This is a somewhat experimental paper. If it succeeds it will show that Sibawayhi’s thinking is essentially non-linear, that is, he works with a complex array of interlocking notions, all of which are present in his mind simultaneously, rather than in a sequence of ideas, each following progressively from the previous one. If the paper fails, it will at least have demonstrated that Sibawayhi’s thinking is of a kind which lesser minds cannot reduce to some arbitrary scheme.

Non-linearity is now a familiar presence. With computers we can construct texts which do not have to be read in any particular order; while under the pseudonym of “hypertext” a document may consist of many linked texts, between which we move at will with a click of the mouse. And computer programmers use “parallel processing” and “neural networks” to replicate in machines the activity of thinking in the brain.

Muslims have been using a hypertext for centuries: it was Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004), who pointed out that the Qur’ān talks to itself, i.e. it is full of internal self-references, with the result that the meaning of a verse may not become apparent until the contents of some other verse are taken into account. Moreover, for the hāfiz who has internalized the Qur’ān, it has physically become part of his neural network, and he can access it both in a linear way (scanning through a sequence of verses) or in a non-linear way (making random connections between words or verses), according to need. And this, in turn, reflects the theological status of the Qur’ān, whose original version has no dimensions at all, but exists as a prototypical hypertext with God, which the hāfiz re-creates in his own mind.

Since the Kitāb of Sibawayhi has itself been called the “Qur’ān of grammar” it seems appropriate to apply similar thinking to the arrangement of its subject matter. Sibawayhi certainly displays an almost God-like omniscience about the contents of the Kitāb: there are forward and backward references extending over hundreds of pages, leaving no doubt that he did indeed have the complete Kitāb in his head, at

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1 This has been a literary conceit for some time, e.g. Pavić 1989, which may be read in any order (and which, moreover, appears in a “male” and “female” version differing in only one paragraph, but that is a different kind of joke).

2 Ibn Fāris, Sāhibi 239ff. He says he has even written a book about it (which is unfortunately not extant). Islam has long been characterized as “intertextual”, but in this case we are dealing with what might be called “intratextuality”.

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least at the stage where he was composing the version he worked on with his pupil al-Aḥfaṣ, the one we now have.

It is already curious that Sibawayhi deals with the ḥāl in so many different places and from so many different perspectives, pragmatic, structural, semantic etc., in clusters of chapters broadly as follows: (1) as a Transitivity problem, i.e. the ḥāl as one of the Objects of the Verb and therefore having Dep. form, which also raises questions of the Dep. form as a default Case for items occurring outside complete phrases or sentences, (2) as an Agreement problem, largely involving the difference between Predication and Adjectival Qualification (which require Agreement) on the one hand, and Adverbial Qualification (which requires Dep. forms) on the other, again raising related questions of Definiteness, Class Membership at both syntactical and semantic level, and word order, (3) as a social act implementing the speaker’s choice, usually affected by the Context of Situation, and often in connection with free Dep. forms as ḥāls of elided or unexpressed Verbs and (4) as affected by the various morphological and semantic constraints on the choice of ḥāl (not every Verbal Noun can be a ḥāl, not every Adj. can occur in the place of a Noun etc.).

But before we can begin, there are three problems with the word ḥāl itself: (1) It may not even be a specific technical term for Sibawayhi. Although by the time of al-Mubarrad (d. 286/898) it had evidently become one (al-Mubarrad, Muqtaṣad IV, 166),

هذا باب من المفعول ولكننا عرضناه مما قبله لا أن شاب مفعول فيه وهو الذي يسميه النحويون

it is very often used in the Kitāb to refer simply to the context of an utterance (in the following quotation it is used both for “state or condition” and “speaker’s situation”):

ونقل قولكم أتميمياً مرتها وقيسيها أخرى وإنما هذا أنك رأيت رجلا في حال تلقن وتللن وتمتلئ فعلت أتميمياً مرتها وقيسيها أخرى كان ذلك أشخيلاً تتميمياً مرة وقيسيها أخرى فانت في هذه الحال تعمل في تلقب هذا له وهو عندك في تلك الحال في تلقن وتنطق وليس سببه

مستشهداً عن أمر هو جاهل به ليفهمه إباه ويخبره عنه ولكنه ويبعه بذلك [144/172, I].

