Ibn Taymiyya and
the Attributes of God

ليس كمثله شيء
وهو السميع البصير

FARID SULEIMAN

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN BY
CARL SHARIF EL-TOBGUI

————

BRILL

Ibn Taymiyya and the Attributes of God

Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science

TEXTS AND STUDIES

Edited by

Hans Daiber
Anna Akasoy
Emilie Savage-Smith

VOLUME 125

The titles published in this series are listed at *brill.com/ipts*

Ibn Taymiyya and the Attributes of God

By

Farid Suleiman

Translated from the German by

Carl Sharif El-Tobgui

BRILL

Cover illustration: Laysa ka-mithlihi shayʾun wa-huwa l-samīʿu l-baṣīr ("There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing," Q. 42:11). Cover calligraphy by Nihad Nadam, 2022.

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

Contents

Acknowledgements (to the English translation)

A few years ago, the thought that I would one day hold in my hands an English translation of my book on Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the divine attributes seemed possible but not very likely. What I would not have dared to imagine, however, is that I would be fortunate enough to receive funding through a very competitive grant, to find a translator who is both an internationally acknowledged expert on Ibn Taymiyya and fluent in (not just) all three languages relevant to the translation project (English, German, and Arabic), and to find a home for the translation in a highly esteemed monograph series at an unusually experienced and professional publishing house. But this is exactly what has happened, and I acknowledge with gratefulness the efforts of all those involved in the process.

At an early stage of that process, I enjoyed the support of De Gruyter, among whose staff I would like to thank especially Christina Lembrecht and Maxim Karagodin. Furthermore, I wish to express my gratitude to Jon Hoover and Ahmed El Shamsy for their encouragement of this translation and for their recommendation letters that significantly strengthened my application for funding. This brings me also to acknowledge my indebtedness to the Börsenverein des deutschen Buchhandels, for without their funding this book would never have seen the light of day.

While securing the financial resources was an enormous step forward, no less important was it to secure a suitable translator. In Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, himself the author of an immensely erudite piece of scholarship on Ibn Taymiyya published in the same series, I found not only a person suited to the task but indeed the best I could have imagined. To him I owe my deepest gratitude for his agreeing without hesitation to take on the time-consuming and laborious task of translating the 400-page original German version of my work and for the fact that throughout the process, he carried out this task with utmost care and concern for detail.

Last but not least I offer a particular note of thanks to Abdurraouf Oueslati at Brill, who provided invaluable guidance throughout the process of publication, as well as to the editors of the Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science series for accepting to include my book therein.

Wa-mā tawfīqī illā billāh.

Acknowledgements (of original German version)

The present work is a lightly revised version of my doctoral dissertation, entitled "The Methodological Foundations of Ibn Taymiyya's Doctrine on the Divine Attributes, with an Analysis of Selected Attributes,"[1] which I completed at the Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg in September 2017 and defended in July 2018. My primary supervisor, Prof. Abbas Poya, who accepted me as a PhD student in 2013 into a junior research group funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research under his direction, accompanied me graciously throughout this project, always with an open ear. It was he who honed my eye to focus on the essentials and who worked to ensure that I had enough time to complete the dissertation despite the many other obligations of university life. For this I extend to him a special note of thanks. I would also like to thank my secondary reader, Prof. Benjamin Jokisch, as well as Prof. Maha El Kaisy-Friemuth, who agreed to act as a third reviewer when the need arose.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to Prof. Frank Griffel, who took the time to discuss portions of this work with me, as well as Prof. Jon Hoover, who allowed me to present and discuss a chapter of this work in a doctoral seminar of his at the University of Nottingham. I would like to draw particular attention to the dedication of Yusuf Kuhn, who read the entire manuscript attentively and, through his well-informed remarks, contributed considerably to the quality of the work. Even in those cases where we continued to see things differently even after extensive discussion, I always came away with the feeling that I had gained a stronger understanding of the topic discussed. I would also like to thank Dr Thomas Hildebrandt for his eminently meticulous copyediting. Any residual errors or deficiencies—which, without the assistance of the aforementioned persons, would certainly have been more numerous and more substantial than they are—remain, naturally, my responsibility alone.

I would like to express my thanks to the editors at De Gruyter, particularly Prof. Ulrich Rudolph, for accepting this work for publication in the series Worlds of Islam. I also extend my gratitude to the anonymous reviewers who participated in the peer review process. Additional thanks go to Dr Christina Lembrecht, Ms Albina Töws, and Ms Gabrielle Cornefert at De Gruyter for

---

1 Original title: "Die methodischen Grundlagen der Attributenlehre Ibn Taymiyyas. Mit einer Analyse ausgewählter göttlicher Attribute," published as Farid Suleiman, *Ibn Taymiyya und die Attribute Gottes* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).

their constantly friendly, competent, and patient editorial support. I also thank the Swiss Asia Society for generously assuming the full costs of printing and publication.

I cannot express adequate thanks here for all the emotional support that I have received from my family, most especially my parents. The same goes for my wife, Rozan Suleiman, who, with her excellent knowledge of Classical Arabic, also helped me decipher many a cryptic passage in Ibn Taymiyya's works. To them I say from the bottom of my heart: *Jazākum Allāhu khayran!*

Figures and Tables

Figures

Tables

Introduction

The Ḥanbalī theologian and legal scholar Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya (661–728/1263–1328), who spent most of his active life in Mamluk Damascus, is one of the best-known and at the same time one of the most controversial of all Muslim thinkers. Yet this was not always the case. Indeed, his writings went largely unnoticed for centuries after his death and only began to be rediscovered in the eleventh/seventeenth century in a process driven by Muslim scholars of widely varying orientations.[1] He has been ever more widely received since then, so much so that one may speak of a perceived omnipresence of Ibn Taymiyya in recent Sunni thought. Lutz Berger, in his introductory work on Islamic theology, was indeed correct in identifying Ibn Taymiyya as "certainly the most influential today of all mediaeval Islamic theologians."[2]

Despite this fact, scholarship in European languages until very recently has not—barring a few exceptions—engaged in a sufficiently thorough manner with the life and works of Ibn Taymiyya. Moreover, the scholarly contributions that do exist, as Birgit Krawietz remarks critically, have portrayed him "overwhelmingly as an opponent of religious tolerance and speculative thought, a proto-fundamentalist—the first or one of the first Islamic fundamentalists—as a violent activist, an opponent of folk religion and syncretism, a critic of Sufism, a radical anthropomorphist, and even an indiscriminate wrangler practically always ready to pick a fight."[3] Despite the fact that studies published in the last

---

1 See p. 128 below.

2 Lutz Berger, *Islamische Theologie* (Vienna: Facultas, 2010), 107. The term "mediaeval," unless it be redefined, is meaningful only in relation to the intellectual and cultural history of Europe. See Konrad Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors* (London: Routledge, 2006), iv–v. For this reason, I have divided the time period dealt with in this work into the "formative period" (the first three centuries of Islam) and the "classical period" (the fourth–eighth / tenth–fourteenth centuries).

3 Birgit Krawietz, "Ibn Taymiyya, Vater des islamischen Fundamentalismus? Zur westlichen Rezeption eines mittelalterlichen Schariatsgelehrten," in *Theorie des Rechts und der Gesellschaft: Festschrift für Werner Krawietz zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Manuel Atienza et al. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2003), 52–53. A slightly redacted version, with different pagination, can be found in Krawietz, "Ibn Taymiyya, Vater des islamischen Fundamentalismus? Zur westlichen Rezeption eines mittelalterlichen Schariatsgelehrten," in *Salafismus in Deutschland: Ursprünge und Gefahren einer islamisch-fundamentalistischen Bewegung*, ed. Thorsten Gerald Schneiders (Bielefeld: transcript, 2014) (cited quotation at p. 76).

few years by Yahya Michot, Jon Hoover, Ovamir Anjum, and others have arrived at decidedly different conclusions,[4] this image has stubbornly persisted. One reason for this is that Ibn Taymiyya used the bulk of his creative energy to strike a sweeping blow against the wider Islamic intellectual tradition, especially in its rationalistic-speculative and philosophical manifestations, and often did so in a bluntly polemical style.[5] In doing so, however, he not only engaged thoroughly with the schools of thought he criticised but also—in a move by no means self-evident for a Ḥanbalī—confronted them in the argumentative garb of a speculative theologian (*mutakallim*) or even a philosopher.[6] The formidable scope and intellectual depth of his critique are certainly among the factors that explain its potency and the polarising forces it unleashed. Wael Hallaq, for instance, describes Ibn Taymiyya's *Radd*,[7] which is a critique of Greek logic, as "one of the most devastating attacks ever levelled against the logic upheld by the early Greeks, the later commentators, and their Muslim followers."[8] Similarly, Ibn Taymiyya's work refuting principal elements of Shīʿī thought[9] is, as Krawietz remarks, "anything but simplistic and is based on astonishingly deep erudition."[10] Alexander Knysh remarks in his work on the thought of Muḥyī al-Dīn b. ʿArabī[11] (d. 638/1240) and its reception that Ibn Taymiyya's critique of Ibn ʿArabī rests on an "intimate familiarity"[12] with the latter's doctrine of the unity

---

4   See Yahya Michot, *Muslims under Non-Muslim Rule: Ibn Taymiyya* (Oxford: Interface Publications, 2006); Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); and Ovamir Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

5   Ibn Taymiyya's dubious reputation also stems from the fact that a large number of violent groups within Sunni Islam believe they are justified in claiming him as one of their intellectual forefathers. See p. 28, n. 26 below.

6   As we shall elaborate, however, the current study also disagrees with the judgement expressed by the authors of some secondary studies that Ibn Taymiyya should, in reality, be classified as a speculative theologian and/or a philosopher.

7   Ibn Taymiyya's works throughout this study are indicated by short titles, which are listed in alphabetical order at the beginning of the bibliography along with full bibliographical details (see p. 337 ff.).

8   Wael B. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), xi. This assessment is corroborated by Anke von Kügelgen. See von Kügelgen, "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik an der aristotelischen Logik und sein Gegenentwurf," in *Logik und Theologie: Das Organon im arabischen und im lateinischen Mittelalter*, ed. Dominik Perler and Ulrich Rudolph (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 171.

9   In his work *Minhāj*.

10   Krawietz, "Ibn Taymiyya" (2003), 47.

11   The correct form of his name is Ibn al-ʿArabī. Here and in the remainder of this work, however, the definite article is omitted, as is standard academic practice, in order to distinguish him from the Mālikī legal scholar Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148).

12   Alexander Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 88.

of being, describing the critique as a "devastating blow, which made him [Ibn Taymiyya] undoubtedly the most implacable and consequential opponent of Ibn ʿArabī and his followers."[13] Along similar lines, Frank Griffel observes that "Ibn Taymiyya was probably one of the best-informed critics of rationalism in Islam, and his opinion deserves to be taken seriously."[14] The current study is all the more relevant given that Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the divine attributes, as I will show, has not yet been subjected to a thoroughgoing analysis despite the fact that, in my estimation, there is no other topic to which he himself devotes more attention in his various writings. Given that Western scholarship on Ibn Taymiyya has been written primarily in English and French,[15] [the original German version of] this study was intended as a contribution to the field of Islamic Theology currently emerging in the German-speaking academy.[16]

---

13 Ibid., 87.

14 Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 283.

15 Jon Hoover has listed and annotated the most important studies up to the year 2011 in Jon Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya," *Oxford Bibliographies Online*, last modified 24 April 2012, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0150.xml. The following list includes a selection of works that have appeared since 2011: Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community*; Yahya Michot, *Ibn Taymiyya: Against Extremism* (Paris: Albouraq, 2012); Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer, eds., *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013); Yasir Kazi [also: Qadhi], "Reconciling Reason and Revelation in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328): An Analytical Study of Ibn Taymiyya's *Darʾ al-taʿāruḍ*" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2013); Jörn Thielmann, *Ibn Taymiyya: A Social Market Economist avant la lettre?* (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2014); Jon Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya between Moderation and Radicalism," in *Reclaiming Islamic Tradition: Modern Interpretations of the Classical Heritage*, ed. Elisabeth Kendall and Ahmad Khan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016); Sophia Vasalou, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theological Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Mohamed Moustafa, "Upholding God's Essence: Ibn Taymiyya on the Createdness of the Spirit," *Nazariyat* 3, no. 2 (2017); Farid Suleiman, "Ibn Taymīyas Theorie der Koranexegese," in *Koranexegese als »Mix and Match«: Zur Diversität aktueller Diskurse in der tafsīr-Wissenschaft*, ed. Abbas Poya (Bielefeld: transcript, 2017); and Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation: A Study of* Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql (Leiden: Brill, 2020). I did not have access to the following works: Elliott Bazzano, "The Qurʾan according to Ibn Taymiyya: Redefining Exegetical Authority in the Islamic Tradition" (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 2013) and Rodrigo Adem, "The Intellectual Genealogy of Ibn Taymiyya" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2015).

16 The most important German works dealing with aspects of Ibn Taymiyya's thought are (1) Fritz Meier, "Das sauberste über die Vorherbestimmung: Ein Stück Ibn Taymiyya," in Fritz Meier, *Bausteine I–III: Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Islamwissenschaft*, ed. Erika Glassen and Gudrun Schubert, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992); Eng. trans. John O'Kane, with the editorial assistance of Bernd Radtke, "The Cleanest about Predestination: A Bit of Ibn Taymiyya," in *Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism*, ed. Fritz Meier (Leiden: Brill,

1   State of the Field

Frank Griffel has recently remarked that "Muslim theories of divine attributes
are often surrounded by an air of obscurity and do not enjoy great favor in
Western academia."[17] Indeed, as Griffel intimates, Western scholarship until
now has only with relative infrequency turned its attention to the theme of
the divine attributes.[18] This is particularly true when it comes to the theolo-
gical positions of *ahl al-ḥadīth* ("traditionalists"),[19] among whom Ibn Taymiyya
may be counted. An analysis of Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the attributes in
particular thus remains an outstanding desideratum of academic research, as
has been pointed out numerous times in the past several years. Jon Hoover,
for instance, remarks at the end of his monograph on Ibn Taymiyya's theodicy
that "other aspects of Ibn Taymiyya's theology await more detailed exposition
and analysis, especially his doctrine of God's attributes surveyed in Chapter
One."[20] Mohammad Gharaibeh in 2012 bemoaned the lack of such a study in
the following words: "The fact that Ibn Taymiyya left behind no systematic work

---

1999) and (2) Benjamin Jokisch, *Islamisches Recht in Theorie und Praxis: Analyse einiger
kaufrechtlicher Fatwas von Taqī'd-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyya* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1996).
The following studies should also be mentioned: Dorothea Becker-Klein, "Der ‚Heilige'
in der Kritik Ibn Taymīyas" (PhD diss., Free University of Berlin, 1957); Clemens Wein,
"Die islamische Glaubenslehre (*ʿAqīda*) des Ibn Taimīya" (PhD diss., University of Bonn,
1973); Marwan Kabbani, "Die Heiligenverehrung im Urteil Ibn Taymīyas und seiner Zeit-
genossen" (PhD diss., University of Bonn, 1979); Bernd Radtke, "Ibn Taimīya: Der erste
sunnitische »Fundamentalist«," in *Die Welten des Islam: Neunundzwanzig Vorschläge, das
Unvertraute zu verstehen*, ed. Gernot Rotter (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1994); Marco Schöller, "Ibn
Taymiyah und nochmals die Frage nach einer Reformation im Islam," in *Studien für Semit-
istik und Arabistik: Festschrift für Hartmut Bobzin zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Otto Jastrow,
Shabo Talay, and Herta Hafenrichter (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008); and Abdelkader
Al Ghouz, "Kontingenzbewältigung als Zügel der Herrschaft: Ibn Taymīyas Herrschaftsver-
ständnis zwischen religiöser Normativität und politischem Pragmatismus," *Das Mittelalter*
20, no. 1 (2015). For German-language studies on the life of Ibn Taymiyya, see p. 24, n. 9
below.

17   Frank Griffel, review of *Der unbekannte* kalām: *Theologische Positionen der frühen Mātu-
rīdīya am Beispiel der Attributenlehre*, by Angelika Brodersen, *Der Islam* 93, no. 2 (2016):
585.

18   The most important such works are listed in chapter 3 below, which deals with the attrib-
utes of God in Islamic thought up to the time of Ibn Taymiyya. See particularly p. 39,
n. 6 (on the Māturīdīs); p. 41, n. 20 (on the Muʿtazila); p. 52, n. 90 and p. 52, n. 91 (on the
falāsifa); p. 58, n. 118; p. 58, n. 120; and p. 77, n. 225 (on *ahl al-ḥadīth*); and p. 81, n. 252 (on
the Ashʿarīs).

19   Why this is a problematic translation, as well as the sense in which this term is used in the
present work, is discussed at p. 59 below.

20   Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 237.

and that his works resemble a collection of different *fatāwā* makes a systematic analysis and interpretation of them harder but all the more necessary."[21] Indeed, as far as I can ascertain, Western scholarship has only discussed Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the divine attributes in the form of summary overviews or it has focussed narrowly on partial aspects thereof. Below I list and, where appropriate, engage the scholarship whose treatment of the topic at hand goes beyond mere passing remarks. Important works whose scope, however, is limited to individual questions pertinent to Ibn Taymiyya's methodology or to his doctrine of the divine attributes are discussed subsequently in the individual chapters of this study to which they are relevant. Selected sources from the vast Arabic scholarly literature are likewise cited in the ensuing chapters where relevant.

To the best of my knowledge, Henri Laoust is the first to have provided an overview of Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the divine attributes in a European language.[22] Although his 750-page study is concerned with Ibn Taymiyya's sociopolitical views, Laoust nevertheless dedicates eighteen pages to a treatment of the theme that concerns us here. In Laoust's opinion, Ibn Taymiyya belongs neither to the anthropomorphists (*mushabbiha*) nor to the so-called negators (*nufāh*), who deny the reality of God's attributes, but rather attempts to tread a middle path between these two extremes.[23] Laoust thus parts ways with Ignaz Goldziher and Duncan MacDonald, both of whom—albeit without relying on any primary sources—classified Ibn Taymiyya as an anthropomorphist.[24] Clemens Wein, who in the course of his dissertation on Ibn Taymiyya's *Wāsiṭiyya* also has occasion to speak of his doctrine of the attributes,[25] makes an argument similar to that of Laoust and comments, "In an equally critical manner, (newer) Orientalists who seem to be convinced of Ibn Taymiyya's anthropomorphism must be asked whether they have not fallen victim to the influence of one-sided, anti-Ḥanbalī sources."[26] A similar sentiment can be found in

---

21   Mohammad Gharaibeh, *Zur Attributenlehre der Wahhābīya unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Schriften Ibn ʿUṯaimīns (1929–2001)* (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2012), 315, n. 1037.

22   See Henri Laoust, *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Taḳī-d-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taimīya* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1939), 154–172.

23   See ibid., 155–156.

24   See Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Ẓāhiriten: Ihr Lehrsystem und ihre Geschichte* (1884; repr., Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), 198–199, as well as Duncan B. MacDonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory* (1902; repr., London: Darf, 1985), 270–271 and 274.

25   See Wein, "Glaubenslehre," 15–32.

26   Ibid., 30 (parentheses original).

works by Sherman Jackson[27] and Serajul Haque, the latter being one of the few who have argued explicitly against the widespread presumption of Ibn Taymiyya's supposed literalism.[28] Ssekamanya Siraje Abdallah advocated for the opposing view in a 2004 article in which he attempts to illustrate Ibn Taymiyya's theological method by analysing specific partial aspects of his doctrine on the divine attributes.[29] The contributions of both Haque and Abdallah are, however, cursory and do not appear to be based on an in-depth engagement with the primary literature. Given that Ibn Taymiyya considered the word of God to be uncreated, for instance, both authors draw the false conclusion that he also considered it eternal.[30] While it is conceivable how one might draw this conclusion, Ibn Taymiyya argues repeatedly and explicitly throughout his works that God's word, though uncreated, is by no means eternal.[31] Offering a more nuanced characterisation of Ibn Taymiyya's Quranic hermeneutics, Yahya Michot suggests the term "literalist rationalism" in an article in which he translates a lengthy passage from Ibn Taymiyya's *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* that bears directly on the topic of the divine attributes.[32]

In agreement with Laoust, Dorthe Bramsen argued in a 2003 article that Ibn Taymiyya's method with respect to the divine attributes aims to reconcile the doctrine of divine transcendence with statements describing God in the revealed texts.[33] Bramsen recognised that the linguistic concept of *mutawāṭiʾ*

---

27   See Sherman A. Jackson, "Ibn Taymiyya on Trial in Damascus," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 39, no. 1 (1994): 51–56 (esp. p. 53).

28   See Serajul Haque, "Ibn Taymīyyah," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M.M. Sharif (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966), 802–803. Here and afterwards, the term "literalist" refers to a person who acknowledges the semantic distinction between literal and figurative meaning and who interprets the revealed texts primarily in accord with the former.

29   See Ssekamanya Siraje Abdallah, "Ibn Taymiyyah's Theological Approach Illustrated: On the Essence (*dhāt*) and Attributes (*ṣifāt*) of Allah," *Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 9, no. 1 (2004).

30   See Haque, "Ibn Taymīyyah," 803; Abdallah, "Ibn Taymiyyah's Theological Approach," 60.

31   The divine attribute of speech is treated exhaustively in chapter 10, section 2.

32   See J. Yahya Michot, "A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary on Avicenna's *Risāla Aḍḥawiyya*, being a translation of a part of the *Darʾ al-Taʿāruḍ* of Ibn Taymiyya, with introduction, annotation, and appendices, Part 1," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2003): 165. The second part has appeared as Michot, "A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary on Avicenna's *Risāla Aḍḥawiyya*, being a translation of a part of the *Darʾ al-Taʿāruḍ* of Ibn Taymiyya, with introduction, annotation, and appendices, Part 2," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 3 (2003).

33   See Dorthe Bramsen, "Ibn Taymiyya og de guddommelige egenskaber," *Religionsvidenskabeligt Tidsskrift* 42 (2003). Since I do not read Danish, my knowledge of the content of this article is derived from the abstract provided of it in English, as well as from an unpublished translation of the main text prepared expressly for the purpose of the present study.

terms, which we address in detail in chapter 5, was a key element in this endeavour and therefore treats it at greater length than has typically been the case for other studies.[34]

In a short 2009 article on Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the divine attributes, Souheil Sayoud advances an argument diametrically opposed to the basic premiss of the foregoing works. In Sayoud's view, Ibn Taymiyya merely deconstructed the opinions of others but did not work out any alternative theory of his own about how statements describing God in the revealed sources should be understood.[35] Now, it is true that Ibn Taymiyya's writings consist in large part of critiques levelled against other strands of thought, a fact in light of which Sophia Vasalou has aptly characterised his thought as "thinking-*in-bello*."[36] However, the current work demonstrates that contrary to Sayoud's claims, Ibn Taymiyya did indeed elaborate a positive theory of the divine attributes.

In her monograph on Ibn Taymiyya's ethics referenced just above, Vasalou comes to the conclusion that Ibn Taymiyya's moral-theoretical stances are very close to those of the Ash'arīs, both in substance and in terms of their pessimistic attitude towards reason. To gain a deeper understanding of Ibn Taymiyya's position on reason, she explores themes that do not bear a direct relation to ethics, such as Ibn Taymiyya's conception of God. Here too she concludes that, contrary to what Ibn Taymiyya's own language may lead one to surmise, reason does not, in fact, play any "critical role" in his methodology.[37] In this Vasalou concurs with Jon Hoover, from whose monograph she cites the observation that Ibn Taymiyya is "devising his rational arguments so as to arrive safely at theological doctrines held a priori on the basis of authoritative tradition."[38] Both Yossef Rapoport and I, in our respective reviews of her study, have concluded that Vasalou is able to maintain this image of Ibn Taymiyya's methodology only by overlooking his creative interpretive engagement with the revealed texts.[39]

Bramsen's article is based on her Master's thesis (also in Danish), which was not available to me.

34 She bases her treatment of this topic on that of Sherman Jackson, which I do not follow in the present work. On the reason for this, see p. 157, n. 67 below.

35 See Souheil Sayoud, "Sans comment: Ibn Taymiyya et le problème des attributs divins," in *Lumières médiévales*, ed. Géraldine Roux (Paris: Van Dieren, 2009), 67.

36 Vasalou, *Theological Ethics*, 57 (emphasis original).

37 See ibid., 230–241 (quoted material at p. 241).

38 See ibid., 239. The quotation cited by Vasalou is located in Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 68.

39 See Yossef Rapoport, review of *Ibn Taymiyya's Theological Ethics*, by Sophia Vasalou, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 80, no. 1 (2017): 145 and Farid Suleiman,

Before delving further into Jon Hoover's works, we first mention the dissertation of Abdel Hakim Ajhar (McGill University, 2000). As we shall see shortly, Ajhar advocates a view diametrically opposed to Vasalou's.[40] Ajhar is primarily interested in Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of creation, which he compares to the views of the *falāsifa*[41] and the *mutakallimūn*.[42] He also addresses the question of Ibn Taymiyya's position on the essence and attributes of God, but his treatment of the topic is often imprecise and at times even seriously misleading. His claim that Ibn Taymiyya advocated *tafwīḍ*,[43] for instance, is decidedly incorrect,[44] for Ibn Taymiyya was, in fact, an avowed opponent of this method and formulated his own position in explicit opposition to it. Equally problematic is Ajhar's view that Ibn Taymiyya was pursuing the same goal as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), namely, to reconcile *kalām* and *falsafa* by means of a synthesis.[45] In light of these contentions, it is hardly surprising that Ajhar identifies Ibn Taymiyya—in direct contrast to Vasalou—as a *mutakallim* (speculative theologian) and a philosopher.[46] Yet Ibn Taymiyya saw himself as neither a *mutakallim* nor a philosopher (be it in the sense of a *faylasūf* or in any other sense), and as the current work shall demonstrate, we have good reasons to concur with him in that.

The most important and substantive contributions on Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the divine attributes are those of Jon Hoover, specifically a section of his aforementioned monograph,[47] as well as a 2010 article that analyses the treatise *Ikhtiyāriyya*.[48] In contrast to Vasalou, who consistently argues that Ibn

---

　　　　review of *Ibn Taymiyya's Theological Ethics*, by Sophia Vasalou, *Die Welt des Islams* 57, no. 2 (2017): 262–263.

40　　See Abdel Hakim Ajhar, "The Metaphysics of the Idea of God in Ibn Taymiyya's Thought" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2000).

41　　A term designating the members of a particular tradition of philosophical thought known as *falsafa*. See chapter 3, section 3 on the *falāsifa* and the conceptual distinction between "philosophy" and "*falsafa*."

42　　Plural of the word *mutakallim*, introduced previously.

43　　Literally "consigning" or "entrusting," meaning that the knowledge of what is meant by the language used to describe God in the revealed sources should be left, or "consigned," to God alone. The method of *tafwīḍ* is further elaborated at p. 67 ff. below.

44　　See Ajhar, "Metaphysics," 11 and 248.

45　　On this development, driven by al-Ghazālī among others, see pp. 56–57 below.

46　　See Ajhar, "Metaphysics," 48 and 247–248.

47　　See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 46–67.

48　　See Jon Hoover, "God Acts by His Will and Power: Ibn Taymiyya's Theology of a Personal God in his Treatise on the Voluntary Attributes," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010). *Ikhtiyāriyya* offers little in terms of substance that cannot be found elsewhere in Ibn Taymiyya's works. Given that Hoover has already summarised *Ikhtiyāriyya* and that the aim of the current work is to

Taymiyya considers revelation the decisive source of authority while allotting but a marginal role to reason, Hoover repeatedly emphasises those elements of Ibn Taymiyya's methodology that display a favourable disposition to reason. In both aforementioned works, Hoover lucidly works out one of the essential components of Ibn Taymiyya's theology that clearly distinguishes it from conceptions of God found in other influential strands of thought. As he says by way of summary, "Ibn Taymiyya's God, who is perpetually active and creative from eternity, contrasts sharply with the ultimately timeless and motionless God of not only Ibn Sīnā and his successors but also the Kalām theologians."[49] Another important insight, also confirmed in the current work, is Hoover's assertion that Ibn Taymiyya interprets the descriptions of God in revelation neither literally nor metaphorically.[50] In other ways too the picture Hoover paints of Ibn Taymiyya's views on the attributes of God is consistent with the findings of the present study, though naturally that picture remains fragmentary in several places given the limitations of what can be covered in the space of a single article or book chapter.

2 Objectives and Approach

The current study aims to achieve several objectives. First, based on statements scattered unsystematically over numerous individual treatises, it attempts to piece together an overall picture of the methodological foundations underlying Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the divine attributes. As a second step, it then examines how he applies these foundational principles as exemplified in his treatment of selected divine attributes. In exploring these themes, I have attempted to place Ibn Taymiyya's positions within the larger context of Islamic intellectual history. The study focusses primarily on Ibn Taymiyya's elaboration of his own positive, constructive positions and less on his deconstructive critique of the positions of others, though I do also discuss this critique where relevant. And while a systematic comparison of Ibn Taymiyya's ideas with those of, for instance, Ibn ʿArabī or Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198) may be desirable—particularly given that academic studies have often pointed to parallels among these thinkers[51]—such a task goes beyond the scope of the

---

introduce as many of Ibn Taymiyya's works as possible to a non-Arabic-speaking audience for the first time, I have not drawn on *Ikhtiyāriyya* in this study.

49 Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 4–5.

50 See ibid., 52.

51 With respect to Ibn ʿArabī, see ibid., 47–48, as well as Abdel Hakim Ajhar, *Suʾāl al-ʿālam:*

present work, remaining a project for future scholarship. Similarly, inquiries into the subsequent reception of Ibn Taymiyya's views, as well as the interesting question to what extent trends like modern Salafism can claim Ibn Taymiyya as their intellectual forebear, have been fully excluded from consideration in this study.[52]

In the course of achieving the above-stated goals, I also seek to answer a number of other questions: What role does reason play in Ibn Taymiyya's methodology? Does Ibn Taymiyya apply the methodology he has worked out consistently in practice? Is Ibn Taymiyya's view of himself as neither a literalist nor an anthropomorphist justified? And finally, what relationship do Ibn Taymiyya's positions have to the development of ideas that preceded him?

The first step in answering these questions involved identifying the relevant works from Ibn Taymiyya's corpus. This task was facilitated by the fact that the vast majority of his works are available in print, and often in critical editions that meet the standards of academic scholarship. Difficulties arose, however, from the fact that in the more than thirty thousand printed pages over which Ibn Taymiyya deals with problems drawn from the most varied branches of the Islamic sciences, the question of the divine attributes and directly related themes are, in my estimation, the ones he raises and deals with most frequently. After reviewing all the relevant works, treatises, and passages of which I am aware, I was able to select a group of texts that shed light on the substantive development of Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the attributes. I refer to these works by abbreviations or short titles, which are listed in alphabetical order at the beginning of the bibliography.[53] In addition, I provide in the following section an annotated listing of the works—ten in number—upon which I draw most frequently in this study.[54] In light of the rich and complex body of primary source materials, such a listing allows for an easier reconstruction of the source base on which my research predominantly rests. In so doing, I address the chronology of these ten works, five of which I have been able to date precisely, while

---

al-Shaykhān Ibn ʿArabī wa-Ibn Taymiyya min fikrat al-waḥda ilā fikrat al-ikhtilāf (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2011). With respect to Ibn Rushd, see al-Ṭablāwī Saʿd, *Mawqif Ibn Taymiyya min falsafat Ibn Rushd* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Amāna, 1989) and Jon Hoover, "Perpetual Creativity in the Perfection of God: Ibn Taymiyya's Hadith Commentary on God's Creation of this World," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 3 (2004): 289–291.

52   On the reception of Ibn Taymiyya, see "Ibn Taymiyya: Receptions (14th–17th Century)," ed. Caterina Bori, special issue, *Muslim World* 108, no. 1 (2018).

53   See p. 337 ff. below.

54   See section 3 below.

two others I was able to locate within specific phases of Ibn Taymiyya's life. It has therefore been possible in many cases for me to investigate Ibn Taymiyya's thought in light of its development over time. However, the prospect of analysing each of Ibn Taymiyya's works (whether datable or not) separately—in order to avoid the danger of projecting an inner coherence[55] onto texts that may have been written years or decades apart—is one I have rejected for two reasons. First, such an approach would likely have at least doubled the size of this work given the large number of primary sources in question. Second, there is in most cases an obvious degree of substantive overlap in the treatment of one and the same theme across Ibn Taymiyya's various works; indeed at times, even the wording of passages and/or the examples given are very similar. In cases where the similarities were less explicit or where there even appeared to be contradictions, I have drawn attention to this fact and discussed the relevant passages separately. One should note in this connection the lack of any discernible ruptures or substantial transformations in Ibn Taymiyya's various treatments of the divine attributes, even in works we know to have been composed decades apart. It is true that in one of his works, Ibn Taymiyya himself reports that he had once adhered blindly to a conception of God that he had been taught but that he rejected upon subsequent reflection.[56] However, I concur with Jon Hoover that this shift in Ibn Taymiyya's thought must have occurred very early in his life since there is no passage of which we know in any of his writings in which he upholds, or even so much as describes, these earlier views.[57]

In terms of structure, the core of my study is divided into three parts. Part 1, section 1 considers Ibn Taymiyya's biography, with a focus on his relationship to the wider scholarly and political elite of his day—a relationship fraught with tension primarily, or so it seems, on account of theological differences. Section 2 provides an overview of the development of various doctrines concerning the divine attributes over the course of Islamic thought up to Ibn Taymiyya's time. Both these sections are based to a considerable extent on existing scholarship, and neither purports to advance any novel thesis. Rather, they serve to provide a historical contextualisation of Ibn Taymiyya's theological positions as discussed in subsequent chapters and to sharpen the contours of these positions

---

55   A phenomenon for which Quentin Skinner coined the phrase "the mythology of coherence." See Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): esp. 16–21.

56   See *Ikhtiyāriyya*, MF, 6:258; JR, 2:56.

57   See Hoover, "God Acts," 71–72.

by contrasting them with opposing views. They likewise elucidate particular terms and concepts that are central to this study and to which Ibn Taymiyya refers in many of his writings.

Part 2, which forms the core of the present study, deals with the methodological foundations of Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the divine attributes. The different chapters of part 2 examine the ontological, linguistic, hermeneutical, and epistemological dimensions of Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the attributes and conclude with a summary of main findings.

In part 3, we turn our attention to a substantive consideration of Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the attributes, particularly as concerns God's essence, His attributes of justice (*ʿadl*), speech (*kalām*), and rising (*istiwāʾ*) over His throne, and the Quranic affirmation that creation is constantly in the presence (*maʿiyya*) of God. I have chosen these four attributes because Ibn Taymiyya discusses them in a particularly detailed and thorough manner, thus allowing them to be used as a basis for comparing Ibn Taymiyya's concrete applications with his stated methodology as presented in part 2. Furthermore, at least with respect to the attributes of *kalām* and *istiwāʾ*, it turns out that not only Ibn Taymiyya but also many other thinkers of various stripes within the debate over the divine attributes frequently appeal to these specific attributes as examples when discussing the various positions taken and elucidating their own stance. Part 3 is likewise capped by a summary (which constitutes chapter 11).

The final part of the study, consisting of chapter 12, returns to where we began in the introduction and attempts to answer the questions posed at the outset of this work. It also raises further questions that emerge from this study and that invite further research.

Finally, a few points of protocol. For the purposes of the English version of this study, quotations from non-English-language works have generally been translated directly from the source language. Any substantive departures from the translations that appear in the German original of this work have been approved by the author. The transliteration of Arabic words follows the conventions adopted by the *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*,[58] excluding the elision of *hamzat al-waṣl* in the definite article when preceded by a long vowel (e.g., *fī al-dār*, rather than *fī l-dār*). Well-known place names and names of dynasties with established English spellings (e.g., Basra, Kufa, Abbasid, Mamluk) have not been transliterated, nor have Arabic words that have gained widespread usage

---

58   See "Transliteration Table for Brill Online," https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/pages/help/transliteration-islam (last consulted 15 October 2023).

in English (e.g., hadith, fatwa) as determined by the online version of the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*.[59] The current translation has been reviewed and certified by the author, who has approved modest departures from strict adherence to the wording of the original text in the interest of smoothness and readability in English. Several minor errors in the original text have also been corrected with the approval of the author. In a very small number of instances, comments or notes relevant only to the German readership have been removed, while an equally small number of minor adjustments or further corrections to the text—whether by way of addition, deletion, or slight rewording—have been carried out by the author himself, or by the translator with the approval of the author.

3 Overview of the Works of Ibn Taymiyya Most Frequently Used in This Study

(1) *Bayān talbīs al-jahmiyya fī taʾsīs bidaʿihim al-kalāmiyya*
(Uncovering the deceit of the Jahmiyya in laying the foundations of their unlawful innovations in *kalām*)

MANUSCRIPTS AND PUBLISHED EDITIONS: This work was published in 2005-6 for the first time in a complete critical edition based on the six manuscripts of it (of differing completeness) that have been preserved.[60]

LENGTH: Eight volumes (approx. 300 pages per volume).

DATING: Ibn Taymiyya wrote this work during his imprisonment in the tower of the citadel in Cairo between 26 Ramaḍān 705 (11 April 1306) and 23 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 707 (21 September 1307).[61]

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: As Ibn Taymiyya states in the introduction, the treatise *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya al-kubrā* (see #2) and the follow-up work *Jawāb al-iʿtirāḍāt al-Miṣriyya ʿalā al-futyā al-Ḥamawiyya* (see #3) responding to critiques of the *Ḥamawiyya* were directed at contemporary opponents in the dispute over the divine attributes. However, he reports having become convinced that a thorough refutation of these opponents was possible only through a

---

59   See https://www.merriam-webster.com/.

60   Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-jahmiyya fī taʾsīs bidaʿihim al-kalāmiyya*, ed. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Hunaydī et al., 10 vols. (Medina: Mujammaʿ al-Malik Fahd li-Ṭibāʿat al-Muṣḥaf al-Sharīf, 1426/[2005-6]). Concerning the manuscripts used, see 9:26–28.

61   On this dating, see editor's remarks at *Bayān*, 9:22–25.

rebuttal of the works of their masters.[62] *Bayān* thus builds on the two above-mentioned works but with the express goal this time of refuting Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 606/1210) *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* (also known as *Asās al-taqdīs*[63]).[64] Ibn Taymiyya deals in this work with a large number of seemingly anthropomorphic divine attributes, making *Bayān* a work of central importance for the present study.

(2)   *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya al-kubrā*[65]
       (The large fatwa from Hama [in current-day Syria])

MANUSCRIPTS AND PUBLISHED EDITIONS: This work has been preserved in twenty manuscripts of varying length[66] and was published in a critical edition for the first time in 2004.[67] This version is to be preferred to the more common, albeit uncritical, version found in *MF*, 5:5–120.

LENGTH: Approx. 75 pages.

DATING: Written in 698/1298.[68]

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: This work is Ibn Taymiyya's response to a query he received from the city of Hama concerning the correct interpretation of several Quranic verses and prophetic hadith that appear to describe God in anthropomorphic terms. The treatise unleashed a wave of criticism, whereupon Ibn Taymiyya sought to defend his views in two further works (see #3 *Iʿtirāḍāt* and #1 *Bayān*).

---

62   See *Bayān*, 1:4–8.

63   This alternative title is the one under which the work has been edited and published. See Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Asās al-taqdīs*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyya, 1986).

64   For this reason, Ibn Taymiyya's *Bayān* is also known by the title *Naqḍ Asās al-taqdīs* (Refutation of *Asās al-taqdīs*), under which it was published in incomplete form in the year 2004-5. See Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyya, *Naqḍ Asās al-taqdīs*, ed. Mūsā b. Sulaymān al-Duwaysh (Medina: Maktabat al-ʿUlūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 1425/[2004-5]).

65   This work is very likely an expanded version of the treatise *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya al-ṣughrā*. See Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd al-Hādī, *al-ʿUqūd al-durriyya fī dhikr baʿḍ manāqib Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*, ed. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿImrān (Mecca: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawāʾid, 2011), 111, n. 3 (editor's note).

66   See ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Shibl, *al-Athbāt fī makhṭūṭāt al-aʾimma: Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya wa-l-ʿallāma Ibn al-Qayyim wa-l-ḥāfiẓ Ibn Rajab* (Riyadh: Malik Fahd al-Waṭaniyya, 2002), 88–90.

67   Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyya, *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya al-kubrā*, ed. Ḥamd b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Tuwayjirī (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumayʿī, 2004) [hereafter *Ḥamawiyya*, ed. al-Tuwayjirī]. The editor based this edition on nine manuscripts.

68   This dating is very well documented. See, e.g., Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, *ʿUqūd*, 111.

(3) *Jawāb al-iʿtirāḍāt al-Miṣriyya ʿalā al-futyā al-Ḥamawiyya
      al-kubrā*
      (Response to objections from Egypt concerning *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya
      al-kubrā*)

MANUSCRIPTS AND PUBLISHED EDITIONS: Large parts of this work, long
believed to have been lost, were recently published in a critical edition on the
basis of two incomplete manuscripts.[69]

LENGTH: Approx. 174 pages.

DATING: Written during Ibn Taymiyya's imprisonment in the tower of the
citadel in Cairo during the period from 26 Ramaḍān 705 (11 April 1306) to 23
Rabīʿ al-Awwal 707 (21 September 1307), though prior to *Bayān* (see #1).[70]

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: This work is a response to the objections raised by the
Ḥanafī chief qadi of Egypt, Shams al-Dīn al-Sarrūjī[71] (d. 710/1310), against Ibn
Taymiyya's *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya al-kubrā* (see #2).

(4) *Kitāb al-Īmān*[72]
      (The book of faith)

MANUSCRIPTS AND PUBLISHED EDITIONS: This work is available in a critical
edition produced on the basis of the eight manuscripts (of differing complete-
ness) known to the editor.[73] This edition is to be preferred to the more common,
albeit uncritical, version found in *MF*, 7:5–460. The work has also been trans-
lated into English.[74]

---

69   Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyya, *Jawāb al-iʿtirāḍāt al-Miṣriyya ʿalā al-Futyā al-Ḥamawiyya*,
     ed. Muḥammad ʿUzayr Shams (Mecca: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawāʾid, 1429/[2008]).

70   Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1393) mentions that Ibn Taymiyya composed this work while in prison in
     Egypt. See Abū al-Faraj b. Rajab, *al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid
     al-Faqqī, 2 vols. (Cairo: al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1953), 2:403. Ibn Taymiyya must have
     composed *Iʿtirāḍāt* before *Bayān*, as he mentions the former work in the latter. See *Bayān*,
     1:6–7 and 5:315–316.

71   On his life, see Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr wa-aʿwān al-naṣr*, ed. ʿAlī Abū Zayd et
     al., 6 vols. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1998), 1:159–161.

72   Also known as *Kitāb al-Īmān al-kabīr*, by which it is differentiated from Ibn Taymiyya's
     Kitāb al-Īmān al-awsaṭ (found in *MF*, 7:461–640; also referred to more rarely as *Kitāb al-
     Īmān al-ṣaghīr*). However, Ibn Taymiyya himself, as well as his students, uses the title given
     above (i.e., *Kitāb al-Īmān*) and refers to the latter-mentioned work as *Sharḥ ḥadīth Jibrīl fī
     al-īmān wa-l-islām*.

73   Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya, *"Kitāb al-Īmān al-kabīr"* li-Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya: Dir-
     āsa wa-taḥqīq," ed. Muḥammad Saʿīd Ibrāhīm Sayyid Aḥmad, 2 vols. (PhD diss., Umm
     al-Qurā University, 1423/[2002]) [hereafter *Īmān*, ed. Aḥmad]. For a description of the
     manuscripts, see *Īmān*, ed. Aḥmad, 1:105–117.

74   Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-Īmān: Book of Faith*, ed. Salman Hassan al-Ani and Shadia
     Ahmad Tel (Bloomington, IN: Iman Publishing House, 2010) [hereafter *Īmān*, Eng. trans.].

LENGTH: Approx. 300 pages.

DATING: Written between 705/1306 and 712/1313; this date can be further specified, with some degree of probability, to the period between 709/1310 and 712/1313.[75]

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: In this work, Ibn Taymiyya defends the view that *īmān* includes both internal conviction and external works and, moreover, that it is subject to increase and decrease. The claim of many groups, such as the Murji'a, that the word *īmān* (faith/belief) ostensibly denotes a particular mental state and includes works only in a figurative sense (*majāz*) leads Ibn Taymiyya, in a lengthy passage, to expound his fundamental critique of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy. This section of the work is of particular relevance to our study.[76]

(5)   ***al-Iklīl fī al-mutashābih wa-l-ta'wīl***[77]
      (The crown jewels regarding [the explication of the terms] *mutashābih* and *ta'wīl*)

MANUSCRIPTS AND PUBLISHED EDITIONS: This treatise has been preserved in two manuscripts[78] and published numerous times, including in *MF*, 13:270–313. However, no critical edition exists to date.

---

75   Ibn Rajab lists more works of Ibn Taymiyya, including *Kitāb al-Īmān*, and says in conclusion, "He wrote all these works in prison except for *Kitāb al-Īmān*, which he composed during his seven-year stay in Egypt." Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:403. Ibn Taymiyya's seven-year stay in Egypt lasted from 705/1306 to 712/1313, during which he spent the majority of the time between 705/1306 and 709/1310 in prison. This fact justifies a further specification of the date at which this work was composed (namely, in the period between 709/1310 and 712/1313). I owe my awareness of the evidence supporting this conclusion to the editor of *Īmān*. See *Īmān*, ed. Aḥmad, 1:91–93. (Elsewhere, however, Aḥmad goes against this conclusion when he argues that *Īmān* was written subsequently to *Dar'*, which Ibn Taymiyya composed after the year 713/1313. See *Īmān*, ed. Aḥmad, 2:173, n. 8. Aḥmad cites this passage in the mistaken belief that it supports the conclusion he has drawn formerly at pp. 1:91–93.) By contrast, al-Turkī, in his analysis of Ibn Taymiyya's views on the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy, attempts to demonstrate that *Kitāb al-Īmān* was composed much later. See Ibrāhīm al-Turkī, *Inkār al-majāz 'inda Ibn Taymiyya bayna al-dars al-balāghī wa-l-lughawī* (Riyadh: Dār al-Ma'ārij al-Dawliyya, 1996), 60–63. Al-Turkī's position, which I do not adopt here, will be revisited and further discussed below (see p. 153). We should also note that *Īmān* may possibly be a collection of individual, smaller writings, which Ibn Taymiyya may have put together at the end of his stay in Egypt. On this point, see also the editors' introduction in *Īmān*, Eng. trans., 9.

76   Passage located in *Īmān*, *MF*, 7:87–119; ed. Aḥmad, 2:138–194; Eng. trans., 98–131.

77   I was unable to find this very commonly used title in any of the catalogues of Ibn Taymiyya's works put together by his students. The substance and style of the treatise, however, leave no doubt that the work is Ibn Taymiyya's. Given that it is a smaller writing, it could be that it acquired the above-mentioned title only later.

78   See Shibl, *Athbāt*, 54.

LENGTH: Approx. 24 pages.

DATING: Cannot be reliably dated.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: Ibn Taymiyya explicates the terms *muḥkam*, *mutashā-bih*, and *ta'wīl* that appear in numerous passages of the Quran, with an emphasis on Q. 3:7.

(6) *Qāʿida fī al-ḥaqīqa wa-l-majāz*
(Basic rule regarding [the differentiation between] literal and figurative meaning)

MANUSCRIPTS AND PUBLISHED EDITIONS: This work, which appears to have been preserved in only one manuscript,[79] has been published in an uncritical addition in *MF*, 20:400–497.

LENGTH: 54 pages.

DATING: Composed after 716/1316.[80]

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: Ibn Taymiyya provides an in-depth discussion in an attempt to show that the linguistic distinction between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* is illegitimate. The main target of his critique in this treatise is the work *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām* by Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233).[81]

(7) *al-Risāla al-Akmaliyya fī-mā yajibu li-Llāh min ṣifāt al-kamāl*
(The *Akmaliyya* epistle on [the question of] which attributes of perfection belong to God necessarily)

MANUSCRIPTS AND PUBLISHED EDITIONS: On the basis of two earlier editions, Rashād Sālim has produced a third edition of this work (in which he

---

79 See ibid., 182.

80 This dating of the work can be inferred from the fact that in it, Ibn Taymiyya mentions that he has elsewhere refuted the argument that the prophet Shuʿayb was the father-in-law of Moses (see *MF*, 20:429). In all likelihood, he is referring here to his *Risāla fī qiṣṣat Shuʿayb* (located in *JR*, 1:59–66), which deals precisely with this topic. In the *Risāla*, Ibn Taymiyya refers to his epistle *al-Radd ʿalā al-Naṣārā*, which, as Bosworth has shown, is an alternative title of the work *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ* [hereafter *Jawāb*]. See Clifford Bosworth, "The Qurʾanic Prophet Shuʿaib and Ibn Taymiyya's Epistle Concerning Him," *Le Muséon* 88 (1974): 440, n. 47. *Jawāb*, in turn, can be dated to the year 716/1316 or shortly thereafter. See Jon Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya," in *Christian–Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 4, *1200–1350*, ed. David Thomas and Alex Mallett (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 834. It follows from these considerations that the treatise in question here, concerning the terms *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*, was likely composed after this date.

81 The passages to which Ibn Taymiyya refers here can be found in Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām*, ed. ʿAbd al-Razzāq ʿAfīfī, 4 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumayʿī, 2003), starting at 1:67.

indicates the differences between the earlier editions).[82] Sālim's edition is to be preferred to the more common edition found in *MF*, 6:68–140.

LENGTH: 70 pages.

DATING: Cannot be reliably dated.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: Writing in response to a query, Ibn Taymiyya provides in this work a relatively systematic presentation of his approach to establishing the divine attributes through the *argumentum a fortiori* (*qiyās awlā*). We treat this work primarily in chapter 7, section 1.2 of the current study.

(8)   *al-Risāla al-Madaniyya fī al-ḥaqīqa wa-l-majāz*[83]
      (The Medinan epistle regarding [the distinction between] literal and figurative meaning)

MANUSCRIPTS AND PUBLISHED EDITIONS: This work exists in three manuscripts, which served as the basis of a critical edition.[84] This edition is to be preferred to the more common, albeit uncritical, edition found in *MF*, 6:351–373.

LENGTH: 15 pages.

DATING: Written some time before 711/1311.[85]

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: In recounting a debate between himself and an unnamed Shāfiʿī (and thus likely also Ashʿarī) opponent, Ibn Taymiyya states four conditions that must be met for an expression to be understood in a figurative rather than a literal sense. Approximately ten years after this debate, he composed a work known as *Ḍābiṭ* in response to objections that had been raised against *Madaniyya* by an unnamed *mutakallim*.[86] In *Ḍābiṭ*, which has unfortunately been only partially preserved, Ibn Taymiyya speaks of the *mutakallim* in a most respectful manner, but without coming any closer to him on substantive questions.

---

82   Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya, *al-Risāla al-Akmaliyya fī-mā yajibu li-Llāh min ṣifāt al-kamāl*, ed. Rashād Sālim (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, 1983).

83   Also known by the title *al-Risāla al-Madaniyya fī ithbāt al-ṣifāt al-naqliyya*.

84   Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya, *al-Risāla al-Madaniyya*, ed. al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Farriyān (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṭība, 1408/[1987-8]).

85   Ibn Taymiyya sent this epistle to the Ḥanbalī scholar Shams al-Dīn al-Dibbāhī in Medina (see Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, *ʿUqūd*, 83), who, according to al-Dhahabī, died in the year 711/1311 and had taught in Damascus towards the end of his life. See Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Muʿjam al-shuyūkh al-kabīr*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb al-Hīla, 2 vols. (Taif: Maktabat al-Ṣiddīq, 1988), 2:168–169. We may thus assume that the epistle was sent to Medina sometime before 711/1311.

86   For the dating of this treatise, see *Ḍābiṭ*, *JM*, 5:44–45 and 62.

(9) **al-Risāla al-Tadmuriyya fī taḥqīq al-ithbāt fī al-asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt wa-ḥaqīqat al-jamʿ bayna al-qadar wa-l-sharʿ**
(Epistle to Palmyra concerning the verification of [the position of] affirming the divine names and attributes and the true [way of] reconciling divine predestination with revealed commands)

MANUSCRIPTS AND PUBLISHED EDITIONS: This work has been preserved in nine manuscripts[87] and published in, inter alia, *MF*, 3:1–128. The critical edition first published in 1985-6,[88] which is based on six manuscripts, is to be preferred to all other editions.

LENGTH: Approx. 80 pages.

DATING: Cannot be reliably dated.[89]

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: As Ibn Taymiyya remarks in the introduction to this treatise, he had been requested[90] to write a work concerning God's attributes as well as the relationship between divine predestination and revealed divine commands on account of the great confusion (*kathrat al-iḍṭirāb*) surrounding these subjects.[91] Ibn Taymiyya treats the question of the divine attributes in an unusually systematic, if not comprehensive, manner in the first two-thirds of *Tadmuriyya*, making this treatise highly relevant to the current study.

(10) **Tafsīr Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ**
(The exegesis of Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ [Q. 112])

MANUSCRIPTS AND PUBLISHED EDITIONS: This work has been preserved in ten manuscripts and published numerous times. As far as I know, however, none of these editions can be considered more reliable than the widespread non-critical edition in *MF*, 17:214–503.

---

87   See Shibl, *Athbāt*, 66.

88   Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya, *al-Tadmuriyya: Taḥqīq al-ithbāt fī al-asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt wa-ḥaqīqat al-jamʿ bayna al-qadar wa-l-sharʿ*, ed. Muḥammad b. ʿAwda al-Saʿawī, 6th ed. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-ʿUbaykān, 2000).

89   It is certain that Ibn Taymiyya composed *Tadmuriyya* before *Aʿlā*, as he mentions *Tadmuriyya* in the latter (see *MF*, 16:430). Unfortunately, however, we can say no more about *Aʿlā* than that it was composed after *Jawāb* (Ibn Taymiyya mentions it in *MF*, 16:362) and, therefore, after 716/1316. On the dating of *Jawāb*, see p. 17, n. 80 above.

90   As Laoust remarks, Ibn Taymiyya composed this work for a Mamluk amir named Muhannā b. ʿĪsā (d. 736/1335-6). See Henri Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 3, ed. B. Lewis et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 952a.

91   Judging from the title of the treatise, he indeed appears to have received this request from the city of Palmyra, located in current-day Syria. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to say anything more about the historical context of this work.

Length: Approx. 270 pages.

Dating: Probably written before 715/1316.[92]

Brief description: Contrary to what the title might lead one to expect, this work consists of a polemical treatise on theology. Although Ibn Taymiyya does discuss the verses of sura 112 from an exegetical standpoint, he nevertheless uses them primarily as scaffolding for a larger discussion of the *falāsifa*'s doctrine of emanation, the question whether God is a body, and the terms *muḥkam*, *mutashābih*, and *taʾwīl* mentioned in Q. 3:7.[93]

---

92 Ibn Taymiyya deals briefly with Q. 112:1–2 in his work *Iqtiḍāʾ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm li-mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm* (written before 715/1316), in which he mentions that he has already treated these verses thoroughly elsewhere. See Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya, *Iqtiḍāʾ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm li-mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm*, ed. Nāṣir b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-ʿAql, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1998), 2:394 (on the dating of *Iqtiḍāʾ*, see editor's introduction, 1:30). Ibn Taymiyya is likely referring here to his treatise *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*.

93 This work has been treated in relative detail, including with respect to Ibn Taymiyya's methodology of Quranic exegesis, in Didin Syafruddin, "The Principles of Ibn Taymiyya's Qurʾanic Interpretation" (MA thesis, McGill University, 1994), 78–97.

PART 1

Ibn Taymiyya's Biography and the History of the Divine Attributes in Islamic Thought before His Time

∵

Ibn Taymiyya's Biography

According to several reports, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 770/1368 or 779/1377), the famous Arab world traveller and writer from Morocco, reached the city of Damascus on Thursday, 9 Ramaḍān 726 (9 August 1326) in the course of extensive travels that took him across three continents.[1] In his travelogue entry for this date we find, interestingly enough, a lengthy passage in which he broaches the phenomenon of Ibn Taymiyya. On one hand, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa describes the scholar in positive terms, declaring that the population of Damascus held him in the highest esteem. On the other hand, he attests that Ibn Taymiyya had something of a loose screw (*fī ʿaqlihi shayʾ*).[2] Furthermore—and this is where his remarks are particularly relevant for our study—Ibn Baṭṭūṭa reports that once while delivering the Friday sermon, Ibn Taymiyya physically stepped down from the pulpit (*minbar*) to show the congregation how God descends from His throne to the lower heavens.[3] Now, it is well-known that Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's travel reports do not always reflect his actual experiences;[4] it would thus be unsurprising if the incident reported here never occurred (or at least not in the form presented by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa). One indication that this may be the case is that Ibn Taymiyya was arrested about three weeks before Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's arrival and never left prison again until his death. Hence, he could not have delivered any Friday sermons in a Damascus mosque at the time in question.[5] And even if we suppose that the date Ibn Baṭṭūṭa gives for his arrival in Damascus was off by several weeks and

---

1 See Shams al-Dīn b. Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa: Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār fī gharāʾib al-amṣār wa-ʿajāʾib al-asfār*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-ʿAryān and Muṣṭafā al-Qaṣṣāṣ, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-ʿUlūm, 1987), 1:100.

2 See ibid., 1:111. Goldziher translated this phrase with the German expression "einen Sparren im Kopf (haben)." See Goldziher, *Ẓāhiriten*, 189. This was based in turn on a French translation of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's work that interprets the phrase as indicating some kind of derangement in the head ("mais il y avait dans son cerveau quelque chose de dérangé"). See Shams al-Dīn b. Baṭṭūṭa, *Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah*, ed. and trans. Charles Defrémery and Beniamino Sanguinetti, 4 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1853–1858), 1:215. Duncan MacDonald rendered it as "(having) a screw loose," a translation picked up by Donald Little in an article in which he attempts an analysis of Ibn Taymiyya's personality. See Donald P. Little, "Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?" *Studia Islamica* 41 (1975).

3 See Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, 1:111–112.

4 On this point, see David Waines, "Ibn Baṭṭūṭa," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2016-5, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

5 See here also Michot, *Muslims*, 168.

that he actually alighted in the city some time earlier, the authenticity of this incident would still be questionable considering that Ibn Taymiyya in many places explicitly denies that the attributes and actions of God are comparable to those of human beings.[6] It is thus unclear whether Ibn Baṭṭūṭa made this incident up or simply claimed eyewitness observation of an event that had been making its way around Damascus in the form of a rumour.[7] In either case, the fact that Ibn Baṭṭūṭa considered this report worthy of inclusion in his travelogue may be taken as an indication that at the time of his visit to Damascus, a heated debate was underway about how to understand the attributes of God in general and about Ibn Taymiyya's views on the matter in particular.

It is not the aim of the current chapter to reproduce a detailed biography of Ibn Taymiyya[8] as richly documented in the Arabic sources, a task that has already been carried out numerous times in the existing literature.[9] Rather, we

---

6 See, e.g., *Suʾāl ʿan al-Murshida*, MF, 11:482. Here, Ibn Taymiyya says that he who claims that God's descending takes place in a manner similar to that of a human being has not only erred but has placed himself outside the bounds of Islam.

7 The latter possibility is probable, however, as Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) reports a similar incident that is said to have occurred some twenty years earlier. See Little, "Screw Loose?," 97–98.

8 Little regards the source material for Ibn Taymiyya's biography as "quite possibly greater in bulk and detail than that for any other medieval Muslim with the obvious exception of Muḥammad himself." Ibid., 94. The most detailed descriptions, which come from three of Ibn Taymiyya's disciples and are therefore marked by a hagiographical undertone, are Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, *ʿUqūd*; ʿUmar b. ʿAlī al-Bazzār, *al-Aʿlām al-ʿaliyya fī manāqib Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Jadīda, 1976); and Ibn Kathīr's (d. 774/1373) *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, in which he relates the events of Ibn Taymiyya's life in a non-contiguous manner in the context of his chronicling of the years 661–728. Ibn Kathīr synthesised the relevant passages after Ibn Taymiyya's death. See Abū al-Fidāʾ Ismāʿīl [b. ʿUmar] b. Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, in *al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya khilāla sabʿat qurūn*, ed. Muḥammad ʿUzayr Shams and ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿImrān, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawāʾid, 1422/[2001-2]). Other important sources are discussed in Caterina Bori, *Ibn Taymiyya: Una vita esemplare. Analisi delle fonti classiche della sua biografia* (Pisa and Rome: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 2003), chap. 1. Finally, we mention the following two collected volumes, which together contain more than eighty-six (mostly biographical) entries written by authors who died in the period between 711/1311 and 1317/1899: (1) Shams and al-ʿImrān, *al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām* and (2) ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿImrān, ed., *Takmilat al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya khilāla sabʿat qurūn*, 2nd ed. (Riyadh: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawāʾid, 1423/[2002-3]).

9 Selected works include the following (for studies that deal specifically with Ibn Taymiyya's so-called *miḥan* [trials], see following note): Bori, *Vita esemplare*, chaps. 2 and 3; Laoust, *Essai*, 111–149; Henri Laoust, "La biographie d'Ibn Taymīya d'après Ibn Katīr," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 9 (1942); Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya"; Michot, *Muslims*, 148–169; and David Waines, "Ibn Taymiyya," in *The Islamic World*, ed. Andrew Rippin (London: Routledge, 2008). Detailed treatments of Ibn Taymiyya's life and work in German are of an earlier date. See Martin Schreiner, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der theologischen Bewegungen im Islām," *Zeitschrift der*

shall make do with a more general overview, focussing on the stages of Ibn Taymiyya's life in which the polarising effect of his positions in various debates—particularly those related to the divine attributes—comes to the fore.[10] The chapter concludes with some reflections about what factors may have played a role in Ibn Taymiyya's repeatedly falling victim to state reprisals.

Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm b. Taymiyya was born on 10 Rabīʿ al-Awwal (22 January 1263) in the northern Mesopotamian city of Ḥarrān—then part of the Mamluk empire (648–932/1250–1517), today part of the Şanlıurfa province of southeastern Turkey[11]—to a scholarly family of Ḥanbalī orientation.[12] He was born at a time of political upheaval and unrest, with which the Mamluk state was forced to contend. Only five years prior to Ibn Taymiyya's birth, the Mongols had captured Baghdad, killed a sizeable portion of its inhabitants, and put a violent end to the Abbasid caliphate that had lasted for roughly five hundred years (though it had for some time no

---

Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft 52 (1898): 540–563 and 53 (1899): 51–59; Mohammed Ben Cheneb, "Ibn Taimīya," in Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1st ed., vol. 2, ed. M.Th. Houtsma et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1927); and Carl Brockelmann, Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur, 2nd ed. (matched to Supplement volumes), 2 vols., plus Supplement, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1937–1949), 2:125–127 and Supplement, 2:119–126. The Arabic scholarship on Ibn Taymiyya's biography is vast; see overview in Bori, Vita esemplare, 17–19 (esp. the footnotes). One source not mentioned by Bori but that is useful even beyond Ibn Taymiyya's biography is ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Maḥmūd, Mawqif Ibn Taymiyya min al-Ashāʿira, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1995).

10   A number of secondary works have focussed on the so-called miḥan (trials) that Ibn Taymiyya endured on this account. See Donald P. Little, "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya," International Journal of Middle East Studies 4, no. 3 (1973); Hasan Qasim Murad, "Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial: A Narrative Account of his Miḥan," Islamic Studies 18, no. 1 (1979); and Jackson, "Trial."

11   Without citing any source, Marco Schöller claims that Ibn Taymiyya was born in Damascus and not in Ḥarrān. See Schöller, "Ibn Taymiyah und nochmals die Frage," 366. I have not come across anything to this effect in either the primary or the secondary literature, so it remains unclear to me on what basis Schöller advances this claim. Also unclear to me is the basis of Bakr Abū Zayd's (d. 1429/2008) claim that the city of Ḥarrān is located not in (current-day) Turkey but between Iraq and al-Shām (the Levant). See Bakr Abū Zayd, Introduction (taqdīm) to Shams and al-ʿImrān, al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām, 17. In fact, Ḥarrān lies between the historical regions of Iraq and al-Shām as well as in current-day Turkey. Maps showing the relevant area at the time of Ibn Taymiyya can be found in Heinz Halm et al., eds., Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients (TAVO)—Teil B (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1977–1984), esp. VIII 1 and 15.

12   Two of the most important works produced by this family are al-Muntaqā min akhbār al-Muṣṭafā, by Ibn Taymiyya's grandfather, Majd al-Dīn (d. 652/1254), and al-Musawwada fī uṣūl al-fiqh, co-authored by Ibn Taymiyya; his father, Shihāb al-Dīn (d. 683/1284); and his grandfather.

longer fulfilled more than a nominal function).[13] While the Mamluks, with their capture of Acre in 690/1291, successfully ended the nearly two-hundred-year Crusader presence in the Levant, they now found themselves confronted with the threat of the Mongols, who were steadily advancing to the west. In light of this situation, Ibn Taymiyya's family decided to move deeper within the central Mamluk territories, abandoning Ḥarrān in 667/1269 and resettling in Damascus, one of the centres of Muslim scholarship at the time.[14] It is here that Ibn Taymiyya's life of learning and teaching began. At the age of seventeen, he was granted permission to issue independent fatwas,[15] and when his father, Shihāb al-Dīn, died in the year 683/1284, Ibn Taymiyya, aged twenty-two, took over the administrative and teaching functions his father had previously fulfilled at the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Sukkariyya madrasa[16] (where Ibn Taymiyya also lived).[17] One year later, a special post was reserved for him at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, where he taught Quranic exegesis. It was also in Damascus that the first documented incident of trouble occurred, in 690/1291, after Ibn Taymiyya had delivered a lecture on the divine attributes. Some of those in attendance expressed indignation at his views and attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to have him suspended from teaching.[18] Following the death of one of his many teachers,[19] Zayn al-Dīn b. al-Munajjā (d. 695/1296), Ibn Taymiyya took up a teaching post at the prestigious Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ḥanbaliyya. Two years

---

13   The shock and the trauma that accompanied this event are reflected clearly in the works of contemporary Muslim chroniclers. See Stefan Heidemann, *Das Aleppiner Kalifat (A.D. 1261): Vom Ende des Kalifates in Bagdad über Aleppo zu den Restaurationen in Kairo* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), esp. 67 ff. An Abbasid shadow caliphate continued thereafter in Mamluk Cairo until the Ottomans put a definitive end to it in 1517.

14   There are said to have existed more than two hundred educational institutions in Damascus at this time as well as numerous libraries. See Abdul Hakim I. Al-Matroudi, *The Ḥanbalī School of Law and Ibn Taymiyyah: Conflict or Conciliation* (London: Routledge, 2006), 50.

15   He was given this authorisation by the scholar Sharaf al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (d. 694/1295), who, interestingly, was not a Ḥanbalī but a Shāfiʿī. See Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 407; Michot, *Muslims*, 150.

16   On this madrasa, see Muṭīʿ al-Ḥāfiẓ, *Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Sukkariyya: Suknā Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm b. Taymiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 2003).

17   One does not typically attain to such a position until around the age of thirty-five. Other scholars who likewise obtained a similar position at an unusually young age are Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī (at the age of twenty) and Ibn ʿAqīl (at the age of twenty-seven). See George Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl: Religion and Culture in Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 24.

18   See Murad, "Ibn Taymiya on Trial," 1.

19   See Henri Laoust, "al-Nashʾa al-ʿilmiyya ʿinda Ibn Taymiyya," in *Usbūʿ al-fiqh al-Islāmī wa-mahrajān al-imām Ibn Taymiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Abū Zahra (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Majlis al-Aʿlā li-Riʿāyat al-Funūn wa-l-Ādāb wa-l-ʿUlūm al-Ijtimāʿiyya, 1963), esp. 832–833 and 838.

earlier, he had been jailed for several days for his involvement in an uproar unleashed by an incident in which a Christian was said to have insulted the Prophet Muḥammad.[20]

In 698/1298, Ibn Taymiyya received a query from the city of Hama, located in current-day Syria, regarding certain anthropomorphic-sounding hadith reports, in response to which he composed his *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya al-kubrā*.[21] A number of scholars were perturbed by this work and publicly condemned Ibn Taymiyya as an anthropomorphist (*mujassim*). However, the deputy governor of Damascus, who sympathised with Ibn Taymiyya, counteracted these scholars and halted any further actions against him. Ibn Taymiyya, moreover, submitted voluntarily to a public interrogation by the Shāfiʿī chief justice (*qāḍī al-quḍāh*),[22] at the end of which he was acquitted of all charges.[23] In the same year, he wrote his *al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya*—in response to an inquiry he had received from the Iraqi city of Wāsiṭ—in which he presents a highly concise summary of the most important topics of Islamic theology.[24] Around seven years later, this work triggered one of the several *miḥan* (sing. *miḥna*, "test" or "trial") to which Ibn Taymiyya was subjected. Prior to this, however, Ibn Taymiyya had to contend with problems of an entirely different nature. Under the leadership of the ruler Ghāzān (r. 694–704/1295–1304), who had converted to Islam (likely for tactical reasons), the Mongols attacked the Mamluks three times between 699/1299 and 702/1303.[25] Only the first of these attacks was somewhat successful in that the Mongols were able to occupy Damascus for at least several months. While many members of the Mamluk political and scholarly classes fled the city, Ibn Taymiyya intervened with the Mongol author-

---

20 The Christian, under threat of capital punishment, subsequently converted to Islam, only to be killed for doing so by his own family. See Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 406–407.

21 On this treatise, see p. 14 above.

22 On the office of chief justice, see p. 36, n. 65 below.

23 See Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 408; Michot, *Muslims*, 153.

24 This treatise is located in *MF*, 3:129–159. It has been discussed numerous times in the academic literature and translated into German, French, and English. See Wein, "Glaubenslehre"; Henri Laoust, *La Profession de foi d'Ibn Taymiyya: La Wāsiṭiyya* (Paris: Geuthner, 1986); and Merlin Swartz, "A Seventh-Century (A.H.) Sunnī Creed: The ʿAqīda Wāsiṭīya of Ibn Taymīya," *Humaniora Islamica* 1 (1973).

25 Ibn Taymiyya, who spent time in the Mongol military camp on numerous occasions, believed that many of them, including Ghāzān (their leader), were only outwardly Muslim. Ghāzān's own brother and successor, Öljeitü (r. 703–716/1304–1316), himself a convert to Shīʿī Islam, later claimed that Ghāzān had, in fact, become Muslim purely on the basis of strategic considerations. See Reuven Amitai-Preiss, "Ghazan, Islam, and Mongol Tradition: A View from the Mamlūk Sultanate," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 59, no. 1 (1996): 10.

ities to ensure favourable treatment of the city's population and endeavoured
in various ways to bring an end to the Mongols' foreign rule.[26] Several years
later, the sultan in Cairo, Nāṣir al-Qalāwūn (r. 693/1293, 698–708/1299–1309,
and 710–741/1310–1341), caught wind of a rumour that Ibn Taymiyya was collab-
orating with the Mongols to gain political power. Ibn Taymiyya subsequently
appeared in person before the sultan, eliminating any doubt that the allega-
tions against him had been fabricated.[27]

Around the year 705/1305, Ibn Taymiyya clashed with various Sufi currents,
earning himself some influential enemies.[28] His (at times) very harsh critique
of Muḥyī al-Dīn b. ʿArabī (d. 638/1240), a highly revered figure in Sufi circles,
can most likely be dated to the same time or to several years later.[29] This cri-
tique was partly expressed in a letter to Naṣr al-Dīn al-Manbijī (d. 719/1319), a
staunch disciple of Ibn ʿArabī who was well-connected to the political elite and
who served as spiritual mentor to the vice-sultan—and later sultan—Baybars
al-Jāshnakīr (executed 709/1310). In this letter, addressed to al-Manbijī in the
most respectful of terms, Ibn Taymiyya's decidedly critical attitude towards
Ibn ʿArabī's thought comes out clearly. Irked by the letter, al-Manbijī joined
forces with other scholars, first and foremost the Mālikī chief justice of Cairo
Zayn al-Dīn b. Makhlūf (d. 718/1318), who would turn out to be Ibn Taymiyya's
fiercest and most tenacious opponent. They pulled their political weight and
arranged for a decree from the sultan in Cairo to be sent to Damascus order-

---

26   See Reuven Amitai-Preiss, "The Mongol Occupation of Damascus in 1300: A Study of Mam-
      luk Loyalties," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, ed. Amalia
      Levanoni and Michael Winter (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 28–31, as well as Emmanuel Fons, "À
      propos des Mongols: Une lettre d'Ibn Taymiyya au sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad
      b. Qalāwūn," *Annales Islamologiques* 43 (2009), which includes a translation of a confid-
      ently worded letter written by Ibn Taymiyya to the Mamluk sultan of Cairo requesting
      military backup for Damascus. Also dating to this period are three anti-Mongol fatwas of
      Ibn Taymiyya which have gained some notoriety as they have been cited in recent times
      by Islamist actors to legitimate acts of violence against Muslim rulers. On these fatwas,
      see, e.g., Denise Aigle, "The Mongol Invasions of Bilād al-Shām by Ghāzān Khān and Ibn
      Taymīyah's Three 'Anti-Mongol' Fatwas," *Mamluk Review Studies* 11, no. 2 (2007). Michot
      (*Muslims*) sees here a dehistoricisation and concomitant misuse of Ibn Taymiyya's writ-
      ings by contemporary extremist groups. Jon Hoover comes to less definitive conclusions
      in an article in which he offers a critical discussion of Michot's book. See Hoover, "Ibn
      Taymiyya between Moderation and Radicalism."
27   See Little, "Historical and Historiographical Significance," 322.
28   See Nathan Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173–1325*
      (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 167–173, as well as the sources cited at p. 174,
      n. 31.
29   On this critique, as well as the fact that Ibn Taymiyya was by no means an opponent but
      rather an adherent of *taṣawwuf* (Sufism in a general sense), see chapter 4, section 4.

ing that Ibn Taymiyya be questioned about his theological views, particularly with regard to the divine attributes. Three hearings were held for this purpose within a little more than a month.[30] In addition, several of Ibn Taymiyya's students were beaten or, as in the case of the hadith scholar Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī (d. 742/1341), imprisoned. A short while later, Ibn Taymiyya released al-Mizzī from prison without consulting the authorities and filed a complaint with the governor of Damascus over the treatment his student had received.[31] In the course of the hearings, Ibn Taymiyya explicated his aforementioned treatise *al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya* and used the opportunity to show that works that had been falsely attributed to him in order to harm his reputation were, in fact, forgeries. Finally, a dispatch was drafted and sent to Cairo, to which the sultan responded with an edict fully restoring Ibn Taymiyya's good repute.[32] Nevertheless, forces hostile to Ibn Taymiyya were unwilling to let the matter rest and succeeded in having another official edict sent to Damascus demanding that Ibn Taymiyya be transferred to Cairo and that the two theological treatises he had written in 698/1298, *Ḥamawiyya* and *al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya*, be sent along with him for examination.[33] Ibn Taymiyya's arrival in Cairo at the end of Ramaḍān 705 (April 1306) marked the beginning of a seven-year period of residence in Egypt. Shortly after arriving, he was brought before the four chief justices of Cairo as well as the vice-sultan, Baybars. When Ibn Taymiyya learned that the Mālikī chief justice, Ibn Makhlūf, would take part in the hearing as both prosecutor and judge, he denounced the arrangement as unjust and refused to answer the questions posed by the scholars in attendance concerning his theological views. This led to a tumultuous row, at the end of which Ibn Makhlūf sentenced Ibn Taymiyya to eighteen months in prison. Ibn Makhlūf intervened with the authorities to arrange for Ibn Taymiyya to serve his sentence in the lowest dungeon of the Cairo jail tower, in which the conditions of detainment

---

30   Ibn Taymiyya, in response to different requests, conveyed his memories of these interrogations in three separate accounts that diverge from one another in both length and substance. See Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, *ʿUqūd*, 262–306; *MF*, 3:160–193 (trans. in Jackson, "Trial"); and recently also *JM*, 8:181–198. In addition, there are many other reports, including from Ibn Taymiyya's brother, Sharaf al-Dīn (d. 727/1327), [*MF*, 3:202–210] and his students al-Birzālī [*MF*, 3:194–201] and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350). Ibn al-Qayyim does not aim at a matter-of-fact retelling of the events but rather reworks them in a literary key. See Livnat Holtzman, "Accused of Anthropomorphism: Ibn Taymiyya's *Miḥan* as Reflected in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *al-Kāfiya al-Shāfiya*," *Muslim World* 106 (2016).

31   See Michot, *Muslims*, 157.

32   See Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 421. An extensive treatment of the topic can be found in Jackson, "Trial."

33   See Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 421–422; Michot, *Muslims*, 158.

were particularly abysmal.[34] In addition, an edict was sent to Damascus the contents of which were to be read publicly at Friday prayers in the city. This edict declared, among other things, that Ibn Taymiyya's theological views were anthropomorphic and stood contrary to scholarly consensus (*ijmāʿ*), with the result that anyone who professed them could be subject to capital punishment.[35] Furthermore, a number of Ibn Taymiyya's supporters, and of Ḥanbalīs in general, were subjected to public humiliation and detention. When the Ḥanafī chief justice in Damascus lent public support to Ibn Taymiyya's cause and proclaimed that Muslims had not witnessed a scholar of his calibre in over three hundred years, Ibn Makhlūf had him deposed.[36] Upon the intercession of high political functionaries, Ibn Taymiyya was released from jail at the end of Rabīʿ al-Awwal 707 (September 1307), albeit on the condition that he not leave Cairo. Rumours began to circulate that during an interrogation shortly before his release, Ibn Taymiyya had renounced his doctrine on the divine attributes, declared himself an Ashʿarī, and adopted central Ashʿarī positions.[37] Similar statements had been falsely attributed to Ibn Taymiyya following his earlier hearings in Damascus. According to Ibn Taymiyya's brother, Sharaf al-Dīn (d. 727/1327), these earlier rumours had been concocted by the Shāfiʿī scholar Zayn al-Dīn b. al-Muraḥḥil (d. 716/1316), with whom Ibn Taymiyya had engaged in a debate over the concepts of *ḥamd* (praise) and *shukr* (thanks).[38]

Ibn Taymiyya brought further trouble upon himself after criticising in public lectures the Sufi strain of thought represented by Ibn ʿArabī and his disciples. Influential Sufi shaykhs, including the well-known scholar and leader of the Shādhilī order Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1310),[39] in addition to around five hundred other persons, publicly aired their displeasure over the matter in the streets of Cairo and eventually took the matter to the sultan, filing a complaint with him against Ibn Taymiyya. As a result, Ibn Taymiya was arrested once more, and the individual allegations were examined. As these turned out to be groundless, however, no conviction was made, whereupon protests flared

---

34   See Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 422–423; Michot, *Muslims*, 158.

35   See Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 423. The edict is reproduced in full in Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, in *al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*, 176–179.

36   See al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, 180.

37   See ibid., 181 (along with the editor's remarks in n. 1).

38   See Jackson, "Trial," 47; also Murad, "Ibn Taymiyya on Trial," 28, n. 18. A written recounting of this debate has been preserved; see *MF*, 11:135–155.

39   An Internet search for "debate between Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh" yields many results, which, however, refer to a forgery. Ibn Taymiyya dedicated a separate work to refuting the founder of the Shādhilī order titled *al-Radd ʿalā Abī al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī*. This treatise is available in a published edition.

up anew.[40] It was then decided that Ibn Taymiyya would be given the choice to go to Damascus, to Alexandria, or back to prison in Cairo. He chose to go back to prison but was pressured by his supporters to return to Damascus instead. He thus joined the mail cavalcade (*barīd*) that was heading to Damascus but was stopped along the way and summoned back to Cairo. As it turned out, Ibn Makhlūf had used his influence to arrange for Ibn Taymiyya to be imprisoned in Cairo once again. Two Mālikī judges were successively commissioned to sentence Ibn Taymiyya to prison, but they both refused. At this point, Ibn Taymiyya announced that he would go back to jail of his own accord as this was most conducive to preserving the public interest (*maṣlaḥa*).[41] He remained in detention this time for less than three months, until the beginning of 708/the middle of 1308. During this time, he received numerous visitors, including many political officials who sought his religious counsel.[42]

Around nine months later, things came to a head yet again for Ibn Taymiyya when Baybars usurped the sultan's throne, leaving Nāṣir al-Qalāwūn with no choice but to flee. The leadership of the Mamluk empire had now been taken over by someone who in the past had always stood clearly on the side of Ibn Taymiyya's adversaries. Baybars ordered that the Damascene theologian be transferred to Alexandria and placed under house arrest.[43] Several scholars from Palmyra who were sympathetic to Ibn Taymiyya warned him that plans had allegedly been hatched for his assassination, whereupon Ibn Taymiyya is said to have made the following statement, frequently cited today:

> Should they kill me, I die a martyr's death. Should they drive me out, that is my emigration (*hijra*). Should they drive me all the way to Cyprus, I shall invite its inhabitants to the way of God, and they shall follow me. Should they lock me up, prison is my place of prayer. I am like a sheep: whichever way it turns, it never lies but on wool.[44]

In Alexandria, Ibn Taymiyya was deprived of his freedom and placed under constant surveillance, though he was permitted to continue writing. Over the

---

40 See Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 426; Michot, *Muslims*, 160–161; and Murad, "Ibn Taymiyya on Trial," 16.

41 See Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 426–427; also Michot, *Muslims*, 161.

42 See Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 427.

43 See Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya," 952; also Michot, *Muslims*, 161.

44 Ibrāhīm al-Jayāmī, "Faṣl fī-mā qāma bihi Ibn Taymiyya wa-tafarrada bihi wa-dhālika fī taksīr al-aḥjār," in Shams and al-ʿImrān, *al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām*, 148. Little translates a statement with slightly different wording that Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1393) attributes to Ibn Taymiyya. See Little, "Screw Loose?," 106.

course of the following eight months, he composed numerous works, including a first version of his treatise against Peripatetic logic, entitled *al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn*.[45] When the former sultan regained power in Shawwāl 709 (March 1310), Ibn Taymiyya was not only released but also received with honours by the sultan.[46] Over the following three years (until 712/1313), during which he remained in Cairo, Ibn Taymiyya suffered no further reprisals from the state. On the contrary, his advice on political-religious questions was even sought on several occasions by the sultan himself,[47] whom Ibn Taymiyya nevertheless did not shrink from criticising.[48] Ibn Taymiyya's popularity reached a new high during this period, and many of his former opponents visited him to offer their apologies, whereupon he duly forgave them.[49]

When word reached Ibn Taymiyya that the Mongols had set out with an army to conquer Damascus, he set off to join in battle against the assailants. But before he reached Damascus at the end of 712 / beginning of 1313, the Mamluks had already succeeded in warding off the danger. In Damascus, where Ibn Taymiyya was received with honours, he now began work on his magnum opus, *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*, which he completed around the year 717/1317. Around the same time, he lost his mother, with whom he had had a very close relationship.[50]

One year later, in response to a query, Ibn Taymiyya issued a fatwa that, after lengthy arguments with the Mamluk authorities, earned him a jail term in Damascus of just under six months in the year 720/1320-1. The fatwa in question had to do with the question of divorce. In Ibn Taymiyya's day and for a long time prior, it was customary for a man to lend emphasis and credibility to a promise by swearing an oath that, if broken, would result in his divorcing his wife.[51] The breaking of the oath was sometimes coupled with the pronouncement of a so-called triple divorce, which, according to Islamic law, would bar the

---

45   A posthumous abridged version of this work has been translated into English. For further
       information, see listing of Ibn Taymiyya's works in the bibliography (p. 337 ff.), under the
       entry *Radd*.

