall see) use the notion of *sabab* quite loosely.

Another verse (whose author I was unable to identify) that contains a similar phenomenon is:

qad sabaqa l-ashqaru wa-huwa rābiḍun	*fa-kayfa lā yasbuqu idhā yurākaḍu*
The red one ran faster than others while lying,	so how can he not run faster than others when taken to a competition?

Ibn Jinnī explains that the verse speaks about a foal. "Running while lying" must mean while it was inside the womb of its running mother. The mother is the one actually running, and the fetus in her womb can be viewed as running by proxy. The poet mentioned the result (the foal's movement) instead of the cause (the mother's movement).[19] This trope creates a rich image, stressing the excellence of the mother, who wins a running competition despite being pregnant, a quality that is expected to be inherited by the foal. Additionally, it presents the foal as already learning to compete while in its mother's womb.

16 Ibn Jinnī, *Khaṣā'iṣ*, 3: 176–177.

17 Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Qur'an. Text and Explanatory Translation* (Tehran: Entesharat Salehi, n.d.), 222.

18 Ibn Jinnī, *Khaṣā'iṣ*, 3: 180.

19 Ibid.

The replacement of cause by effect is also used to explain unclear syntactic relations in texts. In the following poetic verse by al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī (thought to be active between years 570–600),[20] it is hard to identify the governor of the noun in the accusative:

idhā taghannā l-ḥamāmu l-wurqu hayyajanī	*wa-law taʿazzaytu ʿanhā Umma ʿAmmārin*
When a gray pigeon sings, it excites me [by reminding me of]	Umm ʿAmmār, although I endured with patience the loss of her

The verse apparently includes no transitive verb that can assign the accusative to *Umma ʿAmmārin* (*hayyaja* is a transitive verb, but its direct object is a bound pronoun). Ibn Jinnī explains that *hayyajanī* signifies *dhakkaranī* "reminded me," and thus assigns the accusative to the direct object.[21] This argument was used by various grammarians in relation to this verse.[22] Ibn Jinnī's originality in relation to his predecessors is in viewing this structure as an instance of mentioning the effect (i.e., the poet's excitement) instead of the cause (i.e., reminding the beloved one). This analysis explains how the addressees decipher the poet's intention.

2.1.2 Al-Jurjānī

Al-Jurjānī, who made pivotal contributions in rhetoric, surprisingly does not show any particular interest in the phenomenon of causes and effects replacing each other (although he is interested in the phenomenon of a cause replacing the real agent, as we shall see below). However, he mentions an effect that replaces the cause in his discussion of cases in which a literal usage appears as a non-literal one, specifically in verses presenting contentment as real wealth. For instance,

20 See Albert Arazi, "al-Nābigha al-Dhubyanī," *EI*^{2} for a discussion of this poet.

21 Ibn Jinnī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ*, 2: 427.

22 Al-Khalīl (d. ca. 170/786), as cited by Sībawayhi, says that "when [the poet] says *hayyajanī*, it is understood that there was a remembering" (*lammā qāla hayyajanī ʿurifa annahu kāna thamma tadhakkurun*), as if he had said *hayyajanī fa-dhakkaranī Umma ʿAmmārin* "It excited me and reminded me of Umm ʿAmmār." See Abū Bishr ʿAmr ibn ʿUthmān ibn Qanbar Sībawayhi, *Al-Kitāb*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1988), 1: 286.

inna l-qunūʿa l-ghinā lā kathratu l-māli[23]

Contentment is wealth, not the abundance of money

This saying might appear as a metaphor that presents contentment (*qunūʿ*) as equivalent to material wealth (*ghinā*). However, al-Jurjānī explains that the literal meaning of *ghinā* is "a lack of need" (*intifāʾ al-ḥāja*), and a need means "to want something, and being unable to obtain it" (*an turīda l-shayʾa wa-lā tajiduhu*).[24] He notes that "there are some propositions that are valid intellectually, but become as if they are non-literal or even less than that in terms of correctness, because [people's] nature is dominated by ignorance and weakness of judgment" (*rubba qaḍiyyatin min-a l-ʿaqli nāfidhatin qad ṣārat ka-annahā min-a l-umūri l-mutajawwazi fīhā, aw dūna dhālika fī l-ṣiḥḥati, li-ghalabati l-jahli wa-l-safahi ʿalā l-ṭibāʿi*).[25]

In relation to the words' signification, he states that *ghinā* may signify abundance of money, and *faqr* may signify its scarcity, "belonging to [words] that are removed by custom from their literal meaning in the language" (*mimmā yuzīluhu l-ʿurfu ʿan ḥaqīqatihi fī l-lughati*). Since someone who has a lot of money can obviously afford anything he wants, an abundance of money is named *ghinā*; similarly, since someone who has little money cannot fulfill his desires, a scarcity of money is named *faqr*. "That belongs to using the name of the effect to refer to the cause" (*huwa min jinsi tasmiyati l-sababi bi-smi l-musabbabi*),[26] as abundant money causes fulfillment of desires, and scarce money causes an absence thereof.

Al-Jurjānī describes the process by which *ghinā* and *faqr* achieved the meaning of "wealth" and "poverty," respectively: first as a kind of metonymy, and then the secondary meanings became customary and widespread to the extent that the basic meanings of "contentment" and "need," respectively,

23 ʿAbd al-Qāhir ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jurjānī, *Asrār al-Balāgha*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, 1991), 83.

24 Ibid., 84.

25 Ibid., 85. He likely refers to false propositions when describing propositions that are "less than non-literal ones in terms of correctness"—given his interest in distinction between non-literal (*majāz*) and false (*bāṭil*); see, e.g., Jurjānī, *Asrār*, 385 f. Noy also explores this distinction in al-Jurjānī's works—see Avigail Noy, "Rethinking ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's Theory of Metaphorical Predication (*majāz fī al-ithbāt*)," forthcoming in *Journal of Arabic Literature*.

26 Jurjānī, *Asrār*, 85.

might appear non-literal.[27] It should be mentioned that if *ghinā* is indeed interpreted as "contentment," the above-cited verse becomes tautological (although al-Jurjānī seems to ignore this).

2.1.3 Al-Zamakhsharī

Al-Zamakhsharī discusses the abovementioned verses Q. 16:98 and Q. 5:6,[28] drawing an analogy between them and *idhā ḍarabta ghulāmaka fa-hawwin ʿalayhi* "If you hit your servant, make it easy for him." He holds that in all three cases the will to perform the action (rather than the action itself) is intended.[29] In relation to the third example, al-Zamakhsharī probably has in mind that the decision to use moderation when hitting someone should be made before the actual blow—for instance, by choosing to hit with the hand rather than with a stick. He asks, "why one can use [a word denoting] the action to refer to the will to act" (*lima jāza an yuʿabbara ʿan irādati l-fiʿli bi-l-fiʿli*)—or, in other words, why the word denoting the will may be omitted in such cases.

The answer is that "an action comes into being because of the agent's ability to perform it, and his will to perform it" (*al-fiʿlu yūjadu bi-qudrati l-fāʿili ʿalayhi wa-irādatihi lahu*), explaining the "will" in terms of "intention" (*qaṣd*), "inclination" (*mayl*), and "incitation" (*dāʿī*).[30] This statement, presenting ability and will as two prerequisites of an intended action, reminds one of the vivid discussions in Islamic theology pertaining to the authorship of human actions (and thus to the question of free will).[31] Al-Zamakhsharī uses it to explain

27 The term *ʿurf* in medieval Arabic philology calls for an additional inspection. It may indicate that some intellectuals discerned a fourth way in which a linguistic element achieves its meaning, in addition to the three studied in Beata Sheyhatovitch, *The Distinctive Terminology in* Sharḥ al-Kāfiya *by Raḍī l-Dīn al-ʾAstarābādhī* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 121–127, viz. *waḍʿan* "by coinage," *bi-l-ṭabʿi/ṭabʿan* "by nature," and *ʿaqlan* "by means of reason."

28 See Section 2.1.1. above.

29 Maḥmūd ibn ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf ʿan Ḥaqāʾiq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl wa-ʿUyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Taʾwīl wa-maʿahu al-Intiṣāf wa-Mashāhid al-Inṣāf wa-l-Kāfī*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ḥusayn Aḥmad (Cairo: Dār al-Rayān li-l-turāth, 1987), 1: 609.

30 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 609.

31 It seems that the notions of ability and will feature prominently in the theories of human action of all theological schools; however, there are various opinions regarding their exact role in bringing about an action (see the detailed analyses in Gimaret, *Théories*). For instance, according to ʿAbd al-Jabbār (a Muʿtazilī), ability causes the possibility of an action, whereas the existence of an action is determined by "incitations" (*dawāʿī*), that are related to the will (see the discussion in Gimaret, *Théories*, 54–55). The notions of ability and will are also used in the Ashʿarī doctrine of *kasb* "acquisition" to explain how exactly man "acquires" actions that are created by God (see Gimaret, *Théories*, 91 and Louis Gardet, "*Kasb*," *EI*[2]). Interestingly, the earliest source that uses a formulation similar to the abovementioned one by Zamakhsharī seems to be al-Māturīdī's commentary on

that the word denoting the action may be used to refer to both the ability and the will to act (as both ability and will are presupposed by mentioning the action). For instance, *al-insānu lā yaṭīru* "A man does not fly" and *al-aʿmā lā yubṣiru* "A blind person does not see" mean, respectively, that "a man/a blind person cannot fly/see" (*lā yaqdurāni ʿalā l-ṭayarāni wa-l-ibṣāri*). A similar phenomenon is found in *nuʿīduhu waʿdan ʿalaynā innā kunnā fāʿilīna* "We shall bring it back again—a promise binding on Us; so We shall do" (Q. 21:104). The verse speaks of heaven, which on the Day of Judgment will be rolled up and then brought back. As the context refers to the future, the use of the perfect form *kunnā* is problematic. Al-Zamakhsharī's solution is to paraphrase *kunnā fāʿilīna* as *kunnā qādirīna ʿalā l-iʿādati* "We were able to bring back."[32] This solves the problem, because God's ability to do things is true for the past, as it is for any time.

Al-Zamakhsharī stresses again that an action results from ability and will, and "a result (i.e., a verb denoting an action) may be put in the position of the cause (i.e., a verb denoting ability/ will), due to the semantic relation between the two, and for the sake of conciseness of speech" (*uqīma l-musabbabu maqāma l-sababi li-l-mulābasati baynahumā wa-li-ījāzi l-kalāmi*).[33] In other words, the linguistic expression denoting the result may replace the one denoting the cause because of the semantic relation between the two (a causal

wa-l-wālidātu yurḍiʿna ḥawlayni kāmilayni li-man arāda an yutimma l-raḍāʿata "Mothers shall suckle their children for two whole years; (that is) for those who wish to complete the suckling" (Q. 2:233). Al-Māturīdī (Ḥanafī, d. ca. 333/944) maintains that the verb *arāda* in the verse is superfluous, noting that words denoting will and ability may be used when one has in mind the action itself rather than the will or ability to act. He explains that such usages are possible, "because an action can be performed only because of ability and will" (*lam yakun-i l-fiʿlu illā bi-qudratin wa-irādatin*). See Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī, *Tafsīr al-Māturīdī* (*Taʾwīlāt Ahl al-Sunna*), ed. Majdī Bāslūm (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005), 2: 177. He prefers not to interpret *arāda* literally probably because the Qurʾān does not seem to leave the matter in question to people's personal choices.

32 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 609. Al-Zajjāj (*Maʿānī*, 3: 407) paraphrases the sentence as "We could do whatever we want" ([*kunnā*] *qādirīna ʿalā fiʿli mā nashāʾu*). That is to say, he also interprets the verse in terms of ability; however, he understands *fāʿilīna* as "doing [anything]" rather than referring to the action mentioned before. In contrast, al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) explains the past form of the verb by the claim that God's decision to do as He says was taken in the past; see Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al-Qurʾān* (Mecca: Dār al-Tarbiya wa-l-Turāth, n.d), 18: 547. Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272) mentions the possibilty that *kunnā* in the verse is redundant (*ṣila*); see Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, ed. Aḥmad al-Bardūnī and Ibrāhīm Aṭfîsh (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1964), 11: 348.