Sometimes it is impossible to distinguish between ḥāl in the literal meaning of “situation or circumstance” and ḥāl in the technical meaning of “Dep. Noun in the function of Circumstantial Qualifier”, e.g.

هذا باب ما ينتصب لأنه حال صار فيها المسؤول والمسؤول عنه * وذلك قولك ما شئت قائمًا وما شأن ربد قائمًا وما لأحق قائمًا وهذا حال قد صار فيه وانتصب بقولك ما شئت كما ينتصب قائمًا في قولك هذا عبد الله قائمًا بما قيل [8-2247, 2-211, I].

There may be a good reason for this indeterminacy, which is a general feature of the terminology of the Kitāb: Sibawayhi evidently had no interest in separating the real world from the linguistic world: the word fi'il, for example, can just as well de-
note an action as a Verb, i.e. a non-linguistic event or a Part of Speech, *sifa* can denote a quality or an Adjective, *badal* an act of substituting or the substituted word itself, and so on. It appears that Sibawayhi consciously ignored the boundary between the extra-linguistic context and the strictly linguistic features of an utterance, because for him there was a continuum of participation in the act of speaking, within which the speaker and his words have different levels of autonomy according to the circumstances. For the purposes of this paper, however, as a term *hāl* will always be used to mean the Dep. Noun Qualifier.

(2) It is somewhat strange that Sibawayhi does not concern himself anywhere in the *Kitāb* with the syntax of the Sentence *hāl*, confining his analysis to the Dep. Noun type of *hāl*, yet he is perfectly aware of the existence of the Sentence *hāl* and not only uses one to paraphrase the Noun *hāl* but also uses a Sentence *hāl* containing the word *hāl* itself, *wa-hādibi hāulu: “this being his situation”:

وَلَكِنْ قُولُهُ كَلَمَتهُ فَاحِئٌ إِلَى فِيّ وَبَلَغَهُ يَدَا بِكَأْنُهُ قَالَ كَلَمَتهُ مَشْعَفَةٌ وَبَلَغَهُ يَدَاً

أَيُّ كَلَمَتهُ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَالِ وَبَعْضُ الْعَرْبِ كَلَمَتهُ فَاحِئٌ إِلَى فِيّ كَأْنُهُ يَقُولُ كَلَمَتهُ وَقُولُهُ إِلَى

فِيّ أَيُّ كَلَمَتهُ وَهَذِهِ الْحَالِ فَالْفِنْفُقُ عَلَى قُولُهُ كَلَمَتهُ وَهَذِهِ الْحَالِ وَالْحُبُّ عَلَى قُولُهُ كَلَمَتهُ

في هذه الحالة فاستنبض لأنه حال وقع فيه الفعل [6-165/1955].

It was left to the later grammarians to classify this structure and, since it was not a formal *hāl* in Sibawayhi’s sense, they were obliged to call it the “implicit *hāl*”, *hāl* *muqaddar*.

(3) For reasons best known to himself Sibawayhi likes to play with the verb *hāla* in the sense of “to intervene” when speaking of the grammatical *hāl*:

فَالْاَسْمُ الأَوَّلُ المَفْعُولُ فِي ضَرْبَتِهِ قَدْ حَالَ بِهِ وَبَيْنَ الْفَعْلِ أَنْ يَكُونَ فِيهِ بِمَنْزِلَتِهِ كَما حَالَ

الْفَعْلَ بِهِ وَبَيْنَ الْفَعْلِ فِي ذَهَبِهِ أَنْ يَكُونَ فَاعِلاَ وَكَمَا حَالَ الْأَسْمَاءِ المَجْرِورةَ بِيْنِهَا بَعْدَهَا

وَبَيْنَ الْجَرَّ فِي قُولِهِ لَيْ مَلِئَهُ وَلَيْ مَلِئَهُ عَسْلًا [16/20].

It is true that Intervention and Separation are important concepts in his general theory of Dep. forms (see below), but this word-game hardly makes it easier to follow the argument.