46   See Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 429–430.

47   See Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya," 952b.

48   See Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 430–431, as well as Murad, "Ibn Taymiyya on Trial," 19.

49   See Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 429–430 and Murad, "Ibn Taymiyya on Trial," 19.

50   Yahya Michot has translated a letter Ibn Taymiyya wrote to his mother in Michot, "Un cé-
       libataire endurci et sa maman: Ibn Taymiyya (m. 728/1328) et les femmes," in *La femme
       dans les civilisations orientales*, ed. Christian Cannuyer et al., *Acta Orientalia Belgica* 15
       (Brussels: La Société belge d'études orientales, 2001).

51   See Yossef Rapoport, "Ibn Taymiyya on Divorce Oaths," in Levanoni and Winter, *Mamluks
       in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, 193–194.

man from remarrying his former wife unless she first consummated a marriage with another man (and was then divorced from him). As such triple divorces often occurred absent the conscious intention of the spouses, the latter would sometimes resort to a so-called "*taḥlīl* marriage" as a way out. In a *taḥlīl* marriage, the triply divorced woman marries another man for a short period of time with the mutual intent to separate after the marriage is consummated so that she can return to her erstwhile husband.[52] Ibn Taymiyya considered this practice un-Islamic and socially detrimental, and he argued in the above-mentioned fatwa, as well as in many other subsequent short tracts, that a (triple) divorce resulting from such oaths was legally invalid and that a man had only to offer an expiation (*kaffāra*) for breaking his oath. In addition, he argued that a triple divorce was binding as such only when uttered on three separate occasions rather than back-to-back in a single instance. The outrage Ibn Taymiyya encountered from scholarly circles was enormous, for in their view, his position ran counter not only to that of the four established schools of law but also to the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the Muslim community at large.[53] An edict was dispatched from Cairo forbidding Ibn Taymiyya from taking any further public stance on said questions. He refused to comply, however, which resulted in his conviction to the prison term mentioned above.[54]

Approximately five years later, things escalated for Ibn Taymiyya once more. The reason this time around was a fatwa in which he argued, on the basis of a prophetic hadith, that the only valid destinations for a religiously motivated journey (*ziyāra*) were the Holy Mosque in Mecca, the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, and the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. He condemned the practice, widespread in his time, of travelling for the purpose of visiting graves or other places believed to contain blessings as an unlawful innovation in religion (*bidʿa*).[55] With this stance he sparked an outrage that reached all the way to Cairo and at the height of which the Mālikī chief justice in Egypt, Taqī al-Dīn al-Ikhnāʾī (d. 750/1349), issued a fatwa declaring Ibn Taymiyya a non-Muslim (*kāfir*).[56]

---

52   See ibid., 193–199.

53   See ibid., 211–212.

54   For a detailed treatment, see Rapoport, "Ibn Taymiyya on Divorce Oaths."

55   Ibn Taymiyya explicitly rejected travel undertaken with religious motivation though not personally motivated visits to nearby cemeteries, which he actually considered recommendable. The issue is also a theological one as it is closely related to the veneration of saints, which Ibn Taymiyya abhorred. See Kabbani, "Heiligenverehrung," chap. 4; Niels Olesen, *Culte des saints et pèlerinages chez Ibn Taymiyya* (Paris: Geuthner, 1991); and Christopher Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyāra and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), chap. 5.

56   See Michot, *Muslims*, 167.

A petition was presented to the sultan, Nāṣir al-Qalāwūn, calling for Ibn Tay-miyya's execution, but the sultan refused and sentenced Ibn Taymiyya instead to a prison sentence that began in the month of Shaʿbān 729 (July 1326). It was one month later that Ibn Baṭṭūṭa claimed to have made the observation described at the beginning of this chapter. While in jail, Ibn Taymiyya wrote a refutation of al-Ikhnāʾī on the question of *ziyāra*.[57] Under pressure from al-Ikhnāʾī, the sultan ordered a complete ban on Ibn Taymiyya either writing or issuing any fatwas.[58] Ibn Taymiyya remained in prison until his death[59] on 20 Dhū al-Qaʿda 728 / 26 September 1328, whereupon he was buried in a Sufi cemetery in Damascus next to his brother, Sharaf al-Dīn. The proceedings on the day of his funeral have been recorded in the eyewitness account of his student al-Birzālī (d. 739/1339), who offers a striking illustration of the great popularity Ibn Taymiyya must have enjoyed not only among scholars but also in particular among the people.[60] Ibn Taymiyya, who had never married, left behind no descendants.[61]

The table on the following page provides an overview of Ibn Taymiyya's *miḥan*, the causes of which we examine in greater detail below.[62]

It is worth asking to what extent Ibn Taymiyya's detentions in prison can really be explained by the above-mentioned reasons or whether these reasons should rather be considered mere triggers or perhaps even pretexts.[63] The behaviour of the top political leaders towards Ibn Taymiyya is highly ambiguous. On the one hand, Ibn Taymiyya proved useful in the fight against the Mongols, not only because he participated in the struggle several times on the

---

57   This work, known under the title *al-Radd ʿalā al-Ikhnāʾī*, has been preserved and is available in a published edition.

58   See Murad, "Ibn Taymiyya on Trial," 25.

59   As was the case with Ibn Taymiyya's birthplace, Schöller here too goes against the primary and secondary literature of which I am aware by claiming, without citing any proof, that Ibn Taymiyya was executed. See Yaḥyā b. Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Das Buch der vierzig Hadithe: Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn mit dem Kommentar von Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd*, trans. Marco Schöller (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010), 336.

60   The relevant report is contained in Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya* and has been translated by Michot. See Yahya Michot, "Pour une tombe, à Damas …," SaphirNews, 21 Sep. 2006, accessed 15 Oct. 2023. http://www.saphirnews.com/Pour-une-tombe-a-Damas_a4483.html.

61   On this point, see Michot, "Célibataire," 167–168.

62   The table lists seven detentions, one more than are usually indicated in the literature. The reason for this is that the third and fourth detentions may be counted as one since Ibn Taymiyya was set free for only a few days between them.

63   An informative treatment of this question can be found in Little, "Historical and Historiographical Significance."

TABLE 1   Overview of Ibn Taymiyya's detentions

#	Reason for detention	Time period (dates in CE); location
1	A Christian insults the Prophet, leading to a tumultuous row in which Ibn Taymiyya takes part.	1294; for a few days, in Damascus.
2	Statements regarding the divine attributes of speech (*kalām*), rising over the throne (*istiwā'*), and descending to the lowermost heaven (*nuzūl*).[a]	April 1306 until September 1307; for about 1.5 years, in Cairo.
3	Criticism of the Sufi strain of thought represented by Ibn ʿArabī and his disciples.	April 1308; for a few days, in Cairo.
4	Related to the previous prison sentence. Two judges are commissioned to convict Ibn Taymiyya, but they refuse. Ibn Taymiyya goes to jail voluntarily, a move he believed was in the public interest (*maṣlaḥa*).	April 1308; for more than two months, in Cairo.
5	At the order of the new sultan Baybars, who had recently acceded to power through a coup d'état.	August 1309 until March 1310; for about eight months, in Alexandria.
6	Ibn Taymiyya issues a fatwa on oaths and divorce in which he is accused of violating the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the Muslim community.	August 1320 until February 1321; for about six months, in Damascus.
7	In another fatwa, Ibn Taymiyya condemns the practice, widespread in Sufi circles, of travelling to visit graves (*ziyāra*) as an unlawful innovation in religion (*bidʿa*).	July 1326 until his death in September 1328; for more than two years, in Damascus.

a   Ibn Taymiyya's views on the attributes of *kalām* and *istiwā'* are discussed in chapter 10, sections 2 (p. 293 ff.) and 3 (p. 307 ff.), respectively.

actual battlefield[64] but also because he identified the Mamluks in several fatwas and public speeches as a bulwark against the Mongols, who, if anything, were partial to a more Shīʿī-oriented Islam. On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyya criticised the Mamluk rulers, albeit without ever calling their fundamental legitimacy into question. In addition, he repeatedly triggered riots and protests with his polarising views, which must have been seen as particularly irksome by the regime, especially in times of acute external danger. For these reasons, it

---

64   See, e.g., Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 418.

seems to me that the best explanation for the Mamluk authorities' inconsistent behaviour towards Ibn Taymiyya is that they were making decisions on a per situation basis in accord with what was most amenable to their desire for stability and peace within the empire.

On the other hand, the motive of those scholars who actively opposed Ibn Taymiyya may well have been a different one. The four legal schools, the Ashʿarī establishment, and various Sufi orders such as the Shādhilīs were firmly entrenched in the institutional power structure of Ibn Taymiyya's day and exerted influence on the religious, social, and political levels.[65] As far as the legal schools are concerned, Ibn Taymiyya was of course himself a Ḥanbalī, but as we have shown, he accorded himself the freedom to issue fatwas that did not converge with any of the positions held by the four schools. In terms of the debate surrounding theology, he was by no means the only one to call basic Ashʿarī positions into question.[66] However, the number of works he wrote on the topic, the quality of his critique, and the fact that he dispatched his writings, upon request, to divers cities all converged to lend his activity a highly subversive character.[67] In addition, he criticised late Ashʿarī authorities in particular, including thinkers who were highly esteemed in his day such as al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and, even more so, al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), not to mention influential contemporary scholars as well. Another factor at play seems to have been that Ibn Taymiyya was anything but an ivory-tower scholar. Rather, he propagated his teachings through close contacts with the common folk, who much admired him. Moreover, he refused to content himself with mere talk but took active steps against practices he considered un-Islamic. For example, he smashed stones and rocks that many Sufis believed to hold blessings out of a desire to prevent people from continuing to visit such places.[68] He likewise destroyed wine barrels being sold in the market in Damascus.[69] Furthermore,

---

65   On the rise of Sufi tendencies in Mamluk Egypt generally, see Hofer, *Popularisation of Sufism*. With regard to the four schools of law, the Mamluks introduced a separate office of chief justice for each in 663/1265 in Cairo (and shortly thereafter in other cities as well). The process of the institutionalisation of the legal schools and their concomitant incorporation into state structures had already begun, however, long before the Mamluks. In Ibn Taymiyya's day, the Shāfiʿīs were the strongest of the four factions, while the Ḥanbalīs were the weakest. See Joseph Escovitz, "The Establishment of Four Chief Judgeships in the Mamlūk Empire," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 102, no. 3 (1982).

66   George Makdisi's thesis that Ashʿarism was still struggling hard for recognition even in Ibn Taymiyya's day is clearly an exaggeration of the circumstances. See p. 91 below.

67   Apart from his critique, however, Ibn Taymiyya also has words of praise for the Ashʿarīs. See, e.g., Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community*, 189–192.

68   Al-Jayāmī, "Faṣl," 132–139.

69   See Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 410–411.

he called out some of the Sufi shaykhs and accused them of charlatanism for a practice in which they would secretly rub themselves with heat-insulating grease, then, in a bid to impress their followers, expose themselves to fire while remaining safe from any harm. Ibn Taymiyya approached them and publicly challenged them to wash themselves, rub themselves with vinegar, and only then to come into contact with the fire.[70]

Yet Ibn Taymiyya's directness and harshness were not limited to his public bearing alone; his writings too attest to little sense of diplomacy. Even his student al-Dhahabī notes this fact critically and concludes that had his teacher handled his opponents with greater sensitivity, many of them would have conceded that he was correct and adopted his views.[71] Finally, it is very likely that some scholars who were intellectually inferior to Ibn Taymiyya and who did not enjoy the same recognition among the populace as he were motivated to machinate against him out of envy.[72]

To return to the question raised above concerning the reasons for Ibn Taymiyya's detentions, I believe it would be erroneous to presume that theological differences played no role in the respective disputes. Yet if we consider such differences to be the only relevant factor or the decisive one, we would be failing to grant the complex and sometimes conflicting interests of the various actors involved in this drama their due right.

---

70   On this incident, see ibid., 419; also Little, "Screw Loose?," 107.

71   See Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Dhayl Tārīkh al-Islām*, ed. Māzin b. Sālim Bāwazīr (Riyadh: Dār al-Mughnī, 1998), 326–327.

72   See, e.g., Little, "Historical and Historiographical Significance," 323 and 325.

The Divine Attributes in Islamic Intellectual History up to the Time of Ibn Taymiyya

It is clear from even a superficial reading of Ibn Taymiyya's works that he grappled intensively with the complex historical development of ideas concerning the attributes of God that preceded him. Not only does he formulate his own positions in sharp distinction to countervailing views, but he also appeals to previous thinkers—even those whose thought diverges substantially from his own—as sources of inspiration[1] or else cites them supportively.[2] While it is a general truth that one must always view a thinker against the background of the intellectual developments to which he was heir, this is particularly imperative in the case of Ibn Taymiyya. The present chapter therefore aims to familiarise the reader with the relevant background. Since it is impossible to account for each and every school of thought, our focus will lie on the Basran Mu'tazila, the *falāsifa*, the traditionalists (particularly the Ḥanbalīs), and, finally, the Ashʿarīs. As the tendencies mentioned cannot by any means be understood as homogenous bodies, it is possible only to trace their general lines of development and to present the views of important representatives of each current. But before delving into these schools of thought, we first outline the emergence of the debate over the divine attributes in early Islam.

The reader may have noticed the absence among the tendencies listed here of the theology of some Ḥanafīs who appeal to Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) and who, in the course of later developments, came to be identified as Māturīdīs (named after Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī, d. 333/944) in the generation following Ibn Taymiyya.[3] This school had its home in the northeast of present-day Iran,

---

1 This fact has been noted previously in the scholarship with respect to other thematic contexts. See Anke von Kügelgen, "Dialogpartner im Widerspruch: Ibn Rushd und Ibn Taymīya über die ,Einheit der Wahrheit'," in *Words, Texts and Contexts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea: Studies on the Sources, Contents and Influences of Islamic Civilization and Arabic Philosophy and Science Dedicated to Gerhard Endress on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Rüdiger Arnzen and Jörn Thielmann (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 462.

2 We may refer, by way of example, to Ibn Taymiyya's citations from the writings of the Qarmaṭī Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī (d. after 361/971) and the philosopher Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198); see pp. 248–249 below. Both authors hail from intellectual traditions of which Ibn Taymiyya was acutely critical, yet he cites their opinions supportively.

3 See Angelika Brodersen, *Der unbekannte* kalām*: Theologische Positionen der frühen* Māturīdīya *am Beispiel der Attributenlehre* (Münster: Lit, 2014), 18.

where it developed in relative isolation—to the extent that the Ashʿarīs, for instance, were not aware of the presence of the Māturīdīs until the fifth/eleventh century.[4] One might surmise that this school may have had an influence on, for instance, Ibn Taymiyya's theory of human action,[5] but in the context of his treatment of the divine attributes, such an influence would appear to be of only minor relevance. For this reason, the Māturīdī school has not been included in the following treatment of intellectual developments pertinent to the question of the divine attributes up to the time of Ibn Taymiyya.[6]

1 The Emergence of the Debate over the Divine Attributes in Early Islam

The controversy concerning the divine attributes is probably almost as old as Islam itself, though it only came to occupy a prominent place in Islamic theology as of the third/ninth century. The dominant themes prior to this were the questions of divine predestination (*qadar*) and the definition of faith (*īmān*), the latter bearing specifically on the question of the religious status of the grave sinner.[7] Three works on the topic of predestination have been attributed to different authors from the first/seventh and the early second/eighth centuries, but the authenticity of these works is heavily disputed.[8] An epistle of Abū Ḥanīfa

---

4 See Martin Nguyen, "Abū Bakr al-Fūrakī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2013-4, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 129a. We also find in the same time period the first mention of the Ashʿarī school in the work of a Māturīdī. See Angelika Brodersen, "Sunnitische Identitätssuche im Transoxanien des 5./11. Jahrhunderts: Abū Šakūr as-Sālimī und sein *Tamhīd fī bayān at-tauḥīd*," in *Rationalität in der islamischen Theologie*, vol. 1, *Die klassische Periode*, ed. Maha El Kaisy-Friemuth, Reza Hajatpour, and Mohammed Abdel Rahem (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 324.

5 See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 155–156.

6 On the Māturīdīs, see Ulrich Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie in Samarkand* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), trans. Rodrigo Adem, *Al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand* (Leiden: Brill, 2013). See also, more recently and with a focus on the doctrine of the attributes, Brodersen, *Der unbekannte* kalām.

7 On early Islamic theology in general, see, e.g., Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973); Josef van Ess, *Zwischen Ḥadīṯ und Theologie: Studien zum Entstehen prädestinatianischer Überlieferung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975); Josef van Ess, *Anfänge muslimischer Theologie: Zwei antiqadaritische Traktate aus dem ersten Jahrhundert der Hiǧra* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977); and Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source-Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

8 On this point, see the summary treatment in Sabine Schmidtke, "Rationale Theologie," in *Einheit und Vielfalt einer Weltreligion*, ed. Rainer Brunner (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), 168–169.

(d. 150/767) concerning the definition of faith has also been preserved.[9] The first five of the ten articles of creed mentioned in the work *al-Fiqh al-akbar I*, which may well reflect the views of Abū Ḥanīfa and/or those of his circle of students, are similarly concerned with faith. Among the remaining five articles, which do not admit of a similarly early dating, only the ninth addresses the attributes of God. According to this ninth article, one who doubts that God is on high (*fī al-samāʾ*) is not a Muslim.[10]

The need felt by a broader swathe of Muslim scholars for a more intense reflection on the divine attributes was fuelled by extreme positions such as those held by Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/746),[11] who advocated a radical transcendentalism[12] in which God could not even be described as being a *thing* (*shayʾ*). Jahm's aim was not to deny the reality of God but rather the possibility of describing Him through either logical or real predicates.[13] Jahm himself remains an obscure figure. The sparse information we have about him comes from later authors, who mostly held an antagonistic attitude towards him.[14] Although we can trace the existence of followers of Jahm into the fourth/tenth century,[15] the term *jahmiyya* in later Islamic literature is used not as the designation of a school but as an umbrella term—normally pejorative—for all those who nullify the reality of the divine attributes (*taʿṭīl*; proponents of this view are referred to as *muʿaṭṭila*).[16] The term *jahmiyya* is conceived more broadly or nar-

---

9   A second epistle, dealing with *qadar*, has also been attributed to Abū Ḥanīfa. Rudolph is of the opinion that this epistle is also very old but that, in contrast to the first epistle, it was not written by Abū Ḥanīfa. See his exhaustive discussion, as well as his translation of both epistles, in Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie*, 30–53; Eng. trans., 28–53.

10   See Arent Jan Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1932), 104. Wensinck's problematic synopsis of *al-Fiqh al-akbar* is treated thoroughly in Rudolph, *Al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie*, esp. 61 ff.; Eng. trans., 56 ff. See also the summary treatment in Jon Hoover, "Creed," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2014-3, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 68.

11   See Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, 6 vols. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991–1997), 4:439.

12   For lack of a better alternative, we retain this term, which is also used in the academic literature relevant to the topic. It should be noted, however, that the term as used here has nothing in common with the transcendentalism of European Enlightenment philosophy (primarily that of Immanuel Kant).

13   See Cornelia Schöck, "Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/745–6) and the 'Jahmiyya' and Ḍirār b. ʿAmr (d. 200/815)," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 57–58.

14   On Jahm, see van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 2:493–508.

15   See ibid., 2:497.

16   At least when the term is used in the context of discussions about the attributes of God.

rowly depending on the positioning of the one employing it. In Ibn Taymiyya's writings, for instance, it often denotes not only the proponents of extreme transcendentalist views but also the Muʿtazila and even some Ashʿarīs.[17] The negative theology of Jahm should be viewed in the context of the intellectual climate of late antiquity, a climate heavily influenced by Neoplatonism. The same is true of other thinkers, such as Ḍirār b. ʿAmr (d. 200/815), who held that affirmative statements concerning God merely express a negation of the contrary.[18] The climate of late antiquity also had a powerful influence on the rise of the science of *kalām* (lit. "speech"; usually translated as "speculative theology"), a tradition whose adherents include the thinkers mentioned above. As for the name "*kalām*," its origin cannot be determined conclusively and remains a matter of debate. According to one view, the Greek term *dialexis* (disputation), corresponding to the term *kalām*, was confounded in the first/seventh century with the term "theologia," which had been translated literally into Syriac as "speech concerning God" and from there had made its way into the Arabic language. This may explain why the term *kalām* is understood to refer not to the practice of disputation in general but only to such as took place exclusively in the realm of theology.[19]

2 The Muʿtazila

In the person of Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 227/842), a thinker came onto the stage who was to have a lasting influence on Muʿtazilism.[20] It was possibly con-

---

In the context of discussions pertaining to the topic of *qadar*, the Jahmiyya are those who denied human free will altogether in favour of a strict determinism. On the designation "Jahmiyya" and its meaning, see Watt, *Formative Period*, 143–148.

17 This is explicit in, e.g., the full title of Ibn Taymiyya's work *Bayān*, which is directed first and foremost against the Ashʿarī theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210). See p. 13 above.

18 Thus, if one describes God as "knowing," for example, the only thing meant by this is that He is "not unknowing." See Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, *Kitāb Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn*, ed. Hellmut Ritter, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Maṭbaʿat al-Dawla, 1929–1933), 1:166, lines 14–15.

19 See Alexander Treiger, "Origins of *Kalām*," in Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 32–34. Note that while Treiger presents the view in question, he does not endorse it himself for want of sufficient evidence.

20 On this school and its aftermath in Islamic thought, see chaps. 7–11, by various authors, in Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 130–214. See also Sabine Schmidtke, "Neuere Forschungen zur Muʿtazila unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der späteren Muʿtazila ab dem 4./10. Jahrhundert," *Arabica* 45, no. 3 (1998). On the Muʿtazila's con-

Abū al-Hudhayl who first articulated[21] the five fundamental principles of the Muʿtazilī school.[22] Along with others, he was also an influential proponent of atomism, whose advent in *kalām* dates to the second half of the second/eighth century.[23] Abū al-Hudhayl is also the first thinker known to have subjected Quranic descriptions of God to a systematic analysis,[24] and he can further be

---

ception of God, see, e.g., Richard Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes: The Teaching of the Basrian School of the Muʿtazila in the Classical Period* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1978); van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, esp. 3:270–286, 3:399–413, 4:20–33, and 4:361–477; Jan Thiele, *Theologie in der jemenitischen Zaydiyya: Die naturphilosophischen Überlegungen des al-Ḥasan ar-Raṣṣāṣ* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), chap. 5; and Racha el Omari, *The Theology of Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī/al-Kaʿbī (d. 319/931)* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), chap. 2.

   Muʿtazilism was divided into the school of Basra and the school of Baghdad, a purely geographic distinction in the early period that only came to possess doctrinal relevance in the course of later developments. Important Basran Muʿtazilī figures include Abū al-Hudhayl, his nephew al-Naẓẓām (d. probably 221/836), Muʿammar b. ʿAbbād (d. 215/830), Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/916), and the latter's son Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī (d. 321/933), from whose name derives the title "Bahshamiyya" by which his followers—among them the well-known al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025)—are known.

   The Baghdadi school, on the other hand, enjoyed but a brief life, beginning with Bishr b. al-Muʿtamir (d. 210/825) and ending with Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī (d. 319/931). The best-known representatives of the school during the period between these two figures include al-Iskāfī (d. 240/854) and al-Khayyāṭ (d. 300/913). For an exhaustive listing of the members of both schools, see, e.g., Louis Gardet, *Dieu et la destinée de l'homme* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1967), 26; also el Omari, *Theology of Abū l-Qāsim*, 1–2 and Schmidtke, "Neuere Forschungen," 380.

21   Whether he deserves credit for this or the "founders" of the Muʿtazilī school, Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d. 131/748-9) and ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd (d. 144/761), is a matter of scholarly controversy. See Schmidtke, "Rationale Theologie," 173.

22   These five principles are (1) the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*), (2) divine justice (*ʿadl*), (3) the doctrine of the promise and the threat (*al-waʿd wa-l-waʿīd*), (4) the intermediate status of the grave sinner between that of a Muslim and that of a non-Muslim (*al-manzila bayna al-manzilatayn*), and (5) commanding the good and forbidding the evil (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-l-nahy ʿan al-munkar*). For a summary presentation of these five fundamental principles, see Schmidtke, "Neuere Forschungen," 382–383. The first two principles take on a central position in Muʿtazilī thought; for this reason, adherents of the school referred to themselves as "the people of divine justice and oneness" (*ahl al-ʿadl wa-l-tawḥīd*). These two principles are explicated thoroughly in el Omari, *Theology of Abū l-Qāsim*, 89–116 (for *tawḥīd*) and 117–148 (for *ʿadl*).

23   See Alnoor Dhanani, "Atomism," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2013-1, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 32b–34.

24   See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 4:441. On Abū al-Hudhayl's doctrine of the attributes, see especially—in addition to the sources cited farther below—Richard Frank, "The Divine Attributes according to the Teaching of Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf," *Le Muséon* 82 (1969), reprinted as part 2, with original pagination, in Richard Frank, *Early Islamic Theology: The Muʿtazilites and al-Ashʿarī*, ed. Dimitri Gutas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

credited with inaugurating the turn from a pure *theologia negativa* to a positive doctrine of the divine attributes.[25] Abū al-Hudhayl's views on these topics long continued to influence the Basran branch of the Mu'tazila, albeit in modified form.[26]

The Mu'tazilī conception of God can be subsumed thematically under the principle of *tawḥīd* (the oneness of God), which, on account of its importance, constitutes the first of the five principles delineated in later Mu'tazilī works.[27] Not only Abū al-Hudhayl but the Mu'tazilī school as a whole understood the ascription of substantive existence to the divine attributes as incompatible with the principle of *tawḥīd*. This is why some Mu'tazilīs, as we shall see, took the position that God's essence and His attributes are identical. The statement repeated formulaically among Ash'arīs that God's attributes are superadded to His essence (*zā'ida 'alā al-dhāt*) takes aim precisely at this (Mu'tazilī) theology and illustrates one of the core differences between the two schools' respective conceptions of God.[28] According to the Mu'tazilī view, if the attributes were real entities that had always existed along with God's essence, then one would have to admit a plurality of eternal existents. But the essence of *tawḥīd* in the Mu'tazilī view is that God alone is the only eternal.[29] In addition, God's oneness must also be understood to entail that He is not composed of parts, but according to the Mu'tazila, an ontologically real multiplicity in His essence would imply just such a composition.[30]

The Mu'tazilī view attempts to steer a middle course between transcendentalist conceptions of God influenced by Neoplatonism and the positive descriptions of God found in revelation.[31] The question of the relationship of God's essence to His attributes was one that occupied the Mu'tazila for a long time. Abū al-Hudhayl formulated his attempted solution, as reported by al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935-6) in his *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, as follows: "He [God] is knowledgeable through an act of knowing that is identical with Him (*'ālim bi-'ilm huwa*

---

25   See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 4:442.

26   See ibid., 3:272.

27   On the five fundamental principles, see p. 42, n. 22 above.

28   This is elaborated farther on. See p. 86 below.

29   See Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 132–133. Wolfson's claim here that the early *mutakallimūn* were influenced by the thought of the Church fathers has not been vindicated by subsequent research. See, inter alia, Schöck, "Jahm b. Ṣafwān," esp. 57–58.

30   See Jan Thiele, "Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī's (d. 321/933) Theory of 'States' (*aḥwāl*) and its Adaption by Ash'arite Theologians," in Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 365 and 377–378.

31   See Schmidtke, "Rationale Theologie," 171.

huwa). He is powerful through a power that is identical with Him. He is living through a life that is identical with Him."[32] And so it is, al-Ashʿarī adds, with all the other attributes, such as God's seeing (*baṣar*), hearing (*samʿ*), eternality (*qidam*), and face (*wajh*). In contrast, Abū al-Hudhayl interpreted God's hands (sing. *yad*) and eyes (sing. *ʿayn*) figuratively.[33] Yet even if the attributes are identical with God's essence, Abū al-Hudhayl maintains, they are nonetheless distinguishable from one another since they relate to different objects. As Josef van Ess remarks, this explanation is beset by grave problems, as in the case of those attributes that do not correspond to any object, such as the attribute of being alive.[34]

Abū al-Hudhayl's positions were adopted and modified in succeeding generations, with his nephew, al-Naẓẓām (d. probably 221/836), being cited as one of the earliest protagonists of his views. Al-Naẓẓām was uneasy with the fact that the way Abū al-Hudhayl articulated his positions implied a multiplicity in God's essence by seeming to ascribe a distinct reality to the attributes. He therefore reduced the attributes to mere names of a single divine nature, differing from one another only in their denoting different aspects of this indivisible nature. God is not knowing through an act of knowing (*ʿālim bi-ʿilm*), as al-Naẓẓām's uncle had seen it, but rather is knowing through His very self (*ʿālim bi-nafsihi*).[35] Al-Naẓẓām's reformulation of Abū al-Hudhayl's approach influenced the Muʿtazilī thinker Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī, who lived two generations later. With the latter's son Abū Hāshim, however, we witness a turning point in the question of the relationship between God and His attributes. Diverging unmistakably from the position of his father, Abū Hāshim accorded ontological reality to the divine attributes and tried to escape the problem of thereby having to admit a multiplicity in God's essence through his theory of *aḥwāl* (sing. *ḥāl*, "state").[36] This theory not only enjoyed wide acceptance subsequently among the Muʿtazila but found its way into Ashʿarī thought as well.[37] For this reason, it is worth considering more closely.[38]

---

32   Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 1:165, lines 5–6.

33   See ibid., 1:165, lines 6–7 and 11–13.

34   See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 3:274.

35   For more on this, see ibid., 3:399–400 and 4:442–443.

36   See Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*, 23–24 (with n. 37 on p. 36); also Thiele, "Jubbāʾī's Theory," 368–369.

37   On this point, see p. 90 below.

38   None of the works of Abū Hāshim have been preserved, though unsystematic presentations of his theory can be found scattered in the writings of later Muʿtazilī authors. Richard Frank has collected these passages and produced on their basis a thorough account of the theory of states. See Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes* and, in summary form, Richard

Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī's theory of states is based on his transfer of the syntactic notion of the "accusative of circumstance" (ḥāl) developed by the grammarians into the realm of kalām, with the goal of accounting for the ontological foundation not only of the attributes of God but of all things.[39] The ḥāl itself possesses an intermediate status, ontologically speaking, insofar as it belongs neither to the realm of existent nor to the realm of non-existent entities.[40] It is not equivalent to the subject to which it refers, but rather describes the manner or state in which the subject exists. As we shall see later through examples, the ḥāl of a thing can be expressed linguistically with the copulative verb kāna or the verbal noun kawn derived from it. Abū Hāshim's theory distinguishes five categories of ḥāl, which we summarise below.

The first of the five categories of states relates both to the Creator and to created beings and comprises the attribute of essence (ṣifat al-dhāt), or essential attribute.[41] The attribute of essence expresses what can be stated essentially, or essentialiter, about a particular thing. The attribute of essence thus not only establishes the identity of the thing but is also that in virtue of which the thing in question can be differentiated from all other things. In the case of created beings, this attribute is easy to determine, for it is simply the respective designation of each given entity. In the case of an accident, for instance, the essential attribute is simply the fact of being an accident (kawn al-ʿaraḍ ʿaraḍ^{an}), a fact that distinguishes it qua accident from all non-accidents. Analogously, the colours white and black can be differentiated by the fact that the former exists in the state (ḥāl) of "being white" and the latter in the state of "being black."[42] Created entities that no longer exist or that have not yet come into existence likewise possess an attribute of essence, whence the thesis of the Bahshamiyya (that is, the followers of Abū Hāshim) that the non-existent is a thing (shayʾ). Since the Bahshamiyya held that things were only intelligible and could only be an object of knowledge by virtue of their attribute of essence, they were able to explain how God could have knowledge not only of existent things but of non-existent things as well.[43] They disagreed, however, concerning which of

---

Frank, "Ḥāl," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (Supplement), ed. P.J. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Other accounts, all of which rely heavily on Frank's monograph, can be found in Thiele, *Theologie in der jemenitischen Zaydiyya*, esp. 117–131 (which also discusses other studies); Thiele, "Jubbāʾī's Theory," 367–375; el Omari, *Theology of Abū l-Qāsim*, 89–91; and Schmidtke, "Rationale Theologie," 174–175.

39   See Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*, 19–20.
40   See Thiele, "Jubbāʾī's Theory," 368.
41   See Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*, 53–57.
42   See ibid., 53.
43   See ibid., 54; also Thiele, "Jubbāʾī's Theory," 371.

God's attributes should be considered His essential attribute. One view identi-
fied God's essential attribute with the quality of being eternal (*qadīm*), while
an opposing view identified it with the quality of being existent (*mawjūd*).[44]
The attribute of existence, however, falls under the second category of states,
to which we now turn.

All attributes necessarily entailed by (*muqtaḍā* or *mūjab ʿan*) a subject's
essential attribute are subsumed under the second category once the subject
has come into existence.[45] The essential attribute of an atom, for example, is its
state of being located in a place (*kawn al-jawhar mutaḥayyiz*^{an}).[46] The fact that
Abū Hāshim's theory ascribes ontological reality to the states explains how it is
that a particular state can bring about another.[47] In the case of God, four attrib-
utes are identified that—since God's essence and hence His essential attrib-
utes have always existed—are equally eternal with God Himself: these are the
attributes of being powerful (*qādir*^{an}), knowing (*ʿālim*^{an}), living (*ḥayy*^{an}), and
existent (*mawjūd*^{an}). These four attributes can also be placed in a logical rela-
tion and thereby established through reason. Thus, ʿAbd al-Jabbār argues that
from the existence of creation and the order implicit in it, one can conclude
that its Creator must be powerful and knowing.[48] But these two attributes can
belong only to living entities, while the attribute of being alive presupposes, in
turn, that the entity exists.[49] It is this second category of states that constitutes
the most substantive distinction between Abū Hāshim's theory and the views
of his father, Abū ʿAlī, for on the one hand, the divine attributes are now accor-
ded a distinct ontological reality, while on the other, they are no longer equated
with God's essence as such, but rather denote only partial aspects thereof.[50]

The third category of states describes those attributes that do not belong
to an existent thing necessarily. The fact that these attributes are realised in a
subject can therefore not be grounded in the subject's very essence. Rather, the
cause of their reality is a *maʿnā*, a term that can best be translated in this con-
text as a "causative accident."[51] With one exception that will be discussed later,
this *maʿnā* always inheres in the subject that is qualified by the attribute occa-

---

44   Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*, 54; Thiele "Jubbāʾī's Theory," 371.

45   See Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*, 58 (with n. 1 on p. 80).

46   See ibid., 60 and 107.

47   See Thiele, "Jubbāʾī's Theory," 372.

48   This line of reasoning is based on an analogical inference that we will discuss in detail in
       chapter 7, section 1.

49   See al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī uṣūl al-dīn*, in *Rasāʾil al-ʿadl wa-l-tawḥīd*, ed.
       Muḥammad ʿImāra, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1988), 210–211.

50   See Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*, 80, n. 2.

51   See ibid., 93.

sioned by the accident in question. Thus, as stated above, the existence of an atom necessarily entails the attribute of being located in a place, but not the attribute of being in one particular place to the exclusion of others. The attribute of being located in a place is concomitant to the atom on account of the causative accident. The same is also true, for instance, of a body's attribute of possessing colour or of a human being's attributes of being capable of acting (*qādir^{an}*), willing (*murīd^{an}*), or experiencing dislike (*kārih^{an}*).[52] This category of states applies to God insofar as He too possesses the attributes of liking and disliking. These attributes cannot arise as a result of God's essence, according to the Bahshamiyya, which means that they are temporal (*muḥdath*) rather than eternal in nature.[53] And in contrast to created things, the causative accident is not located within God but outside of Him, where it exists without any substrate (*maḥall*).[54]

The fourth category of states involves attributes that are brought into being by the agent (*bi-l-fāʿil*).[55] These include predicates such as being able to speak (*mutakallim^{an}*) or being benevolent (*muḥsin^{an}*). Such properties are not ascribed either to God or to created things as ontologically real states or attributes, but rather belong to them, in a secondary or derived manner, only by virtue of their acting (*ʿalā ṭarīqat al-fiʿliyya*).[56]

The fifth and final category of states includes the attributes that are grounded neither in the essence of a thing, nor in a causative accident, nor in the activity of an agent.[57] In the case of living beings, this would include, for example, the attribute of being perceptive (*mudrik^{an}*). With respect to God, possession of this attribute entails that He can be described as being hearing (*samīʿ^{an}*) and seeing (*baṣīr^{an}*). These attributes belong to Him in virtue of His attribute of being alive and are therefore eternal—though only in the sense of

---

52   See ibid., 95 and 96–97.

53   This topic is treated in detail in al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-ʿadl*, ed. Ibrāhīm Madhkūr et al., 14 vols. printed in 16 (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1960–1965), 6²:105–148. (The full work comprises twenty volumes, of which volumes 1, 2, 3, 10, 18, and 19 are either partially or completely lost.)

54   The view that an accident can exist without a substrate is classified as an obvious absurdity both by Ashʿarīs and by Ibn Taymiyya. A detailed attempt to defend the Bahshamī position can be found in ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 6²:149–202. By contrast, al-Kaʿbī, another important representative of the Baghdadi school of the Muʿtazila, held that will (*irāda*) in the case of God does not represent an additional attribute but is identical with the attribute of knowledge (*ʿilm*). He was sharply criticised for this view within his own school, however. See el Omari, *Theology of Abū l-Qāsim*, 91.

55   See Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes*, 124.

56   See ibid., 135–136.

57   See ibid., 148.

constituting a capacity whose actualisation is contingent on the existence of a thing that can be perceived (*bi-sharṭ wujūd al-mudrak*).[58]

Now, although most Muʿtazilīs were influenced in due course by the thought of Abū Hāshim, this did not prevent the formation of another strand of Muʿtazilī thought. This strand goes back to Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044), a student of the Bahshamī Muʿtazilī theologian ʿAbd al-Jabbār. Al-Baṣrī rejected the theory of *aḥwāl*[59] and equated God's will with His knowledge, as al-Kaʿbī had done[60] before him,[61] though he remained undecided as to whether God's seeing and hearing could also be considered identical to His knowledge.[62] On the basis of his work *Taṣaffuḥ al-adilla*,[63] which he never completed, some Muʿtazilīs accused al-Baṣrī of unbelief (*kufr*), which prompted him to compose the work *Ghurar al-adilla*, now lost. Ibn Taymiyya, as late as the early eighth/fourteenth century, describes these two works as the "Zabūr"[64] of the Muʿtazila of later times.[65] One of the best-known Muʿtazilīs that were influenced by the thought of Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī is al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144),[66] and even the Ashʿarī theologian al-Juwaynī borrowed aspects of Abū al-Ḥusayn's thought as well.[67]

A little more than a century before Ibn Taymiyya, all Muʿtazilīs belonged either to the school of Abū Hāshim or to that of Abū al-Ḥusayn.[68] In subsequent decades, Muʿtazilism came to be almost completely defunct among Sunnis, though traces of it can be detected all the way into the ninth/fifteenth century.[69] In contrast, numerous aspects of Muʿtazilī thought were

---

58   See ibid., 153–154. As of the time of Iskāfī, by contrast, the view came to prevail in the Baghdadi school that God's attribute of being perceptive was identical with His attribute of knowledge. See el Omari, *Theology of Abū l-Qāsim*, 99–100.

59   See Schmidtke, "Rationale Theologie," 176.

60   See p. 47, n. 54 above.

61   See Wilferd Madelung, "Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2007-1, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 18b.

62   See ibid.

63   The preserved parts of this work are available in a published edition. See Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *Taṣaffuḥ al-adilla*, ed. Wilferd Madelung and Sabine Schmidtke (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006).

64   This term refers to the Psalms revealed to David. See Q. 4:163.

65   See *Tisʿīniyya*, 2:645–646.

66   On this, see the editor's introduction in Muḥammad b. ʿUmar (Jār Allāh) al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Beirut: Arabic Scientific Publishers, 2007), esp. 79.

67   See Madelung, "Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī," 19a.

68   See Schmidtke, "Neuere Forschungen," 381.

69   See ibid., 379 and 382 (with n. 5).

adopted in Shīʿī and even Jewish circles,[70] as in the case, for instance, with the Imāmī Shīʿī scholar and contemporary of Ibn Taymiyya Ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325),[71] whom Ibn Taymiyya sought to refute in his multi-volume work *Minhāj al-sunna*.

3   The *Falāsifa*

The polymath Abū Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq al-Kindī (d. between 247/861 and 252/866) was likewise influenced by Muʿtazilī thought,[72] but he was not a Muʿtazilī. Rather, he is the first representative of an altogether distinct intellectual tradition, namely, that of *falsafa*.[73] Though the term *falsafa* is normally translated as "philosophy," the two are by no means identical from a conceptual point of view. *Falsafa* represents a particular form of philosophical thought[74] whose

---

70   See Camilla Adang and Sabine Schmidtke, eds., *A Common Rationality: Muʿtazilism in Islam and Judaism* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2016).

71   Al-Ḥillī follows in the tradition of Abū al-Ḥusayn. See Madelung, "Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī," 19a.

72   On this, see Peter Adamson, "Al-Kindī and the Muʿtazila: Divine Attributes, Creation and Freedom," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 13 (2003).

73   The proponents of *falsafa* are called *falāsifa* (sing. *faylasūf*). On Ibn Taymiyya's complex relationship with this intellectual tradition and its representatives, see Thomas Michel, "Ibn Taymiyya's Critique of Falsafa," *Hamdard Islamicus* 6, no. 1 (1983); Nurcholish Madjid, "Ibn Taymiyya on Kalām and Falsafa: A Problem of Reason and Revelation in Islam" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1984), chap. 5; Yahya Michot, "Misled and Misleading … Yet Central in their Influence: Ibn Taymiyya's Views on the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ," in *The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and Their* Rasāʾil*: An Introduction*, 3rd ed., ed. Nader El-Bizri (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. 139–140; and Yahya Michot, "From al-Maʾmūn to Ibn Sabʿīn via Avicenna: Ibn Taymīya's Historiography of *Falsafa*," in *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas*, ed. Felicitas Opwis and David Reisman (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

       Scholarship on the intellectual tradition of *falsafa* is extensive and can easily be searched. I call particular attention here to Khaled El-Rouayheb and Sabine Schmidtke, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), as well as Ulrich Rudolph, *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt*, vol. 1, *8.–10. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ulrich Rudolph, with the assistance of Renate Würsch (Basel: Schwabe, 2012).

74   The equation of philosophy with *falsafa* in the academic literature has led, among other things, to the erroneous presumption that philosophy in the Islamic world met an early demise shortly after the sixth/twelfth century. This is true, in fact, only for the tradition of *falsafa*, which represents just one particular form of philosophising. On this point, see, e.g., Frank Griffel's remarks in Abū al-Walīd b. Rushd, *Maßgebliche Abhandlung: Faṣl al-maqāl*, trans. Frank Griffel (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010), 61–70, as well as Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 5–12 and Rudolph, introduction (Einleitung) to *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt*, vol. 1, esp. xiv–xv.

representatives, however heterogenous their views may have been, concur in recognising the Greek philosopher Aristotle (d. 322 BCE) as the "first teacher" (*al-muʿallim al-awwal*).[75] Other important pioneers of this tradition include Plotinus (d. 270 CE) and his later disciple Proclus (d. 485 CE), two chief representatives of the tradition that has been referred to as Neoplatonism in works on the history of philosophy since the eighteenth century.[76]

As early as the Umayyads, and much more so under the early Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136–158/754–775), philosophical works from the authors of antiquity and late antiquity began to be translated into Arabic. However, three circles of translators that arose subsequently have come to be seen as particularly central to this process, namely, those of al-Kindī, Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq (d. 260/873), and Bishr b. Mattā (d. 328/940). Al-Kindī's circle produced, alongside other works, Arabic translations of Proclus's *Elements of Theology* and parts 4–6 of Plotinus's *Enneads*, both in heavily redacted form. The first work is known by the title *Kitāb fī al-khayr al-maḥḍ*[77] and the second as *Kitāb al-Uthūlūjiyā*,[78] and both were falsely attributed to Aristotle. It is therefore understandable why thinkers like al-Fārābī (d. 339/950-1) and Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), two of the most prominent representatives of *falsafa*, saw themselves as belonging not to the Neoplatonic tradition but squarely to that of Aristotle.[79] The two aforementioned works formed much of the foundation upon which Neoplatonic metaphysics came to fruition in the *falsafa* tradition.[80] The *Kitāb al-Uthūlūjiyā* also exerted a great influence on thinkers like Ibn ʿArabī, who, however, belonged not to the tradition of *falsafa* itself but to a current within *taṣawwuf* (referring to Sufism in a general sense) that was influenced by it.[81]

---

75   See Cristina d'Ancona, "Aristotle and Aristotelianism," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2008-1, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 153b–154a.

76   See Helmut Meinhardt, "Neuplatonismus," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 6, ed. Karlfried Gründer (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984).

77   This work is treated in detail in Gerhard Endress, ed., *Proclus Arabus: Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der* Institutio Theologica *aus arabischer Übersetzung* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1973).

78   A thorough presentation of this work can be found in Peter Adamson, *The Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the 'Theology of Aristotle'* (London: Duckworth, 2002).

79   See Jon McGinnis, *Avicenna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 8–9. Ibn Sīnā, however, expressed doubt concerning Aristotle's authorship of these works. See Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works*, 2nd rev. and exp. ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 21 (with n. 2) and 58.

80   See McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 8.

81   See Michael Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Ismāʿīlī Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 231. Ibn ʿArabī's ontology and his conception of God, as well as Ibn Taymiyya's critiques thereof, are presented in chapter 4, section 4.

Al-Kindī himself had already conceptualised the Aristotelian unmoved mover not merely as final cause of the movement of the heavenly spheres (as in modern scholarship) but as Creator God as well, a move in which he was followed by later generations of *falāsifa*.[82] With regard to the process of creation, al-Kindī followed the views of John Philoponus (d. ca. 575 CE), the most prominent advocate of a temporal creation from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) that the world of late antiquity had produced.[83] Two generations later, al-Fārābī countered this model with the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation, which he combined with the Ptolemaic view that the cosmos consisted of nine heavenly spheres with the earth at the centre.[84] Al-Fārābī adopted the premiss that from God's activity of reflecting upon Himself, there *flows*[85] into being a second existent, namely, an incorporeal intellect. The process of creation is repeated through the mediation of this intellect until nine more intellects are emanated, each associated with its own heavenly sphere comprising a body and a soul.[86] The last of these spheres is the lunar sphere, beneath which lies the material world, which, in contrast to the superlunary world, is characterised by generation and corruption. Just as God's activity of reflecting upon Himself is eternal, so too are the existent entities that result from this reflection. These entities are thus subsequent to God not in a temporal sense but only from an ontological and causal perspective. And while the spheres have an influence on the material processes occurring on earth, the so-called active intellect (*al-ʿaql al-faʿʿāl*), associated with the lunar sphere, is capable of guiding and assisting human thought. It is through the active intellect that prophets gain their knowledge— which explains why the active intellect is identified with the angel Gabriel[87]— but this does not apply exclusively to prophets: all other human beings too, as we elaborate below, can acquire knowledge of apodictic universal propositions through the agency of the active intellect.[88]

---

82   See Peter Adamson, *Al-Kindī* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 72–73.

83   See ibid., chap. 4.

84   On this, see Ulrich Rudolph, "Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī," in Rudolph, *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt*, vol. 1, 428–429, as well as Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 44–48. The following summary of al-Fārābī's theory of emanation is based on the passages cited here from these two works.

85   Ar. *yafīḍu*, Lat. *emanare*, whence the name "theory of emanation (*fayḍ*)."

86   These spheres are, in descending order, the starless sphere, the sphere of the fixed stars, then the spheres of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the sun, Venus, Mercury, and the moon.

87   On this point, see Frank Griffel, "Muslim Philosophers' Rationalist Explanation of Muḥammad's Prophecy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Muḥammad*, ed. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

88

Ibn Sīnā adopts a similar model of creation but modifies it substantially in several respects.[89] Regarding the conception of God, the following presentation will be limited for reasons of space to the position held by Ibn Sīnā,[90] particularly since it is he that Ibn Taymiyya primarily has in view when engaging with the *falāsifa* in those works of his that are relevant to this study.[91]

According to Ibn Sīnā, then, God is a pure, self-sufficient being whose existence is grounded within Himself and is thus necessary (*wājib*).[92] A core element of the Neoplatonic conception of God, advocated by Ibn Sīnā as well, is the negation of any multiplicity in God, who is thus frequently referred to as "the One" (*al-wāḥid*). For Ibn Sīnā, this lack of multiplicity entails that God possesses no quiddity (*māhiyya*) outside His individual reality (*inniyya*).[93]

---

89   On this point, see, e.g., Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes*, 74–82. See also Ibn Sīnā's own treatment of the topic in Avicenna [Abū ʿAlī b. Sīnā], *The Metaphysics of The Healing [al-Shifāʾ: al-Ilāhiyyāt]*, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005), book 9 (pp. 299–357).

90   This presentation is based on Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, book 8, esp. chaps. 4–7. See also the following selected studies: Muhammad Legenhausen, "Ibn Sina's Concept of God," *Ishraq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook* 1 (2010); Rahim Acar, *Talking about God and Talking about Creation: Avicenna's and Thomas Aquinas' Positions* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); and John Rosheger, "A Note on Avicenna and the Divine Attributes," *Modern Schoolman* 77, no. 2 (2000).

It is certain that Ibn Sīnā at least began composing a work called *al-Risāla al-ʿArshiyya*, the published version of which has been discussed and/or cited numerous times in the literature. See, e.g., Egbert Meyer, "Philosophischer Gottesglaube: Ibn Sīnās Thronschrift," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 130, no. 2 (1980). To be sure, the published text is of utmost relevance to our topic given that it primarily addresses God's essence and His attributes. However, serious doubts have been raised in recent studies as to whether the published text really is the above-named work of Ibn Sīnā. See Gutas, *Avicenna*, 484–485. For the purposes of the present discussion, therefore, I have disregarded the work in question as well as any discussions based on it in the literature.

91   In addition to Ibn Sīnā, other *falāsifa* are discussed with respect to their theory of the attributes in, e.g., Ian Netton, *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 1989); Adamson, "Al-Kindī and the Muʿtazila"; and Harry Austryn Wolfson, "Avicenna, Algazali and Averroes on Divine Attributes," in *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Isadore Twersky and George Williams (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

92   See Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, book 1, chaps. 6 and 7.

93   See ibid., 274, line 4. It is unclear whether Ibn Sīnā's equation of God's *māhiyya* with His *inniyya* amounts to a negation of *māhiyya* or not. On this point, see Acar, *Talking about God*, 82–83, as well as Olga Lizzini, "Wuǧūd-Mawǧūd/Existence-Existent in Avicenna: A Key Ontological Notion of Arabic Philosophy," *Quaestio* 3 (2003): esp. 123. With respect to created entities, the two (*māhiyya* and *inniyya*) are distinct from each other according to Ibn Sīnā. See Rollen Hauser, "Essence and Existence in Ibn Sīnā," in *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Richard Taylor and Luis Xavier López-Farjeat (London: Routledge, 2016), 212.

He therefore also possesses no genus or specific difference, which entails in turn that He cannot be apprehended through a definition.[94] In short, God is pure being conditioned by the negation of non-existence with respect to Him, as well as the negation of all attributes (*huwa mujarrad al-wujūd bi-sharṭ salb al-ʿadam wa-sāʾir al-awṣāf ʿanhu*). Ibn Sīnā emphasises that this should not be confused with existence in the sense of a universal (*kullī*), such a universal being unconditioned by any affirmation (*al-wujūd lā bi-sharṭ al-ithbāt*).[95] He clarifies the matter further by stating that the word "God" refers to pure being that is free of any addition (*ziyāda*), whereas existence in the sense of a universal includes all things irrespective of whether or not something else can be added to their being. Created entities are characterised by the possibility of such an addition, while God is such that nothing can be added to His being.[96]

The fact that God is pure existence does not mean that He cannot be apprehended by means of other positive descriptions. Thus, for example, He is pure good (*al-khayr al-maḥḍ*), for the good, Ibn Sīnā explains, is that after which all things strive, and this, in turn, is nothing other than existence: "So it is," he summarises, "that existence is pure good and pure perfection."[97] In order to preserve the purity of God's existence and thus to negate any specificity or determinateness with respect to Him, positive descriptions of God may be understood only as negations (sing. *salb*) of contrary qualities, as relations (sing. *iḍāfa*) to the creation, or as a combination of both. Ibn Sīnā is thus able to accept and to affirm many of the descriptions of God commonly put forth by the theologians. He illustrates this through several examples, as in the following passage:[98]

> Those [attributes] that intermix with negation (*tukhāliṭu al-salb*) [are such that, for example,] if one, without due respect, says of the First that He is a substance (*jawhar*), he would not mean [anything] but this

---

94   See Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, 277, lines 4–10.

95   See ibid., 276, line 16 to 277, line 1.

96   See ibid., 277, lines 1–3 (on this point, see also the translation at p. 415, n. 7). Michot's presentation of the typology of being in Ibn Taymiyya's writings is also helpful, as this typology relies heavily on Ibn Sīnā's treatment of the matter. See Michot, "Commentary, Part 2," 360–363.

97   See Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, 283, lines 15–18.

98   Ibid., 296, lines 6–15. The English translation of this passage is that of Michael Marmura (located at the page cited here). Additions in square brackets are Marmura's; Arabic glosses are those of the author.

[His] existence with the negation of His being in a subject. And if he says of Him "one" (*wāḥid*), he would mean only this [His] existence itself, where either quantitative and categorical division are negated of Him or else a companion is negated of Him. If he says [that He is] intellect, intellectual apprehender, and intelligible (*ʿaql wa-ʿāqil wa-maʿqūl*), he would mean in reality only that this pure being [is such that] the possibility of mixing with matter and its attachments (*ʿalāʾiq*) is negated of Him, with the consideration, however, of [there being] some relation [to matter]. If he says of Him "first" (*awwal*), he[99] would mean only the relating of this existence to the whole. If he says of Him "powerful" (*qādir*), he would mean by it only that He is the Necessary Existent, to which is added that the existence of [what is] other than Him comes about in reality only from Him in the manner that has been mentioned [elsewhere]. If he says of Him "living" (*ḥayy*), he would mean only this intellectual existence taken in relation to the whole, which is also intellectually apprehended in the second intention since the living is one who is an apprehender and an enactor. If he says of Him "willer" (*murīd*), he would mean only that the Necessary Existent's being with His intellectuality—that is, the negation of matter from Him—is the principle of the entire order of the good and that He intellectually apprehends this. This [attribute] would, hence, be composed of a relation and a negation.

It is evident from this passage, which by no means includes all descriptions of God acceptable to Ibn Sīnā, that even if he predicates of God the same attributes as do many of the theologians, he in fact advocates a transcendentalism even more radical than the Muʿtazila had proposed. Moreover, the fact that Ibn Sīnā describes God, for example, as having a will does not mean that He is able to choose from among several options. Thus, God was unable to choose whether or not to bring creation into existence. Rather, it exists through Him necessarily, even if, considered on its own, it is subsumed under the category of merely possible existence.[100] Similarly, the ordering of the cosmos and of all the processes that occur within it are determined. This may well seem to run counter to God's perfection, but for Ibn Sīnā, it is precisely the opposite. Human beings, for instance, choose one of several possible courses of action because external circumstances cause it to appear to be the best. But in the case of God,

---

99   Marmura: "He" [*sic*].
100   See Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, book 1, chap. 6.

given that He is not influenced by external factors in any way, the grounds for preferring one particular action over all others is something He possess intrinsically. He is thus not subject to any process of decision, even if one were to conceive of such in a non-temporal sense.[101] Nevertheless, as we have seen, Ibn Sīnā does attribute a will to God and even describes it in another passage as being free.[102]

According to Ibn Sīnā—and in this point he concurs with numerous other philosophers, such as al-Fārābī, Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185), and Ibn Rushd—the philosophically unschooled Muslim masses should not be presented with such an abstract conception of God.[103] Rather, they must be instructed concerning God through the use of symbolism and allegory. In Ibn Sīnā's words:

> He [a prophet] should not occupy them [the philosophically unschooled masses] with any knowledge about God Most High beyond the fact that He is one, real (ḥaqq), and without like. Were he to go beyond this by obligating them to believe that God exists but that He can be neither pointed to [as existing] in a place nor defined (or described) in terms of categorical division (ghayr munqasim bi-l-qawl), that He is neither inside nor outside the world, and that no other such [predicates can be affirmed of Him], this would amount to laying upon them an excessive burden, obfuscating their religion, and embroiling them in something from which only one who is granted support and success [from God] can hope to escape; yet such persons are rare and but seldomly encountered. […] Nor is it fitting for a man to make known his possession of a truth that he is concealing from the masses. He must not permit that anything of the matter become public. Rather, he is obliged to make known to them the majesty and greatness of God Most High through symbols and allegories [taken] from things that, in their estimation, are majestic and great. He must further impart to them this much: namely, that He has no equal, no partner, and no like.[104]

---

101 See Acar, *Talking about God*, 147.

102 See ibid., 132 ff.

103 On this point, and more generally on the relationship between philosophy and religion from the perspective of the *falāsifa,* see Michael Marmura, "The Islamic Philosophers' Conception of Islam," in *Islam's Understanding of Itself*, ed. Richard Hovannisian and Jr. Speros Vryonis (Malibu: Undena, 1983), as well as Andrew March, "Falsafa and Law," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Law*, ed. Anver Emon and Rumee Ahmed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018; online 2016).

104 Avicenna, *Metaphysics*, 365–366.

The distinction—widespread among the philosophers—between the (philosophical) elite and the uneducated masses is one that Ibn Taymiyya criticises sharply. In his view, the Quran and hadith address all Muslims equally, regardless of their level of knowledge or education.[105]

Particularly problematic in the eyes of later theologians was Ibn Sīnā's assertion that God knows only universals to the exclusion of particulars. Al-Ghazālī, for instance, considers this position of the *falāsifa*, along with two others, to constitute disbelief (*kufr*).[106] Recent scholarship, however, is divided on whether Ibn Sīnā's statements on this topic should really be taken to mean that God does not know particulars.[107]

The intellectual tradition of *falsafa* boasts its last major proponent in the Andalusian figure of Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198)—stressing once more that what holds for *falsafa* does not hold for philosophy more generally as cultivated in the Islamic world. Numerous reasons can be cited for the decline of *falsafa*, including the decreased political and social support that becomes palpable particularly after the displacement of the Buyids by the Seljuqs in the years following Ibn Sīnā's death.[108] Another factor in the waning acceptance of *falsafa* may have been al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, in which, as mentioned above, he declares three positions of the *falāsifa* to be contrary to Islam. Nevertheless, Ibn Sīnā exerted an enormous influence on al-Ghazālī, as is clear in the latter's positions on questions of ontology, psychology, and prophetology.[109] Indeed, Frank Griffel views al-Ghazālī's theology as the "first successful fusion of Avicennism[110] and Ashʿarite *kalām*."[111] Al-Ghazālī has also been given credit

---

105   On his critique of this distinction among the philosophers, see esp. Michot, "Commentary, Part 1," 155–159 and the relevant translated passages indicated in the article's table of contents (Michot, 161–164). See also von Kügelgen, "Dialogpartner," 461–462, 474, and 476–477.

106   See Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 101–103.

107   Michael Marmura argues that this is the case for at least some particulars. See Marmura, "Some Aspects of Avicenna's Theory of God's Knowledge of Particulars," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 82, no. 3 (1962). Rahim Acar, on the other hand, maintains that according to Ibn Sīnā's conception, God has knowledge of all particulars without exception. See Rahim Acar, "Reconsidering Avicenna's Position on God's Knowledge of Particulars," in *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam*, ed. Jon McGinnis, with the assistance of David C. Reisman (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

108   See Frank Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz im Islam: Die Entwicklung zu al-Ġazālī's Urteil gegen die Philosophie und die Reaktionen der Philosophen* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 186.

109   See Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 7 (with n. 20 on p. 288).

110   This word is derived from the Latinised form of Ibn Sīnā's name, "Avicenna."

111   Frank Griffel, "Between al-Ghazālī and Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī: The Dialectical Turn of Philosophy in Iraq and Iran during the Sixth/Twelfth Century," in *In the Age of Averroes:*

for the acceptance among many Muslim thinkers of the view that syllogistic methods of inference as propounded in Aristotelian logic are an indispensable method of proof in the various sciences.[112] In the wake of this development, Aristotle's *Organon*[113] was adopted as a preparatory text in the curricula of the theological madrasas starting in the sixth/twelfth century.[114] During the same period, the philosopher Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. ca. 560/1165) composed the first known work to compare and contrast the views of the *falāsifa* with those of other schools of thought, including the Ashʿarīs, with the goal of weighing them against one another and according preference to whichever he found to be most plausible.[115] The fact that important elements of *falsafa* were unmistakably incorporated into the *kalām* tradition becomes apparent later with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), who authored commentaries on the works of Ibn Sīnā.[116]

Despite Ibn Taymiyya's massive critique of the tradition of *falsafa* in general and of Aristotelian logic and its associated ontology in particular, he was unable to arrest this development in the intellectual history of Islam. Indeed, he himself may have even been influenced in some of his positions by the thought of the *falāsifa*, including that of Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd.[117]

Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century, ed. Peter Adamson (London: The Warburg Institute, 2011), 47.

112 See Perler and Rudolph, introduction (Einleitung) to Perler and Rudolph (eds.), *Logik und Theologie*, 8.

113 Seven works are subsumed under the *Organon* ("tool"). The first is the *Isagoge* ("introduction") of Porphyry (d. after 300 CE), whereas the other six go back to Aristotle and are known by the following titles: *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, *Topics*, *On Sophistical Refutations*, *Prior Analytics*, and *Posterior Analytics*.

114 See d'Ancona, "Aristotle and Aristotelianism," 156a.

115 See Griffel, "Between al-Ghazālī and Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī," 64.

116 Ayman Shihadeh even goes so far as to consider him the first representative of an "Islamic philosophy." By this he means that al-Rāzī worked out a synthesis between *falsafa* and *kalām* that was subsequently seen to be in harmony with orthodoxy but was simultaneously not in principle hostile to *falsafa*. See Ayman Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī: 6th/12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 15 (2005): 178.

117 See Jon Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya as an Avicennan Theologian: A Muslim Approach to God's Self-Sufficiency," *Theological Review* 27, no. 1 (2006) and Saʿd, *Mawqif Ibn Taymiyya*. On the relationship between Ibn Taymiyya and the *falsafa* tradition, see the sources mentioned at p. 49, n. 73 above.

4   Ahl al-Ḥadīth

Al-Kindī's generation saw the formation of the movement of the so-called *ahl al-ḥadīth*, usually translated as "traditionalists."[118] Adherents of this movement consider themselves followers and guardians of the Sunna, narrowed conceptually by al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) to include only the words and practices of the Prophet Muḥammad as transmitted through hadith.[119] *Ahl al-ḥadīth* are often associated with the Ḥanbalī school,[120] and there is indeed a correlation between the two that became ever more conspicuous over the centuries. Nevertheless, belonging to *ahl al-ḥadīth* implied no necessary affiliation with the tradition of any particular legal school. The unifying elements of the movement were the rejection of *kalām*, whose proponents it classified as *mubtadiʿa* (those who introduce unlawful innovations into the religion), and an approach to theology that was centred first and foremost on the texts of revelation. This made *ahl al-ḥadīth* direct adversaries of the *mutakallimūn*, who, for their part—at least since the time of Abū al-Hudhayl—accused *ahl al-ḥadīth* of falling prey to *tashbīh*, that is, the likening of God to His creation.[121] The *mutakallimūn* likewise referred to the traditionalists by the pejorative term *ḥashwiyya* (from *ḥashā*: to fill or stuff), meant to imply that they stuffed their works with numerous weak hadith, regarding these as valid proofs that could be used to reinforce their position.[122] While this charge may hold for some works of *ahl al-ḥadīth*,[123] it is illegitimate as a generalisation, one that still echoes in Western scholarship as a consequence of the latter's problematic reception of *ahl al-ḥadīth* in general and of the Ḥanbalīs in particular. Influential Orientalists, such as Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921), have had a long-lasting

---

118   On *ahl al-ḥadīth*, see, e.g., Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

119   See George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 7.

120   On the Ḥanbalī school, see especially the numerous works of Henri Laoust and George Makdisi, such as the in-depth editor's introduction in Abū ʿAbd Allāh b. Baṭṭa, *La profession de foi d'Ibn Baṭṭa*, ed. and trans. Henri Laoust (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1958), as well as Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl*. See also Jon Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," in Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, with the references given there.

121   See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 3:270.

122   See Jon Hoover, "Ḥashwiyya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2016-5, 86.

123   Thus, for instance, Ibn Taymiyya, who sees himself as belonging to *ahl al-ḥadīth*, takes issue with several authors of this kind, including the well-known ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mandah (d. 470/1078), accusing them of citing numerous weak hadith in their works. See *Aʿlā, MF*, 16:432–435.

impact on the Western image of the Ḥanbalīs, whom they studied mostly on the basis of works penned by the latter's opponents—particularly the Ashʿarīs—and thus characterised as a particularly reactionary, fanatical, and aggressive movement in Islam.[124] It is primarily the works of Henri Laoust (d. 1983) and his student George Makdisi (d. 2002) that have contributed to the rectification of this skewed image.

In addition, Sherman Jackson has demonstrated that the dichotomy between "rationalism" and "traditionalism" as widely employed in the academic literature is misleading,[125] arguing that we would be better advised to speak of "different *traditions of reason*."[126] He cites on numerous occasions Binyamin Abrahamov, who maintains that Islamic theology has encompassed pure forms of traditionalism, in which the fundamentals of Islam were derived through exclusive reliance on transmitted reports going back to the Prophet, his Companions, or their students without making use of reason in any form whatsoever.[127] Jackson refutes this view by arguing persuasively over numerous pages that even the most extreme form of traditionalism never consisted in a simple passing on of transmitted material but, rather, was marked by a process of "evaluation, amplification, suppression, refinement, and assessing the polarity between would-be tradition and indigenous innovations and/or non-indigenous ideas and practices."[128] On the other hand, he argues further, the so-called rationalistic schools of thought likewise stood within specific traditions—such as Neoplatonism, for instance—through which specific construals of rationality were constituted. Anything that lay outside the framework dictated by these traditions was then demoted to the rank of irrationality. In Jackson's words:

> […] there is no necessary contradiction between "reason" and the ostensibly anthropomorphist doctrines of the Traditionalists. The only contradiction that exists is between these doctrines and the Rationalists' construction of the Aristotelian-Neoplatonic tradition. Otherwise […] it might be no more unreasonable to affirm God's mounting on the throne,

---

124   See George Makdisi, *L'Islam hanbalisant* (Paris: Geuthner, 1983), 8–24; Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl*, 12–13; and Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," 625.

125   See Sherman A. Jackson, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's* Fayṣal al-Tafriqa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 16–29.

126   See ibid., 17 (emphasis original).

127   See ibid., 17–18. The passages Jackson cites can be found in Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology*, ix and x.

128   Jackson, *On the Boundaries*, 26.

or His descending to the lower heavens in the last third of the night or
His laughing at His penitent servant, than it would be to negate these doc-
trines or to explain them away.[129]

Though I have not done away with the terms "rationalism" and "traditionalism"
in this work, it must always be borne in mind that on a conceptual level, they
are not considered here to be mutually exclusive categories.

After these introductory remarks on *ahl al-ḥadīth*, their reception, and the
terminology pertaining to them, we shift our focus in what follows to their con-
ceptualisation of God, particularly that of the Ḥanbalīs.

The basic attitude of *ahl al-ḥadīth* on the question of the attributes of God
is described concisely in a passage from Abū Bakr b. Khuzayma's (d. 311/924)
Kitāb al-Tawḥīd. Not only was Ibn Khuzayma an adherent of this approach, but,
given that he was born in 223/834, he was also able to study under many of its
well-known proponents in the third/ninth century.[130] Ibn Khuzayma's *Kitāb
al-Tawḥīd*, which became an oft cited reference among *ahl al-ḥadīth*, earned
a disparaging mention several centuries later from the Muʿtazilī- and *falsafa*-
influenced Ashʿarī theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, who commented that Ibn
Khuzayma, rather than naming his book *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* (The book of the one-
ness of God), would have done better to name it *Kitāb al-Shirk* (The book of
polytheism).[131] But Ibn Khuzayma, for his part, was also extremely hostile to
kalām. In fact, he pressured two of his students publicly to repent for their
views on God's speech, which were in conformity with those of the later Ashʿarī
school.[132] In the context of his treatment of Quranic verses that attribute a face
(*wajh*) to God,[133] Ibn Khuzayma remarks in *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*:

> Our doctrine (*madhhab*), as well as that of all our teachers from the Hijaz,
> Tihāma, Yemen, Iraq, the Levant (*al-Shām*), and Egypt, is as follows: we
> ascribe to God everything that He has ascribed to Himself. We acknow-
> ledge it verbally and hold it to be true through inner conviction [lit.

---

129   Ibid., 23–24. In the passages not cited here, Jackson refers to the philosophy of Charles
      Hartshorne (d. 2000), from which he drew inspiration in his own treatment of the topic.
130   See Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, 15 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1967–2010),
      1:601.
131   See Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* aw *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 32 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat
      al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyya, 1934–1964), 27:582.
132   See Yasir Qadhi, "Salafī–Ashʿarī Polemics of the 3rd & 4th Islamic Centuries," *Muslim World*
      106 (2016): 443–444.
133   See, e.g., Q. 55:27.

"within ourselves"], though without thereby comparing God's face to the face of any created entity, [for] our Lord is above being like unto creatures. He is likewise above the assertions of those who deny the divine attributes as well as the assertion that He is non-existent, as the prattlers claim; for [they say that God has no attributes, but] whatever has no attributes does not exist. God is above what is claimed by the Jahmiyya, who deny the attributes of our Creator with which He has described Himself in the Quran and through the words of the Prophet Muḥammad—may God's peace and blessings be upon him.[134]

The term "Jahmī" refers first and foremost to the Muʿtazila, who were among the most influential adversaries of *ahl al-ḥadīth* at the time of the so-called *miḥna* (lit. "affliction" or "trial"). The *miḥna* refers to a conflict that took place from 218/833 to 237/851 between the Abbasid rulers—beginning with al-Maʾmūn (r. 198–218/813–833)—on one side and the traditionalist theologians on the other. The ostensible bone of contention in this dispute was the question whether the Quran was created or uncreated.[135] In essence, however, it had to do with whether it was the political authorities or the religious scholars who could lay claim to ultimate interpretive authority in religious matters.[136] If previously it had been the scholars who worked out religious doctrine on the authority of the transmitted texts, now the judgement of the caliph, based in reason, was to be elevated as the sole standard in answering religious questions.[137] The doctrine of the createdness of the Quran (*khalq al-Qurʾān*), which the Abbasids elevated

---

134   Abū Bakr b. Khuzayma, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd wa-ithbāt ṣifāt al-Rabb ʿazza wa-jalla*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Shahwān (Riyadh: Dār al-Rushd, 1988), 1:26–27.

135   On this, see chapter 10, section 2.

136   This dispute has long been seen in the academic literature as the culmination of a power struggle between the political and religious elites that had been going on for some time. This thesis, however, has increasingly come to be discounted. See the critical discussion of the scholarship on this topic in Scott Lucas, *Constructive Critics, Ḥadīth Literature, and the Articulation of Sunnī Islam: The Legacy of the Generation of Ibn Saʿd, Ibn Maʿīn, and Ibn Ḥanbal* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 192–202. On the *miḥna* in general, see John Abdallah Nawas, *Al-Maʾmūn, the Inquisition, and the Quest for Caliphal Authority* (Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2015), including the further sources cited therein and Nawas's response to a critique by Lucas of an earlier publication of his on this topic (see Nawas, 75, n. 110).

137   See Dimitri Gutas, "Die Wiedergeburt der Philosophie und die Übersetzungen ins Arabische," in Rudolph, *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt*, vol. 1, 60. There are, however, dissenting scholarly voices that hypothesise other motivations behind the *miḥna*. On this, see Nimrod Hurvitz, "al-Maʾmūn (r. 198/813–218/833)," in Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, esp. 650–651.

to a state-sponsored creed during this period, was distinctly well suited for use as a hook for persecuting opponents since it was rejected in particular by the scholars, who opposed any upgrading of the religious authority of the caliph.[138] Although the Abbasid rulers resorted to inquisitorial means to enforce their position, the period of the *miḥna* ended in a victory for the scholars, first and foremost *ahl al-ḥadīth*.[139]

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), the eponym of the Ḥanbalī school, garnered enormous prestige and renown in the wake of the *miḥna* since, according to Islamic historical sources, he staunchly maintained the position of *ahl al-ḥadīth* that the Quran was uncreated, despite being imprisoned and tortured.[140] In terms of theology, Wesley Williams attempted in a 2002 article to show that Ibn Ḥanbal's conception of God was blatantly anthropomorphic[141]—an untenable claim in my opinion. Before substantiating this objection, however, a few comments are in order regarding the state of the source materials. In the work *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* by the Ḥanbalī Ibn Abī Yaʿlā b. al-Farrāʾ (d. 526/1133), Henri Laoust identified six creeds, all of which are attributed to Ibn Ḥanbal.[142] He notes that while the authenticity of these works remains to be decided, they may at least be taken as a testimony of early Ḥanbalism.[143] Nonetheless, the authors of many studies, including Wesley William, have attempted to elaborate Aḥmad's theological views on the basis of all six of these creeds, as well as on the basis of the work *al-Radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa-l-zanādiqa*.[144] In his 2011 dissertation, however, Saud al-Sarhan puts forth

---

138   See Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz*, 114. Other reasons why the question of *khalq al-Qurʾān* in particular was foregrounded are discussed in Nawas, *Al-Maʾmūn*, 67–69.

139   Christopher Melchert deals with the religious policy of the Abbasids in the decades after the *miḥna* in Melchert, "Religious Policies of the Caliphs from al-Mutawakkil to al-Muqtadir, A.H. 232–295/A.D. 847–908," *Islamic Law and Society* 3, no. 3 (1996).

140   Different opinions exist in the Western academic literature regarding whether Ibn Ḥanbal did, in fact, affirm the createdness of the Quran under torture. On this, see Lucas, *Constructive Critics*, 211, n. 200.

141   See Wesley Williams, "Aspects of the Creed of Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal: A Study of Anthropomorphism in Early Islamic Discourse," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 3 (2002).

142   See Henri Laoust, "Les premières professions de foi hanbalites," in *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, vol. 3 (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1957), 12–14. The six creeds can be found in Ibn Abī Yaʿlā al-Farrāʾ, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamīd al-Faqqī, 2 vols. (Cairo: al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1952), 1:24–36 (creed 1), 1:130–131 (creed 2), 1:241–246 (creed 3), 1:294–295 (creed 4), 1:311–313 (creed 5), and 1:341–345 (creed 6).

143   See Laoust, "Premières professions," 14.

144   See Saud al-Sarhan, "Early Muslim Tradition: A Critical Study of the Works and Political Theology of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal" (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2011), 32.

serious arguments against Aḥmad's authorship of the six creeds as well as the
Radd. He has demonstrated that Aḥmad's authorship of some of these works
can be disproved altogether, while for other works it remains highly dubit-
able.[145]

Yet even if these treatises should indeed reflect Aḥmad's theological views,
Williams's contention remains largely unpersuasive. In order to demonstrate
that Aḥmad ascribed a human form to God, Williams points to several hadith
that Aḥmad acknowledged as authentic. In all these hadith, God is ascribed a
form (*ṣūra*). We read, for example, that God created Adam in His form (*khalaqa
Allāh Ādam ʿalā ṣūratihi*)[146] and that the Prophet Muḥammad saw God in the
very best of forms (*fī aḥsan ṣūra*) or, in more detail, that he saw Him as a young-
ling with curly hair[147]—this last description coming from a dream vision the
Prophet is said to have had. Williams argues that the dreams of prophets are
true according to Muslim belief and that God, in their view, thus really does
possess the form of a youngling. Whether Aḥmad also regarded the matter thus
remains a question of speculation. At any rate, the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn al-Jawzī
(d. 597/1201) explains in a similar context that such dreams are true in terms
of their content but that the figures and forms in which they appear originate
with the person dreaming.[148] The Ashʿarī scholar al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), who
can certainly not be accused of being an anthropomorphist, has no issue with
the fact that the Prophet was alleged to have seen God in the form of a young-
ling with curly hair, even if this were to have happened outside the context of
a dream.[149] As for the assertion that the Prophet saw God in the very best of
forms, this too was most often interpreted as a reference to a dream. Williams,
however, argues forcefully that Aḥmad did not subscribe to this interpreta-
tion. Yet the only conclusion to be drawn from this is that Aḥmad did indeed
ascribe a form to God, a fact already entailed by the first mentioned hadith
according to which God created Adam in His form. The same view was shared

---

145   See ibid., 32–54. On the *Radd*, see also p. 228 below.

146   This portion of a longer hadith is found in many hadith compilations, including that of
       al-Bukhārī. See Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 3 vols. (Vaduz, Liecht-
       enstein: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000), 3:1267–1268 (kitāb #79, bāb #1, ḥadīth
       #6299). It should also be mentioned that it is highly debatable whether or not the pro-
       noun in *ṣūratihi* refers to God. This question, however, is not relevant for the treatment of
       the topic at hand.

147   See Williams, "Aspects of the Creed," 443, 444–445, and 445–446.

148   See Ibn al-Jawzī, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb Akhbār
       as-Ṣifāt*, ed. and trans. Merlin Swartz (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 46 (in Arabic text).

149   See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *al-Laʾālīʾ al-maṣnūʿa fī al-aḥādīth al-mawḍūʿa*, ed. Ṣāliḥ ʿUwayda,
       2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1996), 1:34, lines 23–25.

by the traditionalist scholar Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), who died approximately thirty years after Aḥmad and who concludes his discussion of the topic with the following words:

> In my opinion, and God knows best, [ascribing to God] a form is no more remarkable than [ascribing to Him] two hands,[150] fingers,[151] and an eye[152] … We have certainty with respect to all [these attributes], and we refrain from saying anything regarding the modality (*kayfiyya*) of any of them or regarding any [other] determination (*ḥadd*).[153]

The basic stance that the modality of God's essence, attributes, and acts is unknown to creatures and is therefore not open to discussion came to be known by the term *balkafa*, which we discuss two paragraphs below. First, however, we examine Williams's contention that Aḥmad did not subscribe to this position, a conclusion he reaches in light of the observation that neither in the six creeds nor in the *Radd* do we find statements referring to the principle of *balkafa*.[154] Contrary to what Williams contends, however, there is a passage in the *Radd* where, after three of the divine attributes are listed, we are told that these must be accepted without discussing the "when" or the "how" of them (*lā matā wa-lā kayfa*).[155] Moreover, Ibn Ḥanbal would forbid a person to mention divine attributes such as a hand while simultaneously pointing to his own hand.[156] But then the question arises why pointing to one's hand should be inadmissible as a means of clarification if Williams is correct that Aḥmad indeed conceived of God as possessing a human form.

It is odd that Williams also cites the Muʿtazilī ʿAmr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869) and the Zaydī al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī (d. 246/860) as witnesses to an allegedly widespread anthropomorphism among the traditionalists.[157] It is hardly surprising that these two thinkers should consider this to be the case; their statements, however, cannot be taken as a neutral description of tradi-

---

150   Such a description is found in, e.g., Q. 38:75.

151   This description is attested in several hadith. See p. 79, n. 244 below.

152   See, e.g., Q. 54:14.

153   Abū Muḥammad b. Qutayba, *Taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, ed. Salīm b. ʿĪd al-Hilālī, annot. ʿUmar b. Maḥmūd Abū ʿUmar (Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Qayyim, 2009), 415.

154   See Williams, "Aspects of the Creed," 448–449.

155   See (pseudo-)Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa-l-zanādiqa*, ed. Daghash b. Shubayb al-ʿAjmī (Kuwait: Gharāsh, 2005).

156   See Livnat Holtzman, "Anthropomorphism," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2011-4, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 49b–50a.

157   See Williams, "Aspects of the Creed," 453.

tionalist theology. Should such extraneous attributions constitute a valid argument, then the Muʿtazila could likewise be classified as anthropomorphists based on the views of Ibn Sīnā.[158]

As a concept, the *balkafa* principle mentioned above is very old, though it did not emerge formally with the name *bi-lā kayfa* ("without how") until the second half of the third/ninth century.[159] Abrahamov has elaborated various meanings all of which are expressed by the term *bi-lā kayfa* as it was used by the traditionalists. This includes a denial of *tashbīh*, which entails that God neither is a body nor possesses a bodily form. It also refers to the fact that all God's attributes must be equally acknowledged as real and may not be reinterpreted in a figurative sense.[160] Beginning with Joseph Schacht, however, a few scholars have made the argument that the *balkafa* principle as employed by the traditionalists simply meant that one could not establisfh theological beliefs through rational means—and this, they argue, is what distinguishes traditionalist use of the *balkafa* principle from how it was normally used by the Ashʿarīs.[161] It seems to me, however, that the most important difference in the use of the *balkafa* principle lies in whether it is the modality of the divine attributes itself that is being negated or merely created beings' knowledge of this modality.[162] Proponents of the first view are those who hold that God has no form (*ṣūra*). Thus, for instance, it is not merely that God's hand does not have a form like that of creatures but rather that it has no form at all. In the words of the Ashʿarī hadith scholar Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998), "What we and all Muslims are obligated to believe is that God possesses neither form (*ṣūra*) nor shape (*hayʾa*), for a form would necessarily entail 'howness' (*kayfiyya*), which must be negated of God and His attributes."[163] Al-Khaṭṭābī's

---

158 See Abū ʿAlī b. Sīnā, *al-Taʿlīqāt*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 1973), 52, line 17 ff.

159 See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 4:418.

160 See Binyamin Abrahamov, "The *Bi-Lā Kayfa* Doctrine and Its Foundations in Islamic Theology," *Arabica* 42, no. 3 (1995): 366–367.