33 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 609.

relation is thus presented as a type of possible semantic relation; the relation between the two allows the addressee to surmise the one from the mention of the other). Additionally, Arabic speakers' tendency to seek conciseness and lightness in their speech makes it plausible to omit words, as long as this does not hinder understanding.[34]

Al-Zamakhsharī also speaks of effects replacing causes in the context of Q. 5:83 (where he says that *tafīḍu min-a l-damʿi* "overflow with tears" is used in the sense of "become full with tears until they (= the eyes) overflow"),[35] Q. 17:28 (*ibtighāʾ raḥmatin* "seeking mercy" in the sense of "lack of sustenance"),[36] Q. 29:36 (*irjū l-yawma l-ākhira* "look you for the Last Day" in the sense of "do things by which you seek the reward"),[37] etc.

2.1.4 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī

Neither Ibn Jinnī nor al-Zamakhsharī use the term *majāz* in reference to the interchange of cause and effect. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī indeed classifies the phenomenon as *majāz*, and even as *majāz mashhūr* "a well-known non-literal usage."[38]

For instance, in relation to *alladhīna yaẓunnūna annahum mulāqū rabbihim wa-annahum ilayhi rājiʿūna* "who reckon/know[39] that they shall meet their Lord and that unto Him they are returning" (Q. 2:46), al-Rāzī reports that some commentators maintain that the verb *ẓanna* in the verse has the meaning of "knowing." They prefer not to interpret *ẓanna* according to its usual meaning that is "a belief accompanied by viewing the opposite as possible" (*al-iʿtiqādu lladhī yuqārinuhu tajwīzu l-naqīḍi*), because that would entail that those who

34 Arab grammarians and commentators explain various phenomena by speakers' tendency to seek conciseness. For instance, Carter presents *ījāz* "being succinct," *ittisāʿ* "exercising latitude," *ikhtiṣār* "keeping short" etc. as "essentially rhetorical terms, clarifying the motive or means of an elision." Michael G. Carter, "Elision," *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, ed. Kees Versteegh et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 2: 17.

35 See Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 669–670.

36 See Ibid., 2: 662.

37 See Ibid., 3: 453. See also the discussions in Ibid., 4: 119, 140, 156.

38 Al-Tahānawī (d. after 1158/1745) defines *majāz mashhūr* as "an expression that is so well-known in its non-literal sense that this sense is the first to come to mind when the [expression] is used" (*al-lafẓu l-mushtaharu fī maʿnāhu l-majāziyyi ḥattā idhā uṭliqa yatabādaru minhu hādhā l-maʿnā ilā l-fahmi*). Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī l-Tahānawī, *Mawsūʿat Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn wa-l-ʿUlūm*, ed. ʿAlī Daḥrūj (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān Nāshirūn, 1996), 2: 1462. To the best of my knowledge, al-Rāzī was the first to make significant use of this term. A preliminary survey of his examples suggests that the term can be interpreted as "conventional metonymy."

39 Arberry translates *yaẓunnūna* as "reckon," and Pickthall as "know." We shall see below how these interpretations are grounded in the exegetical discourse.

are in this state are not absolutely certain regarding the Day of Resurrection (provided that this is the meaning of "meeting their Lord"), and this is disbelief. This cannot be the correct interpretation of *ẓanna*, given that God praises people that hold such *ẓann* (calling them *al-khāshiʿīna* "the humble" in the previous verse), and it does not stand to reason that He would praise disbelief. Thus, *ẓanna* in the verse must have the meaning of knowledge. "Such non-literal usage" (*hādhā l-majāz*) is allowed, because knowledge and *ẓann* are similar in that both are "beliefs that incline towards one option" (*iʿtiqād rājiḥ*), and different in that knowledge "inclines towards one option, viewing the opposite as impossible" (*rājiḥun māniʿun min-a l-naqīḍi*), whereas *ẓann* "inclines towards one option, not viewing the opposite as impossible" (*rājiḥun ghayru māniʿin min-a l-naqīḍi*). Since these two states are similar, "the name of the one may be used to refer to the other" (*ṣaḥḥa iṭlāqu aḥadihimā ʿalā l-ākhari*).[40] This analysis views "meeting their Lord" as referring to the Resurrection, and thus is impelled to interpret *ẓanna* in terms of "knowledge" rather than in terms of mere "thought"—because Muslims are commanded to firmly believe in it, and not just to think that it is possible.[41]

According to another approach, *ẓann* is to be understood literally, i.e. as "reckon." Al-Rāzī presents three possible interpretations of the verse that can be subsumed under this approach, one of which is that "meeting their Lord" is a non-literal reference to death. Such usage is possible, "because meeting the Lord is caused by death, and the effect is mentioned, while the cause is intended; this is a well-known non-literal usage" (*li-anna mulāqāta l-rabbi musabbabun ʿan-i l-mawti fa-aṭlaqa l-musabbaba wa-l-murādu minhu l-sababu, wa-hādhā majāzun mashhūrun*). Al-Rāzī adds that also in ordinary speech someone who dies is said "to meet his Lord" (*laqiya rabbahu*). According to this interpretation, the verse speaks of the humble ones who think about death every minute. Constant thoughts of death render those people humble, and make them hasten to repent.[42]

Al-Rāzī not only views the replacement of cause by effect as a type of non-literal usage, but also refers to its rhetorical contribution. For instance, in his commentary on *wa-lā tuʾtū l-sufahāʾa amwālakumu llatī jaʿala llāhu lakum qiyāman* … "But do not give to fools their property that God has assigned to you

40 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 3: 491. See also Ibid. for two other verses in which, according to al-Rāzī, *ẓanna* is to be understood in terms of knowledge.

41 Gardet (Louis Gardet, "*Ḳiyāma*," *EI*^{2}, 236) stresses that "the Day of Judgment" and "the Day of Resurrection," "taken as a whole constitute one of the 'necessary beliefs' which determine the content of the Muslim faith."

42 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 3: 491. See also for two additional interpretations of the verse.

to manage **as a support**" (Q. 4:5),[43] he explains that presenting the property as a support means that your sustenance and living are only due to this property. Property is the cause of sustenance and independence, so it is called *qiyām*, "using the name of the effect to refer to the cause, in order to emphasize" (*iṭlāqan li-smi l-musabbabi ʿalā l-sababi ʿalā sabīli l-mubālaghati*).[44] Al-Rāzī probably has in mind emphasizing the role of property in one's sustenance (*qiyām*, the most basic meaning of which is "standing"), as such a usage presents the property as if it was the sustenance.

Al-Rāzī also mentions the idea of the effect replacing the cause in his discussion of Q. 23:106 (in reference to al-Jubbāʾī's [d. 303/915–6] interpretation of *ghalabat ʿalaynā shiqwatunā* "our adversity prevailed over us"),[45] Q. 25:23 (where *qadimnā* lit. "we came" as said by God is interpreted as *qaṣadnā*, because a literal coming may be predicated only of concrete objects),[46] and Q. 39:17 (where it explains that idols are called *ṭāghūt*, a word apparently derived from the root *ṭ-gh-y*, denoting "extravagancy in acts of disobedience," because this is what is liable to happen when someone approaches idols).[47]

2.2 *Mentioning the Cause Instead of the Effect*

2.2.1 Ibn Jinnī

In the abovementioned chapter on "being content with the cause to the exclusion of the effect and being content with the effect to the exclusion of the cause," Ibn Jinnī discusses the following poetic verse (by an anonymous poet):

43 The translation is Arberry's, with my addition in bold.

44 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 9: 496.

45 See Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 23: 296.

46 See Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 24: 451.

47 See Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 26: 435. The word *ṭāghūt* pl. *ṭawāghīt* appears in the Qurʾān eight times, and has been the subject of various analyses and interpretations. Muslim scholars interpreted it to refer to entities such as Satan, a sorcerer, a rebel, or any power opposed to Islam. It was generally regarded as an Arabic word derived from the root *ṭ-gh-w*, meaning "to go beyond the measure, be very lofty, overflow, be tyrannical, rebellious, oppressive, proud, etc." (see T. Fahd and F.H. Stewart, "*Ṭāg<u>h</u>ūt*," EI²). See Edward W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1968), 5: 1857 for a discussion of differing views on the morphological pattern and meanings of *ṭāghūt*; see Arthur Jeffery, *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qurʾān* (Oriental Institute Baroda, 1938), 202–203, and Wahib Atallah, "*Ǧibt* et *Ṭāġūt* dans le Coran," *Arabica* 17. 1 (1970): 69–82 for a discussion of possible non-Arabic origins of *ṭāghūt*. H. Rahman, "*Jibt*, *Ṭāghūt* and the *Taḥkīm* of the *Umma*," *Arabica* 29. 1 (1982), 50–59 offers a theory connecting the use of this word to the Prophet's struggle for judicial authority.

Yā ʿādhilātī lā turidna malāmatī	*inna l-ʿawādhila lasna lī bi-amīrin*
O the women who blame me, do not seek to criticize me,	as blamers do not command me

The poet's intention is to say "do not criticize me," but he mentions the "will to criticize," as the act of criticizing follows such will and is its effect.[48]

A similar phenomenon is found in *fa-man kāna minkum marīḍan aw bihi adhan min raʾsihi fa-fidyatun* "If any of you is sick, or injured in his head, then redemption …" (Q. 2:196). This sentence follows a prohibition to shave one's head until the offering (that compensates for one's inability to perform the Ḥajj or the ʿUmra) reaches the place of sacrifice.[49] Ibn Jinnī explains that the implicit verb in the protasis of this conditional sentence is *fa-ḥalaqa* "and shaved" (i.e., the protasis should be understood as "If any of you is sick, or injured in his head, and shaves …"). Here the mention of sickness and head injury that cause the shaving allows omitting the verb that denotes the effect. Similarly, *wa-man kāna marīḍan aw ʿalā safarin fa-ʿiddatun min ayyāmin ukhara* "… and if any of you be sick, or if he be on a journey, then a number of other days" (Q. 2:185) is a regulation for Muslims that are unable to fast during Ramaḍān, and the missing verb is *fa-afṭara* "and broke the fast."[50]

In the following verse by Ruʾba (Ibn al-ʿAjjāj, d. 145/762) the idea of cause replacing effect is employed to explain a pseudo-conditional structure:

Yā rabbi in akhṭaʾtu aw nasītu	*fa-anta lā tansā wa-lā tamūtu*
O God, if I do wrong or forget,	you do not forget and do not die

This pseudo-conditional structure has a contrastive meaning, and is similar to *in kāna l-insānu nāṭiqan fa-l-ḥimāru nāhiqun* "If a man talks, then a donkey

48 This is similar to the abovementioned discussion by al-Māturīdī (see fn. 31 above), although the latter proposes to ignore the verb *arāda* without mentioning any causative relation.

49 It may appear from the verse that both Ḥajj and ʿUmra are obligatory (although this is true only of the former). Al-Zamakhsharī (*Kashshāf*, 1: 238–239) addresses this issue, stating that the verse only commands to complete the Ḥajj or the ʿUmra once a person decided to perform one of them and assumed the *iḥrām*, saying nothing about either of them being obligatory. See Arent J. Wensinck et al., "Ḥadjdj," *EI*[2] for a discussion of religious practices related to the Ḥajj (including practices involving shaving or cutting one's hair).

50 Ibn Jinnī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ*, 3: 177.

brays"[51]—although in the latter example the first clause certainly states a fact, whereas in the former the first clause may be a fact, if wrong-doing is viewed as characteristic to human nature, or may not be. However, Ibn Jinnī's analysis goes deeper. He notes that in non-figurative uses of conditional structures, "the [content of] the second [clause] is the result of the [content of] the first" (*an yakūna l-thānī musabbaban ʿan-i l-awwali*); e.g., in *in zurtanī akramtuka* "If you visit me, I treat you with honour," the honorable treatment "is the result of the visit" (*musabbabatun ʿan-i l-ziyārati*)[52]—at least in the sense that the visit provides an opportunity for it. However, concerning the poetic example, the fact that God does not forget and does no wrong[53] is not caused by Ru'ba's wrongdoing or right-doing. These are God's attributes (and thus exist unconditionally).[54] "The sentence is to be understood according to its intention" (*kalāmun maḥmūlun ʿalā maʿnāhu*),[55] which is: if I do wrong or forget, forgive me, because I am imperfect and You are perfect. Ibn Jinnī explains that the poet mentioned only God's perfection (the cause for forgiveness), omitting the forgiveness (the result of God's perfection).[56]

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51 This is one of al-Astarābādhī's (d. ca. 686/1289) examples demonstrating that sometimes the content of the apodosis occurs simultaneously with the content of the protasis (although it usually follows it). See the discussion on pseudo-conditionals in Beata Sheyhatovitch, "The Terms *iṭlāq*, *taqyīd*, and Their Derivatives in *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya* by Raḍī al-Dīn al-Astarābādhī," *JSAI* 51 (2021), 390.