In order to display graphically the contents of a non-linear system of thinking, a Cube has been chosen (Fig. 1) because it is easy to represent eight different but interlinked topics in this configuration. Of course there are other notions which should

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3 The impression is reinforced by Sibawayhi's use of the term *kalām* in so many different senses, see T. Iványi’s paper in these Proceedings 17-36.

4 The sentence *hāl* is well recognized later, of course, as a “clause with an inflectional function”, *šumla lahubi mahall fi l-īrāb*, e.g. in Ibn Hīšam, *Muğni* Chapter 2 (II, 41-83, esp. 46ff).

5 For a similar example of grammarian’s wit see the acronym SNIP (Separation and Non-Identity Principle) which was coined for this phenomenon by Owens (1990:109).
The Cube below represents only a sketch of the possibilities: to illustrate the relationships between the concepts in appropriate graphic detail would require many more connecting lines than shown here.

Figure 1

SURFACE, FORMAL

1 Case
2 Definiteness

CONTEXT OF SITUATION

3 Agreement
5 Constituent Member

UNDERLYING, SEMANTIC

4 Synt. Completeness
6 Speaker's Intention

7 Identity & Category
8 Transitivity & Op.
be included, but this would require a more complex diagram. For simplicity the joining lines are limited to those forming the sides of the Cube: in true non-linear thinking every topic will be connected with all the others, requiring 16 more lines. Finally it is not claimed that the position of each concept on the Cube is the only possible one, though in practice this is only of graphic relevance: since all the concepts were available to Sibawayhi simultaneously, his thinking is not even spatial and cannot be reproduced as such.

A vertical division separates the Context of Situation from the Speech Act proper, and there is a horizontal division of Surface and Underlying features, which occupy the top and bottom surfaces of the Cube respectively.

The concepts are as follows, illustrated by the most conveniently brief examples from a large selection (numbers correspond to points on the Cube, and the references to the Kitāb are to Derenbourg/Būlāq, with the vowels of the Būlāq edition):  

(0). CONTEXT OF SITUATION (unnecessary because it is outside the utterance): Every Context act occurs in a real context, which often affects grammatical form. Indeed the Context itself may itself be a Substitute (badal) for part of an utterance: 

وأما النصب فكأنه بناء على قوله قدمت فقال قدمت خبر متقيد وإن لم يَنتمي منه هذا اللفظ فإن قدمته ورؤيته إيانا بمشلة قوله قدنت [7-365/136-114, I]

Sibawayhi’s approach is conspicuously pragmatic, and many of the factors listed below depend on the Context of Situation in one way or another.

(1). CASE: the choice is usually between Dep. form and some other Case determined by the factors below, such as Syntactical Completeness, Identity/Non-identity or Constituent Membership, with Dep. as the default case for the true ḥāl: 

هذا باب ما يتمثل فيه الفعل فينتصب وهو حال وقع فيه الفعل [20/15, I]

(2). DEFINITENESS: the ḥāl is normally Indef.: 

فإذا كان الاسم حالاً يكون فيه الأمر لم تصحه الألف واللام ولم تصحه له قلت شرتيه القائم تريد قائماً كان قبيحاً ولو قلت ضربتهم قائمين تريد قائمين كان قبيحا [189/158, I]

Its Antecedent is normally Def. because it is the topic of some additional information (habar) provided by the ḥāl, and thus it follows the rule for Predication that the Subj. must be identifiable to the listener, though Sibawayhi somewhat takes this for granted:

باب ما ينتصب فيه الخبر لأنه خبر المعروف يرتفع على الابتداء [260/222, I]

(3). AGREEMENT: in Case is a marker of non-ḥāls, viz. Adjectival Qual. or Pred., and so may be relevant if the intention is to construct such a unit or to Coordina two items in the same Constituent, which will both contrast with the Dep. (i.e. non-Agreeing) form of a ḥāl:

6 The edition of Hārūn has the Būlāq pagination in the margin.
Agreement in Definiteness will likewise indicate that the item is not a hāl:

وذلك فولك ضربت عبد الله قاصماً وذهب زيد راكباً فانى بمنزلة المفعول الذي يتعرى إليه فعل الفاعل نحو عبد الله ويده ما جاز في ذهبت ولجان أن تقول ضربت زيدا آباه وضربت زيدا القائم لا تريد بالآب ولا بالقائم الصفة ولا البديل [I, 15-16/2026]

(4). SYNTACTICAL COMPLETENESS: a hāl is typically found after the completion of an utterance, hence completeness may determine whether an element is a hāl or not:

وانتصب لأن هذا الكلام قد عُقِّل فيها كما عمل الرجل في العلم حين قلت آت الرجل علمًا فعلمُ منتصب على ما فسرت لك وعمل فيه ما قبله كما عمل عشورون في الدرب حين قلت عشرونا ترهم [I, 273/253-5-274]

Note that the expression ‘iṣrūna dirhaman is invoked here as the symbol of the syntactically complete unit which must therefore be followed by Dep. elements (see also below).

(5). CONSTITUENT MEMBERSHIP: this is a grammatical feature usually marked by Agreement in Case and/or Definiteness, e.g. of Noun and Adj., or Subj. and Pred., or between Coordinated items. A hāl is not a member of these units, and will therefore show lack of Agreement (cf. also the notion of Intervention below, 8):

هذا باب ما يَتَنصَبُ فيه الاسم لأنه لا سبيل له أن يكون صفة * وذلك قولك هذا رجل معه رجل

قهرين فهذا يتنصب لأن الهاة التي في معه معرفة فأخبر بها أما كلمته [I, 246/210]

واعلم أنه لا يجوز أن تنصف النكرة والمعرفة كما لا يجوز وصف المختلفين وذلك قولك هذه

دالة وفصيلتهاالراعي فهذا مجال لأن الراعي لا يكونان صفة للفصل ولا للنافية ولا تستطيع أن تجعل بعضها نكرة وبعضها معرفة وهذا قول الخليل [I, 211/247]

(6). SPEAKER’S INTENTIONS: these are closely linked with the extra-linguistic context, but in any case are often the sole syntactic determinant, e.g.

أرأى الرفع فعلى أنه جعل ذلك أمرًا ثابتًا ولم يرد أن يجعله على الفعل وجعله مبتدأ أو مبنيًا على

أيضاً فكأنه قال هذا خير مُقدِّم [I, 137/115]

where the choice of bayru maqdamin or bayra maqdamin is entirely up to the speaker.

(7). IDENTITY AND CATEGORY: these are the semantic attributes of Constituent Membership, i.e. Identity will tend to result in Agreement, and non-Identity will be marked by Dep. forms, reflecting the fact that the latter are not members of the same Constituent. The second and third items in the following list are non-identical and therefore Dep.:
(8) TRANSITIVITY AND GRAMMATICAL OPERATION: Composite elements (normally complete units, such as Subj. + Pred., Verb + Ag.) will operate on others in the Dep. form; Sibawayhi uses this notion to account both for the regular occurrence of Dep. forms after Complete Sentences and also for the occurrence of Dep. forms in situations where the Verb has been either replaced by another element or omitted altogether because the Context of Situation makes it unnecessary:

وذلك قولك ويحّط رجلاً [.....] وانتصب الرجل لأنه ليس من الكلام الأول ولا عمل فيه الكلام الأول

فصار اللهاء بمنزلة التنوين [299/258, I, 218/256]

An important correlative of Transitivity is the Separation Principle, which states that elements which are prevented from being Adjacent to an Operator will take Dep. Form. The “20 Dirhams” structure (see below) is the model for this, but it is also stated by Sibawayhi without reference to that example:

فمنطلق [في هذا عبد الله منطلق] حال قد صار فيها عبد الله وحال بين ومنطق وهذا كما حال بين راكب والفعل حين قلت جاء عبد الله راكبا صار جاء لعبد الله وصار الراكب حاللا

A number of concepts simply cannot be included in the diagram, because it would require a much larger polygon and many more connecting lines, and in any case such a graphic representation of non-linear thinking can never be truly isomorphic or exhaustive: it is merely intended to be illustrative.