161 This interpretation strikes me as implausible. I have come across it in the following sources, in each case with only very scant justification, if any at all: Joseph Schacht, "New Sources for the History of Muhammadan Theology," *Studia Islamica* 1 (1953): 34; Jan Thiele, "Between Cordoba and Nīsābūr: The Emergence and Consolidation of Ashʿarism (Fourth–Fifth/Tenth–Eleventh Century)," in Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 228; and Schmidtke, "Rationale Theologie," 179.

162 Richard Frank also hints at this difference in his treatment of the topic. See Frank, "Elements in the Development of the Teaching of al-Ashʿarī," *Le Muséon* 104 (1990), reprinted as part 6, with original pagination, in Frank, *Early Islamic Theology*, 155–162.

163 Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī, *Aʿlām al-ḥadīth fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Muḥammad b. Saʿd, 4 vols. (Mecca: Umm al-Qurā University, 1988), 1:529.

contemporary and fellow Ashʿarī al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) held a similar position, which he expressed in the following words: "If someone were to ask, 'How is God (*kayfa huwa*)?' and he understands *kayfiyya* to mean that God is composed and has a form and a genus, it would be said to him [in reply] that God possesses neither form nor genus and that we therefore cannot instruct you concerning these."[164] With respect to the Ashʿarī school, a review of several works by different authors reveals that this may well have been the majority position among them[165]—a view that stands in contrast to that of the traditionalists, who widely believed that God did, in fact, possess a form. We may cite as an example the position of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and Ibn Qutayba discussed above. The same position was defended a century later by the influential Ḥanbalī theologian Ibn Baṭṭa (d. 387/997).[166] The disagreement over whether God has a modality is also expressed in various versions of a dictum ascribed to the famous Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/796). Reports concur that a man came to Mālik in the Prophet's mosque in Medina asking how God had risen (*istawā*) over His throne. This inquiry seems to have angered Mālik so much that he had the man removed from the mosque, but not before granting him a short answer consisting of three points. Two of these points are identical in substance if not in wording across the various versions of the report in question. They state, first, that God's rising over the throne is known and, second, that inquiring into how this rising occurred constitutes an unlawful innovation (*bidʿa*) in the religion. The third point states—depending on the version—either that the *kayfa* (or modality) of God's rising is unknown (*majhūl*),[167] or that it is unintelligible (*ghayr maʿqūl*),[168] or that His rising has no modality to begin with (*wa-kayfa ʿanhu marfūʿ*).[169] All three versions can be read in such a manner as to conclude that Mālik was a proponent of the *balkafa* doctrine. According to the first two versions, he understood God to have a "howness" that, however, is unknown to creatures; according to the third version, he denied any "howness" to begin with.

---

164   Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*, ed. Richard McCarthy (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya, 1957), 264, lines 7–8.

165   This impression is also confirmed by Frank's treatment of the issue. See Frank, "Elements," 155–160, esp. 155–158 (along with nn. 35–41).

166   See Ibn Baṭṭa, *Profession*, 57, lines 9–13.

167   See Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd li-mā fī al-Muwaṭṭaʾ min al-maʿānī wa-l-asānīd*, ed. Muḥammad al-Falāḥ et al., 26 vols. (Rabat: al-Awqāf al-Maghribiyya, 1967–1992), 7:138.

168   See Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyāʾ*, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1996), 6:325–326.

169   See Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥāshidī, 2 vols. (Jeddah: Maktabat al-Sawādī, 1993), 2:304–305.

There are likewise two opinions—for each of which Mālik was also cited as an authority—regarding the question whether it is possible to know the meaning of those descriptions of God that seem to ascribe to Him the quality of either having a body or being located in a place. The method of interpretation that denies the possibility of such knowledge is known as *tafwīḍ* (lit. "consigning," that is, consigning knowledge of the meaning of such expressions to God alone).[170] We may illustrate *tafwīḍ* by the example of descriptions of God according to which He possesses a *yad*, a word that has several meanings in Arabic but that is usually used in the sense of "hand." For the opponent of *tafwīḍ*, it is certain that God possesses a hand, and insofar as he is not an anthropomorphist, it would be expected that he follow this statement up with the *balkafa*. This is the method of *ithbāt* (affirmation), and since it is the method that Ibn Taymiyya advocated, we treat it extensively in this work. The opposite position—that of *tafwīḍ*—represents the belief that the ascription of a hand necessarily entails anthropomorphism in a manner that cannot be resolved through an appeal to the *balkafa* principle. Thus, the attribute of a *yad* is affirmed insofar as God has ascribed it to Himself; however—and here is where *tafwīḍ* comes in—knowledge of the *meaning* of the word *yad* is consigned to God alone.[171] As previously mentioned, the statement of Mālik cited above is ambiguous. A proponent of *tafwīḍ* would interpret Mālik's affirmation that the *istiwā'* is known to mean that what is known is either (1) the meaning of the word *istiwā'* in the Arabic language (though not its meaning as used specifically in the Quran) or, alternatively, (2) the fact that the Quran ascribes the attribute of *istiwā'* to God. An opponent of *tafwīḍ* would interpret Mālik's statement to mean that what is known is the meaning of *istiwā'* generally, regardless whether or not the word is used in the Quran to describe God.[172] The view came to prevail among the Ashʿarīs that *tafwīḍ* was a valid method of interpretation.[173] Among traditionalists, on the other

---

[170] See Sayf al-ʿAṣrī, *al-Qawl al-tamām bi-ithbāt al-tafwīḍ madhhab^(an) lil-salaf al-kirām* (Amman: Dār al-Fikr, 2010), 103. This work is informative, but one should bear in mind that the author is clearly a staunch proponent of *tafwīḍ*. While the Arabic literature on this subject is vast, I was unable to find any in-depth study on it in a European language. The topic is treated peripherally in Khaled El-Rouayheb, "From Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 1566) to Khayr al-Dīn al-Ālūsī (d. 1899): Changing Views of Ibn Taymiyya among Non-Ḥanbalī Sunni Scholars," in Rapoport and Ahmed, *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, 282, as well as in Gharaibeh, *Attributenlehre der Wahhābīya*, esp. 133–135. The further literature cited by Gharaibeh in n. 445 is incorrect, however, as it treats of the term *tafwīḍ* but in a different meaning than the one relevant here.

[171] See ʿAṣrī, *Qawl*, 103–104.

[172] On this, see Ibn Taymiyya's treatment of Mālik's statement on pp. 314–315 below.

[173] See George Makdisi, "Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites in Islamic Religious History I," *Studia Islam-*

hand, the point was subject to greater controversy. Examples of proponents of *tafwīḍ* include Ibn Surayj (d. 306/918)[174] and a number of Ḥanbalī scholars such as Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223).[175] By contrast, scholars such as Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) and Ibn Taymiyya consider *tafwīḍ* to be invalid.[176] In taking this stance, Ibn Taymiyya set himself at odds with the established traditionalist position of his time, which earned him criticism from within his own ranks.[177]

The ambiguity of the exceedingly brief statements attributed both to Aḥmad and to the *salaf* (pious forebears), as well as the differences of opinion concerning which of these views may be considered to have been reliably transmitted and which may not, led to a situation in which both the proponents of *tafwīḍ* and those of *ithbāt*—and also, to a lesser degree, the advocates of *taʾwīl* (figurative interpretation)[178]—believed that they could base themselves on the authority of the early scholars of Islam.[179] To what degree the respective claims of these three groups are justified is a question that, in my view, cannot be resolved on the basis of the available source materials—which are problematic

---

ica 17 (1962): 51–52. We treat the position of the Ashʿarīs in greater detail in the current chapter.

174   The fact that he advocated the method of *tafwīḍ* can be inferred with a high degree of probability from his statement that God's attributes may not be translated from Arabic into another language. See Ibn Surayj, *al-Imām Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Surayj (t. AH 306) wa-risālatuhu fī ṣifāt Allāh taʿālā*, ed. Saʿd al-Shahrānī (n.p., n.p.: 2005), 46–47 (as per manual count, as the book contains no pagination). The authenticity of this work, however, is contested; see p. 18 of the editor's introduction.

175   See Muwaffaq al-Dīn b. Qudāma al-Maqdisī, *Rawḍat al-nāẓir wa-junnat al-munāẓir*, ed. Muḥammad Mirābī (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla Nāshirūn, 2009), 95.

176   According to both, therefore, all expressions in the Quran, including those that describe God, are knowable with respect to their meaning. On this point, see chapter 6, section 1.3.

177   On this point, see esp. Jon Hoover and Marwan Abu Ghazaleh Mahajneh, "Theology as Translation: Ibn Taymiyya's Fatwa permitting Theology and its Reception into his *Averting the Conflict between Reason and Revealed Tradition* (Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql)," *Muslim World* 108, no. 1 (2018).

178   This is an abridged translation, as the concept of *taʾwīl* entails a specific conception of the relationship between expressions and meaning. We treat this topic in depth in chapter 5, section 1.1.

179   The contemporary scholar Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (d. 1444/2022) has recently attempted to declare all three methods as originating with the Salaf. It is obvious, however, that his primary concern was to contain the disputes that exist within the Muslim community on account of differing views concerning the attributes of God and thereby to promote Muslim unity. On this point, see Farid Suleiman, "A Call to Unity: Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī's Middle Way Approach to the Interpretation of the Divine Attributes," in *Unity and Diversity in Contemporary Muslim Thought*, ed. Abbas Poya and Farid Suleiman (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2017).

on account of their previously mentioned ambiguity as well as their doubtful reliability—even though some recent studies have come to different conclusions.[180]

What can be established conclusively, however, is that early traditionalist circles of the third/ninth century made use of figurative interpretation only in very limited cases. Of particular note here is the, from a historical perspective, relatively well-established use of *taʾwīl* by the hadith scholar Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) with respect to Q. 28:88, in which God is described as having a *wajh* (face),[181] as well as with respect to the divine attribute of laughter (*ḍaḥik*) mentioned in a prophetic hadith.[182] Al-Bukhārī interpreted *wajh* in the Quranic verse as a reference to God's sovereignty (*mulk*) and *ḍaḥik* in the hadith as a possible reference to mercy (*raḥma*). Considering the statement of Ibn Khuzayma cited earlier (see pp. 60–61), in which the attribute of *wajh* is also central, al-Bukhārī may have struck out on a path of his own with this interpretation—a conclusion that is consistent with my own research. Both interpretations can be found in chapter headings in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and in order to evaluate their historical reliability, we must briefly explain how this work was transmitted.

Jonathan Brown has argued persuasively that al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* was completed during his lifetime and that the chapter headings by and large originated with him.[183] Over the course of several years, al-Bukhārī taught this work to many of his students, the most important of whom were Yūsuf al-Firabrī (d. 320/932) and Ibrāhīm b. Maʿqil al-Nasafī (d. 295/907-8). In the seventh/thirteenth century, the Ḥanbalī scholar Sharaf al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī (d. 701/1302) produced a recension of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* based on all copies of the work available to him that converge in al-Firabrī as their transmitter. Al-Yūnīnī employed a sophisticated methodology, and his recension was, in the words of Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, "probably very close to the original."[184] While al-Yūnīnī's text itself has been lost, it can be reconstructed through the commentary on

---

180   Thus, Gharaibeh, for instance, believes that the Salaf tended towards *tafwīḍ*. See Gharaibeh, *Attributenlehre der Wahhābīya*, 179.

181   A *wajh* is ascribed to God in several passages of the Quran. The question whether or not al-Bukhārī interpreted all these passages in a figurative sense cannot be answered.

182   See, e.g., al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:550 (kitāb #56, bāb #28, ḥadīth #2863)

183   See Jonathan A.C. Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunnī Ḥadīth Canon* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 384–386, also 72–73. For an overview of studies dealing with the transmission of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, see Brown, 292, n. 100.

184   Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, "How al-Buḥārī's Ṣaḥīḥ Was Edited in the Middle Ages: ʿAlī al-Yūnīnī and His 'Rumūz,'" *Bulletin d'études orientales* 50 (1998): 192.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī written by al-Qasṭallānī (d. 923/1517). All editions of the work in use today are based on this recension.[185]

As for the interpretation of the attribute *wajh* in the sense not of face but of sovereignty, it is this interpretation that is found in the editions used today.[186] Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449), whose commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ* attests to the fact that he must have had a large number of manuscripts at his disposal, comments that al-Bukhārī, in a recension that goes back to al-Nasafī, does not propose this figurative interpretation himself but rather attributes it to Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar b. al-Muthannā (d. 210/825).[187] However, the fact that al-Bukhārī reproduces it without commentary in one of his chapter headings is a clear indication that he regards it as correct.

Less reliably established is al-Bukhārī's equation of the attribute of laughter with mercy. In his commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, which is the oldest preserved, al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998) states that this interpretation of the word *ḍaḥik* by al-Bukhārī can be found in a recension transmitted by way of al-Firabrī.[188] In commenting on al-Khaṭṭābī's statement, Ibn Ḥajar remarks that he was unable to ascertain anything of the sort in the manuscripts available to him, manuscripts that were likewise based on the authority of al-Firabrī.[189] The editions in use today also contain nothing to this effect, which, however, does not necessarily mean that al-Bukhārī did not put forth the aforementioned interpretation of laughter himself.[190]

The work *Sharḥ al-Sunna* provides further testimony of early traditionalist theology. The academic literature has as a rule attributed this work to the Ḥanbalī scholar al-Barbahārī (d. 329/941). However, Maher Jarrar and Sebastian Günther[191] have recently put forth the thesis that it was actually written by Ghulām Khalīl (d. 275/888).[192] Regardless who the author was, this work can

---

185   Ibid.

186   See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:983, relating to Q. 28:88.

187   See Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī, sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī, 13 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1370/[1959-60]), 8:505.

188   See al-Khaṭṭābī, *Aʿlām al-ḥadīth*, 2:1367.

189   See Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 8:632.

190   The possibility that al-Khaṭṭābī merely made this up is unlikely, since in the same passage he advocates that God's laughter be interpreted as His contentment. Had al-Khaṭṭābī knowingly put words into the mouth of al-Bukhārī, he certainly would have done so in a manner that supported his own position.

191   A debate has arisen over this point between the two scholars mentioned and Christopher Melchert. See Melchert, "al-Barbahārī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2007-3, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 161 and Maher Jarrar, "Ghulām Khalīl," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2015-4, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 146b–148a, as well as the additional sources cited in each article.

192   It is debatable whether he was a Ḥanbalī too or merely sympathised with Ḥanbalism. See Jarrar, "Ghulām Khalīl," 146a.

be said to be marked by an aggressive undertone. It purports to represent the creedal beliefs of *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa* (adherents of the Sunna and the community), putting them on an equal footing with the Prophet and his Companions, whom one is bound to follow without exception.[193] This entails that one may speak only about those theological matters concerning which there exists a transmitted report (*athar*). Furthermore, one must stick to the report and not go beyond its explicit content.[194] What made the Jahmiyya (referring primarily to the Muʿtazila) apostates, the author explains further, is the fact that they ignored transmitted reports and began to ponder over the how (*kayfa*), or modality, of God's essence and the why (*lima*) of His acts.[195] The author himself holds the standard position among traditionalists that all revealed descriptions of God are to be accepted with due consideration of the *balkafa* principle. The question of the divine attributes is merely one of many theological topics and is thus treated in the work only in passing. Instead, the author insists numerous times on the necessity of eschewing those who introduce unlawful innovations into the religion (*ahl al-bidaʿ*). It is noteworthy also that the author is so convinced of the correctness of his work that he declares anyone who objects to a single statement in it to be a non-Muslim.[196]

The book *al-Sunna* by Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim (d. 287/900) is a work typical of the traditionalist school of thought, whereby theological topics are treated almost exclusively by adducing relevant transmitted reports. Particularly instructive is the concluding section of the work, in which Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim cites twenty-five points of creed that, he maintains, were uniformly upheld by the traditionalists. Only two of these relate to the question of the divine attributes, specifically God's speech (*kalām*), which is declared to be uncreated, and the beatific vision of God (*ruʾyat Allāh*) in the hereafter. The beatific vision is real, according to Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, in the sense that people will see God with their eyes.[197] The remaining points of creed presented by Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim serve primarily, if not exclusively, to demarcate *ahl al-sunna* from the Muʿtazila on questions of *qadar* and from the Shīʿa on the question of the status of the Prophet's Companions.[198]

The Muʿtazila and the Shīʿa also formed the main opposition to the now increasingly more defined Ḥanbalī school, active predominantly in the hometown of the group's founder, Baghdad. There the Ḥanbalīs emerged primarily

---

193   See al-Barbahārī (or Ghulām Khalīl), *Sharḥ al-Sunna*, ed. Khālid al-Ridādī (Medina: Maktabat al-Ghurabāʾ al-Athariyya, 1993), 67–68.

194   See ibid., 69.

195   See ibid., 100–101.

196   See ibid.

197   See Abū Bakr b. Abī ʿĀṣim, *al-Sunna*, ed. Bāsim al-Jawābirī (Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumayʿī, 1998), 1028.

198   See ibid., 1027–1032.

as a politico-religious movement distinguished by its activism and its considerable following among the masses. Consistent with their guiding principle concerning the obligation to command the good and forbid the evil, Ḥanbalīs took active measures against anything they viewed as contrary to Islamic precepts.[199] One of their most prominent victims was the exegete al-Ṭabarī, who seems to have brought the Ḥanbalīs' wrath upon himself for having completely omitted the views of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in one of his works on the extant differences of opinion in Islamic law.[200]

Leading traditionalist theologians of the fourth/tenth century were al-Barbahārī, Ibn Baṭṭa, and al-Ajurrī (d. 360/970). Al-Ajurrī, in contrast to al-Barbahārī and Ibn Baṭṭa, was not a Ḥanbalī but a Shāfiʿī—a fact that, as we have elaborated above, did not prevent him from sharing ground with the traditionalists on questions of theology.

By the fourth/tenth century, the Abbasid caliphs no longer exercised anything more than nominal authority, the empire itself having come under the control of numerous local dynasties. The fact too that beginning around the second half of the fourth/tenth century broad areas of the Islamic world were now controlled by Shīʿī rulers[201] must have only increased the resentment of the Abbasids, who saw themselves as representatives of Sunni Islam. Thus, the Ismāʿīlī Fatimids ruled over Egypt and a portion of the Levant, the Qarāmiṭa (sing. Qarmaṭī), who were also Ismāʿīlī, established themselves in the Persian Gulf, the Zaydīs controlled portions of the Arabian Peninsula, and the Twelver Shīʿī Hamdanids took over a region that stretched from Aleppo to north of the Tigris.[202] Of direct relevance to the Abbasids were the Shīʿī Buyids, who, pushing ever farther to the west, conquered the caliphal city of Baghdad as well as large portions of Iraq in the year 334/946. Not least because of this politico-religious situation, the Abbasid caliphate elected to promote the Ḥanbalīs, who

---

199   Many Ḥanbalīs active in the fourth/tenth century, such as al-Barbahārī and his followers, were clearly more prepared to resort to violence than their Ḥanbalī predecessors had been. These developments are discussed in Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 121–122. See also Melchert, "al-Barbahārī," 160b.

200   The disputes between al-Ṭabarī and the Ḥanbalīs were, however, dramatised by later anti-Ḥanbalī historians. Franz Rosenthal discusses this topic at length in Rosenthal, trans., *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 1, *General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 69–78. See also p. 318, n. 170 below.

201   On this, see Gudrun Krämer, *Geschichte des Islam* (Munich: Beck, 2005), 112–131.

202   See ibid., 127–131. It is not entirely clear whether the Buyids professed allegiance to any specific subsect of Shīʿism and, if so, whether they saw themselves as Zaydīs or as Twelver Shīʿīs.

not only had a particularly anti-Shīʿī mindset but were also a social factor to be reckoned with in Baghdad.[203] The extent of the resultant Ḥanbalī influence can be gleaned from a statement of the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn al-Baqqāl (d. 440/1048), who compared the Abbasid caliphate to a tent that was held up by the ropes of the Ḥanbalīs.[204]

The Ḥanbalīs enjoyed an enormous increase in power at the beginning of the fifth/eleventh century when the Abbasid caliph al-Qādir (r. 381–422/991–1031), in the wake of violent clashes between Sunni and Shīʿī paramilitary gangs known as *ʿayyārūn*, clearly sided with the Sunnis. In the year 409/1017, al-Qādir did the same thing that al-Maʾmūn had attempted almost two hundred years earlier, but in the opposite direction. As we saw above, al-Maʾmūn had sought to elevate a rationalistic theology to the position of state doctrine, a move through which considerable benefit would have accrued to schools of thought like the Muʿtazila. Now, however, it was precisely the views of the Muʿtazila—as well as those upheld in Ashʿarī circles with respect to the attributes of God—that al-Qādir publicly condemned in 409/1017, declaring the traditionalist position to be the only correct one. George Makdisi identifies this point as the beginning of the Sunni revival that took place in the fifth/eleventh century, with "Sunni" for him referring here exclusively to the traditionalists.[205] Indeed, it was the Ḥanbalī Ibn al-Jawzī who transmitted the text known as *al-Iʿtiqād al-Qādirī* (The creed of al-Qādir),[206] a text that purports to reproduce the position of *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa* and deals predominantly with the divine attributes, the definition and characteristics of inner belief (*īmān*), and the preeminent merit of the Prophet's Companions. Let us briefly summarise the work's discussion of the divine attributes. According to *al-Iʿtiqād al-Qādirī*, every attribute by which God is described in the Quran or Sunna must be accepted in its literal (*ḥaqīqī*) sense and may not be interpreted figuratively (*majāz*^{an}). God is

---

203   See Cook, *Commanding Right*, 122.

204   See ibid.

205   See George Makdisi, "The Sunnī Revival," in *Islamic Civilization 950–1150*, ed. Donald Sidney Richards (Oxford: Cassirer, 1973), 157. The term "Sunni revival" and the question of what precisely is meant thereby have led to academic debates over the past fifty years, a summary presentation of which can be found in Vanessa van Renterghem, "Controlling and Developing Baghdad: Caliphs, Sultans and the Balance of Power in the Abbasid Capital (Mid-5th/11th to Late 6th/12th Centuries)," in *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture*, ed. Christian Lange and Songül Mecit (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 120–123.

206   See Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī tārīkh al-mulūk wa-l-umam*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAṭā and Muḥammad ʿAṭā, 37 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1995), 15:279–282 (under the entry for the year 433); German trans. Adam Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islāms* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters, 1922), 198–201.

seeing and hearing, yet the true nature (*kunh*) of these attributes cannot be known by any creature. Likewise, God has risen over His throne in whatever manner He wished. He did not do so because He needed to rest as creatures do. Moreover, He is subject to neither time nor space; how should He be, the text continues, when He is the creator of both? As for God's speech, it is uncreated in all its forms, whether recited, memorised, written, or heard. On the other hand, whoever considers the divine speech to be created has abandoned the fold of Islam and, unless he repents, may be subject to capital punishment.[207]

The elevation of this point of creed to the status of Abbasid state doctrine can, as we have mentioned, be seen as a victory of traditionalism over rationalism. This passage on the divine attributes stands in opposition to the positions of both the Muʿtazila and the Ashʿarīs, the former considering God's speech inherently created and the latter maintaining that the Quran in recited, memorised, written, and heard form is not the uncreated word of God itself but something that refers to (*yadullu ʿalā*) this uncreated word.[208] The Muʿtazila had always interpreted the attribute of *istiwāʾ* figuratively, and many Ashʿarīs followed them in this when the Qādirī creed was read out for the first time.[209] The fact that the text mentions the attributes of seeing and hearing separately with reference to the *balkafa* principle could be directed specifically against the Baghdadi Muʿtazila, who typically reduced these two attributes to that of divine knowledge.[210] Yet the positions of the Muʿtazila were not merely attacked, for now it was even considered a crime to belong to their school. To be sure, any inquisitions concerning belief were restricted to civil servants such as judges, even though Baghdad was home to a large number of Muʿtazilī scholars whose whereabouts were known to the authorities.[211]

The originator of the content of the Qādirī creed seems to be unknown to Western scholarship.[212] The text of the creed, as we learn from Ibn Taymiyya,

---

207   See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 15:280; German trans., 199.

208   This question is treated in detail in chapter 10, section 2.

209   See p. 90 below, as well as the detailed treatment of the attribute of *istiwāʾ* in chapter 10, section 3.

210   See p. 48, n. 58 above.

211   See Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl*, 11–12 and 41.

212   Important contributions to the field include Ibn Baṭṭa, *Profession*, xcvi; Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl*, 8–16; Erika Glassen, *Der mittlere Weg: Studien zur Religionspolitik und Religiösität der späteren Abbasidenzeit* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1981), 11; Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz*, 109–113 and 116–120; and Udjang Tholib, "The Reign of the Caliph al-Qādir Billāh (381/991–422/1031)" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2002), 258–267.

al-Dhahabī, and others, is taken from the work *al-Sunna* by Abū Aḥmad al-Qaṣṣāb al-Karajī[213] (d. 360/971 or shortly before),[214] a traditionalist scholar who did not identify with any particular legal school.[215] The biographical information we have on al-Karajī is exceedingly sparse.[216] It is quite unlikely that he in his day would have been aware of the Ashʿarīs as a distinct school;[217] thus, the anti-Ashʿarī statements of the Qādirī creed regarding God's speech were likely directed originally against the views of Ibn Kullāb. But since these views are also found to a large extent in Ashʿarism, the text at the time of al-Qādir was well suited for a condemnation of the Ashʿarīs as well. Tilman Nagel argues against George Makdisi that the Qādirī creed was "beholden to Ashʿarī theology,"[218] though Madelung—rightly, in my view—considers Nagel's judgement unconvincing.[219] Considered in light of the authorship of the creed as discussed here, Nagel's remarks now appear to be entirely unsustainable.

Al-Qādir's religious policy was implemented in his time, as well as in that of his son al-Qāʾim (r. 422–467/1031–1075), by the Sunni Seljuqs, who had wrested control of Baghdad from the Buyids in 447/1055. The creed of al-Qādir became a standard text that was read out publicly many times in official settings, most often when theological disputes broke out in Baghdad. Particularly famous among such disputes are, on the one hand, the physical altercations that pitted the Ashʿarī Abū al-Naṣr b. al-Qushayrī (d. 514/1120)[220] and his fol-

---

213 His *nisba* is also given as al-Karkhī, in relation to the Karkh neighbourhood of Baghdad. This, however, is a mistake. See Abū Aḥmad Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Qaṣṣāb al-Karajī, *Nukat al-Qurʾān al-dālla ʿalā al-bayān fī anwāʿ al-ʿulūm wa-l-aḥkām*, 4 vols., ed. ʿAlī b. Ghāzī al-Tuwayjirī (vol. 1), Ibrāhīm b. Manṣūr al-Junaydil (vols. 2 and 3), and Shāyiʿ b. ʿAbduh b. Shāyiʿ al-Asmarī (vol. 4) (Dammam: Dār Ibn al-Qayyim, 2003), 1:19–22 in the editor's introduction.

214 See ibid., 1:34–35 in the editor's introduction.

215 See ibid., 1:43–45 in the editor's introduction.

216 See ibid., 1:23–24 in the editor's introduction.

217 This is also confirmed by the fact that in his *tafsīr* work, al-Qaṣṣāb cites groups with rationalistic tendencies—including, first and foremost, the Muʿtazila—on numerous occasions, yet not once does he mention the Ashʿarīs. See the indices prepared by the editors at the end of each volume of al-Karajī's *Nukat*.

218 See Tilman Nagel, *Die Festung des Glaubens: Triumph und Scheitern des Rationalismus im 11. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Beck, 1988), 120 (with n. 118).

219 See Wilferd Madelung, review of *Die Festung des Glaubens*, by Tilman Nagel, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 53, no. 1 (1990): 130. Nevertheless, Madelung affirms Nagel's view that the statements concerning the Quran as the word of God put forth in the Qādirī creed concur with the Ashʿarīs' position. As mentioned previously, I do not agree with Madelung on this point.

220 A son of the Ashʿarī scholar Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), who is known primarily on account of his work *Risāla fī ʿilm al-taṣawwuf*.

lowers against some Ḥanbalīs, which took place in the year 469/1077 after Ibn al-Qushayrī had publicly accused the Ḥanbalīs of describing God as a corporeal being (*tajsīm*). On the other hand, the year 461/1068-9 saw the beginnings of an intra-Ḥanbalī dispute in which the scholar Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 513/1119), who was accused of having sympathies for the Muʿtazila and for the Sufi figure al-Ḥallāj (executed 309/922), was harassed to such a degree that he first went into exile for four years and then had to make public repentance (*tawba*) on account of some of his theological positions.[221]

In the case of one of Ibn ʿAqīl's teachers, al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā b. al-Farrāʾ (d. 458/1065), we can clearly discern two processes that are relevant to the historical development, namely, the close cooperation between the state and the Ḥanbalīs, on the one hand, and the penetration of *kalām* into Ḥanbalī thought, on the other. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in particular and early Ḥanbalism in general were very anxious to avoid any collaboration with the state. Abū Yaʿlā, by contrast, worked as a judge in the service of the Abbasids, and the fact that his fellow Ḥanbalīs generally prefaced his name with the title "al-Qāḍī" (judge) demonstrates that they found nothing objectionable in this.[222] Moreover, Abū Yaʿlā was one of the first Ḥanbalīs to write a theological work that was inspired by Ashʿarī *kalām*, not only in terms of its structure and style of argumentation but also in terms of its substantive positions. The work in question is his *al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-dīn*, in which, as Jon Hoover describes it, Abū Yaʿlā attempts to tread a middle path between the rationalism of *kalām* and the traditionalism of the Ḥanbalīs.[223] Concerning his doctrine of the attributes, Abū Yaʿlā firmly rejected the notion that God could be considered a body (*tajsīm*) and adopted the method of *tafwīḍ*, explicitly stating that the descriptions of God in the revealed texts are not to be interpreted figuratively. He even went so far as to argue—based on a prophetic hadith that, however, was considered weak by hadith scholars—that one can see God's molars and His uvula when He laughs.[224]

---

221   Both events are discussed in Livnat Holtzman, "The *miḥna* of Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 513/1119) and the *fitnat* Ibn al-Qushayrī (d. 514/1120)," in Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*.

222   See Cook, *Commanding Right*, 123–124.

223   See Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," 630–631.

224   See Livnat Holtzman, "'Does God Really Laugh?'—Appropriate and Inappropriate Descriptions of God in Islamic Traditionalist Theology," in *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 186–188. This topic is also treated in a summary fashion in Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," 631.

For Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201),[225] this was reason enough for him to accuse his fellow Ḥanbalī, Abū Yaʿlā, of *tajsīm*, even though the latter, as mentioned, explicitly distanced himself from it. This accusation, which Ibn al-Jawzī also levelled against two other important Ḥanbalī scholars, Ibn Ḥāmid (d. 403/1012) and al-Zāghūnī (d. 527/1132), appears in his *Kitāb Akhbār al-ṣifāt*.[226] In this work, he blames the three figures mentioned primarily for earning the Ḥanbalīs the reputation of being *mushabbiha*.[227] On the other hand, Ibn al-Jawzī distanced himself very explicitly from *kalām*,[228] though his book is, in many respects, closer to Ashʿarī than to Ḥanbalī theology. For instance, like many Ashʿarīs, Ibn al-Jawzī not only considers rational knowledge of God to be the first obligation of an adult Muslim,[229] but he also subscribes to the *mutakallimūn*'s views about how the existence of God is to be proved.[230] Moreover, he holds the position, along with many Ashʿarīs, that the existence of a given divine attribute may be inferred on the basis of the revealed texts only when these texts have been transmitted through so many different chains of transmission as to be considered fully authentic (i.e., only when they are *mutawātir*).[231] He also subscribes to the view of the Ashʿarī al-Ghazālī (albeit without naming him) that descriptions of God should be explained to the common folk (*ʿawāmm*) according to the method of *tafwīḍ*, but that figurative interpretations of them may be proposed among the scholars.[232] Thus, for instance, Ibn al-Jawzī interprets God's two hands—with which He created Adam according to Q. 38:75—as His favour (*niʿma*) and power (*qudra*),[233] God's descent (*nuzūl*) in the last third of the night as His offering His mercy (*yuqarribu raḥmatahu*) to His creation,[234]

---

225 His biography and doctrine on the attributes are discussed in the editor's introduction to Ibn al-Jawzī, *Medieval Critique* (*Kitāb Akhbār al-ṣifāt*).

226 This is possibly a longer version of his better-known work *Dafʿ shubah al-tashbīh*. See ibid., x–xi in the editor's introduction.

227 This term refers to those who compare God with creation (often translated as "anthropomorphists"). For Ibn al-Jawzī's critique of these three figures, see Ibn al-Jawzī, *Medieval Critique* (*Kitāb Akhbār al-ṣifāt*), 17–20 (in Arabic text).

228 See ibid., 12–17 (in Arabic text).

229 See ibid., 1 (in Arabic text). The Ashʿarī position is elaborated in Richard Frank, "Knowledge and *Taqlīd*: The Foundations of Religious Belief in Classical Ashʿarism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, no. 1 (1989), reprinted as part 7, with original pagination, in Richard Frank, *Classical Islamic Theology: The Ashʿarites*, ed. Dimitri Gutas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), esp. 45–46 and 54–55.

230 See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Medieval Critique* (*Kitāb Akhbār al-ṣifāt*), 2–3 (in Arabic text).

231 See ibid., 7–8 (in Arabic text). See also chapter 7, section 2, esp. p. 258 ff.

232 See ibid., 21–23 (in Arabic text). On al-Ghazālī, see Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 266 ff.

233 See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Medieval Critique* (*Kitāb Akhbār al-ṣifāt*), 26–27 (in Arabic text).

234 See ibid., 71–72 (in Arabic text).

and the description according to which God is on high (*fī al-samāʾ*) simply as an expression of glorification (*taʿẓīm*). He justifies this interpretation by the fact that God does not exist in space and is therefore neither inside nor outside the world.[235]

Ibn al-Jawzī is one of the main representatives of a wing within Ḥanbalism that is largely influenced by *kalām*-style thinking in many points—an influence noticeable in, among other things, the figurative interpretation of a variety of divine attributes.[236] Opposed to this trend was the much more powerful traditionalist wing, which in the time of Ibn al-Jawzī could count among its adherents such figures as ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlī (or al-Jīlānī) (d. 561/1166), eponym of the Qādirī order,[237] Abū al-Faḍl al-ʿAlthī (d. 634/1236), who explicitly criticised Ibn al-Jawzī,[238] and the famous scholar Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī (d. 620/1223).[239]

The city of Baghdad became less important for Ḥanbalism as of the sixth/twelfth century, a trend that increased with the growing push of the Mongols to the west and that ultimately became irreversible with the Mongol capture of Baghdad in 656/1258. The central bases of activity for the Ḥanbalīs were now Jerusalem and Damascus, with the former, however, quickly losing its importance in the wake of its occupation by the Crusaders.[240]

---

235 See ibid., 35 and 39–40 (in Arabic text).

236 Ibn Taymiyya later remarks critically that Ibn al-Jawzī is farther from Ḥanbalism in his theology than Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī and his early followers. See *Aṣfahāniyya*, 517–520.

237 For his personal background, see Jacqueline Chabbi, "ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2009-1, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2009); on his theological positions, see Ibn Baṭṭa, *Profession*, cxix–cxxi in the editor's introduction. Ibn Taymiyya not only held ʿAbd al-Qādir in particular honour but also dedicated a treatise to his work *Futūḥ al-ghayb* (the authenticity of which, according to Chabbi, is unconfirmed). This treatise can be found in *MF*, 10:455–548.

238 See Merlin Swartz's discussion, with a translation of al-ʿAlthī's partially preserved critique, in Ibn al-Jawzī, *Medieval Critique* (*Kitāb Akhbār al-ṣifāt*), 283–297.

239 His theological positions are treated briefly in Ibn Baṭṭa, *Profession*, cxxxiii–cxxxv in the editor's introduction and in Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," 633. One of his anti-*kalām* works was edited and translated into English by George Makdisi. See Muwaffaq al-Dīn b. Qudāma al-Maqdisī, *Ibn Qudāma's Censure of Speculative Theology: An Edition and Translation of Ibn Qudāma's Taḥrīm an-naẓar fī kutub ahl al-kalām*, ed. and trans. George Makdisi (London: Luzac, 1962). Another theological work, *Dhamm al-taʾwīl*, in which Ibn Qudāma denies the validity of figurative interpretations of the divine attributes, is to be understood partly as a critique of Ibn al-Jawzī, although the latter is not explicitly named. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Medieval Critique* (*Kitāb Akhbār al-ṣifāt*), 42, n. 35 and 62, n. 62 in the editor's introduction.

240 See Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: An Extended Survey* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1962), 142.

We end our presentation of the Ḥanbalīs with Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 716/ 1316), who lived two generations after Ibn Qudāma and who met Ibn Taymiyya during a brief sojourn in Damascus.[241] Of interest here is a recently published work of his called *Ḥallāl al-ʿuqad*, which includes a passage in which al-Ṭūfī offers some—admittedly subjective—insight into the dispute concerning the divine attributes in his time (and thus also in the time of Ibn Taymiyya). It is therefore worth considering his remarks in full. Al-Ṭūfī says:

> People hold different views concerning [the correct interpretation of] Quranic verses and prophetic hadith that ascribe attributes to God. Such [verses] include, for example, "Rather, His two hands (*yadāhu*) are out-stretched," "And the face (*wajh*) of your Lord will abide," and [the verse] "And on the day when the shin (*sāq*) shall be laid bare,"[242] or the hadith regarding the foot (*qadam*),[243] the finger (*iṣbaʿ*),[244] laughter (*ḍaḥik*),[245] ecstasy (*tawājud*),[246] and many others of this kind.
>
> Many have interpreted them [i.e., such attributes] according to the outward sense (*ẓāhir*) that is based in the seen and known world; in doing so, they have corporealised God and likened Him to creation. In order to escape [the pitfall of] corporealising God, others have ascribed to the expressions describing Him certain meanings that these expressions could denote in a general sense (*taʾawwala ʿalā maʿān*^{*in*} *muḥtamala*

---

241 During this stay, he also studied with Ibn Taymiyya, to whom he refers in his works as "our master" (*shaykhunā*). See Lejla Demiri, *Muslim Exegesis of the Bible in Medieval Cairo: Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī's (d. 716/1316) Commentary on the Christian Scriptures* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 5–6.

242 See Q. 5:64, 55:27, and 68:42.

243 The attribute of having a foot is attributed to God in, inter alia, al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:1008 (kitāb #65, bāb #1, ḥadīth #4897).

244 Several hadith ascribe a finger to God. See, e.g., the statements of a Jew describing God, which the Prophet confirmed, in al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1496–1497 (kitāb #97, bāb #19, ḥadīth #7503).

245 See p. 69, n. 182 above.

246 The oldest known mention of the so-called *ḥadīth al-tawājud* (hadith of ecstasy) is found in a work by the Sufi scholar Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113-14). In this hadith, the Prophet and his Companions are said to have fallen into a state of ecstasy after hearing two verses of poetry about God. Al-Ṭūfī, as well as many other scholars, classified this tradition as a forgery (*mawḍūʿ*). On this, see Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd al-Hādī, *Juzʾ fī kalām al-ʿulamāʾ ʿalā al-ḥadīth al-mansūb lil-nabī ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama ʿan tawājudihi wa-tamzīq ridāʾihi*, ed. Muḥammad al-Takla (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir, 2005). In all this, however, it remains unclear why al-Ṭūfī cites this hadith in the first place, as it seems to bear no relevance for the debate concerning the divine attributes.

fī al-jumla); in doing this, they have negated the divine attributes and eviscerated them [of any meaning].

And many have regarded the expressions describing God as homonyms (*alfāẓ mushtaraka*) that refer both to the attributes of created things and to the attributes of God—mighty and majestic is He[247]—in the sense of [their being] realities that relate to His noble essence. So, for instance, the word *ʿayn* can be used homonymously to refer to a spring and to gold. Thus, one says, "I have a hand (*yad*) in the real sense, and God too has a real *yad*."[248] Apart from being designated by the same name, the one *yad* has nothing in common with the other. As for what is designated by it [i.e., the word *yad*] (*al-madlūl*), God's *yad* is something real that He possesses in a manner befitting of Him, similar to how I possess an essence and God possesses an essence but the two coincide in name only. This is the position of the Ḥanbalīs and most of *ahl al-sunna*. Whoever has understood it deems it a good, right, and clear position.

The topic at hand may, without objection, be treated in further detail in a manner that unifies the positions [mentioned above]. Thus, the following holds for all terms [that describe God]: Either they are accompanied by conclusive evidence that they were meant in either the proper sense (*ḥaqīqa*) or a figurative sense (*majāz*), in which case one follows this conclusive evidence; or one of the two [meanings] is more probable than the other, in which case one follows the more probable one as long as it does not contradict another [meaning] that is even more probable [than it]; or both meanings are equally probable or nearly so, in which case the expression is ambiguous (*mujmal*) or treated as such: it thus either requires [further] clarification, or it should be interpreted in line with what the interpreter believes is most befitting of the majesty of God.

This way is, God willing, the most excellent (*al-amthal*), and it is in this way that we interpret all verses and hadith [describing God], which are many in number.[249]

The method al-Ṭūfī attributes in this passage to the Ḥanbalīs in particular and to *ahl al-sunna* more generally is that of *tafwīḍ*. He clearly does not subscribe

---

247   For the sake of readability, such formulae of praise have been left untranslated for the remainder of this passage.

248   Following the train of al-Ṭūfī's argument, the term *yad* has been deliberately left untranslated.

249   Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī, *Ḥallāl al-ʿuqad fī bayān aḥkām al-muʿtaqad* wa-huwa *Qudwat al-muhtadīn ilā maqāṣid al-dīn*, ed. Lejla Demiri and Islam Dayeh (Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī, 2016), 32–33.

to this method personally, however—something that he has in common with Ibn Taymiyya. The alternative he proposes nevertheless remains inconcrete. Al-Ṭūfī does not address the seemingly anthropomorphic attributes of God, such as the hand or face, but limits himself instead to discussing the ninety-nine names of God, based on which his position in the debate over the divine attributes is difficult to grasp. Most revealing here is his treatment of the divine name al-ʿAlī (the Lofty), which he interprets entirely in line with the traditionalist position and in opposition to the Ashʿarīs. He says that *ahl al-sunna wa-l-ḥadīth* hold, on the basis of this divine name, that God and creation are situated in a direction (*jiha*) with respect to each other and that God is "on high" not only in an abstract (*maʿnawī*) sense but also in a manner that can be experienced through the senses (*ḥissī*).[250]

Already in Baghdad in later times, and much more so in Damascus, the primary opponents of the Ḥanbalīs were no longer represented by the Muʿtazila, who were becoming increasingly less important, but by the Ashʿarīs.[251] In the following section, we sketch the intellectual development of the Ashʿarī school, with special focus on Ashʿarī teachings related to the divine attributes.

5   The Ashʿarīs

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, the eponym of the Ashʿarī school,[252] was born in Basra in the year 260/873-4 and died in Baghdad in 324/935-6. Although he is one of the best-known theologians in Islamic history, not only is the documentation on his life scanty, but the majority of his works have also been lost.[253] Until the

---

250   Al-Ṭūfī, *Ḥallāl al-ʿuqad*, 19, lines 15–17. The Ashʿarīs, whom al-Ṭūfī does not name explicitly, interpret this divine name to mean that God is above creation in a hierarchical sense (that is, in the sense of rank) in order to avoid the implication that He is located in space. See, e.g., Abū Bakr b. Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-shaykh Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī*, ed. Daniel Gimaret (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1987), 47, lines 3–9; al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 7:14; and Daniel Gimaret, *Les noms divins en Islam: Exégèse lexicographique et théologique* (Paris: Patrimoines, 1988), 206–207.

251   See Makdisi, *Ibn ʿAqīl*, 7.

252   On this school, see, e.g., Michel Allard, *Le problème des attributs divins dans la doctrine d'al-Ašʿarī et de ses premiers grands disciples* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965); Daniel Gimaret, *La doctrine d'al-Ashʿarī* (Paris: Patrimoines, 1990); and the numerous works of Richard Frank, such as his collected writings in Richard Frank, *Classical Islamic Theology: The Ashʿarites*, ed. Dimitri Gutas, Texts and Studies on the Development and History of Kalām 3 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

253   Al-Ashʿarī's life and works were treated in relative detail by Wilhelm Spitta, whose work, despite its age, still offers a good introduction to the topic. See Wilhelm Spitta, *Zur*

age of forty, al-Ashʿarī was a close student of Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/916), the leading representative of the Basran Muʿtazila in his day. A few years before the death of his teacher, al-Ashʿarī declared one day after Friday prayer in the central mosque of Basra that he had broken ties with the Muʿtazilī school.[254] Thereupon, as reported in the oldest preserved biographical entry on his life, he is said to have stood on a chair and made the following declaration to the crowd gathered before him:

> I am known to those who know me. Whoever does not know me, I intro-
> duce myself to him. I am so-and-so (*fulān b. fulān*). I used to hold that the
> Quran was created, that God could not be seen by the eyes (*bi-l-abṣār*)
> [of human beings], and that I myself caused [my] bad deeds. I [now]
> turn away from [these beliefs], repentantly and firmly convinced of the
> necessity of refuting the Muʿtazila and pointing out their turpitudes and
> errors.[255]

A short time after this event, al-Ashʿarī relocated to Baghdad, where he is said to have studied law with the well-known Shāfiʿī scholar Abū Isḥāq al-Marwazī

Geschichte Abû'l-Ḥasan al-Aśʿarî's (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1876). See also Allard, *Attributs divins*, 25–72. An overview of more recent studies can be found in David Thomas, "Al-Ašʿarī," in *Christian–Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 2, *900–1050*, ed. David Thomas and Alex Mallett (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 209–212. The two most important pre-modern treatments of al-Ashʿarī's life and works—both of which are, however, somewhat hagiographical in nature—are (1) Abū al-Qāsim b. ʿAsākir, *Tabyīn kadhib al-muftarī fī-mā nusiba ilā al-imām Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī*, ed. Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Qudsī (Damascus: Maṭbaʿat al-Tawfīq, 1347/[1928-9]) and (2) Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*, ed. Maḥmūd al-Ṭanāḥī and ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-Ḥulw, 10 vols. (Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1964), 3:343–373. Ibn ʿAsākir's work is summarised and partly translated in Richard McCarthy, *The Theology of al-Ashʿarī* (Beirut: Imprimerie Ca-tholique, 1953). In addition, Abū ʿAlī al-Ahwāzī (d. 446/1055), member of a Sufi-theological current known as the Sālimiyya, composed a short treatise on al-Ashʿarī's biography. This work is a collection of the most vicious insults, which are of little value for the reconstruc-tion of al-Ashʿarī's life but which do bear witness to the particularly harsh climate in which early Ashʿarism had to assert itself. Al-Ahwāzī's tract has been edited and translated into French; see Michel Allard, "Un pamphlet contre al-Ašʿarī," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 23 (1970). Finally, it should also be noted that al-Ahwāzī is the one to whom the term "liar" (*al-muftarī*) in the title of Ibn ʿAsākir's work refers.

254   On this, see Daniel Gimaret, "Sur la conversion: L'exemple du théologien musulman Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ašʿarī (m. 324 h./935 AD)," in *De la conversion*, ed. Jean-Christophe Attias (Paris: Patrimoines, 1997).

255   Ibn al-Nadīm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*, ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid, 2 vols. printed in four parts (London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage, 2009), 1²:648–649.

(d. 340/951). With reference to this fact, the later Shāfiʿī school considered al-Ashʿarī one of their own against the extant alternative claim that he was a Mālikī.[256]

Among al-Ashʿarī's several hundred works, only six have been preserved, all of which are theological in nature and were composed after his conversion from Muʿtazilism. These works are *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*,[257] *al-Lumaʿ fī al-radd ʿalā ahl al-zaygh wa-l-bidaʿ*, *Risāla ilā ahl al-thaghr bi-Bāb al-Abwāb*, *Masʾala fī al-īmān*,[258] *al-Ibāna ʿan uṣūl al-diyāna*, and *al-Ḥathth ʿalā al-baḥth*.[259] The authenticity of these last two works has long been a matter of scholarly debate, partly because their respective content appears so contradictory that it was difficult to imagine they had been composed by one and the same author. The *Ibāna*, in terms of both substance and style of argumentation, is clearly committed to a traditionalist theology. Al-Ashʿarī ostensibly wrote this work with the intention of winning the favour of the Ḥanbalīs and of al-Barbahārī in particular.[260] In contrast, the *Ḥathth* can be seen as making a case for the method of *kalām*. It argues, among other things, that the Prophet refrained from speaking about the createdness of the Quran, atoms, and the theory of the "leap" (*ṭafra*)[261] only because there had been no need to do so.[262] The view that has eventually won out in the scholarly literature, however, is that both works indeed go back to al-Ashʿarī and that the alleged contradiction between them is only apparent. The *Ḥathth* takes a position in favour of *kalām* only as a meth-

---

256   See Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:352.

257   This work is discussed in detail in Josef van Ess, *Der Eine und das Andere*, 2 vols. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 1:456–501. It should also be noted that al-Ashʿarī had written the first part of this work prior to his rupture with the Muʿtazila. See van Ess, *Der Eine und das Andere*, 1:459.

258   This tract can be found in an edited version in Spitta, *Geschichte*, 138–140.

259   This work is also known by the inauthentic title *Risālat Istiḥsān al-khawḍ fī ʿilm al-kalām*.

260   See Gimaret, "Sur la conversion," 116–117.

261   Through this theory, the Muʿtazilī theologian al-Naẓẓām tried to explain, in light of his view that bodies are infinitely divisible, how it can be that an object can traverse an infinitely divisible distance in a finite amount of time. In accord with the theory, he postulated that the object passes through a finite number of points in traversing the distance in question and, in doing so, "leaps over" (hence the name of theory) the infinite number of points in between. A detailed treatment of this topic can be found in Alnoor Dhanani, *The Physical Theory of Kalām: Atoms, Space, and Void in Basrian Muʿtazilī Cosmology* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 176–181.

262   See Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, *Al-Ashʿarī's* Kitāb al-Ḥathth ʿalā al-baḥth, ed. Richard Frank, *Mélanges de l'Institut dominicain d'études orientales* (*MIDEO*) (1988), reprinted as part 9, with original pagination, in Frank, *Early Islamic Theology*, 149a, section 2.314 (English summary on p. 102).

odology, but no concrete theological positions are cited; it therefore cannot be said to conflict with the *Ibāna* on that score. The fact that the *Ibāna* contains no arguments in the style of *kalām* does not mean that its author was necessarily opposed to *kalām*, so the work can be brought into harmony with the *Ḥathth* from this vantage point as well.[263]

From a doctrinal perspective, al-Ashʿarī thus moved closer to *ahl al-ḥadīth* following his conversion from Muʿtazilism, but in terms of his method, he remained loyal to *kalām*. For this reason, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, whom al-Ashʿarī undoubtedly held in high regard,[264] cannot be considered one of the latter's intellectual predecessors—or if so, then only in a limited sense. Rather, al-Ashʿarī's predecessors, as identified by the Ashʿarī doxographer ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037), are those early generations of speculative theologians amongst the traditionalists (*al-mutaqaddimūn min mutakallimī ahl al-ḥadīth*)[265]—first and foremost Ibn Kullāb (d. 241/855), but also figures like al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857) and al-Qalānisī (fl. second half of the third/ninth century).[266] Even though the geographer al-Muqaddasī (d. after 380/990) perceived the Ashʿarīs as forming a distinct school as early as the year 375/985 approximately, al-Ashʿarī himself in the following decades was sometimes still considered merely one of many scholars in the tradition of Ibn Kullāb.[267] Below, we outline al-Ashʿarī's doctrine of the attributes on the basis of his available works, as well as the *Mujarrad al-Maqālāt* of Ibn Fūrak,[268] who lived two generations later.[269]

---

263   See Frank, "Elements"; also Thiele, "Between Cordoba and Nīsābūr," 227, n. 2.

264   Thus, he follows the mention of Ibn Ḥanbal's name with the honorific phrase *raḍiya Allāhu ʿanhu* (may God be pleased with him).

265   See ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn* (Istanbul: Maṭbaʿat al-Dawla, 1346/1928), 254, lines 16–17.

266   See here Harith Bin Ramli, "The Predecessors of Ashʿarism: Ibn Kullāb, al-Muḥāsibī and al-Qalānisī," in Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*.

267   See Josef van Ess, "Ibn Kullāb," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (Supplement), 392a.

268   Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt*. Daniel Gimaret, who edited this work and who has also written extensively on al-Ashʿarī's theological views, believes that Ibn Fūrak correctly transmits al-Ashʿarī's positions. See Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 16–21. On the other hand, Martin Nguyen expresses the opinion, without discussing Gimaret's position, that "the work more properly reflects the developing arguments made by some of the earliest Ashʿarī scholars to follow Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, particularly Ibn Fūrak, rather than by al-Ashʿarī himself." See Martin Nguyen, "Ibn Fūrak, Abū Bakr Muḥammad," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2017-2, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 131b.

269   Al-Ashʿarī's doctrine concerning the attributes is treated in detail in Allard, *Attributs divins*, 173–285 and Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 211–365.

Al-Ashʿarī distinguishes between God's attributes of essence (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*) and His attributes of action (*ṣifāt al-afʿāl*).[270] This categorisation, which came to be taken for granted later in the development of Islamic thought, was first proposed by the Muʿtazila in the mid-third/ninth century.[271] According to al-Ashʿarī, all divine attributes must be derived from revelation;[272] however, some of them (the so-called *ṣifāt ʿaqliyya*) can also be recognised through reason, while others (the so-called *ṣifāt khabariyya*) cannot be. According to al-Ashʿarī, the essential attributes confirmed by reason are the following eight:[273] (1) *mawjūd* (existent), or *bāqin* (everlasting), or *wāḥid* (one); (2) *ḥayy* (living); (3) *qādir* (powerful); (4) *ʿalīm* (knowing); (5) *murīd* (willing); (6) *mutakallim* (speaking);[274] (7) *samīʿ* (hearing); and (8) *baṣīr* (seeing).[275] Those essential attributes that we know about only because revelation has informed us of them are the following: (1) and (2) *yadān* (two hands), (3) *wajh* (face), (4) *janb* (side), and (5) and (6) *ʿaynān* (two eyes).[276] In addition to these essential attributes, al-Ashʿarī also recognises four attributes of action, namely, (1) *istiwāʾ* (rising) over His throne,[277] (2) *ityān* (approaching), (3) *nuzūl* (descending), and (4) *majīʾ* (coming).[278]

---

270   See Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, *Risāla ilā ahl al-thaghr bi-Bāb al-Abwāb*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh al-Junaydī (Medina: Maktabat al-ʿUlūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 2002), 177. The *ṣifāt al-dhāt* are often referred to synonymously as *ṣifāt al-nafs*.

271   See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 3:272–273 and 401. Van Ess also remarks here that Abū al-Hudhayl did not yet know this distinction. Sabine Schmidtke, on the other hand, identifies him—albeit without citing a reference—as the one who originated it. See Schmidtke, "Rationale Theologie," 172.

272   See Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt*, 42, lines 1–3.

273   For the passages in which al-Ashʿarī tries to corroborate these through rational arguments, see p. 227, n. 24 below.

274   This attribute will form our focus in chapter 10, section 2.

275   These seven last-mentioned attributes, as well as the attribute of existence, are listed in the same order by al-Ashʿarī in *Thaghr*, 213 (ijmāʿ #3). In other passages, he replaces the word *mawjūd* with *wāḥid*. See Allard, *Attributs divins*, 56–57. Later Ashʿarīs, who had access to a large number of al-Ashʿarī's other works, lost today, list instead of *wāḥid* and *mawjūd* the attribute *bāqin* in their treatment of his views. See here Richard Frank, "Al-Ustādh Abū Isḥāḳ: An *ʿAḳīda* Together with Selected Fragments," *Mélanges de l'Institut domini-cain d'études orientales* (*MIDEO*) (1989), reprinted as part 14, with original pagination, in Frank, *Classical Islamic Theology*, 189–190 on fragment 47.

276   See Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt*, 41, lines 3–5; also Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, *al-Ibāna ʿan uṣūl al-diyāna*, ed. Fawqiyya Ḥusayn Maḥmūd (Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, 1977), 120–140 (on all except 4) and al-Ashʿarī, *Thaghr*, 225–226 (ijmāʿ #7, on 1 and 2).

277   We treat this attribute in detail in chapter 10, section 3.

278   See Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt*, 41, lines 7–9; al-Ashʿarī, *Ibāna*, 30 and 114 (on 3 and 4), 108–119 (on 1); and al-Ashʿarī, *Thaghr*, 232–234 (ijmāʿ #9, on 1) and 227–229 (ijmāʿ #8, on 3 and 4).

All attributes of God must be understood in accord with the *balkafa* principle[279] and with strict adherence to the premiss that neither is God composed of parts nor do temporal processes or, by extension, any changes whatsoever occur within His essence.[280] For this reason, the attributes of essence—in contrast to those of action, which, as we shall see, are not located in God Himself—are unchanging and eternal (*qadīm*). They are also additional to God's essence (*zāʾida ʿalā al-dhāt*) while being neither identical with God (*nafsuhu*) nor something other than He (*ghayruhu*).[281] The relationship between God's essence and His attributes had already been defined in this way by the Basran theologian Ibn Kullāb in conscious differentiation from the Muʿtazila.[282] God's attributes are considered to have an ontological reality through the fact that they are not identical with His essence. In other words, an attribute (*ṣifa*) of God is not simply reducible to a description (*waṣf*) of Him, as was held by the Muʿtazila up to the time of Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī.[283] But the affirmation that the attribute is also not something other than God should be understood as a response to the Muʿtazilī view that assuming God's eternal attributes to be real entities leads to the conclusion that one is positing supplementary eternal existents in addition to God.

It should be noted here that al-Ashʿarī does not construe the term *ṣifa* when referring to God in the sense of accident (*ʿaraḍ*). Rather, he makes it clear that God—in contrast to created beings—consists neither of a substance nor of accidents.[284] The word *ṣifa* in this meaning had already been used extensively in theologies of the most varied sorts; it is therefore all the more surprising that more than a hundred years after al-Ashʿarī, the Andalusian scholar Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) argued that the word *ṣifa* means nothing other than "accident"

---

279   See al-Ashʿarī, *Thaghr*, 236 (ijmāʿ #10).

280   See, e.g., Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, *Kitāb al-Lumaʿ fī al-radd ʿalā ahl al-zaygh wa-l-bidaʿ*, ed. Ḥammūda Ghurāba (Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 1955), 23 and 43. The notion that anything subject to change is preceded by non-existence is a core premiss of Ashʿarī theology and constitutes one of the most substantial points of difference that distinguish it from the position of Ibn Taymiyya. On this, see chapter 9 of the present work.

281   See al-Ashʿarī, *Thaghr*, 218.

282   See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 4:443–444.

283   The terms *waṣf* and *ṣifa*, as well as their usage in theology, are treated in Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 235–243; Daniel Gimaret, "Ṣifa (2. In Theology)," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 9, ed. C.E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1997); and Richard Frank, "Attribute, Attribution, and Being: Three Islamic Views," in *Philosophies of Existence: Ancient and Medieval*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), reprinted as part 5, with original pagination, in Frank, *Classical Islamic Theology*; and Frank, "Ḥāl," 343–344.

284   See al-Ashʿarī, *Thaghr*, 218.

and that its use in relation to God constitutes an innovation in religion not countenanced by revelation (*bidʿa*).[285]

Concerning the attributes of action, al-Ashʿarī does not state much more than what has already been presented, namely, that they are subject to the *balkafa* principle and that they do not constitute temporally occurring states in God. Later doxography adds that, according to al-Ashʿarī, the attribute of *istiwāʾ* in particular is an act of God that He carries out vis-à-vis His throne and that He designates in revelation by the term "rising" (*faʿala fī al-ʿarsh fiʿlan sammāhu istiwāʾan*).[286]

Al-Ashʿarī reduces all other descriptions of God mentioned in revelation to one of the attributes mentioned above. The Quran, for instance, ascribes to God the attributes of being contented and angry. Al-Ashʿarī affirms these attributes as well, but he reduces them in substance to God's will to reward the righteous and to punish the disbelievers, respectively.[287]

Despite the prominent position of Ashʿarism in the history of Islamic thought, the development of the school has by no means been adequately researched. Given that several important works of Ashʿarī scholars have been edited and published in the past fifteen years,[288] it may be hoped that some of the outstanding desiderata of scholarly research will be fulfilled in the near future. It is undoubtedly true that early Ashʿarism was particularly influenced by three scholars, all of whom were trained by direct students of al-Ashʿarī, namely: Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), Abū Bakr b. Fūrak (d. 406/1015), and Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027). Al-Bāqillānī was based in Baghdad and served as a judge, and also temporarily as a diplomat, for the Shīʿī Buyids.[289] He also played a key role in spreading Ashʿarī thought in North Africa.[290] Al-Bāqillānī's conception of God, as Michel Allard demonstrates, was close to that

---

285 See Abū Muḥammad b. Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fī al-milal wa-l-ahwāʾ wa-l-niḥal*, 5 vols. (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Adabiyya, 1317/[1899-1900]; photogrph. repr., Cairo: Maktabat al-Salām al-ʿĀlamiyya, n.d.), 2:95–96.

286 See Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 328.

287 See Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt*, 42 ff. and 74–75; for the example cited here, see p. 45, line 11 ff. See also al-Ashʿarī, *Thaghr*, 231 (ijmāʿ #9). This holds true for all other attributes that al-Ashʿarī mentions in his works (foremost among them the *Ibāna*) and that go beyond the attributes listed in the treatment above.

288 See Sabine Schmidtke, introduction to Schmidtke (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 11–14.

289 On al-Bāqillānī's life and work, as well as the most important studies on him, see David Thomas, "Al-Bāqillānī," in Thomas and Mallett, *Christian–Muslim Relations*, vol. 2.

290 On this, see Delfina Serrano Ruano, "LaterAšʿarism in the Islamic West," in Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, esp. 516 containing further references on the topic.

of the school's founder.[291] However, we can also detect influences from Greek logic in his works,[292] and he borrowed the term *wājib al-wujūd* (the necessary being, i.e., God) from *falsafa*.[293] The centre of Ashʿarī scholarship at this time was not Baghdad, al-Ashʿarī's and al-Bāqillānī's theatre of activity, but rather Khurasan—primarily Nishapur, located in the east of current-day Iran. Both Ibn Fūrak and al-Isfarāyīnī settled in Nishapur to teach in schools that had been specially built for each one, and both played a major role in the increasing spread of Ashʿarism within Shāfiʿī scholarly circles. The fact that the Ashʿarī school was beginning to consolidate at this time should not blind us to the reality that it also met with intense hostility from various quarters. The primary theological opponents of the Ashʿarīs in Nishapur were the Karrāmiyya,[294] and it is against what he saw as the anthropomorphic positions of this school that Ibn Fūrak seems to have composed his work *Mushkil al-ḥadīth*. Concerning the divine attributes as propounded in *Mushkil*, Ibn Fūrak's views coincide to a large extent, though not entirely, with those of al-Ashʿarī.[295] If we are to believe later historical accounts, the Karrāmiyya seem to have poisoned Ibn Fūrak after he defeated them in a theological debate at the Seljuq court.[296]

On the other side of the more conservative-minded al-Bāqillānī was his contemporary al-Isfarāyīnī, who not only held novel views but also drew inspiration from Muʿtazilī theology.[297] The only work of his that has been preserved is a short creed (*ʿaqīda*) in which he sets forth twenty-six articles of faith. According to al-Isfarāyīnī, this work is meant to be read to Muslim children

---

291   See Allard, *Attributs divins*, 310 and 311.

292   See ibid., 308–309.

293   That is, before this term became widespread on account of its use by Ibn Sīnā. See Thiele, "Between Cordoba and Nīsābūr," 231.

294   The eponym of this school is Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Karrām (d. 255/869), who lived primarily in the eastern region of Sijistān (Persian: Sīstān). The Karrāmiyya were active from the third/ninth to the seventh/thirteenth century; however, their last major representative, Muḥammad b. al-Hayṣam, died in the year 409/1019. Like the Ḥanbalī school, the Karrāmī label refers not only to a theological but also to a legal orientation; many of the Karrāmiyya, for instance, were Ḥanafī in law. As no theologically relevant works of theirs have been preserved, we are unable to ascertain anything concerning their views firsthand. Aaron Zysow provides an overview of the Karrāmiyya in Zysow, "Karrāmiyya," in Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*. For further sources, see the references given there.

295   See Abū Bakr b. Fūrak, *Kitāb Mushkil al-ḥadīth aw Taʾwīl al-akhbār al-mutashābiha*, ed. Daniel Gimaret (Damascus: Institut français d'études arabes de Damas, 2003), 42–44 in the editor's Arabic introduction.

296   See Nguyen, "Ibn Fūrak," 131b.

297   See Angelika Brodersen, "Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2008-2, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 19.

as soon as they enter adulthood so that they may thereby become believers (*muʾminūn*).[298] Since, as he explains further, some of those who follow the truth (*ahl al-ḥaqq*) hold that adults cannot have perfect faith (*īmān kāmil*) unless they not only know these twenty-six articles of faith but can also substantiate them through rational proofs, he proceeds to deliver such proofs subsequent to his exposition of the articles.[299] The theological background to this position is what Frank Griffel has referred to as the Ashʿarīs' "*Jugendsünde*," or sin of youth.[300] Their "sin" consisted in the view that the unlearned masses of Muslims were not truly believers unless they affirmed the fundamentals of (Ashʿarī) theology not in an act of blind imitation but on the basis of rational evidence. According to many Ashʿarīs, the majority of the Muslim community were thus not truly believers—including the Seljuqs, who were unschooled in *kalām* and who took over Nishapur in 427/1038. This stance afforded the Karrāmiyya an opportunity to discredit the Ashʿarīs among the political elite, thus providing one of the reasons for the state-ordered persecution of the Ashʿarīs in Nishapur, which began in 445/1053 and ended only with the death of the Seljuq sultan Tughrul Beg (d. 455/1063). The Ashʿarīs were cursed during Friday prayers, and many of their high-ranking scholars, including the well-known Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī, either had to flee or, like Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), were imprisoned. In the wake of these events, the Ashʿarī school amended its conception of belief so as to allow that the unlearned too could rise to the rank of true believers.[301]

Seljuq religious policy nevertheless changed dramatically in favour of the Ashʿarīs under the vizier Niẓām al-Mulk (executed in 485/1092). Niẓām al-Mulk had a large number of schools built in different cities, including one in Nishapur that he dedicated to al-Juwaynī, in addition to one in Baghdad in which al-Juwaynī's student, al-Ghazālī, took up a chair as professor in 484/1091.[302] Despite these developments, however, we should not forget that the Ashʿarīs also faced powerful opponents. In Baghdad, these opponents were the Ḥanbalīs, as previously expounded.[303]

As with the schools of thought discussed in the foregoing sections, we can point here only to general trends in the development of Ashʿarī thought concerning the divine attributes, a limitation resulting from the diversity of opin-

---

298   See Frank, "Knowledge and *Taqlīd*," 133, i.

299   See ibid., 136, iv.

300   Griffel, *Apostasie und Toleranz*, 208.

301   See ibid., 204–215.

302   On the religious policies of Niẓām al-Mulk, see Glassen, *Der mittlere Weg*, 63 ff.

303   See pp. 75–76 above.

ion within the school itself. In considering Ashʿarism, we can recognise a methodological as well as a substantive rapprochement with both the Muʿtazila and the *falāsifa*. A figure as early as al-Bāqillānī, in addition to some later Ashʿarī theologians such as al-Juwaynī, adopted the *ḥāl* theory of the Bahshamiyya Muʿtazila, albeit in modified form.[304] Al-Juwaynī, moreover, was influenced by the Muʿtazilī Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī in the manner in which he attempted to prove the existence of God.[305] As detailed above, substantial elements of the *falsafa* tradition were likewise incorporated successively into Ashʿarī *kalām*.[306] This development was also accompanied by the use of Avicennian terminology. Thus, al-Ghazālī, like Ibn Sīnā, distinguished between attributes of negation (*salb*) and attributes of relation (*iḍāfa*).[307]

The most important development for our purposes is the manner in which the Ashʿarī conception of God came to reflect increasingly transcendentalist positions akin to those of the Muʿtazila. The Ashʿarīs had early concurred on the reality of the attributes of essence that could be known through reason—though they limited these to just seven attributes, unlike al-Ashʿarī himself. Accordingly, they viewed God as living, powerful, knowing, willing, speaking, hearing, and seeing.[308] As for the attributes of essence that can be known only through the descriptions of God given in revelation, as well as the attributes of action, Ashʿarī theology tended to interpret these in an increasingly figurative fashion as the school developed. Less than a hundred years after al-Ashʿarī's death, for instance, Abū Manṣūr b. Ayyūb (d. 421/1030), a leading representative of the Ashʿarī school in Transoxania and a student and son-in-law of Ibn Fūrak,[309] reported that many of his fellow Ashʿarīs of recent generations (*mutaʾakhkhirī aṣḥābinā*) interpreted God's rising (*istiwāʾ*) over the throne as His subjugation (*qahr*) and overmastering (*ghalaba*) of His creation.[310]

---

304   See Thiele, "Jubbāʾī's Theory," 377–382.

305   See Madelung, "Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī," 19a.

306   We have discussed this previously in the section on the *falāsifa*. See pp. 56–57 above.

307   On Ibn Sīnā's use of these terms, see p. 53 above. On al-Ghazālī, see Gimaret, *Noms divins*, 110–113.

308   An exception to this is al-Bāqillānī, who continues to list everlastingness (*baqāʾ*) as an eighth attribute in his later work *Hidāyat al-mustarshidīn*. See Sabine Schmidtke, "Early Ašʿarite Theology: Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) and His *Hidāyat al-mustaršidīn*," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 60 (2011): 49, 21 verso.

309   On Ibn Ayyūb, see Wilferd Madelung, "Abu l-Muʿīn al-Nasafī and Ashʿarī Theology," in *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth*, vol. 2, *The Sultan's Turret: Studies in Persian and Turkish Culture*, ed. Carole Hillenbrand (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 324–325.

310   Ibn Ayyūb is said to have told al-Bayhaqī this in a letter. See al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt*, 2:309.

Ibn Ayyūb's contemporary ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037) also drew closer to the views of the Muʿtazila when he, against the position of al-Ashʿarī and al-Bāqillānī, interpreted seemingly anthropomorphic attributes such as God's hands in a figurative sense.[311] The conservative impulse in Ashʿarī theology, still represented one generation after ʿAbd al-Qāhir by the prominent scholar al-Bayhaqī,[312] now receded farther into the background as both al-Juwaynī and al-Ghazālī put forth figurative interpretations of the attributes of essence and of action referred to above.[313] This development culminated in the thought of al-Rāzī, who, with his view of language as beset by an inordinate degree of vagueness, further strengthened the grounds for legitimising figurative interpretations of the revealed texts. Of central importance here are al-Rāzī's systematisation and comprehensive application of what had come to be known starting in the time of al-Ghazālī as the "universal rule" (al-qānūn al-kullī). Given its particular relevance to our study, the universal rule will be considered separately in chapter 6, section 2.

It is therefore later Ashʿarism—and al-Rāzī in particular—that Ibn Taymiyya considers his primary opponent in the debate concerning the divine attributes. In contrast, he speaks in laudatory terms of al-Ashʿarī himself and of his rather conservative successors al-Bāqillānī and al-Bayhaqī.[314] Contrary to what George Makdisi sought to prove, the Ashʿarī school had become an established fixture in the Islamic intellectual tradition by the middle of the sixth/twelfth century at the latest.[315] Ibn Taymiyya, as his biography lays bare, had chosen powerful adversaries.

---

311 See Allard, *Attributs divins*, 339 and 342, as well as p. 203, n. 136 below.

312 Al-Bayhaqī's position on the attributes is presented in ibid., 342–372.

313 On al-Juwaynī, see p. 203, n. 136 below. His position is presented in detail in Mohammed Saflo, *Al-Juwaynī's Thought and Methodology, with a Translation and Commentary on Lumaʿ al-adillah* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2000), 118–156 and Allard, *Attributs divins*, 372–404. See also Tariq Jaffer's discussion, which also treats of al-Ghazālī's views, in Jaffer, *Rāzī: Master of Qurʾānic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 73–77.

314 See, e.g., *Aṣfahāniyya*, 517–519. Ibn Taymiyya's view of al-Ashʿarī is also discussed in Racha el Omari, "Ibn Taymiyya's 'Theology of the Sunna' and His Polemics with the Ashʿarites," in Rapoport and Ahmed, *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*.

315 See Wilferd Madelung, "The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks," *Biblios* 46 (1970), reprinted as part 2, with original pagination, in Madelung, *Religious Schools and Sects*, 109–110 (with n. 3), as well as Frank, "Elements." It is Makdisi, however, who is credited with showing that until its consolidation, Ashʿarism encountered much more opposition than Ashʿarī historical sources—by which Western academic studies have been strongly influenced—are often keen to let on. On this point, see especially Makdisi, "Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites I"; George Makdisi, "Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites in Islamic Religious History II," *Studia Islamica* 18 (1963); and Makdisi, "Sunnī Revival."

The Methodological Foundations of Ibn Taymiyya's Doctrine of the Divine Attributes

∵

Ontological Foundations

1   The Term *wujūd*: Meaning and Gradations

The term *wujūd*, Ibn Taymiyya informs us, has three meanings. First, it is the verbal noun of the verb *wajada* (to find, discover). However, it can also take on the meaning of the passive participle, *mawjūd*, just as the word *khalq* (creation) can equally be used to mean *makhlūq* (created).[1] An object can therefore be characterised as having *wujūd* or being *mawjūd* when it has in fact been "found" or—and this is the crux of Ibn Taymiyya's conception of existence—when it is such that it could be "found." This meaning of *wujūd*, Ibn Taymiyya continues, gave way over time to another meaning—the third and last one—namely, that of subsisting (*thubūt*), being (*kawn*), or coming about (*ḥuṣūl*).[2] The property of being potentially "findable" or of actually being "found" is inextricably connected to (*lāzim li*) this newer meaning without, however, being consciously perceived by either speaker or interlocutor.[3]

Existence, or *wujūd*, for Ibn Taymiyya can thus be equated with the potential to be "findable." Here and elsewhere he explains the concept of "findability" as the possibility of being perceived through the senses, referring explicitly to the five human senses.[4] Conversely, an object is non-existent (*maʿdūm*) precisely when it cannot in principle be perceived by the (human) senses.[5] According to Ibn Taymiyya, the natural human disposition (*fiṭra*) attests that the denial of an object's "findability" is tantamount to the denial of its existence.[6] The property of findability, Ibn Taymiyya reasons further, necessarily entails that any existent thing can be characterised in terms of a where (*ayna*) and a whereto (*ḥaythu*).

---

1   *Bayān*, 2:351–352.
2   On this, see, for instance, Ibn Sīnā [Avicenna], *Metaphysics–Ilāhiyyāt*, 24, lines 7–8. In the *falsafa* tradition, a distinction is usually made between "existence" and "being." See, e.g., Lizzini, "Wuǧūd-Mawǧūd," 111 ff. Ibn Taymiyya, however, uses these terms synonymously.
3   *Bayān*, 2:352. In *Akmaliyya*, Ibn Taymiyya identifies the term *wujūd*, as well as the terms *māhiyya* (quiddity) and *kayfiyya* (modality), as neologisms (*alfāẓ muwallada*) that arose because of foreign influences. See *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:99; ed. Sālim, 25.
4   *Bayān*, 2:341, 2:352, and 3:565–566.
5   The operative term here is "in principle," since Ibn Taymiyya remarks elsewhere that the fact of not having "found" an object does not necessarily mean that the object does not exist (*ʿadam al-wijdān lā yastalzimu ʿadam al-wujūd*). See *Radd*, 100.
6   *Bayān*, 2:354.

The where pertains to the space occupied by the object (*ḥayyiz*), without which its findability would be inconceivable, while the whereto pertains to the directionality (*jiha*) necessarily entailed by the relation between the thing found and the one finding it. For Ibn Taymiyya, therefore, an existent thing is *real* (*ein Wirkliches*) in virtue of its property of having an effect (*Einwirkung*) on the senses and *existent* (*ein Daseiendes*) in virtue of the properties entailed by its "findability" (specifically, that of being located *there* [*da*]).[7]

The view that existent things must be perceptible is one that Ibn Taymiyya ascribes to the majority of the Salaf and the "*ṣifātiyya*,"[8] while the converse position was allegedly held by the Jahmiyya.[9] A discussion of this topic is, in fact, found in the early work *al-Radd ʿalā Bishr al-Marīsī* by Abū Saʿīd al-Dārimī (d. between 280/893 and 282/895),[10] a hadith scholar and student of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. This treatise is an attempt to refute an unnamed opponent (*muʿāriḍ*) identified only as a follower of Bishr b. Ghiyāth al-Marīsī (d. 218/833) and, as such, classified as a Jahmī from the perspective of traditional heresiography. According to al-Dārimī, this opponent held the position that God could not be perceived through any of the five senses. Al-Dārimī argues against this by appealing, for example, to the audibility of divine speech and the possibility of seeing God on the day of judgement.[11] These views form the theological backdrop for understanding the Ashʿarī (and also Māturīdī[12]) position that anything that exists must in principle be perceptible.[13] The Ashʿarī

---

7   See Suleiman, *Ibn Taymiyya und die Attribute Gottes*, 99.

8   This is the term Ibn Taymiyya uses to designate those among the *mutakallimūn*, such as the Ashʿarīs, who affirm some of the divine attributes as real. See *Bayān*, 1:69.

9   *Bayān*, 3:565–566.

10   On whom see Binyamin Abrahamov, "al-Dārimī, Abū Saʿīd," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2015-3, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015). Abū Saʿīd al-Dārimī is not to be confused with Abū Muḥammad al-Dārimī (d. 255/869), author of a hadith compilation known by the title *Sunan al-Dārimī*.

11   See Abū Saʿīd al-Dārimī, *Radd al-imām al-Dārimī ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd ʿalā Bishr al-Marīsī al-ʿanīd*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Faqqī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004), 13–19.

12   The Māturīdī theologian Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣaffār (d. 534/1139), for instance, considered perceptibility and existence (as well as non-perceptibility and non-existence) to be interchangeable. See Brodersen, *Der unbekannte* kalām, 418.

13   Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī lists several opinions on the question of what it means for God to be qualified as *mawjūd*. Among these is the position of his teacher, Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī, from whom al-Ashʿarī, as is well-known, turned away at a later stage of his life. Al-Jubbāʾī understood the term *mawjūd* in the sense of known (*maʿlūm*) and existent (*kāʾin*). See al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 520. Daniel Gimaret, who discusses this passage, asserts with reference to Ibn Fūrak's *Mujarrad Maqālāt* that al-Ashʿarī held a similar view. See Gimaret, *Noms divins*, 133–136, esp. 133–134. Gimaret is correct here, though al-Jubbāʾī's understanding of

theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), who in a later phase of his life adopted a sceptical stance regarding the provability of some Ashʿarī positions, asserts that the question concerning the possibility of seeing God cannot be answered on rational grounds and identifies the Ashʿarī argument adduced for this purpose—namely, that existent things are necessarily visible in principle—as weak.[14] Ibn Taymiyya remarks that al-Rāzī, influenced by the Peripatetic philosophers (*al-mutafalsifa al-mashshāʾiyyūn*), came to the conclusion that there is no logical connection between existence and sensual perceptibility. Al-Rāzī, Ibn Taymiyya continues, then tried to exemplify this with the claim that the soul, for instance, cannot in principle be perceived by the senses.[15] Philosophers following in the tradition of Aristotle, such as al-Fārābī (d. 339/950-1), did indeed make a clear distinction between the everyday meaning and the philosophical meaning of the term *mawjūd*.[16] Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) states in his work *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt* that it has been falsely claimed that existent entities can as a matter of principle be perceived by the senses. He holds that this is true only of physical being but not, for instance, of univer-

---

mawjūd in the sense of *maʿlūm* may have been theologically motivated in that it may have been a concern of his, as a Muʿtazilī, that God's "findability" be equated with knowability and not in any way with sensual perceptibility. Al-Ashʿarī, on the other hand, sees the matter entirely differently. In one of his works, he argues that God can, in fact, be seen and heard and even explains in what manner, according to some of his colleagues (*aṣḥāb*), the other three senses can also perceive God. See al-Ashʿarī, *Lumaʿ*, 61–63; see also Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt*, 80, lines 6–8. We subsequently find, in the works of al-Juwaynī at the latest, the affirmation that an object that is qualified as *mawjūd* must be potentially visible. See Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād ilā qawāṭiʿ al-adilla fī uṣūl al-iʿtiqād*, ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsā and ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Munʿim ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1950), 174. For further studies, which also go into the etymology of the term *wujūd*, see Richard Frank, "The Ašʿarite Ontology. 1: Primary Entities," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 9 (1999), reprinted as part 9, with original pagination, in Frank, *Classical Islamic Theology*, as well as Lizzini, "Wuǧūd-Mawǧūd."

14   He nevertheless favours the view that seeing God is possible, since this is what the reports going back to the Prophet and to those who have received divine inspiration (*aṣḥāb al-kashf*) indicate. See Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1987), 2:87. In other writings, he attributes the statement that any existing thing must be sensorially perceptible to unnamed opponents of his—probably Ḥanafī Karrāmiyya (on the Karrāmiyya, see p. 88, n. 294 above). Unfortunately, he says nothing about what position he himself takes on this question. See al-Rāzī, *Asās al-taqdīs*, 63.

15   *Bayān*, 2:344.

16   See Tiana Koutzarova, *Das Transzendentale bei Ibn Sīnā* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 189 ff., esp. 194–195. Koutzarova remarks that Ibn Sīnā did not treat of this question, as far as she is aware. See Koutzarova, 192.

sals such as humanity—an argument predicated on the validity of his realist construal of universal concepts.[17]

At various places in his works, Ibn Taymiyya divides being into four levels (*marātib*).[18] Without stating explicitly on whom he is basing himself in making this division, he usually begins his discussion thereof with the words "it was said" or a similar phrase, then goes on to state that this four-stage concept of being is found in the Quran itself.[19] Accordingly, existence can be located in individual things (*aʿyān*), in minds (*adhhān*), on the tongue (*lisān*), and on the fingertips (*banān*). This choice of terms, with homonymous endings in Arabic, is obviously intended more as an aide-mémoire than as a transparent indication of meaning. But Ibn Taymiyya goes on to clarify what is meant by this classification, namely, that existence is expressed in concrete (*ʿaynī*), conceptual (*ʿilmī*), spoken (*lafẓī*), and written (*rasmī*) forms. By way of example, he mentions the sun, which enjoys concrete existence in the external world. This concrete existence is then conceptualised intramentally in the form of an image that corresponds (is *muṭābiq*) to it. The word "sun" is the linguistic analogue that refers to the image in the mind. Finally, the ordered letters *s*, *u*, and *n* denote the spoken vocable.[20] According to Ibn Taymiyya, as already mentioned, this classification is implicitly addressed in the Quran, which states that God taught man knowledge by the pen.[21] Here, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, the transmission of knowledge is deliberately tied not to the capacity for thought or speech but to the capacity for writing, as this last capacity is predicated on the first two. Conversely, it is not necessarily the case that one who can think is able to speak or that one who can speak is able to write.[22]

These exegetical comments related to the Quran should not obscure the fact that the classification of being into four levels is theologically motivated, which is true also in the case of thinkers prior to Ibn Taymiyya. According to Richard Frank, for instance, al-Ghazālī, in adducing this model, at least partially intended to provide an ontological safeguard for the Ashʿarī understanding of the

---

17   See Abū ʿAlī b. Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, ed. Mujtabā al-Zirāʿī, 3rd ed. (Qom: Būstān, 1434/[2012-13]), 263–264.