52 Ibn Jinnī, *Khaṣā'iṣ*, 3: 178.

53 One would expect here a mention of God's immortality, as a paraphrase of the second part of the verse, but the edited text has *ghayr nāsin wa-lā mukhṭi'an amran* (Ibid.). If this edition can be trusted, Ibn Jinnī constructed this statement about God as a negation of the poet's statement about himself.

54 God's being eternal is expressed, e.g., in His names *al-Ḥayy* and *al-Bāqī*. His being without forgetfulness is expressed, e.g., in the name *al-Ḥafīẓ*. See Louis Gardet, "*al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*," *EI*[2] for a full list of divine names and a discussion of their theological status.

55 The term *maʿnā* is hard to translate into English. In many cases in can be rendered as "meaning," but sometimes "intention," "function" or even "attribute" are preferable. See Sheyhatovitch, *Terminology*, 169 ff. for a discussion of *maʿnā*, and its connections with terms close to it in al-Astarābādhī's writing. Here I have chosen to translate it as "intention," because Ibn Jinnī apparently has in mind that the reader of the abovementioned verse has to figure out the poet's intention (rather than concentrate on the literal meanings of the verse's words). The term *ḥaml* and its derivatives merit a separate study, at they can be understood in various contexts as "interpreting," "analyzing" or "constructing (according to something)". Gully translates *al-ḥaml ʿalā ḍiddihi* as "agreement according to its opposite," and *al-ḥaml ʿalā naẓīrihi* as "agreement according to its counterpart"); Adrian Gully, "*Taḍmīn*, 'Implication of Meaning,' in Medieval Arabic," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117. 3 (1997), 468.

56 Ibn Jinnī, *Khaṣā'iṣ*, 3: 178.

Ibn Jinnī recognizes a similar phenomenon in the following verse by al-Akhṭal (d. probably before 92/710):

Fa-in tabkhul Sadūsu bi-durhayhimā	*fa-inna l-rīḥa ṭayyibatun qabūlun*
If Sadūs withhold their meager dirhams,	the wind is good and accepting

The story behind this verse is the following: the poet praised a nobleman of Banū Shaybān, a service for which he demanded two dirhams from each man belonging to this tribe. Men from all clans paid their share, except for the Banū Sadūs; the poet reprimands them for this in the verse above.[57] Again, the structure of the verse is a pseudo-conditional, as the wind's goodness does not depend on the behavior of the Banū Sadūs; it contrasts the unjust miserliness of the people with the wind's goodness. Ibn Jinnī reconstructs the conditional relation between the two clauses, explaining that the intention is: if they withhold, we will leave them. The wind's goodness (the cause of the departure, that allows it and renders it preferable to staying) is mentioned instead of its effect (the departure).[58]

Another example cited by Ibn Jinnī is:

Fa-in taʿāfaw-u l-ʿadla wa-l-īmānā	*fa-inna fī aymāninā nīrānan*[59]
If you loathe justice and faith,	we have fires in our right hands

Ibn Jinnī first explains that by "fires" the poet means (the flash of) swords. However, the conditional relationship between the two clauses is unclear; Ibn Jinnī reconstructs the poet's intention as: if you loathe …, we will attack you with swords. The mention of swords, that are instruments of attack (and can be viewed at some level as its cause, as they make it possible), replaces the mention of the attack itself.[60]

Another verse (whose author is unknown) states:

57 Ibn Jinnī, *Khaṣā'iṣ*, 3: 179, fn. 1.
58 Ibid., 3: 179.
59 *Al-Dīwān* ascribes it to al-Najashī al-Ḥārithī. See https://www.aldiwan.net/poem91319.html.
60 Ibn Jinnī, *Khaṣā'iṣ*, 3: 179.

Dhur-i l-ākilīna l-māʾa ẓulman fa-mā arā	*yanālūna khayran baʿda aklihim-i l-māʾa*[61]
Leave those who wrongfully eat water, as I do not see	them attain any good after eating water

The verse cannot be understood literally, as water is not something that can be eaten (but only drunk). Ibn Jinnī explains that it refers to people who were selling water, and buying their food with the proceeds. Water is mentioned instead of food, "as its proceeds are the cause [that allows the people] to eat whatever they are eating" (*li-anna thamanahu sababu aklihim mā yaʾkulūna*).[62] This usage is clearly a metonymy, which, according to Lakoff and Johnson, differs from metaphor in that in the former "we are using one entity to refer to another that is related to it" (without, however, imputing the qualities of one to another, which is the case with metaphor).[63] A similar phenomenon is found in the following verse:

Juztu bi-l-sābāṭi yawman	*fa-idha l-qaynatu tuljamu*[64]
I passed in a roofed passage one day,	and there was the singing slave girl, being bridled

The story behind the verse is that a man sold his singing slave girl (*qayna*), and bought a horse with the money he gained. The poet passed by that horse while it was bridled, and referred to it as "the singing slave girl," because its purchase was enabled by her sale.[65]

To sum up, Ibn Jinnī assembles in a single chapter various examples in which causes and effects can be said to replace each other and explains the sentences' meaning, without using rhetorical terms or theories.

2.2.2 al-Zamakhsharī

An interesting case of a discussion involving an argument of the type "cause replacing effect," alongside theological considerations and several possible

61 Lane (*Lexicon*, 1: 71) cites a slightly different version of this verse.

62 Ibn Jinnī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ*, 3: 179.

63 Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*, 36.

64 Ibn Jinnī's editor mentions Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Ḥārith al-Kūfī as the author of the verse (but notes that Ibn Jinnī says that the author was Baṣran). See Ibn Jinnī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ*, 3: 179, fn. 9.

65 Ibid., 3: 180.

analyses, is found in al-Zamakhsharī's discussion of *dhālika ʿĪsā bnu Maryama qawla l-ḥaqqi lladhī fīhi yamtarūna* "That is Jesus, son of Mary, in word of truth, concerning which they are doubting" (Q. 19:34). Al-Zamakhsharī demonstrates that *qawl al-ḥaqq* may be read in the nominative or in the accusative cases.[66] Additionally, *al-ḥaqq* may be understood literally as "the truth" or as one of God's names, "the Really-Existing."[67]

Al-Zamakhsharī explains the nominative case as due to the phrase's function as the second nominal predicate (of *dhālika*, whose first predicate is *ʿĪsā bnu Maryama*), an apposition (*badal* of *ʿĪsā bnu Maryama*), or the predicate of an omitted subject (according to this analysis, the implicit structure of the verse is *dhālika ʿĪsā bnu Maryama*, *huwa qawlu l-ḥaqqi*, with two nominal sentences).[68] As for the accusative, it can be explained either "by the [function of] praise" (*ʿalā l-madḥi*),[69] if *qawla l-ḥaqqi* is interpreted as "God's word," or by the function of *mafʿūl muṭlaq* that emphasizes the content of the sentence,[70] if it is interpreted as "a true and sound saying."[71]

Al-Zamakhsharī proceeds to explain that ʿĪsā is called "God's word" (*kalimat allāh*[72] and *qawl al-ḥaqq*, assuming that both expressions have the same meaning), because he was born "out of the God's word only, when God said 'be!', without a father's mediation" (*bi-kalimati llāhi waḥdahā wa-hiya qawluhu*

66 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 3: 16. As for the variant reading *qawlu l-ḥaqqi*, al-Ṭabarī ascribes it to Ḥijāzī and Iraqi readers. *See Variae Lectiones* for a survey of various readings of the verse (https://corpuscoranicum.de/en/verse-navigator/sura/19/verse/34/variants; accessed on 19/11/2024).

67 Lane, *Lexicon*, 2: 608.

68 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 3: 16.

69 According to Wright (*Grammar*, 2: 276), "it is always possible to break the natural connection between a substantive and its adjective," if the latter is used for praise, or dispraise, or curse, etc. Such a phenomenon is called *al-qaṭʿ* "separation," and a "separated" adjective may take the nominative or the accusative (instead of the case identical to the preceding substantive's). See also the discussion in ʿAbbās Ḥasan, *al-Naḥw al-Wāfī*, 15th edition (Egypt: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 3: 485 ff.

70 Al-Astarābādhī views such *mafʿūl muṭlaq* as a one that "emphasizes something else" (*mu'akkid li-ghayrihi*); see Sheyhatovitch, *Terminology*, 183 for a discussion. For a discussion of the various types of *mafʿūl muṭlaq* according to Arab grammarians see Pierre Larcher, "Les *mafʿūl muṭlaq* "à incidence énonciative" de l'arabe classique," *L'adverbe dans tous ses états: Travaux linguistiques du CERLICO 4*, ed. by Claude Guimier and Pierre Larcher (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1991), 151–178.

71 Anawati (Georges Anawati, "ʿĪsā," *EI*^{2}, 81) views the Qur'ānic *qawl al-ḥaqq* as "an obscure expression," that may or may not be a title of ʿĪsā.

72 ʿĪsā is presented as God's word (*kalima*) in Q. 3:39, 3:45 and 4:171. See the discussion in Grant R. Kynaston, "Jesus as God's Word. A Comparative Study in Islamic and Christian Theologies," *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies* 3. 2 (2018), 78.

kun min ghayri wāsiṭati l-abi).[73] The Qurʾānic formulations are probably inspired by the Christian notion of *logos*, although the theological meanings of "God's word" in Christianity and Islam are different: in Christianity, Jesus "is revelation made tangible, rather than scriptural, and embodies in a literal sense God's mode of governance over the Universe," whereas in Islam ʿĪsā is a word of God "only insofar as he comes bearing a revealed book, and he reflects *kalām* only insofar as he is a direct result of the creative command."[74]

According to al-Zamakhsharī, calling ʿĪsā "God's word" is "using the name of the cause to refer to the effect" (*tasmiyatan li-l-musabbabi bi-smi l-sababi*), similarly to the use of the word *samāʾ* (whose basic meaning is "sky") to refer to grass, or the use of the word *nadā* (whose basic meaning is "rain/dew/moisture") to refer to "fat."[75] As for *samāʾ*, Lane notes (based on several classical dictionaries) that it can denote "rain," because rain comes forth from the *samāʾ*, i.e., by metonymy; he also mentions that it can denote "herbage," "because produced by the rain, which is thus called,"[76] i.e., by a second-order metonymy. Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311) draws an analogy between this case and that of *nadā*, which may denote "a plant," because plants come into being due to rain, and also "fat," because animals gain weight from eating plants.[77]

In relation to … *wa-minhum sābiqun bi-l-khayrāti bi-idhni llāhi dhālika huwa l-faḍlu l-kabīru jannātu ʿadnin yadkhulūnahā* "and of them are some who outstrip (others) through good deeds, by Allah's leave. That is the great favor! Gardens of Eden! They enter them …"[78] (Q. 35:32–33). A question is raised of

73 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 3: 16. Kynaston ("Jesus," 79–81) surveys various interpretations of *kalimat allāh* proposed by Muslim exegetes, including "the association of Jesus with the imperative *kun* 'Be!'". See also Anawati, "ʿĪsā," 81–82 for a discussion on the Qurʾānic view of the conception and birth of Jesus.

74 See Kynaston, "Jesus," 83.

75 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 3: 16.