Among the notions not depicted on the Cube are:

- Lexical and Semantic considerations, of which Sibawayhi was well aware.
- Morphological restraints on the kinds of words which can function as ḥāl.
- Word Order issues, among the most important of which is the directional nature of grammatical effect (ṣānaḥ) which does not normally permit words to operate on elements which precede them. The neutralization of grammatical effect is also well recognized and forms part of the argument in Example B below.
- Time and Simultaneity, though Sibawayhi certainly discusses them in the context of the word-classes which may function as ḥāls.
- Various distributional factors, often involving the syntactic “power” (gurra) and “freedom” (tasarruf) of words, depending on the form-class they belong to.
- The substitutability (badal) of elements of equal status (manzila) is part of many discussions of the ḥāl.

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7 Thus you can say hawwa ʿrağūlu ʿilmān wa-fiqhān “he is the man for wisdom and sagacity” but not “he is the man for horses and camels”, haylan wa-šibilān [I, 163/194].
Compulsory v. Optional deletion, whether it is a decision of the speaker or follows an observed Bedouin practice.

Here follow two examples of Sibawayhi’s discussion of the hāl using the ideas set out above. They are chosen mainly because of the high concentration of different topics raised, but are typical of Sibawayhi’s analysis throughout the Kitāb.

(A). Uses Context of Situation (0), Case (1), Agreement (3), Syntactic Completeness (4), Constituent membership (5), Intention (6) and Transitivity (8).

The differences between hādā r-rağulu muntalīqun and hādā r-rağulu muntalīqun are explained as follows:

They are due to the speaker’s choice (6) between Predication and hāl.

If Predication is chosen the two elements hādā and ar-rağulu must be members of the same Constituent (5) and therefore Agree (3) because ar-rağulu is an Adj. Qualifier of hādā, which allows them to function together as the Subj., with muntalīqun as the Pred., both therefore in Indep. case (1).

But if the hāl is chosen (6) the Dep. case of muntalīqun is required (1), because ar-rağulu is now the Pred. of hādā, hence no longer in the same Constituent (5).

Further, the hāl option has the purpose (6) of reminding the listener about somebody he already knows (0), whereas the the Subj.-Pred. unit, with Agreement (3) simply intends to inform the listener that a certain person indicated (but not necessarily known to the listener before) has gone away.

The Dep. Case (1) occurs after a syntactically complete statement (8) where the first element (Subj. or Verb) operates on the second (4), in which the second element (Pred. or Agent) intervenes (8) between the first and third elements, causing the Dep. form. The third element here indicates a situation (hāl, here in the literal sense) in which the action is done, and the previous (complete) sentence is intended (6) to alert or inform the listener of the topic of the hāl, the hāl itself being a comment (babar) indicating the circumstances (0).
(B). Uses Case (1), Definiteness (2), Agreement (3), Syntactic Completeness (4), Constituent Membership (5), Speaker’s Intention (6), Identity and Category (7) and Transitivity (8).

Here the speaker’s choices (6) lie between fibā ‘abdullāhi qā‘īman and fibā ‘abdullāhi qā‘īmun.

The Dep. form (1) is accounted for by the fact that qā‘īman is a comment (ḥabar) on a Def. element (2) which is Subj. of a (complete) Sentence (4), so the Sentence operates on it like a Verb (8) and makes it Dep. (1)

Under those circumstances fibā functions as a Pred. (5), even though it is not actually identical with the Subj. (7) but only a location for it to be in, making an utterance which is self-sufficient and structurally complete (4), as if you had started with istagarrā ‘abdullābi and then wanted (6) to say in what situation, so you added qā‘īman. Here Sibawayhi invokes the theory of the zarf, which shares several features with the hāl, particularly the property of non-identity, hence a Subj. cannot “be” a location, only be “in it”, though this is enough to form a complete utterance.

Alternatively the fibā can be neutralized (alġayta), losing its grammatical effect (8), whereupon you say fibā ‘abdullābi qā‘īmun, now with ‘abdullābi as Subj. and qā‘īmun as Pred. (5), (7), and qā‘īmun is Indep. (1),(3) as if you had said ‘abdullābi qā‘īmun fibā, with ‘abdullābi qā‘īmun already a complete utterance (4)

What this paper has tried to show is that Sibawayhi often analysed the same topic more than once and from several different angles simultaneously, and, furthermore, that all of these considerations were always present in his mind. It therefore seems appropriate to interpret his thinking as non-linear. The physical linearity of the Kitāb itself is, of course, merely the result of the need for the ideas to be expressed in time and space.