18   See, e.g., *Bayān*, 6:480–483; *Jawāb*, 3:340 and 397; *Ṣafadiyya*, 2:156 and 277; *Darʾ*, 5:91; and *Minhāj*, 5:450.

19   The fourfold division of being can be traced at least as far back as Ibn Sīnā, who mentions it in his *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*. The concept is found after him in the works of a line of other thinkers. See Sajjad Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics* (London: Routledge, 2009), 1 (with n. 6 on p. 137). (I thank Zeynep Yucedogru for drawing my attention to this work.)

20   *Jawāb*, 3:340 and 397.

21   See Q. 96:4–5.

22   *Manbijī*, MF, 2:470.

Quran as the word of God against the Ḥanbalī objection that the terms *qirāʾa* (lit. "reading") and *maqrūʾ* (lit. "that which is read") could be used interchangeably.[23] Yet it might also be the case that al-Ghazālī in fact had the Muʿtazila in mind here. Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 793/1390), for instance, cites an argument that he explicitly attributes to the Muʿtazila. According to this argument, it has been transmitted in a *mutawātir*[24] fashion that the word "Quran" is a name for that which is written and contained between the two covers of the *muṣḥaf*. This entails that it (the Quran) exists in written form in the *muṣḥaf*, is recited by tongues, and is heard by ears. But since such are properties of temporal things, it follows that the Quran cannot be eternal. Al-Taftāzānī then attempts to rebut this argument by resorting to al-Ghazālī's four-stage model of being.[25]

Ibn Taymiyya too adduces this model in the context of discussions about God's attribute of speech,[26] as we elaborate in chapter 10, section 2. Much more often, however, it serves him as a support in refuting the Aristotelian realist view of universals, against which, as we shall expound, he proposes a conceptualist understanding.

2   Likeness (*mithl, tamāthul*) and Similarity (*shibh, tashābuh, ishtibāh*) among Existent Things

According to Ibn Taymiyya, each actually existing individual thing possesses the properties that are specific to it in a manner completely separate from all other individual things, these properties being realised in each object in a manner specific to the object in question. It follows from this that two or more existing objects can be neither indistinguishable in every respect nor fully dissimilar. Were they to be completely indistinguishable, we would in fact be dealing with a *single* object and not a plurality.[27] But it is equally impossible for objects to be *fully* dissimilar since all objects by necessity are alike at the very least

---

23   See Richard Frank, *Al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite School* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 82 (with n. 14 on p. 132). See also Martin Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qurʾān: One Book, Many Meanings* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2007), 24.

24   The term *mutawātir* is used in classical hadith scholarship to describe those hadith reports that have been transmitted through so many different chains as to preclude the rational possibility of an error in transmission or of the transmitters' having colluded upon a deliberately false statement.

25   See Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid al-Nasafiyya*, ed. Shuʿbat al-Kutub al-Dirāsiyya, 2nd ed. (Karachi: Maktabat al-Madīna, 2012), 167–170.

26   See *Afʿāl al-ʿibād*, MF, 8:424–425.

27   *Darʾ*, 10:275.

in the fact that they exist.[28] The highest degree of comparability exists among things that manifest likeness (*mithl*, *tamāthul*). Here, Ibn Taymiyya establishes the rule that the likeness of two things with respect to their attributes (*ṣifāt*) and acts is predicated on the likeness of their essences (*dhawāt*),[29] and he cites the example of two individual human beings. On the other end of the spectrum of comparability among created things, he mentions objects belonging to the empirical world and to the transcendent world that, though possessing some measure of similarity (*shibh*, *tashābuh*, *ishtibāh*), are nevertheless separated by a much greater degree of dissimilarity. This dissimilarity is surpassed only by that which exists between created entities and the Creator, who is even more unlike created things in terms both of His essence and of His attributes and acts than are even the most disparate of created entites with respect to one another.[30] Two or more objects are the same—and here Ibn Taymiyya agrees with thinkers such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and other *mutakallimūn*—if and only if all that is necessary, possible, or impossible for the one object is equally necessary, possible, or impossible for the other object or objects as well.[31]

Beyond this, Ibn Taymiyya makes a terminological distinction between the words *tamthīl* and *tashbīh*, whereby *tamthīl* refers to the act of classifying one or more objects as being alike in kind, while *tashbīh* denotes one or more objects being not alike in essence but merely similar. In making this distinction, Ibn Taymiyya deliberately distances himself from the *mutakallimūn*, who use both terms synonymously.[32] If, however, one uses the term *tashbīh* purely in the sense of *tamthīl*, Ibn Taymiyya considers this unproblematic and, indeed, something that can be found in the linguistic usage of some of the *salaf*. But if, on the other hand, one regards the two terms as synonymous because one has failed to distinguish between complete likeness and mere similarity, then, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, one has committed the error of which those who deny the attributes (*nufāh*) among the Jahmiyya were guilty. Thus, in order to escape *tamthīl*, they negated of God not only any complete likeness but also any mere similarity to existent things whatsoever, unwittingly equating Him with non-existent being in the process.[33] Now, Ibn Taymiyya concurs that *tamthīl* is

---

28   *Darʾ*, 5:83–84.

29   *Nuzūl*, MF, 5:325; ed. al-Khamīs, 73.

30   *Nuzūl*, MF, 5:325 and 348–349; ed. al-Khamīs, 72–73 and 108.

31   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:87; ed. al-Saʿawī, 145. The word "impossibly" in this passage does not appear in MF. However, Ibn Taymiyya repeats this definition, either word for word or in substance, in numerous places throughout his works. See, e.g., *Bayān*, 1:289 and 3:134. For al-Rāzī's position, see al-Rāzī, *Asās al-taqdīs*, 35–36 and 75.

32   *Bayān*, 3:134–136.

33   *Bayān*, 3:136.

unequivocally forbidden in the Quran; God and creation are thus not alike in kind.[34] In contrast, *tashbīh* in the sense of affirming a similarity between Creator and created is not only permissible but, as we have seen, obligatory.[35] Ibn Taymiyya remarks that this similarity between Creator and created was denied to varying degrees by the so-called *muʿaṭṭila*[36] and elaborates in *Tadmuriyya* that it was a point of controversy within this group which descriptions of God entail *tamthīl* and which do not. The Muʿtazila, for instance, argued that anyone who ascribes an eternal attribute (*ṣifa qadīma*) to God is guilty of *tamthīl,* such as in the case of someone who claims that God possesses an eternal attribute of knowledge or an eternal attribute of power. This is because the property of being eternal is one of the most particular descriptions of God (*min akhaṣṣ waṣf al-ilāh*), such that positing the existence of an eternal attribute would amount to setting up a likeness (*mithl*) unto Him.[37] The *muthbita,*[38] Ibn Taymiyya explains, counter the Muʿtazila by maintaining that the most particular properties of God are those that are not possessed by creation, such as His being the Lord of the worlds, omniscient, omnipotent, and the single, unique God. Some of them, Ibn Taymiyya informs us, argued that it is nonsensical to consider God and His attributes as distinct eternal existents. Rather, the *muthbita* hold, God is eternal along with all His attributes, such that the attribute of eternality is not limited to His essence alone as dissociated from all attributes (*dhāt mujarrada*), which does not even exist in such a form (i.e., as an essence devoid of all attributes). When the Muʿtazila accuse the *muthbita* of *tashbīh* or *tamthīl* on this score, the accusation is justified only in light of certain basic premises that, however, the *muthbita* do not share.[39]

---

34   *Nuzūl, MF,* 5:325; ed. al-Khamīs, 72–73. This passage refers to Q. 42:11.

35   Elsewhere, Ibn Taymiyya refers to the view that God may not be described as either existent or non-existent, living or non-living, etc., in order to avoid comparing Him to existent or non-existent, living or non-living beings. This, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, is ultimately tantamount to equating God with that whose existence is impossible. See *Nuzūl, MF,* 5:327; ed. al-Ḳhamīs, 75.

36   A pejorative term used to describe those whom one believes to have robbed the divine attributes of their reality and divested them of any substantive content.

37   *Tadmuriyya, MF,* 3:70; ed. al-Saʿawī, 117.

38   Ibn Taymiyya employs this term sometimes as a generic designation for all those who ascribe attributes to God, but also at times with reference to specific subgroups thereof, such as the Ashʿarīs or *ahl al-ḥadīth.*

39   In a later passage, he compares this with the fact that Shīʿīs refer to Sunnis as *nawāṣib* (a pejorative term used to accuse those labelled by it of harbouring hostility towards the fourth caliph, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib). This is based on the view that sympathy towards the first two caliphs of Islam is equivalent to harbouring hostility towards ʿAlī. See "Tadmuriyya," *MF,* 3:72; ed. al-Saʿawī, 122–123. One gets the impression here that Ibn Taymiyya sees terms

The *muthbita* might respond to this charge by arguing that even if some define affirming the eternality of God's essence along with all His attributes as *tashbīh*, this is nevertheless the kind of *tashbīh* that is supported by both reason and revelation.[40] Moreover, the Muʿtazila maintain that attributes can only inhere in a body (*jism*) that occupies space (*mutaḥayyiz*). Bodies, furthermore, are all alike in kind (Ibn Taymiyya is alluding here to an argument made by many *mutakallimūn* called *dalīl tamāthul al-ajsām*, which he himself rejects, however, as we shall see). Hence, the view that God possesses attributes necessarily entails the conclusion that He is corporeal, which, in turn, necessarily entails *tashbīh* given that all bodies are alike in kind. The *muthbita* endorse the same logic, according to Ibn Taymiyya, though they qualify it by the distinction they make between those attributes that can also be possessed by non-corporeal entities and those that cannot. Among those that cannot be possessed by non-corporeal entities they count, for instance, God's attributes of being above His throne and of having voluntary actions that inhere in Him (*qiyām al-afʿāl al-ikhtiyāriyya bihi*). For this reason—Ibn Taymiyya is referring here explicitly to the views of al-Juwaynī—they reject these attributes, considering their affirmation an instance of inadmissible *tashbīh*. Among the attributes that non-corporeal entities can also possess, according to the *muthbita*, are those of hearing, seeing, and speaking, and it is thus permissible for these to be ascribed to God. Ibn Taymiyya points out that even some Ḥanbalīs were influenced by this way of thinking. He himself, however, considers any kind of demarcation between those attributes whose affirmation would necessarily entail that God is like His creation and those attributes whose affirmation would not entail this to be purely arbitrary. He likewise rejects the validity of the assertion that all bodies are alike in kind, regardless whether one defines body as that which can be pointed to (*mā yushāru ilayhi*), as that which is self-subsistent (*al-qāʾim bi-nafsihi*), as that which exists, or as that which is composed of matter and form. The argument would be valid only if one were to posit that bodies are composed of atoms and these, in turn, were classified as being all alike in kind. But, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, the belief that atoms exist is not only unproved but is also considered false by the generality of those possessed of intellect (*jumhūr al-ʿuqalā*).[41] Based on the premiss that it is impossible for any two objects not to share in any similarity whatso-

---

like *mumaththila* and *mushabbiha* as polemical battle cries. Nevertheless (or perhaps precisely for this reason), he applies these very terms both to the Muʿtazila and to the Ashʿarīs, as expounded in chapter 7, section 1.

40   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:70–71; ed. al-Saʿawī, 118–119.

41   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:72; ed. al-Saʿawī, 121–122.

ever, Ibn Taymiyya considers *tashbīh* as a concept unsuitable for distinguishing between those attributes that belong to God and those that do not. He suggests as an alternative the *argumentum a fortiori* (*qiyās awlā*),[42] which we treat in chapter 7, section 1.

The similarity that exists between things is captured linguistically in the form of universal terms such that it is possible to describe metaphysical objects, such as the wine of paradise—and also God Himself—meaningfully. Were it not for this similarity, a person would be able to describe only what he has perceived through his own senses.[43] We conduct a linguistic investigation of universal terms and their function in chapter 5, section 2 in the context of discussing Ibn Taymiyya's alternative to the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* theory that he rejects. In the section below, we investigate what ontological status Ibn Taymiyya accords to universal concepts, which will reveal that the position he espouses is a conceptualist one.

3   Ibn Taymiyya's Ontological Conceptualism

The question of the ontological status of universal concepts, perhaps first posed by Plato (d. 348 BCE), runs throughout the history of philosophy and remains unresolved to this day. Debates on the topic raged in Europe between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries (influenced by the translations of works by Arab thinkers starting at the end of the twelfth century) with such intensity that the controversy is known today as the "mediaeval problem of universals."[44] The body of terms and concepts still in use today to denote the various positions in the debate likewise date back to this period. Before we can engage in a concrete examination of Ibn Taymiyya's view on the matter, it is necessary first to clarify the usage of certain terms employed in this chapter, terms whose definitions are subject to some dispute.

---

42   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:74; ed. al-Saʿawī, 124. In contrast to numerous passages in other works, Ibn Taymiyya does not use the term *qiyās awlā* here, yet it is clear from his discussion that this is precisely the inferential technique he has in mind.

43   *Nuzūl*, MF, 5:346; ed. al-Khamīs, 104–105.

44   The background and history of the problem of universals in the Latin Middle Ages have been delineated in depth in Hans-Ulrich Wöhler, ed., *Texte zum Universalienstreit*, vol. 1, *Vom Ausgang der Antike bis zur Frühscholastik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992), 307–339 and, as a continuation, Wöhler, ed., *Texte zum Universalienstreit*, vol. 2, *Hoch- und spätmittelalterliche Scholastik* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994), 2:263–315. Wöhler also traces, though less exhaustively, the development of the controversy over universals in the classical phase of Arabic philosophy in *Universalienstreit*, vol. 1, 339–345.

The term "universals" refers to the five predicables enumerated and defined by Porphyry (d. after 300 CE) in his *Isagoge*. Accordingly, universal concepts, when applied to a concrete object in the external world, can refer to various things, namely, to the object's genus (*jins*), its species (*nawʿ*), its specific difference (*faṣl*; Lat. *differentia*), its property (*ʿaraḍ khāṣṣ*; Lat. *proprium*), or one of its non-essential characteristics, or accidents (*ʿaraḍ ʿāmm*). Thus, man—to illustrate the point using the example cited by Porphyry himself—is an animal (genus), a human being (species), is endowed with reason (specific difference), has the capacity to laugh (property), and possesses accidents like, for instance, being black or white or sitting (non-essential characteristics).[45] The question of the ontological relationship between universal concepts and that which they denote is one that Porphyry raises explicitly but does not answer. Attempts at an answer can be found in the numerous Arabic and Latin commentaries on the *Isagoge*. The view that universal concepts refer to objects (Lat. *res*) that really exist in the external world stood in opposition to the view that such concepts are mere names (Lat. *nomina*). The advocates of each position in the Latin Middle Ages were thus referred to as realists and nominalists, respectively.[46] A strict realism, such as that represented by Plato among others, posits that a universal concept such as "horse"—to cite another classic example—exists independently and, therefore, separately from individual horses. Nominalism in its extreme manifestation (which was probably never actually held in this form) maintains that the particular horses that exist in the external world have nothing whatsoever in common other than the fact that they are all designated by the word "horse."[47] Many thinkers, however, articulated positions that fell somewhere in the middle, espousing either a moderate realist, a conceptualist, or a moderate nominalist view. Moderate realism traces its roots to the writings of Aristotle, who, deliberately distancing himself from Plato, posited that the universal concept "horse" is ontologically real but that it exists as something particular only within individual horses. Conceptualism, on the other hand, views universals merely as mental concepts. In contrast to these two positions, moderate nominalism denies the existence of universals both in the external world and as mental concepts, thus postulating that the relationship between expressions and their denotata can be maintained

---

45   See the German translation: Porphyry, *Isagoge*, in Wöhler, *Universalienstreit*, vol. 1, 3–20
       (here p. 4).

46   See Iwakuma Yukio, " 'Vocales,' or Early Nominalists," *Traditio* 47 (1992): 37.

47   See Anthony Woozley, "Universals: A Historical Survey," in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed.
       Donald M. Borchert, 2nd ed., vol. 9 (New York: Thomas Gale, 2006), 599b.

without the mediation of any existing entity.[48] As the following treatment util-
ises the somewhat expanded terminology elaborated here, the reader is advised
to keep two things in mind: First, the controversy over universals in the Latin
Middle Ages developed along the contours of theological and ontological prob-
lems and concerns that are specific to scholasticism. For this reason, my use
of terms familiar from discussions on the problem of universals to identify
the positions of Muslim thinkers should not necessarily be taken to imply any
substantive comparability between the latter's positions and those of the schol-
astics. Second, the three intermediate positions mentioned above—moderate
realism, conceptualism, and moderate nominalism—are separated only by a
fine line, resulting in a lack of conceptual clarity whereby the positions of
one and the same thinker are sometimes classified in different ways within
the literature. In discussing the mediaeval thinker Peter Abelard (d. 1142 CE),
for instance, Woozley states that Abelard's successors saw him as a nominal-
ist but that one could also identify him as a conceptualist or perhaps even as
a moderate realist.[49] The same problem arises with respect to the ontological
positions of some Muslim thinkers. For example, Ibn Sīnā's view on the ques-
tion of universals—as we elaborate farther below—has been characterised in
very different ways.

Ibn Taymiyya's conception of universals has been investigated in numer-
ous studies,[50] mostly in the context of his critique of Peripatetic logic.[51] These
studies—with one exception that will be mentioned below—have concluded
unanimously that Ibn Taymiyya was a nominalist.[52] Some authors have gone

---

48   See ibid., 594.

49   See ibid., 599a.

50   In addition to the sources mentioned in the following note, other discussions particu-
      larly relevant for the present chapter include Hallaq, *Against the Greek Logicians*, xi–xvii;
      Michot, "Commentary, Part 2," 360–363; von Kügelgen, "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik," 181–187; and
      Anke von Kügelgen, "The Poison of Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya's Struggle For and Against
      Reason," in Krawietz and Tamer, *Debating Ibn Taymiyya*, 291–312.

51   On Ibn Taymiyya's critique of logic, see Wael Hallaq's introduction to and translation of
      Ibn Taymiyya's treatise *al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn*, in the version abridged by al-Suyūṭī
      entitled *Jahd al-qarīḥa fī tajrīd al-naṣīḥa*, in Hallaq, *Against the Greek Logicians*. For fur-
      ther studies, see references in von Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy," 268, n. 63. Though
      published in 2013, von Kügelgen's article was completed in 2008 (see von Kügelgen, 253,
      n. 1). Thus, the following studies should be mentioned in addition: Sobhi Rayan, "Nominal
      Definition in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyya," *International Studies in the Philosophy of Sci-
      ence* 23, no. 2 (2009); Sobhi Rayan, "Ibn Taymiyya's Criticism of the Syllogism," *Der Islam* 86
      (2011); and Sobhi Rayan, "Translation and Interpretation in Ibn Taymiyya's Logical Defin-
      ition," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19, no. 6 (2011).

52   See, e.g., Muhammad Umar Memon, *Ibn Taymīya's Struggle against Popular Religion, with*

so far as to contend that in adopting a nominalist position and the empiricist attitude tied to it, Ibn Taymiyya anticipated the kind of nominalism and empiricism (particularly British) that one finds in, for example, John Locke (d. 1704) or John Stuart Mill (d. 1873). Anke von Kügelgen, however, has demonstrated in an article that this contention is untenable, for despite striking parallels between Ibn Taymiyya's thought and that of later nominalists and empiricists, important differences can also be identified both substantively and in terms of the goal pursued by the respective thinkers.[53] While von Kügelgen still affirmed in the foregoing article that Ibn Taymiyya's position could be characterised as nominalist, she later moved away from this view in light of subsequent research, as she herself mentions in another article published in 2013.[54] In this article, she argues that Ibn Taymiyya, despite all his polemic against Peripatetic philosophy, adopted some of its basic premises both explicitly and implicitly, including that of a moderate realism.[55] I argue against this position below by attempting to demonstrate that on the question of universals, Ibn Taymiyya should be identified as a conceptualist with nominalist tendencies. In support of this view, I address the question of universals from several angles. First, I examine that facet of the issue having to do with ontology and the philosophy of language, which is concerned with the question of how universal concepts relate to the entities that exist in external reality. Then, examining the matter from an epistemological perspective, I seek to answer the question whether Ibn Taymiyya attributes an unchanging nature to things such as would allow for the generation of apodictic universal propositions on the basis of empirically observed causal relations. It is in this context that Anke von Kügelgen has described Ibn Taymiyya as a moderate realist, so it is befitting that we address the topic in light of her analysis. We then turn to consider the problem of universals from the perspective of natural philosophy, where we examine Ibn Taymiyya's views on the ontological status of space and time.[56]

The goal of this multidimensional investigation of Ibn Taymiyya's position is to demonstrate, on the one hand, that the dominant view among scholars that

---

an Annotated Translation of his Kitāb Iqtiḍāʾ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm li-mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 35–36 and 39; Hoover, Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy, 50–52 and 65; and Georges Tamer, "The Curse of Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya as a Philosopher in Contemporary Islamic Thought," in Krawietz and Tamer, Debating Ibn Taymiyya, 337 and 361 ff.

53   See von Kügelgen, "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik," 215–218.
54   See von Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy," 255.
55   See ibid., esp. 255 and 306.
56   I took inspiration for this division of topics vis-à-vis the question of universals from Wöhler, Universalienstreit, vol. 1, viii–ix.

Ibn Taymiyya was a nominalist is subject to further qualification and, on the other hand, that von Kügelgen's classification of Ibn Taymiyya as a moderate realist is untenable.

3.1 *The Onto-linguistic Perspective: The Relationship between Universal Concepts and the External World*

The question regarding the ontological status of universal concepts is one that Ibn Taymiyya takes up in numerous works. Indeed, he wrote a separate treatise dealing with this problem, though unfortunately it has not survived.[57] The attention he accords to this issue would seem to result from the fact that he considers the view that universals have extramental reality to be one of the primary causes of the error of numerous thinkers from various schools of thought on questions concerning the existence and attributes of God.[58] All languages, Ibn Taymiyya avers, contain generic terms by which both the Creator and created entities can be designated. This is theologically unproblematic as long as one does not hold to a realist construal of these terms. In Ibn Taymiyya's words:

> When people say, "Between any two objects designated [by a single term] there exists something in which both participate (*qadr mushtarak*)," they do not mean that there is an extramentally existing thing in which both the Creator and created entities participate. [Indeed,] if there does not exist even between one created entity and another created entity something in which both participate, then how about between the Creator and created entities? Such was fancied only by the adherents of Greek logic and their followers, such that they believed there to be absolute quiddities (*māhiyyāt*) in the external world in which sensorially perceptible particulars participate. Moreover, some of them, such as Plato, regarded these [i.e., the quiddities] as separate from the individual objects, while others, such as Aristotle, Ibn Sīnā, and their like, held that they are not detached from the particulars.[59]

In this passage, Ibn Taymiyya denies both the Platonic doctrine of forms and the Aristotelian variant thereof (which amounts to a moderate conceptual realism), offering in contrast to both a conceptualist understanding instead. According to the conceptualist view, a person apprehends through his senses

---

57 This treatise is entitled *Qāʿida fī al-kulliyyāt* (Basic teachings on universals). See on it also *Minhāj*, 2:595 along with the editor's comment at n. 10.

58 *Minhāj*, 2:584 and 595.

59 *Irbiliyya*, MF, 5:203.

the similarities that obtain between existing things and forms them, through a process of abstraction operated by the mind, into a universal concept that exists exclusively as a mental construct and thus has no reality in the external world.[60] A passage in *Minhāj* further clarifies Ibn Taymiyya's position. In this passage, Ibn Taymiyya remarks that for any two objects that can be described as existent, each possesses a specific, concrete existence that is different from that of the other. Thus, in the case of the word "humanity," the entities to which it refers are each characterised by their own humanity that only exists in concrete reality.[61]

When we examine Ibn Sīnā's conception of universals, it seems at first glance to coincide with that of Ibn Taymiyya. Yet Ibn Taymiyya saw Ibn Sīnā as one of his Peripatetic opponents, as evident in the passage cited above. It is worth outlining Ibn Sīnā's position—with which Ibn Taymiyya was intimately familiar and which he describes, without assessment, in several places in his works[62]—since it is grounded in a moderate realist understanding of universals against which Ibn Taymiyya's position comes into sharper relief. Ibn Sīnā distinguishes three types of universals (sing. *kullī*), namely, the natural (*ṭabīʿī*), the mental (*ʿaqlī*), and the logical (*manṭiqī*).[63] The natural universal represents the essence of a thing, such as the horseness of a horse. Yet even though it is called a universal, it is, according to Ibn Sīnā, neither universal nor particular, neither one nor many, for if it were universal, then there could be no concrete, but only universal, horses. If, on the other hand, it were something particular, then there could exist only one concrete horse, not many. As for what Ibn Sīnā refers to as the logical universal, it is universality as a property superadded by the mind. The correlation of the natural to the logical universal—that is, the consideration of the essence of a horse with the condition of universality—comes about through a process of mental abstraction. The result of this process is the mental universal, which has no extramental existence.[64] Michael Marmura notes

---

60   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:76; ed. al-Saʿawī, 127–128. Also *Bayān*, 4:568–569.

61   *Minhāj*, 8:34–35.

62   See especially *Darʾ*, 6:275, as well as *Ṣafadiyya*, 1:113 and 304.

63   See Abū ʿAlī b. Sīnā, *al-Shifāʾ: al-Manṭiq—al-madkhal*, ed. al-Ab Qanawātī, Maḥmūd al-Khuḍayrī, and Fuʾād al-Ahwānī (Cairo: Wizārat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUmūmiyya, 1952), book 1, chap. 12, 65–72. In his treatment of the topic, Ibn Sīnā does not refer to the five predicables of Porphyry in general but rather, by way of example, to the genus in particular; he thus does not use the term *kullī*, but rather *nawʿ*. An English translation and explanation of the passage referred to in the current footnote can be found in Michael Marmura, "Avicenna's Chapter on Universals in the *Isagoge* of His *Shifāʾ*," in *Probing in Islamic Philosophy: Studies in the Philosophy of Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali and Other Major Muslim Thinkers*, by Michael Marmura (New York: Global Academic Publishing, 2005).

64   The concept of the natural, the mental, and the logical universal is also expounded in Mar-

the anti-realist undertone of this tripartite division[65] yet rightly remarks, "It is true that Avicenna's insistence that the universal is only a mental concept is a move towards conceptualism, but his theory is not purely conceptualist and at most represents a variation on the realism of Aristotle, not a repudiation of it."[66] The mental universal results solely from a process in which the multiplicity of concrete individual objects in the sublunar world is reduced to a single concept through mental abstraction. Universal statements made on the basis of empirical observation are thus fallible.[67] In Ibn Sīnā's Neoplatonic doctrine of the origination of the world, however, this process also operates in the opposite direction, that is, from unity to multiplicity. Accordingly, the essences of things have existence in the active intellect and only undergo instantiation and multiplication within the process of emanation in the sublunar world.[68] Although these essences are particular in nature in the sublunar world, they are nonetheless identical to one another, according to Ibn Sīnā, since they correspond to the archetype that exists in mental form in the active intellect.[69] Knowledge that the human soul receives directly from the active intellect can then serve as a basis for formulating apodictic universal propositions.[70] According to Ibn

---

mura, "Avicenna's Chapter on Universals," 39–43 and Hallaq, *Against the Greek Logicians*, xxi (with footnotes), as well as Farīd Jabr et al., *Mawsūʿat muṣṭalaḥāt ʿilm al-manṭiq ʿinda al-ʿArab* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān Nāshirūn, 1996), 507 and 745–746.

65   Contrary to what one might suppose, the view that universals possess only intramental existence does not necessarily stem from a nominalist position. Regarding this topic in scholasticism, which was influenced on this point by Ibn Sīnā, see Sven Knebel, "Universalien—I. Antike," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 11, ed. Gottfried Gabriel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2011), 180–181.

66   Marmura, "Avicenna's Chapter on Universals," 34. Academic treatments of this topic contain numerous, though contradictory, categorisations of Ibn Sīnā's position on the question of universals. This divergence strengthens the plausibility of Parviz Morewedge's assertion that Ibn Sīnā employed at times a realist, at times a conceptualist, and at times a nominalist conception of universals depending on the field of knowledge in question. See Parviz Morewedge, "Universal and Particular," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Science, and Technology in Islam*, ed. Ibrahim Kalin, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press: 2014), 396–397. Wöhler has come to similar conclusions. See Wöhler, *Universalienstreit*, vol. 1, 341 (with n. 178 on p. 353).

67   On this point, see Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 208–209.

68   See here Michael Marmura, "Quiddity and Universality in Avicenna," in *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (New York: Suny Press, 1992), 83–84.

69   This should not be confused with the Platonic theory of ideas—from which Ibn Sīnā clearly distances himself—for according to Plato, the archetypes exist extramentally.

70   On this point, see Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes*, 83–94; Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 208–209; and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines: Conceptions of Nature and Methods Used for Its Study by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, al-Bīrūnī, and Ibn Sīnā* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1964), 201–202.

Taymiyya, however—and here the difference with Ibn Sīnā's moderate realist conception of universals becomes apparent—not only are essences particular, but they are also distinct from one another. The humanity of Zayd, he tells us, is not the same as the humanity of ʿAmr. Their common participation in the universal "humanity," which exists only mentally, is based solely on the similarity of the external particulars to one another.[71] From this it follows that universal concepts have no real ontological foundation in existing particulars, a position that clearly distances Ibn Taymiyya from moderate realism as represented by Ibn Sīnā.

Ibn Taymiyya identifies a number of questions that, in his view, would have never even arisen had a clear distinction been made between that which exists in the mind and that which exists extramentally.[72] Among these is the question whether existence is identical with or superadded to quiddity. Ibn Sīnā, as previously indicated, considered the two identical with respect to God and distinct with respect to created beings.[73] Ibn Taymiyya firmly rejects this view, arguing instead that "the external existence of each thing is identical with its externally existent quiddity" (*wujūd kull shayʾ fī al-khārij huwa māhiyyatuhu al-mawjūda fī al-khārij*).[74] Consistent with his conceptualist ontology, Ibn Taymiyya believes that objects are not composed of parts such as substance and attributes or matter and form. Rather, such parts are separable from one another only in the minds of human beings, not in the external world.[75] He thus affirms the view of the *mutakallimūn* and *falāsifa* that God is not composed of parts. In contrast to them, however, he understands this only in the sense of material or sensorially perceptible parts, such as the human body's being composed of limbs, trunk, and head.[76] Thus, the question that had long preoccupied the *mutakallimūn* in particular regarding how to conceptualise the relationship between God's essence and His attributes without viewing Him as composed of parts is reduced, for Ibn Taymiyya, to nothing more than a pseudo-problem.

3.2   *The Ontological-Epistemological Perspective: On Causality*

As discussed above, Anke von Kügelgen in a 2013 article went against the unanimous view of Western scholars hitherto that Ibn Taymiyya was a nominalist.

---

71   This and similar statements can be found in numerous places in Ibn Taymiyya's works. The statement made here is based specifically on *Īmān*, MF, 7:406; ed. Aḥmad, 2:628; Eng. trans., 392–393.

72   *Radd*, 24–25. Also *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:76–77; ed. al-Saʿawī, 128–129.

73   See n. 93, p. 52 above.

74   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:77; ed. al-Saʿawī, 129.

75   Ibn Taymiyya propounds this view in numerous works. See, e.g., *Radd*, 224.

76   *Bayān*, 3:128–129.

She maintains that statements can be found in Ibn Taymiyya's works in which he "explicitly and implicitly confirms an essential tenet of Peripatetic epistemology, namely man's capability to grasp the essences of things, i.e., the universals *in rebus*."[77,78] She classifies Ibn Taymiyya as a moderate realist and states that his firm rejection of universals *in rebus*, which one can find in numerous places throughout his works, may have been motivated solely by the substantial differences between his thought and the Peripatetic system in the realm of metaphysics.[79] Below, I demonstrate how her arguments to this effect are unpersuasive.

Von Kügelgen points out that Wael Hallaq had already concluded that Ibn Taymiyya considered two kinds of universal statements to be "absolutely true." On one hand are the axiomatic propositions that express, for instance, the basic principles of logic; on the other are those statements that originate in divine revelation.[80] Von Kügelgen maintains that a third category may be added to these, one predicated on the acceptance of the view that universals are present within objects, specifically in the sense that there exists a natural causality located in the essences of things.[81] At issue here are universal propositions that arise inductively on the basis of empirical observation, such as the proposition that food assuages hunger and water quenches thirst. Von Kügelgen cites several passages in which Ibn Taymiyya argues that, based on an interplay of empirical observation and reason, one may validly draw the conclusion that water indeed quenches thirst. It is of note here that Ibn Taymiyya nowhere states that this conclusion is valid necessarily and without exception because, say, water possesses the property of quenching thirst by virtue of its essence. On the contrary, he states in a passage also cited by von Kügelgen that one may not, for instance, affirm with absolute certainty based on empirical evidence that fire always burns. Von Kügelgen takes this passage to mean not that Ibn Taymiyya intends to deny that the property of burning is essential to fire but rather that he means only to say—in full accord with the Peripatetic tradition—that there exist objects that, on the basis of their essential characteristics, are not

---

77   This expression is based on a Neoplatonic categorisation of the positions taken in the dispute over universals. Accordingly, universals exist either *prior to things* (i.e., separate from them) according to the strict realist, *in things* according to the moderate realist, or as mental abstractions *posterior to things* according to the nominalist (these positions are referred to as *ante res*, *in rebus*, and *post res*, respectively). See Knebel, "Universalien," 184.

78   Von Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy," 306.

79   Ibid., 311.

80   See ibid., 296–297 (with n. 189).

81   See ibid., 297, which is elaborated at pp. 306–312.

susceptible of burning;[82] the fact that the process of burning fails to occur with respect to them is therefore not due to the nature of fire. In the context of this discussion, von Kügelgen summarises a section on Ibn Taymiyya's theory of causality taken from Jon Hoover's monograph, which she mentions with praise. She writes:

> If God does not will something to happen that would result from a cause or a combination of causes He created, He does not perfect the combination of causes and conditions or He creates an impediment. However, God does not alter the order He has fixed for the things, because otherwise He would undermine His own all-embracing wise purpose. Thus, He cannot create "contraries simultaneously in one place, and He cannot create a son before his father." God's wise purpose, thus, entails that his [*sic*] creatures follow a fixed order and are bestowed with specific powers. The essences He bestowed things with, for instance His bestowal on fire of the power to burn, are their necessary concomitants and aren't lost when God does not will them to "act" or to "react," but are rendered ineffective by impediments God creates.[83]

Indeed, Hoover does state that God, in Ibn Taymiyya's view, cannot create objects that would contain a logical contradiction. Yet this has nothing to do with God's wisdom or with a fixed order of creation but with the fact that such objects belong to the category of that whose existence is impossible; in Hoover's words, "God is bound by the rules of logic."[84] For this reason, the examples von Kügelgen cites here, drawing on Hoover, are out of place. It is also the case that for Ibn Taymiyya, God's creative activity is contingent on His wisdom. Ibn Taymiyya adopts here al-Ghazālī's view that the existing world is the best of all possible worlds. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that, for Ibn Taymiyya, God could have created a less good world had He willed.[85] Moreover, were God's wisdom to call for it, the order known to us in creation could be abrogated—which, in fact, has happened. Ibn Taymiyya cites as an example of this several of the miracles of the prophets, including the incident when springs of water gushed forth from a rock upon Moses's striking the latter

---

82 See ibid., 308–309.
83 Ibid., 311. The section cited by von Kügelgen can be found in Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 133.
84 Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 133.
85 See ibid., 226–227.

with his staff.[86] Furthermore, Hoover himself, whom von Kügelgen references numerous times, states unambiguously that Ibn Taymiyya regards causal relations as neither purely natural nor necessary, although he acknowledges that they may seem to be so from a human perspective.[87] In Hoover's words:

> The shaykh [i.e., Ibn Taymiyya] goes on in *Kasb* to explain that God has bound certain causes to certain effects with a "firm bond (*rabṭ muḥkam*)" such that, from the perspective of creatures, the operation of the secondary causes is that of natural causality. Someone who eats gets full. Someone who drinks quenches his thirst. Yet, this account, even from the human perspective, is not entirely naturalistic. According to Ibn Taymiyya, God can break these causal bonds if He wills. He can take the potency out of food or place an impediment in the stomach. He can even make people full and quench their thirst by some other means if He so wills.[88]

In the second to last sentence of the above quotation, Hoover is referring to a passage that reads in Arabic: *immā an lā yajʿala fī al-ṭaʿām quwwa* [...].[89] Ibn Taymiyya thus acknowledges—contrary to what von Kügelgen argues—that it is possible for God to strip food of the capacity to satiate; food remains food, however, even when divested of this capacity. This view appears elsewhere in Ibn Taymiyya as well, though in less explicit form. In one such instance, he responds to an objection that arises if one regards the capacity to burn as part of the substantive form of fire (*al-ṣūra al-nāriyya*), such that anything not possessing this capacity cannot be called fire. The larger thematic context of this objection, as well as Ibn Taymiyya's response to it, shall not be considered here.

---

86   See *Sunna*, ᴊʀ, 1:52. Ibn Taymiyya is referring here implicitly to Q. 2:60. In *Sunna*, cited here, he argues that the divine custom (*sunnat Allāh*), which, according to several Quranic passages, undergoes no change (*tabdīl*; see, e.g., Q. 33:62), relates only to religious matters (*umūr dīniyya*—meaning, in sum, that the prophetic message is ultimately victorious and its opponents lose out), not to natural ones (*umūr ṭabīʿiyya*, referring to natural correlations). Ibn Taymiyya criticises the *falāsifa*—naming al-Suhrawardī (executed 587/1191) explicitly—who are said to have cited these verses as evidence for the eternity of the world and for the presence of logically necessary causal relations within it. Ibn Taymiyya also departs here from al-Ghazālī, who likewise (albeit with rather different intentions than the *falāsifa*) relates these verses to the creative activity of God, such that—at least according to Frank Griffel's interpretation—even miracles, as astonishing as they may be, do not violate "the laws of nature." See Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 198.

87   Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 162–164.

88   Ibid., 163–164.

89   *Kasb*, ᴍꜰ, 8:397. In English: "either by not placing a capacity in food [...]."

All that is relevant for our purposes is that Ibn Taymiyya discusses this view regarding the essence of fire with the proviso that one consider it correct, which indicates that he himself is only assuming it here *arguendo*.[90]

As further evidence for her position, von Kügelgen cites a passage from the *Dar'* in which Ibn Taymiyya speaks about human will. In his treatment of this topic, which von Kügelgen mistakenly interprets as an attempt to prove the existence of God,[91] we read the statement *"wa-l-kullī lā wujūd lahu fī al-aʿyān illā muʿayyan^{an}."*[92] Von Kügelgen paraphrases this as follows: "The universal feature, however, does not exist separately, but as a particular *in rebus* […]," on the basis of which she argues that Ibn Taymiyya could hardly have expressed his agreement with the Peripatetics more clearly.[93] Such an assessment is entirely comprehensible at first blush. In my opinion, however, Ibn Taymiyya is, in fact, merely repeating here the conceptualist view he has put forth in numerous works[94] (although his choice of words may rightly be qualified as imprecise)— a conclusion supported by other passages in which he uses similar wording. In the first volume of the same work, for example, he states that "that which exists as absolute and universal in people's minds exists in the particular only as something concrete, individuated, and distinct" (*fa-mā huwa muṭlaq kullī fī adhhān al-nās lā yūjadu illā muʿayyan^{an} mushakhkhaṣ^{an} mutamayyiz^{an} fī al-aʿyān*).[95] This statement is identical in tenor to that cited by von Kügelgen,

---

90   See *Radd*, 300.

91   See von Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy," 309. Ibn Taymiyya does indeed make the point that every human being necessarily has an *ilāh* (deity)—here in the sense of a thing that is striven after for its own sake. His argument is structured as follows: Man is created as a necessarily willing being. Now, it is possible that a particular object be willed not for its own sake but for the realisation of a higher goal. Yet it cannot be the case that everything be willed only on account of another, as this would entail an infinite chain of efficient and final causes, which is impossible. Consequently, every chain of willing must end in an instance of willing that relates to an object that is willed for its own sake. This object is the *ilāh* of the willing person, which, as Ibn Taymiyya says elsewhere, may be the Creator, though it may also be a created entity, such as a king. It is clear that Ibn Taymiyya is concerned here not with a proof for the existence of God but rather with the fact that a human being cannot help but be devoted to some "god," which may then be either God the Creator Himself or a created entity that one has deified. See *Dar'*, 8:464–466, as well as *Islām*, JM, 6:229. Aristotle, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, had previously argued in a similar manner for the existence of a highest good.

92   *Dar'*, 8:466.

93   Von Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy," 310.

94   On this, see section 3.1 above.

95   *Dar'*, 1:216. A similarly worded phrase, employed by Ibn Taymiyya in *Minhāj*, has been translated and commentated in Michot, "Commentary, Part 2," 360–361 and 362–363. See also Ibn Taymiyya's discussion concerning the ontological status of the natural universal in *Dar'*, 6:275.

though it differs in wording. Now, what is interesting to note is that Ibn Taymiyya immediately afterwards outlines both the Platonic and the Aristotelian positions on the question of universals, concluding with the statement that "both positions are patently false" (*wa-kilā al-qawlayni khaṭaʾ ṣarīḥ*).[96] It is therefore plausible to assume that in the passage cited by von Kügelgen too, Ibn Taymiyya had no intention of expressing agreement with the moderate realist position of the Peripatetics. He further clarifies his view to this effect by referring in the same passage to the four-stage model elaborated in section 1 of the current chapter. The passage in question is cited here in full, with the segment that denotes a clear departure from the position of Aristotle in italics:

> We know on the basis of sense experience and rational necessity that nothing exists in the external world other than the concrete, particular thing, in which there is no [ontological] co-sharing [with any other thing] (*lā shirka fīhi aṣlan*). Rather, the meanings in the mind, which are universal, general, and non-specific, are like the non-specific and general words on the tongue and in the written form that refers to these words. The written form corresponds to (*yuṭābiq*) the word [on the tongue], which in turn corresponds to the meaning. Each of these three refers to, encompasses, and extends to particulars that exist in the external world. *This is not because there exists something in the external world that extends to this and that [thing] or exists in this and that [thing], or because this and that [thing] participate in it.* This view is not held by anyone who is cognisant of what he is saying, but only by one who is incapable of distinguishing between (*ishtabaha ʿalayhi*) mental and externally existent objects or who blindly follows those who have held something similar from among those who have erred [on the question of universals].[97]

In this passage, Ibn Taymiyya explicitly denies that universal concepts possess an ontologically real foundation in the external world. For this reason, but also in light of the remarks made in section 3.1 of the current chapter, it is my view that the passage cited by von Kügelgen should not be taken as indicative of a moderate realist understanding of universals.

Having dealt with the ontological-epistemological perspective concerning the question of universals, we now turn our attention to Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of space and time. Here too we shall see that he maintains an anti-realist position.

---

96   *Dar*ʾ, 1:216.
97   *Dar*ʾ, 1:216–217.

3.3 *The Ontological–Natural Philosophical Perspective: On Space and Time*

According to Ibn Taymiyya, erroneous views concerning the ontological status of space and time, among other things, are fed from the same source of error that underlies the problem of universals, namely, the failure to distinguish between mental concepts and the world of external reality.[98] Ibn Taymiyya's own position in this dispute must be viewed against the backdrop of the theological issues that were being debated, but also against the backdrop of conceptions of space[99] and time[100] that predate him. These conceptions are outlined below.

It is likely Aristotle that had the greatest influence on the contentious debate among Muslim thinkers concerning space and time. According to him, space (as occupied by an object) is "the immediate [that is, nearest] motionless bordering surface of the body enclosing [the object]."[101] Space is therefore two-dimensional. With respect to a pencil lying on a table, for instance, it would consist of the surface of the table on the pencil's bottom side and of the air surface bordering the pencil on all other sides.[102] All objects within the world exist in space, though not the world as a whole since there is nothing lying outside of it enclosing it. Aristotle rejects the existence of a void (Ar. *khalāʾ* or *faḍāʾ*), whether it be inside the world or outside it. Furthermore, space has an objective existence, albeit one that is contingent on the existence of the bodies through which it is constituted.

---

98   *Bayān*, 2:288.

99   On the available scholarship, see, in addition to that cited in the course of the following pages, Hans Daiber, *Bibliography of Islamic Philosophy*, 3 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1999 and 2007), 2:493 and 3:411 (under *space*). For more recent studies, see Alnoor Dhanani, "Space," in Kalin, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Science, and Technology in Islam*, 2:273b–277 (as well as the references listed at the end of this article).

100   On the available scholarship, see, in addition to that cited in the course of the following pages, Daiber, *Bibliography of Islamic Philosophy*, 2:519–521 and 3:416 (under *time*).

101   Aristotle, *Aristoteles: Physikvorlesung*, trans. Hans Wagner (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979), IV, 4, 212a20–22 (the parentheses are those of the translator [Wagner]). In the Arabic translation of Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn (d. 298/910-11), this passage reads as follows: *fa-nihāyat al-khaṭṭ idhᵃⁿ ghayr al-mutaḥarrika al-ūlā hiya al-makān*. See Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn, *al-Ṭabīʿa: Tarjamat Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn maʿa shurūḥ Ibn al-Samḥ wa-Ibn ʿAdī wa-Mattā b. Yūnus wa-Abī al-Faraj b. al-Ṭayyib*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, photomech. repr. of 1st ed., vol. 1 (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 1984), (same page reference, as the Arabic edition follows the Bekker pagination, which serves as the standard form of citation for the works of Aristotle).

102   See also Otfried Höffe, *Aristoteles*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Beck, 1999), 128.

Time, on the other hand, is defined by Aristotle as the unit of measure of motion[103] or, as he says elsewhere, "a number of change in respect of the before and after."[104] Since Aristotelian cosmology posits that the moving celestial spheres are without beginning, it follows that there is an unlimited number of past points of time, though these can be apprehended in their entirety only as a potential, rather than an actual, infinite. The sequence of points of time is not discrete but continuous. Furthermore, given that this sequence forms a unity, Aristotle does not posit that individual moving objects are accompanied by their own time that is specific to them. Since time has by definition the sole function of rendering motion enumerable, the existence of an enumerating soul is a necessary precondition for the instantiation of time. According to Otfried Höffe, it does not follow from this that Aristotle construes time as a psychological phenomenon since the soul is merely a condition for, and not the cause of, the coming into being of time.[105] Analogously to space, whose existence is contingent on that of bodies, the existence of time is bound to that of motion. Unlike with space, however, it is unclear whether Aristotle also ascribes an objective reality to time.

The best-known Muslim representatives and defenders of an Aristotelian conception of space and time are Ibn Sīnā[106] and Ibn Rushd,[107] while we find a different conception of space and time among the scholars of *kalām*. In what follows, we refer exclusively to a common Ashʿarī view according to which space and time stem merely from the imagination (*mutawahham*) and are therefore in themselves non-existent (*maʿdūm*).[108] Nevertheless, some claim

---

103   Aristotle, *Physikvorlesung*, IV, 12, 220b32–221a1. The Arabic translation reads: *al-zamān miqdār al-ḥaraka wa-l-taḥarruk*. See Aristotle, *al-Ṭabīʿa: Tarjamat Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn*.

104   Aristotle, *Physikvorlesung*, IV, 11, 219b2. The Arabic translation reads: [...] *al-zamān huwa ʿadad al-ḥaraka min qibal al-mutaqaddim wa-l-mutaʾakhkhir*. See Aristotle, *al-Ṭabīʿa: Tarjamat Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn*.

105   See Höffe, *Aristoteles*, 129.

106   On whom see, e.g., Ḥusām al-Ālūsī, *al-Zamān fī al-fikr al-dīnī wa-l-falsafī al-qadīm* (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr, 1980), 101–104 and Jon McGinnis, "The Topology of Time: An Analysis of Medieval Islamic Accounts of Discrete and Continuous Time," *Modern Schoolman* 81 (Nov. 2003). Despite what its title may suggest, McGinnis's article treats predominantly of the views of Ibn Sīnā and demonstrates his innovative way of dealing with the Aristotelian conception of time. See, in addition, McGinnis, *Avicenna*, 67–71 (on space) and 71–75 (on time).

107   On whom see al-Ālūsī, *Zamān*, 104–109 and the references cited at p. 116, n. 99 above.

108   This, at least, is the widespread view among scholars, based primarily on an appeal to ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355) as the earliest source. See, e.g., Abdelhamid Sabra, "The Simple Ontology of Kalām Atomism: An Outline," *Early Science and Medicine* 14 (2009): 71 (along with the references given at n. 5); also ʿAbd al-Muḥsin Sulṭān, *Fikrat al-zamān*

that the Ashʿarīs did affirm the existence of time.[109] The Ashʿarīs likewise reject the Aristotelian view that time and space can be divided indiscriminately and thus form a continuum. Against the notion of a continuum, they posit an atomistic conception predicated on the existence of basic units of space and time that are not susceptible of further division. On a conceptual level, space is divided into three types: *ḥayyiz*, *makān*, and *khalāʾ*. According to the lexicographer al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413), *ḥayyiz* refers to "the imagined void (*al-farāgh al-mutawahham*) that is filled either by an extended object like a body or by a non-extended object like an atom."[110] The term *makān* partially overlaps with *ḥayyiz* insofar as it refers to space that undergoes multidimensional extension through being filled by an extended object.[111] Thus, space in the sense of a *makān* is always a *ḥayyiz* as well, though the reverse is not the case. The term *khalāʾ* is understood to refer to voids within the world that are potentially but not actually filled by atoms or bodies.[112] In contrast to the Peripatetics, the Ashʿarīs recognise the possibility of a void, though it should be pointed out once more that the denotata of all three terms—*ḥayyiz*, *makān*, and *khalāʾ*—are merely mental notions and thus have no external reality. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī takes a rather different stance when he affirms that among the many conceptions of space and time, it is Plato's that is to be preferred. Accordingly, al-Rāzī holds that time and space are entities that possess a discrete existence (*qāʾim bi-nafsihi*) and are thus independent of motion and bodies. According to him, therefore, there also exist empty space and empty time.[113] Yet unlike his name-

---

ʿinda al-Ashāʿira (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2000), 51–56. The famous Sufi Ibn ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) can likewise be said to have described time and space in a similar manner. See William Chittick, "Time, Space and the Objectivity of Ethical Norms: The Teachings of Ibn ʿArabī," *Islamic Studies* 39, no. 4 (2000).

109   These are listed in al-Ālūsī, *Zamān*, 148–150.

110   Al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Muʿjam al-taʿrīfāt*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣiddīq al-Minshāwī (Cairo: Dār al-Faḍīla, 2004), 83a.

111   See ibid., 191b.

112   See ibid.

113   Regarding his conception of time, see, e.g., Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā (Tehran: Muʾassasat al-Ṣādiq, 1415/[1995-6]; repr. of orig. ed., Cairo: n.p., n.d. [ca. 1986]), 2:148–149; al-Ālūsī, *Zamān*, 86–88; Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Zarkān, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa-ārāʾuhu al-kalāmiyya wa-l-falsafiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1963), 450–462; Peter Adamson and Andreas Lammer, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Platonist Account of the Essence of Time," in *Philosophical Theology in Islam*, vol. 5, *Later Ashʿarism East and West*, ed. Ayman Shihadeh and Jan Thiele (Leiden: Brill, 2020); and Peter Adamson, "The Existence of Time in Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*," in *The Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Physics and Cosmology*, ed. Dag Nikolaus Hasse and Amos Bertolacci (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018). I am grateful to Prof. Adamson for making this article available to me prior to its publication. Regarding al-Rāzī's views on space, see, e.g., al-

sake Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 313/925), he did not posit space and time as having existed along with God from all eternity.[114] Rather, he considered them created, in keeping with the position of the *mutakallimūn*.[115] He likewise concurs with the position of the *falāsifa* and most of the *mutakallimūn* in holding that God transcends time. Al-Ghazālī[116] before him had already expressed this view with the phrase "*inna Allāh taʿālā fawqa al-zamān*."[117]

Ibn Taymiyya elaborates his conception of space and time in various works,[118] mostly in the context of theological questions that he discusses in critical engagement with the writings of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Ibn Taymiyya is aware of his predecessors' views on space and time[119] and is thus able to take

---

Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 5:119 and 155; al-Zarkān, *al-Rāzī wa-ārāʾuhu*, 438–450; and Peter Adamson, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on Place," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 27 (2017). At the time this chapter was written, the following source had not been published and was therefore unavailable to me: Jules Janssens, "Avicennian Elements in Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Discussion of Place, Void and Directions in the *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*," in Hasse and Bertolacci, *Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin Reception*.

114   In addition, he also considered the soul and matter to be eternal. On this point and on Abū Bakr al-Rāzī's having possibly been influenced by Galen (d. 210 CE), see Peter Adamson, "Galen and al-Rāzī on Time," in *Medieval Arabic Thought: Essays in Honour of Fritz Zimmermann*, ed. Rotraud Hansberger, Afifi al-Aktiti, and Charles Burnett (London and Turin: Warburg Institute and Nina Aragno Editore, 2012).

115   Although time and space were considered by the Ashʿarīs to be merely ideas in the mind, they are nevertheless two created entities preceded by absolute non-being (*muḥdathān*). See Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt*, 135, line 4.

116   Ernst Behler, in his examination of al-Ghazālī's conception of space and time, notes that it influenced the seemingly subjectivist theories of Gottfried Leibniz (d. 1716) and thereby contributed to the awakening of critical philosophy in Germany. See Thomas Behler, *Die Ewigkeit der Welt: Problemgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den Kontroversen um Weltanfang und Weltunendlichkeit in der arabischen und jüdischen Philosophie des Mittelalters* (Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1965), 162–171, esp. 166–167. Space and time in al-Ghazālī's thought have also been thoroughly discussed in Muhammed Yasin El-Taher Uraibi, "Al-Ghazalis Aporien im Zusammenhang mit dem Kausalproblem" (PhD diss., University of Bonn, 1972), 38–54.

117   "God, may He be exalted, is above time." Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Maʿārif al-ʿaqliyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1963), 64. The concept of the non-temporality of God is Platonic and can be traced in the monotheistic religions at least as far back as Ignatius of Antioch (d. 2nd century CE). See Thomas Sören Hoffmann, "Zeitlosigkeit," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 12, ed. Gottfried Gabriel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004), 1275.

118   On space, see, e.g., *Darʾ*, 6:312–321; *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:342–351; *Minhāj*, 2:350–358 and 555–557; and various passages throughout *Bayān*, esp. in the first five volumes. On time, see, e.g., *Bayān*, 2:276–289, 5:215–225, and many other places within the first five volumes.

119   Ibn Taymiyya ascribes to the majority of the *mutakallimūn* the practice of distinguishing between the terms *ḥayyiz* and *makān* in that the former denotes a non-existent, the latter

inspiration from them. As we shall see, Ibn Taymiyya's own position is closest to that of Aristotle, though his discussion of the question of space and time is more theologically than philosophically motivated.

Ibn Taymiyya submits the term *ḥayyiz* to a thorough linguistic investigation.[120] Unlike with the term *wujūd*, however, his conception of space has little to do with the basic linguistic meaning of the term, so we may omit his analysis of it here. Of relevance for our purposes is Ibn Taymiyya's affirmation that an object that occupies space (*mutaḥayyiz*) is located in a place (*ḥayyiz*) precisely when it is enclosed by existent objects outside itself. In this sense, everything inside the world is located in an existent space, though the world as such is not since it is not enclosed by anything.[121] Since, according to Ibn Taymiyya, everything inside the world is necessarily enclosed by bodies, we may conclude that he denies the possibility of a void within the world. He also rejects the existence of an extracosmic void[122] as well as the possibility of infinite spaces or of infinitely large spatial objects, for such cases would entail an actual infinite, the existence of which he holds to be impossible.[123] Among the *mutakallimūn*, Ibn Taymiyya continues, the term *ḥayyiz* is conceived of as more general (*aʿamm*)[124] than *makān* insofar as it can also be used to refer to non-existent places. In this sense then, the world too is in a *ḥayyiz*. Ibn Taymiyya operates on the terms of this distinction in numerous works, so we may presume that on this point he is in agreement with the *mutakallimūn*. In *Minhāj*, he subdivides existent places—*ḥayyiz* in this case being synonymous with *makān*—into those that objects occupying space require as a bearing element and those for which this is not the case. He gives as an example of the former the roof of a house on which a person is standing. Among the examples he gives for the latter is the sky, which is located above the atmosphere (*jaww*).[125] God—and here the theological backdrop to the discussion on space becomes apparent—may not be described as an object or entity that occupies space (*mutaḥayyiz*) if this is taken to mean that He is enclosed by bodies or is in need

---

an existent, space. See, e.g., *Radd*, 239 and *Minhāj*, 2:555–556. At least with respect to the Ashʿarīs, however, this does not seem to have been the dominant view. It is not clear to me which groups among the *mutakallimūn* Ibn Taymiyya has in mind here.

120   See, e.g., *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:343–344.

121   *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:344.

122   *Bayān*, 1:161.

123   *Bayān*, 5:180.

124   The printed edition has *ahamm*, which, however, is implausible considering the context. See *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:344–345.

125   *Minhāj*, 2:356.
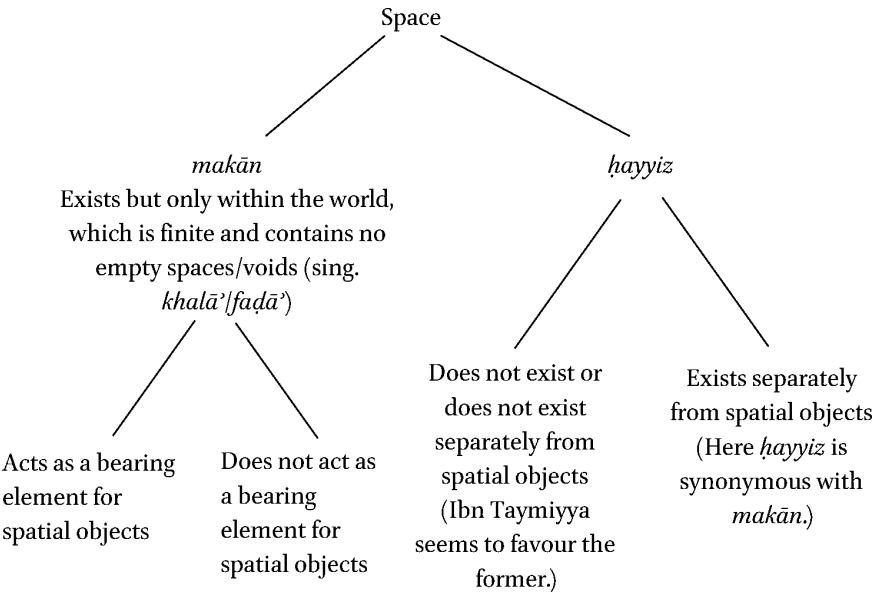
FIGURE 1   Ibn Taymiyya's conception of space (*makān/ḥayyiz*)

of bodies to bear Him.[126] It is unobjectionable, however, to describe God as *mutaḥayyiz* if what is meant thereby is that He, like the world, is located in a non-existent (*ʿadamī*) place or that He exists separate (*bāʾin*) from creation.[127] This is unobjectionable even if the place is taken to be existent, provided that what is meant thereby is simply that it is part of the space-occupying entity, which, by virtue of its extendedness and its demarcation from other entities located outside it, necessarily spans a space. This space, then, in which God exists as an entity that occupies space is either non-existent—which seems to be the view that Ibn Taymiyya favours—or it is part of God's being in the sense that it is a by-product that is necessarily concomitant not only to God but also to every other existing entity.[128] In both cases—and this is what matters to Ibn Taymiyya here—the view that God occupies space in an existent place that lies outside Himself is denied. Figure 1 above provides a graphic summary of these details for further clarification. The affinity between Ibn Taymiyya's position and that of Aristotle is even more obvious when it comes to his concept of time, to which we turn presently.

---

126   *Minhāj*, 2:144–145, also 2:556.
127   *Minhāj*, 2:556; also *Radd*, 239.
128   *Bayān*, 3:605 and 610–611; also *Darʾ*, 6:323.

Ibn Taymiyya erroneously attributes to Aristotle the view that time is the unit of measure not of motion itself but of the movement of the celestial spheres in particular. Ibn Taymiyya seems here to have fallen into an error that is found among some Arabic authors,[129] including the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ.[130] He goes on to say that even if one considers time to be the measure of motion per se, at most a particular time can be related to a particular motion, but the genus of time (*jins al-zamān*) must be correlated with the genus of motion. The genus of time is without end, so that even after the demise of the celestial spheres, motion in paradise will still be accompanied by time.[131] In *Bayān*, Ibn Taymiyya explains that the existence of time is dependent (*muftaqir*) on the existence of motion, as motion is the necessitating cause (*sabab mūjib*) of time. Time and motion cannot occur in isolation of one another (*lā yanfakku*). Motion is prior to time only in essence (*dhātī*), but not temporally.[132] Ibn Taymiyya's choice of words is striking because in numerous works, he criticises the *falāsifa* for conceiving of God as the cause of an effect—namely, the world—that has always existed along with Him. The *falāsifa*, Ibn Taymiyya explains, illustrated their position with the example of a ring on a finger whose movement occurs simultaneously with that of the finger.[133] Ibn Taymiyya, on the other hand, maintains that causes must precede their effects temporally, and he rejects the *falāsifa*'s example of the ring by qualifying the movement of the finger as merely a condition for the movement of the ring and not its cause.[134] Does Ibn Taymiyya contradict himself when he identifies motion as the *sabab* of time, with motion preceding time only in essence and not temporally? To resolve this question, we must refer to another passage in *Bayān* where we can see that Ibn Taymiyya employs a somewhat peculiar choice of terms. There he states that the *sabab*, conceptually speaking, is tantamount to a condition (*al-sabab bi-manzilat al-sharṭ*).[135] The *sabab* is thus merely a condition for the occurrence of the effect, whereas the cause, to which he refers as the *ʿilla*,

---

129   On this, see Brian Ogren, *Time and Eternity in Jewish Mysticism: That Which Is Before and That Which Is After* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 54 (with n. 4).

130   In English, "the Brethren of Purity." This is the name of a group that was anonymously active in Iraq in the fourth/tenth century and that left behind a compendium of fifty-two epistles known by the title *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*. On the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and their *Rasāʾil*, see El-Bizri, *The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and Their* Rasāʾil.

131   *Ṣafadiyya*, 2:167.

132   *Bayān*, 2:282.

133   See, for instance, Ibn Sīnā's discussion, which mentions examples similar to this one. Ibn Sīnā [Avicenna], *Metaphysics–Ilāhiyyāt*, 201–205.

134   See, e.g., *Minhāj*, 1:170–172.

135   *Bayān*, 5:201.

consists of the totality (*majmūʿ*) of requisite conditions (*asbāb*; sing. *sabab*), which always include God's will that the conditioned effect come about. In Ibn Taymiyya's view, however, it is not necessary for the conditions to precede the conditioned effect temporally. Yet this stance does not necessarily resolve the contradiction since Ibn Taymiyya, as shown above, describes motion not merely as one condition among many but as a *sabab mūjib*, which, in light of the present discussion, can best be translated as "sufficient condition." Is the sufficient condition, for Ibn Taymiyya, also separable conceptually from the cause understood in the sense of *ʿilla*? I know of no passage in Ibn Taymiyya's works that would provide an answer to this question. Nevertheless, I believe that Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of the relationship between motion and time can be clarified if we consider it analogous to the relationship between an existent object and its non-existent *ḥayyiz*. Just as the existence of an object in its being *there* (**Dasein**) necessarily spans a space, so too does motion in its sequence of before and after necessarily constitute the basic unit of temporality.[136] Ibn Taymiyya thus says of time that it is that with respect to which "preceding" and "succeeding" are conceivable (*al-zamān mā yuʿqalu fīhi al-taqaddum wa-l-taʾakhkhur*).[137] In another passage, in which he attempts to refute al-Rāzī's view that God does not precede the world in a temporal sense because He exists outside time, the analogy made above to the non-existent *ḥayyiz* comes out with even greater clarity. In the four arguments Ibn Taymiyya puts forth,[138] he describes time as one of the consequences of movement (*min lawāḥiq al-ḥaraka*), one that either is non-existent (*maʿdūm*)—the position Ibn Taymiyya seems to favour here—or that constitutes a part of the moving object.[139] Since Ibn Taymiyya starts from the premiss that movement occurs within the divine essence,[140] time is also one of the consequences of God's existence (*min tawābiʿ wujūd al-Ḥaqq*). For Ibn Taymiyya, God's preceding the world in

---

136   In *Minhāj*, he agrees with al-Rāzī's statement that the fact that the sum of the angles of a triangle results in two right angles necessarily and simultaneously coincides with the existence of the triangle. If my interpretation of Ibn Taymiyya's remarks is correct, then this applies in like manner to time with respect to motion. Ibn Taymiyya's inconsistency in his use of the word *sabab* becomes clear when he argues that the triangle may in no case be understood as a *sabab*, since a *sabab* must always precede the *musabbab* (effect) in time. Here, then, he uses the term *sabab* in the sense of reason or cause (*ʿilla*) and not in the sense of condition. See *Minhāj*, 1:280–284.

137   *Bayān*, 5:221.

138   *Bayān*, 5:222–224.

139   *Bayān*, 5:222–223.

140   He emphasises here that even al-Rāzī had to concede that this premiss is compatible with reason. We deal with this topic, as well as al-Rāzī's position, in chapter 9.

no way entails the necessity of positing time as an eternally existent entity.[141] The set of all points of time, which is unlimited owing to its connection with the eternal essence of God, does not represent an actual infinity for Ibn Taymiyya since its constituent elements do not occur simultaneously but successively.[142] It is different with space, however, which therefore cannot extend indefinitely for Ibn Taymiyya, as elaborated above.

As in his discussion of space, Ibn Taymiyya cites different meanings of the term *zamān* without subjecting them to evaluation. Thus, he mentions in one passage that *zamān* can, in addition to its conventional meaning, also be understood in the sense of day and night,[143] just as the term *makān* can be understood as a reference to the heavens and the earth.[144] This is relevant in that Ibn Taymiyya explicitly describes *zamān* as non-existent in the passages from *Bayān* discussed above, whereas in other passages of the same work he explicitly defines it as being existent.[145] This is only an apparent contradiction, however, one due to the inconsistent use of the term *zamān*.

Finally, we should highlight the theological motive that is clearly discernible in Ibn Taymiyya's discussions of space and time. Ibn Taymiyya is convinced of the validity of the propositions that God is self-subsistent (*qāʾim bi-nafsihi*), that He is above creation, and that He is separate from it. Moreover, God can be seen and pointed to.[146] All this can be accounted for through the description of God as *mutaḥayyiz*, though Ibn Taymiyya stresses that the use of this term with respect to God represents an unlawful innovation (*bidʿa*). Moreover, it is misleading on account of the various ways in which it is used and the ambiguity resulting from this and is thus better avoided.[147] Ibn Taymiyya's view that the *ḥayyiz* is something non-existent allows him to sidestep the theological and philosophical pitfalls of affirming that God is borne by His *ḥayyiz*, that He is dependent on it, or that the *ḥayyiz* has existed as an independent entity alongside God since all eternity, as well as the affirmation that God's preference for occupying one particular *ḥayyiz* over another violates the postulate—also accepted by Ibn Taymiyya—that there can be no granting of preponderance

---

141   *Bayān*, 5:223. Elsewhere, Ibn Taymiyya states that an actual preceding (*taqaddum ḥaqīqī*) is always temporal, not merely essential (*dhātī*) or mental (*ʿaqlī*). See *Ṣafadiyya*, 2:228.

142   *Bayān*, 5:179–180.

143   A little farther on, Ibn Taymiyya explains that night can be understood, among other things, as merely an absence of light and, therefore, as non-existent. See *Bayān*, 2:283.

144   *Bayān*, 2:282.

145   See, e.g., *Bayān*, 5:179.

146   See, e.g., *Bayān*, 3:606.

147   *Darʾ*, 5:57.

in the absence of a justifying factor[148] (the principle known as *imtināʿ al-tarjīḥ bi-lā murajjiḥ*).[149] With respect to time, Ibn Taymiyya desires to safeguard the notion that God's preceding of creation is temporal in nature. As in the case of the *ḥayyiz*, by positing that time—understood as the set of all points in time—is non-existent, Ibn Taymiyya evades the theological problem of having to postulate an entity that has existed alongside God since all eternity.

4 Ibn Taymiyya's Critique of the Doctrine of the Unity of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) in Speculative Sufism

In the long history of the controversial debate concerning the doctrine of the unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*),[150] Ibn Taymiyya's highly polemical critique represents just one chapter, albeit a very influential one. It is thus useful to sketch the background to this debate so that we may locate Ibn Taymiyya's critique more easily within the broader framework of Islamic thought. Though Ibn Taymiyya criticised a number of figures in this context,[151] the following discussion is limited to only one such figure whom he critiqued with particular frequency, namely, the Sufi scholar Muḥyī al-Dīn b. ʿArabī (d. 638/1240),[152] born in the Andalusian city of Murcia, who declared himself the Seal of the Saints (*khātam al-awliyāʾ*). Ibn ʿArabī, moreover, is the first Muslim thinker to have worked out the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* on a theoretical level, though it should be emphasised that he never employed this term himself.[153] Broad seg-

---

148 On this point, see his discussion in *Bayān*, 3:811–812 and *Darʾ*, 6:318–319. He further argues on the basis of God's will and power, by means of which He gives preference to a particular *ḥayyiz* over all others.

149 This can be traced back to the principle of sufficient reason, to which Ibn Taymiyya appeals, inter alia, in his refutation of the *mutakallimūn*'s view that the world was created ex nihilo. See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 84–86.

150 This is the English term that has come to be used in the literature as a translation of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. The following discussion also employs the term "ontological monism" as a synonym.

151 Among these are Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ḥammūya (d. 649/1252), Ibn Sabʿīn (d. 669/1270), Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), and ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291).

152 An annotated index of the most important publications on Ibn ʿArabī's person and thought—which, however, incomprehensibly fails to include most of the scholarship in German—can be found in Alexander Knysh and Ali Hussain, "Ibn al-ʿArabī," *Oxford Bibliographies Online*, last modified Feb. 25, 2016, http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0206.xml.

153 See William Chittick, "Rūmī and *waḥdat al-wujūd*," in *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: The*

ments of the Sunni scholarly establishment have censured Ibn ʿArabī for this and other teachings, with some going so far as to declare him an apostate— a point he has in common with Ibn Taymiyya.[154] Ibn ʿArabī summarised his views in an accessible work (at least in terms of its size) entitled *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, which, in his own words, represents the faithful transcription of inspirations vouchsafed to him by the Prophet Muḥammad.[155] This work more than any other unleashed a barrage of criticism against Ibn ʿArabī, and even some of his own disciples either ignored it or tried to cast doubt on its authenticity.[156] Even in Western scholarship, in which there is broad agreement that Ibn ʿArabī was a thinker of great intellectual depth, different opinions exist concerning the extent to which his positions can be harmonised with the Quranic picture of God and the world. Abul Ela Affifi, for instance, identifies Ibn ʿArabī as an acosmic pantheist whose image of God, just as in any other form of pantheism, cannot be reconciled with the ethical-personal God of religion.[157] Binyamin Abrahamov has recently remarked that even by the standards of an "extreme Sufism," Ibn ʿArabī's ideas strike him as "extraordinary" and as operating outside any framework set by Islam.[158] William Chittick sees the matter quite differently, opining that "Ibn al-ʿArabī places himself squarely in the mainstream of Islam by basing all his teachings upon the Koran and the Hadith."[159] In view of

---

Heritage of Rūmī, ed. Amin Banani et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 71–72. The term "Sufi" too does not concur with the common vocabulary of Ibn ʿArabī, who instead normally employs the term *ʿārif* (knower or gnostic).

154   In the span from the seventh/thirteenth to the ninth/fifteenth century alone, at least thirty-four works and 138 fatwas are known in which Ibn ʿArabī's thought is repudiated. See the list of these in Osman Yahya, *Histoire et classification de l'œuvre d'Ibn Arabī* (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1964), 113–135. Michel Chodkiewicz remarks that this list probably includes but a small part of the extant anti–Ibn ʿArabī literature from this time period. See Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophet and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī*, trans. Liadain Sherrard (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 19–20. (Original: *Le Sceau des saints: Prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d'Ibn Arabî*, Paris: Gallimard, 1986.)

155   See Muḥyī al-Dīn b. ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Abū al-ʿIlā ʿAfīfī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1946), 47.

156   See Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 246, 248, and 270.

157   See Abul Ela Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid Dín-Ibnul ʿArabí* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), 58. The word "religion" here may be taken to apply to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

158   See Binyamin Abrahamov, ed., *Ibn al-ʿArabī's Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam: An Annotated Translation of "The Bezels of Wisdom"* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 1.

159   William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), xv.

such a divergence in scholarly opinion, Annemarie Schimmel, along with many others before and after her, declares the interpretation of Ibn ʿArabī's writings to be a most difficult undertaking.[160] Ibn Taymiyya obviously faced similar problems on this count as well. As he tells us:

> Only in earlier times was I among those who had a good opinion of Ibn ʿArabī and held him in high regard. This was because of the beneficial things I had found in his words in many passages of *al-Futūḥāt* [*al-Makkiyya*], *al-Kunh* [*mā lā budda minhu lil-murīd*], [*al-Amr*] *al-muḥkam al-marbūṭ* [*fī-mā yalzamu ahl ṭarīq Allāh min al-shurūṭ*], *al-Durra al-fākhira* [*fī dhikr man intafaʿtu bihi fī ṭarīq al-ākhira*], *Maṭāliʿ*[161] *al-nujūm* [*wa-maṭāliʿ ahillat al-asrār wa-l-ʿulūm*], and others. At that time, we had not yet come to realise what he [Ibn ʿArabī] really intended to say […].[162]

From the lines following this passage we may infer that Ibn Taymiyya's process of transformation from an admirer of Ibn ʿArabī to one of his fiercest critics was triggered by his study of the aforementioned work *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. This event can be dated to the year 703/1303-4,[163] which means that Ibn Taymiyya apparently thought very positively of Ibn ʿArabī until about the age of forty.[164] We may thus suspect that Ibn Taymiyya may himself have been influenced by Ibn ʿArabī's thought. However, both Western scholars and those writing in Arabic emphasise as a rule the opposition between and the incompatibility of the two thinkers' positions.[165] In a 2011 monograph, Abdel Hakim Ajhar sought to demonstrate that these antagonistic representations do not adequately cap-

---

160   See Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 35th anniv. ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 263.

161   Yahya's bibliographical index of Ibn ʿArabī's works has *"Mawāqiʿ."* See Yahya, *Histoire et classification*, 375.

162   *Manbijī*, MF, 2:464–465.

163   See Abū Bakr al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar wa-jāmiʿ al-ghurar*, in Shams and al-ʿImrān, *al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām*, 236.

164   I use the word "apparently" here deliberately, as the citation above comes from a letter that was addressed to Naṣr al-Dīn al-Manbijī (d. 719/1319), a politically influential devotee of Ibn ʿArabī. In this letter, Ibn Taymiyya is unstinting in his criticism of Ibn ʿArabī, though he addresses al-Manbijī in a most respectful manner. We cannot rule out the possibility that Ibn Taymiyya is posing here as a former admirer of Ibn ʿArabī in order to gain al-Manbijī's sympathy and thus increase the latter's willingness to accept his criticism. Since, however, Ibn Taymiyya also speaks of his former relationship to Ibn ʿArabī in similar terms in a different context, I see no reason to doubt the accuracy of his account. See *Ṣūra, JM*, 7:249.

165   See, e.g., Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 107.

ture the complexity of the relationship.[166] Moreover, Khaled El-Rouayheb has recently shown that a number of scholars in the eleventh/seventeenth and twelfth/eighteenth centuries who followed in the tradition of Ibn ʿArabī or at least sympathised with him, figures such as Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1101/1690), saw no contradiction in championing the thought of Ibn Taymiyya as well. In doing so, these figures contributed significantly to the rediscovery of Ibn Taymiyya's writings and, consequently—and this is the irony of it—to the emergence of the modern Salafī movement, which harbours a deep disdain for Ibn ʿArabī.[167]

For a long time, Western scholars had regarded the Ḥanbalī school in general, and Ibn Taymiyya in particular, as being opposed to *taṣawwuf* per se owing to their rejection of speculative Sufism.[168] In passing this judgement, they committed an error similar to that involved in describing al-Ghazālī as an opponent of philosophy per se on account of his writings that were critical of *falsafa*.[169] The term *taṣawwuf* covers a wide variety of expressions of spirituality, which means that Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of Ibn ʿArabī's thought does not entail a rejection of *taṣawwuf* as such but only of some of its variants (in this case theosophy, or speculative Sufism[170]).[171] Hikmet Yaman has even argued that

---

166 Ajhar, *Suʾāl al-ʿālam*. Further research is necessary, however, in order to judge the extent to which he has succeeded in this.

167 See El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 271 and chap. 8, esp. 307–311. Similar is the case with scholars who came later, such as Abū al-Thanāʾ al-Ālūsī (d. 1270/1854) and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1332/1914). See Munʿim Sirry, "Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī and the Salafi Approach to Sufism," *Die Welt des Islams* 51, no. 1 (2011).

168 On this, see George Makdisi, "The Hanabali School and Sufism," *Humaniora Islamica* 2 (1974).

169 On the oft repeated but entirely erroneous presumption that al-Ghazālī sounded the death knell of Islamic philosophy, which supposedly met its end with the death of Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198), see p. 49, n. 74 above.

170 The term "mysticism," often used as a synonym, is avoided here as its use in relation to non-European phenomena is a Eurocentric imposition. See here Hofer, *Popularisation of Sufism*, 3.

171 Ibn Taymiyya's relationship to *taṣawwuf* has been elucidated in several studies. See George Makdisi, "Ibn Taymiya: A Sufi of the Qadiriya Order," *American Journal of Arabic Studies* 1 (1973) [Makdisi's article is discussed critically in Diego Sarrio, "Spiritual Anti-Elitism: Ibn Taymiyya's Doctrine of Sainthood (*walāya*)," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 22, no. 3 (2011): 276–277]; Meier, "Cleanest about Predestination"; Thomas Michel, ed., *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's al-Jawab al-Sahih* (Ann Arbor, MI: Caravan Books, 1985), intro., section 3; Thomas Emil Homerin, "Ibn Taimīya's al-Ṣūfīyah wa-al-fuqarāʾ," *Arabica* 32, no. 2 (1985); Muhammad Abdul Haq Ansari, "Ibn Taymiyya and Sufism," *Islamic Studies* 24, no. 1 (1985) [note also the critical remarks of the journal's editor in the endnotes]; Hikmet Yaman, "Ḥanbalīte Criticism of Sufism: Ibn Taymiyya (d. 795[*sic*]/1328), a Ḥanbalīte Ascetic (*Zāhid*)," *Ekev Akademi Dergisi* 14, no. 43

> Ibn Taymiyya's condemnation of Akbarian[172] ideas was not supposed to
> be considered as a criticism of Sufism [but] instead as a criticism of
> philosophy in the context of his other well-known attack directed to the
> Muslim philosophers, especially Ibn Sīnā. [...] He does not consider Ibn
> ʿArabī as a genuine Sufi, [but] rather a pseudo Sufi whose mind is con-
> fused with philosophical argumentations, especially with metaphysical
> speculations and exegeses.[173]

It was important to Ibn Taymiyya that his critique of Ibn ʿArabī not be under-
stood as a critique of *taṣawwuf*, as is apparent from the following statement,
articulated in the highly polemical manner typical of his remarks on the topic:
"Ibn ʿArabī and his ilk, if they claim to belong to the Sufis, belong to the Sufis
among the heretics (sing. *mulḥid*) [and] the *falāsifa*, not to the Sufis among the
people of knowledge."[174]

What follows is a summary presentation of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of the unity
of being.[175] According to this doctrine, the term existence denotes not a genus
that is instantiated in existent things but a singular reality (*ḥaqīqa wāḥida*).
This reality is identical with God,[176] who is absolute and unlimited. In this
respect, God is also indeterminable and hence unknowable, for any kind of
determination would necessarily entail a limitation. The acknowledgement of
the idea that the divine essence lies hidden behind an impenetrable veil of
transcendence is captured in the concept of *tanzīh* (lit. "exalting"). Though *tan-
zīh* is crucial in Ibn ʿArabī's thought, it represents only one side of the coin,
for just as important is the notion of *tashbīh* (lit. "declaring similar"), which is
both contrary and complementary to *tanzīh*. In *tashbīh*, God is no longer con-
sidered with respect to His attribute of being transcendent but with respect to

---

(2010); and Qais Assef, "Le soufisme et les soufis selon Ibn Taymiyya," *Bulletin d'études ori-
entales* 60 (2012).

172 Ibn ʿArabī is also known by the title "al-Shaykh al-Akbar" (the greatest master), from which
     is derived the adjective "akbarian" commonly used in the academic literature.

173 Yaman, "Ḥanbalīte Criticism," 54.

174 *Furqān I, MF*, 11:233.

175 There are numerous studies on the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, of which we cite the
     following examples: Affifi, *Mystical Philosophy*, chap. 1; Toshihiku Izutsu, *Sufism and Tao-
     ism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley: University of California
     Press, 1984), esp. chaps. 2 and 4–13; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, 263–274; William Chit-
     tick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (Albany: State
     University of New York Press, 1994), chap. 1; and Fateme Rahmati, *Der Mensch als Spiegel-
     bild Gottes in der Mystik Ibn ʿArabīs* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 17–43.