76 Lane, *Lexicon*, 4: 1434–1435.

77 Muḥammad ibn Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), 14: 399. Al-Ḥātimī (d. 388/998) mentions two poetic verses in which *nadā* has the meaning of "fat" in a chapter entitled "[The poets] want to mention something which they cannot, so they mention something related to it that signifies it" (*yurīdūna an yajīʾū bi-shayʾin fa-lā yumkinuhum fa-yaʾtūna bi-shayʾin min sababihi yadullu ʿalayhi*); Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥātimī, *Ḥilyat al-Muḥāḍara fī Ṣināʿat al-Shiʿr* (Iraq: Dār al-Rashīd li-l-Nashr, 1979), 2: 12–13. This discussion may be viewed as preceding Ibn Jinnī's in discussing causes that replace effects (al-Ḥātimī does not mention the phenomenon of effect replacing cause). It is unclear why he claims that poets are unable to literally express their intentions in some cases. This may be related to rhyme and rhythm considerations. See Heinrichs, "Contacts," 274–275 for a short survey of al-Ḥātimī's chapters dedicated to *majāz al-shiʿr*.

78 Pickthall, *Qurʾan*, 430.

how *jannātu ʿadnin* may function as a substitution for *al-faḍlu l-kabīru*, while the latter is presented as co-referential with outstripping through good deeds (since its subject is *dhālika* that refers back to *wa-minhum sābiqun* …).[79] This is problematic, because a substitution should be co-referential with its head, and if we are to accept al-Zamakhsharī's assumptions that would mean that a noun denoting a place should be co-referential with an abstract noun. It is not entirely clear why al-Zamakhsharī does not consider the option of *jannātu ʿadnin* opening an independent sentence—perhaps because under such an analysis the connection between the sentences would be unclear.[80]

Al-Zamakhsharī's solution to the problem of seemingly inappropriate substitution is to say that "the great favor" is the cause of receiving the reward, and thus "can be treated as its result, as if 'the reward' [had been mentioned]" (*nazala manzilata l-musabbabi, ka-annahu huwa l-thawābu*), thus "Gardens of Eden" may function as its substitution.[81] It should be noted that *al-faḍlu l-kabīru* cannot be replaced by *al-thawāb*, as a statement that outstripping others in the performance of good deeds **is** the reward does not make sense. Al-Zamakhsharī probably has in mind that the verse should be interpreted as: "and of them are some who outstrip (others) through good deeds, by Allah's leave, that is the great favor, which will be followed by a reward, Gardens of Eden."

Al-Zamakhsharī also uses the idea of cause replacing effect in his discussion of Q. 3:196 (where *lā yaghurrannaka* lit. "let them not delude you" is interpreted as "do not be deluded"),[82] and Q. 5:67 (where *mā ballaghta risālatahu* "thou wilt not have delivered His Message" is interpreted as "(if you do not transmit the entire message), you will be punished as if you did not transmit it at all").[83]

79 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 3: 613.

80 In contrast, al-Rāzī (*Tafsīr*, 26: 240) indeed views *jannāt* as opening an independent sentence, and discusses the phenomenon of preposing the *mafʿūl* and "replacing the preposed *mafʿūl* with a pronoun that refers back to it" (*yuʿādu l-mafʿūlu l-muqaddamu bi-l-ḍamīr*). He discusses the purpose of this change in basic word order, without referring to the syntactic function of *jannāt* (which must be the subject). Al-Rāzī's analysis comes close to the modern linguists' notions of extraposition, topicalization or left-dislocation; see Yishai Peled, *Sentence Types and Word-Order Patterns in Written Arabic: Medieval and Modern Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 89 ff. for a discussion of relevant grammarians' opinions in light of modern linguistic theories.

81 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 3: 613.

82 See Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 458. This is a case of a discrepancy between the structure of a prohibitive sentence and the person to whom the speaker addresses the prohibition. See a detailed discussion on a similar example on pp. 162–163 below.

83 See Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 659.

2.2.3 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī

We saw above[84] one part of al-Rāzī's commentary on *alladhīna yaẓunnūna annahum mulāqū rabbihim wa-annahum ilayhi rājiʿūna* "who reckon that they shall meet their Lord and that unto Him they are returning" (Q. 2:46), where he proposed that "meeting one's Lord" means death, a non-literal usage in which effect replaces cause. In the next part of his commentary on the verse he deals with the exact meaning of "meeting the Lord," employing the notion of cause replacing the effect.

This expression is problematic from a theological point of view, as it can be used to argue that God can be seen. The Muʿtazilīs (who refuted any anthropomorphism in relation to God) claimed that "meeting" does not mean "seeing with the eyes," adducing support for their position, inter alia, from Qurʾānic verses stating that the sinners are to meet God[85]—whereas even the Sunnīs, who maintain that God can be seen in principle, generally maintain that He can be seen "only in the after-life and only by believers."[86]

Al-Rāzī presents a definition of *liqāʾ* that does not involve seeing by eye: "to be close to someone whom one is meeting, so that there is no barrier between them" (*al-qurbu mimman yalqāhu ʿalā wajhin yazūlu l-ḥijābu baynahumā*). Thus, a person "who was not allowed to approach the emir" (*ḥujiba ʿan-i l-amīri*) would say: "I did not meet him yet," although he saw him, whereas if he is allowed to approach the emir, he would say: "I met him," even if he is blind.[87] Al-Rāzī notes that this interpretation of *laqiya* is relevant to concrete objects, but not to God (who is not an object).[88] In other words, the notion of physical separation is relevant only in case of concrete objects.

Al-Rāzī seems to prefer the following definition of *liqāʾ*: "one object reaching another, so that it can touch its surface" (*wuṣūl aḥadi l-jismayni ilā l-ākhari bi-ḥaythu yumāssuhu bi-musaṭṭaḥatin*). The meeting of the objects causes perception (*idrāk*), and if *liqāʾ* cannot be interpreted as touching, it should be interpreted as perception, "because referring to the effect by a word denoting its cause is one of the strongest types of non-literal usage" (*li-anna iṭlāqa lafẓi l-sababi ʿalā l-musabbabi min aqwā wujūhi l-majāzi*).[89] *Idrāk* here probably means a kind of perception that is usually achieved by touching.[90]

84 See pp. 150–151 above.

85 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 3: 491.

86 See Daniel Gimaret, "*Ruʾyat Allāh*," *EI*[2].

87 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 3: 492.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

90 Gimaret ("*Ruʾyat Allāh*," 649) briefly mentions Sunnī theologians who distinguish between *idrāk* and *ruʾya*.

Another example appears in the discussion of a dialogue between Moses and his people:

> *wa-idh qāla Mūsā li-qawmihi inna llāha yaʾmurukum an tadhbaḥū baqaratan qālū a-tattakhidhunā huzuwan qāla aʿūdhu bi-llāhi an akūna min-a l-jāhilīna* "And when Moses said to his people, 'God commands you to sacrifice a cow.' They said, 'Dost thou take us in mockery?' He said, 'I take refuge with God, lest I should be one of the ignorant.'" (Q. 2:67)

Al-Rāzī explains that Moses does not take refuge with God against the thing that his interlocutors ascribe to him (i.e., against indulging in mockery), but against "its necessitating cause" (*al-sabab al-mūjib lahu*, i.e., the ignorance as expressed in *al-jāhilīna*), since, as al-Rāzī points out, only ignorant people indulge in mockery, and ignorance is the only cause for such behavior. He adds that such behavior contradicts the status of a prophet.[91]

The idea of a cause replacing an effect is also resorted to in al-Rāzī's discussions on Q. 2:191 (where *fitna* lit. "trial" is interpreted as "a punishment"),[92] Q. 2:202 (in relation to *sarīʿ al-ḥisāb* "swift at the reckoning" as God's epithet, several interpretations are presented, among which "reckoning" as letting the people know their rights and duties, or as retribution),[93] Q. 3:7 (where *mutashābihāt* lit. "things that resemble each other" are interpreted as *mā lā yahtadī l-insānu ilayhi* "things to which one cannot find the way"),[94] Q. 5:64 (where fettering and spreading of a hand are presented as metonymies for miserliness and generosity, respectively),[95] etc.

2.3 *Cases That Can Be Interpreted Both Ways*

2.3.1 Ibn Jinnī

In his abovementioned chapter on causes and effects replacing each other, Ibn Jinnī discusses *fa-qulnā ḍrib bi-ʿaṣāka l-ḥajara fa-nfajarat minhu thnatā*

91 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 3: 546.

92 See Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 5: 290.

93 See Ibid., 5: 339.

94 See Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 7: 138. This verse includes the important distinction between two types of Qurʾānic verses, *muḥkamāt* and *mutashābihāt*, in Arberry's translation—"clear" and "ambiguous," respectively. For a discussion of the meanings of these terms according to various commentators, including the two meanings of *mutashābihāt*, "similar" and "ambiguous," see Leah Kinberg, "*Muḥkamāt* and *Mutashābihāt* (Koran 3/7): Implication of a Koranic Pair of Terms in Medieval Exegesis," *Arabica* 35. 2 (1988): 143–172.

95 See Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 12: 394. See also the discussions in Ibid., 13: 78; 14: 306–307; 17: 187, 246, 280; 19: 131; 20: 329; 21: 446–447, 544, etc.

ʿashrata ʿaynan "… so We said, 'Strike with thy staff the rock'; and there gushed forth from it twelve fountains …" (Q. 2:60).[96] The narrative is lacking, as the gushing fountains are the result of Moses actually striking the rock, not of God's command to do so. Ibn Jinnī explains that the effect, the gushing forth of the fountains, replaces the cause, the striking. However, the analysis may be inverted, as one can say that the cause, God's command, replaces the effect, the striking.[97]

In relation to *fa-lā yaṣuddannaka ʿanhā man lā yuʾminu bihā wa-ttabaʿa hawāhu fa-tardā* "Let none bar thee from it, that believes not in it but follows after his own caprice, or thou wilt perish" (Q. 20:16), al-Zamakhsharī first explains that "it" may refer to belief in resurrection, or to prayer. Then he points out a problematic point in the verse: the explicit expression prohibits non-believers from barring Moses, whereas the intention is to prohibit Moses from disbelief in resurrection, or to command him to believe in it.[98] That may be implied by the tension between the verb in the 3rd person that follows the particle of prohibition, and the 2nd person pronoun functioning as the direct object of the verb. Normally, in a prohibitive sentence the addressee should be the one prohibited from doing something. Al-Zamakhsharī proposes two possible explanations of how the structure of the verse conveys the intended message:

1. Being barred by an unbeliever from believing causes disbelief, "and [God] mentioned the cause to imply the result" (*fa-dhakara l-sababa li-yadulla ʿalā l-musabbabi*).[99] In other words, the true intention of the verse is to prohibit Moses from disbelief, and being barred by disbelievers is mentioned as a cause of Moses' disbelief, to imply the latter.
2. Being barred by an unbeliever results from the weakness of a person's faith, "and [God] mentioned the result to imply the cause" (*dhakara l-musabbaba li-yadulla ʿalā l-sababi*). The actual meaning of the verse, according to this analysis, is "Be strong of spirit, so that someone who does not believe in resurrection will not even hope to bar you from your belief." This is similar to the sentence *lā arayannaka hāhunā* "Shall I not see you here" (constructed as a speaker's prohibition on himself), which actually prohibits the addressee from seeing the speaker and approaching him; if the addressee approaches the speaker, it causes the latter to see the former, "and the effect is mentioned to imply the cause" (*fa-kāna*

96 Ibn Jinnī, *Khaṣāʾiṣ*, 3: 177.
97 Ibid. See also for another example that permits both analyses.
98 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf* 3: 56.
99 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 3: 56.

dhikru l-musabbabi dalīlan ʿalā l-sababi).[100] Interestingly, *lā arayannaka hāhunā* is the cardinal example of *afʿāl manqūla* "transferred verbs"[101] discussed by Ibn al-Sarrāj (d. 316/929). The latter discusses the phenomenon without explicitly mentioning causality, and defines such verbs as "those in which the intended agent is not the grammatical one" (*yurādu bihā ghayru l-fāʿili lladhī juʿilat lahu*). His analysis of *lā arayannaka hāhunā* is the following:

> "The prohibition [refers] to the speaker, as if he formally prohibits himself, whereas semantically it refers to the addressee, and the sentence should be interpreted as 'Do not be here, as I see everyone who approaches me'" (*fa-l-nahyu innamā huwa li-l-mutakallimi ka-annahu yanhī nafsahu fī l-lafẓi, wa-huwa li-l-mukhāṭabi fī l-maʿnā, wa-taʾwīluhu lā takūnanna hāhunā fa-inna man ḥaḍaranī fa-anā arāhu*).[102]

2.3.2 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī

Al-Rāzī discusses a very interesting case, where he presents two options of interpretation in terms of cause and effect, one of which he prefers. The discussion revolves around the verse *wa-lā tankiḥū mā nakaḥa ābāʾukum min-a l-nisāʾi illā mā qad salafa innahu kāna fāḥishatan wa-maqtan wa-sāʾa sabīlan* "And do not marry women that your fathers married, unless it be a thing of the past; surely that is indecent and hateful; an evil way" (Q. 4:22). This verse poses a complicated juristic question, whether it prohibits marriage with a former wife of one's father, or with any woman with which the latter had had intercourse. Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767, the eponym of the Ḥanafī school) maintained that this verse prohibits a man from marrying a woman "with whom his father had unlawful intercourse" (*mazniyyat abīhi*), claiming that the word *nikāḥ* which the verse mentions has the meaning of *waṭʾ* "sexual intercourse" rather than legal marriage. In contrast, al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820, the eponym of the Shāfiʿī school) claimed that the verse does not prohibit marrying such a woman.[103]

Al-Rāzī adduces additional Qurʾānic evidence in support of interpreting *nikāḥ* as intercourse. For instance, *fa-lā taḥillu lahu min baʿdu ḥattā tankiḥa zawjan ghayrahu* "she shall not be lawful to him after that, until she marries another husband" (Q. 2:230). Al-Rāzī claims that in this context *nikāḥ* must be

100 Ibid.

101 For a discussion of *naql* as "semantic shift" see Beata Sheyhatovitch, "*Asmāʾ al-fiʿl*—The Arab Grammarians' Views on Their Classification," *Zeitschrift für Arabische Linguistik* 73 (2021), 91 ff.