These conclusions represent a third attempt on the writer’s part to come to grips with Sibawayhi’s thinking. The first was in a paper examining Sibawayhi’s use of the expression ‘īṣrīna divhaman in the Kitāb (Carter 1972), showing how this innocent-looking phrase, which occurs some two dozen times in the Kitāb, served as a kind of shorthand for a bundle of linguistic principles with which Sibawayhi could explain a number of quite different syntactical structures. What all these structures have in
common is that (a) the first element is a complete syntactical unit, (b) the second is always in Dep. form and nearly always Indef., and (c) the second element is semantically excluded from the first, being non-identical with it. The hāl, it will have been noticed, already fits these three criteria and indeed ‘īsrūna dirhaman is quoted in connection with it.

A second study, which was delivered as a paper in this very city three years ago, concerned the term dārā’a “to resemble” (Carter 1998). Like ‘īsrūna dirhaman, the concept of “resemblance”, muḍārā’a, is applied to a much wider range of topics than might be expected, given that the term is now restricted almost entirely to the form of the Imperf. Verb and, rather infrequently, to a variety of the Vocative construction. By contrast, in the Kitāb we find muḍārā’a applied to linguistic phenomena at all levels, from phonology to syntax, covering about twenty different types of “resemblance” between sounds, word-forms and structures. Without going into details, it is enough to point out that this “resemblance” is an objective property of many linguistic forms, which Sibawayhi carefully distinguishes both from other kinds of formal “similarity” between elements and from the general process of analogy, qiyās, which often determines the linguistic behaviour of speakers and speech elements.

In both these studies the conclusion was drawn that Sibawayhi preferred a unified approach which he could apply throughout the whole Kitāb9. At the time this seemed as far as it was possible to go, but from the perspective of the present paper these two topics can now be seen as part of an extremely complex set of interlocking ideas. Indeed not only is “20 Dirhams” invoked in connection with the hāl as already noted, but “resemblance” even crops up, albeit rather tangentially, to account for the fact that sīra ‘alayhi can either be qualified by hāl (Dep.) or an extended Adjectival Phrase (Indep.) (Carter 1998:10, item 4):

[...]

سبري عليه شديدًا وسير عليه حسنًا فالنصب في ذا أنه حاول وهو وجه الكلام لأنه وصف السبئي ولا يكون فيه الرفع لأنه لا يقع موقع ما كان اسمًا ولم يكن طرفا لأنه ليس بين يقع فيه الأمر إلا أن تقول سبري عليه حسن أو سير عليه سبئي شديد فإن قلت سبري عليه طويل من الدهر وشديد من السبئي فأطلت الكلام ووصفته كان أحسن وأقوى وجزا ولا يبلغ في الحسن الأسماء وإنما جاز حين وصفته وأطلت لأنه ضارع الأسماء لأن المرصوفة في الأصل الأسماء [ِ-7, 96/116-I].

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8 See the ex. from I, 235/274-5 above.

9 Additional evidence for this is the distribution of the linguistic criteria hasan/qabīh “structurally correct/incorrect” (and their important correlatives mawdī “place, (syntagmatic) function” and manzila “(paradigmatic) status”), and musaqiq “semantically right” and muḥāl “semantically wrong, absurd” throughout all the major sections of the Kitāb, the latter pair inevitably somewhat sparsely in the phonological chapters.
Furthermore, the arguments about the *ḥal* are used to explain other Dep. forms in the same terms, such as the *zarf*, which differs from the *ḥal* only in that the Dep. Noun denotes a time or place:

هذا باب ما ينتمي من الأماكن والوقت *وذلك لأنها ظروف* وقع فيها الأشياء وتكون فيها فانتصب لأنها موقعة فيها ومكون فيها وعميل فيها ما قبلها كما أن الْآلما إذا قلت أنت الرجل علما على ما قبله وكما عمل في الدروهم عشرون إذا قلت عشرون دلهماَّ