176 Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 111, line 4.

the attribute of manifesting Himself through creation itself. Ibn ʿArabī refers several times in this context to a prophetic hadith that, as he himself admits, is weak (*ḍaʿīf*) according to the standards of hadith scholarship but whose reliable (*ṣaḥīḥ*) transmission he claims was revealed to him by divine inspiration (*kashf*).[177] The hadith in question quotes God as saying, "I was a hidden treasure and none had knowledge of Me. But I desired to be known, so I created the creation and gave Myself to it to know Me, so it knew Me."[178] Ibn ʿArabī interprets the word "treasure" in this hadith as a "confirmation of the existence of the fixed entities (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*), which the Muʿtazila likewise advocated."[179] The fixed entities are the result of the purest emanation (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*) and constitute the infinite set of all possible objects and their states, which God recognises in the act of self-contemplation.[180] These entities are non-existent (*maʿdūm*) but nonetheless have subsistence (*thubūt*), ontologically speaking, in the knowledge of God. They should not be confused with the Platonic ideas, however, as they are neither universals nor archetypes.[181] Rather, they are the first step towards greater specificity (*taʿayyun*) in the divine process of creation.[182] This step is followed by pure emanation (*al-fayḍ al-muqaddas*), in which the fixed entities are given existence—one that they possess only in a figurative sense, however, since only God exists.[183] This is the visible world, which is identical with the sum of all loci of manifestation (*maẓāhir*) of the divine names, which are unlimited in number. The

---

177   On the function of hadith in the Sufi tradition in general, see Jonathan A.C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2017), chap. 7 (pp. 205–207 on Ibn ʿArabī specifically).

178   Muḥyī al-Dīn b. ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, 4 vols. (Cairo: Būlāq, 1852–1857), 2:443, lines 16–18. Neither the later and higher-quality edition of 1911 nor the now complete and, from a scholarly point of view, best edition by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Sulṭān al-Manṣūb (published in 2010) was accessible to me. The critical edition begun by ʿUthmān Yaḥyā in 1972, on the other hand, was available to me, but it remains unfinished and does not include the passage just discussed.

179   Muḥyī al-Dīn b. ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, ed. ʿUthmān Yaḥyā, 2nd unchanged ed., 14 vols., unfinished (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 1977–1992), 14:409, lines 9–10.

180   See Suʿād al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʿjam al-ṣūfī: al-Ḥikma fī ḥudūd al-kalima* (Beirut: Dandara, 1981), 889.

181   This misinterpretation, widespread in the academic literature, has been addressed in several studies. See, e.g., Egbert Meyer, "Ein kurzer Traktat Ibn ʿArabī's über die *-aʿyān aṭ-ṭābita*," *Oriens* 27–28 (1981): 228 (with n. 9).

182   See al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʿjam al-ṣūfī*, 889–890.

183   See William Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 30a.

origin of the world, or the cosmos, according to William Chittick, "is God, while
the cosmos is nothing but the Being of God within which appear the proper-
ties of the nonexistent entities, properties which themselves are the effects of
the divine names. So what we see are the names, and the cosmos is the out-
ward form of all the names in differentiated mode."[184] The world as theatre of
the infinitely many names of God has, since all eternity,[185] been alternating in
state—and here we are reminded of the Ashʿarī-occasionalist understanding of
creation—between the non-existence proper to it and the existence conferred
upon it by God, a process in which, with each new becoming, it never takes on
the same form twice.[186] Which names manifest themselves with what intens-
ity is determined by the degree of receptivity (*istiʿdād*) of the fixed entities in
the process of divine self-revelation.[187] Herein lies, for Ibn ʿArabī, the secret of
divine foreordainment (*sirr al-qadar*), for if one knows the nature of the fixed
entities, he can also predict the unfolding of phenomena within the world.[188]
Ibn ʿArabī's discussion of the relationship between God and the world appears,
most likely by design, both paradoxical and highly ambiguous. To engage with
it is to move away from the either-or thinking one finds in the rationally based
arguments of the *mutakallimūn* and of Ibn Taymiyya and to adopt the categor-
ies of the simultaneously both-and or neither-nor. For example, in response to
the question whether created things are identical with God, Ibn ʿArabī responds
in both the affirmative and the negative, adding that they are simultaneously
both He and not He (*huwa lā huwa*).[189] Thus, on the one hand, the world gives
form to the manifestation of the divine names, yet on the other hand, since
forms are limitations but God is unlimited, they cannot be identical with Him.
Yet they have no actual existence, nor are they self-subsisting substances, with
the result that—and this insight is the very essence of *tawḥīd* for Ibn ʿArabī—
nothing exists but God.[190] Ibn ʿArabī attempts to make these contradictions
comprehensible through a series of analogies. One of these, which he iden-

---

184   Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 114.
185   Ibn ʿArabī does not hold the position of the *falāsifa* that the world is eternal, however,
       nor does he subscribe to the *mutakallimūn*'s view of a *creatio ex nihilo*. For more, see ibid.,
       84b–85a and Rahmati, *Mensch als Spiegelbild*, 19 and 21.
186   See Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 19a.
187   Ibid., 91b.
188   *Kashf* is the means for beholding the fixed entities; however, this occurs only rarely and
       only to a very few people. See Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 99, lines 2–6.
189   See Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 81a and Mohamed Haj Yousef, *Ibn ʿArabī: Time and
       Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 2008), 133.
190   Al-Ḥakīm, *al-Muʿjam al-ṣūfī*, 1173–1174.

tifies as the most apposite, shall be cited here briefly.[191] As per this analogy, God sees Himself in the world as an observer sees himself in a mirror. Creation "is His mirror in which He beholds His names and in which their determinations (*aḥkām*) are revealed, which are nothing other than Himself."[192] Since the world is the materialised form of the divine names, God is also a mirror in which creation can see itself.[193] When one looks at God, he also sees the world. The non-manifest God, however, who is identical with pure existence that is beyond any determination, remains unrecognisably veiled in transcendence.

We turn our attention now to Ibn Taymiyya's critique,[194] which has been examined in several previous studies.[195] Ibn Taymiyya's strategy consists of an

---

191   Other metaphors are described in ibid., 1152–1157.

192   Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 62.

193   Ibid. The metaphor of the mirror is discussed at greater length in Rahmati, *Mensch als Spiegelbild*, 34–35.

194   Ibn Taymiyya articulates his critique in several works, smaller tracts, and fatwas. Of central relevance are his letter to al-Manbijī, written in 703/1303-4; *Ḥaqīqa*, which has only been partially preserved; and *Ḥujaj*. Michel is of the view that the latter two works, given their similarity, might be two versions of one and the same work. See Michel, *Muslim Theologian's Response*, 383, n. 5. I consider this implausible, however. Ibn Taymiyya probably composed the tract *Ḥaqīqa* at the request of the well-known Ḥanbalī scholar Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 716/1316). See Ibn Rushayyiq, *Asmāʾ muʾallafāt Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*, in Shams and al-ʿImrān, *al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām*, 303. The work bearing the promising title *al-Radd al-aqwam ʿalā Kitāb Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (*MF*, 2:362–451) contains little material relevant to the topic we discuss here. Finally, we should mention the tracts *Ḥammūya* and *Ṣūra*, which were edited and published only a few years ago.

195   I draw attention here to two studies in particular: (1) Cyrille Chodkiewicz, "Les premières polémiques autour d'Ibn ʿArabī: Ibn Taymiyya (661–728/1263–1328)" (PhD diss., University of Paris, 1984), 30–69 [a summary of this dissertation can be found in Michel Chodkiewicz, "Le procès posthume d'Ibn ʿArabī," in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, ed. Frederick De Jong and Bernd Radtke (Leiden: Brill, 1999), esp. 101–103] and (2) Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 87–111 [but note the errata listed in Jon Hoover, review of *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam*, by Alexander Knysh, *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 10, no. 3 (1999)]. Knysh's study represents, in my opinion, the most convincing treatment of the topic to date. See also, in addition, the introduction to Memon, *Ibn Taymīya's Struggle*, 35–46; Nūr al-Dīn Aliyu, "Ibn Taymiyya's Attitude towards Ṣūfism and His Critique of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Mystical Philosophy" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1981); Michel, *Muslim Theologian's Response*, intro., section 1; Hallaq, *Against the Greek Logicians*, esp. xxii–xxvii; Chittick, "Rūmī and *waḥdat al-wujūd*," 85–87; and Thomas Würtz, "Reactions of Ibn Taymiyya and Taftāzānī upon the Mystic Conception of Ibn ʿArabī," in *Mysticism East and West: The Concept of the Unity of Being*, ed. Heike Stamer (Lahore: Multi Media Affairs, 2013), 42–48 (based primarily on Knysh's study).

argument in three parts that relate, respectively, to the doctrinal content of Ibn ʿArabī's teaching, to the way in which this doctrine is justified, and to the consequences of the doctrine for religious practice.

Ibn Taymiyya accuses Ibn ʿArabī of contradicting himself by assuming that God's external aspect (*ẓāhir*) is the creation and His hidden, internal aspect (*bāṭin*) is His *ḥaqq*, that is, the Real, or pure existence. The contradiction derives from the fact that God would thereby be divided in two in His being; that is, there would exist two distinguishable existences, which runs contrary to the basic idea of the doctrine of the unity of being. Ibn Taymiyya anticipates the counterargument, which is based on the distinction between being as such and particular entities whose reality arises only through participation in this being, and he emphasises that such a distinction is pure fiction.[196] Ibn Taymiyya's refusal to accept both forms of God's being simultaneously does not mean that he favours one of the two over the other. On the contrary, he rejects equally that God be described by either of the two forms of being. Thus, identifying God with absolute being (*wujūd muṭlaq*) hidden unknowably in transcendence—that is, God's *bāṭin*—is tantamount to His non-existence, for absolute being is a purely mental construct having no counterpart in the external world. If, on the other hand, one considers God's essence as that which is manifested through creation—that is, if one considers it in relation only to His *ẓāhir*—then this, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, would lead to a substantive nullification (*taʿṭīl*) of God's attribute of being the lord and sustainer (*rabb*) of creation and would divest His sending of revelations and prophets of any meaning.[197] Here, the basic issue at the core of the dispute becomes clear: In what ontological relationship does God stand vis-à-vis His creation? Both Ibn Taymiyya and the *mutakallimūn* hold that God and the world are entirely separate, self-subsisting[198] entities that exist alongside[199] each other by virtue of a being that each possesses individually. This God–world dualism is completely abolished in the doctrine of the unity of being, which, in Ibn Taymiyya's view, not only leads to logical contradictions but also entails far-reaching, unacceptable theological consequences. He discusses the logical contradictions in numerous works, in one instance in the form of an anecdote. According to this anecdote, a scholar from among those who

---

196   *Ḥujaj*, MF, 2:307.
197   *Ḥaqīqa*, MF, 2:229–230.
198   In the sense of *qāʾim bi-nafsihi*.
199   It is only over the question whether and to what extent this "alongside" can be further qualified that the disagreement between Ibn Taymiyya and the *mutakallimūn* begins.

uphold the unity of being remarked that whoever claims that there is anything in existence other than God is a liar. One of those present asked who, then, was doing the lying if it is true that none exists but God. To this the scholar was incapable of responding,[200] for either it is God who is lying, or else one must postulate the existence of another being, separate from God, that could be accused of doing so. According to Ibn ʿArabī, Ibn Taymiyya continues, everything in the world—including good and bad, or that which is praiseworthy and blameworthy on the basis of religion and custom—is none other than God manifesting Himself through His own attributes.[201] Ibn Taymiyya cites several times in this context a verse from Ibn ʿArabī's poetry that reads:

> Verily, everything spoken in existence is His speech;
>> Thus, it matters not to us whether it be prose or lyric.

Ibn Taymiyya understands these verses to mean that, for Ibn ʿArabī, the speech of creatures—even heretical and untruthful speech—is, in fact, the speech of God. He considers such a proposition to follow logically only because Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of the unity of being would otherwise have to posit the existence of something else besides God. Yet Muslims are unanimously agreed that creation may not be considered identical with either God's essence or His attributes.[202] Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya sees the doctrine of the unity of being as the perfect breeding ground for antinomian currents,[203] even though Ibn ʿArabī himself, as Ibn Taymiyya acknowledges elsewhere, considered adherence to the commandments of religion to be obligatory.[204] As Ibn Taymiyya states:

> In addition, according to him [i.e., Ibn ʿArabī], when it comes to command and prohibition, the commander, the prohibitor, the one commanded, and the one prohibited are all one and the same. He thus says at the very beginning of *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, his most comprehensive work:
>> The Lord is real (*ḥaqq*) and the servant is real;

---

200 *Ḥujaj*, ᴍꜰ, 2:305. This incident is also recounted in M. Chodkiewicz, "Procès posthume," 103–104.

201 *Ḥujaj*, ᴍꜰ, 2:305–306. Ibn Taymiyya is referring here to Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 79.

202 *Ḥujaj*, ᴍꜰ, 2:352–353.

203 *Ḥaqīqa*, ᴍꜰ, 2:173–174.

204 *Manbijī*, ᴍꜰ, 2:470–471.

> Would that I but knew which was charged with fulfilling the command.
>
> If thou say, "The servant," surely, he is the Lord;
>
> And if thou say, "The Lord," how then can He be charged therewith?[205]

> Elsewhere I read "then surely, he is dead"[206] written in his [i.e., Ibn ʿArabī's] hand. This [statement] is based on his basic notion that there is no servant and no existing thing other than the being of the Lord. Who, then, is the one charged with fulfilling the commandments [i.e., of God]?[207]

In Ibn Taymiyya's view, however, the doctrine of the unity of being undermines not only the legal system of Islam but Islam more generally, for equating God with His creation entails the impossibility that one could worship anything other than God. In support of this impossibility, Ibn ʿArabī cites a Quranic verse that states: "Your Lord has decreed that none be worshipped but He."[208] He understands this verse to mean that even if one were to kneel down before stones, he would still be worshipping none but God insofar as there is nothing else in existence but He.[209] Ibn Taymiyya considers such an interpretation a distortion (*taḥrīf*) of the meaning of the verse and accuses Ibn ʿArabī in numerous places of resorting to a *bāṭinī*, or esoteric, hermeneutic of the Quran.[210] According to Ibn Taymiyya, the verse states not that God has decreed that none other than He *could* be worshipped but that none other than He *should* be worshipped.[211] In addition, Ibn Taymiyya cites passages from the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* that go on for pages in which Ibn ʿArabī offers commentary on the stories about the dispute between Moses and Pharaoh, the dispute between Moses, Aaron, and the Jews who had worshipped the golden calf, and the dispute between Noah and his people. According to Ibn ʿArabī's unconventional interpretation,

---

205   See Ibn ʿArabī (ed. Yaḥyā), *Futūḥāt*, 1:42.

206   This is also how it appears in *Futūḥāt* (ed. Yaḥyā), instead of "surely, he is the Lord."

207   *Ḥaqīqa, MF*, 2:242.

208   Q. 17:23.

209   Ibn ʿArabī refers to this verse numerous times. See, e.g., Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 192.

210   The term *bāṭiniyya* refers to all groups that operate on the premiss that the Quran contains hidden (*bāṭin*) meanings accessible only to initiates, a position attributed primarily to the Ismāʿīlī Shīʿa. See Paul Walker, "Bāṭiniyya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2009-1, ed. Gudrun Krämer et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2009). On several occasions, Ibn Taymiyya establishes an intellectual connection between Ibn ʿArabī and the Ismāʿīlī intellectual tradition, a connection that has been confirmed by academic studies. See Ebstein, *Mysticism and Philosophy*.

211   *Ḥaqīqa, MF*, 2:263.

the prophets in these instances act with little wisdom and/or their oppon-
ents utter words that bespeak a profound knowledge of God. Ibn Taymiyya
explains in numerous works how, according to Ibn ʿArabī, the prophet Noah[212]
in admonishing his people referred only to God's transcendence, not to His
immanence; had he united the two in his summons, his people would have
accepted the message.[213] In recounting the story of Noah, the Quran quotes
a group of those generally understood to be Noah's opponents as uttering
the words, "Abandon not your gods, and abandon not Wadd, nor Suwāʿ, nor
Yaghūth, Yaʿūq, or Nasr."[214] Ibn ʿArabī reverses the common interpretation of
this verse by appending the comment: "Had they abandoned them [i.e., the
idols], they would have become ignorant concerning God (al-Ḥaqq) to the
extent of their abandonment of them, for al-Ḥaqq has a share (wajh) in every
worshipped object, a share of which some are aware while others are not."[215]
Ibn Taymiyya makes the critique that such an interpretation could lead to an
undermining of Islam's claim to exclusivity and to classifying all worldviews as
equally true. In his treatment of Ibn ʿArabī's views concerning other religions,
William Chittick makes an observation that seems to confirm Ibn Taymiyya's
criticism. According to Chittick, "The idea that there are no errors and that all
beliefs are true rises up logically from waḥdat al-wujūd."[216] "True" here means,
however, that different worldviews each represent an aspect of God's self-
manifestation in the world, not necessarily that they all lead to otherworldly
salvation.[217] Ibn Taymiyya too is aware that Ibn ʿArabī did not consider all reli-
gions to be salvific. He nonetheless criticises the fact that for Ibn ʿArabī, the
unbelief (kufr) of the Christians, for instance, consists not in their recognition
of God's immanence in Jesus but rather in their limiting of it to him. Likewise,
the polytheists went astray only because they limited the objects of their wor-
ship to objects like stones and planets.[218]

---

212   His story is recounted with heavy reference to Q. 71 in the third chapter of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.
      A thorough treatment of this chapter can be found in Ian Almond, *Sufism and Deconstruc-
      tion: A Comparative Study of Derrida and Ibn ʿArabi* (London: Routledge, 2004), 55–60.
213   Almond makes the interesting remark that Ibn ʿArabī's "unflattering portrayal of Noah"
      can also be interpreted as a critique of the *kalām* theologians and some philosophers, for
      whom the transcendence of God likewise constitutes the focal point. See Almond, *Sufism
      and Deconstruction*, 57.
214   Q. 71:23.
215   Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 72. Ibn Taymiyya takes up this passage in, inter alia, *Ḥaqīqa*, MF, 2:251
      and *Manbijī*, MF, 2:467.
216   Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 140.
217   On this, see also Mohammad Hassan Khalil, *Islam and the Fate of Others: The Salvation
      Question* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 58–59.
218   *Manbijī*, MF, 2:467–468.

As elaborated above, the fact that being is a unity and that it pertains only to God is, Ibn Taymiyya explains, one of the two pillars of Ibn ʿArabī's monistic doctrine.[219] The second is the view, common among Shīʿī and Muʿtazilī theologians as well, that the non-existent (*maʿdūm*) is a subsisting entity (*shayʾ thābit*).[220] While these theologians, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, at least acknowledge that such an entity possesses its own being as soon as it becomes a real object,[221] Ibn ʿArabī held that its being is identical with that of God and that it is differentiated from God and from other such entities only by virtue of its essence, which subsists in non-existence (*dhātuhā al-thābita fī al-ʿadam*). Ibn ʿArabī's view, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, thus leads to two erroneous assumptions that do not follow from the position of the Shīʿī and Muʿtazilī theologians: first, that real objects are merely the eternal, immutable entities (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*) upon which the divine being has emanated and can therefore not be regarded as the product of an act of creation and, second, that all possible objects have subsisted in a real state from all eternity.[222] Ibn Taymiyya does not discuss the latter doctrine any further, though his line of reasoning seems to be that if one presumes that all contingent objects are subsistent and that God's existence has forever been emanating upon them, as Ibn ʿArabī claims with his concept of *fayḍ dāʾim*, then all contingent objects must be subsistent in a real state at every moment.

Ibn Taymiyya also critiques the concept of the *aʿyān thābita*, or immutable entities, with reference to the four-stage model of being. Thus, he argues that the subsistence (*thubūt*) of entities before their instantiation is not linked to them directly but merely entails that they are a part of the divine knowledge.[223]

It is difficult to judge to what extent Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the doctrine of the unity of being represented by Ibn ʿArabī is grounded and justified. Alexander Knysh has probably expressed it most aptly when he says that "a

---

219 *Ḥaqīqa*, MF, 2:160.

220 On this doctrine, see Josef van Ess, *Die Erkenntnislehre des ʿAḍudaddīn al-Īcī* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1966), 192–210, with brief reference to Ibn ʿArabī on p. 197.

221 In this way, the world's property of being a creation remains meaningful. While Ibn Taymiyya recognises a conceptual similarity between the doctrine that the non-existent is a subsisting thing and the view that the world and/or matter is eternal, he by no means considers them equivalent. See *Ḥaqīqa*, MF, 2:144–145.

222 *Ḥaqīqa*, MF, 2:143–144.

223 *Ḥaqīqa*, MF, 2:151–152 and 155. Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the concept of the fixed entities goes well beyond what has been stated thus far and delves into questions concerning God's self-sufficiency and omnipotence, as well as predestination (*qadar*). Since the current section is limited to questions that are relevant to ontology, these points have been omitted here.

final judgment on the validity of Ibn Taymiyya's anti-monistic discourse is in the eye of the beholder."[224] Knysh adds that the highly ambiguous nature of Ibn ʿArabī's writings certainly allows one to propose an interpretation that is largely at odds with that of Ibn Taymiyya.[225] Moreover, he adds, Ibn Taymiyya may well be accused of having insufficiently understood certain aspects of Ibn ʿArabī's thought or of having unduly simplified them—an example of the former being Ibn Taymiyya's erroneous conceptual assimilation of the immutable entities to the Platonic ideas. As Knysh sums up, however, "Ibn Taymiyya's insensitivity to subtleties does not necessarily imply his failure to grasp the cardinal implications of Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine for the Muslim community."[226] On the social level, Knysh argues, among other things, that Ibn ʿArabī's thought provided a foundation for the spread of antinomian ideas.[227] On the doctrinal level, it cannot be denied that Ibn ʿArabī's doctrine of creation leaves no room for the concept of a *creatio ex nihilo* and thus collides with the dominant view upheld in the various religions. Knysh's remarks at the end of his article, which I consider correct in the main, require further clarification. First, it should be noted that whatever Ibn Taymiyya's personal experiences may have been, history has proved that there is no correlation between advocacy for the doctrine of the unity of being and the view that Islamic commandments and prohibitions may be disregarded.[228] As for the concept of creation from nothing that Knysh considers incompatible with Ibn ʿArabī's position, it is not to be found in Ibn Taymiyya's thought either. On the contrary, Ibn Taymiyya advocates a doctrine of *creatio ex creatione* (creation from the created).[229] It is nevertheless true that the understanding of creation was a point of contention between Ibn ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. Ibn ʿArabī understood creation to mean that immutable entities, subsisting from all eternity in non-existence, received an outpouring of God's existence—and not, that is, that they were endowed with an existence proper to them. Ibn Taymiyya, on the other hand, held that the concept of creation could be jus-

---

224   Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabī*, 108.

225   Ibid.

226   Ibid., 109.

227   As Knysh does not limit himself in his article to Ibn Taymiyya's critique as it pertains to ontology, he cites, as a further example, that it may well be the case that the theory of sainthood (*wilāya*) advocated by Ibn ʿArabī, in addition to his proclaiming himself the seal of the saints (*khātam al-awliyāʾ*), favoured the emergence of subversive messianic groups.

228   See El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 270–271. This is in no way to deny that there are and were antinomian currents that appeal to Ibn ʿArabī in support of their position, as El-Rouayheb himself emphasises.

229   On Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of creation, see p. 285 ff. below.

tifiably applied to the world only if the objects within it were preceded by pure non-existence and were also endowed with an existence that is separate from God.

To Knysh's remarks should be added two more points that I believe are of central importance. First, Ibn Taymiyya's greatest discomfort with the doctrine of the unity of being stemmed from the abrogation of the God–world dualism that it entails. For Ibn Taymiyya, spiritual development requires a clear differentiation between the worshipped and the worshipper, albeit without falling into the exaggeration of the *mutakallimūn* by which, through the veil of transcendence, God's essence and attributes are divested of any substantive content to the point where He comes to resemble a non-existent object. This is so, according to Ibn Taymiyya,

> because worship of God involves striving, intention, will, and love. This cannot be directed to something non-existent, for the heart strives after an object that exists. If it finds nothing above the world, then it strives after something within it [...]. Therefore, you see that some of them [i.e., the *mutakallimūn*], as long as they are engaged in reasoning and study, tend towards negation [of the divine attributes]. When, however, they practise acts of worship and wish to engage in *taṣawwuf*, they tend towards pantheism (*ḥulūl*). If it is said to them that the one contradicts the other, they reply, "One is a result of my reason and reflection, while the other is a result of my direct experience (*dhawq*) and gnosis."[230]

Here, Ibn Taymiyya implicitly accuses the *mutakallimūn* of abetting pantheistic notions through their conception of an overly transcendent God.[231] He sees the solution in the position that he believes not only to have been held by the *salaf* and the leading scholars but also to agree with the Quran, the Sunna, the consensus of the community, reason, and the natural human disposition (*fiṭra*). According to this position, God has risen over His throne above the heavens and is completely separate in His being from His creation.[232] The second point is that Ibn Taymiyya takes strong offence at Ibn ʿArabī's esoteric hermeneutics of the Quran. I consider Ibn Taymiyya's critique here persuasive since, in my view, Ibn ʿArabī's interpretations of the Quran fall well outside the bounds set by the Arabic language and the context of the text. I therefore agree with the

---

230   *Ḥujaj*, MF, 2:298–299.
231   This supports the observation made by Almond, presented at p. 136, n. 213 above.
232   *Ḥujaj*, MF, 2:298.

assessments reached by other studies that describe the doctrine of the unity of being, at least in the form advocated by Ibn ʿArabī, as an imposition on the Quranic text. I thus find strange the claim made by Chittick that only an unreflective mind could be perturbed by Ibn ʿArabī's exegetical practice.[233]

---

233   See William Chittick, *Ibn ʿArabi: Heir to the Prophets* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2012), 120. Chittick has without a doubt contributed enormously to the understanding of Ibn ʿArabī's thought, and his works proved extremely helpful to me in the composition of this section. However, they are obviously informed by his sympathy for Ibn ʿArabī, which at times borders on the extravagant, as in the following passage: "Ibn ʿArabī's claim to be the Seal of the Muhammadan Friends has appeared pretentious and even outrageous to many people over the centuries. Hostile and critical scholars have dismissed it out of hand. The fact remains, however, that no author writing after him has come close to matching the profundity, freshness, and detail of his interpretation of the sources of the Islamic tradition. Whether or not one would like to call him the Seal of the Muhammadan Friends, it is difficult to deny him the title 'Greatest Master.'" Chittick, 16–17.

Linguistic Foundations

1   The *ḥaqīqa–majāz* Dichotomy

Among theologians, philologists, and legal theorists—across school boundaries—there has existed throughout the history of Islamic thought widespread agreement concerning the fundamental validity of the dichotomous categorisation of linguistic expressions into *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*. *Ḥaqīqa* refers to those expressions that are used in their proper sense, while *majāz* refers to those that are used in a figurative sense.[1] The presumption of this dichotomy, which can be found in a clearly formulated manner as early as Aristotle (d. 322 BCE),[2] has been rejected by only a handful of thinkers, among them Ibn Taymiyya.[3] The

---

1   Following Wolfhart Heinrichs, I have deliberately rejected the translation "metaphorical meaning," as the concept of *majāz* includes many other rhetorical devices besides metaphor. See Wolfhart Heinrichs, "On the Genesis of the *Ḥaqîqa-Mazâj* Dichotomy," *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984): 111, n. 1. Pierre Larcher, on the other hand, does not concur, maintaining that the expression *majāz* "refers not to every figurative expression, but more specifically to metaphorical expression." This objection, however, is valid, if at all, only for the period after the fifth/eleventh century, which saw an increase in the conceptual sharpness of the concept of *majāz* in the course of the progressive systematisation of Arabic rhetoric. In contrast, Bernard Weiss, in his analysis of al-Āmidī's (d. 631/1233) views on legal theory, considers the terms *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* untranslatable and therefore leaves them in Arabic. See Bernard Weiss, *The Search for God's Law: Islamic Jurisprudence in the Writings of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010), 131–132. Larcher further draws attention to a widespread conceptual inaccuracy in the academic literature when he states, correctly, that the terms *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* denote not the proper and figurative meaning of expressions, respectively, but rather the expressions themselves insofar as they are used in a proper or a figurative sense. See Pierre Larcher, "Arabic Linguistic Tradition II: Pragmatics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Arabic Linguistics*, ed. Jonathan Owens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 196 (which also contains the citation mentioned above).

2   A historical outline of metaphor in Western intellectual history up to the time of its complete reevaluation starting in the second half of the twentieth century can be found in Mark Johnson, "Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition," in *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, ed. Mark Johnson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981).

3   Al-Maṭʿanī (d. 1429/2008), in his extensive analysis on the subject, lists ten thinkers prior to Ibn Taymiyya who rejected *majāz*. Among the most prominent of these are the founder of the Ẓāhirī school, Dāwūd b. ʿAlī al-Ẓāhirī (d. 270/884), and the Shāfiʿī Ashʿarī scholar Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī (d. 418/1027). Interestingly, there was allegedly also a Muʿtazilī among them, Abū Muslim al-Aṣfahānī (d. 322/934) (this is untenable, however, as I explain presently). These thinkers disagreed whether *majāz* should be rejected in toto or only with respect to the Quran. What they all have in common is that their writings on the subject are lost and we can thus only learn about their attitudes secondhand. For the period after Ibn Taymiyya, al-Maṭʿanī

fact, on the one hand, that his critique of this dichotomy was preserved and, on the other hand, that it is particularly thorough and elaborate may have something to do with the fact that his views have with particular frequency formed a focal point in the thematically relevant and very manageable secondary literature on the topic. The most important contribution in this respect is Mohamed Yunis Ali's in-depth study, published in 2000, which made Ibn Taymiyya's linguistic views in general, and his dismissive attitude towards the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy in particular, accessible for the first time in a European language.[4] Ali was able to demonstrate that Ibn Taymiyya's rejection of *majāz* had nothing to do with a "dogmatic denial" or a "naive call directed at the adherents of *taʾwīl*,"[5] making his contribution, in the words of Robert Gleave, "a welcome corrective to the portrayal of Ibn Taymiyya as a 'literalist' who simply rejected *majāz*."[6]

---

knows of only three scholars who dissented from the majority opinion regarding the validity of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* distinction. These are Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), who was a student of Ibn Taymiyya, as well as Muḥammad al-Amīn al-Shinqīṭī (d. 1393/1974) and Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn (d. 1421/2001), all three of whom can be located unambiguously within the tradition of Ibn Taymiyya. See ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm Ibrāhīm al-Maṭʿanī, *al-Majāz fī al-lugha wa-l-Qurʾān al-karīm bayna al-ijāza wa-l-manʿ: ʿArḍ wa-taḥlīl wa-naqd*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Wahba, 1985), vol. 2. On Ibn al-ʿUthaymīn, who is not discussed in al-Maṭʿanī's work, see Gharaibeh, *Attributenlehre der Wahhābīya*, 139–144 and 321–322. With respect to the Muʿtazilī figure Abū Muslim al-Aṣfahānī and another of his fellow Muʿtazilīs, Muḥammad Madhbūḥī demonstrates convincingly that the view that these figures rejected *majāz* is untenable. See Muḥammad Madhbūḥī, "al-Majāz fī al-Qurʾān al-karīm bayna al-Muʿtazila wa-l-Ashāʿira fī al-qarnayn al-khāmis wa-l-sādis al-hijriyyayn" (PhD diss., University of Abou Bekr Belkaïd Tlemcen, 2005), 34–47.

4   Mohamed M. Yunis Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics: Sunni Legal Theorists' Models of Textual Communication* (London: Curzon, 2000); see esp. chap. 4, "Ibn Taymiyya's Contextual Theory of Interpretation." Further studies that address Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the theory of *majāz* are El-Tobgui, *Reason and Revelation*, 198–202; Paul-A. Hardy, "Epistemology and Divine Discourse," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 293–296; Muhammad Izharul-Haq, "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Literal and Non-Literal Meaning of the Qurʾan," *Pharos* (Research Journal of the Shaykh Zayed Islamic Centre, University of Peshawar) 3, no. 11 (1996) (to which I unfortunately did not have access); Robert Gleave, *Islam and Literalism: Literal Meaning and Interpretation in Islamic Legal Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 22 and 181–184; and Abdessamad Belhaj, "Ibn Taymiyya et la négation de la métaphore," in *Continuity and Change in the Realms of Islam: Studies in Honour of Professor Urbain Vermeulen*, ed. Kristof D'Hulster and Jo van Steenbergen (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 67–72. This last study can also be found, in slightly revised form, in Abdessamad Belhaj, *Questions théologiques dans la rhétorique arabe* (Piliscsaba, Hungary: Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2009), 90–96.

5   Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 88–89.

6   Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 22.

The analysis presented here, in addition to outlining Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* distinction, will also shed light on the question whether Ibn Taymiyya held contradictory positions on the matter. Ali did not consider this question, but it has been discussed thoroughly in the Arabic literature, where it has been the subject of intense controversy.

1.1   *Ibn Taymiyya's Critique of the* ḥaqīqa–majāz *Dichotomy*

Before presenting Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy, it is useful first to outline the majority position on the matter.[7] The basic premiss legitimising the distinction between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* is that every linguistic sign has been intentionally and consciously assigned an ostensible primary meaning that is specific to it. This act of "coining" the language is known as *waḍʿ*.[8] In a concrete speech act—referred to as *istiʿmāl*—a linguistic sign can

---

7   The classical Arabic and modern literature on this subject is immense, and relevant works can be easily looked up. I refer here only to the views of ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 471/1078), whom I have chosen, on the one hand, because he is considered the major theoretician and systematiser of Arabic rhetoric and, on the other, because his remarks relevant to the topic have been translated into German. See ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb Asrār al-balāgha*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, 1991), 350 ff.; German trans. Hellmut Ritter, *Die Geheimnisse der Wortkunst* (*Asrār al-balāġa*) *des ʿAbdalqāhir al-Curcānī* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1959), 377 ff.

8   For the purposes of the current presentation, it is irrelevant whether this coining is of divine (*tawqīfī*) or human (*iṣṭilāḥī*) origin. Bernard Weiss, after giving a broad outline of the Muslim positions in this regard, comments on the subject saying: "In the end, the controversy over the origin of the Lugha [language], whether Arabic or Adamic, was not deemed sufficiently momentous to require resolution. [...] What is really important is the view that all parties shared, which became a definite hallmark of orthodoxy: whoever the inventor or inventors of the Arabic Lugha may have been, the sound-meaning correlations that make up the Lugha are unquestionably the result of deliberate, consciously undertaken rational action." Weiss, *Search for God's Law*, 117–119 (citation at p. 119). For the Islamic debate among classical Muslim thinkers over the origin of language, see also Bernard Weiss, "Medieval Muslim Discussions of the Origin of Language," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 124, no. 1 (1974). An entirely different view is held by Mustafa Shah, who attempts in a two-part study to demonstrate, among other things, that the scholarship has "glossed over" the theological significance of the debate. Yet even after reading both parts, it is not clear to me how this is the case. See Mustafa Shah, "The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the *tawfīq–iṣṭilāḥ* Antithesis and the *majāz* Controversy—Part I," *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999) [the relevant claim is made on p. 28] and Mustafa Shah, "The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the *tawfīq–iṣṭilāḥ* Antithesis and the *majāz* Controversy—Part II," *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2000). Shah nevertheless deserves credit for correcting Weiss's inaccurate designation of Ibn Taymiyya as a proponent of the theory of *tawqīf*. In fact, Ibn Taymiyya sees language as a human product, albeit one that is predicated on the capacity for language granted by God as a disposition through *ilhām*. See Shah, "Philological Endeavours—Part II," 49–51.

be used either according to its primary meaning or according to a subordinate meaning that nevertheless bears a semantic relation (*munāsaba*) to the primary meaning.[9] In the former case, the linguistic sign functions as a *ḥaqīqa* expression; in the latter case, it functions as a *majāz* expression, the use of which must always be signalled to the interlocutor through additional signs or indicators (*qarāʾin*, sing. *qarīna*). This may be illustrated by the statement "I saw a lion with a sword in hand." The linguistic sign "lion" refers, by virtue of *waḍʿ*, to the well-known feline of prey. The information that this "lion" is wielding a sword is the *qarīna* that justifies interpreting the word "lion" as *majāz* and assigning it the sense of "brave person." The bravery that is attributed both to the predatory cat and to the intrepid person constitutes the semantic intersection between the proper and the figurative meanings of the word. The hierarchically higher-level, proper sense of the word "lion" established as the a priori meaning through *waḍʿ* must give way here to a secondary meaning established purely on the basis of *istiʿmāl*.[10] This process of interpretating an expression figuratively is referred to in Islamic thought by the term *taʾwīl*,[11] often defined as "the diverting of an expression away from its preponderant meaning towards a non-preponderant meaning on the basis of an indicant associated with it [i.e., the expression]" (*ṣarf al-lafẓ ʿan al-maʿnā al-rājiḥ ilā al-maʿnā al-marjūḥ li-dalīl yaqtarinu bihi*).[12]

Ibn Taymiyya mentions the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy in many of his works. As far as I know, however, a thorough critique of the dichotomy is to be found in only two works, namely, *Qāʿida fī al-ḥaqīqa wa-l-majāz* [hereafter *Ḥ/M*] and a lengthy passage in *Īmān*. In his critique of *majāz*, Ibn Taymiyya not only refers to substantive aspects of the theory but also takes up the history of its genesis. He writes:

> This distinction is a convention that emerged after the first three generations (*qurūn*) [of Islam]. It was spoken of neither by the Companions of the Prophet, nor by their righteous followers from the second generation,

---

9   If the semantic relation is not given, then it is a homonym, such as the word "bank," which can denote the financial institution as well as the raised ground bordering a lake.

10 A priori in the sense that the words already possess a certain recognisable meaning before their use in a concrete speech act.

11 In order to distinguish this usage of the term from others discussed later in this study, I have replaced it in what follows by the term *taʾwīl majāzī*, which is the customary term used in the Arabic literature as well.

12 The wording of this definition corresponds to that given by Ibn Taymiyya in his treatise *Iklīl*; see MF, 13:288. It is found in slight variations in a number of different works by other authors. See, e.g., Ibn Qudāma, *Rawḍat al-nāẓir*, 217.

nor by any of the leading scholars (*a'imma*) reputed for their knowledge, such as Mālik, al-Thawrī, al-Awzā'ī, Abū Ḥanīfa, and al-Shāfi'ī. Indeed, it was not even mentioned by the leading philologists and grammarians, such as al-Khalīl [b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī] (d. 175/791 or 170/786 or 160/776), Sībawayh (d. ca. 180/796), Abū 'Amr b. al-'Alā' (d. 154/771), and their likes.[13]

Ibn Taymiyya locates the beginnings of the conscientious distinction between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* as a theoretical pair of opposites in the Mu'tazilī intellectual milieu of the third/ninth century, though he does not rule out the possibility that earlier tendencies in this direction may be traceable back to the end of the second/eighth century. The distinction did not become widespread, however, until the fourth/tenth century.[14] To be sure, Ibn Taymiyya recognises that the conceptual validity of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy is not contingent on the age of the technical terms associated with it. He also concedes that the differentiation between, for instance, *ism*, *fi'l*, and *ḥarf* (noun, verb, and particle) also rests on a later convention, which in no way detracts from its validity.[15] What, then, is Ibn Taymiyya's goal here? We learn of one of his motives from him directly. In Ibn Taymiyya's time, the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy had long since gained acceptance across schools and was treated as such a self-evident fact as to give the impression of being a transtemporally valid categorisation of concepts known since time immemorial and derived from the Arabic language as a characteristic inherent to it (*ukhidha min al-kalām al-'arabī tawqīfiyyan*).[16] Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of the genesis of the terms *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*, summarised above, aims to refute this assumption. Beyond this, one may suspect another purpose, though Ibn Taymiyya does not state it explicitly: namely, that the reference to the Mu'tazila as the originators of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* distinction is meant to increase mistrust of it not only among Ḥanbalī but also among Ash'arī audiences. This is not to say that the historical accuracy of his analysis of the emergence and development of the terms was subordinate to a tactical calculation: the correctness of Ibn Taymiyya's view has been confirmed numerous times, particularly in Western scholarship.[17] On the other hand, 'Abd

---

13   *Īmān*, MF, 7:88; ed. Aḥmad, 2:140–141; Eng. trans., 99.

14   *Īmān*, MF, 7:88–89; ed. Aḥmad, 2:142–145; Eng. trans., 99–101.

15   *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:452.

16   *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:402–403. Thus, the Ash'arī figure al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233)—and Ibn Taymiyya cites him on this point—argues that the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* distinction has been transmitted over centuries in statements and books going all the way back to the originators of the language (*ahl al-waḍ'*). See al-Āmidī, *Iḥkām*, 1:68; see, as cited in Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:406 and again at 20:451.

17   See, e.g., Heinrichs, "On the Genesis," 115 ff. and van Ess, *Der Eine und das Andere*, 1:474–475.

al-ʿAẓīm al-Maṭʿanī argues with some plausibility that the basic idea behind the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy is older than Ibn Taymiyya claims. As an example, he mentions the distinction made by Sībawayh (d. ca. 180/796) between well-formed fair speech (*kalām mustaqīm ḥasan*) and well-formed false speech (*kalām mustaqīm kadhib*). The latter has similarities with *majāz* and is exemplified by, for instance, the statement that a person has "drunk an ocean." This expression is false insofar as it is impossible to drink an entire ocean. On the other hand, it is admissible in that the language allows for such a manner of expression in order to convey that a person has consumed a large quantity of water.[18] Sībawayh, in categorising the expression as false, clearly considers the meaning of the word "ocean" in the sense of "sea" to be of higher rank. Whether this means that he actually anticipated the core idea of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* distinction that emerged later depends on whether he understands this higher priority as an a priori characteristic immanent in the language or he acknowledges it merely because the word "ocean" happens to be used most often in the sense of "sea." The accuracy of al-Maṭʿanī's view is contingent on the answer to this question. Sībawayh, to be sure, does not provide this answer, as the question was probably unknown to him in his time.

Ibn Taymiyya's main argument against the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* distinction is that the meaning of linguistic signs is only ever constituted in concrete speech acts, that is, in *istiʿmāl*. The concept of *waḍʿ*, which postulates an a priori connection between the linguistic sign and its meaning, is one that he rejects categorically. In his treatment of the issue, he moves the conception of language underlying the *waḍʿ–istiʿmāl* distinction in a direction similar to the realist conception of the ontological distinction between universals and particulars.[19] Just as, in Ibn Taymiyya's conceptualist view, particulars alone are real and are not preceded by universals as that which is allegedly true and actual, so too do linguistic signs exist solely in *istiʿmāl*, that is, in the concrete speech act.[20] They

---

A worthwhile historical overview can be found in Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, who, like Wolfhart Heinrichs (see "On the Genesis," 132–136), identifies the Muʿtazilī al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869) as the figure in whom the dichotomous use of the terms *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* can first be discerned. See Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, *al-Ittijāh al-ʿaqlī fī al-tafsīr: Dirāsa fī qaḍiyyat al-majāz fī al-Qurʾān ʿinda al-Muʿtazila*, 3rd ed. (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 1996), 91–137, esp. 93 and 111–117. This topic is also treated at length in a later article by Heinrichs. See Wolfhart Heinrichs, "Contacts between Scriptural Hermeneutics and Literary Theory in Islam: The Case of *Majâz*," in *Tafsīr: Interpreting the Qurʾān*, ed. Mustafa Shah, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 2013), first published in *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 7 (1991–1992).

18   See al-Maṭʿanī, *al-Majāz fī al-lugha*, 1:6 ff.

19   *Īmān*, MF, 7:106–107; ed. Aḥmad, 2:172–174; Eng. trans., 117–118.

20   *Īmān*, MF, 7:100–102; ed. Aḥmad, 2:162–166; Eng. trans., 112–113. See also *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:410–415.

are thus not preceded by any would-be true, actual meaning on the basis of which they could then be classified as *ḥaqīqa* or *majāz* in accord with their use. The word "lion" in the statement "I saw a lion with a sword in hand"—to stick with the previously cited example—has no existence that precedes the particular speech act. It exists only in the speech act itself, and specifically in the sense of "brave person" that results from the linguistic sign "lion" taken together with the contextual evidence (*qarāʾin*[21]) that necessarily accompanies every speech act.[22] Ibn Taymiyya categorises and labels this evidence in different ways, though substantively speaking, it always boils down to a division into verbal (*lafẓiyya*), situational (*ḥāliyya*), and rational (*ʿaqliyya*) evidentiary factors.[23] Moreover, the absence of certain kinds of evidence can itself count as evidence.[24] The word "lion," in addition to the meaning assigned to it above (namely, "brave person"), may also refer to the well-known beast of prey if used in such a manner as to denote this meaning. In both cases, the linguistic sign "lion" counts as a *ḥaqīqa* expression, for the meaning in question is the *established meaning* of the expression[25] that it possesses in each respective instance of use.[26] The word *majāz*, on the other hand, is eliminated as a term of contrast, with Ibn Taymiyya using it not as the opposite of *ḥaqīqa* but in its pre-technical sense of "*mimmā yajūzu fī al-lugha*" (belonging to that which is permitted in the language), which he traces to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.[27]

With his context-based theory of meaning, Ibn Taymiyya does away with the very basis of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy. In addition, he seeks to demonstrate the purely arbitrary nature of any attempt to classify one meaning among the

---

21   Ibn Taymiyya also frequently uses the term *dalālāt* interchangeably with *qarāʾin*.

22   See *Īmān*, MF, 7:114; ed. Aḥmad, 2:184–185; Eng. trans., 125–126. See also Ḥ/M, MF, 20:431–432.

23   See, e.g., Ḥ/M, MF, 20:413–414 and 495.

24   One example Ibn Taymiyya uses to illustrate this point is that of the Arabic letters, whose ambiguity can be eliminated through the placement of diacritical dots. Thus, in the case of the letter *jīm*, it is the dot below, in the case of the letter *khāʾ*, the dot above, and in the case of the letter *ḥāʾ*, the absence of a dot that serves to indicate which of the three is meant. In the same way, a speaker's *not* saying something can also act as an indicator of the meaning he wishes to assign to the expressions that compose his speech. See Ḥ/M, MF, 20:413–414.

25   The concept of proper or literal meaning has no place in Ibn Taymiyya's context-based theory of language, in which meaning is always constituted through the interplay of linguistic sign and the contextual evidence accompanying the given speech act. For this reason, I propose the term "established meaning" instead. See also Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 22–23.

26   On this, see Ḥ/M, MF, 20:437–438.

27   See *Īmān*, MF, 7:89; ed. Aḥmad, 2:145; Eng. trans., 101.

possible meanings a linguistic sign can have in a concrete speech act as the hier-archically superior one. The aim of such a hierarchical ranking is to identify the highest-order meaning as the *waḍʿ* meaning from which all lower-order *istiʿmāl* meanings are to be differentiated. One would thus be able to classify an expres-sion as *ḥaqīqa* when it is used in accordance with the highest-order meaning and as *majāz* in all other cases. In what follows, I present Ibn Taymiyya's objec-tions to three criteria that, as characteristic features of a *ḥaqīqa* expression, would allow for it to be distinguished from *majāz* expressions.

According to the first of these criteria, an expression is *ḥaqīqa* when it is used in accord with the meaning the Arabs assigned it upon its first instance of use (*al-istiʿmāl al-awwal*). Against this, Ibn Taymiyya argues that the Arabic lan-guage is far too old for any such meaning to be determined. A word like "lion"— in the long history of the Arabic language spanning thousands of years—may have always referred to the well-known predator, but it may also have acquired this meaning only at a later point in time. But even a weakening of the stated criterion from the primordial *istiʿmāl* to the oldest known *istiʿmāl* cannot, in Ibn Taymiyya's conception of language, serve as a basis for distinguishing between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*. He cites as an example of this the Quranic expression related on the tongue of the prophet Zachariah *"wa-shtaʿala l-raʾsu shaybᵃⁿ"* (Q. 19:3), which is best translated so as to preserve the figurative nature of the expres-sion as "my head hair sparkles in [glistening] white," a reference to Zachariah's advanced age. Not only does Ibn Taymiyya acknowledge that the use of the verb *ishtaʿala* in connection with the word *nār* (fire)—in the sense of "the fire sparkled in a glistening manner"—is temporally prior to its use in connection with the word *raʾs* (here: head hair), but he also affirms that the latter usage involves a figurative comparison (*tashbīh*) as well as a borrowing (*istiʿāra*). But since linguistic signs in Ibn Taymiyya's context-based theory of meaning do not exist on their own but only in conjunction with the contextual indicators constitutive of meaning that surround them in concrete use, the expressions *ishtaʿala al-raʾs* and *ishtaʿala al-nār* represent two entirely distinct instanti-ations of the word *ishtaʿala*.[28] This is because, according to Ibn Taymiyya,

> even if a comparison (*tashbīh*) of one meaning with the other meaning was intended, this does not undermine (*fa-lā yaḍurru*) [my theory], for this is in the nature of general terms. There necessarily exists between the two meanings [of the word *ishtaʿala*] an intersection (*qadr mushtarak*) where they coincide in their specific usages (*afrād*).[29]

---

28   *Ḥ/M*, *MF*, 20:464–465.

29   Ibid. This will be elaborated in the analysis of Ibn Taymiyya's counterproposal to the the-ory of *majāz*; see section 2 below.

The above remarks also form the foundation for refuting the second proposed criterion for distinguishing between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*, namely, that an expression is *ḥaqīqa* when it cannot be negated (*mā lā yaṣiḥḥu nafyuhu*).[30] Returning to our example of the word "lion," we discern that the well-known large felines can never truthfully be denied the qualification of being lions. In the case of a brave person, however, this qualification may be either affirmed or denied and in both cases the statement would be true, even where the person's courage is beyond question.[31] Thus, the word "lion" is *ḥaqīqa* with respect to the predatory cat and *majāz* with respect to the brave person. The pronouns *mā* and *hu* in the phrase "*mā lā yaṣiḥḥu nafyuhu*" that defines this criterion refer to the abstract linguistic sign, in this case the word "lion." But since, as stated in the objection to the first criterion, linguistic signs for Ibn Taymiyya do not exist in and of themselves, these two pronouns, too, can only refer to words that occur in concrete speech acts in the respective meanings assigned to them there. Hence, the pronoun *mā* would refer to the word "lion" in the sense of "brave person" with respect to a person who is actually brave; the pronoun *hu* refers back to the pronoun *mā*, but this pronoun may not be negated in the sense just mentioned. The word "lion" thus meets the second criterion mentioned above even when used in the sense of "brave person" and would therefore have to be classified as *ḥaqīqa*. Ibn Taymiyya elucidates what we have said here regarding the word "lion" with the example of the expression *ishtaʿala al-raʾs*, where he says:

> It is thus also not permitted to negate the expression *ishtaʿala al-raʾs shaybᵃⁿ*. Rather, one must say that the white[-glistening] sparkle (*ishtiʿāl*) of the head hair does not resemble the [glistening] sparkle of firewood although they are similar in some respects.[32]

---

30 See *Īmān*, *MF*, 7:100; ed. Aḥmad, 2:162–163; Eng. trans., 111; and *Ḥ/M*, *MF*, 20:440 and 455.

31 The painting *La trahison des images* (The betrayal of images, 1929) by the French artist René Magritte, which shows a pipe with the words "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" (This is not a pipe) written beneath it, can be interpreted in the same way.

32 *Ḥ/M*, *MF*, 20:465. In another passage dealing with the same theme, it becomes clear on which previous thinkers Ibn Taymiyya may be relying. There, he cites a lengthy passage from the *Kitāb al-Funūn* of his fellow Ḥanbalī Ibn ʿAqīl, who objects to this criterion for *majāz* with arguments similar to those we find in Ibn Taymiyya. See *Ḥ/M*, *MF*, 20:490–491. In this passage, Ibn Taymiyya also informs us that Ibn ʿAqīl takes contradictory positions on the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* distinction. Although the majority of *Kitāb al-Funūn* has unfortunately been lost, the surviving portion has been edited and published by George Makdisi. However, I was unable to locate in it the passage cited by Ibn Taymiyya. Also note Robert Gleave's characterisation of Ibn Taymiyya's context-based theory of language as an "outgrowth of the 'contextually informed' Ḥanbalī position developed by Ibn Qudāma." Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 182.

Ibn Taymiyya, however, rejects the above criterion not only on substantive grounds but also because, in his view, it opens the door to an ontological nullification of the attributes of God. Thus, it may be claimed that God, for instance, is neither merciful (*raḥīm*) nor compassionate (*raḥmān*) in the true sense of these words but only figuratively speaking.[33] But then this gives the impression that God's qualities are instantiated to a lesser degree of intensity than in entities that can be qualified as merciful and compassionate in the *ḥaqīqa* sense.[34]

According to the third criterion, an expression is *ḥaqīqa* when it is used in the sense that first occurs to the mind of someone who hears it in the absence of any contextual evidence indicating the meaning (*mā yasbiqu ilā al-dhihn ʿinda al-iṭlāq*). For example, if a person hears the word "lion," the image that first occurs to his mind is that of the well-known predator.[35] Ibn Taymiyya rejects this criterion if only because for him, there can be no linguistic signs that are used completely devoid of contextual evidence that indicates their meaning. It is this evidence that determines which meaning will first occur to the mind of the interlocutor. Each word, for instance, must necessarily be used in a nominal or a verbal sentence and must also be attributed to a speaker who has a particular habitual way of speaking.[36] Which mental image an expression engenders also depends, among other things, on the interlocutor himself, and this can be very different in the case of an Arab, for instance, as compared to a Nabatean.[37] Moreover, the place in which a statement is made as well as the broader thematic context also counts as part of the contextual evidence that engenders meaning. By way of example, Ibn Taymiyya enumerates three usages of the word *dīnār* and explains that what meaning should be imputed to it in a respective context may depend on the location and the nature of the sales contract.[38] Another important factor to consider is how a particular expres-

---

33   He attributes this opinion elsewhere to the Jahmiyya and the Bāṭiniyya. See *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:441. The passage referenced here is translated in the current work; see p. 156 below.

34   *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:455.

35   *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:402–403. This criterion in connection with the example given is also mentioned by al-Āmidī. See al-Āmidī, *Iḥkām*, 1:68; Ibn Taymiyya cites this passage in *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:406.

36   *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:412. In addition, as elaborated above, the absence of an indicant can itself act as an indicant.

37   *Īmān*, MF, 7:105–106; ed. Aḥmad, 2:171; Eng. trans., 116–117, which includes an informative note from the translator explaining that the Nabateans whom Ibn Taymiyya has in mind here were a "mixed people" who spoke an Arabic dialect whose grammar deviated from that of the literary standard.

38   *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:436–437.

sion is most frequently employed and what the most obvious reference of it is for the interlocutor. Ibn Taymiyya gives the example of the word *ẓahr* (back), which according to all scholars is *ḥaqīqa* regardless of the kind of living being to which it refers. Nevertheless, the image evoked by this word in the mind of the interlocutor is that of a human back, not the back of a fox, a louse, or any other creature. The reason for this is not that the word "back" refers first and foremost to that of a human being, but rather because it is used in this way most often and because a human being can visualise this meaning most easily with reference to his own back.[39] Analogously in the case of the word "lion," which Ibn Taymiyya does not mention as an example, the fact that it evokes the image of the corresponding predator is not because this is, theoretically speaking, the privileged linguistic meaning; rather, it is simply the meaning in which the word is most frequently used. Ibn Taymiyya's objection becomes clearer if we consider it with respect to the word "virus" or *Rabenmutter* ("raven mother").[40] The word "virus" is commonly used in reference both to pathogens and to malware, and unless one finds himself among either medical or computer professionals, respectively, it is difficult to predict with which of the two meanings the term will first be associated in a concrete instance of use. In the case of the word *Rabenmutter*, we may take it for granted that the image spontaneously produced in the mind of the interlocutor is not that of the biological mother of a raven. Thus, the above criterion can determine only the way in which a particular expression is most frequently used in a particular place and time but not what the meaning is that is supposedly proper to the *ḥaqīqa* expression. Ibn Taymiyya maintains that in order to uphold this criterion, people considered it necessary to distinguish between a linguistic, a religious, and an everyday *ḥaqīqa* (*ḥaqīqa lughawiyya*, *sharʿiyya*, and *ʿurfiyya*, respectively).[41] The term *Rabenmutter*, then, would be classified as *ḥaqīqa ʿurfiyya* insofar as it is used in reference to a woman who neglects her children.

Since Ibn Taymiyya operates on the assumption that the terms *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* cannot be justified from within the structure of the language, any criterion one may claim for distinguishing between them is, he maintains, purely arbitrary. Furthermore, for each of the proposed criteria, it is possible to show that expressions deemed by the proponents of the dichotomy to be *ḥaqīqa* should actually be classified as *majāz* and vice versa.[42] Consequently, Ibn

---

39 Ibid.

40 A German word used metonymically in reference to an unloving or neglectful mother.

41 *Īmān*, MF, 7:96–97; ed. Aḥmad, 2:157–159; Eng. trans., 107–109.

42 Ibn Taymiyya makes a similar point in several places. See, e.g., Ḥ/M, MF, 20:407–408, 450–451, and 460–461.

Taymiyya maintains, this dichotomy must be distinguished from the above-mentioned distinction between noun, verb, and particle, which is, in fact, a valid and well-founded convention (*iṣṭilāḥ mustaqīm al-maʿnā*).[43]

But Ibn Taymiyya did not stop at merely criticising the conception of language that undergirds the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy; he also formulated an alternative to it. We examine this alternative in the following section, which will complete our presentation of his position on this dichotomy. For this reason, we postpone our assessment of Ibn Taymiyya's position until the end of following section.

1.2   *Did Ibn Taymiyya Hold Different Positions on the* ḥaqīqa–majāz *Dichotomy?*

In addition to the writings in which Ibn Taymiyya firmly expresses his rejection of the distinction between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*, there are also many passages in his works where he uses these terms in a sense that is fully in line with the majority position without recognisably distancing himself therefrom. While this fact has been entirely ignored in Western scholarship, it has been thoroughly discussed and debated in the Arabic scholarship. Al-Maṭʿanī states at first that Ibn Taymiyya probably rejected the distinction between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* initially, but then accepted it. He nonetheless argues this with some reservation, as he admits his inability sufficiently to determine the chronology of the relevant works.[44] In the end, however, he seems to have adopted the view that Ibn Taymiyya maintained the two positions simultaneously. On this reading, Ibn Taymiyya's rejection of the dichotomy was polemical and theoretical (*jadalī naẓarī*) and merely served to put a stop to the rampant use of *taʾwīl majāzī*, while the acceptance of the dichotomy represents his true position that he applied in practice (*madhhab ʿamalī sulūkī*).[45] Al-Maṭʿanī makes a similar argument in an earlier work, where he maintains that Ibn Taymiyya, though rejecting *majāz* outwardly, actually considered its adoption (at least in practice) to be the correct position.[46] Hādī al-Shujayrī, in his study on the topic, also faces the problem of not being able to determine the chronology of Ibn Taymiyya's works. In contrast to al-Maṭʿanī, however, he favours the view that rejection of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy was Ibn Taymiyya's later and final position. He justifies this, on the one hand, by the higher degree of reflec-

---

43   *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:452.

44   ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm Ibrāhīm al-Maṭʿanī, *al-Majāz ʿinda al-imām Ibn Taymiyya wa-talāmīdhihi bayna al-inkār wa-l-iqrār* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Wahba, 1995), 17.

45   Ibid., 22.

46   See al-Maṭʿanī, *al-Majāz fī al-lugha*, 2:881–884.

tion that distinguishes passages critical of the dichotomy from those that are neutral towards or even approving of it, this higher degree of reflection being taken as indicative of a later phase of Ibn Taymiyya's thought. Furthermore, he argues that Ibn Taymiyya's student, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), famously took up and defended his teacher's critique, which he arguably would not have done had Ibn Taymiyya himself rejected it at the end of his life.[47] The latter argument has also been advanced by Ibrāhīm al-Turkī, who, on the basis of various writings of Ibn Taymiyya, seeks to make the case for a gradual change in Ibn Taymiyya's thinking from acceptance to a complete rejection of the dichotomy.[48] Yet he is faced with the problem of having to explain the statements made in *Jawāb* (written in 716/1316 or shortly thereafter[49]) and *Minhāj* (written after 713/1313 and possibly before 717/1317[50]) in which Ibn Taymiyya seems to refer to his treatise *Īmān* (which is thus obviously a rather early work). Next to *Ḥ/M*, it is, in fact, in *Īmān* that Ibn Taymiyya criticises the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy most explicitly. Al-Turkī tries to identify the remarks in *Jawāb* and *Minhāj* as references to another work, *al-Īmān al-awsaṭ*. The way in which he attempts to substantiate his position is clever, but unconvincing in my view for two reasons. First, the title *al-Īmān al-awsaṭ* seems to have been given to this work only sometime after Ibn Taymiyya's death, as I have been unable to find it in any of Ibn Taymiyya's writings or in the catalogues of his works compiled by his students. These catalogues list the work under the title *Sharḥ ḥadīth Jibrīl fī al-īmān wa-l-islām*; the work *Īmān*, however, is actually known alternatively not by this title but as *Kitāb al-Īmān*. Furthermore, the work in question was dated by the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn Rajab, who was a student of Ibn al-Qayyim and may thus be taken as a reliable source, to the period when Ibn Taymiyya was in Egypt, that is, to the time between 705/1306 and 712/1313.[51] In my view, there is no reason to reject this dating, which al-Turkī, incidentally, does not mention. Second, even if it should turn out that this work is, in fact, to be dated to the late phase of Ibn Taymiyya's life, there are other works clearly datable to the same early period that contain statements indicating a rejection, but also those indicating an acceptance, of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy. For instance, Ibn Taymiyya expounds his context-based theory of

---

47 See Hādī Aḥmad Farḥān al-Shujayrī, *al-Dirāsāt al-lughawiyya wa-l-naḥwiyya fī mu'allafāt Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya wa-atharuhu fī istinbāṭ al-aḥkām al-sharʿiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 2001), 198.

48 See al-Turkī, *Inkār al-majāz*, 57–63.

49 See p. 17, n. 80 above.

50 Cf. the discussion in Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 10–11, with nn. 23 and 24.

51 See p. 16, n. 75 above.

meaning in several passages in the early work *Ḥamawiyya*,[52] and though he does not explicitly oppose the theory of *majāz* in this work, he nonetheless deprives it of the foundation upon which it is built. Similar remarks can be found in *I'tirāḍāt*, likewise an early work, with even the same examples that Ibn Taymiyya later cites in *Ḥ/M*, a work composed during the last ten years of his life and in which he makes his rejection of the concept of *majāz* explicit.[53] His critical stance towards *majāz* comes through even more clearly in *Bayān*, which he wrote in the year 707/1307 and thus at a still rather early stage.[54] On the other hand, there are numerous places in his works where he uses the terms *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* without repudiating the conception that stands behind them. One year before his death, he composed a treatise in which he cites twelve reasons why there are so many disagreements in religious matters despite the existence of acceptably transmitted (*ṣaḥīḥ*) hadith reports and the common will of scholars to follow the way of the Prophet. In the sixth and eighth reasons, he adduces—with respect to different issues—the distinction between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*, which he thus clearly acknowledges.[55]

I subscribe to al-Maṭʿanī's view that Ibn Taymiyya holds contradictory positions vis-à-vis the theory of *majāz* in his writings. In contrast to al-Maṭʿanī, however, I am convinced that Ibn Taymiyya's true stance was the rejection of *majāz*. This view is supported by the fact that Ibn Taymiyya sets forth and expounds his context-related theory of meaning discussed above and his linguistic countermodel to the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy—which is the focus of the following section—in numerous works and integrates these into his overall conception of theology. One would be hard pressed, as far as I can tell, to find something similar in Ibn Taymiyya with respect to the theory of *majāz*. But why he outwardly holds two contradictory positions can, in my view, be better understood if we take into account the question of what consequences the acceptance or rejection of this theory entails for theology. I attempt to provide an answer to this question in section 3 below.

---

52   See, e.g., *Ḥamawiyya*, MF, 5:103 ff.; ed. al-Tuwayjirī, 521 ff.

53   Compare, for instance, *I'tirāḍāt*, 129–131 with the passages in *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:424 and 427–428.

54   *Bayān*, 8:477–478.

55   *Rafʿ*, MF, 20:244–246. For an English translation, see Abdul Hakim Al-Matroudi, "The Removal of Blame from the Great *Imāms*: An Annotated Translation of Ibn Taymiyyah's *Rafʿ al-Malām ʿan al-Aʾimmat al-Aʿlām*," *Islamic Studies* 46, no. 3 (2007); for the reference here, see pp. 340 and 342.

2 On the Semantic Relationship of Homonymous Expressions: Ibn Taymiyya's Linguistic Counterproposal to the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* Dichotomy

Ibn Taymiyya discusses in numerous places how homonymous linguistic signs can be categorised—a question he pursues not out of a purely linguistic interest but out of a theological one. His treatments of the topic are thus primarily found in the context of debates on ontology, the knowability of God, or—more rarely—in the context of his critique of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy. His presentations, moreover, are very concise, which evidently stems from the fact that he is dealing, on the level of both terminology and substance, with something that by his time was a staple of the introductory chapters of many works of logic and *uṣūl al-fiqh* and that, in its essence, goes back at least as far as Aristotle. According to theory, objects can be named either by distinct linguistic signs or by homonymous ones. Distinct signs are either semantically equivalent (*mutarādif*), such as *asad* and *layth*, both of which mean "lion," or semantically distinct (*mutabāyin*), such as *samāʾ* (sky) and *arḍ* (earth).[56] We focus here not on linguistic signs that are distinct in terms of their semantic relationship to one another but on homonymous signs that are applied to different objects. Thus, for example, both God and man, as well as animals and plants, are described as "existent" and as "living." A fruitful starting point for the presentation of Ibn Taymiyya's views—one that will also include a discussion of the extant scholarship[57]—is the following rather lengthy quotation[58] in which Ibn Taymiyya discusses the term "existence" and its application to the Creator and to that which is created:

---

56 Both the terminology and the examples are taken from Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā min ʿilm al-uṣūl*, ed. Ḥamza Ḥāfiẓ, 4 vols. (Medina: al-Jāmiʿa al-Islāmiyya, 1443/[1992-3]), 1:95–96.

57 To the best of my knowledge, Ibn Taymiyya's views on this point have not yet been thoroughly investigated. The most detailed account can be found in Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 116–117 and 124. Very brief, and problematic from a substantive point of view, is Jackson, "Trial," 53–56, which will be discussed in the following. See also the commentary in the footnotes to Wael Hallaq's translation of al-Suyūṭī's abridged version of Ibn Taymiyya's *Radd*, entitled *Jahd al-qarīḥa fī tajrīd al-Naṣīḥa*; see Hallaq, *Against the Greek Logicians*, 74, n. 1; 75, n. 2; 76, n. 1; and 77, n. 2.

58 A passage from Ibn Taymiyya's *al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn* would have also made for a suitable citation. However, since this passage has already been translated into English, I have chosen another, similarly relevant passage for the added benefit of the non-Arabic-speaking reader. The English translation can be found in Hallaq, *Against the Greek Logicians*, 74–77.

Some people say, "No name used to designate that which is created may be applied to the Creator unless it be used in its non-proper (*majāz*) sense." This goes even for the word "something" (*shayʾ*). This is the view of Jahm and those among the Bāṭiniyya who agree with him; they do not refer to Him as existent (*mawjūd*) nor as being a thing (*shayʾ*), nor do they apply any other names to Him.

And some people proceed in the opposite manner. They say, "Rather, everything by which God is designated is an expression used in the proper (*ḥaqīqa*) sense, whereas in the case of all other [referents], it is used in the non-proper sense." This is the view of Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Nāshī (d. 293/906) from the Muʿtazila.

The majority (of scholars) say, "It [the word 'existence'] is used in its proper (*ḥaqīqa*) sense with respect to both [Creator and created]." Of these, the vast majority maintain that it is either univocal (*mutawāṭiʾ*) by virtue of a general univocity (*tawāṭuʾ ʿāmm*) or else analogous (*mushakkik*), the *mushakkik* expression being understood as a category of its own. This [type of univocity] is to be distinguished from pure univocity (*tawāṭuʾ khāṣṣ*), in which the meanings [of *mutawāṭiʾ* terms] are the same (*tatamāthal*) with respect to the common semantic locus from which the terms were derived (*mawārid al-alfāẓ*).

Only a small group (*shirmidha*) among later scholars (*al-mutaʾakhkhirūn*) considered it [i.e., the term "existence"] to be equivocal (*mushtarak*).[59]

Ibn Taymiyya uses several terms here, which we will now define with reference to other works of his as well. Ibn Taymiyya defines *mushtarak* in the conventional sense as pertaining to that which has a single verbal form but carries different meanings (*mā ittafaqa lafẓuhu wa-ikhtalafa maʿnāhu*).[60] Elsewhere, he cites as an example of a *mushtarak* expression the word *mushtarī*, which can refer both to a buyer and to the planet Jupiter.[61] The term *mutawāṭiʾ* refers to homonymous expressions that are also identical in meaning (*mā ittafaqa lafẓuhu wa-maʿnāhu*).[62] Ibn Taymiyya equates *mutawāṭiʾ* in its general form, which he refers to as *mutawāṭiʾ ʿāmm*, with what the grammarians call *ism jins* (generic term) and the logicians refer to as a *kullī* (universal). For Ibn Taymiyya, an expression is *mutawāṭiʾ* if, in its various usages, it captures conceptually

---

59   *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:441–442.
60   *Iʿtirāḍāt*, 10.
61   *Irbiliyya*, MF, 5:210.
62   *Iʿtirāḍāt*, 10.

a commonality (*qadr mushtarak*) shared by all denotata. A distinction must then be made as to whether this commonality is instantiated in the same way or differently in the denoted objects. If it is instantiated in the same way, the homonymous expression is referred to as *mutawāṭiʾ khāṣṣ* (purely univocal), while if it is instantiated differently in each object, the expression is classified as *mushakkik* (analogous). Both types are subsumed under the higher category of *mutawāṭiʾ ʿāmm* (generally univocal).[63] To illustrate the semantic relationship between *mushakkik* expressions in their respective usages, Ibn Taymiyya lists a number of such terms along with two denotata for each. The examples he cites are *abyaḍ* (white, applied to snow and to ivory), *aswad* (black, applied to pitch and to Abyssinians), *ʿuluww* (elevation, applied to the sky and to a roof), *wāsiʿ* (extensive, applied to the ocean and to a mansion), *wujūd* (existence, applied to necessary and to possible existence), *qadīm* (old/eternal, applied to a date palm stem[64] and to that which is beginningless), *muḥdath* (generated, applied to that which is produced in the course of a day and to that which is created by God from nothing), and *ḥayy* (living, applied to men, to animals, to plants, and to God).[65] As for expressions that are categorised as *mutawāṭiʾ khāṣṣ*, that is, those that in all their various uses conceptually capture a commonality that is instantiated in the same manner in all denotata, Ibn Taymiyya maintains that these exist in the language either in very small numbers or not at all.[66] Based on the foregoing, the terms *mushtarak* and *mutawāṭiʾ*, in my opinion, should be translated as "equivocal" and "univocal," respectively.[67] According to

---

63   Ibn Taymiyya reiterates on several occasions that some have mistakenly conceived of the *mushakkik* as an independent category; see, e.g., *Jawāb*, 4:425–426. We revisit and comment upon Ibn Taymiyya's view concerning the categorisation of these terms farther on in the current section.

64   Ibn Taymiyya is referring here implicitly to Q. 36:39.

65   *Minhāj*, 8:35–36.

66   *Jawāb*, 4:426. It seems that Ibn Taymiyya considers *mutawāṭiʾ* expressions to be *mutawāṭiʾ khāṣṣ*, if at all, only with respect to those denotata that belong to one and the same genus. For example, the word "living" is *mutawāṭiʾ khāṣṣ* when applied to Zayd and to ʿAmr since they both belong to the genus man. If, however, it is applied across genera to Zayd, ʿAmr, and horses, then it is *mushakkik*. This is how I understand Ibn Taymiyya's remarks in *Sharḥ ḥadīth al-nuzūl*, MF, 5:325–326 and 328–329; ed. al-Khamīs 72–73 and 77.

67   Sherman Jackson translates *mushtarak* as "denotative" and *mutawāṭiʾ* as "connotative," maintaining that "'equivocal' and 'univocal' are better reserved for terms like mujmal, ẓāhir, naṣṣ." Jackson, "Trial," 54, with n. 75. A few remarks are in order to explain why I do not subscribe to Jackson's view. The terms he suggests are used in logic as well as in linguistics and are defined variously even within these disciplines. On the conceptual history of the word "connotation" and its relationship to the word "denotation," see Bettina Birk, "Konnotation im Deutschen: Eine Untersuchung aus morphologischer, lexikologischer und lexikographischer Perspektive" (PhD diss., Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich,

Ibn Taymiyya, the common equivalent term drawn from the Quranic sciences is *al-wujūh wa-l-naẓāʾir*,[68] with *wujūh* standing for *mushtarak* expressions and *naẓāʾir* for those that are *mutawāṭiʾ*. As for the term *mushakkik* (lit., that which causes doubt), it emerged, Ibn Taymiyya explains, because the expressions subsumed under it leave the interlocutor in doubt as to whether they should be classified as univocal or equivocal; this, in turn, is due to the fact that they denote a universal in which all their denotata participate, but this participation varies in degree.[69] The term *mushakkik*, however, should not be translated literally into other languages even if this means that the original sense of "causing doubt" is lost; rather, it should be translated as "analogous."[70] The term

---

2012), 1–84. The only use of the conceptual pair "denotative–connotative" of which I am aware that comes close to the pair "*mushtarak–mutawāṭiʾ*" is in John Stuart Mill. On Mill's definition of these terms, see John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*, 2 vols. (London: John W. Parker, 1843), 1:37–50. Militating against the translation of *mushtarak* and *mutawāṭiʾ* as "denotative" and "connotative" in this sense is the fact that, on the one hand, despite substantive similarities there are also distinct differences and, on the other hand, the technical terms coined by Mill do not belong to the common conceptual inventory of the philosophy of language. In contrast, the translation of these terms as "equivocal" and "univocal" is very appropriate in terms of their substance and meaning. Moreover, the terms *mushtarak* and *mutawāṭiʾ* had already come to be translated this way (namely, as *aequivoca* and *univoca*, respectively) in the Latin Middle Ages, a practice that remains widespread in the academic literature to this day. See, e.g., the Latin translation of al-Ghazālī's *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* in Charles H. Lohr, "Logica Algazelis: Introduction and Critical Text," *Traditio* 21 (1965): 245–246. For the Arabic original of the passage cited here, see Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, ed. Maḥmūd Bījū (Damascus: Maṭbaʿat al-Ṣabāḥ, 2000), 16–17.

68   The name of a separate literary genre that emerged dealing with the semantic analysis of ambiguous terms in the Quran. The oldest extant work in this genre is by Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) and is available in a published edition. See Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *al-Wujūh wa-l-naẓāʾir fī al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, ed. Ḥātim al-Ḍāmin (Baghdad: Markaz Jumʿa al-Mājid lil-Thaqāfa wa-l-Turāth, 2006).

69   See *Ḥamawiyya*, *MF*, 5:105; ed. al-Tuwayjirī, 524. The same explanation was also put forth by al-Ghazālī. See al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, 17. This work is predominantly, though not exclusively, a reproduction of the content of some parts of Ibn Sīnā's Persian work *Dāneshnāmeh-ye ʿAlāʾī*. However, I was unable to find in this work the statements of al-Ghazālī that are mentioned. I should also point out that in the Judeo-Arabic tradition, the passive participle (i.e., *mushakkak*, meaning "the one caused to doubt") seems to have been rather common. See Alexander Treiger, "Avicenna's Notion of Transcendental Modulation of Existence (*taškīk al-wuǧūd, analogia entis*) and Its Greek and Arabic Sources," in Opwis and Reisman, *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion*, 328, n. 1.

70   In his work *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*, al-Ghazālī explains that the terms *muttafiq* and *mushakkik* are used interchangeably. In the Latin translation of this work, *muttafiq* is translated as *convenientia* (agreement) and *mushakkik* as *ambiguum* (ambiguous). See al-Ghazālī,

mutawāṭiʾ khāṣṣ should also not be translated literally but rather as "purely uni-vocal." Figure 2 (p. 161) provides a graphic summary of the above discussion of terms with respect to their meaning and how they should be categorised.[71]

Following this detailed examination of the relevant terminology, we now return to the above-cited quotation concerning the term "existence" and its application. Ibn Taymiyya tells us that there were four opinions in the Islamic intellectual tradition regarding the semantic relationship between homonym-ous expressions that are applied to both the Creator and creation. The first two positions he cites concur that the relationship here is a *ḥaqīqa–majāz* rela-tionship but differ as to whether the meaning of the terms involved obtains

---

Maqāṣid al-falāsifa, 17 and the Latin translation in Lohr, "Logica Algazelis," 246. Albertus Magnus (d. 1280) adopts al-Ghazālī's division of the terms without explicitly referencing him but suggests the term *analoga* ("similar" or "proportionate") as an alternative to *con-venientia*. See Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suárez* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 98. In the Latin Middle Ages of the late thirteenth century, this designation not only gained acceptance but also acquired a particular prominence through the works of Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), who argues that predicates applied to God and to creation are neither purely univocal nor purely equi-vocal but are predicated analogously. On this position, which, just like for Ibn Taymiyya, is based on the idea that God's differentness from creation cannot ultimately result in His absolute unknowability, see among the extensive literature, e.g., Seung-Chan Park, *Die Rezeption der mittelalterlichen Sprachphilosophie in der Theologie des Thomas von Aquin, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Analogie* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). Wolfson, who explores the ways in which the term *mushakkik* is used in the Arabic *falsafa* tradition, identifies the expression *amphibola* (ambiguous), used by Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. ca. 200 CE) in his commentary on the *Topics* of Aristotle, as the terminological and conceptual ori-gin of the Arabic term *mushakkik* and thus translates it alternately as "amphibolous" or "ambiguous." See Harry Austryn Wolfson, "The Amphibolous Terms in Aristotle, Arabic Philosophy and Maimonides," *Harvard Theological Review* 31, no. 2 (1938): 151–152. Treiger, who also examines the history of the term *mushakkik* in an article that is well worth the read, agrees with Wolfson that *mushakkik* is a translation of the term *amphibola* used by Alexander. Unlike Wolfson, however, Treiger maintains that *amphibola* is not comparable in meaning to the term *mushakkik*, which he himself translates as "modulated terms." See Treiger, "Transcendental Modulation" (for his critique of Wolfson, see pp. 343–345). None of the possible translations proposed for *mushakkik* capture the full conceptual breadth of the term. This also applies to the term "analogous," which I have nevertheless chosen to retain since, given its use in the Latin Middle Ages, it is the most common term used for denoting expressions that can be categorised neither as purely univocal nor as purely equivocal. This choice of terminology, however, is by no means meant to gloss over the substantial differences between the attributive analogy of Thomas Aquinas and that of Ibn Taymiyya, differences that cannot be expounded within the confines of this study.

71   The categorisation of terms presented in this figure is only hinted at by Ibn Taymiyya in the above quotation, but with the help of other passages, it has been possible to work it out explicitly. See, e.g., *Ṣafadiyya*, 1:122–123, also 2:6; *Jawāb*, 4:425–426; and *Radd*, 156.

in the proper sense with respect to God or with respect to creation. Ibn Taymiyya subscribes to neither of these positions as he rejects the theory of *majāz* out of hand. As we shall illustrate with examples, he classifies all expressions that can be divided into *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* as analogous. The terminological counterpart to the word *munāsaba*, which describes the semantic relationship between the expression and its use as *ḥaqīqa* or *majāz*, is *qadr mushtarak*, which refers to the commonality shared by all denotata that is captured by a given expression. According to the fourth position mentioned in the quotation cited, homonymous expressions applied to God and to creation are equivocal; this is the position of those who adopt *tafwīḍ*.[72] Ibn Taymiyya rejects this position primarily because it would entail that the expressions in the Quran and Sunna that describe God constitute, from a human perspective, no more than a sequence of letters with no discernible substantive content. Thus, the word "living" would apply to God and to human beings in the same way in which the word *mushtarī* applies to a buyer and to the planet Jupiter.[73] It is the third position in the above-cited quotation that Ibn Taymiyya adopts and that he, at least with respect to the term "existence," also ascribes to the majority of scholars. In what follows, we examine the theory behind Ibn Taymiyya's conception of analogous terms, illustrating it through examples.

As presented in chapter 4 on Ibn Taymiyya's ontology, different objects, be they metaphysical or otherwise, can never be entirely different from one another, for they share a structural sameness or at least a similarity. Human beings can grasp this sameness or similarity through their senses, unite them under a universal (*qadr mushtarak*) through mental abstraction, and, finally, designate them by means of a single expression. This is what gives rise to *mushakkik* expressions like existence (*wujūd*), animality (*ḥayawāniyya*), and humanity (*insāniyya*).[74] If the word "existence" is used with no further specification, then it refers to the common intersection of all existent things, which exists only in the mind. If, in addition to this common intersection, one also desires to designate the characteristics associated with some but not all denotata, then the term "existence" must be further specified. If one uses this term for God and for humans simultaneously, then it is *analogous* with respect

---

72   On this method, see p. 67 ff. above.

73   Jackson states that if the terms by which God is described were equivocal, then they would be "abstract and essentially devoid of any concrete meaning." Jackson, "Trial," 55. I am in substantive agreement with Jackson with one exception, which may simply be due to an imprecise articulation of the matter on Jackson's part—for if the expressions describing God were equivocal, this would mean only that human beings cannot discern the meaning of the terms, not that the terms have no concrete meaning per se.

74   *Ḥ/M*, ᴍғ, 20:448.

Homonymous Expressions

mutawāṭiʾ ʿamm
(generally univocal)

mushtarak
(equivocal)
Conceptual structure does
not capture any commonality
(*qadr mushtarak*) shared by
all denotata

mutawāṭiʾ khāṣṣ
(purely univocal)
Conceptual structure captures
a commonality (*qadr mushtarak*)
shaed by all denotata that is
actualised in them *in the same way*

mushakkik
(analogous)
Conceptual structure captures
a commonality (*qadr
mushtarak*) shared by all
denotata that is actualised in
them *in different ways*

FIGURE 2   Ibn Taymiyya's categorisation of homonymous terms with respect to their semantic relation-
ship to one another

to the abstracted universal "being existent"—which, however, pertains to God
by greater right and in a manner more sharply distinguished from non-exist-
ence (*aḥaqq bi-l-wujūd wa-abʿad ʿan al-ʿadam*)—but *equivocal* with respect to
characteristics such as beginninglessness and necessity that pertain to God's
existence but not to that of human beings. It is by virtue of this same principle
that angels, the dwellers of paradise, flies, and mosquitoes can all be equally
subsumed under the term "living being."[75] Ibn Taymiyya cites a variety of other
examples as well. To gain a better understanding of the point, it is preferable
to choose a term that is usually divided, with respect to its modes of usage,
into *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*. An example is the word "to want," which is considered
ḥaqīqa when applied to a living being and *majāz* when applied to inanimate
matter. The discussion here centres around Q. 18:77, which speaks of a wall
that—taken at face value—"wants" to collapse (*jidāran yurīdu an yanqaḍḍa*).
Ibn Taymiyya applies some of his counterarguments against the *ḥaqīqa–majāz*
dichotomy to this example to show that there is no convincing rationale for
categorising a particular usage of the term *irāda* (will) as being of higher order
or primary compared to other usages. Since the essence of these arguments
has already been presented in section 1.1 above, we focus here exclusively on

75   *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:442–448. Ibn Taymiyya's phrasing here (*aḥaqq bi-l-wujūd wa-abʿad ʿan al-
ʿadam*) is taken from another passage, namely, *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:136.