102 Muḥammad ibn Sahl Ibn al-Sarrāj, *Al-Uṣūl fī l-Naḥw*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn al-Fatlī (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1988), 1: 74.

103 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 10: 16.

understood as intercourse, as a man cannot marry his own wife (since she is his wife already).[104] This difficulty can be easily resolved by claiming that the usage is analogous to "pressing wine" and "killing a dead man," that, as we have seen above, were explained by "effect replacing cause"[105] (as wine is the result of pressing the grapes, a dead man is the result of killing a living one, and a husband/wife are the result of marrying a single person). Al-Rāzī does not evoke this argument here—maybe because he prefers the arguments of the type "cause replacing effect" (as he states explicitly later on, and which corresponds to the prevalence of these arguments in his book), but also because he claims that legally a woman may be lawful to her previous husband only after sexual intercourse with a new husband (and not only after a new legal marriage).[106]

However, the Qurʾān and the *ḥadīth* also include cases in which *nikāḥ* must be understood as "legal marriage," e.g., the saying of the Prophet *wulidtu min nikāḥin wa-lam ūlad min sifāḥin* "I was born from a lawful marriage, not from a fornication."[107] Of course, *nikāḥ* as an opposite of "fornication" must be understood as "a legal marriage," not as intercourse. Given this, the question arises why it is preferable to understand *nikāḥ* in Q. 4:22 as referring to intercourse.

Here al-Rāzī presents three explanations, according to various approaches. According to al-Karkhī,[108] the word literally means intercourse, and non-literally a legal marriage. His proof is that the basic meaning of the word is "gathering/coming together" (*ḍamm*), which is relevant to intercourse, but not to legal marriage. Legal marriage can be named by this word, because it causes intercourse, and this is "using the name of the effect to refer to the cause" (*uṭliqa smu l-musabbabi ʿalā l-sababi*). Al-Rāzī remarks that al-Karkhī did not permit the use of a word, taking into account both its literal and non-literal meanings, so it should be concluded that the verse provides a judgement regarding intercourse, while the judgement regarding legal marriage is to be deduced from other evidence.[109]

Next, al-Rāzī presents arguments against the position whereby the literal meaning of *nikāḥ* is intercourse.[110] In this context, he deals explicitly with al-Karkhī's position and presents two arguments against it:

104 Ibid. See also for additional textual evidence.
105 See p. 144 above.
106 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 10: 16.
107 Ibid. See also for additional textual evidence.
108 Apparently Abū al-Ḥasan al-Karkhī (d. 340/952), a Ḥanafī scholar, one of the teachers of Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Baṣrī (d. 369/980). See J. van Ess, "Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Baṣrī," *EI*^{2}.
109 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 10: 17. See also for a presentation of two other approaches.
110 See Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 10: 17–18.

a. "The name of the cause can be used non-literally to refer to the effect, just as the name of the effect can be used non-literally to refer to the cause" (*kamā yaḥsunu iṭlāqu smi l-musabbabi ʿalā l-sababi majāzan fa-ka-dhālika yaḥsunu iṭlāqu smi l-sababi ʿalā l-musabbabi majāzan*). One can say that *nikāḥ* is the name of intercourse and is used to refer to legal marriage because the latter causes intercourse, just like one can say that it is the name of legal marriage, and is used to refer to intercourse, because intercourse is the effect of marriage.[111] In other words, in this case the commentators face a difficulty in determining which meaning of a word is literal and which is metonymical. Textual evidence does not help them (at least, according to al-Rāzī's presentation) as there are examples in which *nikāḥ* must be interpreted in one of the two ways, and also examples in which it may apparently mean either of them.

Yet, al-Rāzī argues that the interpretation of *nikāḥ* as literally meaning "legal marriage" is preferable, because:

> The requirement of the effect by the cause is more complete than the requirement of a specific cause by the effect, because it is possible that a certain fact is caused by many [possible] causes (*istilzāmu l-sababi li-l-musabbabi atammu min-i stilzāmi l-musabbabi li-l-sababi l-muʿayyani, fa-innahu lā yamtaniʿu an yakūna li-ḥuṣūli l-ḥaqīqati l-muʿayyanati asbābun kathīratun*).[112]

He actually claims here that a metonymy in which a cause replaces the effect is more "natural" and more likely to occur than one in which the effect replaces the cause.[113] He probably expects that it would be easier for the addressee to infer the effect from the mention of its cause than the reverse. That is because a certain fact may have multiple causes—his example is that something may be in one's possession because it was bought, received as a gift, inherited, etc.[114] Therefore, "possession" is not

111 Ibid., 18.

112 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 10: 18.

113 Interestingly, modern scholars identify an opposite tendency. For instance, Radden and Kövecses ("Theory," 346) observe that "effects more readily serve as metonymic vehicles than causes," and Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez considers EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy to be more productive than its converse; see Francisco José Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, "The Causal Frame as a Motivating Factor of Figurative Meaning." *Cognition and Contrast / Kognition und Kontrast. Festschrift for / für Prof. Dr. Sabine De Knop*, ed. Françoise Gallez and Manon Hermann (Brussels: Presses universitaires Saint-Louis Bruxelles, 2022), 37–46.

114 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 10: 18.

expected to refer metonymically to "buying," whereas "buying" may be expected to refer metonymically to "possession." This approach may be criticized on the ground that an act may have multiple possible results, just as it may have multiple possible causes, and, to return to our case, that marriage does not necessarily entail intercourse. A counter-argument may be that some actions have expected (even if not necessary) effects, and that marriages that do not lead to intercourse are probably rarer than acts of intercourse that do not follow marriage.

b. All commentators agree that Q. 4:22 was revealed in relation to the pre-Islamic Arab custom of marrying the wives of one's father. All Muslims agree that the "cause of the verse's revelation must be included in it" (*sababu nuzūli l-āyati lā budda wa-an yakūna dākhilan taḥta l-āyati*), whereas opinions vary as to question whether something else is also included in it.[115] In other words, there should be no doubt that the verse prohibits marrying fathers' legal wives, because everyone agrees that its intention is to stop this pre-Islamic practice. It may be interpreted also as prohibiting marriage with other category(ies) of women, an issue on which there are different opinions.[116]

In the discussions we have seen above, the idea of causes and effects replacing each other was used to explain and justify unexpected non-literal usages. In contrast, here al-Rāzī tries to determine which usage is literal and which is not, and justifies his decision, *inter alia*, by formulating an opinion regarding the preferable direction of metonymical shift.

3 Mentioning the Cause Instead of the Real Agent

3.1 *Al-Jurjānī*

Al-Jurjānī seems to have been the first to elaborate on this type of non-literal usage using the term *sabab*. He does this in the context of the distinction between two types of *majāz*, *lughawī* "linguistic," i.e., related to the name applied to the thing predicated of the subject, and *ʿaqlī* "intellectual," i.e., related to the attribution of the characteristic in question to that subject.[117]

115 Ibid.

116 See Ibid., 10: 18–22 for the rest of the discussion on this verse.

117 For a discussion of these two types according to al-Jurjānī see Margaret Larkin, *The Theology of Meaning. ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's Theory of Discourse* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1995), 96 ff. Noy ("Rethinking") provides a detailed and insightful analysis of al-Jurjānī's category of *majāz ʿaqlī* (also referred to as *majāz fī l-ithbāt*). She argues, *inter alia*, that *majāz fī l-ithbāt,* as presented in *Asrār al-Balāgha*, is a common feature of

Someone may claim that in the sentence *faʿala l-rabīʿu l-nawra* "The spring made flowers" the *majāz* is of the former type, because the verb *faʿala* lit. "did, made" "was coined in the language [to signify] an effect on the existence of something new" (*wuḍiʿa fī l-lughati li-l-taʾthīri fī wujūdi l-ḥādithi*), and the sentence "presents the dependence of flowers in their existence on spring, by way of cause and custom, as a doing, using the name of 'doing' for something different [from the meaning] for which [the word] was coined in the language" (*juʿila taʿalluqu l-nawri fī l-wujūdi min ṭarīqi l-sababi wa-l-ʿādati fiʿlan wa-uṭliqa smu l-fiʿli ʿalā ghayri mā wuḍiʿa lahu fī l-lughati*).[118]

Al-Jurjānī opposes this argument in a lengthy and quite complicated discussion. One of his proofs that the figurative meaning of this sentence is achieved by predicating the verb *faʿala* of "spring" (and not just by using the verb) is that the sentence *athbattu l-nawra fiʿlan* "I knew certainly that flowers are [someone's] doing" is not figurative, because they are God's doing; it becomes figurative if one says *athbattu l-nawra fiʿlan li-l-rabīʿi* "I knew certainly that flowers are spring's doing."[119]

He accuses of a severe error those who claim that verbs such as *faʿala* and *ṣanaʿa* "made, manufactured" signify "literally" (*min jihati l-lughati*) "a powerful [agent]" (*al-qādir*),[120] arguing that these verbs were coined linguistically to signify an effect on the existence of something new, whereas "the intellect judges that only a powerful agent may cause such an effect" (*wa-l-ʿaqlu qad qaḍā wa-batta l-ḥukma bi-an lā ḥaẓẓa fī hādhā l-taʾthīri li-ghayri l-qādiri*).[121] The distinction between coinage-dependent elements of meaning and ones deduced intellectually parallels the distinction between the two types of *majāz* (since in *majāz lughawī* the metaphorical shift is related to the former elements of meaning, while in *majāz ʿaqlī* it is related to the latter elements). Additionally, it foreshadows the distinction made by latter scholars between *dalāla lafẓiyya* and *ghayr lafẓiyya* "formal and non-formal signification."[122] Al-Jurjānī's reluctance to view a powerful agent as part of the verb's literal meaning can

natural language, whereas in *Dalāʾil al-Iʾjāz* al-Jurjānī distinguishes between instances of metaphorical predication that are part of everyday language and ones that are unique and creative.

118 Jurjānī, *Asrār*, 374.

119 Ibid., 375.

120 This translation follows Gimaret (*Théories*, 18, etc.), who renders *qādir* as "*puissant*," and mentions that already ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Qāḍī claimed that an action depends on its agent in his capacity of being powerful, *qādir* being defined as "such of which an act is possible" (*man ṣaḥḥa minhu l-fiʿlu*).

121 Jurjānī, *Asrār*, 376.

122 See Sheyhatovitch, *Terminology*, 190–194 for a discussion.

be explained by the vivid discussions in Muslim theology regarding human actions (who or what do they depend on, and who should be held responsible for them, and how):[123] how can the idea of a powerful agent be encoded in a verb by its coinage, if scholars are still divided as to the question of who or what such an agent might be? Al-Jurjānī chooses as his cardinal example in this complex discussion *faʿala l-rabīʿu l-nawra* (concerning which everyone would agree that spring is not the real agent), in order to avoid delving into the controversial question of human agency.