[I, 170/201]

Likewise the *mašūl muṭlaq* can be analysed either as a *ḥal* or the object of an elided verb:

ومما يجيء تركيداً وينصب قوله سير عليه سيراً وانطلاق به انطلاقاً وضرب به ضرباً فينصبُ على وجهين أحدهما على أن حال على حد قولك ذُمَيْبَ يَه مَشيّاً وقُتِلُ به صْبِراً وإن وصفته على هذا الحال كان نصبها تقول سير به سيراً عنيفاً كما تقول ذُمَيْبَ به مَشيّاً عنيفاً

 وإن شئت نصبته على إضمار فعل آخر ويكون بدلاً من اللهج بالفعل [II, 118-8, 97-1]

Note that in this final example Sibawayhi leaves it completely open as to whether the *mašūl muṭlaq* is a *ḥal* or the object of an elided verb, doubtless because only the speaker can know this, since the surface structure is identical. This suggests a possible reason for the evident non-linearity of his method, for it now appears to lie not so much in Sibawayhi’s way of thinking as in the behaviour of the speaker as he describes it. This is particularly obvious in the treatment of “resemblance”, where Sibawayhi appears to fall into the trap of circularity, be asserting more than once that element A “resembles” B while elsewhere element B is said to “resemble” element A (Carter 1998:60). In Sibawayhi’s defence Ibn Ğinnī (d. 392/1002) justifies this by attributing it to the the psychology of the speaker (*Ḥaṣaʾīs* I, 304), and this insight was in fact the inspiration for this paper.

In the light of Ibn Ğinnī’s observation, Sibawayhi’s non-linearity can be interpreted as a deliberate analogue of the competence of the native speaker in all its complexity. Such a speaker knows all the rules of the language instantaneously, indeed true competence is impossible without this total, unordered knowledge. Sibawayhi is often difficult to follow precisely because he seeks to account for so many simulta-

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10 It is worth recalling that Sibawayhi has a lawyer’s approach to language, and assumes that the overt utterance directly expresses the speaker’s intention, and that the listener has no other access to knowledge of that intention, apart perhaps from the context.

11 This interpretation has another point in its favour: it removes the problem of diachronicity in sound changes. With the weak radical verbs, for example, a post facto analysis of Apoc. *yaqul* has to assume three stages of derivation merely for the sake of linguistic coherence, viz. *yaqamu* > *yaqamu* > *yaqul* > *yaqul*. A speaker might know that *yaqul* is somehow connected with *yaqamu*, but his unconscious, synchronic performance requires no knowledge of those theoretical stages. The implications of this were brilliantly explored by Ibn Ğinnī, and his ideas are analysed with similar profundity in Guillaume 1981.
neous and interconnected processes, and any symbolic representation of such a complicated activity would be equally impenetrable, as the Cube incidentally also demonstrates. Nevertheless, this is surely the way the Kitāb ought to be read, with the reader trying to reproduce in his mind the vast range of information and ideas Sibawayhi constantly accesses and deploys as a unity: like the Qurʾān, parts of the Kitāb can only be understood in terms of other parts.

The non-linear thinking of Sibawayhi contrasts very strongly with the style of reasoning known as scholasticism, which is manifestly linear in nature. Where Sibawayhi is implicitly programmed, leaving it to the reader to replace the spatial sequence of ideas by non-spatial mental links, scholasticism is very explicitly programmed, advancing cumulatively from one idea to the next. And where Sibawayhi is internally structured (the overt arrangement of the Kitāb is not the same as the underlying principles of its composition), scholasticism, with its prefaces, statements of purpose, tables of contents, chapter divisions and so on, is clearly externally structured. As is well known, the history of the Kitāb is largely the story of its eventual conversion into a scholastic text: one may compare it with, say, Ibn Yaʾṣī’s Commentary on the Mufassal, which is about the same size, but which presents an image of a science worlds apart in structure and intent from the network of ideas created by Sibawayhi.

REFERENCES

A. Primary sources

B. Secondary sources