Ibn Taymiyya's concept of *mushakkik* expressions as a counterproposal to the concept of *majāz*. Ibn Taymiyya states that the word "will" in the sense of *mayl* (inclination or tendency) has been used (*ustuʿmila*) in relation to both animate objects, in which inclination is accompanied by consciousness (*shuʿūr*), and inanimate objects, which are devoid of consciousness.[76] This assertion, which at first glance appears unremarkable, is in fact the most important link in his train of reasoning. Ibn Taymiyya seeks to destroy the—in his view erroneous—impression that, since the word *irāda* is overwhelmingly used in relation to living beings, an inclination that is not accompanied by consciousness cannot be referred to as *irāda* in the proper sense. For Ibn Taymiyya, "being accompanied by consciousness" is a semantic by-product that results when the term *irāda* is used in a particular speech act exclusively in reference to living beings. He does not mean by this that the term *irāda* in the sense of "will" and *mayl* in the sense of "inclination" or "tendency" are synonymous. Rather, *mayl* is the *qadr mushtarak*—in this case equivalent to what the rhetoricians call *munāsaba*—that is, the conceptual fulcrum (*mawrid al-taqsīm*) in which all usages of the word *irāda* semantically converge.[77] The fact that the word *irāda*—along with all other terms that refer to the properties (*aʿrāḍ*) of objects—can never be used in isolation of a complement that determines its meaning is, according to Ibn Taymiyya, something that derives from the very purpose of language, which is to enable the naming of that which exists in reality and that which habitually occurs to the mind (*mā yūjadu fī al-qulūb fī al-ʿāda*). Thus, for instance, one does not speak of being willing, powerful, long, knowing, or white per se; rather, one always uses these terms in reference to a particular object to which the property in question is attributed.[78] This is different from the case of terms like "man" and "horse," with respect to which the mind has become accustomed (*taʿawwadat al-adhhān*) to understanding not the concrete person but rather the mentally abstracted conceptualisation of "human being" (*taṣawwur al-insān*) since the denotata of these expressions—unlike those that refer to properties—exist independently and unconnected to other objects.[79]

To clarify the topic further, we now apply the principle underlying *mushakkik* expressions as just described to the example of the word "lion," which, though cited several times in section 1.1, is not one that Ibn Taymiyya himself mentions in this context.

---

76   *Īmān*, MF, 7:108; ed. Aḥmad, 2:174–175; Eng. trans., 119.

77   *Īmān*, MF, 7:108; ed. Aḥmad, 2:175–176; Eng. trans., 119–120.

78   *Īmān*, MF, 7:109; ed. Aḥmad, 2:176; Eng. trans., 120. Ibn Taymiyya excludes here the lexicographers, who he says are concerned with identifying the common semantic denominator among the various uses of a term.

79   *Īmān*, MF, 7:109; ed. Aḥmad, 2:176; Eng. trans., 120.

According to the view espoused by Ibn Taymiyya, one may argue that it is a matter of undisputed fact that the word "lion" can be used both in the sense of "predator" and in the sense of "brave person." On the other hand, he considers any hierarchical categorisation of these usages such as we find in the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy to be non-demonstrable, indeed purely arbitrary. Abstracting from the two usages, we arrive at the commonality shared by all denotata that is captured in the term "lion," namely, "bravery." This abstraction, however, is only a mental construct and in no way counts as the proper sense of the word "lion." Rather, the proper sense of "lion" is whichever meaning can be imputed to the term in a concrete speech act. In this sense, then, the word "lion" is always a *ḥaqīqa* expression, while in terms of its semantic relationship to other respective usages, it is *mushakkik*.

Ibn Taymiyya's linguistic categorisation of homonymous terms has important advantages over approaches that distinguish between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*, but it is insufficiently elaborated in the form in which he presents it. Ibn Taymiyya's arguments against the theory of *majāz* are persuasive. Furthermore, his countermodel lends the conceptual categorisation of homonymous terms an increased objectivity and intersubjective plausibility,[80] for it is indisputable that homonymous terms can be used in different ways, yet there appears to be no objective criterion on the basis of which they could be hierarchically ordered.[81] The fact that even in modern linguistics a broad front has emerged against the prioritisation of literal over figurative meanings[82] is a further indication of the missed opportunity inherent in the fact that Ibn Taymiyya's linguistic approaches were never taken up or further developed in the books of either theology or legal theory.[83] Such an engagement is imperative, however, since Ibn Taymiyya's linguistic alternative to the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy contains problems that he himself did not broach, let alone resolve. This may have

---

80   This is also the assessment of Ali (*Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 124).

81   This is also argued by Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 10, n. 20. See also the sources cited in the following note.

82   There now exists an entire body of literature on this topic. See, e.g., François Recanati, "The Alleged Priority of Literal Interpretation," *Cognitive Science* 19 (1995); Sam Glucksberg, "How Metaphors Create Categories—Quickly," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, "A Deflationary Account of Metaphors," in Gibbs, *Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*. Robert Gleave also identifies intersections between Ibn Taymiyya's and Ludwig Wittgenstein's positions on language and meaning. See Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 65.

83   Robert Gleave, who deals in his book with legal theory, deliberately treats Ibn Taymiyya's views only in passing, as they have remained, in his opinion, without noteworthy influence to this day. See Gleave, *Islam and Literalism*, 23, n. 66, and also 181–184.

to do with the fact that, as mentioned at the beginning of the current section, he was motivated more by a theological than by a purely linguistic interest in the topic, with the result that his treatments of it are very brief. To illustrate the problems alluded to here, we cite once more the example of the word "lion," but this time in a threefold sense, namely, (1) as a predator (hereafter L1), (2) as a brave person (hereafter L2), and, finally, let us assume that the word "lion," thanks to a creative expansion of the term, can also refer to (3) a person with voluminous, wildly dishevelled, gold-coloured hair (hereafter L3) given the resemblance of such hair to the mane of a lion. The question now is whether the term "lion" can be considered analogous with respect to all three of these usages. L1 obviously has a semantic relationship to both L2 and L3, but is this true of L2 and L3 with respect to each other? In order to avoid having to classify L2 and L3 as equivocal, one could consider "similarity to L1" to be the common intersection of both terms. However, since "similarity to L1" is not one of the meanings of L1 itself, it is not eligible to serve as the lowest common semantic denominator of all three terms.

We may assume the existence of a strategic factor at play behind Ibn Taymiyya's classification of analogy as a subcategory of univocality. He repeats in numerous works that analogy has been seen either as a middle category between univocity and equivocity or as a subcategory of univocity.[84] The latter position seems to have been that of the early thinkers among the philosophers and others (*al-mutaqaddimūn min nuẓẓār al-falāsifa wa-ghayrihim*), who, without employing a specific term for analogous expressions, simply designated them as univocal.[85] Ibn Taymiyya does not mention any names, but we may note that in the central texts of the philosophers—including Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. ca. 200 CE), Porphyry (d. after 300 CE), Elias (d. ca. 580 CE), al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn al-Ṭayyib (d. 435/1043), Ibn Bājja (d. 533/1139), and Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198)—analogy is conceived of either as being intermediate between univocity and equivocity or, more commonly, as a subcategory not of univocity but of equivocity.[86] This observation is incon-

---

84 See, e.g., *Radd*, 156; *Minhāj*, 2:586; and *Jawāb*, 4:425–426.

85 *Radd*, 156.

86 On the first seven of the thinkers listed here, see Treiger, "Transcendental Modulation," esp. 332 ff. Elias notes that Plato considered the ambiguous term "existence" univocal, whereas Aristotle considered it equivocal. He attempts in Neoplatonic fashion to reconcile the positions of the two thinkers by arguing that the term "existence" has both univocal and equivocal qualities and thus, as an intermediary term, may correctly be designated as both univocal and equivocal. See Treiger, 340–341. On Ibn Sīnā, see also Acar, *Talking about God*, as well as Koutzarova, *Das Transzendentale bei Ibn Sīnā*. On Ibn Bājja, see David Wirmer, *Vom Denken der Natur zur Natur des Denkens: Ibn Bāǧǧas Theorie der Potenz als*

sistent with Ibn Taymiyya's assertion cited above. Only in the domain of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, where, in my estimation, al-Ghazālī was the first to use these terms,[87] were there some authors who, prior to Ibn Taymiyya and in the same sense as understood by him, subsumed the *mushakkik* under the category of expressions having the same verbal form and meaning.[88] In support of his position, Ibn Taymiyya advances the plausible argument that an expansion in the usages of a *mushakkik* expression always proceeds from that which is semantically shared, with the result that it is the univocal, rather than the equivocal, character of these expressions that is decisive.[89] It is nevertheless perplexing that Ibn Taymiyya, who was familiar with the works of the philosophers, discusses in numerous places the different ways of categorising *mushakkik* expressions yet fails to mention even once that such expressions were also (indeed, even usually) viewed as equivocal. However, if one considers that the proponents of *tafwīḍ*[90]—which Ibn Taymiyya criticised heavily—consider many of the terms used to describe both God and creation to be *mushtarak* (that is, equivocal), it becomes clear why he is at pains to avoid any association of the concept of *tashkīk*, which is so important for his theory of the attributes, with that of equivocation. He endeavours to emphasise the similarity of denotata captured in the *mushakkik* expression, for it is this similarity

---

     Grundlegung der Psychologie (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 196–210. On Ibn Rushd, see Oliver Leaman, *Averroes and His Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 178–196, esp. 183.

87   In his work *al-Mustaṣfā* (ed. Būlāq, 1:32 and, in the better but less widely available Ḥāfiẓ edition used in this study [hereafter ed. Ḥāfiẓ], 1:97–98), al-Ghazālī uses both the term *mushtarak* and the term *mutawāṭiʾ* and suggests the name *mutashābih* (*fa-l-nusammi dhālika mutashābihan*) for the analogous terms that he designates as *mushkil*. He has adopted this longer passage verbatim from his work *Miḥakk al-naẓar*, the printed edition of which, however, has *mushakkik* instead of *mushkil*. See Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Miḥakk al-naẓar fī al-manṭiq*, ed. Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn al-Naʿsānī and Muṣṭafā al-Qabbānī (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Adabiyya, [1925?]), 13. Reading "*mushakkik*" here is more plausible in my opinion, and perhaps the divergence is due to a transcription error by later copyists, especially given that these two words are very similar in written form.

88   As held explicitly by, e.g., the Shāfiʿī scholar Ibn al-Dahhān (d. 592/1196). See Muḥammad b. al-Dahhān, *Taqwīm al-naẓar fī masāʾil khilāfiyya dhāʾiʿa wa-nubadh madhhabiyya nāfiʿa*, ed. Ṣāliḥ al-Khuzaym, 5 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2001), 1:66–67.

89   *Ḥamawiyya*, MF, 5:105; ed. al-Tuwayjirī, 524. In *Darʾ*, 5:325, he also explains that no expression that can be categorised is equivocal. Thus, for example, the analogous term "existence" can be categorised into "necessary existence" and "possible existence" and therefore subsumed under terms that are univocal. In contrast, an equivocal expression like "Suhayl," for example, cannot be categorised into the terms "planet Jupiter" and "person named Suhayl."

90   On which see p. 67 ff. above.

that allows us to form an impression of the transcendental world, even if only a vague one. Many *kalām* theologians too acknowledge that the homonymity of the expressions by which both God and creation are described is not purely accidental but, rather, is grounded in the resemblance that the denotata have to one another. This resemblance is already captured in, for instance, the terminology suggested by al-Ghazālī when he proposes the term *mutashābih* instead of *mushakkik*.[91] The word "light," for al-Ghazālī, is one such *mutashābih* term since it is used both for the light of the sun and as a term denoting the intellect (*ʿaql*), which guides one through lines of reasoning that are obscure or difficult to comprehend.[92] The term "living being" also belongs to the same category for al-Ghazālī, but in contrast to Ibn Taymiyya, his goal in treating the issue is to highlight the differentness of the various denotata. Al-Ghazālī says:

> Similar to the term "light" is the expression "the living" (*al-ḥayy*) in that it is applied to [both] plants and animals. This is a case of pure equivocation (*ishtirāk maḥḍ*), the reason being that in the case of plants, what is intended is the component (*maʿnā*) from which growth proceeds, while in the case of animals,[93] [what is intended is] the component through which they feel and act on the basis of will. In its application [i.e., that of the term "the living"] to God, the exalted, you will realise, should you ponder deeply enough, that it represents a third meaning, and this [meaning] is unlike the two [first-mentioned] cases.[94]

Al-Ghazālī's insistence on the differentness of the denotata subsumed under the term "living" results in the contradictory view that although the term is not purely accidental but rather, like the term "light," applies both to plants and animals and to God on the basis of a common semantic denominator, it is nevertheless a purely equivocal term.[95] If one contrasts this position with that of

---

91   See n. 87 on previous page.
92   Al-Ghazālī, *Mustaṣfā*, 1:97–98.
93   Likewise included here are human beings.
94   Al-Ghazālī, *Mustaṣfā*, 1:97.
95   We find something similar as early as Aristotle, who holds that the expression "living being" is predicated univocally (or, in Aristotelian terms, synonymously) of, for instance, human beings and cattle but equivocally (Aristotelian: homonymously) when used beyond this in reference to plants. The line of demarcation is drawn by a perceptive capacity proper to human beings and cattle but not to plants. Nevertheless, Aristotle, like al-Ghazālī later, does not wish completely to abandon the conceptual unity of the expression "living being" in its various usages. See Uwe Voigt, "Von Seelen, Figuren und Seeleuten: Zur Einheit und Vielfalt des Begriffs des Lebens (ζωή) bei Aristoteles," in *Was ist ‚Leben'? Aris-*

Ibn Taymiyya, it becomes apparent how even seemingly unsuspicious linguistic categorisations can be influenced by theological presuppositions. Whether the rejection of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy and Ibn Taymiyya's alternative conception indeed entail substantive theological consequences is a question we examine in detail in the following section.

3   What Are the Theological Consequences of Ibn Taymiyya's Alternative to the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* Dichotomy?

It is by now clear that Ibn Taymiyya and the proponents of *majāz* are separated not by a mere terminological dispute but by a substantive disagreement, at least on the level of linguistic theory—particularly on the question of the relationship between linguistic signs and meaning. One might deem this disagreement to extend to the realm of rhetoric as well if one considers an objection raised by Burhān al-Dīn al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392) against a group of scholars who acknowledged the existence of *majāz* in language but denied it with respect to the Quran: "Were *majāz* to be omitted from the Quran," al-Zarkashī argues, "half [its] beauty would be omitted [along with it]."[96] We cannot assess here to what extent this objection is justified with respect to the group of scholars mentioned, but what is clear is that it cannot be extended to Ibn Taymiyya's position. Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya makes it clear that some forms of expression are more beautiful (*aḥsan*) than and rhetorically superior (*ablagh*) to others.[97] In his view, for instance, it is stylistically more becoming to describe a person as a lion, for example, than simply as brave. Thus, at least as far as rhetoric goes, the disagreement over *majāz* is inconsequential. The question we address in the current section is whether the same holds true in the domain of theology. Different answers to this question can be found in the academic literature, a situation only aggravated by the fact that Ibn Taymiyya himself expressed contradictory views on the matter. Al-Maṭʿanī is convinced that the disagreement between the proponents and the opponents of the theory of *majāz* comes down to a terminological dispute (*nizāʿ lafẓī*), and he cites a passage in which Ibn Taymiyya expresses the same view.[98] Al-

---

toteles' Anschauungen zur Entstehung und Funktionsweise von Leben, ed. Sabine Föllinger (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010), esp. 19–21 and 26–31.

96   Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 4 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, [1957?]), 2:255.

97   *Ḥ/M*, MF, 20:462–463.

98   See al-Maṭʿanī, *al-Majāz fī al-lugha*, 863 ff. (the passage referred to is on p. 865). The ori-

Maṭʿanī's position must also be viewed in light of his belief, discussed previously, that Ibn Taymiyya's rejection of the theory of *majāz* was polemical-cum-theoretical in nature and that, in reality, he acknowledged the validity of *majāz*.[99] In contrast, al-Shujayrī maintains that Ibn Taymiyya expounded his final position on this question in *Īmān*, where he affirms that the matter is very much one of substantive disagreement.[100] This view is also endorsed by al-Turkī, who likewise believes that the disagreement is not merely a terminological one since—and here again he agrees with al-Maṭʿanī—the adoption of the theory of *majāz* provides apparent legitimation for what Ibn Taymiyya considers an inadmissible reinterpretation of the source texts.[101] In addition, al-Turkī attributes to Ibn Taymiyya the view, which he himself also seems to hold, that there is a logical relationship between acceptance of the theory of *majāz* and denial of the attributes of God.[102] Belhaj—the only one, to my knowledge, who treats this topic in a non-peripheral way in Western scholarship[103]—reaches a similar conclusion, stating that "the negation [of the validity] of *majāz* (Fr. *métaphore*) necessarily represents a form of affirmation of the [divine] attributes."[104] As an example, he cites the expression "the hand of God," which, according to Ibn Taymiyya, refers in light of circumstantial evidence precisely to a divine, and not to a human, hand. It would thus be incorrect first to understand the word "hand" in the sense of a human hand, then to conclude that this cannot be meant in the case of God, and then finally to reinterpret "hand" in the manner of the Ashʿarīs.[105] Furthermore, Belhaj identifies the distinction between proper and figurative meaning as the rhetorical equivalent of the ontological distinction made in theology between the essence of a thing and its attributes.[106] He argues that by rejecting *waḍʿ* con-

---

ginal can be found in *Tawba*, MF, 12:277. See also al-Maṭʿanī, *al-Majāz ʿinda al-imām Ibn Taymiyya*, 16–17.

99   See pp. 152–153 above.

100   See al-Shujayrī, *Dirāsāt lughawiyya*, 204–206. Al-Shujayrī refers to *Īmān*, MF, 7:113; ed. Aḥmad, 2:183; Eng. trans., 125.

101   See al-Turkī, *Inkār al-majāz*, 63.

102   See ibid., 77.

103   Mohamed Yunus Ali's study is very detailed on the level of linguistic theory, but it deliberately ignores to a considerable extent the theological relevance of the topic. See Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 88. Mustafa Shah's article, in contrast to what the title suggests, deals with this aspect only in passing. See Shah, "Philological Endeavours—Part II."

104   See Belhaj, "Négation de la métaphore," 74. Belhaj repeats this statement a year later in his monograph, in which he examines the mutual influence of rhetoric and theology. See Belhaj, *Questions théologiques*, 97.

105   See Belhaj, "Négation de la métaphore," 74.

106   See ibid., 66 and 75.

strued as an a priori link between word and meaning, Ibn Taymiyya made room for his alternative theory of meaning, which places the possible usages of expressions in a non-hierarchical relation to their common semantic core. In doing so, Belhaj continues, Ibn Taymiyya was able to escape the contradiction that arises when, on the one hand, the attributes of action and of essence are considered equally real and, on the other hand, one continues to apply the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy in interpreting the descriptions of God in the Quran.[107]

Belhaj's assertion that there is an inverse logical relationship between the acceptance or rejection of the theory of *majāz* and the acceptance or rejection of the divine attributes is, in my view, untenable. We may illustrate this by the example of the statement "The king governed Iraq with a firm hand." The expression "with a firm hand" can easily be understood by both a proponent of *majāz* and an opponent of it, like Ibn Taymiyya, in the sense of "stern" or "uncompromising." For the proponent of *majāz*, the word "hand" refers first and foremost to a corporeal human hand but must be interpreted figuratively in light of the contextual evidence accompanying the speech act. The opponent of *majāz* would argue that various meanings can be ascribed to the word "hand" and that the meaning intended is always constituted solely within the concrete speech act and on the basis of contextual factors, with none of the available meanings possessing any a priori validity over the others. Since this principle would apply with equal force to the example of God's hand cited by Belhaj, I fail to see the necessary relationship he claims between the negation of the validity of *majāz* and the affirmation of the divine attributes.

Although the acceptance of the theory of *majāz* does not necessarily entail the rejection of the divine attributes, it does create fertile ground for its legitimation. The thesis first proposed by Wolfhart Heinrichs in 1984 and oft repeated in academic works thereafter—namely, that the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy was an instrument introduced into theological discourse by the Muʿtazila to support their reading of the Quran—is an eminently plausible one.[108] Its plausibility derives from the presumption within the theory of *majāz* that linguistic signs in their ostensible sense relate to phenomena internal to the world, a fact that renders language intrinsically inadequate for describing metaphysical realities. This, in turn, opens the door for even drastic reinterpretations of the source texts to be more easily legitimised. I believe this may be the main reason why Ibn Taymiyya is so critical of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy in two

---

107   Ibid., 74–75.
108   See Heinrichs, "On the Genesis," 139.

of his works. His awareness of this point can be gleaned from the following passage, the substance of which he repeats in numerous places throughout his works:

> The ignorant one is misled by the assertion of the *mutakallimūn* [when they say,] "The Arabs [originally] coined the word *istiwāʾ* (settling, sitting, or rising [above something]) for the settling of a human being aboard a ship or at the place where he alights,[109] or for the ark's coming to rest on Mount Judi,[110] or for that which is similar with respect to the sitting or settling of certain created things." This is like saying, "They originally coined the words 'hearing' (*samʿ*), 'seeing' (*baṣar*), and 'speaking' (*kalām*) exclusively for that whose locus is pupils, eyelids, an ear canal, auricles, and lips." This is all misguidance in religion and falsehood. [Or the statement] "They originally coined the words 'mercy' (*raḥma*), 'knowledge' (*ʿilm*), and 'will' (*irāda*) exclusively for that whose locus is a chunk of flesh (*muḍghat laḥm*) and a heart (*fuʾād*)." All this [too] is ignorance.
>
> Rather, the Arabs coined in relation to the human being only those [terms] that they attributed to him [concretely]. When they speak of a man's ability to hear, his power of sight, his speech, knowledge, will, and mercy, that which is specified by it [the term "man"] is that which involves the characteristics of human beings. And when one speaks of God's ability to hear, His power of sight, His speech, knowledge, will, and mercy, this implicates everything that is characteristic of God, which contains nothing of that which is specific to created beings.
>
> Thus, whoever thinks that the term *istiwāʾ*, insofar as it is *ḥaqīqa*, refers to the characteristics of created beings, although the text (*naṣṣ*) specifies it by relating it to God, is exceedingly ignorant of the semantics of languages and of *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*.[111]

A consequence of the conception of language Ibn Taymiyya criticises here is that the overt sense (*ẓāhir* as understood by the proponents of *majāz*) of Quranic verses and prophetic hadith entails describing God in anthropomorphic terms. If this were so, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, such texts would be sources not of guidance but of misguidance and it would be the scholars of later generations who, with the help of the Persians, Jews, philosophers, and others, had derived a correct theology from the Islamic sources through the

---

109   From Q. 23:28–29.
110   From Q. 11:44.
111   *Irbiliyya*, *MF*, 5:208.

practice of reinterpretation.[112] For Ibn Taymiyya, the *ẓāhir* meaning of a linguistic expression is that which emerges when all the concomitant contextual evidence has been taken into account. In other words, as we have said elsewhere, the *ẓāhir* meaning is not the outward, or overt, meaning but the established meaning.[113] From the perspective of the speaker—this being God and His prophet in the case of the two sources mentioned (i.e., the Quran and Sunna)—the *ẓāhir* meaning is a single meaning and is identical with the intended meaning. However, not all interlocutors possess knowledge of the relevant context, with the result that their assessment of what the *ẓāhir* meaning is remains relative (*nisbī*).[114] It is Ibn Taymiyya's countermodel, in which meaning is only ever constituted contextually, that allows him to escape the premiss—highly problematic theologically from his point of view—that the *ẓāhir* meaning of the statements describing God in the two revealed sources is misleading.

We have noted previously that the question concerning the validity of the theory of *majāz* does not constitute a point of divergence of the various interpretations of the divine attributes. Ibn Taymiyya, who held contradictory positions on the matter, expressed this fact with captivating clarity, in my view, in a passage where he shows what the dispute about *majāz* was actually about, namely, where to draw the boundaries of the framework within which *taʾwīl majāzī* may be used. Unfortunately, we do not know today where the work is in which Ibn Taymiyya makes this statement. The relevant passage, however, was cited by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1332/1914), an expert on Ibn Taymiyya, in his *tafsīr* work as follows:

> He [Ibn Taymiyya]—may God have mercy on him—said in one of his *fatāwā* works: "We endorse the *majāz* that is supported by evidence and the *taʾwīl* that was carried out in accordance with a correct method. Neither in our statements nor in those of any of our [fellows] (*aḥad minnā*) is there anything to the effect that we do not approve of *majāz* or *taʾwīl*, and God is a witness over every speaker (*wa-Allāh ʿinda lisān kull qāʾil*). But we reject of this that which runs counter to the truth and to what is right and through which the door is opened to the destruction of the Sunna and the Quran, as well as to joining the ranks of those possessors of scripture who distort the meaning thereof (*muḥarrifa*). That which has been transmitted from Imam Aḥmad and the majority of his followers is

---

112   *Ḥamawiyya*, MF, 5:15–16; ed. al-Tuwayjirī, 221–223.

113   See p. 147, n. 25 above.

114   *Ḥamawiyya*, MF, 5:108; ed. al-Tuwayjirī, 528–529.

that there are *majāz* expressions in the Quran. Apart from him, no state-
ment on the matter is known from among the leading scholars. Indeed, a
group of scholars who were his followers, as well as others such as Abū
Bakr b. Abī Dāwūd [d. 316/929], Abū al-Ḥasan al-Kharazī [d. 391/1001],
Abū al-Faḍl al-Tamīmī [d. 410/1020], and—as far as I know—Ibn Ḥāmid
[d. 403/1012], in addition to others, maintained that there is no *majāz* in
the Quran. But they were only driven to this by the contorted interpreta-
tions they had beheld from those who distort the meaning of the Quran
and who seek to legitimise this by appealing to the theory of *majāz*. They
[the scholars] thus countered this aberration and corruption by drying
up the spring (*bi-ḥasm al-mawādd*). The best of matters, however, is the
middle way and [the way of] balance (*iqtiṣād*)."[115]

Both the form and the style of this passage, in addition to al-Qāsimī's general
conscientiousness in reproducing Ibn Taymiyya's works, indicate that these are
indeed his words.[116] Ibn Taymiyya's denial here of ever having taken a position
against *majāz* could be due to the fact that this work is possibly earlier than
his explicitly *majāz*-critical writings. But even if this passage does not go back
to Ibn Taymiyya or he changed his mind on the matter, I believe it neverthe-
less aptly reveals the backdrop against which the debate over the validity of
majāz must be understood. We may thus conclude that the linguistic concept
of *majāz* was without a doubt invoked as a legitimising instrument for what Ibn
Taymiyya saw as a distorting reinterpretation of the attributes of God, but that
it is ultimately the question of how much leeway one grants the hermeneut-
ical instrument of *taʾwīl majāzī* that has a decisive impact on one's position in
the debate over the divine attributes. In the passage cited above, Ibn Taymiyya
states clearly that he acknowledges the legitimacy of this instrument, provided
it be applied in accordance with a correct methodology. What he means by this
is expounded in his treatise *Madaniyya*, which we examine in detail on this
point in section 2.2 of the following chapter.

---

115   Cited from Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī, *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī al-musammā Maḥāsin al-taʾwīl*, ed.
       Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī, 17 vols. ([Cairo?]: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1957),
       17:6156 (on Q. 89:22).
116   Al-Shujayrī and Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī also cite this passage from al-Qāsimī, with neither of
       them doubting that these words can be traced back to Ibn Taymiyya. See al-Shujayrī,
       Dirāsāt lughawiyya, 203 and Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *Fuṣūl fī al-ʿaqīda bayna al-salaf wa-l-
       khalaf: Āyāt wa-aḥādīth al-ṣifāt, al-awliyāʾ wa-karāmātuhum, al-qubūr wa-mubtadaʿātuhā,
       al-tawassul* (Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 2005), 175.

Hermeneutical Foundations

1 Verse Q. 3:7—Ibn Taymiyya's Understanding of the Terms *muḥkam*, *mutashābih*, and *ta'wīl*

The following discussion consists of several parts. First, we examine verse Q. 3:7[1] and the exegetical difficulties associated with it. Next, we address the relevant academic literature, focussing on a claim oft repeated therein but that, in my opinion, is untenable in the form in which it is put forth. However, we elaborate and substantiate the critique of this claim only after presenting Ibn Taymiyya's views on Q. 3:7, which is the primary goal of the current section. In the process, we also present the views of al-Ṭabarī and al-Zamakhsharī to the extent necessary for clarifying the critique.

Verse Q. 3:7 has without a doubt been accorded special attention in the Islamic tradition.[2] An exegete as early as al-Ṭabarī knows of an astonishing variety of interpretations of it, though he is surpassed in this distinction by the scholar Abū Ḥayyān (d. 745/1344), a contemporary of Ibn Taymiyya. Abū Ḥayyān lists around twenty interpretations of just the terminological pair *muḥkam/mutashābih* mentioned in the verse.[3] Yet the dispute over the correct

---

1 This reference conforms to the Kufan tradition of numbering verses that is common today and that is used in the standard Cairo edition of the Quran (first published 1342/1924). This verse is also cited in the academic literature on rare occasions as 3:6, in accordance with the Syrian (Shāmī) tradition of numbering. In Gustav Flügel's edition of the Quran, which is not based on any of the Islamic traditions of verse enumeration, this verse is identified as 3:5. Flügel's edition remained authoritative in Orientalist scholarship at least until the publication of the Cairo edition; his numbering is thus found especially in older works, such as those of Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921).

2 Thus, the terms *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* mentioned in it, which are generally considered an opposite pair, are dealt with in works of *tafsīr*, the Quranic sciences (*'ulūm al-Qur'ān*), and legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). Separate works were also dedicated to the topic, especially by Mu'tazilī authors (on which see p. 191 below) but also, for instance, by the early exegete Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767). Such works usually bear titles such as *Mutashābih al-Qur'ān* and are not to be confused with compilations of Quranic verses that are similar in wording, which were intended as a mnemonic for Quran reciters and also usually bore the title *Mutashābih al-Qur'ān*. On Muqātil's work, which has been partially preserved, see van Ess, *Der Eine und das Andere*, 1:652–654 and the literature on it at n. 151. On the works of the Mu'tazila, see Bruce Fudge, *Qur'ānic Hermeneutics: Al-Ṭabrisī and the Craft of Commentary* (London: Routledge, 2011), 114–142, esp. 115–116.

3 See Muḥammad b. Yūsuf Abū Ḥayyān, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ*, ed. 'Ādil 'Abd al-Mawjūd et al., 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1993), 2:396–397.

interpretation of this verse raged with respect not only to this pair of terms but also to the terms *taʾwīl*, *umm al-kitāb*, *al-rāsikhūna fī al-ʿilm*, *fitna*, and *zaygh* likewise mentioned in the verse, as well as with respect to a segment of the verse whose meaning changes depending on whether one pauses[4] or not at a specific place while reciting it. As the four terms listed here after "*taʾwīl*" are of lesser relevance in the context of this study, we shall not address them any further; I have translated them throughout in the manner customary in English translations of the Quran, which is also consistent with Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of them. The case of the first three terms—*muḥkam*, *mutashābih*, and *taʾwīl*—is different. *Muḥkam* and *mutashābih* are often understood in the academic literature as an opposite pair, with *muḥkam* usually translated as "decisive" (Fr. *clair*) and *mutashābih* as "ambiguous" (Fr. *équivoque*).[5] The term *taʾwīl*, on the other hand, is usually translated as "interpretation" (Fr. *interprétation*). This construal of the terms is indeed consistent with a reading of them that is widespread in the Islamic tradition.[6] Nevertheless, the complexity of the debate surrounding verse Q. 3:7 requires us to consider the range of meanings of the Arabic terms as a whole.[7] We must therefore dispense with any translation, as none could be adequate to the task given the ambiguity of the terms in question.

The following rendering of Q. 3:7 in English represents the meaning of the verse when read with the pause in recitation mentioned above; the segment whose meaning is contingent on the pause is set in italics:

> It is He [God] who has sent down the book (*kitāb*) to you [Prophet Muḥammad]. In it are verses that are *muḥkam*—these are the foundation of the book (*umm al-kitāb*; lit. "mother of the book")—and others that are *mutashābih*. As for those in whose hearts is sickness (*zaygh*; lit. "swerving"), they follow what is *mutashābih* of it [the book], seeking discord (*fitna*) and seeking its *taʾwīl*. *Yet none knows its taʾwīl but God.* [*pause*]

---

4   What is meant here is a pause in recitation that performs the function of a full stop, that is, signals the end of the sentence.

5   Thus, in the third edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, the term *mutashābih* no longer appears under "*mutashābih*" but under "ambiguity." See Eric Chaumont, "Ambiguity," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2013-4, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

6   Afnan Fatani, however, propounds the extravagant view that the terms *mutashābih* and "ambiguous" have no semantic overlap and that, moreover, "*mutashābih*" has never been understood in this sense within the Islamic tradition. See Afnan Fatani, "Aya," in *The Qurʾān: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 2006), 97b–98a.

7   The failure to take into account the equivocality of the terms *mutashābih* and *taʾwīl* in particular is the cause of a widespread misconception in the academic literature that will be discussed later.

> *And those firmly grounded in knowledge say:* "We believe therein; it is all from our Lord." But none take heed save those possessed of insight.

If, on the other hand, one omits the pause, then the italicised segment reads as follows: "Yet none knows its * taʾwīl* but God and those firmly grounded in knowledge. They say …" The answer to the question whether verse Q. 3:7 attributes knowledge of the * taʾwīl* of *mutashābih* verses to at least some segment of God's creatures in addition to God Himself thus depends on whether, as a reader, one pauses at the indicated spot or one reads on in a single breath. All four theoretically possible views concerning the pause are to be found in the Islamic tradition. Al-Ṭabarī, for instance, considered the pause obligatory. He argued for this position partly on the basis of two pre-ʿUthmānic readings that do away with the ambiguity[8] intrinsic to the ʿUthmānic consonantal text through either a modified syntax or the addition of words, such that the verse—whether it be read with the pause or not—unambiguously ascribes knowledge of the *taʾwīl* to God alone.[9] Yet since al-Ṭabarī himself regarded the written codex of the Quran commissioned by ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (r. 23–35/644–656) as binding, he probably did not consider it possible to put an end to the dispute over the pause on the strength of this argument.[10] Opponents of the pause are to be found especially,

---

8   Thus, readings that conform to the ʿUthmānic text are incapable of removing this ambiguity. The literature dealing with where to stop and start (*al-waqf wa-l-ibtidāʾ*) when reciting the Quran is also incapable of rendering a final verdict since, according to its own self-understanding, it relies merely on *ijtihād* and not on universally binding revealed texts. This also explains why, according to the editors, the Medina edition of the Quran widely used today (first published 1985) gives a different assessment concerning the obligation to pause (obligatory, recommended, optional, not recommended, prohibited) in a total of 555 places compared to the standard Cairo edition (first published 1924). Among these is the pause in verse Q. 3:7, which the Medina edition classifies as recommended, while the Cairo edition classifies it as obligatory. On this point, see ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Qāriʾ, *al-Taqrīr al-ʿilmī ʿan muṣḥaf al-Madīna al-nabawiyya* (Medina: Wizārat al-Ḥajj wa-l-Awqāf, 1985), 51 and 54–55.

9   See Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, ed. Maḥmūd Shākir and Aḥmad Shākir, 16 vols. to date (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1954–), 6:204. One reading, which al-Ṭabarī attributes to the Companions Ubayy b. Kaʿb (d. between 19/640 and 35/656) and Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687-8), has "*wa-yaqūlu al-rāsikhūna*" instead of "*wa-l-rāsikhūna yaqūlūna.*" The other reading, which is said to go back to Ibn Masʿūd (d. 32/652-3 or 33/653-4), is "*in taʾwīluhu illā ʿinda Llāhi wa-l-rāsikhūna fī l-ʿilmi yaqūlūna.*" The disambiguation comes from the fact that the addition of the word *ʿinda* results in the words [*A*]*llāhi* and *al-rāsikhūna* being in different grammatical cases (genitive and nominative, respectively), which rules out their being joined in a conjunctive sequence.

10   Thus, he says that the pre-ʿUthmānic readings, though originating in revelation, have not been transmitted with any certainty. See ibid., 1:64.

though by no means exclusively, in the camp of the Muʿtazila. Among them is al-Zamakhsharī, who dedicates relatively little space to Q. 3:7 in his work *al-Kashshāf* and who also makes no attempt to support his rejection of the pause on the strength of arguments. He may have considered it unnecessary to do so, as a negative attitude towards the pause can be traced back to the early period of Islam (as listed by al-Ṭabarī).[11] The third position views the pause as optional and can thus be seen as a middle way. This is the view adopted by Ibn Taymiyya and others, as will be expounded later. The fourth possible stance one may have on the issue was ostensibly held by the Shāfiʿī *uṣūl* scholar al-Qaffāl al-Shāshī (d. 365/976), who is said to have spent at least some time as a Muʿtazilī. Al-Shāshī is reported to have expressed the view in one of his *uṣūl* works that the arguments for and against the pause are equally strong and that the matter is, therefore, undecidable.[12]

Ibn Taymiyya addresses the issue of the pause in numerous places, though he usually elaborates on it only sparingly. However, he spells out his view in a detailed and coherent manner in the treatise *Iklīl*, which is dedicated to the topic of the pause specifically, as well as in the second half of volume eight of *Bayān* and in the works *Ikhlāṣ* and *Tadmuriyya*.[13] The following presentation of his views is based primarily, though not exclusively, on these texts. Despite the numerous sources available, the academic literature to my knowledge has dealt with Ibn Taymiyya's views on verse Q. 3:7 only in passing. Carl Sharif El-Tobgui's monograph constitutes an exception to this rule, though owing to its thematic framework, it is based primarily on a single work, Ibn Taymiyya's (ten-volume) *Darʾ al-taʿāruḍ*.[14] We should also mention here the article by Michel Lagarde, who presents the views of Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1323/1905) but states that they are to a large extent identical to those of Ibn Taymiyya.[15]

1.1　　*The Term* taʾwīl

The word *taʾwīl* is the verbal noun of the second form of the root *ʾ-w-l*. The first form of this verb—*āla, yaʾūlu*—means, Ibn Taymiyya explains, "to return

---

11　See Andrew Lane, *A Traditional Muʿtazilite Qurʾān Commentary: The Kashshāf of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī* (*d. 538/1144*) (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 108–113.

12　This is reported in al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392), among others. See Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī, *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-ʿĀnī, 2nd ed., 11 vols. (Hurghada: Dār al-Ṣafwa, 1992), 1:445.

13　See *Iklīl*, MF, 13:270–313; *Bayān*, 8:215–549, esp. 337–549; *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:359–448; *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:54–68 (ed. al-Saʿawī, 89–116).

14　See El-Tobgui, *Reason and Revelation*, 184–193.

15　See Michel Lagarde, "De l'ambiguïté (*mutašābih*) dans le Coran: Tentatives d'explication des exégètes musulmans," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 3 (1985): 54.

to something" (*ʿāda ilā kadhā* or *rajaʿa lahu*), while the second form represents a transitivising (*taʿdiya*) of this meaning, that is, "to return something to something."[16] In addition, he informs us that the word *taʾwīl* is equivocal (*mushtarak*), as it is used linguistically in three very different ways, of which only the last presented below is directly related to the basic linguistic meaning of the term *taʾwīl* we have just mentioned.

First, then, the word *taʾwīl* is used as a discipline-specific technical term within *kalām*, where it is defined as "the diverting of an expression from the probable meaning to the non-probable meaning on account of an indicant associated with it [the expression]" (*ṣarf al-lafẓ ʿan al-maʿnā al-rājiḥ ilā al-maʿnā al-marjūḥ li-dalīl yaqtarinu bihi*).[17] Such a use of the term *taʾwīl*, Ibn Taymiyya avers, cannot be dated before the end of the third/ninth century. And while scholars of later generations did indeed construe the word *taʾwīl* in verse Q. 3:7 in such a manner, Ibn Taymiyya insists that this constitutes a grossly anachronistic misinterpretation.[18]

In its second sense, the word *taʾwīl* is synonymous, or nearly synonymous, with the word *tafsīr*. Ibn Taymiyya equates the term *tafsīr* with *bayān* (elucidation) and *īḍāḥ* (clarification).[19] *Taʾwīl* in this sense thus means to elucidate and clarify what is intended by some speech (*al-murād bi-l-kalām*). The meaning (*maʿnā*) of this speech is represented via a mental image (*ṣūra ʿilmiyya*) in the mind of the interlocutor.[20] The interlocutor then translates the image back into words, and insofar as it corresponds to the meaning intended by the speech, he has carried out *taʾwīl* correctly. The *taʾwīl* of speech in the sense of *tafsīr* is thus itself also speech (*min jins al-kalām*)[21]—unlike in the case of the third meaning, to which we shall turn presently—and consequently exists, as Ibn Taymiyya states elsewhere with reference to the four-stage model of being, exclusively in mental, oral, or written form (*lahu al-wujūd al-dhihnī wa-l-lafẓī wa-l-rasmī*).[22] The word *taʾwīl* in this sense can be found in the usage of the Salaf and specifically of early exegetes such as Mujāhid (d. 104/722) and al-Ṭabarī as well.[23]

---

16 *Iklīl*, ᴍꜰ, 13:291.
17 *Iklīl*, ᴍꜰ, 13:288. See also p. 144, n. 12 of the current work. This kind of *taʾwīl* is referred to here as *taʾwīl majāzī*; see p. 144, n. 11 above. The conditions that Ibn Taymiyya stipulates for its validity are discussed in section 2.2 below.
18 *Iklīl*, ᴍꜰ, 13:288 and *Ikhlāṣ*, ᴍꜰ, 17:401.
19 *Bayān*, 8:278.
20 *Iklīl*, ᴍꜰ, 13:283.
21 *Ikhlāṣ*, ᴍꜰ, 17:369.
22 *Iklīl*, ᴍꜰ, 13:289.
23 *Iklīl*, ᴍꜰ, 13:288–289. Ibn Taymiyya notes that later exegetes such as al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035), al-Baghawī (d. 516/1122), and Ibn al-Jawzī claim to have identified semantic differ-

Moreover, it occurs in the Quran with this meaning in a single verse, namely, Q. 3:7 (if recited without the pause).[24] This type of *taʾwīl* of *mutashābih* verses is thus the kind that is also known by those firmly grounded in knowledge, in addition to God. Ibn Taymiyya is particularly concerned to show that while a correct exposition of the intended meaning of a Quranic passage might, depending on the verse, require a great deal of prerequisite knowledge, it is nonetheless never impossible. The word *taʾwīl* in verse Q. 3:7 must therefore mean something other than *tafsīr* if the pause in recitation is observed.

This leads us to the third sense in which the word *taʾwīl* may be used. In this case, as already mentioned, *taʾwīl* is closely related to the basic linguistic meaning of the word as explicated above. As Ibn Taymiyya says:

> Here, *taʾwīl* signifies that to which the speech is brought back, or to which the speech will be brought back, or to which it goes back itself. The speech goes back (*yarjiʿu*), returns (*yaʿūdu*), settles (*yastaqirru*), comes back (*yaʾūlu*), and is returned (*yuʾawwalu*) to none other than its reality (*ḥaqīqa*), which is its denotatum (*ʿayn al-maqṣūd bihi*). Some of the Salaf thus explained His [God's] words "For every tiding there is a fixed setting" (*li-kulli nabaʾ^{in} mustaqarr^{un}*)[25] as meaning "[Every tiding has] a *ḥaqīqa* (reality)."[26]

According to Ibn Taymiyya, then, the *taʾwīl* of any speech is the object or event in the real world that corresponds to the intended meaning of the speech—regardless whether or not the object exists or the event has already occurred.[27] In the case of a true declarative statement, such as "The sun has risen," its *taʾwīl* is the rising of the sun itself. If the proposition set forth in the declarative statement is false, then there is no object or state of affairs corresponding to the

---

<div style="margin-left: 2em;">

ences between the terms *taʾwīl* and *tafsīr*. He cites these and provides a partial discussion of them. See *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:367–368 and, in greater detail, *Bayān*, 8:263–281, where Ibn Taymiyya praises Ibn al-Jawzī for omitting in his discussion of verse Q. 3:7 any mention of the word *taʾwīl* in the sense of the technical term that emerged later in the discipline of *kalām*. See *Bayān*, 8:269.

24   As elaborated farther below, Ibn Taymiyya deals in detail with the word *taʾwīl* in the Quran, where it is used a total of seventeen times. Claude Gilliot counts eighteen occurrences, but this is incorrect. See Claude Gilliot, "Exegesis of the Qurʾān: Classical and Medieval," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 100a.

25   Q. 6:67.

26   *Iklīl*, MF, 13:293–294.

27   *Iklīl*, MF, 13:289–290.

</div>

intended meaning and, consequently, no *taʾwīl*.[28] The *taʾwīl* of an imperative statement, on the other hand, is the act whose performance is being solicited. Here too the term *taʾwīl* goes beyond the level of semantics since it denotes the ontologically instantiated act to which the intended meaning of the imperative statement refers. Ibn Taymiyya thus understands the statement "*al-sunna taʾwīl al-amr wa-l-nahy*," which he attributes to Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (d. 196/811), to mean that the Sunna of the Prophet represents the implementation and realisation of the commands and prohibitions mentioned in the Quran.[29] For example, the Quran commands the performance of prayer, with the actual act of its performance taking place in the Sunna in exactly the manner intended in the Quran. Yet not only speech but also dreams and actions have a *taʾwīl*. Dreams, insofar as they are true, relate, like speech, to an external object. Ibn Taymiyya cites as an example here the statement related in the Quran on the tongue of the prophet Joseph, who identified the subsequent prostration of some of his family members as the *taʾwīl* of his earlier dream.[30] The *taʾwīl* of true dreams, then, is the very object or state of affairs existing in the external world to which the dream pertains (*nafs madlūl al-ruʾyā*).[31] The *taʾwīl* of actions, on the other hand, is that which follows on from them, that is, their outcome and consequence (*ʿāqiba wa-maṣīra*). In support of this, Ibn Taymiyya cites, among other things, the Quranic story of Moses and al-Khiḍr in which al-Khiḍr undertakes a series of actions whose rationale Moses questions. Al-Khiḍr then explains to Moses the consequences of his acts, explicitly identifying these consequences as the acts' *taʾwīl*.[32]

Both the second and the third meanings of the word *taʾwīl* are present, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, in verse Q. 3:7. Reading with the pause, the verse states that God alone knows the *taʾwīl*, so that "*taʾwīl*" must be understood here in line with the third meaning (referred to in what follows as "ontic *taʾwīl*"). If, however, the verse is read such that those who are firmly grounded in knowledge also have knowledge of *taʾwīl*, then the word must be understood in accord with the second meaning (referred to in the following as "semantic *taʾwīl*").[33] "A person," Ibn Taymiyya states,

---

28   *Iklīl*, MF, 13:294.

29   *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:368; also *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:56–57 (ed. al-Saʿawī, 94).

30   See Q. 12:100. The dream itself is described in Q. 12:4.

31   *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:290.

32   *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:291. See also Q. 18:65–82, where the term *taʾwīl* is used in 18:78 and 18:82.

33   Ibn Taymiyya repeats this in many places, but in one passage he does so with a particularly catchy formula, namely: *al-taʾwīl al-manfī ghayr al-taʾwīl al-muthbat*. This means that the *taʾwīl* that created beings cannot know is not the same as the one that they can know. See *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:400.

may know the *tafsīr* [i.e., the semantic *taʾwīl*] of a statement as well as its meaning, but this does not entail that he necessarily knows its ontic *taʾwīl* as well, for [knowledge of the ontic] *taʾwīl* requires knowledge of the quiddity existing outside the mind (*al-māhiyya al-mawjūda fī al-khārij*) and the distinction between it and other [quiddities like it].[34]

It is thus insufficient, he maintains, that one understand the Quranic verses and prophetic hadith about the localities involved in the pilgrimage and the correct performance thereof in terms of their semantically intended meaning in order for one to know as well the ontic *taʾwīl* of words like "Kaʿba," "al-Ṣafā," and "al-Marwa."[35] As we shall demonstrate in detail when expounding the term *mutashābih*, Ibn Taymiyya is concerned to preserve the knowability of the intended meaning of Quranic speech and to restrict that which is unknowable exclusively to the ontic properties of the objects or events addressed by this speech, insofar as they belong either to the future or to the realm of the metaphysical.

It is beyond dispute that the first meaning of the term *taʾwīl* was unknown in the early days of Islam and is thus based on a later convention.[36] Likewise, there is no doubt that the terms *taʾwīl* and *tafsīr*, as Ibn Taymiyya explains, were used synonymously during this early period.[37] Things become more complicated, however, when one compares the third meaning of the term *taʾwīl* that he puts forth with the views of earlier scholars. To do this, let us recall Ibn Taymiyya's positions that are relevant to such a comparison: Ibn Taymiyya distinguishes the *taʾwīl* related to actions from that which relates to speech or dreams, equating the former with the outcome and consequence (*ʿāqiba wa-maṣīra*) of the action and the latter with the object or state of affairs in the extramental world that corresponds to the intended meaning of an utterance or a dream. As an intermediate step in this process, he first equates the *taʾwīl* of an utterance with its *ḥaqīqa*, then equates the *ḥaqīqa* with distinct expressions such as *ʿayn al-maqṣūd bihi*,[38] *nafs al-murād bi-l-kalām, nafs al-shayʾ al-mukhbar bihi*,[39] and *al-māhiyya al-mawjūda fī al-khārij*.[40] The equation of the term *taʾwīl* with out-

---

34   *Bayān*, 8:291.

35   *Bayān*, 8:291. See also *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:426–427.

36   In this meaning, it is inextricably linked to the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* distinction that arose in the third/ninth century. See the studies related to this mentioned at p. 145, n. 17 above.

37   On this, see also, e.g., Ismail Poonawala, "Taʾwīl," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 10, ed. P.J. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 390b–391a.

38   See quotation on p. 178 above.

39   See *Iklīl*, MF, 13:289.

40   See quotation above on the current page.

come and consequence (ʿāqiba wa-maṣīra) can be found in the writings of numerous scholars prior to Ibn Taymiyya, though they make no distinction regarding whether this taʾwīl relates to actions, speech, or dreams. Such a distinction, and with it the meaning of taʾwīl as the denotatum of a statement or a dream, is one that I have not encountered this unambiguously in other than Ibn Taymiyya.[41] Thus, for instance, the early exegete Muqātil b. Sulaymān generally equates taʾwīl—the exception to this will be elaborated farther below[42]—with ʿāqiba (outcome).[43] Referring to verse Q. 3:7, he interprets that taʾwīl the knowledge of which he ascribes to God alone as the number of years left for the community of the Prophet Muḥammad before the advent of the Last Day.[44] Al-Ṭabarī holds that the Arabs understood the term taʾwīl to mean "al-tafsīr wa-l-marjiʿ wa-l-maṣīr" (the tafsīr [of a thing], [its] origin, and [its] consequence). Similar to his predecessor Muqātil, al-Ṭabarī identifies the taʾwīl mentioned in verse Q. 3:7, the knowledge of which he too attributes to God alone, with the various times at which future events will occur.[45] The linguist Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004), who lived two generations later, subscribes to a similar reading.[46] Furthermore, even the famous lexicographer Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311) seems to have been unaware of the distinction advanced by his contemporary Ibn Taymiyya between the taʾwīl of speech and dreams, on the one hand, and the taʾwīl of actions, on the other. Ibn Manẓūr mentions various Quranic verses containing the word taʾwīl and comments on them by citing the statements of earlier scholars. Taʾwīl in this context is equated with mā yaʾūlu ilayhi al-amr, that is, that to which a matter goes back. This, however, refers not to the ontological reality, as understood by Ibn Taymiyya, but to that in which a matter has its origin and consequence (al-marjiʿ wa-l-maṣīr).[47] According to the philo-

---

41   Ibn Taymiyya himself informs his reader that when explicating the term taʾwīl, at least the exegetes of later generations (mutaʾakhkhirū al-mufassirīn) did not mention this meaning. See Ikhlāṣ, MF, 17:367–368.

42   See n. 53 on the following page.

43   See Muqātil b. Sulaymān, Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān, ed. ʿAbd Allāh Maḥmūd Shiḥāta, 5 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Tārīkh al-ʿArabī, 2002), 1:383 (on Q. 4:59), 2:40 (on Q. 7:53), 2:530 (on Q. 17:35), 2:597 (on Q. 18:78), and 2:599 (on Q. 18:82).

44   See ibid., 1:264.

45   See al-Ṭabarī (ed. Shākir), Tafsīr, 6:200 and 204.

46   See his remarks on the difference between maʿnā (meaning), tafsīr, and taʾwīl in Aḥmad b. Fāris, al-Ṣāḥibī fī fiqh al-lugha al-ʿarabiyya wa-masāʾilihā wa-sunan al-ʿArab fī kalāmihā, ed. Aḥmad Ḥasan Basj (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997), 144–145.

47   Examples of these consequences are given, such as God's reward and punishment or the advent of the day of judgement and the events that follow. See Muḥammad b. Manẓūr, Lisān al-ʿArab, ed. ʿAbd Allāh ʿAlī al-Kabīr, Muḥammad Aḥmad Ḥasb Allāh, and Hāshim Muḥammad al-Shādhilī, 6 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 1:172b.

logist Ḥammād al-Jawharī (d. 393/1002-3), *taʾwīl* need not even necessarily be understood as the origin or result but may merely refer to the explanation of these (*al-taʾwīl tafsīr mā yaʾūlu ilayhi al-shayʾ*).[48] The Māturīdī theologian Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣaffār (d. 534/1139) holds the same position when he interprets *taʾwīl* as "*bayān mā yaʾūlu ilayhi al-ʿāqiba fī al-murād.*"[49] In fact, in all the verses cited by Ibn Taymiyya in support of his position, *taʾwīl* can also be easily understood in the senses put forth by Ibn Manẓūr, al-Jawharī, or al-Ṣaffār. The word is also discussed at length in the Western academic studies I have consulted, but the notion that the *taʾwīl* of a statement is equivalent to its denotatum is nowhere mentioned in these works.[50]

None of this is to say that Ibn Taymiyya was the first to understand the *taʾwīl* of speech as its *ḥaqīqa*. Al-Ṭabarī, centuries earlier, reports that Ibn Zayd[51] equated the word *taʾwīl* with *ḥaqīqa* in Q. 7:53: "on the day when its *taʾwīl* shall come" and Q. 3:7: "none knows its *taʾwīl* but God."[52] But what is the *ḥaqīqa* of a *mutashābih* verse? Is it really the ontic reality of the object or state of affairs in the outside world that corresponds to the meaning of the verse, as Ibn Taymiyya claims? This is possible from a linguistic perspective, and perhaps this is the meaning Ibn Zayd had in mind. But perhaps he merely meant the actual or real meaning of the verse that only God knows in a comprehensive manner. This could also include the description of ontic properties, but in that case the *taʾwīl* would be not the denotatum itself but merely its deeper *tafsīr*.[53] This

---

48   See ibid.

49   Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣaffār, *Talkhīṣ al-adilla li-qawāʿid al-tawḥīd*, ed. Angelika Brodersen, 2 vols. (Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut, 2011), 2:794, lines 5–11. Brodersen gives the correct death date in the Arabic foreword (see 1:7), but cites it erroneously as 543/1139 in the unpaginated German foreword (end of vol. 2) and on the title page.

50   See, e.g., Hussein Abdul-Raof, *Schools of Qurʾanic Exegesis: Genesis and Development* (London: Routledge, 2010), 102–110; Poonawala, "Taʾwīl"; Gilliot, "Exegesis"; and Adnan Demircan and Atay Rifat, "*Tafsīr* in Early Islam," in Leaman, *Qurʾān: An Encyclopedia*.

51   Referring to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Zayd Aslam al-Madanī (d. 182/798-9), whose Quran commentary may have been available to al-Ṭabarī. See Heribert Horst, "Zur Überlieferung im Korankommentar aṭ-Ṭabarīs," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 103 (1953): 305 and 307.

52   Al-Ṭabarī (ed. Shākir), *Tafsīr*, 12:479–480. Ibn Abī Ḥātim (d. 327/939), on the other hand, mentions in his Quran commentary that this same Ibn Zayd understood the term *taʾwīl* in verse Q. 3:7 in the sense of *taḥqīq* (realisation, making real). ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Ḥātim, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm musnadan ʿan Rasūl Allāh ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama wa-l-ṣaḥāba wa-l-tābiʿīn*, ed. Asʿad al-Ṭayyib, 9 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1997), 2:598, narration #3204.

53   This understanding of *taʾwīl* is attested several times. See, e.g., the discussion between the Ismāʿīlī Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/934-5) and the philologist Thaʿlab (d. 291/904), presented in Poonawala, "Taʾwīl," 391a. Muqātil's interpretation of Q. 12:37 amounts to the same.

marks a substantial difference from Ibn Taymiyya, even if it does not affect the interpretation of the phrase "*mā yaʿlamu taʾwīlahu illā Llāh*" in Q. 3:7. We are left, then, with the finding that such a definitive identification of the *taʾwīl* of a statement with its *ḥaqīqa* and then the equation of this *ḥaqīqa* with the ontic reality of the denotatum appears indeed to have begun with Ibn Taymiyya.[54]

The discussion of the terms *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* to which we now turn demonstrates that the manner in which Ibn Taymiyya interprets the term *taʾwīl* allows him to appeal to verse Q. 3:7—whether read with the pause or not—in support of his position on the divine attributes.

1.2 *The Opposite Pair* muḥkam *and* mutashābih

The terms *iḥkām*[55] and *tashābuh*[56] as well as their derivatives are employed in a self-referential manner in numerous passages of the Quran. This, Ibn Taymiyya explains, occurs in both a general (*ʿāmm*) and a specific (*khāṣṣ*) sense. In the general sense, all Quranic verses are qualified by both terms equally, while in the specific sense, the two terms are understood as corresponding to an opposing categorisation of verses.[57] Ibn Taymiyya understands the word *iḥkām* as referring to the separation (*faṣl*), distinction (*tamyīz*), division (*farq*), and specification (*taḥdīd*) of a thing such that it crystallises (*yataḥaqqaqu*) and reaches its perfection (*ḥaṣala itqānuhu*).[58] With reference to the Quran's being *muḥkam* in full, it means that verses with a narrative character establish a distinction

---

In this verse, we read: "No food that is provided to you (two) as sustenance shall come to you but that I will inform you of its *taʾwīl* before it comes." Informing them means, according to Muqātil, giving them information about the types and varieties of the food. See Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 2:334. Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (d. after 409/1018) also reports that the *taʾwīl* reserved for God was understood by some as "that to which the essential realities of things go back in terms of their quiddity, their times [at which they exist], and many of their states" (*mā taʾūlu ilayhi ḥaqāʾiq al-ashyāʾ min kayfiyyātihā wa-azmānihā wa-kathīr min aḥwālihā*). Abū al-Qāsim al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, *Muqaddimat Jāmiʿ al-tafāsīr maʿa tafsīr al-Fātiḥa wa-maṭāliʿ al-Baqara*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥasan Farāḥāt (Kuwait: Dār al-Daʿwa, 1984), 87. The Muʿtazilī ʿAbd al-Jabbār attributes a similar understanding to his fellow Muʿtazilī Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī. See ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 16:379.

54   According to him, this can be found in innumerable works, especially in those of modern authors, but also in, e.g., the Ḥanafī scholar Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz (d. 792/1390). That Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz relies on Ibn Taymiyya in his treatment is more than obvious, although he does not mention him explicitly. See Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz, *Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Ṭaḥāwiyya*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh al-Turkī and Shuʿayb al-Arnaʾūṭ, 2 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1990), 2:251–258.

55   Verbal noun of the root from which the word *muḥkam* is also derived.

56   Verbal noun of the root from which the word *mutashābih* is also derived.

57   *Iklīl*, MF, 13:273 and *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:61–62 (ed. al-Saʿawī, 105). On this, see also figure 1 on p. 121 of the current work, which will be further elaborated below.

58   *Iklīl*, MF, 13:274.

(*tamyīz*) between truth and falsehood and that verses of legal import establish a distinction between guidance and misguidance.[59] Ibn Taymiyya here thus relates *iḥkām ʿāmm* (general *iḥkām*) to the substantive meaning of the Quran, though elsewhere he relates it also to the modality of its revelation, making a distinction between *iḥkām ʿāmm* with respect to the sending down (*tanzīl*) of revelation and with respect to its preservation (*ibqāʾ al-tanzīl*). *Iḥkām ʿāmm* with respect to the sending down of revelation—Ibn Taymiyya has in mind here Q. 22:52—negates any admixing of God's revealed word with the insinuations of the devil, while *iḥkām ʿāmm* with respect to the preservation of revelation refers to the clarification of the meaning of Quranic verses that is ultimately intended, that is, the meaning that is subject to no further abrogation (*naskh*) or specification (*takhṣīṣ*).[60] This is why, according to Ibn Taymiyya, some of the Salaf contrasted *muḥkam* verses with those that have been subject to *naskh*.[61]

Iḥkām also manifests in a third form, one having to do with semantic *taʾwīl* and meaning (*al-iḥkām fī al-taʾwīl wa-l-maʿnā*). As such, it pertains only to a portion of the Quran, specifically those verses that eliminate the semantic ambiguity of other parts of the Quran until all meanings are ruled out that were not intended by God. This is known as specific *iḥkām* (*iḥkām khāṣṣ*)—Ibn Taymiyya refers here exclusively to verse Q. 3:7—which is the opposite of specific *tashābuh*.[62]

The word *tashābuh*, Ibn Taymiyya informs us, signifies in a general sense that two or more objects are so similar that an observer would be incapable of distinguishing them.[63] General *tashābuh*, he explains further—that is, the *tashābuh* that pertains to all Quranic verses—should be understood in the sense that God's statements in the Quran are mutually reinforcing and free of contradiction.[64] Specific *tashābuh*, as indicated previously, pertains only to some verses and is the opposite of specific *iḥkām*. While in the case of general *tashābuh* what follows from the similarity of God's words to one another is a lack of contradiction, in the case of specific *tashābuh* it is ambiguity. Ibn Taymiyya divides specific *tashābuh*, addressed exclusively in verse Q. 3:7, into absolute (*kullī*), on the one hand, and relative (*nisbī*) or accidental (*iḍāfī*), on the other.

---

59   *Tadmuriyya*, ᴍꜰ, 3:60; ed. al-Saʿawī, 102–103.

60   *Iklīl*, ᴍꜰ, 13:272–274.

61   In the usage of the Salaf, Ibn Taymiyya informs us, no terminological distinction is made between abrogation and specification, with the result that both are identified as *naskh*. See *Iklīl*, ᴍꜰ, 13:274.

62   *Iklīl*, ᴍꜰ, 13:274–275.

63   *Bayān*, 8:347.

64   *Tadmuriyya*, ᴍꜰ, 3:61; ed. al-Saʿawī, 104.

In the case of *mutashābih* verses that fall under the first category, the ambiguity is irresolvable, with knowledge of the *taʾwīl* of such verses thus belonging to God alone. Thus, if one reads verse Q. 3:7 with the pause, then the *taʾwīl* referred to, as expounded above, is ontic and the *tashābuh* absolute. Without the pause, the *taʾwīl* must be understood as semantic *taʾwīl* and the *tashābuh* as relative or accidental. Here, the resolution of the ambiguity occasioned by specific *tashābuh* is contingent on the previous knowledge of the interlocutor. We explain this below using an example that Ibn Taymiyya cites in several places.

Ibn Taymiyya considers it a fact indisputably attested by the tradition that the visit of the Christian delegation from Najran to the Prophet and the debates that took place on that occasion constitute the historical context in which verse Q. 3:7 was revealed.[65] In these debates, he tells us, the Christians cited the pronoun "we" (*naḥnu, innā*) frequently used in the Quran with reference to God as evidence that Islam acknowledges the doctrine of the trinity.[66] Ibn Taymiyya does not dispute the fact that such an interpretation is possible from a semantic point of view. He concedes that someone who refers to himself in the first-person plural could mean to refer to himself and his partisans, who are either hierarchically subordinate to him or—as the Christian delegation understood it—hierarchically equal to him.[67] Elsewhere, he mentions a third possibility for interpreting the pronoun "we," namely, as a *pluralis majestatis*.[68] The term "we" is thus *mutashābih* on account of its equivocity. The correct semantic *taʾwīl*, or knowledge of the meaning intended by the expression, depends here on the interlocutor's level of knowledge. If the interpreter is familiar with the *muḥkam* verses that clearly negate the existence of any hierarchically equal copartner of God,[69] then he also recognises that the interpretation of the word "we" put forth by the Christian delegation must be rejected as false and that the cor-

---

65 *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:377. According to another opinion, the verse was revealed when the Jews in Medina wanted to use the individual letters with which some suras begin as a chronogram for calculating the time of the demise of the Muslim community or the advent of the day of judgement. Ibn Taymiyya rejects this view partly because the event in question has not been reliably transmitted in his estimation. See *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:398–399. Interestingly, al-Ṭabarī in one passage in his commentary also considers the extant traditions concerning this event to be entirely inauthentic; he nevertheless cites the event in another passage as the reason for the revelation of verse Q. 3:7. See al-Ṭabarī (ed. Shākir), *Tafsīr*, 2:225 (with editor's comment in n. 5) and 6:179–180.

66 Ibn Taymiyya cites this story in various places with differing levels of detail. See *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:377–378 and 398; *Iklīl*, MF, 13:276; *Bayān*, 8:498–499; *Jawāb*, 3:448; *Furqān I*, MF, 13:145.

67 *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:377.

68 *Iklīl*, MF, 13:276.

69 Ibn Taymiyya refers here to Q. 2:163 and 25:2, in addition to other verses.

rect semantic *taʾwīl* is to be found in the other two meanings.[70] But, if we go a step farther and inquire into the ontic nature of the relationship between God, the omnipotent and self-sufficient, and His devout servants, we are now venturing into metaphysical territory. We may be sure that such a relationship is incomparable to the relationship between a human king and his subjects since the king is dependent on the loyalty of his subordinates.[71] However, a positive description of this relationship, which would have to be based on knowledge of the ontic *taʾwīl*, cannot be given here since such knowledge belongs to God alone, as does knowledge of the number and precise characteristics of God's devout servants (Ibn Taymiyya appeals here to the Quranic verse "None knows the hosts of your Lord save Him").[72] The pronoun "we" used in the Quran with reference to God is thus *mutashābih* in a double sense—that is, on both the semantic and the ontic levels—and it is only on the semantic level that knowledge of the *taʾwīl* can be ascribed to at least some human beings in addition to God. What holds for the pronoun "we" discussed in this example can now be applied to all Quranic expressions insofar as they speak either of a fact in the future or of metaphysical entities. A Quranic verse dealing with the day of judgement is, on a semantic level, in all cases *mutashābih* in a relative sense. With respect to its ontic *taʾwīl*, however, it is *mutashābih* in an absolute sense since only God knows the moment when the day of judgement will advene. If a verse speaks of the bounties of paradise, such as the rivers of *khamr*, then one may indeed understand this as a reference to rivers of wine. However, the possibility that human beings could have knowledge of the ontic properties of this wine, such as its colour, taste, and smell, is denied in Q. 3:7 if the verse is read with the corresponding pause. Ibn Taymiyya likewise considers the verses that speak of God's attributes to be entirely comprehensible, and thus *muḥkam*, in terms of their intended meaning on the semantic level. Thus, it is clear what is meant when God says, for instance, that He is *raḥīm* (merciful), *samī'* (hearing), and *baṣīr* (seeing). One could also cite here the examples of God's *yad* (hand), *wajh* (face), and *'ayn* (eye) for additional elucidation, as it is clear here that Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of Q. 3:7 takes its cue from the method of *tafwīḍ*.[73] However, knowing how these attributes are constituted and realised with respect to God requires knowledge of their ontic *taʾwīl*, and that knowledge is possessed by God alone. It should thus be noted that for Ibn Taymiyya, expressions denoting the attributes of God are either *muḥkam* or *mutashābih*

---

70   *Iklīl*, MF, 13:276.

71   *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:377–378.

72   Q. 74:31. See *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:378.

73   On *tafwīḍ*, see p. 67 ff. above.

The Concepts
iḥkām and *tashābuh*
in the Quran

iḥkām

tashābuh

tashābuh khāṣṣ
Quran 3:7

tashābuh ʿāmm
Quran 39:23

iḥkām ʿāmm
Quran 11:1 und
22:52

iḥkām khāṣṣ
Quran 3:7

tashābuh iḍāfī nisbī
(without pause in
recitation)

tashābuh kullī
(with pause in
recitation)

tashābuh muṭlaq

tashābuh muʿayyan
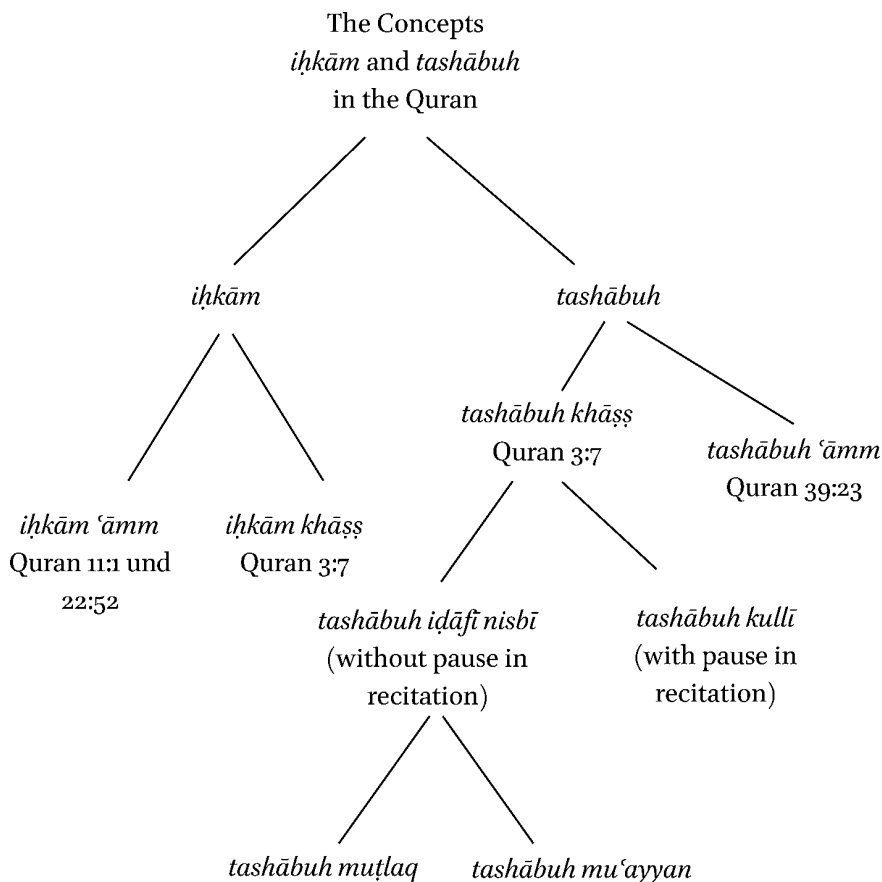
FIGURE 3   Ibn Taymiyya's categorisation of the Quranic terms *iḥkām* and *tashābuh*

nisbī depending on the interlocutor's level of knowledge; moreover, they are always *mutashābih kullī* as well. Whether and in what way such expressions are addressed by verse Q. 3:7 depends on whether the verse is read with the pause or not.[74]

To round out the picture of Ibn Taymiyya's categorisation of *tashābuh*, it should be mentioned here that relative *tashābuh* can be further divided into unrestricted (*muṭlaq*) and specific (*muʿayyan*) relative *tashābuh*.[75] With unres-

---

74   On this and on the examples cited above, see *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:57–59; ed. al-Saʿawī, 97–101. Similar passages with additional examples can be found in *Iklīl*, MF, 13:278–279 and *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:379–380, as well as *Bayān*, 8:296–297.

75   *Bayān*, 8:378–379. To my knowledge, this is the only place where Ibn Taymiyya articulates this further categorisation.

tricted *tashābuh*, the uncertainty regarding the intended meaning lies alone with the interlocutor. Thus, a fully univocal term like "Ramaḍān" is understood by some Nuṣayrīs not as a month but as referring to a number of their scholars (*ism li-ʿadad min shuyūkhihim*).[76] Unrestricted *tashābuh* is thus not a characteristic that belongs to a verse or a Quranic expression; rather, it arises solely as a function of the interlocutor's lack of knowledge and can thus potentially relate to any expression. Specific *tashābuh*, on the other hand, stems both from the equivocity of God's words and from the interlocutor, who, on account of his inadequate knowledge, is unable to distinguish the intended from the non-intended meaning. The question concerning the pronoun "we" in the example cited above falls under this category. Figure 3 on the previous page summarises in visual form the foregoing discussion regarding Ibn Taymiyya's categorisation of the Quranic terms *muḥkam* and *tashābuh*.

1.3 *Verse Q. 3:7—A Crossroads in Quranic Hermeneutics?*

Now that we have presented Ibn Taymiyya's position on verse Q. 3:7, the current section critically examines an assumption that is often repeated in the academic literature, as such an examination will help better situate Ibn Taymiyya's views within the reception history of this verse in Islamic thought. Without a doubt, few verses of the Quran have been discussed within the Islamic tradition in a manner as elaborate and simultaneously contradictory as Q. 3:7. It is entirely correct to identify this verse, as Angelika Neuwirth does, as a *crux interpretum*.[77] Other scholars have gone farther and suggested that how one understands Q. 3:7 has repercussions not only for the interpretation of the verse itself but also for the positions one takes on basic hermeneutical questions, making the verse a sort of crossroads in Quranic hermeneutics. At issue here is not only the interpretation of the terms mentioned in the verse, such as *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*, but also, more important, the pause in recitation that affects the meaning, which John Wansbrough states "may be understood to symbolize all argument about the limits of exegetical activity."[78] Among these fundamental hermeneutical questions is whether the Quran contains expressions whose intended meaning remains closed to human beings on the linguistic level because it is known only to God. Frequently contrasted here are the

---

76   *Bayān*, 8:367.

77   Angelika Neuwirth, "Reclaiming Babylon: The Multiple Languages of the Qurʾān," in *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages: Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation, in Honour of Hans Daiber*, ed. Anna Akasoy and Wim Raven (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 586–587.

78   John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2004), 152.

views of al-Ṭabarī and al-Zamakhsharī, who, as previously described, held contrary positions regarding the pause. Their differing attitudes have given rise to the hasty conclusion—as we find in Orhan Elmaz, for example—that al-Ṭabarī holds "the austere position that God alone has knowledge of the interpretation of the ambiguities in His speech," whereas according to al-Zamakhsharī "religious scholars indeed can, even must, interpret ambiguous passages."[79] Sahiron Syamsuddin gives voice to a similar understanding of the matter when he states that al-Ṭabarī and al-Zamakhsharī held diametrically opposed positions on the possibility of interpreting *mutashābih* verses.[80] What is presented here as a dispute over a core exegetical premiss, however, turns out upon closer inspection to be a purely semantic disagreement rooted in the ambiguity of the terms *mutashābih* and *muḥkam*. Thus, one reads in the Ḥanbalī scholar al-Mardāwī (d. 885/1480) the following assessment of the dispute over the pause:

> It has been said: The disagreement over it is semantic (*lafẓī*), for he who claims that the one firmly rooted in knowledge knows its *taʾwīl* [i.e., that of a *mutashābih* verse] means thereby that he knows its meaning [as intended by the speaker] (*ẓāhiruhu*), but not its reality (*ḥaqīqatuhu*). And he who claims that it [i.e., *taʾwīl*] cannot be known means thereby its reality, the knowledge of which belongs exclusively to God, the exalted.[81]

It is quite possible that in writing these lines, al-Mardāwī had in mind his Ḥanbalī colleague Ibn Taymiyya, who was a strong proponent of the view he describes.[82] Yet this position had already been held long before Ibn Taymiyya, including by scholars who were not Ḥanbalī, or even Sunni, in affiliation.[83] For

---

79 Orhan Elmaz, "Wenn Pausen Grenzen setzen: Über den Koranvers Q 3:7 und die Qualität einer Rezitationspause," in *Religion übersetzen: Übersetzung und Textrezeption als Transformationsphänomene von Religion*, ed. Marianne Grohmann and Ursula Ragacs (Vienna: V&R unipress, 2012), 213. In the same passage, Elmaz erroneously claims that Ibn Taymiyya restricted what is categorised as unknowable in verse Q. 3:7 to the reality of the divine attributes. The source he cites, however, does not support this claim. See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 54.

80 See Sahiron Syamsuddin, "*Muḥkam* and *Mutashābih*: An Analytical Study of al-Ṭabarī's and al-Zamakhsharī's Interpretations of Q. 3:7," *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1991): 73.

81 ʿAlī al-Mardāwī, *al-Taḥbīr sharḥ al-Taḥrīr fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jibrīn, 8 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2000), 3:1411.

82 The editor also points this out in the footnote to the above quotation, citing *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:381, where Ibn Taymiyya makes a statement identical in substance to this one.

83 For instance, it is also found with striking clarity in the Shīʿī thinker al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044). See ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, *Amālī al-Murtaḍā: Ghurar al-fawāʾid*

example, the Andalusian exegete Ibn ʿAṭiyya (d. 541/1147) cites various opinions on the question whether or not God alone has knowledge of *taʾwīl*. He concludes with the remark that "in this question, when considered in depth, the [apparent] dissent approaches a consensus."[84] He too explains how this is by showing the way in which the meanings of the terms *taʾwīl* and *mutashābih* change depending on whether one pauses when reciting or not.[85] It is precisely on this basis that the apparent disagreement can be resolved between Abū ʿAlī al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/916), who was a proponent of the pause, and his peers in the Muʿtazilī school, who were generally opposed to it. Al-Jubbāʾī was convinced that the intended meaning of the entire Quran could be known, but he argued in favour of the pause because he regarded the word *taʾwīl* in Q. 3:7 as relating to the description of the ontic properties of metaphysical entities.[86] As the Muʿtazilī theologian ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025) remarks, one must presume the necessity of the pause if *taʾwīl* is to be understood in this manner. He himself rejects it, however, because he understands *taʾwīl* in Q. 3:7 as merely the exposition of the intended meaning of semantically ambiguous verses.[87] The same is true of the views of al-Ṭabarī and al-Zamakhsharī, who therefore cannot be compared in the manner done by Elmaz and Syamsuddin.[88] We may note instead, with respect to the positions of these two scholars and also of Ibn Taymiyya, that although all three of them hold mutually divergent views on the pause in particular and on verse Q. 3:7 more generally, they are nevertheless in agreement that the intended meaning of all Quranic verses is knowable and

---

wa-durar al-qalāʾid, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1954), 1:439–441.

84   Ibn ʿAṭiyya, *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz fī tafsīr al-kitāb al-ʿazīz*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad, 6 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2001), 1:403.

85   Ibid.

86   See Fudge, *Qurʾānic Hermeneutics*, 119.

87   See al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mutashābih al-Qurʾān*, ed. ʿAdnān Zarzūr, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1969), 1:15. This section is also presented in Fudge, *Qurʾānic Hermeneutics*, 125–126.

88   It should not be denied that a different understanding of verse Q. 3:7 might also affect the setting of boundaries for what is possible in Quranic exegesis. Thus, for instance, Ibn Qudāma—in contrast to al-Ṭabarī and al-Zamakhsharī—holds that the Quran does contain expressions that are incomprehensible. He can support this with verse Q. 3:7 because he argues in favour of the pause in recitation and interprets the word *taʾwīl* in the sense of *tafsīr*. See Ibn Qudāma, *Rawḍat al-nāẓir*, 94–96. In another theological context, but also with reference to Q. 3:7, the Murjiʾa too argue for the possibility that the meaning of many Quranic verses will not be made known to human beings until the day of judgement. On this view, as well as on the critique of it by ʿAbd al-Jabbār, see Cornelia Schöck, *Koranexegese, Grammatik und Logik: Zum Verhältnis von arabischer und aristotelischer Urteils-, Konsequenz- und Schlußlehre* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 388–393.

that the knowledge of when the day of judgement will occur, as well as of the ontic properties of metaphysical entities, is known by God alone.[89]

The relevance of verse Q. 3:7 lies not in whether and to what extent it defines the boundaries of Quranic exegesis but in the different theological implications that have been attached to it within its reception history in Islamic thought. In al-Ṭabarī, the *mutashābih* verses are so narrowly defined that Q. 3:7 can only be invoked to a limited extent in theological disputes. In the Muʿtazilī tradition, and therefore also for al-Zamakhsharī, on the other hand, the distinction made in Q. 3:7 between *muḥkam* and *mutashābih* verses constitutes a fundamental hermeneutical building block in the interpretation of theologically relevant passages of the Quran. On this point, Suleiman Mourad remarks:

> This is why the Muʿtazila, more than any other group, were attracted to the genre of *mutashābih al-Qurʾān* (books and treatises on the ambiguous verses of the Quran), and that was precisely because it allowed them to identify the ambiguous verses, but more importantly to offer the "true" interpretation of these verses in a way that helps them determine and validate the tenets of their theological system.[90]

Particularly in the discussion concerning the proper understanding of the divine attributes, verse Q. 3:7 was referenced numerous times outside the Muʿtazilī school, such as in the works of the Ashʿarīs[91] and the Māturīdīs[92]—and this long before the time of Ibn Taymiyya. The debate over the correct

---

89   Although al-Ṭabarī does not claim that the ontic properties of metaphysical entities can be known, their non-knowability, in his view, is not addressed by verse Q. 3:7 at all. The term *mutashābih* in the verse, according to him, pertains only to the times at which future events will occur, such as the day of judgement. It also includes, for instance, the disconnected letters (*al-ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭaʿa*) by which some suras of the Quran are introduced. When used to determine when the day of judgement will occur, they are *mutashābih*, but in terms of their meaning as intended by God, they are, like all verses in the Quran, knowable and therefore *muḥkam*. See al-Ṭabarī (ed. Shākir), *Tafsīr*, 1:220–223, 6:180–182, and 6:200–201. Al-Ṭabarī clearly applies this dichotomy to all verses that speak of future events. Thus, McAuliffe's claim that the *mutashābih* for him includes only the disconnected letters in the Quran is untenable. See Jane McAuliffe, "Text and Textuality: Q 3:7 as a Point of Intersection," in *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qurʾān*, ed. Issa Boullata (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), 58.

90   Suleiman A. Mourad, "Towards a Reconstruction of the Muʿtazilī Tradition of Qurʾanic Exegesis: Reading the Introduction to the *Tahdhīb* of al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī (d. 494/1101) and Its Application," in *Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qurʾanic Exegesis (2nd/8th–9th/15th C.)*, ed. Karen Bauer (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 111–112.