Al-Jurjānī comes back to the same example later on, stating that such usages are possible, "by the way of extrapolating and in accordance with the prevailing custom of treating something that is the cause or virtually the cause for the existence of an act on the part of an agent, as if it were the agent" (*ʿalā sabīli l-taʾawwuli wa-ʿalā l-ʿurfi l-jārī bayna l-nāsi an yajʿalū l-shayʾa, idhā kāna sababan aw ka-l-sababi fī wujūdi l-fiʿli min fāʿilihi ka-annahu fāʿilun*).[124]

He explains that since God made a permanent custom (*al-ʿāda*) that in the spring trees put forth leaves, flowers appear, etc., people can imagine, based on the explicit state of affairs and on custom, that these phenomena need spring in order to exist. Thus, the "making" may be predicated of "spring," based on this interpretation.[125] The term *ʿāda* was used by Jubbāʾītes (a group of Muʿtazila who followed al-Jubbāʾī) to refer to the relation between a human act and an act seemingly resulting from it: it is a relation of custom, of habitual coincidence created by God.[126]

Al-Jurjānī adds that this type of *majāz* is widespread in the Qurʾān, in verses such as *tuʾtī ukulahā kulla ḥīnin bi-idhni rabbihā* "it gives its produce every season by the leave of its Lord" (Q. 14:25), *wa-idhā tuliyat ʿalayhim āyātuhu zādathum īmānan* "and when His signs are recited to them, it increases them in faith" (Q. 8:2), *wa-akhrajat-i l-arḍu athqālahā* "and earth brings forth her burdens" (Q. 99:2). Al-Jurjānī explains that all these verses ascribe an action, "in the meaning of a cause" (*ʿalā maʿnā l-sababi*), to things to which actions cannot be ascribed, from an intellectual point of view. According to al-Jurjānī, it is known that a tree cannot produce fruit,[127] signs (i.e., Qurʾānic verses) cannot

123 See the complex presentation in Gimaret, *Théories*.

124 Jurjānī, *Asrār*, 385. The translation is taken from Larkin, *Theology*, 101. In another context she translates *taʾawwul* as "explication" (see Ibid., 84). Wansbrough renders it is "interpretative step;" see John Wansbrough, "*Majāz al-Qurʾān*: Periphrastic Exegesis," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 33. 2 (1970), 266.

125 Jurjānī, *Asrār*, 385–386.

126 See Gimaret, *Théories*, 44–45.

127 This argument may appear strange, since in various languages trees are customarily spoken of as producing fruit. However, al-Jurjānī does not view them as the real agent, which is God.

create faith in the heart of a one who listens to them, and the Earth cannot eject burdens hidden in it—but when a movement occurs in the Earth by God's power, things hidden within it appear.[128] Larkin points out that in this excerpt Q. 8:2, a controversial verse entailing the question of whether faith is bestowed by God or depends on the believer, "is presented cushioned" among other entirely innocuous verses.[129] She claims that the main issue underlying al-Jurjānī's category of *majāz fī l-ithbāt* (a term synonymous with *majāz ʿaqlī*), is "the question of the creation of acts—what can be attributed to God and what to man."[130]

3.2 *Al-Zamakhsharī*

Al-Zamakhsharī uses the idea of a cause replacing the real agent in his discussion of the following verse:

> *inna llāha lā yastaḥyī an yaḍriba mathalan mā baʿūḍatan fa-mā fawqahā fa-ammā lladhīna āmanū fa-yaʿlamūna annahu l-ḥaqqu min rabbihim wa-ammā lladhīna kafarū fa-yaqūlūna mādhā arāda llāhu bi-hādhā mathalan yuḍillu bihi kathīran wa-yahdī bihi kathīran wa-mā yuḍillu bihi illā l-fāsiqīna* "God is not ashamed to strike a similitude[131] even of a gnat, or aught above it. As for the believers, they know it is the truth from their Lord; but as for unbelievers, they say, 'What did God desire by this for a similitude?' Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many; and thereby He leads none astray save the ungodly" (Q. 2:26).

128 Jurjānī, *Asrār*, 386.

129 Larkin, *Theology*, 101.

130 Ibid., 104. Interestingly, already al-Jāḥiẓ uses the term *majāz* (although in the sense of "interpretation," according to Heinrichs) in his discussion of "pious *salaf* concerned with safeguarding the omnipotence of God against false ascription of causality to beings other than God;" See Wolfhart Heinrichs, "On the Genesis of the *Ḥaqîqa-Majâz* Dichotomy," *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984), 133–134. Heinrichs ("Contacts," 278–279) holds that al-Jurjānī's discussions of *majāz ʿaqlī* exhibit "the inherited *kalām-tafsīr* context of *majāz*" and "has little relevance for poetry and *balāgha* studies." However, in at least one discussion in al-Jurjānī, *Asrār* (57–58), the idea of "cause replacing the real agent" is used without mentioning God as the real agent, and, as we shall see below, in the Qurʾānic exegesis the idea is used for more than one purpose.

131 Arberry, and Pickthall (*Qurʾan*, 8) both translate *mathal* in this context as "similitude," likely influenced by commentators who interpret it as *shibh* ("likeness, resemblance") (see, e.g., Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ*, 1: 403). Various senses of the term *mathal* require further research. In this discussion, I render it as "similitude," keeping in mind that this English word can also mean "simile" or "allegory" (and choosing not to decide between these options at this point). See *Collins English Dictionary*, https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/similitude.

This verse raises a theological difficulty: if God determines people's belief and disbelief, how can He reward them for the former and punish for the latter? This contradicts the principle of divine justice. Thus, the Muʿtazila advocated the principle of free will,[132] which they found various ways to reconcile with problematic Qurʾānic verses.[133]

Al-Zamakhsharī explains that the passage "Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many …" clarifies the two sentences that start with *ammā* ("As for the believers, they know it is the truth … but as for unbelievers, they say …"). It adds that both the group of those who know that the God's similitude is the truth and the group of those who do not understand and ridicule it are many, and that "the knowledge of the [similitude's] being the truth is related to the God's guidance that adds light to the believers' light, and the ignorance of its good source is related to the leading astray, that increases the ignorant ones' inability to find the right path" (*anna al-ʿilma bi-kawnihi ḥaqqan min bābi l-hudā lladhī zdāda bihi l-muʾminūna nūran ilā nūrihim wa-anna l-jahla bi-ḥusni mawridihi min bābi l-ḍalālati llatī zādat-i l-jahalata khabṭan fī ẓalmāʾihim*).[134] That is to say, knowledge and ignorance of the truth of God's message originate in people, while the guidance and the leading astray that originate in God are essentially equivalent to these two human states, respectively, and they only intensify these states. Probably, God intensifies these states in response to people's choices.

Having addressed the problem of free will that may arise from the verse, al-Zamakhsharī still feels the need to address the problem of ascribing to God the leading astray. His explanation is that it is "predicating a verb on the cause [of the action]" (*isnādu l-fiʿli ilā l-sababi*), as God strikes a similitude (i.e., uses a parable) by which some people are led astray and some are guided, and thus can be viewed as a cause of their respective states.[135] It is still unclear how God is not the source of human belief or disbelief, if he is presented as the cause of these states.

132 See, e.g., Eric L. Ormsby, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought: The Dispute Over Al-Ghazali's Best of All Possible Worlds* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 20; Daniel Gimaret, "*Muʿtazila*," *EI*², 789. In fact, Gimaret (*Théories*, 11 ff.) demonstrates that there were differences between Muʿtazilī scholars as to the scope of human free will and the factors that affect it.

133 See Larkin, *Theology*, 98–99 for a discussion of a debate between ʿAbd al-Jabbār and his opponents regarding the notions of *hudā* and *ḍalāl* as mentioned in Q. 2:26.

134 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 118.

135 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 118–119.

To clarify this point, al-Zamakhsharī mentions an anecdote about Mālik ibn Dīnār (probably, al-Sāmī, d. ca. 131/748–9, Baṣran preacher and moralist).[136] The latter visited a prisoner who was caught with stolen goods and shackled. When the prisoner complained about the shackles, Mālik said, referring to the stolen goods (consisting of some chickens and *khabīṣ*):[137] "Those put shackles on your legs" (*hādhihi waḍaʿat quyūdan ʿalā rijlayka*).[138] It can be concluded from the analogy between *yuḍillu bihi kathīran* and *hādhihi waḍaʿat quyūdan ʿalā rijlayka* that God can be presented as the cause of people's disbelief just as food can be presented as the cause of the thief's punishment: just as other people's property may be loosely viewed as the "cause" of the theft, and, by implication, of the consequent punishment of someone who fails to treat it correctly, God may be loosely viewed as the "cause" of disbelief of someone who fails to interpret His message correctly. This corresponds to the aforementioned observation by al-Jurjānī, that both the "real" cause and the virtual cause of an act may be treated as if they were the agent (i.e., put in the syntactic position of the agent).

Another discussion that resolves similar theological problems, while delving even deeper into related linguistic issues, can be found in the commentary on the verse *khatama llāhu ʿalā qulūbihim wa-ʿalā samʿihim wa-ʿalā abṣārihim ghishāwatun wa-lahum ʿadhābun ʿaẓīmun* "God has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a covering, and there awaits them a mighty chastisement" (Q. 2:7). The most natural interpretation of this verse would be that God himself prevents the sinners under discussion from receiving His message, and then punishes them for failing to do so, which contradicts the principle of His justice.

Al-Zamakhsharī starts his discussion with elucidating the meaning of sealing hearts and hearing, and covering eyes. He says that it is a non-literal usage (*majāz*) that can be viewed as metaphor (*istiʿāra*) or allegory (*tamthīl*).[139] The metaphorical interpretation views the sinners' hearts and ears, in their state of being impenetrable to truth because their owners turn away from it, as if they were firmly closed by a seal, and their eyes that do not look at God's signs as if they were covered by something that prevents perception.[140] The allegorical

136 See C. Pellat, "Mālik b. Dīnār," *EI*^{2}.

137 A sweet made of dates and clarified butter. See Lane, *Lexicon*, 2: 697.

138 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 119.

139 The literal meaning of *tamthīl* is "providing a *mathal*," i.e., "producing a proverb." According to van Gelder (Geert J.H. van Gelder, "*Tamthīl*," *EI*^{2}), al-Jurjānī used the term to refer to a simile or a metaphor based on analogy which is sentence-based and not the mere substitution of one word for another.

140 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 48.

interpretation draws an analogy between the sinners' hearts—whose owners do not make use of them for religious purposes, "which are imposed upon them and for which they were created"[141] (*kullifūhā wa-khuliqū min ajlihā*)—and objects that are rendered unusable by seals and coverings.[142] In other words, the former interpretation understands "the sealing" and "the covering" metaphorically, whereas the latter interpretation takes into account the whole situation of the hearts' and eyes' owners, who cannot use them for their real purpose, as if they were sealed and covered.

Next, al- Zamakhsharī asks why "sealing" is predicated of God. Such a predication would mean that God prevents these people from accepting the truth and reaching it—an unjust act unbecoming of God, "who is far too exalted for doing ugly things, as He knows that they are ugly and knows that He has no need of them" (*taʿālā ʿan fiʿli l-qabīḥi ʿuluwwan kabīran li-ʿilmihi bi-qubḥihi wa-ʿilmihi bi-ghanāʾihi ʿanhu*).[143] Here al-Zamakhsharī evokes the principle of God's justice, linking it to His omniscience: a human may do ugly things, not knowing that they are ugly, or thinking that they are necessary, but this cannot be the case with God. Al-Zamakhsharī also cites several Qurʾānic verses asserting that God does not act unjustly.[144]

He proposes several solutions to the exegetical difficulty posed by the verse, one of which is: "the predication itself may have been borrowed from [an agent] that is not God, for God, so that the sealing is predicated on God's name non-literally, being in fact [the action] of someone else" (*yajūzu an yustaʿāra l-isnādu fī nafsihi min ghayri llāhi li-llāhi, fa-yakūna l-khatmu musnadan ilā smi llāhi ʿalā sabīli l-majāzi, wa-huwa li-ghayrihi fī l-ḥaqīqati*).[145] The mention of non-literal predication reminds one of al-Jurjānī's category of *majāz fī l-ithbāt* (although al-Jurjānī used it to clarify that certain actions may be attributed only to God, whereas al-Zamakhsharī speaks of actions that cannot be literally

141 This formulation evokes *taklīf*, an important theological term "denoting the fact of an imposition on the part of God of obligations on his creatures, of subjecting them to a law." See Daniel Gimaret, "*Taklīf*," *EI²* for a discussion. The idea that people were created for religious purposes originates in the Qurʾān itself—see, e.g., Q. 51:56.

142 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 48–49.

143 Ibid., 1: 49–50.

144 See Ibid., 1: 50. The principle of God's justice, in its maximalist interpretation, is problematic, because it virtually contradicts His omnipotence. Ormsby (*Theodicy*, 4 ff) views omnipotence and justice as "the twin horns of the classic dilemma of theodicy": if God is both just and omnipotent, how can evil possibly exist in the world?

145 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 51. See Ibid., 1: 49–50, 52 for four other solutions for the exegetical problem posed by the verse.

attributed to God). The formulation "God's name" points out that this part of the discussion deals with the linguistic domain.

Al-Zamakhsharī continues his explanation by stating that "a verb/action has various [constituents] that are logically related to it" (*li-l-fiʿli mulābasātun shattā*); it is logically related (*yulābisu*) to its agent, object, *maṣdar*, time, place and cause (*al-musabbib lahu*).[146] This presentation seems to confuse linguistic and extra-linguistic domains, hence my hesitation between two possible translations of *fiʿl*. One would expect al-Zamakhsharī to base his discussion on elements of meaning accompanying a verb semantically, or on conditions accompanying an action in extra-linguistic reality; however, the mention of *maṣdar* supports the linguistic interpretation. The constituents mentioned by al-Zamakhsharī besides the agent partly correspond to the *mafāʿīl* recognized by Arab grammarians that were viewed as indicated by the verb.[147]

Al-Zamakhsharī explains that the verb is predicated literally on its agent. As for the other abovementioned elements:

> [The verb] may be predicated on these [other] things in a non-literal way that is called a metaphor. That is because [these elements] resemble an agent in their being logically related to the verb, just like a man resembles a lion in his courage, so that the name of the lion is used metaphorically (lit. borrowed) to refer to the man (*wa-qad yusnadu ilā hādhihi l-ashyāʾi ʿalā ṭarīqi l-majāzi l-musammā stiʿāratan, wa-dhālika li-muḍāhātihā li-l-fāʿili fī mulābasati l-fiʿli, kamā yuḍāhī l-rajulu l-asada fī jarāʾatihi fa-yustaʿāru lahu smuhu*).[148]

Here al-Zamakhsharī formulates a kind of rhetorical rule: in literal usage, a verb can be predicated only on its agent, whereas a verb's predication on other elements should be interpreted metaphorically. He argues that an object and its likes resemble an agent, and thus can replace it—because all these constituents are related to the verb. He draws an analogy between these cases and the metaphor whereby a man may be called a lion if he resembles it in courage. It should be mentioned that the metaphor of a lion is al-Jurjānī's cardinal example of *majāz lughawī*, but unlike al-Jurjānī, who stressed the differences

146 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 51. This passage, which presents *sabab* as one type of constituents related to a verb (*mulābasāt*), supports my decision to distinguish between *sabab* as "cause" and *sabab* as "semantic link" or "semantically connected element." Noy ("Rethinking," Section 2.3) mentions a similar passage in al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338).

147 See Zeynab Taha, "*Mafʿūl*," *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, ed. Kees Versteegh et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 3: 100–106 for a discussion.

148 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 51.

between *majāz lughawī* and *majāz ʿaqlī*, al-Zamakhsharī here stresses the similarities.

He provides examples of the constituents that can metaphorically replace the agent. In all these examples, the constituents in question do not function as syntactic agents, but are instead described by active participles, which can be seen as a way to present a noun as a semantic agent (the Arabic term for active participle, *ism al-fāʿil*, literally means "agent noun"). His examples for an object are: *ʿīshatun rāḍiyatun* "a satisfying life" (lit. "a satisfied life"), *māʾun dāfiqun* "a pouring water" (in fact, water is being poured rather than it pouring something else); in the same context he mentions a contrary example, in which the agent is presented as if it were the object: *saylun mufʿamun* "an abundant torrent" (the basic meaning of *mufʿam* is "full," but it is more plausible to think of a torrent as filling something else than as being full[149]). His examples for a *maṣdar* are: *shiʿrun shāʿirun* "excellent poetry" (lit. "a poeticizing poetry"; in fact, *shiʿr* is the *maṣdar* of *shaʿara*, and as such is more suitable to function as a *mafʿūl muṭlaq* of this verb than to take the position of its agent[150]), *dhaylun dhāʾilun* "exceeding lowness/meanness" (again, *dhayl* is the *maṣdar* of *dhāla*). Al-Zamakhsharī's example for time expressions is *nahāruhu ṣāʾimun wa-layluhu qāʾimun* "He is fasting during the day and rising [from the fast] at night" (lit. "His day is fasting and his night is rising"),[151] and his examples with place expressions are *ṭarīqun sāʾirun* "a road where [people] are walking" (lit. "a walking road") and *nahrun jārin* "a channel where [water] flows" (lit. "a flowing channel"; *nahr* may also mean "river," but is transpires from al-Zamakhsharī's metaphorical interpretation of the expression that he views "channel" as a more basic meaning).[152] Eventually, he gives examples in which the cause replaces the real agent (these are actually similar to Q. 2:7 under discussion), such as *banā l-amīru l-madīnata* "The governor built the city" (such usage exists in different languages; it is clear that the governor did not build

149 See the discussion in Lane, *Lexicon*, 6: 2421, that draws an analogy between *saylun mufʿamun* and *shiʿrun shāʿirun*.

150 See Ibid., 4: 1502 for a discussion on this expression and its likes.

151 This sentence appears in Noy's discussion of Sībawayhi's examples of *ittisāʿ* "latitude of speech;" Avigail Noy, "Reading Poetry with Sībawayhi: *Ittisāʿ*/*saʿat al-kalām* and Metaphorical Thinking in the *Kitāb*," *From Sībawayhi to Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Zayyāt. New Angles on the Arabic Linguistic Tradition*, ed. Beata Sheyhatovitch and Almog Kasher (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 67. Interestingly, Sībawayhi's examples of *ittisāʿ* are usually related to "treating non-*mafʿūl*s as *mafʿūl*s" (see Noy, "Reading," 40 ff. for a discussion), whereas al-Zamakhsharī here can be said to concentrate on non-*fāʿil*s that are treated as *fāʿil*s.

152 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 51. Lane (*Lexicon*, 8: 2858) mentions "channel" and "water (running in a channel)" as central meanings of *nahr*; Arab lexicographers' opinions seem to differ as to which meaning is more basic.

himself, but rather ordered others to build, and thus may be viewed as the cause of building),[153] *nāqatun ḍabūthun* "A she-camel of which one doubts whether she be fat, and which one therefore feels with the hand" (*ḍabatha* means "grasped/seized with hands,"[154] so a she-camel may be described by an adjective derived from this verb, because she "causes" people to touch her).[155]

Coming back to the Qurʾānic verse in question, al-Zamakhsharī states that the one who seals the sinner's heart is the Satan, or the sinner himself. God is the one who gives the Satan (or the sinner) the power to do so, so the "sealing" is predicated of Him, "as the verb may be predicated of its cause" (*kamā yusnadu l-fiʿlu ʿalā l-musabbibi*).[156] Al-Zamakhsharī probably has in mind that God may be loosely called "the cause" of people's disbelief, because He gives them freedom of choice, hence allowing them to choose not to believe (nor does He prevent Satan from leading them into disbelief).[157]

Another example of using the notion of "cause" in resolving exegetical difficulties in al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf* appears in the discussion on *wa-akhī Hārūnu huwa afṣaḥu minnī lisānan fa-arsilhu maʿiya ridʾan yuṣaddiqunī innī akhāfu an yukadhdhibūni* "Moreover my brother Aaron is more eloquent than I. Send him with me as a helper and to confirm I speak truly, for I fear they will cry me lies" (Q. 28:34). Al-Zamakhsharī explains that the intention in *yuṣaddiqunī* is neither that Aaron say to Moses "You have spoken truth," nor

153 Lakoff and Johnson (*Metaphors*, 38–39) speak of metonymy of the type CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED, one example of which is "Nixon bombed Hanoi." They explain that such a metonymy presents Nixon as responsible for the bombing, although he did not drop the bombs himself.

154 See Lane, *Lexicon*, 5: 1763.

155 See Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 1: 51.

156 Ibid., 52.

157 Indeed, Satan is presented in the Qurʾān and in post-Qurʾānic religious literature as a tempter who leads people astray (see the survey in Andrew Rippin, "Shayṭān," *EI*^{2} and Christian Lange, "Devil (Satan)," *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three Online*, ed. K. Fleet et al., Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_25991). I have not found in the secondary literature dealing with the questions of free choice and theodicy in Islam a discussion on the role of Satan in relation to these problems. Rippin ("Shayṭān," 409) notes that "in Islamic theological thinking, the existence of al-Shayṭān as a force of evil has been accepted without a great deal of speculation as to its implications. The emphasis in Islamic thinking has always been that individuals are responsible for their own "fall," as in the case of Adam, and while the role of Satan as a tempter is real [...] he provides no excuse for evil behaviour on the part of the individual." Ormsby (*Theodicy*, 26) cites al-Maʿarrī's criticism of theologians' positions on the question of evil, to the effect that if God is indeed omniscient and omnipotent, nothing happens unless He wills it, and if He wills something, it is "as though He were the agent." According to this line of thought, al-Zamakhsharī's attributing of "sealing the hearts" to Satan fails to exempt God from injustice.

that he say to people "Moses has spoken truth"[158] (although the basic meaning of *ṣaddaqa* is "He attributed/ascribed to him truth," or: "he said to him, 'You have spoken truth'"[159]). The intention is that Aaron should explain the truth in his own words, talk extensively about it and dispute with infidels about it. Such actions may be called *taṣdīq*, because they are similar to "a demonstration by which a saying is verified" (*yuṣaddaqu l-qawlu bi-l-burhāni*).[160]

Al-Zamakhsharī explains that this interpretation is needed, because the verse mentions Aaron's eloquence, and eloquence is needed to explain the truth etc., not to say "You have spoken truth,"[161] i.e., to admit the truth. The ones who should admit Moses' words are the ones whose disagreement he fears. "The confirmation of the truth is predicated of Aaron in a non-literal predication, because he is the cause [of the people's confirmation]" (*fa-usnida l-taṣdīqu ilā Hārūna li-annahu l-sababu fīhi isnādan majāziyyan*). He adds that the confirmation is really found in those who do the confirming, and can be predicated on them literally; it does not exist in its cause, "but the predication is attributed metaphorically to its cause (lit. borrowed for its cause), because [the cause] is logically connected to the confirmation by causality, just like the agent is connected to it by performing it" (*wa-lākinna stuʿīra lahu l-isnādu li-annahu lābasa l-taṣdīqa bi-l-tasabbubi, kamā lābasahu l-fāʿilu bi-l-mubāsharati*).[162] In other words, al-Zamakhsharī justifies a metaphorical usage, in which a noun denoting the cause of the action occupies the position of the verb's subject, which should be occupied by the agent, by establishing a similarity between the cause and the agent (while metaphors are based on similarity between things).

Al-Zamakhsharī supports his interpretation of "confirmation" as an action of the potential listeners, by the existing reading *yuṣaddiqūnī* (3rd person pl. jussive) instead of *yuṣaddiqunī* (3rd person sing. indicative). This reading explicitly presents the people's confirmation as the result of Aaron's sending (as the verb takes the jussive as *jawāb al-amr*). A third reading has *yuṣaddiqnī*[163] (*jawāb al-amr* with the same metaphorical usage as in *yuṣaddiqunī*; the indicative verb functions as a relative clause describing *rid'*).