91   See, e.g., Allard, *Attributs divins*, 328–329.

92   See, e.g., Brodersen, *Der unbekannte* kalām, 159–160.

understanding of Q. 3:7 had become so theologically charged in the meantime that it is hardly surprising that Ibn Taymiyya, on the one hand, addresses it at such length in his various works and, on the other hand, interprets it in a manner distinct from that of al-Ṭabarī, who in his lengthy expositions does not link the verse in any way to the controversy concerning the divine attributes.

2 Ibn Taymiyya's Challenge to the Validity of *taʾwīl majāzī*: Attempting to Limit the Scope of Application of the Universal Rule (*al-qānūn al-kullī*)

2.1 *The Ashʿarīs and the Universal Rule*

In his *Tadmuriyya*, Ibn Taymiyya makes an observation that I believe summarises one of the central points in the dispute over the divine attributes between the Ashʿarīs and *ahl al-ḥadīth*. He writes that many of the scholars of *kalām* elaborate their theology on the basis of a framework of premises that they consider to constitue the rational foundations (*uṣūl ʿaqliyya*) without which the truth of prophethood, and thus the truth of revelation, cannot be proved. A group that Ibn Taymiyya does not specify (he most likely has the Ashʿarīs in mind) linked the provability of the existence of God—a prerequisite for the provability of the truth of revelation—to the provability of the temporal origination of the world. The provability of this, in turn, is based on the premiss that bodies are temporally originated, which relies on the further premiss that the attributes and actions inherent in bodies are also temporal in nature.[93] The provability of revelation thus stands or falls with the truth of these basic rational premises such that in the event of a contradiction between them and revelation, revelation must either be interpreted (*yuʾawwalu*) or its meaning declared unknowable (*yufawwaḍu*).[94] The train of reasoning Ibn Taymiyya describes here can already be found in the writings of al-Ashʿarī[95] and his early followers,[96] but it is only with al-Ghazālī that it was cast for the first time in

---

93   We deal with this topic in chapter 9 of the current work.

94   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:alif–bāʾ; ed. al-Saʿawī, 147–148. This is a part of the seventh rule (*qāʿida*) presented in *Tadmuriyya*, which Ibn Taymiyya may have added later (see here ed. al-Saʿawī, 146, n. 9). MF is not paginated here numerically as is customary, but by the letters *alif* to *sīn*. Owing to the large degree of similarity in content, it is possible that Ibn Taymiyya is referring here to a passage in al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*. This passage, which we shall treat shortly, can be found in al-Rāzī, *Asās al-taqdīs*, 221.

95   See el Omari, "Ibn Taymiyya's 'Theology of the Sunna,'" 109–114, esp. the example of God's speech on p. 114.

96   Typically Ashʿarī is, for example, al-Bāqillānī's interpretation of the divine attributes of

the form of a "universal rule" (*qānūn kullī*)[97]—as al-Ghazālī himself calls it—which was then further systematised and comprehensively applied by al-Rāzī, who lived two generations later.[98] Al-Rāzī states in his work *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*[99] that there are four possible approaches for dealing with a conflict between apodictic rational proofs (*dalāʾil qaṭʿiyya ʿaqliyya*) and the outward meaning (*ẓāhir*) of scriptural indicants (*adilla samʿiyya*).[100] The first two possibilities al-Rāzī lists consist, respectively, in the acceptance or rejection of both the rational proofs and the scriptural evidence. He rejects both possibilities in view of the logical principle that contradictory statements can be neither simultaneously true nor simultaneously false. A third possibility consists in granting revelation priority over reason. But this too, according to al-Rāzī, is not the correct approach, for—and this is the premiss on which the universal rule is based—reason as a source of knowledge is considered the foundation (*aṣl*) of revelation insofar as the truth of revelation can only be inferred through rational means. It is therefore not possible to question the reliability of reason without simultaneously impeaching the credibility of revelation as a source of knowledge. For al-Rāzī, then, there remains only one possibility, namely, to grant priority to reason, then either to interpret the revelational data that contradicts it in accord with a non-obvious meaning (*taʾwīl*) or, if this is not possible, to refrain from proffering an interpretation altogether (*tafwīḍ*). This, al-Rāzī summarises,

---

contentment (*riḍā*) and anger (*ghaḍab*), which he understands exclusively as God's will to bestow benefits on or to punish someone, respectively. This, as one of his reasons goes, is because the internal states of being pleased or angry necessarily entail a change in the state of their subject, and God must be declared free of such changes in state. Al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 27.

97   See Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Qānūn al-taʾwīl*, ed. Maḥmūd Bījū (n.p.: n.p., 1993), 15. Frank Griffel provides information on the background, authorship, dating, and content of this concise but influential treatise and also addresses Ibn Taymiyya's position vis-à-vis the universal rule articulated in it. See Frank Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist: The Universal Rule for Allegorically Interpreting Revelation (*al-Qānūn al-Kullī fī t-Taʾwīl*)," in *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of al-Ghazālī. Papers Collected on His 900th Anniversary*, vol. 1, ed. Georges Tamer (Leiden: Brill, 2015). See also Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 111–116.

98   See here also Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 73–74.

99   Similar passages can be found in his work *al-Masāʾil al-khamsūn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, as well as in his well-known *Tafsīr*. The relevant passages are presented in Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 89–94.

100   This and the following refer to al-Rāzī, *Asās al-taqdīs*, 220. A full English translation of this passage can also be found in Nicholas Heer, "The Priority of Reason in the Interpretation of Scripture: Ibn Taymīyah and the *Mutakallimūn*," in *The Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy*, ed. Mustansir Mir (in collaboration with J.E. Fossum) (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1993), 184; also Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 90 and 93.

is the universal rule by which one must abide when dealing with ambiguous statements (*mutashābihāt*) in revelation.

In his bid to demonstrate the invalidity of this rule, Ibn Taymiyya propounds forty-four arguments, which he elaborates in his work *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* over the course of more than five hundred pages.[101] In addition to Nicholas Heer's 1993 summary of Ibn Taymiyya's counter-position,[102] more comprehensive studies of this work have recently become available.[103] One of Ibn Taymiyya's main strategies in refuting the universal rule is to replace the dichotomy it posits between reason and revelation with the dichotomy of knowledge versus conjecture.[104] Thus, Ibn Taymiyya insists, precedence is given to whichever knowledge claim is better established, regardless whether it originates in reason or in revelation. He firmly rejects the possibility that there could be any contradiction between rational knowledge and knowledge acquired from the revealed texts when both are on the level of certain knowledge.[105]

Frank Griffel has argued in a recent article that Ibn Taymiyya's position entails a "vicious cycle." I detect some difficulties in Griffel's article, however, that prevent me from endorsing his verdict. These difficulties stem from his inconsistent use of the terms *ʿaql* (reason) and *ẓāhir* (which he translates throughout as "outward sense"), though I concur with him that Ibn Taymiyya himself makes for much confusion by employing these terms to mean different things without indicating this explicitly. Griffel sensibly distinguishes in his article between *reason* and *reason**. The former term refers to the form of reason that Ibn Taymiyya ascribes to his opponents and that he considers false, while the latter stands for what Ibn Taymiyya refers to as *ṣarīḥ al-ʿaql*. Griffel, following Anke von Kügelgen, translates *ṣarīḥ al-ʿaql* as "uncontaminated reason." According to Ibn Taymiyya, this form of reason, as Griffel notes, necessarily produces true (*ḍarūrī*) judgements and those that are based in the natural disposition (*fiṭra*) of man.[106]

We turn now to the first difficulty in Griffel's treatment. At one point, Griffel describes Ibn Taymiyya's position as follows:

---

101   Predominantly in volumes 1 and 5.

102   See Heer, "Priority of Reason," 188–192.

103   See Qadhi, "Reconciling Reason and Revelation," esp. chap. 2; El-Tobgui, *Reason and Revelation*, esp. chap. 3. Less detailed but also worthwhile are el Omari, "Ibn Taymiyya's 'Theology of the Sunna,'" 107–114 and Jaffer, *Rāzī*, esp. 117–129, as well as Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist," esp. 119–120.

104   See here esp. El-Tobgui, *Reason and Revelation*, 156–163.

105   On this point, see ibid., as well as Qadhi, "Reconciling Reason and Revelation," 197–206.

106   Frank Griffel, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Ashʿarite Opponents on Reason and Revelation: Similarities, Differences, and a Vicious Circle," *Muslim World* 108, no. 1 (2018): 34.

1) Reason* verifies revelation.
2) Revelation verifies reason*.
3) Cases of conflict between reason* and the *outward sense* of revelation are impossible.

If such a case appears, a mistake had [*sic*] been made about what reason* mandates.[107]

Griffel had previously used the term "outward sense" only in relation to Ashʿarī positions, in which case it is indeed the correct translation of the Arabic word *ẓāhir*, denoting that which first occurs to one's mind upon reading a text. The word *ẓāhir* in Ibn Taymiyya has another meaning,[108] however, so it might have been appropriate to speak of a *ẓāhir** by way of analogy with *reason**. It is incorrect to maintain that in Ibn Taymiyya's view, it is impossible for *ẓāhir* as understood by the Ashʿarīs to come into conflict with reason*. Yet this is precisely what Griffel seems to be saying here, thereby contradicting an assertion he makes a few pages earlier, where he states that

> Fakhr al-Dīn only admits conflict with the outward sense of revelation, which in his opinion is not the true meaning (*maʿnā ḥaqīqī*) of the text but a mere metaphor (*majāz*) that stands in for what the text wishes to express. Like Ibn Taymiyya, he claims that there is no contradiction between reason and what revelation *wishes to express*.[109]

If we take both cited passages together, then the third proposition in the first passage, in order to be correct, should read: "3) Cases of conflict between reason* and what revelation *wishes to express* are impossible." Following the first quotation, Griffel continues:

> This, however, is a circular argument. If the truth of what is mandated by reason is verified by recourse to revelation, then there is no verification of reason independent of revelation. And if that is the case, how can reason verify revelation?[110]

Here one must ask how, then, Ibn Taymiyya arrives at what revelation wishes to express. This indeed involves a process that occurs primarily through reason*.

---

107 Ibid., 35 (emphasis mine).
108 See pp. 170–171 above.
109 Griffel, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Ashʿarite Opponents," 31 (emphasis mine).
110 Ibid., 35.

Even passages that appear unproblematic are, though we may not be aware of it, unproblematic only through the intervention of reason*. Thus, for example, we read in the Quran that God is the creator of all things; yet the obvious fact that this is not meant to assert that God created Himself is something we recognise through reason*.[111] Textual meaning (in Griffel's sense of "what the text wishes to express") and reason* are inextricably intertwined. However, Griffel's statement cited above seems to be based on the view that textual meaning and reason are two things existing side by side that can be constituted independently of each other and are thus susceptible of contradiction.

A second difficulty resides in the question of what kind of "verification" Griffel is seeking when he himself says that according to Ibn Taymiyya, reason* consists of necessarily true judgements and of those that are rooted in the human *fiṭra*, for this amounts to saying none other than that they require no justification and that they are self-evident. To illustrate this with an example, revelation states that God is on high (*fī al-samāʾ*). The necessary and/or *fiṭra*-based (and thus not further justifiable) judgement of reason*, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, recognises that it is unbefitting that God be located beneath our feet or beside us. Rather, He is above us, something that is also indicated by the *fiṭra*-based act of a person's turning towards the heavens when supplicating. Thus, what revelation wishes to express by the phrase "*fī al-samāʾ*," that is, the *ẓāhir** of this statement, is consistent with what Ibn Taymiyya maintains is the self-evident judgement of reason*, namely, that God is, from our vantage point, in an upward direction. Yet this interpretation collides with the reason (sans asterisk) of, for instance, the Ashʿarīs since this reason, Ibn Taymiyya affirms, is one that is beset with error.

The third difficulty is that Griffel seems to understand Ibn Taymiyya to be saying that reason* can serve only to recognise revelation as a whole to be true, but not discrete statements within revelation. In this vein, Griffel translates the following parable put forth by Ibn Taymiyya to illustrate his position:

> Reason* points to the trustworthiness (*ṣidq*) of the prophet in a general and absolute way. [Reason*] is like an untrained man (*ʿāmmī*), who, if he knows the expertise of the *muftī* [M] and points someone else [S] towards him, explains to the latter [S] that the former [M] is a scholar and a *muftī*. When the untrained man, who points to the *muftī*, disagrees with the *muftī*, it is incumbent upon the one who requests a *fatwā* [S] to submit to the teachings of the *muftī*. Now, consider the untrained man says to the

---

111   *Madaniyya*, MF, 6:361; ed. al-Farriyān, 42–43. See also *Bayān*, 285–286.

one who requests a *fatwā* [S]: "I am the foundation (*al-aṣl*) of your knowledge that he is a *muftī*. Now that his teachings oppose my teachings, if you give preference to his teachings over mine you dismiss (*qadaḥta*) the source by which you found out that he is a *muftī*." The one who requests the *fatwā* [S] answers: "Once you acknowledged that he is a *muftī* and once you pointed to this fact, you acknowledged the necessity of following him rather than following you, and this is what your pointing (*dalīl*) acknowledged. My agreement with you regarding this particular knowledge [namely knowing who is the *muftī*] does not mean that I also agree with you in your knowledge about other issues. Your mistake in disagreeing with the *muftī*, who is more knowledgeable than you, does not mean that you are also mistaken in knowing that he is a *muftī*."[112]

Based on this, Griffel then affirms:

> In Ibn Taymiyya's parable, reason* is dismissed once it has done its job of pointing to revelation.[113]

In light of my comments above, it should be clear that the untrained man in the parable is questioning the mufti's statements on the basis not of reason* but of reason. Once again, reason* contains necessary judgements and/or those induced by the *fiṭra*, and these judgements, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, cannot contradict what revelation wishes to express (represented in the parable by the mufti's fatwas). Were it really reason* that should be discarded when reading revelation, as Griffel seems to say here, then not only would Ibn Taymiyya be a literalist, but he would also have failed to grasp that the meaning of the text can never be deduced without the help of some form of reason or another. But the fact that reason* and textual meaning (in the sense of what the text wishes to express) are not divorced for Ibn Taymiyya shows that he does not have as simplistic an understanding of hermeneutics as Griffel implicitly, if not explicitly, imputes to him.

Griffel rightly notes, however, that upon closer inspection, the position of the proponents of the universal rule is more similar to that of Ibn Taymiyya than a superficial reading of Ibn Taymiyya's often polemical writings might make it appear.[114] The real point of conflict, in my view, lies in the fact that as the

---

112   Griffel, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Ashʿarite Opponents," 36–37 (original at *Darʾ*, 1:138).
113   Ibid., 37.
114   Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist," 119; also Griffel, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Ashʿarite Opponents," 38.

Ashʿarī school developed, the number of rational judgements classified as constituting certain knowledge and as being in conflict with the *ẓāhir* meaning of revelation increased substantially, while the degree of semantic sharpness of the revealed texts was progressively downgraded. Thus, if some Ashʿarīs of the first generation, including al-Ashʿarī himself, could accept, for instance, hands, eyes, and a face as established attributes of God on the grounds that these are definitively affirmed in the revealed texts and do not contradict any apodictic rational judgement, their later Ashʿarī colleagues, based on the universal rule, understood these same attributes only in a figurative sense.[115] This development culminated in the thought of al-Rāzī, who, as Jaffer states, can be described as an Ashʿarī in terms of his substantive theological views but a Muʿtazilī in terms of his methodology.[116] It was likewise al-Rāzī who, in comparison to his earlier Ashʿarī colleagues, attested to a particularly high degree of imprecision and vagueness in language, thus considerably limiting the meaningfulness of the revealed texts.[117] The concomitant expansion of the scope of application of the hermeneutical instrument of *taʾwīl majāzī* served to reinforce this instrument in its function of aligning the meaning of revelation with rational judgements that were taken to be apodictic. It is hardly surprising that there is no consensus across school lines about which judgements of reason can, in fact, be regarded as certain. Thus, al-Ghazālī remarks in his *Fayṣal al-tafriqa* that the Ḥanbalī locates God above (*fawqa*) creation because he does not subscribe to the rational judgement of the Ashʿarī that such a thing is impossible, while the reverse is true with respect to the Ashʿarī vis-à-vis the Muʿtazilī on the question of the possibility of seeing God in the hereafter.[118]

---

115   On this, see p. 203, n. 136 below. For an overview of the development of Ashʿarī doctrine concerning the attributes, see also chapter 3, section 5.

116   See Jaffer, *Rāzī*, esp. 54 ff. and 68 ff. I should also point out that al-Rāzī's methodology and some of his views are also heavily influenced by the *falāsifa*, to the extent that he is identified in the academic literature as an important element in the gradual process of incorporating Avicennian ideas into the science of *kalām*. See Frank Griffel, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy between 500 and 1500*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund, vol. 1 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 342–345, as well as p. 56 (with n. 116) of the current work.

117   On this, see chapter 7, section 2.

118   See Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayna al-Islām wa-l-zandaqa*, ed. Maḥmūd Bījū (n.p.: n.p., 1993), 47–48. It would be erroneous to presume that this passage conceals a relativistic conception of truth. On the contrary, according to al-Ghazālī, the Ashʿarī position alone is correct with regard to the question raised, though he notes that views contradicting it, while constituting misguidance and unlawful innovation, nonetheless remain within the bounds of Islam.

In addition to the critique levelled by Ibn Taymiyya in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, which questions the validity of the universal rule at its root, we can discern two other strategies of argumentation in his works that aim more at a restriction of the scope of application of the rule. One strategy consists in demonstrating the falsity of the rational judgements identified by the *mutakallimūn* as apodictic, while the other consists in limiting the instrument of *taʾwīl majāzī* to such an extent that a reinterpretation of the revealed texts in line with these rational judgements becomes impossible. The first of these strategies will come to light in the course of our discussion in part 3 of this work, which offers a concrete presentation of Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the attributes. The second strategy is elucidated in our detailed examination of the treatise *Madaniyya* in section 2.2 below. Although this text reveals an important aspect of Ibn Taymiyya's hermeneutics in a form that is unusually systematic for his writings, it has so far received little attention in the academic literature.[119] The fact that Ibn Taymiyya composed a follow-up work answering objections to *Madaniyya* in the form of the treatise known as *Ḍābiṭ* has already been mentioned.[120] This treatise, which would likely have been highly informative, has unfortunately only survived to a limited extent. We shall turn our attention to *Ḍābiṭ* following our analysis of *Madaniyya*.

2.2　*Conditions for the Validity of* taʾwīl majāzī

The opening words of the epistle *Madaniyya*[121] make it clear that the recipient—namely, the Ḥanbalī scholar Shams al-Dīn al-Dibbāhī (d. 711/1311)—was not an adversary of Ibn Taymiyya but rather a friend or perhaps a student of his. Ibn Taymiyya, for instance, thanks al-Dibbāhī for sending him three books.[122] What occasioned the letter was al-Dibbāhī's inquiry into the conditions under which it is permissible to engage in figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of the revealed texts.[123] By way of response, Ibn Taymiyya refers to a debate that he says took place between him and an unnamed Shāfiʿī (who was thus most likely an Ashʿarī as well). This debate took place when Ibn Taymiyya heard the Shāfiʿī say that there were two methods available for the proper handling of those passages in revelation that describe God. The first is the way of

---

119　The only study in a European language, to my knowledge, that deals with this treatise tangentially is Izharul-Haq, "Literal and Non-Literal Meaning," which, however, was not available to me.

120　See p. 18 above.

121　On which see p. 18 above.

122　*Madaniyya*, MF, 6:353–354; ed. al-Farriyān, 22. In *Ḍābiṭ*, Ibn Taymiyya identifies him as "*baʿḍ al-aṣḥāb*," that is, a fellow Ḥanbalī. See JM, 5:44.

123　*Madaniyya*, MF, 6:354; ed. al-Farriyān, 26.

al-Shāfiʿī, namely, that of safety (*salāma*) and remaining silent (*sukūt*). This method entails affirming that the revealed texts are true according to the meaning intended by God and the Prophet, but without trying to determine this meaning by exegetical means. If, however, one wishes to tread the path of investigation (*baḥth*) and verification (*taḥqīq*), then truth can be found in the figurative interpretations of Quranic and prophetic descriptions of God as proposed by the *mutakallimūn*. Ibn Taymiyya replied to his Shāfiʿī opponent that the first method described is indeed valid but that the latter way in no wise entails the interpretations of the *mutakallimūn*, but rather refutes them. Provoked by this answer, the Shāfiʿī offered to settle the dispute in a debate, to which Ibn Taymiyya agreed.[124] Ibn Taymiyya reports that three issues were set for the debate in which later Ashʿarīs (*al-mutaʾakhkhirūn*) were at odds with the position of the traditionalists (*ahl al-ḥadīth*). The first issue has to do with God's describing Himself as being above the throne (*waṣf Allāh bi-l-ʿuluww ʿalā al-ʿarsh*), the second with the question of the Quran as divine speech (*masʾalat al-Qurʾān*), and the third with the validity of figurative interpretations of revealed texts describing God (*masʾalat taʾwīl al-ṣifāt*). Ibn Taymiyya remarks that at the outset of the debate, he made a request of his opponent that they begin with the third point[125] as this was the ultimate source (*al-umm*) of all the disputes, whereas the first two could be regarded as mere branches (sing. *farʿ*) of the third.[126] The remainder of the discussion in *Madaniyya* revolves around a passage in which the four conditions that, in Ibn Taymiyya's view, constitute a sine qua non for the correct use of *taʾwīl majāzī* are enumerated in a manner that is unusually structured for his writing style. I cite this passage here in full, then comment on it subsequently. Ibn Taymiyya reports:

> I said to him [i.e., the Shāfiʿī opponent]: If God describes Himself with an attribute, or His messenger describes Him with it, or the believers (*al-muʾminūn*) who Muslims agree are rightly guided and knowledgeable describe Him with it, then deflecting it from the established meaning (*ẓāhir*)[127] that accords with the majesty of God, the exalted, or from its *ḥaqīqa* that is understood from it in favour of a hidden meaning (*bāṭin*) that is contrary to the *ẓāhir* or in favour of a *majāz* that negates the *ḥaqīqa* is only permissible under four conditions.

---

124   *Madaniyya*, ᴍꜰ, 6:354; ed. al-Farriyān, 26–28.
125   Given how Ibn Taymiyya recounts the course of the debate in *Madaniyya*, this is probably the only issue that was ultimately discussed.
126   *Madaniyya*, ᴍꜰ, 6:354–355; ed. al-Farriyān, 28–29.
127   On this translation of the word *ẓāhir*, see p. 147, n. 25 above.

The first is that the word admit of also being used in the *majāz* sense, for the Quran, the Sunna, and the words of the Salaf are in the Arabic language. Thus, it is not possible that what was meant by the word [used to name the attribute in question] should run counter to the Arabic language or to [the use prevalent in] languages more generally. It is therefore necessary that the *majāz* meaning be something that the word can be employed to mean. Were this not the case, then any prattler (*mubṭil*) could interpret any given word as having any meaning that occurs to his mind, even if this has no basis in the language.

Second, it [the word] must be accompanied by an indicant (*dalīl*) requiring [this] diversion from its *ḥaqīqa* to its *majāz* [meaning]. Otherwise, if [the word] is used to signify one meaning by way of *ḥaqīqa* and another by way of *majāz*, then it is impermissible by the consensus of those endowed with reason to construe it according to the *majāz* meaning in the absence of an indicant requiring its diversion [from *ḥaqīqa* to *majāz*]. Moreover, if one claims that it is necessary to divert it from the *ḥaqīqa* meaning, then there must be a conclusive indicant—be it textual or rational—requiring this diversion. And if one asserts a [mere] likelihood of obligation (*ẓuhūr*) to divert the word from its *ḥaqīqa* meaning, then there must be an indicant that favours construing [the word] as *majāz* [over construing it as *ḥaqīqa*].

Third, the [aforementioned] indicant requiring diversion [from *ḥaqīqa* to *majāz*] must not be opposed by an indicant that contradicts it. Should there be a Quranic (*qurʾānī*) or theologically based (*īmānī*) indicant that makes it clear that the *ḥaqīqa* [of the word] is intended, it [i.e., this indicant] must not be rejected. Moreover, if the indicant is a definitive text, then no consideration is given to its opposite, but if the indicant is one of likely obligation, then it must be weighed against other pieces of evidence to determine which of them is preponderant.

Fourth, if the Prophet has made a statement by which he intends something other than the established and the *ḥaqīqa* meaning, then it is obligatory for him to have clarified to the community of Muslims that he did not intend the *ḥaqīqa* but rather the *majāz*, whether he has specified the *majāz* meaning or not (*sawāʾ*ᵘⁿ *ʿayyanahu aw lam yuʿayyinhu*). This holds particularly for the descriptive statements [of the Prophet] that they [Muslims] are required to believe and to know, without [the obligation of] any physical actions [being derived therefrom].[128]

---

128   *Madaniyya*, MF, 6:360–361; ed. al-Farriyān, 39–41.

Although *Madaniyya* contains no explicit rejection of the concept of *majāz*—indeed, on the contrary, Ibn Taymiyya uses terminology associated with it in many passages—one can see from the way he employs the terms *ẓāhir* and *ḥaqīqa* that he does not subscribe to the underlying logic of *majāz*. From the above-cited passage and others, it is clear that for Ibn Taymiyya, the *ẓāhir* meaning of a word used to describe God is one that is appropriate to the divine nature. One of the examples he cites is the word "hand" (*yad*). In his view, someone who seeks to legitimise a reinterpretation of this word on the grounds that it refers in its *ẓāhir* meaning to a human limb is correct insofar as it is inadmissible to describe God in such a manner, yet he would be mistaken in assuming that this is, in fact, the *ẓāhir* meaning.[129] The following discussion presents Ibn Taymiyya's elaboration of the four conditions cited above, which he divides into four sections (sing. *maqām*). This is done using his own example of the word "hand" (*yad*), stressing again that it is not *yad* construed as a human hand that Ibn Taymiyya seeks to guard against reinterpretation but *yad* specifically in the sense of a hand that is appropriate to God and whose modality is known to us only in the sense that God's *yad* does not possess any of the characteristics of created hands.

Ibn Taymiyya cites a number of examples from the linguistic usage of the Arabs in which the word "hand" is used in the sense of favour (*niʿma*), gift (*ʿaṭiyya*), and power (*qudra*).[130] He also cites Q. 5:64, which describes God's "two hands" as being stretched out wide—a reference, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, to God's bounty (*jūd*) and generosity (*saʿat al-iʿṭā'*).[131] Yet he refuses to draw the conclusion that if such is the intended meaning, then Q. 5:64 does not, in fact, constitute proof that God actually possesses two hands.[132] He later clarifies why this is the case when he asserts that it is not admissible in the Arabic language to attribute hands in a figurative sense to objects that do not also possess them in the *ḥaqīqa* sense.[133]

Having established that a figurative interpretation of terms used to describe the divine attributes in no way entails the non-reality of what these terms signify in the proper sense, Ibn Taymiyya turns to consider the following Quranic verse: "He [God] said: 'O Iblīs, what prevented you from bowing down to that which I have created with My two hands [i.e., Adam]?'"[134] Ibn Taymiyya seeks

---

129   *Madaniyya*, ᴍꜰ, 6:356–357; ed. al-Farriyān, 30–31.
130   *Madaniyya*, ᴍꜰ, 6:363–364; ed. al-Farriyān, 46–49.
131   *Madaniyya*, ᴍꜰ, 6:363; ed. al-Farriyān, 45.
132   *Madaniyya*, ᴍꜰ, 6:364; ed. al-Farriyān, 49.
133   *Madaniyya*, ᴍꜰ, 6:370; ed. al-Farriyān, 60–61.
134   Q. 38:75.

to examine whether the expression "two hands" may, while adhering to the four conditions listed above, be understood in a figurative sense to mean, for instance, "power," "blessing," or the like. He maintains that the word "hand" specifically in the dual form (*yadān*, *yadayn*) has never been used in the Arabic language in the sense of "power" or "blessing." A singular noun may be used in the sense of a plural, a plural in the sense of a singular, and also a plural in the sense of a dual, but never a dual in the sense of a singular, nor a singular in the sense of a dual, nor a dual in the sense of a generic term. This makes it nonsensical for the expression "two hands" to be used in reference to power, which is a *single* attribute (*ṣifa wāḥida*) of God, or to blessings, as these are innumerable.[135] A similar, though less elaborate, argument can be found in the works of early Ashʿarīs such as al-Bāqillānī, who, in contrast to later members of the school like al-Juwaynī, still acknowledged and defended the attribute "hand" as an essential attribute of God (*ṣifat al-dhāt*).[136] Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya points out that the expression "two hands" also cannot refer to the divine essence itself,[137] since in this case the act of creation would have to have been ascribed to the hands rather than to God Himself. Ibn Taymiyya cites, by way of illustration, various Quranic verses[138] in which acts are indeed ascribed directly to hands. Verse Q. 38:75, which stands at the centre of his present inquiry, however, says "to that which I created with My two hands" (*li-mā khalaqtu bi-yadayya*). On the one hand, then, the agent ("I") is explicitly identified, while on the other, the word *yadayya* is conjoined to the particle

---

135   *Madaniyya*, MF, 6:365; ed. al-Farriyān, 50–51.

136   See al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 258–259. Al-Juwaynī acknowledges that some of the leading Ashʿarī scholars (*aʾimma*) ascribed two hands, two eyes, and a face to God as real attributes (*ṣifāt thubūtiyya*). He himself, however, favours the view that the term "hands" stands for God's power, "eyes" for His ability to see, and "face" for His existence. See al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 155. One encounters a similar stance one generation earlier in ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037), a fellow Ashʿarī. See al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 110, line 2 ff. and 111, line 9 ff. See also on this p. 91 above.

137   Al-Thaʿlabī ascribes the view that what is meant by hands is God's essence to the early Quranic exegete Mujāhid (d. 104/722), though he rejects it on the basis of exegetical considerations. See, in the deficient yet only extant edition of his *tafsīr* work, Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad al-Thaʿlabī, *al-Kashf wa-l-bayān*, ed. Abū Muḥammad b. ʿĀshūr, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2002), 8:216. It should also be pointed out that al-Ṭabarī, in his very brief treatment of this verse, cites a report whose chain of transmitters includes said Mujāhid but that blatantly contradicts the position al-Thaʿlabī attributes to him. See Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh al-Turkī, 30 vols. in 24, plus 2 vols. indices (Cairo: Dār Hajr, 2001), 23:185.

138   Namely, Q. 22:10, 3:182, and 36:71.

bi, indicating that the hands serve only an instrumental function in carrying out the action. Thus, the very first condition, namely, that the expression "*bi-yadayya*" in Q. 38:75 admit of being used as a *majāz*, has not been met. Ibn Taymiyya adds that, God willing, one will not find anyone knowledgeable of the Arabic language, or any other language for that matter, who uses *majāz* this way in his speech.[139]

Ibn Taymiyya continues that even if one considers the first condition to have been fulfilled, there is no indicant that would necessitate a reinterpretation of the word *yadayya*. He anticipates the possible objection that hands are limbs and that limbs cannot be attributed to God. Yet the only thing one may conclude from this, according to him, is that the word "hands" in the verse may not be understood to include the characteristics of created hands, just as the attributes of knowledge, power, essence, and existence pertain to God in a manner that is befitting of Him and different from the manner in which they pertain to created beings and therefore do not require reinterpretation.[140] Thus, he concludes, the second of the four conditions necessary for a correct application of *taʾwīl majāzī* is likewise unfulfilled.

In the third section, Ibn Taymiyya addresses not the third but the fourth condition mentioned in the passage, insisting that nowhere in the Quran, the Sunna, or the sayings of the Salaf can such a figurative interpretation be found despite repeated mention of the divine hands. He asks rhetorically whether it is thinkable that neither the Prophet nor those with authority in the Muslim community (*ulū al-amr*) ever made it clear to people that such descriptions of God were not to be understood in their proper sense—that is, according to the *ẓāhir* meaning—such that Muslims only in the time after the Companions of the Prophet could, through figures like Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/746) and his spiritual successor Bishr b. Ghiyāth al-Marīsī (d. 218/833), come to know the true meaning of what God has revealed. Ibn Taymiyya asks further how it could be that the Prophet explained all matters in detail—including even the proper way to relieve oneself—but kept silent about the intended meaning of the expressions used in revelation to describe God, even though they are allegedly anthropomorphic on the level of their *ẓāhir* meaning and therefore misleading.[141] The only evidence from revelation that one could cite for this is the verses that stress God's otherness with respect to creation.[142] But all that this proves is that one may not describe God as corporeal or as sim-

---

139   *Madaniyya*, MF, 6:366; ed. al-Farriyān, 52.
140   *Madaniyya*, MF, 6:367; ed. al-Farriyān, 54–55.
141   *Madaniyya*, MF, 6:368–369; ed. al-Farriyān, 57–58.
142   Ibn Taymiyya cites as examples Q. 112:1, 42:11, and 19:65.

ilar to anything created, not that He cannot possess hands that are befitting of Him.[143] Thus, Ibn Taymiyya concludes, the fourth condition too remains unfulfilled.

He now turns his attention, in the fourth and final section, to the third condition, which declares that the interpretation of a linguistic expression on the basis of some indicant is valid only in the absence of an indicant to the contrary. Now, such indicants to the contrary are indeed to be found, Ibn Taymiyya avers, for if, say, the interpretation of "two hands" as a reference to blessing, power, or the divine essence were truly correct, then the creation of Adam would be no different from that of Iblīs or any other created being. But by dint of having been created with God's own two hands, Adam was granted a superior rank (*tafḍīl*) on account of which the angels and Iblīs were commanded to prostrate before him.[144]

In *Madaniyya*, Ibn Taymiyya was clearly inspired by his fellow Ḥanbalī Abū al-Ḥasan al-Zāghūnī (d. 527/1132), who, in his work *al-Īḍāḥ fī uṣūl al-dīn*, articulated three conditions for the validity of figurative interpretations and discussed these in light of examples such as verse Q. 38:75.[145] Although we find no reference to al-Zāghūnī's work in *Madaniyya*, the similarity of the two works in structure and content, as well as the fact that Ibn Taymiyya was aware of al-Zāghūnī's treatment of the topic,[146] leaves little room for doubt that it served as a template for him. As mentioned, however, al-Zāghūnī lists only three conditions, each of which, moreover, he considers sufficient on its own for procuring the validity of *ta'wīl*. These conditions are, namely, (1) that an external fact or set of circumstances preclude the interpretation of a word in accordance with its *ẓāhir*, (2) that there exist an indicant by virtue of which a figurative interpretation can be legitimised, and (substantively speaking a subcategory of the first condition, in my view) (3) that a term be used in such a way that its proper sense is rendered ineligible (*lā yaṣluḥu*).[147] This view differs from that of Ibn Taymiyya, who has drawn up a notably clearer catalogue of criteria for the validity of *ta'wīl majāzī*. The first three of the four conditions he specifies—that is, that a figurative interpretation may be countenanced only for expressions that (1) admit of being used as *majāz* according to the canons of the language and whose interpretation (2) is substantiated by an indicant that (3) is not suscept-

---

143   *Madaniyya*, ᴍꜰ, 6:368; ed. al-Farriyān, 56.

144   *Madaniyya*, ᴍꜰ, 6:369; ed. al-Farriyān, 59.

145   See Abū al-Ḥasan al-Zāghūnī, *al-Īḍāḥ fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. ʿIṣām Sayyid Maḥmūd (Riyadh: Markaz al-Malik Fayṣal lil-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya, 2003), 284–290.

146   Ibn Taymiyya cites it in full in *Bayān*, 1:260–269.

147   See al-Zāghūnī, *Īḍāḥ*, 286.

ible of being cancelled out by a contrary indicant—are uncontentious in terms of their fundamental validity.[148] Their agreement comes to an end, however, with the question whether or not these conditions have been observed in concrete interpretations.[149] The fourth condition grows out of a demand that is widespread in the traditionalist camp and also fully in line with Ibn Taymiyya's Salaf-centred Quranic hermeneutics. It is based on the premiss that the Quranic interpretations of the first three generations overwhelmingly originate with the Prophet, who explicated the Quran in its entirety.[150] To the best of my knowledge, however, one would be hard pressed to find this fourth condition in the writings of the *mutakallimūn*, many of whom readily conceded that the practice of *taʾwīl* arose only after the Salaf but did not consider its validity to be undermined on account of this.[151] Some *mutakallimūn* expressed this stance via the dictum that the way of the Salaf was safer (*aslam*), but the way of the *khalaf* (later generations) was wiser (*aḥkam*).[152]

Underlying the four conditions mentioned by Ibn Taymiyya is the conviction that the Quran and Sunna, when considered as a whole, are self-explanatory with respect to their intended meaning.[153] In *Madaniyya*—and even more

---

148   The notion that linguistic expressions should be construed first and foremost as *ḥaqīqa* and only as *majāz* in the presence of countervailing evidence is summed up concisely in the rule "*al-aṣl al-ḥaqīqa*" or "*al-majāz khilāf al-aṣl.*" See, e.g., Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 78–79.

149   See, e.g., al-Ghazālī's application of *taʾwīl* in relation to, among other things, God's attribute of having hands; Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 106–109.

150   On Ibn Taymiyya's hermeneutics of the Quran, see Suleiman, "Ibn Taymīyas Theorie."

151   See on this, e.g., Louis Gardet, "Allāh," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, ed. H.A.R. Gibb et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 412.

152   On the Ashʿarīs, see Makdisi, "Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites I," 51–52 and, by way of example, the statements of the Māturīdīs Nūr al-Dīn al-Ṣābūnī (d. 580/1184) and Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī (d. 710/1310) in Brodersen, *Der unbekannte* kalām, 145 and 150–151. Ibn Taymiyya firmly rejects this dictum, ascribing it to "some dull-witted people" (*baʿḍ al-aghbiyāʾ*). See *Ḥamawiyya*, MF, 5:8; ed. al-Tuwayjirī, 185. In MF, he adds that the slogan could be considered true depending on how one understands it (MF, 5:9). This sentence does not appear in the al-Tuwayjirī edition, and the editor argues convincingly in a footnote that it is actually a marginal note by someone other than Ibn Taymiyya that was found in one of the manuscripts and accidentally included in the main text in the extant editions (see ed. al-Tuwayjirī, 187, n. 1). We should also point out that there were voices among the proponents of *kalām* as well that attempted to relativise this dictum or that rejected it altogether. See, e.g., Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1791), who cites statements from Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) in support; Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf sādat al-muttaqīn bi-sharḥ Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 20 vols. (Cairo: al-Maymaniyya, 1893), 2:112.

153   In his study of *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, Carl Sharif El-Tobgui describes Ibn Taymiyya's method of *taʾwīl* as one that is "intertextual." See El-Tobgui, *Reason and Revelation*, 200–204. Though expressing the same idea, I have deliberately avoided the term "intertextuality" here as its different usage in contemporary literary studies renders it misleading.

explicitly in *Bayān*—Ibn Taymiyya excepts from this general rule those meanings that are unambiguously to be ruled out on the basis of reason or experience. When, for example, God says that He is the creator of all things, one may not conclude from this that God also created Himself.[154] The triviality of this example shows the limited scope Ibn Taymiyya accords to rational judgement and/or experience in the process of figurative interpretation. Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to classify him on these grounds as a literalist, the concept of literal meaning having no place in his conception of language, as expounded in detail in chapter 5.[155] Similarly, given the logic underlying Ibn Taymiyya's conceptual framework, one can also not speak of a figurative *re*-interpretation when he, as detailed above, understands the two outstretched hands of God, for instance, as a reference to His bounty and generosity. This applies equally to his interpretation of the Quranic statement about Abū Lahab's hands perishing as a supplication that he be deprived of his wealth (*duʿāʾ ʿalayhi bi-l-khusr*),[156] as well as to his equation of the word *ayd^{in}* (hands) in the verse "And the sky did We build with hands" (*wa-l-samāʾ^a banaynāhā bi-ayd^{in}*)[157] with *quwwa* (power).[158] Ibn Taymiyya is thus not concerned to preserve the meaning usually identified as the literal one. Rather, he is concerned drastically to limit the hermeneutical scope for interpreting the revealed texts in order to put a stop to the *mutakallimūn*, who, in his view, do not derive their theology *from* the text but rather impose it *on* the text by means of the instrument of *taʾwīl*.

As Yasir Qadhi has shown, Ibn Taymiyya in at least one question employed the instrument of *taʾwīl* in just the manner he criticises so strongly here.[159] At issue is the interpretation of Q. 7:172, which states:

> And when thy Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins [lit. "backs"], their progeny and made them bear witness concerning themselves, "Am I not your Lord?" they said, "Yea, we bear witness"—lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, "Truly of this we were heedless."[160]

---

154   *Madaniyya*, MF, 6:361; ed. al-Farriyān, 42–43. See also *Bayān*, 285–286.

155   See also El-Tobgui, *Reason and Revelation*, 200–202.

156   *Tabbat*, MF, 16:602. Ibn Taymiyya bases his opinion here on that of the grammarian and exegete Abū Jaʿfar al-Naḥḥās (d. 338/950).

157   Q. 51:47.

158   *Suʾāl ʿan al-Murshida*, MF, 11:485; also *Irbiliyya*, MF, 5:195.

159   See Qadhi, "Reconciling Reason and Revelation," 284–292.

160   Translation: *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al. (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), 466.

Qadhi demonstrates that those in the traditionalist camp relied on the consensus of the Salaf in presuming, as ostensibly depicted in this verse, that mankind was indeed assembled before God and that the conversation in question actually took place—an interpretation endorsed even by the majority of Ashʿarīs. Yet other Ashʿarīs, like al-Rāzī, subscribed to the Muʿtazilī view that the verse should be understood figuratively merely as a reference to God's having endowed human beings with a rational capacity through which they can recognise the existence and lordship of God.[161] Qadhi describes in detail how Ibn Taymiyya in one place confirms the existence of such a consensus but elsewhere interprets this verse, as well as the reports from the Salaf concerning it, on the basis of linguistic, hadith-based, and rational arguments in a manner very reminiscent of the Muʿtazila. Thus, Ibn Taymiyya too understands the verse in a figurative sense, with the difference that according to him, it is referring not to reason but to the natural human disposition (*fiṭra*) as man's God-given endowment.[162] The method he employs here, as Qadhi notes, resembles "the very method of *taʾwīl* that he finds problematic amongst the *mutakallimūn*."[163] Qadhi is aware of no other issue in which Ibn Taymiyya proceeds in such a manner and is thus at pains to explain this anomaly. According to Qadhi, this lone instance of outright figurative interpretation must be understood within the context of Ibn Taymiyya's efforts to enhance the status of the *fiṭra* as a source of knowledge over against reason, held in such high esteem by the *mutakallimūn*.[164]

The debate between Ibn Taymiyya and the unnamed Shāfiʿī was to have an aftermath, however, in the wake of which Ibn Taymiyya composed the treatise *Ḍābiṭ* about ten years later[165] in response to the objections raised by a *mutakallim* upon reading *Madaniyya*. Ibn Taymiyya praises this *mutakallim*,[166] but regrettably does not mention him by name. *Ḍābiṭ*, which in the edited edi-

---

161   Qadhi, "Reconciling Reason and Revelation," 284 (with n. 1).

162   This interpretation was likely proposed even before Ibn Taymiyya. See Geneviève Gobillot, *La fiṭra: La conception originelle. Ses interprétations et fonctions chez les penseurs musulmans* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2000), 46–53.

163   Qadhi, "Reconciling Reason and Revelation," 290.

164   Ibid., 292. Ibn Taymiyya's concept of the *fiṭra* and its importance within his thought have received much attention in the literature. See, e.g., ibid., esp. 250–283; El-Tobgui, *Reason and Revelation, passim* (esp. 260–264); Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, esp. 39–44; Mehmet Sait Özervarli, "Divine Wisdom, Human Agency and the *fiṭra* in Ibn Taymiyya's Thought," in Krawietz and Tamer, *Debating Ibn Taymiyya*; and Vasalou, *Theological Ethics, passim* (see the entry for "*fiṭra*" in the index, p. 337).

165   On the dating, see *Ḍābiṭ*, JM, 5:44–45 and 62.

166   *Ḍābiṭ*, JM, 5:62.

tion comprises just under sixty pages, has unfortunately been only partially preserved. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya does not take up the objections of the *mutakallim* until about halfway through the preserved portion. His primary endeavour is to show that the substance of these objections is not in line with his own position in the debate and that they do not, therefore, require any response. He nevertheless states that he will deal with the objections in the (unpreserved) second section of the work.[167] The main insight we can glean from the relevant part of the preserved portion is that even ten years after the debate—and just as he does in *Madaniyya* as well—Ibn Taymiyya clearly positions himself to recognise the validity of *taʾwīl* in principle. However, he regards this validity as being tied to conditions that the specific interpretations espoused by the *mutakallimūn* against *ahl al-ḥadīth* do not fulfil.[168] The dispute over the instrument of *taʾwīl*, to reiterate, is thus animated by the question not of its fundamental validity but of the scope of its application. This conclusion is in line with the observations made in chapter 5, section 3, where we examined the theological relevance of Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy.

3   The Two Principles and the Seven Basic Rules for Interpreting the Divine Attributes

The first half of Ibn Taymiyya's treatise *Tadmuriyya*[169] can be interpreted as an attempt on his part to summarise the theory behind his doctrine of the attributes in a set of principles (sing. *aṣl*) and rules (sing. *qāʿida*). Thus, in a form that is unusually well structured though by no means comprehensive, he sets forth his approach to the divine attributes on the basis of two principles and seven rules. In terms not of its substantive content but of its function, this work is reminiscent of Ibn Taymiyya's *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr*, which can be seen as a kind of handbook for exegetes of the Quran.[170] The current section presents and discusses the principles and rules that Ibn Taymiyya sets forth in *Tadmuriyya*.

---

167   *Ḍābiṭ, JM*, 5:64.
168   Ibn Taymiyya expresses this position on numerous occasions. See, e.g., *Ḍābiṭ, JM*, 5:69–70.
169   On this work, see p. 19 above.
170   On this work, see Suleiman, "Ibn Taymīyas Theorie."

First Principle: What applies to one divine attribute applies to all the others (*al-qawl fī baʿḍ al-ṣifāt ka-l-qawl fī baʿḍ*).[171]

Ibn Taymiyya articulates this principle primarily against the backdrop of the Ashʿarī doctrine concerning the divine attributes. Though he does not mention them explicitly, it is clear that he is referring to the Ashʿarīs when he accuses of self-contradiction those who, on the one hand, recognise the seven divine attributes of life, knowledge, power, seeing, hearing, speaking, and will as real attributes but, on the other hand, regard the attributes of love, contentment, anger, and disapproval as mere expressions of will or as the created consequences of reward and punishment and, therefore, proceed to interpret them in a figurative sense. In other words, if the former set of attributes can belong to God in a manner befitting of Him without this entailing that He be described in an anthropomorphic manner, then the latter set of attributes can as well. If, now, the objection is raised that God may not be described as being angry in reality, since anger is nothing but the boiling of the blood in the heart out of a desire for revenge (*ghalayān dam al-qalb li-ṭalab al-intiqām*), one could reply that will too is nothing but a striving after the attainment of benefit (*jalb al-manfaʿa*) and the averting of harm (*dafʿ al-maḍarra*) and that, accordingly, it should likewise be inadmissible to describe God as willing. Were someone to respond that this description applies only to the human will, one could counter that the previous description too applies only to human anger.[172] One might then argue, Ibn Taymiyya continues, that the seven aforementioned attributes, in contrast to the others, are confirmed by reason. Consequently—and here he is summarising the typical Ashʿarī pattern of argumentation—one can infer God's power from the fact that creation exists, His will from the fact that it exists with the properties it has rather than with others, and His knowledge from the fact that it was created in the best possible arrangement. These three attributes can only be possessed by living objects, whence we can prove that God is also living. Now, anything living is either hearing, seeing, and speaking or it is not. Though Ibn Taymiyya does not complete the argument, we may complete it by drawing the additional inference that if hearing, speaking, and seeing are

---

171   Ibn Taymiyya expounds this principle in *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:17–24; ed. al-Saʿawī, 31–43.

172   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:17–18; ed. al-Saʿawī, 31–32. It is interesting that even al-Ashʿarī, who denies that God possesses the attribute of anger, makes the same argument as Ibn Taymiyya when it comes to the attribute of possessing hands. Al-Ashʿarī presents the following argument in order then to refute it: namely, that God's hands must necessarily be interpreted as figurative since hands have only been observed in the form of limbs, which God cannot possess. In response, al-Ashʿarī counters that this line of reasoning would commit one to the denial of God's life as well, since all living beings that we have observed are bodies, whereas God is incorporeal. See al-Ashʿarī, *Ibāna*, 136.

considered attributes of perfection and are possessed by some created beings, then God, who is more perfect than His creation, must a fortiori possess them as well.[173]

For two reasons, however, Ibn Taymiyya is unpersuaded by the above attempt to present reason as a criterion by which one can distinguish between seven provable real attributes of God and all other divine attributes, which enjoy no real existence. For one, he says, even if it were true that these other attributes cannot be confirmed by reason, this would still fall short of proving that it is inadmissible for God to be qualified by them. Second, just as the acceptance of the seven attributes was argued for on the basis of reason, so too can the other attributes be substantiated in the same way. Ibn Taymiyya elaborates on this point with several examples, but his position can be sufficiently illustrated by the fact that he considers God's blessings that He bestows on people as proof that He possesses the attribute of being merciful.[174]

In the following section, Ibn Taymiyya turns to the views of the Muʿtazila—whom he names explicitly—as well as to those of the *falāsifa*. The Muʿtazila accepted God's names but rejected His attributes on the premiss that the possession of attributes entails that God is a body. But by this argument, Ibn Taymiyya counters, God's names would also have to be rejected since it is unclear how only attributes but not names could be contingent on the corporeality of an object.[175] Although he does not develop this line of argument any further, we may assume that he is referring here to the basic problem that confronted the Muʿtazila and for which they sought to work out various solutions, namely, the question of the ontological relationship of the discrete names of God to one another as well as the relationship between the names as a whole and the divine essence.[176] Finally, Ibn Taymiyya also critiques the *falāsifa*—whom he does not name directly—for rejecting the divine attributes on the premiss that these constitute distinct entities and that God cannot consist of differentiated parts. He endeavours to prove that the *falāsifa* too run into a contradiction with their belief that God is, inter alia, intellect (*ʿaql*), intellecting agent (*ʿāqil*), and intelligible (*maʿqūl*).[177] If, Ibn Taymiyya sums up, one can accept these attrib-

---

173   On this, see al-Ghazālī's remarks in Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Iqtiṣād fī al-iʿtiqād*, ed. İbrahim Agâh Çubukçu and Hüseyin Atay (Ankara: Nur Matbaası, 1962), 110–111.

174   *Tadmuriyya*, ᴍꜰ, 3:18–19; ed. al-Saʿawī, 33–34. How Ibn Taymiyya attempts to establish this and other attributes through reason is described in detail in chapter 7, section 1.2 of the current work.

175   *Tadmuriyya*, ᴍꜰ, 3:20; ed. al-Saʿawī, 35.

176   The Muʿtazilī view on this has been elaborated in chapter 3, section 2.

177   On this point, see the passage by Ibn Sīnā cited at pp. 53–54 above.

utes without having to regard God as a being composed of parts, then one may proceed in like manner with respect to all other attributes as well.[178]

Second Principle: What applies to God's attributes applies equally to His essence (*al-qawl fī al-ṣifāt ka-l-qawl fī al-dhāt*).[179]
The gist of this principle is that one may ascribe an essence to God in a real sense (*ḥaqīqa*) the same way one may ascribe attributes to Him in a real sense as well. Both essence and attributes pertain to Him in a manner different from those of created objects. If, for instance, someone were to inquire about the modality of God's descent from on high to the lowermost heaven, one should respond with an inquiry about the modality of His essence. Ibn Taymiyya elaborates:

> If one responds that His modality (*kayfiyya*) cannot be known, we say to him that we also cannot know how His descending [from on high] takes place, for knowledge of the modality of the attributes presupposes knowledge of that which is qualified by them. The former derives from the latter and is consequent to it. How, then, do you put demands on me regarding knowledge of the modality of His hearing, seeing, speaking, rising (*istiwāʾ*), and descending when you do not know [and cannot know] the modality of His essence?[180]

Ibn Taymiyya furthermore reiterates the idea already expressed in the first principle, namely, that those who deny the attributes have no consistent criterion (*qānūn mustaqīm*) by which to justify the notion that God can possess an essence and certain attributes to the exclusion of others.

The Two Examples: Paradise and the soul (*rūḥ*)[181]
Ibn Taymiyya provides two examples to elucidate the two principles elaborated above. The first is related to created objects in paradise, such as milk, honey, wine, water, and raiments. In support of the fact that these objects are different in nature from the objects bearing the same name in our world, Ibn Taymiyya cites a statement of the Companion Ibn ʿAbbās to the effect that the

---

178   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:23; ed. al-Saʿawī, 40–41.
179   Ibn Taymiyya expounds this principle in *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:25–27; ed. al-Saʿawī, 43–46.
180   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:25; ed. al-Saʿawī, 44.
181   Ibn Taymiyya elaborates these two examples in *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:28–34; ed. al-Saʿawī, 46–57.

objects of this world and those of the next are alike in name only. What Ibn Taymiyya does not highlight here is his view that there must be some similarity between this-worldly and otherworldly objects to justify their being referred to by identical names.[182] Rather, his point here is to stress that if the objects of this world and those of paradise are so different that we can infer nothing about the realities of otherworldly objects from those of this world despite their belonging equally to the category of what is created, then it is a fortiori impossible to infer anything about the realities of the uncreated attributes of the Creator from those of created attributes on the basis of their being identical in name as well.

The second example concerns the human soul. Here, Ibn Taymiyya attempts to demonstrate that the disagreements on this issue are as significant and numerous as on the question of the divine attributes. He summarises by saying:

> This is to demonstrate that the soul, insofar as it exists, is living, knowing, has power, hears, sees, ascends and descends, comes and goes, and possesses other attributes whose modality reason is incapable of describing or defining. This is so because it [i.e., reason] knows nothing comparable (*naẓīr*) to it [i.e., the soul]. But things are known only by directly beholding them or through the observation of something comparable.[183]

If reason cannot know the modality of these actions in relation to the created soul, Ibn Taymiyya continues, then it is a fortiori incapable of knowing it with respect to the essence and attributes of the Creator.

First Rule: God is described by means of affirmation (*ithbāt*) and negation (*nafy*).[184]

According to Ibn Taymiyya, affirming the divine attributes is to affirm the perfection of God, and negating of Him all non-divine attributes is to negate any kind of deficiency on His part. Since his remarks here are directed primarily at those groups whose interpretations of the divine attributes entail their nullification (*taʿṭīl*), Ibn Taymiyya addresses negation first and foremost. He argues that the mere negation of particular attributes does not constitute praise (*madḥ*) of God or affirmation of His perfection; indeed, without an accompanying affirmation, one ends up even equating God with things that are defect-

---

182   See here pp. 103 and 186 above.
183   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 5:33; ed. al-Saʿawī, 56.
184   Ibn Taymiyya expounds this rule in *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:35–40; ed. al-Saʿawī, 57–65.

ive (*manqūṣāt*) or non-existent (*maʿdūmāt*). It is for this reason that negat-ive descriptions of God in the Quran are always accompanied by affirmative ones.[185]

Ibn Taymiyya rejects even more so the negation of a particular attribute along with its opposite, such as when the Ashʿarīs—whom he does not name explicitly—say that God is neither inside nor outside creation or when He is described as neither seeing nor blind, neither hearing nor deaf, neither living nor dead. Ibn Taymiyya anticipates the counterargument that the negation of the opposite attributes here entails no contradiction because God may not be described in terms of these categories at all, just as one may describe a wall without contradiction as being neither seeing nor blind. Underlying this view, he believes, is a novel interpretation of the terms involved, for he maintains that all objects must indeed be qualified either by the above-mentioned attrib-utes or by their opposite. He cites here the example of the staff of Moses, which God brought to life.[186] As the staff from a linguistic point of view may now be validly described as living (*ḥayy*), it follows that it may also be described in its previous state as dead (*mayyit*). But even with the qualification that inanimate objects (*jamādāt*) such as walls may indeed be described without contradic-tion as possessing neither a given attribute nor its opposite, this does not entail that the same applies to God. Rather, such an entailment must be rejected since to do otherwise would be tantamount to equating God with inanimate matter. In such a case, the deficiency besetting God would be even greater than that of a blind man since the blind man is at least potentially capable of seeing.[187] In his remarks on the seventh rule, presented below, Ibn Taymiyya feels compelled to address in more detail the issue just described.

Second Rule: Everything that has reached us of the Quran, the Sunna, and the consensus of the Muslim community and its leading scholars is to be accepted as true, even if we do not understand its meaning.[188]

In his elucidation of this rule, which he keeps brief, Ibn Taymiyya does not explain what he means when he says that the meaning of some statements of the Quran or Sunna may be incomprehensible. Considering his concept of *mutashābih*, however, it is clear that this incomprehensibility is not absolute but rather depends on the pre-existing knowledge of the interlocutor.[189] The

---

185   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:35–38; ed. al-Saʿawī, 57–61.

186   See Q. 20:20.

187   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:37–38; ed. al-Saʿawī, 61–62.

188   Ibn Taymiyya expounds this rule in *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:41–42; ed. al-Saʿawī, 65–68.

189   On this, see section 1.2 above.

converse of this rule, as Ibn Taymiyya puts it, is that statements containing terms that are found neither in the Quran nor in the Sunna must be vetted for their truthfulness. One example he mentions in this context is the question whether God may be described as *mutaḥayyiz* (occupying space), and he concludes that this, as presented above, depends on what precisely the person using such terms means by them.[190]

Third Rule: Whether a statement must be interpreted according to its outward meaning (*ẓāhir*) depends on how one defines the term *ẓāhir*.[191]

If, as Ibn Taymiyya writes, what is defined as the overt meaning (*ẓāhir*) when interpreting the divine attributes is that which includes the characteristics of created beings, then this interpretation must definitively be rejected. This assertion can be found in several of Ibn Taymiyya's writings and has already been discussed elsewhere in the current work.[192] Along the same lines, he also rejects this definition of the term *ẓāhir* in *Tadmuriyya* since, on the one hand, such a definition would entail that God's descriptions of Himself in their overt sense convey disbelief (*kufr*) and falsehood (*bāṭil*) and, on the other hand, the first three generations of Muslims and the leading scholars did not use the word *ẓāhir* in this way. According to Ibn Taymiyya, those who use the term *ẓāhir* in the manner just criticised commit one of two errors when interpreting the verses and prophetic hadith describing God: either they read a false (*fāsid*) meaning into the Quran and then feel compelled to engage in figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl*), or they acknowledge the true meaning but wrongly reject it on the premiss that God is not to be described in such terms.[193] In expounding the latter type of error, Ibn Taymiyya clearly involves himself in a contradiction, for, as stated at the outset, those whom he has in mind here understand the Quranic verses describing God not in accordance with the meaning he identifies as true but in an anthropomorphic sense, wherefore they deem themselves compelled to adopt a figurative interpretation.

Ibn Taymiyya cites a variety of examples to illustrate this point, none of which refer to the second type of error (this not being possible given the contradiction it entails, as just described). Here, we treat only one of these examples,[194] involving the following hadith that Ibn Taymiyya believes is likely

---

190   See chapter 4, section 3.3.

191   Ibn Taymiyya expounds this rule in *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:43–46; ed. al-Saʿawī, 69–78.

192   See pp. 171 and 204 above.

193   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:43; ed. al-Saʿawī, 69.

194   One of the examples, which will not be discussed in the following, refers to the verse in which God speaks of having created Adam with His two hands (see Q. 38:75). Ibn Taymiyya makes the same argument here as in *Madaniyya*; on the relevant passage in *Madaniyya*, see p. 202 ff. above.

a statement of the Companion Ibn ʿAbbās: "The Black Stone is the right [hand] of God on earth. Whoever touches or kisses it, it is as if (*fa-ka-annamā*) he had touched and kissed the right [hand] of God." Ibn Taymiyya does not see in this statement any legitimising basis for the application of *taʾwīl*. This is because the statement does not assert that God's right [hand] actually is the Black Stone, for the particle *ka* indicates that we are dealing here merely with a simile (*tashbīh*) and "it is well-known that the *mushabbah* (topic, or subject of comparison) is not identical with the *mushabbah bihi* (vehicle, or object of comparison)."[195] It is not clear from Ibn Taymiyya's remarks here against whom he is levelling this critique. In fact, this alleged hadith was discussed numerous times by the *mutakallimūn*, who put forth various interpretations of it.[196]

Fourth Rule: Those who deem it necessary to divest some or all of the divine attributes of their substantive content to avoid equating God with creation (*tamthīl*) fall into four types of pitfalls (*maḥādhīr*).[197]
The first of these four types of pitfalls, Ibn Taymiyya explains, is that the interpreter approaches God and His prophet with a negative opinion (*sūʾ al-ẓann*), assuming that the primary meaning (*mafhūm*) to be understood from verses and hadith describing God involves a prohibited equation of God with creation. Thus, for example, with respect to God's describing Himself as having risen over the throne, it is presumed that such a rising could not occur with respect to God in a way different than for human beings and that God is borne by His throne.[198] In order to escape the anthropomorphism resulting from this false presumption, the interpreter now falls into the second pitfall by divesting the descriptions of God in these Quranic verses and hadith of their substantive content (*ʿaṭṭala*).[199] Furthermore, he is guilty of deciding on his own authority to negate the divine attributes, though he lacks any relevant knowledge of God's reality. This inevitably entails equating God with imperfect and non-existent entities insofar as the attributes in question are negated of these too, either in part or in full.[200]

---

195   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:44; ed. al-Saʿawī, 71–72.

196   See, e.g., Ibn Fūrak, *Mushkil al-ḥadīth*, 55–56.

197   Ibn Taymiyya expounds this rule in *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:48–53; ed. al-Saʿawī, 79–89.

198   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:49–50; ed. al-Saʿawī, 81–82.

199   Ibn Taymiyya makes the same argument in *Irbiliyya*, on which see p. 248, n. 149 below.

200   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:49; ed. al-Saʿawī, 80–81.

Fifth Rule: God's descriptions of Himself are comprehensible in some ways but not in others.[201]

In this rule, Ibn Taymiyya stresses the point that all expressions used to describe God in the Quran and Sunna can indeed be understood on the semantic level. He thus opposes the view of the proponents of *tafwīḍ*, according to which knowledge of the meaning of these expressions is reserved for God alone. Nevertheless, the ontic nature of the attributes denoted by these expressions, which cannot be known simply by apprehending their semantic meaning, remains fully hidden to created beings. In the course of explicating this rule, Ibn Taymiyya mentions his understanding of the terms *taʾwīl*, *muḥkam*, and *mutashābih* and also discusses his conception of *tawāṭuʾ*, though in less detail. Since we have already dealt with this topic at length earlier in the current work,[202] there is no need to present his discussion of it here.

Sixth Rule: With respect to an attribute used to describe God derived from a source other than revelation, said attribute is affirmed if it entails a perfection and rejected if it entails a deficiency; otherwise, it is neither accepted nor affirmed.[203]

Ibn Taymiyya begins by stating that it is imperative to have a criterion (*ḍābiṭ*) for distinguishing between descriptions of God that are acceptable and those that must be rejected. This criterion is articulated in the above rule, though at the end of the relevant section, Ibn Taymiyya informs us that he has not dealt with all the ways of testing the acceptability of a particular attribute since he has already done so elsewhere.[204] He does, however, describe one method—though only very briefly—that is not included in the rule as stated above. He argues, namely, that all attributes necessarily entailed by those attributes that God is known with certainty to possess must also be ascribed to Him. It should be noted, however, that such a presumptive necessary relationship between two given attributes is something that exists generally and not solely in the realm of creation.[205] Ibn Taymiyya does not cite any example here, though he does remark elsewhere that God's attribute of being alive necessarily implies that some kind of activity or other occurs in or proceeds from Him.[206]

---

201   Ibn Taymiyya expounds this rule in *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:54–68; ed. al-Saʿawī, 89–116.
202   See section 1 above, as well as chapter 5, section 2.
203   Ibn Taymiyya expounds this rule in *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:69–88; ed. al-Saʿawī, 116–146.
204   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:88; ed. al-Saʿawī, 146. I am unaware of which work Ibn Taymiyya is referring to here.
205   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:75; ed. al-Saʿawī, 127.
206   *Kaylāniyya*, MF, 12:365. We deal with this at greater length in chapter 9 of the current work.

Ibn Taymiyya then cites the view that revelation is a sufficient criterion for determining the attributes of God in that all descriptions of God found in revelation are to be accepted while all those not mentioned in it are to be rejected. He dismisses this principle on the grounds that one cannot conclude from the fact that a specific attribute is not mentioned in revelation that God does not, in fact, possess said attribute.[207] In his discussion of the rule in question, however, Ibn Taymiyya only cites examples of attributes not mentioned in revelation that anyone would reject since they describe God as deficient. We thus have no examples of attributes not mentioned in revelation that God nonetheless does possess.

Ibn Taymiyya illustrates his method by referring to, among other things, a statement he attributes to the Jews, namely, that God mourned after the Flood and wept until His eyes swelled and the angels protested against Him.[208] Ibn Taymiyya expresses his displeasure with the *mutakallimūn*, who tried to refute such ascriptions on the grounds that the ability to weep necessarily entails having a body and being located in space (*taḥayyuz*).[209] Now, while Ibn Taymiyya agrees that God may not be described as weeping, he does so on the basis that such an attribute runs contrary to God's perfection. This argument against the Jews' description of God as weeping is, in his opinion—and in contrast to the argument of the *mutakallimūn*—concrete, plausible, and irrefutable. This is so because one could respond to the *mutakallimūn* that God weeps in a manner befitting of His nature, which is different from that of created things, and that weeping thus does not necessarily entail corporeality or the occupation of space.[210] Accordingly, as Ibn Taymiyya states in a later passage, one could go so far as to describe God not only as weeping but also as eating, drinking, grieving, laughing, rejoicing, or speaking, as well as to ascribe to Him various body parts and limbs.[211] It is not clear why in this passage, in which Ibn Taymiyya obviously

---

207   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:83; ed. al-Saʿawī, 137.

208   The view that God regretted the Flood and grieved over its consequences is one that has been held in the rabbinic tradition. See Peter Kuhn, *Gottes Trauer und Klage in der rabbinischen Überlieferung* (*Talmud und Midrasch*) (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 55–56.

209   Ibn Taymiyya does not refer here to specific scholars. We may cite as an example the treatment of the early Zaydī al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī (d. 246/860), who argues that heedlessness (*ghafla*) may not be ascribed to God because it can pertain only to temporal things. See al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī, "Munāẓara maʿa mulḥid," in *Majmūʿ kutub wa-rasāʾil lil-imām al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī*, ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm Aḥmad Jadbān, vol. 1 (Sanaa: Dār al-Ḥikma al-Yamāniyya, 2001), 309. Concerning the authenticity of this work, see Binyamin Abrahamov, "Al-Ḳāsim ibn Ibrāhīm's Argument from Design," *Oriens* 29/30 (1986): 281 ff. I am indebted to Mahmoud Abushuair for directing me to these references.

210   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:79–80; ed. al-Saʿawī, 132–133.

211   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:82; ed. al-Saʿawī, 136–137.

intends to list unacceptable attributes, he also specifies laughing, rejoicing, and speaking, for God is indeed described by these attributes in revelation and, according to Ibn Taymiyya, actually does possess them.[212] In a subsequent passage, he states that "weeping and grief presuppose weakness and incapacity, of which [attributes] God must be exonerated, whereas joy and anger are among the attributes of perfection."[213] Ibn Taymiyya owes his reader a justification for this claim, which, in my view, is not self-evident. He proposes just such a justification—though, in my opinion, not a convincing one—in the treatise *Akmaliyya*, discussed in detail in chapter 7, section 1.2.

Seventh Rule: Many of the divine attributes can be demonstrated not only through revelation but also through reason.[214]

Ibn Taymiyya probably added this rule to *Tadmuriyya* later.[215] Given that the sixth rule speaks predominantly about how non-divine attributes can be recognised as such, it probably seemed appropriate to him to delineate also how those attributes that do belong to God can be established as such. The most effective means for doing this is the argument known as *qiyās awlā* (*argumentum a fortiori*), described in detail in chapter 7, section 1.2. Here, however, Ibn Taymiyya emphasises explicitly that he intends to present a different method of proof, namely, the argument that based on the law of the excluded middle, God must necessarily possess either a certain attribute or its opposite. Thus, for example, God is either dead or living, either hearing, seeing, and capable of speech or deaf, blind, and dumb, either inside the world or outside it. This view, he says, was put forth both by the leading scholars (*a'imma*) and by the speculative Sunni thinkers (*nuẓẓār al-sunna*) who followed them.[216] Yet one group of those who deny the attributes (*ṭā'ifa min al-nufāh*), including al-Āmidī, refused to adopt this method.[217]

---

212   On the attribute of laughter, see, e.g., p. 242 below.

213   *Tadmuriyya*, ᴍꜰ, 3:86; ed. al-Saʿawī, 144.

214   Ibn Taymiyya expounds this rule in *Tadmuriyya*, ᴍꜰ, 3:alif–sīn; ed. al-Saʿawī, 146–164.

215   See here the editor's comment in *Tadmuriyya*, ed. al-Saʿawī, 146, n. 9.

216   *Tadmuriyya*, ᴍꜰ, 3:dāl–hā'; ed. al-Saʿawī 151. Thus, al-Ashʿarī argues, for instance, that God must be seeing since otherwise He would have to be characterised as blind. See al-Ashʿarī, *al-Lumaʿ*, 25–26. See also a similar argument with respect to the attributes of will, life, and knowledge in al-Ashʿarī, 37–38.

217   *Tadmuriyya*, ᴍꜰ, 3:wāw; ed. al-Saʿawī, 152–155. For al-Āmidī's discussion, from which Ibn Taymiyya also quotes excerpts, see Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Mahdī, 5 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa-l-Wathāʾiq al-Qawmiyya, 2004), 1:271 ff.

Both al-Āmidī and Ibn Taymiyya refer in their discussion of this issue to the views of Aristotle, who in his *Categories* distinguishes four kinds of opposites (*mutaqābilān*). We explain these here in broad outline to gain a better understanding of them.[218]

The first kind of opposite is that of correlation (*taḍāyuf*). Thus, two objects can have an opposite relationship, such as ten being twice the number five or five being half the number ten. Furthermore, opposites can exist in a relationship of contrariety (*taḍādd*), as with the colours white and black or the qualities of being healthy and sick. With the first pair (white and black), there can be a middle (i.e., it is possible for a thing to be neither white nor black). With the second pair (health and sickness), there can be a middle only if the subject to which the predicate pertains either does not exist or cannot by its nature be qualified by either attribute. Otherwise, a middle is excluded and the entity in question must be qualified either by the one quality or by its opposite, that is, in the current example, it must be either healthy or sick. The same is true for the third kind of opposite, which is that of deprivation and possession (*ʿadam wa-malaka*), an example of which is the attribute of being either seeing or blind. The fourth and final kind of opposite is that of negation and affirmation (*salb wa-ījāb*). Zayd, for example, must be either living or not living. The law of the excluded middle applies here independently of whether the subject to which the predicate pertains, in this case Zayd, exists or does not exist.

Relevant to the current discussion is the fact that in light of the law of the excluded middle, a stone, for instance, cannot be said to be both living and non-living but, at most, to be both non-living and non-dead. This is based on the premiss that the categories "living" and "dead" are not applicable to stones to begin with. If this principle applies to God as well with respect to these and other attributes, then one could, for example, describe Him as being "neither seeing nor blind."

In Ibn Taymiyya's relatively long and complex discussion, we can detect two major strategies of argumentation by which he seeks to refute the principle we have just expounded. First, he attempts to show that there are no grounds for assuming that God transcends the attributes of, for example, life, hearing,

---

218   The tenor of the following paragraphs is based on Aristotle, *Kategorien. Lehre vom Satz. Lehre vom Schluß oder Erste Analytik. Lehre vom Beweis oder Zweite Analytik*, trans. Eugen Rolfes (Hamburg: Meiner, 1995), x, 11b–13b, as well as Aristotle, *Kitāb al-Maqūlāt*, in *Manṭiq Arisṭū*, trans. Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1980), 63–69. The choice of Arabic terminology I have given here comes from Ibn Taymiyya but is close to that found in *Kitāb al-Maqūlāt* just cited.

and seeing. Rather, he maintains, these attributes belong to God necessarily.[219] Second, he argues that the assertion that particular objects, such as stones, can be described as neither living nor dead is based on pure convention (*iṣṭilāḥ maḥḍ*). This, however, runs counter to the Arabic language, as he attempts to demonstrate by appealing to verse Q. 16:21, in which the idols of the polytheists are described as dead (*amwāt*).[220] Third, Ibn Taymiyya argues that even if it indeed be the case that certain objects, such as stones, are neither living nor dead, the fact of being non-living is in itself a defect. One therefore may not ascribe to God, who is free from all defects, the attribute of being non-living, which entails that He must, in fact, be regarded as living.[221]

In addition to the method presented here of substantiating the divine attributes through reference to their respective opposites, Ibn Taymiyya, as previously mentioned, is also aware of the method that is based on an application of the *argumentum a fortiori* (*qiyās awlā*). The following chapter focusses on this method of proof, which constitutes a basic methodological building block in Ibn Taymiyya's substantiation of his doctrine concerning the divine attributes.

---

219   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:ṭāʾ–yāʾ; ed. al-Saʿawī, 157–158.
220   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:lām; ed. al-Saʿawī, 160.
221   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:nūn–sīn; ed. al-Saʿawī, 163–164.

Epistemological Foundations

1   On the Applicability of *qiyās* in Theology

The term *qiyās* is used in both the legal and the philosophical traditions, albeit with a different meaning in each. In law, it refers to several different methods of inference, foremost among them analogy. The process of analogy serves to produce a legal ruling (called *ḥukm al-farʿ*) for an as of yet undetermined case (the *farʿ*) by drawing an analogy between it and an already established case (the *aṣl*). The element of comparison (*jāmiʿ*) is a property present in both cases on the basis of which the ruling of the *aṣl* may legitimately be transferred to the *farʿ*. The conclusion is considered particularly valid if the common property is the one that can also be identified as the *ratio legis* (*ʿilla*) of the ruling pertaining to the *aṣl*. Thus, the prohibition of drinking wine found in the textual sources can be transferred to the consumption of beer given that both beverages possess the quality of intoxication, which, in turn, can be identified as the grounds for the prohibition of consuming wine. In the realm of theology, as elaborated below, this form of inference is known as *qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid*[1] (inference from the seen to the unseen), in which, as al-Ashʿarī states, the *shāhid* is akin to the *aṣl* and the *ghāʾib* is akin to the *farʿ*.[2]

In the *falsafa* tradition, *qiyās* refers to the syllogism, which, following Ibn Sīnā, can be divided into categorical (*iqtirānī*) and hypothetical (*istithnāʾī*),[3] of which only the former will be further elaborated here. Ibn Sīnā illustrates the categorical syllogism by means of the following example:[4]

---

1   The alternative wording "*al-istidlāl bi-l-shāhid ʿalā al-ghāʾib*" is also used with the same meaning. It is likewise common to distinguish *qiyās* with respect to its domain of application into *sharʿī* and *ʿaqlī*, which should be translated as "legal" and "theological," respectively. See, e.g., Abū Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī, *al-Lumaʿ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. Muḥyī al-Dīn Dīb Mistū and Yūsuf ʿAlī Badīwī (Beirut: Dār al-Kalim al-Ṭayyib and Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1995), 199.

2   See Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt*, 286, line 19. See also, e.g., Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Miʿyār al-ʿilm fī fann al-manṭiq* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-ʿArabiyya, 1927), 105.

3   See Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, 139.

4   Ibid.

| (major premiss) | Every *j* is a *b*. |
| (minor premiss) | Every *b* is an *ā*. |

| (conclusion) | Every *j* is an *ā*. |

This *qiyās* consists of two premisses (sing. *muqaddima*) and a conclusion (*natīja*). As Ibn Sīnā explains, the element that appears in both premisses (here *b*) is the middle term (*ḥadd awsaṭ*), the first element mentioned in the conclusion (here *j*) is the minor term (*ḥadd aṣghar*), and the second element mentioned in the conclusion (here *ā*) is the major term (*ḥadd akbar*).[5]

To distinguish the legal instrument of *qiyās* from that of the categorical syllogism, Ibn Taymiyya refers to the former as *qiyās al-tamthīl*,[6] as was common before him; however, contrary to what one might expect, he refers to the latter not as *qiyās iqtirānī* but as *qiyās al-shumūl*.[7] Unlike the *falsafa* tradition, in which the syllogism is generally given precedence over techniques of inference based on analogy,[8] Ibn Taymiyya takes the position that any analogical inference can readily be converted into syllogistic form and thus regards the two inferential techniques as equipollent.[9] Indeed, the belief in the superiority of the syllogism is based on the ontological realism—rejected by Ibn Taymiyya—that attributes universal validity to the generic terms employed in syllogistic inferences.[10]

Central to the current section is the question of the applicability of *qiyās* in theology, a matter on which Ibn Taymiyya's views have already been discussed in the literature.[11] The investigation presented here builds on the existing schol-

---

5   See ibid., 140–141.

6   See, e.g., ibid., 138.

7   Wael Hallaq notes that Ibn Taymiyya may have coined this expression himself. See Hallaq, *Against the Greek Logicians*, xiv. Amir Dziri claims that the term *sīlūjism* (syllogism) was common among the *falāsifa* and that it was "those Muslim scholastics who favoured Arabo-Islamic cultural autonomy" who sought to replace it with the term *qiyās*. Owing to its lack of conceptual clarity, it was then specified by adding the qualifier *shumūl*. See Amir Dziri, *Die* Ars Disputationis *in der islamischen Scholastik: Grundzüge der muslimischen Argumentations- und Beweislehre* (Freiburg: kalam, 2015), 178. In fact, however, the term *qiyās* is used frequently in the works of the *falāsifa*; for this reason, Dziri's comments seem to me to be unsupportable.

8   Thus, Ibn Sīnā, for example, characterises *qiyās al-tamthīl* as weak (*ḍaʿīf*). See Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, 138.

9   He mentions this in numerous places in his writings. See, e.g., *Darʾ*, 7:153 and *Radd*, 364. See also von Kügelgen, "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik," esp. 209–212.

10   See von Kügelgen, "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik," esp. 206–207, as well as chapter 4, section 3.2 of the present work.

11   See esp. Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 56–67; also von Kügelgen, "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik," 212–214.

arship but goes beyond it in several ways. First, it locates Ibn Taymiyya's position within the broader development of Islamic thought, whereby, among other things, it draws attention to similarities with the position of al-Āmidī. Second, it traces various lines of argumentation in Ibn Taymiyya's treatment of the topic, and, third, it uncovers contradictions in his views. To locate Ibn Taymiyya's stance within the context of Islamic intellectual history, we must first sketch the status of *qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid* (hereafter QGS) in theology before him,[12] a task we take up in the following section.

1.1 Qiyās *in Islamic Theology before Ibn Taymiyya*

QGS was probably already widely used in theology in early Islam. Thus, the well-known littérateur and Muʿtazilī theologian ʿAmr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/869) remarked in the first half of the third/ninth century that there are two forms of proof in theology, namely, scriptural proof and QGS.[13] Also indicative of a widespread acceptance of the inference from the perceptible to the imperceptible in theology is a statement from al-Fārābī, who, in his early[14] work *Kitāb al-Qiyās al-ṣaghīr ʿalā ṭarīqat al-mutakallimīn*, reports that his contemporaries (*ahl zamāninā*)—by which he most probably means the *mutakallimūn*[15]—know QGS by the name *al-istidlāl bi-l-shāhid ʿalā al-ghāʾib*. Al-Fārābī

---

12   See here in the Western scholarship: van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre*, 381–394; Josef van Ess, "The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology," in *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*, ed. Gustav E. von Grunebaum (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1970), 34–42; Ahmed Alami, *L'ontologie modale: Étude de la théorie des modes d'Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2001), 121–139; Khaled El-Rouayheb, "Theology and Logic," in Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*; with special focus on al-Fārābī: Joep Lameer, *Al-Fārābī and Aristotelian Syllogistics: Greek Theory and Islamic Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 204–232; and, with special focus on ʿAbd al-Jabbār: Jan Peters, *God's Created Speech: A Study in the Speculative Theology of the Muʿtazilî Qâḍî l-Quḍât Abû l-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Jabbâr bn Aḥmad al-Hamaḏânî* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 225–231. In the Arabic scholarship, the following studies are noteworthy: Aḥmad ʿAbd-al-Laṭīf, *Manhaj imām al-ḥaramayn fī dirāsat al-ʿaqīda: ʿArḍ wa-naqd* (Riyadh: Markaz al-Malik Fayṣal lil-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya, 1993), 143–166; Ḥasan al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Āmidī wa-ārāʾuhu al-kalāmiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 1998), 141–148; Zakariyyā Bashīr, "Qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid," *Majallat al-Sharīʿa wa-l-qānūn* 8 (1994); and Abū al-Qāsim al-Anṣārī, *al-Ghunya fī al-kalām*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Hādī, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2010), 1:137–156 in the editor's introduction. I unfortunately did not have access to the following work: ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Murshidī, "Qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid fī al-fikr al-Islāmī" (PhD diss., Al-Azhar University, n.d.).

13   See Abū ʿUthmān ʿAmr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥujaj al-nubuwwa*, in *Rasāʾil al-Jāḥiẓ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, vol. 3 (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1979), 226. In his own words: *shāhid ʿiyān yadullu ʿalā ghāʾib*.

14   See Lameer, *Al-Fārābī*, 205.

15   This is what Rescher suspects [see Nicholas Rescher, ed., *Al-Fārābī's Short Commentary*

himself subjects this inferential technique to what Joep Lameer calls a "critical appraisal" and confirms its ability to generate if not logically necessary then at least plausible conclusions.[16] A similar view was held several centuries later by Ibn Rushd, who does not reject QGS in principle but does reject it in discrete cases. Moreover, he identifies QGS as a merely rhetorical proof except in cases where the property that constitutes the element of comparison can be rationally established in and through itself (that is, without reference to the seen world) (*wa-huwa dalīl khiṭābī illā ḥaythu al-nuqla maʿqūla bi-nafsihā*).[17] An early opponent of QGS, as Alami points out, may have been Jahm b. Ṣafwān given that he posited the absolute incomparability and dissimilarity of the visible and the transcendent worlds. In Jahm's view, it was enough to describe God by an attribute that is also attributed to creation in order to be guilty of the proscribed *tashbīh*.[18] But even in less extreme circles, there was an awareness that QGS could not proceed without an element of comparison and was therefore in danger of slipping into anthropomorphism. When employing QGS, therefore, it was necessary to make sure that the creaturely quality of the original case could be identified as a secondary factor irrelevant to the construction of the argument. Thus, for example, the Zaydī al-Qāsim al-Rassī (d. 246/860), who was heavily influenced by the Muʿtazila,[19] sees in the perfection of the

---

on Aristotle's Prior Analytics (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), 93 (with n. 1)], and his suspicion is supported by the critical edition of the work since at least one manuscript adds after "*ahl zamāninā*" the words "*min al-mutakallimīn wa-l-fuqahāʾ*" (among the speculative theologians and the jurists). See Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Qiyās al-ṣaghīr ʿalā ṭarīqat al-mutakallimīn*, in *al-Manṭiq ʿinda al-Fārābī*, ed. Rafīq al-ʿAjam, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986), 45 (with n. 2).