Another interesting example in which al-Zamakhsharī points out a problem in the ascription of an action to God is in his discussion of *wa-fadaynāhu bi-dhibḥin ʿaẓīmin* "And We ransomed him with a mighty sacrifice" (Q. 37:107).

158 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 3: 409.
159 Lane, *Lexicon*, 4: 1667.
160 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 3: 409.
161 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 3: 409–410.
162 Ibid., 3: 410.
163 Ibid.

The verse refers to the intended sacrifice of Abraham's son, that was first ordered and then prevented by God. The identity of the son is not clear in the Qur'ān; al-Zamakhsharī presents both opinions on this matter, although he seems to support the opinion that Ismael is the son in question.[164] Al-Zamakhsharī raises a question: how can God say about Himself that He ransomed the son, while He is the one from whom the son was ransomed, as He was the one who ordered the sacrifice? The answer is that Abraham is the one who ransomed, and God gave him the ram for this purpose. God said *wa-fadaynāhu*, "predicating the ransoming on the cause that made the ransoming possible by His gift" (*isnādan li-l-fidā'i ilā l-sababi lladhī huwa l-mumkinu min-a l-fidā'i bi-hibatihi*).[165]

3.3 *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*

Al-Rāzī discusses a problematic ascription of an action to God in *fa-lammā jā'a amrunā ja'alnā ʿāliyahā sāfilahā wa-amṭarnā ʿalayhā ḥijāratan min sijjīlin manḍūdin* "So when Our command came, We turned it uppermost nethermost, and rained on it stones of baked clay, one on another" (Q. 11:82, a verse that refers to God's punishment that befell Lot's tribe). First, he raises the question of the exact meaning of *amr*. Al-Rāzī prefers to understand it literally, as "the antonym of 'prohibition'" (*ḍiddu l-nahyi*). The other possibility would be to interpret it as "punishment" (*ʿadhāb*),[166] but he views this as less plausible, because the verse's intention is to present the *amr* as the condition of the punishment, not as identical with it.[167]

Al-Rāzī continues: if *amr* indeed means "command," the situation was probably that God ordered a group of angels to destroy the cities in question at a

164 See Ibid., 4: 56–57. See Yolanda Yavor, "The Story of the Intended Sacrifice of Abraham's Son in the Qur'ān: A Re-Examination," MA Thesis, Tel Aviv University, 11–23 for a survey of contemporary research on the questions of the place of the intended sacrifice and the identity of Abraham's son whose sacrifice was intended, which is left unclear in the Qur'ān, perhaps intentionally. It seems that early Muslim tradition holds the son in question to be Isaac, whereas at later stages the tradition "replaces" Isaac with Ismael, due to doctrinal and/or political considerations. Yavor (Ibid., 76 ff.) presents various textual evidence, from the Qur'ān itself and from the Bible, to the extent that the Qur'ānic sacrificial son is Isaac.

165 Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, 4: 58. The idea of "cause replacing the real agent" is used also in the discussions in ibid., 4: 616, 704.

166 See Lane, *Lexicon*, 1: 96 for several Qur'ānic verses in which *amr* is interpreted as "God's punishment."

167 See the discussion in Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 18: 382. *Lammā* is not usually viewed as a conditional particle; however, Peled remarks that it is similar to conditional particles in being followed by two clauses, the first of which opens with a perfect verb. He also points out a semantic affinity between the two structures; Yishai Peled, *Written Arabic Syntax in Theory and Practice* (Tel Aviv: Dyunon, 1998), 114–115.

specific time, and when this time came, they performed their mission. However, he notes that if that was the case, the formulation should have been … *jaʿalū ʿāliyahā sāfilahā* "they turned it uppermost nethermost," because the mission was performed by those who had received the command.[168] In other words, it does not seem reasonable that the one who commands is the one who performs the command. Al-Rāzī's solution is to say, first, that in his opinion "the action of the servant is the action of God" (*fiʿlu l-ʿabdi fiʿlu llāhi*).[169] Specifically in this case, ascribing the angels' action to God is not farfetched, because it was performed on God's command and with His power. "An action can be ascribed to its cause, just as it can be ascribed to the one who acts directly" (*al-fiʿlu kamā taḥsunu iḍāfatuhu ilā l-mubāshiri, fa-qad taḥsunu ayḍan iḍāfatuhu ilā l-sababi*).[170]

Another example, not involving God, is taken from the discussion on *arsilhu maʿanā ghadan yartaʿ wa-yalʿab wa-innā lahu la-ḥāfiẓūna* "Send him forth with us tomorrow, to frolic and play; surely we shall be watching over him" (Q. 12:12; taken from the speech of Joseph's brothers to their father). Al-Rāzī presents Ibn Kathīr's reading that has *nartaʿi* instead of *yartaʿ* (i.e., a 1st person pl. of *irtaʿā* "pastured" instead of 3rd person sing. of *rataʿa* "enjoyed himself"[171]). Al-Rāzī notes that *irtaʿā* is usually said of beasts; however, here the agent of the verb is the brothers themselves. His explanation for this usage is that the brothers are "the cause of that pasture" (*al-sababu fī dhālika l-raʿyi*), as they are the ones who lead the beasts to the pasture.[172]

The last example is taken from the story of Abraham.[173] When he broke the idols of his father, people asked him whether he did that, and his answer was: *bal faʿalahu kabīruhum hādhā fa-sʾalūhum in kānū yanṭiqūna* "No; it was this great

168 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 18: 382.

169 See Gimaret (*Théories*, 134–156) for a discussion of al-Rāzī's approach to the question of agency of human acts. Gimaret (Ibid., 138, 142) points out that he did not accept the Ashʿarī theory of *kasb* "acquisition," and, unlike other Ashʿarīs, did not hesitate to explicitly support the idea of *jabr* lit. "compulsion," a doctrine whereby "man does not really act but only God" (see W. Montgomery Watt, "Djabriyya," *EI*^{2}.). As for angels, their "absolute submission and obedience" to God is stressed already in the Qurʾān; see D.B. MacDonald and W. Madelung, "*Malāʾika*," *EI*^{2} for a discussion.

170 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 18: 382. My translation of *mubāshir* is taken from Kamali (Mohammad H. Kamali, "Command, in Islamic law," *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three Online*, ed. K. Fleet et al., Brill), who distinguishes between the legal responsibility of the one who acts directly and the commander, according to Islamic law. Gimaret (*Théories*, 25) also translates *mubāshir* as "*ce qu'il produit directement*."

171 See Lane, *Lexicon*, 3: 1026–1027 for various meanings of this verb, also in the context of this verse.

172 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 18: 426.

173 See R. Paret, "Ibrāhīm," *EI*^{2} for a discussion of the Qurʾānic figure of Abraham.

one of them that did it. Question them; if they are able to speak!" (Q. 21:63). A question is raised as to whether Abraham's words are a lie[174] (whereas prophets are not expected to lie,[175] especially Abraham, who is explicitly referred to in the Qurʾān as a "speaker of truth.")[176] Al-Rāzī says that most scholars maintain that they are not a lie. He presents seven explanations of this opinion,[177] of which the second is that these idols angered Abraham when he saw them standing in a row and decorated.[178] His anger toward the biggest idol was stronger, because he saw people's veneration of it, so he predicated the verb of it, because that idol "was the cause of [Abraham's] contempt, and caused him to break the idols, and an action can be predicated of something that urges it, just as it is predicated of someone who acts directly" (*li-annahu huwa l-sababu fī stihānatihi bihā wa-ḥaṭmihi lahā wa-l-fiʿlu kamā yusnadu ilā mubāshirihi yusnadu ilā l-ḥāmili ʿalayhi*).[179]

4 Conclusion

The notion of *sabab* "cause" was used by al-Zamakhsharī and al-Rāzī to resolve various exegetical difficulties, some of which are related to theological and doctrinal difficulties, and others to unclear formulations. The idea of causes and effects replacing each other seems to originate in Ibn Jinnī's work, and the phenomena are designated as *majāz* only by al-Rāzī, whereas the idea of a cause replacing the real agent seems to originate in al-Jurjānī's rhetorical theory, in which this phenomenon is presented as the cardinal case of *majāz ʿaqlī*.

The term *sabab* is used in the discussions we have seen as "cause" in the widest sense of the word, including means for achieving things (thus, a mention of water whose sale provides money for buying food, may replace the mention of food), things that do not prevent other things from happening

174 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 22: 155.

175 See W. Madelung, "*Iṣma*," *EI*^{2} for a discussion of various Muslim scholars' positions regarding the notion of *ʿiṣma*, "immunity from error and sin, which is attributed by Sunnīs to the prophets." He says that al-Rāzī "argued at length for the *ʿiṣma* of prophets on rational grounds," but "admitted unintentional minor sins after, and major sins before, their mission."

176 See Paret, "Ibrāhīm," 980.

177 See Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 22: 155–156 for other explanations; see Ibid., 157 for a discussion of the opinion that Abraham did lie.

178 The edited text has مزينة (Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 22: 156), but the correct reading seems to be *muzayyana*.

179 Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 22: 156. Al-Zamakhsharī (*Kashshāf*, 3: 164) mentions the same idea in his discussion on Q. 21:63, without using the term *sabab* (using instead the verb *tasabbaba*).

(thus God may be viewed as a cause of human disbelief, as He does not prevent it) or things/states that usually precede other things (thus a mention of wine may replace the mention of grapes). This can be understood in light of al-Jurjānī's remark that for rhetorical purposes "a virtual cause" may be treated as a cause—probably because speakers are not necessarily aware of real causal relations in the world, and construct their speech according to what appears right to them. It should be mentioned that the question of causality is a subject of controversy among Islamic theological schools, some of which deny its existence, viewing only God as the real cause of everything. Thus, we cannot expect *sabab* as used by both al-Zamakhsharī and al-Rāzī in various contexts to refer to a real cause, but rather to something that may be viewed by speakers as a cause.

Some examples explained by the notion of *sabab* are metonymies (that are often marked by the wording "using the name of X to refer to Y"), whereas others are not. In "those who wrongfully eat water," "slave girl, being bridled" and "pressing wine," "water" is a metonymy for "food (bought with the proceeds of selling water)", "slave girl" is a metonymy for "horse (bought with the proceeds of selling the girl)", and wine is a metonymy for "grapes" (that are actually pressed in order to prepare wine); water, slave girl and wine do not actually participate in the described occurrences. In contrast, in "… so We said, 'Strike with thy staff the rock'; and there gushed forth from it twelve fountains …" (Q. 2:60), every part of the passage is to be understood literally; however, the addressee needs to reconstruct one stage of the story, namely, the actual striking, that can be surmised from either its cause (God's order) or the effect (the fountains).

The fact that causes and effects are viewed as linguistically replacing each other, and a few examples that can be interpreted in both ways, highlight the close relations between causes and results in human experience. In Ibn Jinnī's presentation, at least ten examples are explained by a cause replacing its effect, at least 6 are explained by a result replacing its cause, and at least two are presented as such that can be interpreted in both ways. In al-Zamakhsharī's presentation, at least five examples are explained by a cause replacing its effect, at least seven are explained by an effect replacing its cause, and at least one is presented as such that can be interpreted in both ways. In al-Rāzī's presentation, at least nineteen examples are explained by a cause replacing its effect, whereas only six are explained by an effect replacing its cause. In discussing the example that can be interpreted in both ways (the one where he wonders about the literal meaning of *nikāḥ*) he attempts to formulate a logical explanation of why causes are more likely to replace effects than the other way around. Another piece of evidence of his bias at this point is that, at least once,

he speaks of "a cause replacing its effect" in a case that should obviously be interpreted the other way around (with the mention of an action replacing the mention of a will/intention to act).

As for a cause replacing the real agent, four of al-Zamakhsharī's six relevant passages explicitly refer to God, who cannot be viewed as the real agent of the action in question (unlike al-Jurjānī's examples, all of which refer to occurrences whose real agent must be God). Al-Zamakhsharī views a cause replacing the real agent as a particular case of various constituents that can metaphorically replace the agent, because they resemble it in being logically related to the verb. Al-Rāzī mentions this idea only in three passages, of which only one deals with a non-literal mention of God.

The discussions presented in this article interestingly combine linguistic analysis with rhetorical and theological considerations, the latter being related to theories of action in Muslim theology and to questions of God's omnipotence and justice.

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