16   On this and four other kinds of proof distinguished by Ibn Rushd, following Aristotelian logic, see Frank Griffel's remarks in Ibn Rushd, *Maßgebliche Abhandlung* (Faṣl al-maqāl), 163–164.

17   See Abū al-Walīd b. Rushd, *al-Kashf ʿan manāhij al-adilla fī ʿaqāʾid al-milla*, ed. Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 1998), 109, § 39; Ibn Taymiyya cites this passage in *Darʾ*, 9:85. Ibn Rushd's views on QGS are also discussed in relative detail in Bashīr, "Qiyās al-ghāʾib," 179–186. Griffel addresses the topic as well, at least tangentially, in his commentary on a section in the so-called "Appendix" (*Ḍamīma*) to the work *Faṣl al-maqāl*, in which Ibn Rushd is critical of QGS. Griffel's comments, however, inevitably miss the point of the text since he translates it incorrectly. He interprets the phrase "*qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid*" used by Ibn Rushd not as an inference from the known to the unknown but as an inference from the unknown to the known. See Ibn Rushd, *Maßgebliche Abhandlung* (Faṣl al-maqāl), 55, lines 19–24, as well as the commentary pertaining to it on p. 211. An analysis of this passage that is in line with the meaning of the text can be found in Bashīr, "Qiyās al-ghāʾib," 184–185.

18   See Alami, *L'ontologie modale*, 122 and p. 40 above in the current work.

19   Whether this influence took place directly or indirectly has been a subject of scholarly

creative order proof of the fact that God is powerful (*qādir*), living (*ḥayy*), and wise (*ḥakīm*), for "we deem a perfect and wise act to be impossible unless [it be carried out] by one who is powerful, living, wise, and knowing."[20] To an unnamed opponent whom he addresses throughout as a *mulḥid* (heretic), al-Rassī attributes the counterargument that the only wise and powerful agents we have observed are human beings and so, according to this logic, we must conclude that God is a human being. Al-Rassī then shows how, in his opinion, this conclusion by no means follows from the argument he has put forth in favour of QGS:

> Even if I have never actually come across an [agent] that is not a human being, his acting is not due to the fact of his being human. After all, we have also seen human beings who are incapable of action. Since we have observed that they are incapable of acting, this shows that there can be an agent who is not a human being.[21]

As a criterion of validity in verifying the element of comparison, al-Rassī makes use here of the principle of *ṭard* (coextension), which states that property *a* can be causative of property *b* only if it holds that "if *a* (here, the fact of being a human), then *b* (the fact of being an agent)." But since he works from the premiss that there exist human beings who are not agents, al-Rassī regards this condition as not having been fulfilled, which means that the property of being human can be considered irrelevant for the above QGS. In a similar discussion two generations later, al-Ashʿarī attempts to expose this QGS as a fallacy, one that erroneously concludes that since we have never observed an agent that is not corporeal, it follows that God as an agent must also be corporeal. In reply, al-Ashʿarī affirms that "the agent is not an agent because he is corporeal; conversely, one cannot identify a body as a body based on the fact that it acts. This is so because it is a body whether it acts or not."[22]

   In both the Ashʿarī and the Muʿtazilī traditions, there was overwhelming agreement on the legitimacy of applying QGS in theology.[23] Al-Ashʿarī him-

---

debate. Binyamin Abrahamov argues convincingly against Wilferd Madelung that the influence was direct. See, e.g., the introduction to Binyamin Abrahamov, ed., *Al-Ḳāsim b. Ibrāhīm on the Proof of God's Existence: Kitāb al-Dalīl al-Kabīr* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 6 ff.

20   Al-Rassī, "Munāẓara," 307–308. I thank Mahmoud Abushuair for this reference.

21   Ibid., 308.

22   Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad Maqālāt*, 289, lines 16–17. This passage is also discussed in El-Rouayheb, "Theology and Logic," 408.

23   As on the topic of *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*, the Muʿtazila in particular seem to have written works on QGS, such as the (lost) *Kayfiyyat al-istidlāl bi-l-shāhid ʿalā al-ghāʾib* of

self had made use of this method—one that became standard procedure among his followers—to affirm seven eternal essential attributes of God and the beatific vision on the basis of reason.[24] The fact that his erstwhile associates, the Muʿtazila, did not tread this path—as is well-known—motivated him to write his (lost) work *al-Istishhād*, in which by his own testimony he demonstrated that insofar as the Muʿtazila accepted QGS as an argument, they were obliged to recognise God's knowledge, power, and all His other attributes as well.[25] In contrast to the Ashʿarīs, however, the Muʿtazila used QGS to support their position that God's acts, if they are not to be unjust, must conform to earthly standards of justice.[26] In doing so, they earned themselves the label "*mushabbiha fī al-afʿāl*" (anthropomorphists with respect to acts) among the Ashʿarīs, who adduced, among other things, the counterargument that God cannot act unjustly to begin with since He is the owner of creation and may thus dispose of it freely.[27] Ibn Taymiyya affirms this accusation of the Ashʿarīs,[28] but he disagrees with them that God's actions are beyond any possibility of moral judgement.[29]

We have already identified Jahm b. Ṣafwān as an opponent of QGS. This same position of rejection was held—albeit with an entirely different motivation—by the early traditionalists, including the Ḥanbalīs. Theology for them consisted almost exclusively of citing proof texts from the Quran and hadith, while any further speculative engagement with these was frowned upon. And while the Ḥanbalīs remained broadly faithful to their traditionalist stance, the text-centred methodology of the school's founder, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), could not be sustained in the wake of rivalries with the adherents of *kalām*.

Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī (d. 319/931), which, judging by the title, may have been a manual for performing valid analogical inferences in theology (see el Omari, *Theology of Abū l-Qāsim*, 20). A similar work was probably written prior to it by Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāṭ (d. 300/913). See al-Anṣārī, *Ghunya*, 1:144 in the editor's introduction.

24   See al-Ashʿarī, *Lumaʿ*, 24–25 on the attribute of knowledge; p. 25, lines 3–6 on power and life; p. 25, lines 7–12 on hearing and seeing; esp. pp. 36–38 on speech and will; and pp. 61–62 on seeing God.

25   This passage comes from the work *al-ʿUmad fī al-ruʾya*, also lost, and is preserved as a quotation in Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1175). See Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tabyīn*, 131, lines 17–19.

26   For a detailed treatment of this topic, see Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 31–35 and 40–45, as well as, more recently, Ayman Shihadeh, "Theories of Ethical Value in *Kalām*: A New Interpretation," in Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*.

27   See, e.g., al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 26:177–178. On the Ashʿarī argument mentioned here, see chapter 10, section 1, esp. p. 287.

28   See, e.g., *Minhāj*, 1:447.

29   This topic is discussed in detail in chapter 10, section 1.

To secure a legitimising basis for a shift in approach, a work was attributed to Aḥmad about two hundred years after his death entitled *al-Radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa-l-zanādiqa*,[30] in which theologically undesirable positions are rebutted through rational argumentation.[31] Although the traditionalist Shāfiʿī Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) denounced this hoax as late as the eighth/fourteenth century,[32] by his time the leading Ḥanbalī scholars—including al-Dhahabī's teacher Ibn Taymiyya[33]—had affirmed Aḥmad's authorship of the text, thus cementing it in the collective memory across school boundaries. Of the extant works in which the influence of *kalām* on the Ḥanbalī tradition is evident, the oldest is *al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-dīn* by Abū Yaʿlā b. al-Farrāʾ (d. 458/1066).[34] In this work, Abū Yaʿlā affirms the divine attributes, such as power and life, through recourse to QGS in a manner similar to that described in relation to al-Rassī and al-Ashʿarī above.[35] In his work on legal theory, *al-ʿUdda fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, Abū Yaʿlā affirms emphatically that Aḥmad had used *qiyās* in theological matters and that it thus represented a legitimate form of argument.[36] He was followed in this stance by notable Ḥanbalī scholars, including his student al-Kalwadhānī (d. 510/1116),[37] Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 513/

---

30   This work has been edited several times; see, e.g., (pseudo-)Ibn Ḥanbal, *Radd*. The editor's attempt, presented polemically in the introduction, to prove the authenticity of Ibn Ḥanbal's authorship of this work is not very convincing. However, the *Radd* may have been preceded by two antecedent versions, at least the core of which could go back to Ibn Ḥanbal. The earlier version consists exclusively of citations of Quranic verses; see ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, ed. Muḥammad b. Saʿīd b. Sālim al-Qaḥṭānī, 2 vols. (Dammam: Dār Ibn al-Qayyim, 1986), 2:512–520. The later one also consists of Quranic verses along with the additional citation of the ninety-nine names of God; see Abū Bakr al-Khallāl, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, ed. ʿAṭiyya al-Zahrānī, 7 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1989), 6:48–73. Both tracts, however, have little in common with the *Radd* discussed above.

31   A detailed treatment of this topic can be found in al-Sarhan, "Early Muslim Traditionalism," 48–53. See also Christopher Melchert, *Ahmad ibn Hanbal* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006), 101–102 and Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," 627.

32   See Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, ed. Shuʿayb al-Arnaʾūṭ (intro.), 25 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1996), 11:286–287. See also the editor's note at p. 287, n. 1, in which al-Dhahabī's view is convincingly substantiated.

33   See *Darʾ*, 1:221.

34   See Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," 630.

35   See Abū Yaʿlā b. al-Farrāʾ, *al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Wadi Zaidan Haddad (Beirut: Dar El-Machreq Éditeurs, 1974), 46–47.

36   Abū Yaʿlā refers to the work *al-Radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa-l-zanādiqa* mentioned above. See Abū Yaʿlā b. al-Farrāʾ, *al-ʿUdda fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. Aḥmad al-Mubārakī, 6 vols. (Riyadh: n.p., 1993), 1273–1275.

37   See Abū al-Khaṭṭāb al-Kalwadhānī, *al-Tamhīd fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. Mufīd Abū ʿAmsha, 4 vols. (Jeddah: Markaz al-Baḥth al-ʿIlmī wa-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1985), 3:360 ff.

1119),[38] and al-Zāghūnī (d. 527/1132),[39] to the point that among Ḥanbalīs at the time of Ibn Taymiyya, the validity of QGS in theology may have been regarded as largely beyond question. Although Ibn Taymiyya is aware of Ḥanbalī scholars who were hostile to QGS, he interprets the disagreement as a purely semantic one. Thus, he cites the epistle of al-Shaykh Abū Muḥammad to the inhabitants of Raʾs al-ʿAyn[40]—referring to Abū Muḥammad b. Qudāma al-Maqdisī's (d. 620/1223) *Taḥrīm al-naẓar fī kutub al-kalām*[41]—as an example of a Ḥanbalī work critical of QGS.[42] Ibn Qudāma's critique, however, seems to have been referring purely to the designation of QGS as *qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid*, where *shāhid* refers to the perceptible world and *ghāʾib* to the essence and attributes of God. This, according to Ibn Qudāma, contravenes the Quran, which states that God is never *ghāʾib* (here in the sense of "absent").[43] To get around this, Ibn Taymiyya argues that this inference should rather have been named *qiyās al-ghayb* (rather than *al-ghāʾib*) *ʿalā al-shāhid*.[44] The passage in Ibn Qudāma to which Ibn Taymiyya is in all likelihood referring can indeed be interpreted in this manner.[45]

Elsewhere, Ibn Taymiyya counts the same Ibn Qudāma as one of the "speculative thinkers of later times (*mutaʾakhkhirū al-nuẓẓār*), like Abū al-Maʿālī [al-Juwaynī], Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī], and [Fakhr al-Dīn] al-Rāzī"[46] with respect to his criticism of QGS. Here too Ibn Taymiyya considers the disagreement with

---

38   See Abū al-Wafāʾ b. ʿAqīl, *al-Wāḍiḥ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh al-Turkī, 5 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1999), 5:283–284.

39   See al-Zāghūnī, *Īḍāḥ*, 260.

40   In Ibn Taymiyya's time a big city, but today a small village located on the border between Syria and Turkey (where it is known as "Resülayn" or "Ceylânpınar"). See Ernst Honigmann, "Raʾs al-ʿAyn," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 8, ed. C.E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

41   That this work is an epistle to the inhabitants of Raʾs al-ʿAyn is not clear from the text of the editions I have used; rather, it is noted on the title page of the only extant manuscript as a kind of subtitle. On this point, see Ibn Qudāma, *Censure of Speculative Theology* (Taḥrīm al-naẓar), xi in the editor's introduction.

42   *Ghāʾib*, MF, 14:51–52.

43   See Q. 6:7.

44   *Ghāʾib*, MF, 14:52–53. Note that this does not change the translation "inference from the seen to the unseen." Unlike Ibn Qudāma, van Ess considers the name QGS to be self-evident and also makes reference to the Quran (albeit to a different verse). See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 4:664–665.

45   See Ibn Qudāma, *Censure of Speculative Theology* (Taḥrīm al-naẓar), 50–51; Eng. trans., 34–35. Although Ibn Qudāma subsequently criticises QGS as a form of anthropomorphism, he does so with reference to a specific application that even a proponent of QGS such as Ibn Taymiyya would reject.

46   See *Radd*, 366.

the proponents of QGS to be a semantic one, albeit one that does not simply relate, as expounded above, to an infelicitous choice of name for this inferential technique. A more detailed account of the broader discussion is needed to illustrate what seems to have been the bone of contention in this case. Ibn Taymiyya identifies four elements of comparison (sing. *jāmiʿ*), or *tertia comparationis*, that were used by the *ṣifātiyya*, namely, the indicant (*dalīl*), the cause (*ʿilla*), the condition (*sharṭ*), and the definition (*ḥadd*). I have not been able to find among the *mutakallimūn* any author before al-Juwaynī who treats these elements of comparison systematically and in a manner broadly congruent with the terminology proposed by Ibn Taymiyya.[47] What is meant by these elements of comparison becomes clear in light of the examples he cites, namely the following: (1) If one encounters an artefact in the visible world that is flawless and perfect, this is an *indicant* of the fact that its author or maker possesses knowledge. (2) In the perceptible world, the *cause* that makes the one who possesses knowledge knowing is the fact that knowledge inheres in him; the same is true in the non-perceptible world. (3) The possibility of being knowing presupposes the *condition* of being alive, which also holds for both worlds. As for (4) the *definition*, the one who knows, for instance, is defined by the fact that knowledge inheres in him, which likewise holds in both worlds.[48] As is clear from the last example, what is meant by *ḥadd* is not the Aristotelian definition.[49]

---

47   The explanation of the four elements of comparison also coincides in the main with that of Ibn Taymiyya, which is reproduced below. Al-Juwaynī, however, uses the term *ḥaqīqa* (essence) instead of *ḥadd*. See Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī, *al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Dīb, 2 vols. (Qatar: Khalīfa b. Ḥamad Āl Thānī, 1399/[1979-80]), 1:127–128. ʿAbd al-Jabbār also cites four ways in which QGS can be applied in his *al-Muḥīṭ bi-l-taklīf*, which is so far accessible only through Ibn Mattawayh's (fl. fifth/eleventh century) critical commentary. Despite some similarities, however, his presentation diverges markedly from that of al-Juwaynī. See Abū Muḥammad b. Mattawayh, *al-Majmūʿ fī al-Muḥīṭ bi-l-taklīf*, ed. Jean Joseph Houben, vol. 1 (Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kāthūlīkiyya, 1965), 165–166. This passage is also discussed in Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 229–231. Omar Hamdan and Gregor Schwarb are currently working on a critical edition of the *Muḥīṭ*.

The topic is also discussed by al-Juwaynī's contemporary al-Mutawallī al-Shāfiʿī (d. 478/1086) in his *al-Ghunya fī uṣūl al-dīn*. See ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mutawallī al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Ghunya fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. ʿImād al-Dīn Aḥmad Ḥaydar (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, 1987), 90–91. As Gimaret notes, however, this text is largely plagiarised from al-Juwaynī's *Kitāb al-Irshād ilā qawāṭiʿ al-adilla fī uṣūl al-iʿtiqād*. See Daniel Gimaret, "al-Mutawallī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 7, ed. C.E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 781a.

48   See *Radd*, 367.

49   On this, see also van Ess, "Logical Structure," 37–38.

Rather, the *ḥadd* of a term comprises those features that, when predicated of the term, would result in a tautology.[50]

Al-Juwaynī makes it clear in his *Burhān* that he thinks little of QGS as an argument. He also attributes the restriction of the elements of comparison to the above-mentioned four to the *muʿaṭṭila*, by which pejorative he probably means the Muʿtazila, who in his view are guilty of divesting the descriptions of God in the sources of their meaning.[51] It is unclear whether this way of presenting things should be seen as an attempt to classify QGS as a specifically Muʿtazilī instrument and, therefore, as one that is non-Ashʿarī. What we can say with certainty is that even al-Juwaynī in his theological works *Irshād* and *Shāmil*, which were probably written before *Burhān*,[52] had applied QGS using the elements of comparison mentioned[53] and that al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233) less than two hundred years later would write that his fellow Ashʿarīs were broadly in agreement (*ittifāq*)[54] that QGS was valid as long as it was based on one of these four elements of comparison.[55] Al-Āmidī's assertion is probably true at least for Ashʿarīs up to the time of al-Juwaynī. As of al-Juwaynī's *Burhān* at the latest, however, a decidedly *qiyās*-critical attitude was articulated in the Ashʿarī school that was then adopted—as Ibn Taymiyya likewise observes—by al-Ghazālī,[56] al-Rāzī,[57] and other well-known figures such as al-Āmidī,[58] ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355),[59] and Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370).[60] Al-Juwaynī

---

50   See al-Juwaynī, *Burhān*, 1:127–128.

51   See ibid., 1:127.

52   On the chronology of his works, see ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, *Manhaj imām al-ḥaramayn*, 65–68.

53   See ibid., 154 ff.

54   Although *ittifāq*, just like the term *ijmāʿ*, can mean "consensus," it is often—and in contrast to the latter—used in the sense of broad agreement as well.

55   See al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, 1:212.

56   See El-Rouayheb, "Theology and Logic," 612–613 with the references given there.

57   On his *qiyās*-critical position, which we discuss later, see esp. Khadīja Ḥammādī al-ʿAbd Allāh, *Manhaj al-imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī bayna al-Ashāʿira wa-l-Muʿtazila*, 2 vols. (Damascus: Dār al-Nawādir, 2012), 1:146–173, esp. 160 ff. and Shihadeh, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī," 165, where reference is made to al-Rāzī's work *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl* in manuscript form. This work has since been edited and published. The relevant passage can be found in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl fī dirāyat al-uṣūl*, ed. Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Fūda, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Dhakhāʾir, 2010), 1:133.

58   See al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, 1:212–213.

59   In his work *al-Mawāqif fī ʿilm al-kalām*, he counts QGS as one of the problematic methods of inference, but without rejecting it in principle. Van Ess translates and discusses the relevant passage in van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre*, 381–394.

60   See Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī and Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *al-Ibhāj fī sharḥ al-Minhāj*, ed. Aḥmad Jamāl al-Zamzamī and Nūr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Jabbār Ṣaghīrī, 7 vols. (Dubai: Dār al-Buḥūth lil-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya wa-li-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth, 2004), 6:2254–2257. The passage given was not

rejected the *ʿilla* as an element of comparison on the basis of Ashʿarī occasionalism.[61] He also considered it impossible to capture a commonality between God and creation through the element of comparison that consists of the *ḥadd* or the *ḥaqīqa* since the attributes of God are eternal and those of man are temporal and thus entirely different in nature from God's. Now, if one thinks that they converge in the concept of being knowing (*ʿilmiyya*), this, according to al-Juwaynī, is a misconception premised on the validity of the theory of *ḥāl*.[62] He sums up his view in the following words:

> Now, to summarise: If the proof establishes what one seeks to prove concerning the non-perceptible world, then the goal has been achieved and there is no need to adduce an analogous case in the visible world. If, however, there is no proof for what one seeks to establish concerning the non-perceptible world, then adducing an analogous case in the visible world is without any use (*lā maʿnā lahu*). There is no analogical inference in theology (*wa-laysa fī al-maʿqūl qiyās*);[63] and this [also] applies to [the elements of comparison of] the *sharṭ* and the *dalīl*.[64]

It may have been this passage that Ibn Taymiyya had in mind when he argued, as stated above, that the disagreement over the validity of QGS was a purely semantic one. Thus, he says, the opponents of *qiyās* are merely concerned with constructing arguments in theology without distinguishing between an original case (*aṣl*) and a novel case (*farʿ*). Rather, for them, the proof should refer directly and independently to the objects designated in the analogy as

---

written by Taqī al-Dīn, but by his son Tāj al-Dīn. On this, see also the editor's introduction, 1:237.

61   According to this doctrine, there are neither primary nor secondary, or instrumental, causal relations between created objects; rather, every event in creation is caused directly by God. On this assumption, the element of comparison of the cause (*ʿilla*) indeed does not exist.

62   See al-Juwaynī, *Burhān*, 1:130. On the *ḥāl* theory of the Muʿtazilī Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī (d. 321/933) and its relation to QGS, see Alami, *L'ontologie modale*, 132–136. See also the critical remarks on Alami's work in Thiele, "Jubbāʾī's Theory," 370. The theory of *ḥāl*, to which al-Juwaynī also subscribed at least for a time, was expounded above in chapter 3, section 2.

63   The word *maʿqūl* here does not refer to just any type of rational matter but should rather be seen as the counterpart of *sharʿiyyāt* (legal matters), in which *qiyās*, according to al-Juwaynī, is indeed admissible. For this reason, I have translated *maʿqūl* as "theology." See also p. 222, n. 1 above.

64   Al-Juwaynī, *Burhān*, 1:130.

the original and novel cases.[65] Ibn Taymiyya seems to understand al-Juwaynī as accepting analogical inference in theology only when converted into a syllogism, for a syllogism does not refer to a particular original or novel case but encompasses both through that premiss which is formulated as the universal quantifier. Ibn Taymiyya gives the following example:[66]

| (major premiss) | All agents that act in a perfect manner are knowing. |
| (minor premiss) | Person A is an agent that acts in a perfect manner. |

(conclusion)   Person A is knowing.[67]

What Ibn Taymiyya is describing here is the process, which probably began with al-Juwaynī, of substituting QGS as the *kalām*-theological counterpart of legal analogy with the syllogism of the *falāsifa*.[68] Since, as already noted, analogy and syllogism, according to Ibn Taymiyya, can each be converted into the form of the other and both techniques of inference are thus qualitatively on a par, it makes sense that he would regard the disagreement over the validity of QGS in this case as a semantic one. Al-Juwaynī's critique, however, seems to me to go deeper than Ibn Taymiyya supposed, for in his *Burhān*, al-Juwaynī had not only stipulated that a proof in theology must relate directly to the non-perceptible world, but he had also criticised the elements of comparison by arguing that God and the world cannot legitimately be compared. Yet the element of comparison in analogy corresponds to what is referred to as the middle term in the syllogism. Thus, all that is achieved by converting an analogy into a syllogism is that the argument appears less anthropomorphic in terms of its form. Al-Ghazālī considers this a gain, but he stresses that the syllogistic form alone does not increase the probative force of the argument, as this depends on the validity of the major premiss, which can only be substantiated through another syllogism.[69]

From the words of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, whom Ibn Taymiyya lists as an opponent of QGS, one can clearly glean that al-Rāzī would not have conceded

---

65   Lit.: *bal al-iʿtibār bi-l-dalīl al-shāmil lil-ṣūratayn. Radd*, 366.

66   See *Radd*, 367.

67   Ibn Taymiyya states here only the premisses. I have added the conclusion for easier understanding.

68   On this, see also van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre*, 382–383 and 391–392, as well as esp. El-Rouayheb, "Theology and Logic," 411–416.

69   See El-Rouayheb, "Theology and Logic," 412–413.

the major premiss of the syllogism cited on the previous page. Indeed, he raises a variety of objections to the method common among the Ashʿarīs of proving God's knowledge based on the perfection of His creative activity, two of which we describe here briefly. First, al-Rāzī notes, a mere bee is capable of building a six-sided honeycomb—and this without a straightedge or a compass—while even the most rational of human beings would be incapable of producing something similar out of wax. The same is true of a spider's web or an anthill. Because of the perfection of these things, if the method of the Ashʿarīs were valid, one would have to draw the invalid conclusion that these animals are more knowledgeable than human beings.[70] Second, according to al-Rāzī, the Ashʿarī school presumes that the way individual parts are put together in the world neither results in benefits (*manāfiʿ*) nor brings about the realisation of interests (*maṣāliḥ*). Thus, for example, one cannot say that God created the eye in the known manner to perfect the ability to see or that He created the stomach in the known manner to perfect the process of digestion. For this reason, it is also not possible on the basis of the Ashʿarī position to assert that God brought about creation in the best of arrangements (*iḥkām*) and in perfect manner (*itqān*), and it is thus inadmissible to seek to prove His knowledge in this way.[71]

Having provided the foregoing sketch of the historical development of QGS, to which we refer again in the following section, we turn our attention presently to Ibn Taymiyya's own position.

---

70   Al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 3:110. This argument was also made before al-Rāzī. The Ḥanbalī Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 513/1119), for instance, attempted to rebut it by arguing that these animals simply carry out what God has inspired them to do. It is thus to God as inspirer that one must attribute the knowledge to which the complex constructions of the animals point.

71   See ibid., 3:116. Al-Rāzī's objection is not comprehensible. Al-Ashʿarī himself refers to the order in creation in one of his works and develops on the basis of it a teleological proof for the existence of God. Here he even discusses the functioning of the stomach. Moreover, he explicitly states that the order of creation serves to realise the interests (*maṣāliḥ*) of human beings. See al-Ashʿarī, *Thaghr*, 147–155. What the Ashʿarīs found problematic—and this may have been what al-Rāzī was taking aim at—is the assertion that God is subject to a motive for acting (*dāʿin* or *bāʿith*) that causes Him to arrange creation in the best possible order. They hold, by contrast, that God chooses arbitrarily from all possible courses of action and that it is only by observing creation that one arrives inductively at the principle that His activity in creation serves the interests of man. On this point and on the counter-position of the Muʿtazila, see Vasalou, *Theological Ethics*, 162–164.

1.2   *Ibn Taymiyya's View on* qiyās*: A Further Development of al-Āmidī's Position*

Ibn Taymiyya takes a clear position on the question of *qiyās*. He says:

> You know that we cannot come to know anything that is beyond our per-
> ception (*mā ghāba ʿannā*) except through the knowledge of that which
> we have already perceived (*mā shahidnāhu*). Thus, we can come to know
> things only through our external and internal senses,[72] the knowledge
> [thus gained] being always particular and specific (*muʿayyana makhṣūṣa*).
> We then come to know that which is non-perceptible (*ghāʾib*) through
> that which is perceptible (*shāhid*). From this, general and universal judge-
> ments (*qaḍāyā ʿāmma kulliyya*) arise within our minds. Then, when we
> are given a description of something that is not perceptible to us, we
> understand nothing of what we are told except as mediated through the
> knowledge of that which we have already perceived.[73]

Ibn Taymiyya clarifies this line of reasoning further by arguing that the descrip-
tions of paradise[74] and of God[75] would remain incomprehensible to us if the
conceptual structure of the expressions used to convey them did not capture a
commonality that extends across both the perceptible and the transcendent
worlds. This commonality or similarity—and here the common thread that
runs throughout Ibn Taymiyya's theory of the attributes becomes visible—
exists necessarily on the ontological level[76] and is captured on the linguistic
level in the term *mutawāṭiʾ*, or *mushakkik*.[77] This lays the ground for the legit-
imacy of using *qiyās* in theology. In several works, however, he makes a case for
narrowing its scope of application. Since God has no likeness (*lā mithlᵃ lahu*),
Ibn Taymiyya affirms, neither *qiyās al-tamthīl* nor *qiyās al-shumūl* may be used
to gain knowledge about His essence and attributes. This is because in a syllo-

---

72   This division goes back to Ibn Sīnā, drawing on Aristotelian ideas, and was further refined
     in various ways after him. Ibn Sīnā refers to the five known senses as the external senses
     and includes among the internal senses common sense (*ḥiss mushtarak*), imagery (*kha-
     yāl*), imagination (*mutakhayyila*), estimation (*wahm*), and memory (*dhākira*). See Jari
     Kaukua, "Avicenna on the Soul's Activity in Perception," in *Active Perception in the History
     of Philosophy: From Plato to Modern Philosophy*, ed. José Filipe Silva and Mikko Yrjönsuuri
     (Cham: Springer, 2014), 100–102.
73   *Nuzūl*, MF, 5:346; ed. al-Khamīs, 104.
74   *Nuzūl*, MF, 5:347; ed. al-Khamīs, 105–106.
75   *Nuzūl*, MF, 5:350–351; ed. al-Khamīs, 111–113.
76   See chapter 4, section 2.
77   See chapter 5, section 2.

gism the predicate applies to each of the particular elements equally (*tastawī afrāduhu fī al-ḥukm*), just as the ruling (*ḥukm*) applies to the original case (*aṣl*) and to the novel case (*farʿ*) equally in an analogy.[78] Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya continues,

> of these [types of *qiyās*] only the *argumentum a fortiori* (*qiyās awlā*) may be used with respect to God, such as when it is said, for example: [for] every deficiency (*naqṣ*) of which one absolves (*nazzaha*) a created entity, the Creator is a fortiori worthy of being absolved of it. And [for] every unqualified perfection (*kamāl muṭlaq*) possessed by any existent thing, the Creator is a fortiori worthy of possessing such perfection in which there is no deficiency in any respect whatsoever.[79]

The *argumentum a fortiori* can be seen here as a modification of the syllogism and of the inference by analogy, insofar as the middle term in the former and the property that forms the element of comparison in the latter must, first, denote either a deficiency or a perfection and, second, be used not in a purely univocal but in an analogous (*mushakkik*) manner. Ibn Taymiyya holds that QGS in the form of the *argumentum a fortiori* can be found in the texts of the Quran and hadith themselves.[80] He cites a narration in which a Companion asks the Prophet whether it is possible that all people will behold God on the day of judgement at the same time. In his response, the Prophet compares the seeing of God with the seeing of the moon. Since the moon is so large that all people—without blocking one another's view—can behold it simultaneously, this is true a fortiori for the vision of God, since He is even greater (*aʿẓam*) and more majestic (*ajall*).[81]

In his work *Akmaliyya*, Ibn Taymiyya explains the above method in greater detail in response to the query of an unnamed questioner. In this query, various conceptions of God are presented in summary form, followed by the conclusion that all the various proponents of these conceptions attempted to support them with reference to God's perfection and lack of deficiency.[82] As an example

---

78 *Darʾ*, 7:362; Ibn Taymiyya words it similarly in *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:30; ed. al-Saʿawī, 50.

79 *Darʾ*, 7:362.

80 Rosalind Gwynne argues that the *argumentum a fortiori* was first used in law, simultaneously or subsequently in the linguistic disciplines, and lastly in theology. See Rosalind Ward Gwynne, "The *A Fortiori* Argument in *Fiqh*, *Naḥw* and *Kalām*," in *Studies in the History of Arabic Grammar II*, ed. C.H.M. Versteegh and Michael Carter (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990).

81 *Bayān*, 4:443–444.

82 The full query can be found in *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:68–71; ed. Sālim, 3–6.

of this, the querier cites the position of the Muʿtazila that if God possesses attributes that subsist in Him, He would be dependent for His existence on the existence of these attributes. Moreover, according to the Muʿtazila, attributes can only inhere in bodies, which in turn are composed of parts. But dependence, corporeality, and being composed of parts are deficiencies, which means that God cannot possess attributes that subsist in Him.[83] The querier also mentions, among other things, a view held by the polytheists according to which God is so sublime and exalted that it is not befitting that one should turn to Him directly in worship.

But, the questioner pursues, not only can different conceptions of God be supported by appeal to divine perfection and lack of deficiency, but also the categories of perfection and lack of deficiency are relative matters (*umūr nisbiyya*) such that one and the same attribute can fall under one category or the other in different contexts.[84] The query ends with a request for clarification regarding these issues.

In his response, Ibn Taymiyya attempts to prove that the conceptions of God put forth by the questioner are erroneous. To this end, as he says by way of introduction, it is necessary to establish and expound upon two core premises. The first is that God possesses the highest possible degree of perfection (*aqṣā mā yumkinu min al-akmaliyya*) and must be exonerated of any form of deficiency.[85] The second is that the divine attributes of perfection can unambiguously be identified as such on the basis of particular criteria.[86] We trace Ibn Taymiyya's main lines of argument in this regard below.

Ibn Taymiyya regards the first core premiss as proved through the Quran, reason (*ʿaql*), and the natural disposition (*fiṭra*). The Quran attributes to God a plethora of praiseworthy attributes and singles Him out as the one to whom belongs the loftiest description (*al-mathal al-aʿlā*).[87] Furthermore, it identifies God as *al-ṣamad*,[88] a word that, Ibn Taymiyya explains—basing himself, in turn, on a statement of Ibn ʿAbbās—refers to the one to whom every perfection is rightfully ascribed and whose attributes of perfection are actualised in the best possible manner.[89]

---

83   See *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:69; ed. Sālim, 4.

84   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:70; ed. Sālim, 5–6.

85   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:71; ed. Sālim, 7.

86   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:85; ed. Sālim, 21.

87   See Q. 16:60 and 30:27.

88   See Q. 112:2.

89   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:72; ed. Sālim, 8. The report transmitted from Ibn ʿAbbās to which Ibn Taymiyya is referring here can be found in al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* (ed. al-Turkī), 30:346. The exegetical tradition produced a variety of attempts to interpret the word *ṣamad*, a *hapax legomenon*

That God is perfect and free of deficiency, Ibn Taymiyya continues, was never a subject of doubt either in the Muslim community or among mankind in general. This is so because knowledge of God's perfection, like knowledge of His existence, is a necessary part of the natural disposition (*fiṭra*) of man. Only if this disposition is not in a healthy state might one be dependent on rational proofs for the acquisition of this knowledge.[90] Ibn Taymiyya takes issue in this context with some of the *mutakallimūn* of later generations like al-Juwaynī, al-Rāzī, and al-Āmidī, to whom he attributes the view that God's perfection and freedom from defect cannot be proved by rational arguments but only through *ijmāʿ*. According to Ibn Taymiyya, they favoured the methodology of regarding a given attribute as a divine attribute only if it was transmitted in the revealed sources and considering it a non-divine attribute if, in their view, it presupposes the corporeality or spatial locatedness of the object in which it inheres. The former refers directly to the Quran and Sunna, doing away with the need for a detour via *ijmāʿ*, whose authority would first have to be established through an additional stage of proof.[91] Ibn Taymiyya criticises this procedure and attempts in his subsequent discussion to substantiate his first core premiss—namely, that God is absolutely perfect and free of defect—on the basis of two rational arguments. In the first argument, he appeals to what he calls the well-known method (*al-ṭarīqa al-maʿrūfa*) of proving that God's existence belongs to the realm of necessary being. It is obvious that Ibn Taymiyya has in mind here the argument put forth by Ibn Sīnā according to which contingent being (*al-wujūd al-mumkin*) must have a cause for its existence that lies outside itself. This cause, which is God, cannot itself fall under the category of contingence—insofar as it lies outside the realm of contingent existence—and must therefore belong to the realm of necessary being (*al-wujūd al-wājib*).[92] Now, just as contingent being is predicated on the existence of necessary being—and here Ibn Taymiyya's argument begins to unfold—so too, for instance, does temporal, dependent being that does not subsist by virtue of itself require eternal, self-sufficient, and self-subsistent being in order to exist.[93] In other words, deficient

---

in the Quran. For a more detailed analysis of the term by Ibn Taymiyya, see *Ikhlāṣ*, MF, 17:214–234, as well as, in contention with al-Rāzī's views, *Bayān*, 7:486–601.

90   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:72–73; ed. Sālim, 8–9.

91   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:73–74; ed. Sālim, 9–10.

92   Ibn Sīnā elaborates on this line of reasoning in several works. For a German translation of the relevant passages with citation to the original Arabic text, see Koutzarova, *Das Transzendentale bei Ibn Sīnā*, 396–400. For a critical discussion of Ibn Sīnā's proof for the existence of God, see Peter Adamson, "Philosophical Theology," in Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 306–307.

93   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:76; ed. Sālim, 12.

being is dependent on the existence of perfect being, and since contingent creation is deficient, God must necessarily be perfect.

Ibn Taymiyya's second rational proof begins in the form of an *argumentum ex remotione* (*sabr wa-taqsīm*). According to this argument, a pure attribute of perfection that is ontologically possible[94] can either belong to God or not belong to Him. The latter possibility is excluded, however, since it is possible for such an attribute to belong even to temporal, dependent, and contingent beings and thus must belong a fortiori to the Necessary Being.[95] Just as in this first step an argument for the *possibility* of the divine attributes was made via *qiyās awlā*, their actual existence is now substantiated in the same way. Thus, insofar as creation has received its perfections from the Creator, these perfections are actualised a fortiori in the Creator. Ibn Taymiyya adds here that the *falāsifa* also acknowledge this point since they believe that every perfection belonging to an effect stems from its cause, with the result that the perfection in question belongs to the cause a fortiori.[96] Now that the perfection of God has been established, according to Ibn Taymiyya, he endeavours to show that this perfection is essential to God and is not brought about through causes external to Him. The gist of his relatively long and abstract treatment can be illustrated by way of an example. Ibn Taymiyya endeavours to prove that a given attribute of perfection, such as being merciful (henceforth *a*), does not apply to God only when He acts in a merciful manner (henceforth *b*), for if this were the case, then *a* would be the cause of *b* and *b* the cause of *a*. This, however, would constitute a circular-recursive chain (*dawr qablī*) of events that cannot come to be, whereby it is proved that the existence of God's attributes of perfection does not depend on factors outside Himself.[97] Ibn Taymiyya concludes his argument in support of the first core premise by citing a number of Quranic passages and commenting on them in light of the rational arguments just discussed.[98]

---

94   Ibn Taymiyya distinguishes between possible and impossible attributes of perfection, which will be discussed in the further course of this work.

95   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:73–74; ed. Sālim, 9–10.

96   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:77; ed. Sālim, 13. The latter edition does not contain Ibn Taymiyya's remark concerning the *falāsifa*. As Sālim otherwise draws attention to the differences with the MF edition but does not do so here, he may have simply omitted these passages inadvertently.

      That causes are of a higher order than their respective effects is one of the core premises of Neoplatonism but by no means peculiar to it. The same idea can be found in Plotinus as well as in Proclus, both of whom strongly influenced the *falsafa* tradition. See, e.g., Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, trans. Eric R. Dodds, repr. of 2nd rev. ed. of 1963 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 193–194 (editor's comm.) and 9 (trans.).

97   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:77–79; ed. Sālim, 13–15.

98   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:79–83; ed. Sālim, 15–19.

He then turns to the second core premiss on which the applicability of QGS in the mode of the a fortiori argument rests. This premiss stipulates that an attribute of perfection that God possesses necessarily can be clearly identified as such. Ibn Taymiyya articulates two criteria for making this identification: (1) that the perfection be one whose existence is possible (*an yakūna al-kamāl mumkin al-wujūd*)[99] and (2) that the attribute of perfection not imply any deficiency (*al-kamāl alladhī lā yataḍammanu naqṣ^{an}*) on the part of the one in whom it inheres.[100] Ibn Taymiyya invokes the first criterion against the contention—he probably has in mind here the position of the *falāsifa* and the Mu'tazila—that it is a form of perfection for a being (*dhāt*) not to have need of existent attributes (*ṣifāt wujūdiyya*). Ibn Taymiyya replies—very much in line with his conceptualist ontology—that a being devoid of attributes (*dhāt mujarrada 'an al-ṣifāt*) or absolute being (*wujūd muṭlaq*) can only exist as a mental construct. Thus, even if it were a form of perfection not to possess any attributes, this would pertain only to impossible being and therefore not be ascribable to God.[101] Ibn Taymiyya clarifies that it is only in the mind that God's essence and His attributes constitute separable entities that can be set in a differentiated relationship to each other but that they are inseparable (*mutalāzim*) in the external world. It is thus incorrect to claim that God's essence is ontologically dependent on any attributes.[102] He then cites many examples in which this first criterion—namely, that the perfection be one whose existence is possible—comes into play, including the following statement, which he ascribes to the *falāsifa*: "Having created creation from all eternity (*fī al-azal*) is an attribute of perfection and must therefore be ascribed to Him."[103] Ibn Taymiyya counters that creation is necessarily made up of temporally successive things and therefore cannot possibly have existed in its entirety since eternity.[104] But even if this were possible, he continues, it would constitute an even greater perfection of God's if the process through which He creates is permanent and uninterrupted and each individual act of creation is set in motion by a preceding act of will grounded in wisdom.[105]

---

99   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:85; ed. Sālim, 21. From here on, the two editions diverge in their ordering of the text sections.

100   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:87; ed. Sālim, 33.

101   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:98; ed. Sālim, 24.

102   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:100–101; ed. Sālim, 25–26.

103   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:85; ed. Sālim, 31. Only in the Sālim edition can we glean from the context that Ibn Taymiyya attributes this statement to the *falāsifa*.

104   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:85; ed. Sālim, 31–32.

105   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:86; ed. Sālim, 32–33. On Ibn Taymiyya's concept of God's creative activity, see p. 138 above and p. 285 ff. below.

To illustrate the second criterion—namely, that the attribute of perfection not involve any deficiency—Ibn Taymiyya cites the example of the attribute of having appetite. While this attribute is more perfect than the attribute of not having an appetite—which can be triggered, for example, by illness—it is nevertheless not an attribute of perfection that may be ascribed to God. This is so because it necessarily involves deficient attributes, such as being dependent on food.[106]

Having prepared the theoretical ground for QGS in the mode of *qiyās awlā*, Ibn Taymiyya now deals with a number of attributes mentioned by the petitioner in his query. In doing so, he aims to demonstrate on rational grounds whether these attributes must be ascribed to God or not. His discussion illustrates how he employs QGS, and for this reason we summarise it below.

According to Ibn Taymiyya, God must have the ability to act independently at all times such that He can, for example, approach (*yaʾtī*),[107] come (*yajīʾu*),[108] descend (*yanzilu*),[109] and ascend (*yaṣʿadu*),[110] for being able to do so is more perfect than not being able to.[111] Although Ibn Taymiyya acknowledges that these actions would entail the existence of temporally originating states and/or acts in God's essence (*qiyām al-ḥawādith bihi*),[112] he considers this no reason not to ascribe said attributes to God. This is so because an entity that possesses temporally originating attributes is more perfect than one that does not.[113] Ibn Taymiyya next considers the attributes of love (*maḥabba*),[114] contentment (*riḍā*),[115] joy (*faraḥ*),[116] and loathing (*bughḍ*).[117] If we imagine two entities, one capable of rejoicing over, loving, and being satisfied with excellent things and of loathing things like injustice, ignorance, and falsehood and the other indif-

---

106   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:87; ed. Sālim, 33.

107   See, e.g., Q. 6:158.

108   See, e.g., Q. 89:22.

109   See, e.g., al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:215 (kitāb #19, bāb #14, ḥadīth #1153).

110   I was unable to find any such description of God either in the Quran or in the Sunna. Without giving concrete references, Ibn Taymiyya argues in *Nuzūl* that there are narrations in which the attribute of ascending (according to Ibn Taymiyya, both *yaṣʿadu* and *yaʿruju* have been transmitted) is ascribed to God. See *Nuzūl*, MF, 5:521–522; ed. al-Khamīs, 394.

111   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:90; ed. Sālim, 36.

112   On this question, see chapter 9 below.

113   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:90–91; ed. Sālim, 36–37.

114   See, e.g., Q. 2:195.

115   See, e.g., Q. 5:119.

116   See, e.g., al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1284 (kitāb #80, bāb #4, ḥadīth #6382).

117   See, e.g., Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj b. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2 vols. (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000), 2:1115 (kitāb #46, bāb #48, ḥadīth #6873).

ferent to these things, the former entity is clearly more perfect than the latter. From this it follows that said attributes must be ascribed to God.[118] In the same vein, Ibn Taymiyya argues for God's having two hands (*yadān*)[119] and a face (*wajh*).[120] It is no doubt true that it is more perfect to be able to perform actions without the use of hands; but God *is* able to do this, and so it only adds to His perfection also to have the option to carry them out by means of His hands. Ibn Taymiyya likewise considers it a divine perfection to be able to turn to others with one's face (*yuqbilu bi-wajhihi*).[121] Next he considers the divine attribute of mercy (*raḥma*), whereby he seeks to refute the view that mercy is merely an expression of weakness. Indeed, the Quran itself prescribes mercy while prohibiting weakness and excessive sentimentality.[122] He does not deny, however, that in the interpersonal realm weakness can be papered over by ostensible mercy. In the case of other attributes like knowledge, power, hearing, seeing, and speaking, these necessarily involve deficiencies when applied to man. This is because man is by nature a needy being, and this neediness is reflected in his attributes. But since this is not the case with God, He possesses these same attributes untainted by any deficiency.[123] Ibn Taymiyya employs a similar argument in support of the view that things like anger (*ghaḍab*),[124] jealousy (*ghīra*),[125] laughter (*ḍaḥik*),[126] and wonderment (*taʿajjub*)[127] are also to be considered divine attributes.[128] It is conspicuous that the attributes discussed so far are ones that are ascribed to God within the revealed sources themselves.[129] We may not conclude from this, however, that Ibn Taymiyya does not use *qiyās awlā* also to identify divine attributes that are not mentioned in the sources. This makes sense given that the divine attributes, in his view, are unlimited in

---

118   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:92; ed. Sālim, 37–38.

119   See, e.g., Q. 38:75.

120   See, e.g., Q. 55:27.

121   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:92–93; ed. Sālim, 38.

122   He is referring here to Q. 90:17 and 3:139, respectively.

123   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:117–118; ed. Sālim, 51–52.

124   See, e.g., Q. 4:93.

125   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:119; ed. Sālim, 53–54. See, e.g., al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1382 (kitāb #87, bāb #27, ḥadīth #6931).

126   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:121; ed. Sālim, 55–56. See, e.g., al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:550 (kitāb #56, bāb #28, ḥadīth #2863).

127   See, e.g., Q. 37:12 in the recitation of Ḥamza, al-Kisāʾī, and Khalaf al-ʿĀshir.

128   *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:123; ed. Sālim, 57–58.

129   This also holds, according to Ibn Taymiyya, at least implicitly for God's attribute of having temporally originating states and acts that inhere in Him (more on this in chapter 9 below).

number.[130] In his treatise *Akmaliyya*, for instance, Ibn Taymiyya takes up the question whether God has perceptions (*idrākāt*) that, for human beings, are mediated through the five senses.[131] He reports that the *ṣifātiyya* among the *mutakallimūn* hold three different positions in this regard. Among those who ascribe to God all perceptions that can be attained through the human senses, he counts al-Bāqillānī, al-Juwaynī,[132] and al-Ashʿarī (with the caveat that there is some uncertainty in the case of al-Ashʿarī). The same position is likewise said to have been held by the Basran Muʿtazila, as well as by the Ḥanbalī Abū Yaʿlā b. al-Farrāʾ. A second group, which includes many of the *ṣifātiyya*, the Shāfiʿī and Ḥanbalī legal scholars, and the followers of al-Ashʿarī, holds the view, according to Ibn Taymiyya, that God possesses only the perceptions of sight and hearing. He also attributes this position—with the addition that God also has the perceptions that humans attain through the sense of touch—to the majority of *ahl al-ḥadīth*, the Mālikīs, and the Ḥanbalīs, and it is this position that he adopts himself. Ibn Taymiyya does not explain how it is that God does not possess the perceptions available to human beings through the sense of smell, though he does explain how it is that He does not possess those that we attain through our sense of taste. The latter, namely, are inextricably related to the attribute of being able to eat and drink, which, in turn, is based on the attribute of being dependent on food and therefore constitutes a deficiency.[133]

Ibn Taymiyya also deals with the conceptions raised by the questioner that were supported by their respective proponents by, among other things, appealing to God's perfection. In order to demonstrate his pattern of argumentation in refuting these conceptions of God, it suffices to present as an example how Ibn Taymiyya, building on QGS in the mode of *qiyās awlā*, attempts to invalidate the polytheists' contention that God is too majestic and great to be worshipped directly. Against this view he argues that a being either is able to perceive the petitions of its subjects directly and to answer them or it is not. The latter state constitutes a deficiency and thus may not be attributed to God. As for the former, it may be that the being in question deals with its subjects in such a manner out of benevolence, for instance, or because it has no need to fear its subordinates. It may also be the case that it only accepts petitions through

---

130 See Laoust, *Essai*, 161.

131 *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:123–124; ed. Sālim, 57–58. In the Sālim edition, the editor provided this section with the following heading: "Views regarding [the question] whether the five senses (*al-ḥawāss al-khams*) can be ascribed to Him, the exalted." In fact, however, this section is not about whether God has five senses, but whether He possesses the perceptions (*idrākāt*) that human beings attain by way of the five senses.

132 See here al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 186.

133 *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:135–136; ed. Sālim, 68–69.

third parties because it is weak or arrogant, for example, or for reasons other than these. Benevolence and lack of fear are more perfect, Ibn Taymiyya concludes. Moreover, God in the revealed sources has explicitly allowed, indeed commanded, that one turn directly to Him in acts of worship, so it is quite impossible that in doing so a person is behaving disrespectfully towards God, as claimed by some polytheists.[134]

Although Ibn Taymiyya's views on this point have been dealt with numerous times in Western scholarship, their striking similarity to the views of al-Āmidī have not, to my knowledge, been pointed out.[135] If we are to believe al-Āmidī, it was even he who first worked out an independent method for establishing the seven attributes of God affirmed by the Ashʿarīs that appeals to God's perfection. After a passage in which he critically examines QGS, al-Āmidī writes:

> Know that there is [also] an elegant method (*ṭarīqa rashīqa*), one that simplifies the debate, is easy to comprehend, and makes it difficult for one who is just and well versed in the sciences not to make use of it or to fault it with regard to its evidential value. It can be used in a consistent manner to affirm all the attributes of essence (*al-ṣifāt al-nafsāniyya*). [This method] is one of those with which God, the exalted, has inspired me. I have not found it in this form and detail in [the works of] anyone else.[136]

Al-Āmidī then explicates his new method of proof, explaining that what is understood by the seven attributes either is an attribute of perfection or it is not. Al-Āmidī says that he wishes to consider this statement completely independently of to whom the given attribute is ascribed in concrete terms. In doing so, he clearly wishes to avoid any resemblance between his argument and QGS, in which one's consideration is first directed to created beings. Yet his very next comment proves him unsuccessful in this, for he goes on to assert that it is impossible for the seven attributes not to be perfections since we know by necessity after surveying the perceptible world that the one who is described with these attributes is superior to the one who is not. From this we can conclude that these attributes constitute perfections in and of themselves. But since it is the case that God is not inferior to His creatures in any

---

134   *Akmaliyya*, ᴍꜰ, 6:133–134; ed. Sālim, 66–67.
135   This topic has been dealt with in the Arabic scholarship at least tangentially. See Ḥasan al-Shāfiʿī, *al-Āmidī wa-ārāʾuhu*, 230, as well as the editor's note in al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, 1:276, n. 2.
136   Al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, 1:276.

way, it follows that He must also possess these attributes.[137] Al-Āmidī now gives voice to three possible objections to his method. First, it could be the case that although these attributes are considered perfections in the perceptible world, this does not hold for the non-perceptible world. Second, if these attributes are assumed to constitute perfections in both worlds, it would then be necessary to describe God as smelling, tasting, and feeling too since these attributes also count as perfections in the perceptible world. Third, there is evidence to indicate that God cannot possess these attributes, for if He could, then either they would be similar in nature to the attributes possessed by created beings or they would not be. The former is impossible because it would then be the case that God, for instance, is corporeal and located in a place. Yet if they are not similar in nature, then these attributes would no longer be intelligible to us on account of their otherness, with the result that the above method could not be used to substantiate them.[138] Al-Āmidī offers several responses to these objections. The first objection can be dismissed since, according to the law of the excluded middle, the attributes in question either constitute a perfection or they do not. Al-Āmidī clearly has difficulty demonstrating, without resorting to QGS, that these attributes should be regarded as perfections in the non-perceptible world. His strategy is therefore to reverse the burden of proof. Thus, he asserts that these attributes indeed constitute perfections in the perceptible world and that should someone believe that they are not also perfections in the non-perceptible world, then it is he who must shoulder the burden of proof. Al-Āmidī does not address the second objection explicitly, but he does clarify that one may not identify attributes of perfection that imply a deficiency as counting among the attributes of God. His argument here seems to be equivalent to that made by Ibn Taymiyya with respect to possessing a sense of taste. Regarding the third objection, al-Āmidī makes it clear that he considers it unobjectionable to say that the attributes of God are of the same genus as those of created beings, at least if what is meant thereby is that (1) the attributes of created beings are contingent, in the sense that their necessity is not grounded in themselves but in another (namely, God), and that (2) they are accidents, in the sense that they must inhere in a locus.[139]

It is no doubt true, as the historical overview in section 1.1 has shown, that al-Āmidī's method for establishing the divine attributes did not play a significant role prior to his time. Yet this method is by no means as innovative as al-Āmidī claims it to be. The idea of establishing the divine attributes by reference to

---

137   See ibid., 1:276–277.
138   See ibid., 1:277.
139   See ibid.

God's perfection, as Ibn Taymiyya correctly points out in his note on the passage in al-Āmidī's *Abkār* just discussed, is found among scholars of both the early and the later generations and was expressed by them in various ways.[140] But al-Āmidī was perhaps indeed the first who tried to introduce this method as the ideal way of establishing the divine attributes. Ibn Taymiyya followed him in this, though not without modifying and expanding the approach delineated by al-Āmidī. For example, Ibn Taymiyya applies al-Āmidī's method to all the divine attributes and not just to the seven affirmed by the Ashʿarīs. In addition, he criticises al-Āmidī for not appealing to the argument that rejecting an attribute of perfection necessarily entails affirming its opposite[141] such that, for example, asserting that God is not living is synonymous with saying that He is dead.[142] Finally, it should be noted that al-Āmidī's intention in presenting the method discussed above is to offer an alternative to QGS, which he qualifies as a weak argument. This, however, is hardly the concern of Ibn Taymiyya, who thus maintains, in my view, a higher degree of methodological consistency at least on this point, as elaborated in section 1.4 below.

Now that we have laid out Ibn Taymiyya's own position, we turn in the following section to his critique of his opponents.

1.3   *Ibn Taymiyya's Critique of His Opponents*

Ibn Taymiyya accuses the *mutakallimūn*—by which he means first and foremost the Ashʿarīs and the Muʿtazila—of having used the element of comparison in QGS or the middle term of the syllogism in a univocal manner even when these should, in reality, be considered analogous or equivocal. This equivocation came about when ambiguous terms not mentioned in the source texts were subsequently introduced into *kalām*. To illustrate this criticism, Ibn Taymiyya cites the following verses from a poem by ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa (d. 93/712 or 103/721):

> O thou that marriest Thurayyā to Suhayl!
>   How, may God preserve thee, shall they come together?
> For she, when she riseth, is Syrian,
>   Whilst he, when he riseth, is Yemeni.[143]

---

140   *Darʾ*, 4:38. See, by way of example, al-Ghazālī's discussion of the attributes of seeing and hearing in al-Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, 110–113, and in general Ibn Rushd, *Kashf*, 137–138.

141   *Darʾ*, 4:38.

142   This has already been discussed above; see p. 219 ff.

143   *Furqān 1*, MF, 13:146–147. In his collection of poems, these verses are found in ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa, *Dīwān ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa*, ed. Fayz Muḥammad (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1996), 494.

The background to these verses is Ibn Abī Rabīʿa's love of a woman named Thurayyā, who ended up marrying a man named Suhayl.[144] In the first verse, the names Thurayyā and Suhayl refer to the corresponding persons, whereas in subsequent verses Thurayyā denotes the star cluster Pleiades, which appears in the northern sky (and is hence referred to as Syrian), while Suhayl denotes the star Canopus, which appears in the southern sky (and is hence referred to as Yemeni). Ibn ʿUmar uses the equivocality of these terms to express his dismay over the marriage in the form of a figure of speech. What may be permitted in poetry, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, led in *kalām* to a number of false conclusions when terms such as *murakkab* (composed), *mutaḥayyiz* (occupying space), *jawhar* (substance), *jiha* (direction), and *ʿaraḍ* (accident) were used in discussing one and the same question without taking into account their equivocal nature.[145]

As for the univocal usage of terms that are actually analogous—something that Ibn Taymiyya critiques—it is for this reason that he refers to the *mutakallimūn* as anthropomorphists (*mushabbiha*).[146] The accusation of anthropomorphism is one that is usually made by the *mutakallimūn* against traditionalist currents, but Ibn Taymiyya maintains that the logic underlying the position of nullifying the divine attributes (*taʿṭīl*) is itself based on an anthropomorphic impulse.[147] The following example, though not presented by Ibn Taymiyya himself, nevertheless helps to illustrate his point of criticism. As a first step, we consider the following syllogism:

(1)   All wine is intoxicating.
(2)   Some drinks in paradise are wine.

_____

(Therefore)   Some drinks in paradise are intoxicating.

The conclusion, however, contradicts the Quranic statement that although there are beverages like wine in paradise, none of them lead to a state of inebriation.[148] This contradiction can be resolved—in a manner that would be in line

---

144   For more on this, see Mònica Colominas Aparicio, "ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabīʿa and Ṯurayyā in *Rawḍat al-qulūb wa-nuzhat al-muḥibb wa-al-maḥbūb*," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5–6 (2010–2011).

145   *Furqān I*, MF, 13:146–147.

146   On this, see also the discussion at p. 216 above on the fourth rule in Ibn Taymiyya's *Tadmuriyya*.

147   *Irbilīyya*, MF, 5:209. See also Laoust, *Essai*, 157 (with n. 4); Swartz, "Sunnī Creed," 105 (with n. 6); and Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," 637.

148   See, e.g., Q. 37:47.

with Ibn Taymiyya's methodology—by rejecting the syllogistic argument above on account of the univocal use of the middle term "wine," which is, in fact, an analogous expression. In other words, although the wine in paradise and the wine on earth share enough similarity that they may both be referred to as "wine," they are different enough in their essence as to render the above syllogism a fallacy. However, according to the methodology of the *mutakallimūn*, as Ibn Taymiyya sees it, this dissimilarity in the essences would be ignored and the validity of the syllogism thus affirmed. To preserve the validity of the Quranic declaration that there are no intoxicating drinks in paradise, the next stage of the argument would then be to nullify (*taʿṭīl*) the term "wine" used in the descriptions of paradise. Though the term "wine" was probably never adduced in this context, Ibn Taymiyya cites it as an example because what is true of it also holds for the divine attributes and thus for the following syllogism as well:

(1)   All hands (sing. *yad*) are limbs.
(2)   God has a hand (*yad*).

_____

(Therefore)   God has a limb.

It is the admission of this argument, in which the term *yad* is used univocally in an anthropomorphic manner, that constitutes the basis for the nullification of the divine attributes. Ibn Taymiyya refers to this inner logic of *taʿṭīl* when he says: "And these ignoramuses, at the beginning of their process of understanding (*fī ibtidāʾ fahmihim*), equate the attributes of the Creator with the attributes of created beings, then deny these and strip Him [of all attributes] (*yuʿaṭṭilūnahu*)."[149]

Another of Ibn Taymiyya's points of criticism is directed against the (in his view arbitrary) way in which the *mutakallimūn* and the *falāsifa* use QGS, for they only appeal to it, in his view, when the result corresponds to their preconceived theological opinions. Their handling of *qiyās*, he maintains, is akin to the way they treat the revealed sources, for here too they reject undesirable textual proofs even when these have been soundly transmitted according to the criteria of the hadith sciences and accept others that support their theological positions even when there is consensus that such reports are fabricated.[150] This criticism had already been voiced within different theological currents, a fact of which Ibn Taymiyya is well aware. Among the critics whom he cites

---

149   *Irbiliyya*, MF, 5:209. The accusation of anthropomorphism is also stated explicitly in *Aṣfahāniyya*, 457.
150   *Bayān*, 345–346.

supportively in numerous places is the early Qarmaṭī Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī (d. after 361/971), who took aim at an unnamed theological school (probably the Muʿtazila),[151] as well as Ibn Rushd, whose critique was levelled against the Ashʿarīs.[152] Moreover, even al-Āmidī had accused his own Ashʿarī comrades of applying QGS arbitrarily. A consistent application of QGS, according to al-Āmidī, would require that God be considered a living being (*ḥayawān*) that moves voluntarily (*mutaḥarrik bi-l-irāda*), sleeps, is dependent on food, and reproduces.[153] Ibn Taymiyya too makes his objections concrete in many passages, one of which we present here as an example. Ibn Taymiyya cites a passage from al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* in which al-Rāzī argues that God cannot possess magnitude and is thus, for example, not enormously large (*ʿaẓīm*),[154] for this would presuppose being divisible (*munqasim*), which al-Rāzī as well as Ibn Taymiyya holds to be impossible with respect to God. In support of this reasoning, al-Rāzī remarks that one can point to a specific point on any entity that possesses magnitude. This point is distinguished from all other points on the entity to which one has not pointed, from which it follows that the entity in question must be composed of different parts. Al-Rāzī states explicitly here that this line of reasoning is not QGS but an apodictic argument (*burhān qaṭʿī*).[155] Ibn Taymiyya rejects this claim, however, for in his view, every argument meant to prove something about the non-perceptible world must take this perceptible world as its starting point and thus necessarily involves some sort of QGS (*yataḍammanu nawʿan min qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid*).[156] Moreover—and this is Ibn Taymiyya's actual point of critique—al-Rāzī maintains that God is neither inside nor outside the world and that He can be seen without being located in a particular direction with respect to the one seeing Him. Both these positions, Ibn Taymiyya contends, are even more difficult for the mind to grasp than the fact that an entity might possess enormous magnitude but not consist of parts. For this reason, he considers it purely arbitrary to regard the first two positions as acceptable to the exclusion of the latter.[157]

---

151 See Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī, *al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya*, ed. Ismail Poonawala (Tunis: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2011), 79–80. Ibn Taymiyya cites excerpts from this work that go on for pages. The passage relevant here can be found in *Aṣfahāniyya*, 525–526.

152 See Ibn Rushd, *Kashf*, 154–155. Ibn Taymiyya cites this passage in *Darʾ*, 6:229.

153 See al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*, 1:271.

154 See al-Rāzī, *Asās al-taqdīs*, 63. This subject is embedded in the larger discussion on whether God is located in a place (*mutaḥayyiz*) and whether He can be pointed to.

155 See ibid.

156 *Bayān*, 3:495 ff. (p. 496 for the citation here).

157 *Bayān*, 3:502 and 506–507.

1.4   *Evaluating Ibn Taymiyya's Position*

Ibn Taymiyya makes a plausible argument that the intelligibility of any positive theology can be preserved only if one grants some resemblance between the world of our experience and the transcendent world, a resemblance that is captured by language. With the ontological and linguistic positions he develops, Ibn Taymiyya skirts the contradiction in which the Ashʿarīs, Māturīdīs, and Muʿtazila are entangled insofar as they, on the one hand, make positive affirmations concerning God but, on the other hand, postulate a total dissimilarity between God and His creation. On this point, Daniel Gimaret writes:

> There is a certain paradox in asserting that God does not resemble creatures in any respect while, in virtue precisely of the methodology adopted by all Sunni and Muʿtazilī theologians, anything we affirm of God through rational means with respect to His existence and His attributes is based on an analogy between human beings and God. [...] The only logical position when it comes to asserting a radical dissimilarity between God and man is one of negative theology, as practised by the Jahmiyya or the Ismāʿīlīs [...]: anything that is asserted in positive terms with respect to man must be negated of God (and vice versa).[158]

Gimaret, in my opinion, highlights here a fundamental problem of *kalām* theology, one with which the Ashʿarīs also had to contend as of the time in which al-Juwaynī questioned the validity of QGS on the grounds that God and the world cannot be compared, if not earlier.[159] The consequence of such a position, as Gimaret aptly explains, is that positive affirmations about God can no longer be coherently justified. This is true even if QGS is replaced by syllogistic meth-

---

158   Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 248–249. Brodersen speaks in similar terms as Gimaret in the context of her examination of a statement of the Māturīdī scholar Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī (d. 508/1114) in which al-Nasafī negates any resemblance between God and the world. See Brodersen, *Der unbekannte* kalām, 499. Also comparable are Ibn Sīnā's critical remarks on the use of QGS in Muʿtazilī theology. See Ibn Sīnā, *Taʿlīqāt*, 52, line 17 ff.

159   See p. 231 ff. above. Based on a passage from al-Bāqillānī's *Tamhīd*, Michel Allard concludes that in order to preserve the legitimacy of QGS, al-Bāqillānī maintained that God is neither fully like nor fully unlike created things. See Allard, *Attributs divins*, 303. Allard misunderstands the passage, however, for al-Bāqillānī is not addressing here the relationship between God and creation at all, but rather the relationship between God and His attributes. As an Ashʿarī, he subscribes, expectedly, to the doctrine that neither is God identical to His attributes nor are the attributes anything other than He. See al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 210–211. Allard's reference to p. 311 of this edition is incorrect.

ods of inference, as came to be the case from the time of al-Juwaynī onward.[160]
Even al-Āmidī's method cannot escape the basic mechanism of QGS, as demonstrated above.

Concerning the concrete application of QGS, Ibn Taymiyya was probably the first representative of a traditionalist-oriented theology to develop a rational method for safeguarding the divine attributes, a method for which al-Āmidī in particular served him as a source of inspiration. Despite Ibn Taymiyya's efforts in this respect, his approach is not always convincing. For example, from the way he tries to prove that laughter is a divine attribute, one gains the impression that he is ultimately attempting merely to confirm what he has already assumed from the outset on the basis of hadith. Had the sources described laughter as an attribute unbefitting of God, Ibn Taymiyya would probably have also found a way through his methodology to prove that laughter is not, in fact, a divine attribute.

Another inconsistency in Ibn Taymiyya's views is that he does not always live up to the requirement, which he stipulates in numerous works, that *qiyās* with respect to God be used solely in the mode of the *argumentum a fortiori*. Indeed, several statements scattered throughout his works indicate that he accepts QGS even when it is not employed in this form. In the following case, Ibn Taymiyya explicitly places God and creation on the same level by subsuming them under one and the same universal proposition. The case involves an argument that we discussed previously in chapter 4 on Ibn Taymiyya's ontology:[161]

| (1) | Everything that exists (is *mawjūd*) can be perceived by the senses.[162] |
| (2) | God exists (is *mawjūd*). |

(Therefore)   God can be perceived by the senses.

Elsewhere, Ibn Taymiyya does in fact convert this argument into the form of an *argumentum a fortiori*, without declaring the above syllogism invalid. In his words:

---

160   See p. 233 above.

161   See chapter 4, section 1.

162   In *Tadmuriyya*, he changes this universal proposition to "Everything that exists as a discrete entity (*qāʾim bi-nafsihi*) can be seen," adding that this is substantively more correct (*aṣaḥḥ*). See *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:dāl; ed. al-Saʿawī, 150–151.

> The ability to be seen is contingent solely on existent things (*umūr wujū-diyya*) [that is, a thing is potentially visible merely by virtue of the fact that it exists], and that which is contingent solely on existent things [here, the ability to be seen] belongs with even greater right to the Necessary Being [i.e., God] than to possible being [i.e., creation].[163]

To avoid contravening his own methodology, however, Ibn Taymiyya would have had to demonstrate that being visible as an existent object constitutes a perfection of the object. This is so because the *argumentum a fortiori* just cited is predicated on the validity of the universal proposition that the ability of any object to be seen presupposes nothing more than its existence. Yet nowhere in his works, as far as I know, does Ibn Taymiyya declare the potential to be seen to be an attribute of perfection. Had he done so, he could have argued, in accord with his methodology, that since some created beings can be seen and the possibility of being seen is a perfection, God must a fortiori be capable of being seen.

A further inconsistency can be found in Ibn Taymiyya's *Aṣfahāniyya*, in which he asserts that human beings know on the basis of the natural disposition (*fiṭra*) that all agents necessarily possess power (*qudra*).[164] But if he holds this to be true, then he should be able to prove God's power even without resorting to an a fortiori argument. In fact, in *Darʾ*, he responds to al-Āmidī's critique of the Ashʿarīs' usual method for proving God's power via QGS—and thus not in the form of an *argumentum a fortiori*—by maintaining that QGS is valid in principle but stronger when cast in the form of *qiyās awlā*.[165] Elsewhere in *Darʾ*, however, and also in *Aṣfahāniyya*, he advocates the view that *qiyās awlā* is the only valid method for rationally establishing the attributes of God.[166]

2   The Epistemic Value of Textual Indicants: Ibn Taymiyya in Debate with al-Rāzī

Having raised the issue of the validity of rational methods of inference based on analogy in the previous section, we now turn our attention to the question—no less relevant for theology (as well as for legal theory)—of the evidentiary value

---

163   *Tadmuriyya*, MF, 3:dāl; ed. al-Saʿawī, 150–151.
164   *Aṣfahāniyya*, 398.
165   *Darʾ*, 4:34.
166   *Aṣfahāniyya*, 456 and *Darʾ*, 7:362.

of transmitted reports. Two terms, *mutawātir* and *āḥād*, are central to this discussion and will therefore be treated at the outset. In doing so, it is necessary to distinguish how they are used by hadith scholars from how they are used by theologians.

For scholars of hadith, both terms refer to the number of entirely distinct chains of transmission through which a report has been transmitted. According to one common definition, the term *mutawātir* applies to all reports that have been passed down through so many chains of transmission that the possibility either of collusion among the transmitters to produce a false report or of inadvertent errors in transmission can be ruled out as impossible on rational grounds. The authenticity of such reports is thus considered indubitably certain (*yaqīnī* or *qaṭʿī*). The minimum number of chains required for this certainty to obtain is a matter of dispute, but the view that came to prevail is that each concrete case must be examined individually and that no specific minimum number can be set.[167] A report that has been passed down by too few chains of transmission to count as *mutawātir* falls under the category of *āḥād*. In contrast to *mutawātir* reports, the degree of reliability[168] (*darajat al-ṣiḥḥa*) of an *āḥād* narration must be established by further means.[169] In the view of most scholars, as elaborated farther below, an *āḥād* report taken on its own can at most be regarded as probabilistically authentic (*ẓannī*).

---

167   See Aaron Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty: An Introduction to the Typology of Islamic Legal Theory* (Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2013), 9–12.

168   I have used this translation, less common in the academic literature, deliberately here so as to avoid the term "authenticity." As Wael Hallaq highlights, when it came to hadith narrations, scholars of hadith were generally concerned only to determine with what probability a particular report had been accurately transmitted and therefore did not think in the dichotomous categories of "authentic" vs "inauthentic." See Wael B. Hallaq, "The Authenticity of Prophetic Ḥadîth: A Pseudo-problem," *Studia Islamica* 89 (1999).

169   Without delving too far into the topic, the five criteria applied in the science of hadith for trying to determine the degree of reliability of a transmitted report are, in summary form, (1) that the chain of transmitters be unbroken, (2) that the integrity (*ʿadāla*) of all transmitters be attested, (3) that the memory and precision (*ḍabṭ*) of all transmitters involved in the process of transcribing the hadith be attested, (4) that there be no *shudhūdh*, that is, that the report not contradict a better-attested report, and (5) that there exist no serious *ʿilla* (hidden defect). Should the report fulfil all five criteria, then it is intrinsically *ṣaḥīḥ* (lit. "sound"), or sound "by virtue of itself" (*li-nafsihi*). If it fulfils all the criteria with slight flaws in point 3 but its substantive content is corroborated through other reports, then it is *ṣaḥīḥ* "by virtue of another" (*li-ghayrihi*) [i.e., by virtue of other, corroborative reports]. If it is not corroborated through other reports, it is still acceptable and classified as *ḥasan* (lit. "fair"). If conditions 1, 2, 4, or 5 are not fulfilled or serious flaws are detected with respect to condition 3, then the report is rated as *ḍaʿīf* (lit. "weak") and consequently rejected. For more on this, see Brown, *Hadith*, 104–106.

For the theologians, by contrast, the terms *mutawātir* and *āḥād* usually denoted purely epistemological categories. Indeed, they were synonymous with the terms *qaṭʿī* and *ẓannī*, without regard for the number of chains of transmission.[170]

Before delving into Ibn Taymiyya's view and his dispute with al-Rāzī, we first put things in a larger perspective by examining the broader debate over the epistemic status of transmitted evidence in theology.

Major scepticism regarding the validity of transmitted reports is found particularly—though by no means exclusively—in Muʿtazilī circles. As Racha el Omari has elaborated, we may distinguish three basic attitudes among the Muʿtazila with respect to hadith in the early period. First, there were scholars such as ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd (d. 144/761) who were involved in the process of transmitting hadith but who only accepted those reports that were consistent with their theological positions.[171] Others, such as Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf (d. 227/841), admitted hadith in questions of theology provided they were corroborated by twenty narrators, at least one of whom must be a Muslim.[172] The third position is that of the sceptics, first and foremost al-Naẓẓām (d. probably 221/836), who was considered too extreme even within his own school but found more of a hearing in some Shīʿī circles.[173] Al-Naẓẓām held that regardless how many times a (non-Quranic) report was attested, its authenticity could never be positively confirmed and thus its truth value could be ascertained solely through reason or the senses.[174] Al-Naẓẓām's own student

---

170   This usage, according to Hüseyin Hansu, predates that of the hadith scholars. See Hüseyin Hansu, "Notes on the Term *Mutawātir* and its Reception in *Ḥadīth* Criticism," *Islamic Law and Society* 16 (2009). Similar conclusions to those of Hansu have also been reached by al-ʿAwnī, who argues for this view convincingly with recourse to a variety of primary sources. In addition, he believes that this terminological ambiguity was the source of many misunderstandings. See Ḥātim al-ʿAwnī, *al-Yaqīnī wa-l-ẓannī min al-akhbār: Sijāl bayna Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī wa-l-muḥaddithīn*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Publishing, 2013), 133 and *passim*.

171   See Racha el Omari, "Accommodation and Resistance: Classical Muʿtazilites on Ḥadīth," *Near Eastern Studies* 71, no. 2 (2012): 234a.

172   See ibid. In legal-practical matters, he considered four transmitters sufficient. See Josef van Ess, "L'autorité de la tradition prophétique dans la théologie muʿtazilite," in *La notion d'autorité au Moyen Âge: Islam, Byzance, Occident*, ed. George Makdisi, Dominique Sourdel, and Janine Sourdel-Thomine (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1982), 217.

173   See Josef van Ess, "Ein unbekanntes Fragment des Naẓẓām," in *Der Orient in der Forschung: Festschrift für Otto Spies zum 5. April 1966*, ed. Wilhelm Hoenerbach (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1967), 197.

174   See el Omari, "Accommodation and Resistance," 234b–235a and also van Ess, "Unbekanntes Fragment," 184–185.

al-Jāḥiẓ rejected this view, arguing that *mutawātir* hadith are authentic bey-
ond any doubt.[175] In addition to al-Naẓẓām, Ḍirār b. ʿAmr (d. 180/796) and
Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāṭ (d. 300/913) also stood out for their highly crit-
ical stance towards hadith. Ḍirār was not acknowledged by the Muʿtazila as
one of their own on account of his anti-Qadarī stance, despite some overlap
between his views and theirs.[176] As for al-Khayyāṭ, even his own student and
head of the Baghdadi Muʿtazila Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī (d. 319/931) sought to
refute him in an (unpreserved) treatise. Al-Kaʿbī wrote an addendum to this
work entitled *Qabūl al-akhbār wa-maʿrifat al-rijāl* since, as he explains in the
introduction, he feared that the treatise he had written against his teacher
could be misunderstood as meaning that he himself accepted hadith uncon-
ditionally. El Omari identifies this addendum, which has been preserved and
published in a critical edition,[177] as the earliest wider case made amongst the
Muʿtazila for the validity (albeit highly qualified) of *āḥād* narrations.[178] In his
introduction to *Qabūl*, al-Kaʿbī also lays out his stance on the epistemic value
of transmitted evidence. Although at least four lines of the relevant passage
are missing from the extant manuscript, we may sum up the matter by stat-
ing that al-Kaʿbī accepts only arguments grounded in reason when it comes
to God's oneness (*tawḥīd*) and His justice (*ʿadl*), which represent two of the
Muʿtazila's five principles. Hadith can at most serve as additional corrobora-
tion (*tawkīd*) for what we have otherwise come to know through reason. For
the remaining foundations of theology on which there is agreement (*uṣūl al-
kalām al-mujtamaʿ ʿalayhā*),[179] only *mutawātir* narrations may be used, which
naturally require no critique of the transmitters owing to the multitude of aven-
ues of transmission. This is equally true, al-Kaʿbī points out with respect to
the field of law, for matters that affect the general public to the extent that

---

175   See van Ess, "Unbekanntes Fragment," 200.

176   On Ḍirār b. ʿAmr, see van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 3:32–63 and, specifically on the
       assertion made here, 3:35 and 45.

177   See Abū al-Qāsim al-Kaʿbī, *Qabūl al-akhbār wa-maʿrifat al-rijāl*, ed. Abū ʿAmr al-Ḥusaynī
       b. ʿAmr b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2000), 1:17 for al-Kaʿbī's
       statement mentioned here. Because of the exceedingly hadith-critical orientation of the
       work, van Ess remarks: "The criticism of the trade of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* is truly biting, so
       biting that no one in the Arab world has yet dared to edit the text." Van Ess, "Autorité," 222.
       This statement, which is based on a certain view of the Arab world, is clearly problem-
       atic. It may be noted, in any case, that the work has now been edited and published, as
       mentioned above.

178   See el Omari, "Accommodation and Resistance," 233.

179   I follow here the translation of van Ess (van Ess, "Autorité," 223). By contrast, el Omari, who
       is aware of this translation, renders the term *uṣūl al-kalām* as "principles of language." See
       el Omari, "Accommodation and Resistance," 242.

the majority of people are in need of their legal regulation (*al-amr al-ʿāmm alladhī yaḥtāju ilayhi al-akthar*). By contrast, reports that have been transmitted through only two or three chains may be used under some conditions in *furūʿ* (detailed questions of jurisprudence),[180] but one must be aware in doing so that such narrations engender only justified supposition and not certainty (*bi-akthar al-raʾy lā bi-l-yaqīn*).[181] We may thus state that al-Kaʿbī considers only *mutawātir* reports to be authoritative in theology (for topics other than *tawḥīd* and *ʿadl*).[182] Since, as we have seen, after dealing with reports considered *mutawātir* he treats of those having two or three chains of transmission, al-Kaʿbī seems to be of the view that narrations transmitted through fewer than four chains can never be categorised as *mutawātir*. His contemporary al-Jubbāʾī, the leading scholar of the Basran Muʿtazilī school in his day, likewise considered only *mutawātir* reports to be valid in theological matters.[183]

This stance of radical rejection vis-à-vis transmitted evidence that we observe in the formative phase of the Muʿtazila could not carry the day, however, with the result that we find leading figures in the classical period of the school such as ʿAbd al-Jabbār,[184] Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044),[185] Abū Rashīd al-Naysābūrī (d. 460/1068),[186] and al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī (d. 494/1101)[187] acknowledging—indeed even partially defending—*mutawātir* reports in theology, as well as *āḥād* narrations in law.[188] The Muʿtazila had thus clearly drawn closer to

---

180   I share el Omari's view that al-Kaʿbī does not have the detailed questions of theology in mind here. This, in my estimation, is clear from the context.

181   See al-Kaʿbī, *Qabūl al-akhbār*, 17. El Omari translates "*bi-akthar al-raʾy lā bi-l-yaqīn*" as "according to the majority, but (these reports) are not acceptable for establishing certainty." See el Omari, "Accommodation and Resistance," 242a.

182   El Omari, who, as just mentioned, understands the term *uṣūl al-kalām* differently, argues that according to al-Kaʿbī, transmitted reports can never possess independent evidentiary value in theology. See el Omari, "Accommodation and Resistance," 241b.

183   See ibid., 246b.

184   As in his work *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa*, which is available in a critically annotated recension by Mānkdīm Shashdīw (d. ca. 425/1034). See Aḥmad Mānkdīm Shashdīw, [*Taʿlīq*] *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa* [falsely attributed to al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār], ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān (Cairo: Maktabat al-Wahba, 1965), 796.

185   For his detailed defence of *āḥād* transmissions in the realm of law, see Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. Muhammad Hamidullah, 2 vols. (Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1964–1965), 2:583–608.

186   See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 4:653 (with n. 37).

187   See al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī, *Taḥkīm al-ʿuqūl fī taṣḥīḥ al-uṣūl*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbbās al-Wajīh (Amman: Muʾassasat al-Imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-Thaqāfiyya, 2001), 35.

188   Interesting, but probably to be regarded with reservation, is the statement of a member of *ahl al-ḥadīth* by the name of Abū Aḥmad al-Qaṣṣāb al-Karajī (d. 360/971 or shortly before;

the position of *ahl al-ḥadīth*—a fact that can be partly explained by the latter's victory in the *miḥna*,[189] the massive recording of hadith in the third/ninth century, and the Ḥanafisation of the Muʿtazilī school—while some figures, such as ʿAbd al-Jabbār, belonged to even more strongly hadith-centric schools like that of the Shāfiʿīs.[190]

A different situation presents itself with the Ẓāhirīs, whose theology bore Muʿtazilī traits (to the dismay of *ahl al-ḥadīth*) but who were nevertheless influenced by al-Shāfiʿī in the question of the authority of textual evidence.[191] Thus, for instance, Dāwūd b. ʿAlī (d. 270/884), identified by the Ẓāhirī school as its founder, regarded *āḥād* narrations not only as authoritative but also as a source capable of producing certainty.[192] Several centuries later, the most famous of Ẓāhirīs, Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), continued to advocate this position.[193] But as in the case of the Muʿtazila, the picture here is not uniform: Dāwūd's son and student Muḥammad (d. 297/909), unlike his father, was sceptical with regard

---

see on him p. 75 above), who in a theological context reports of the Muʿtazila in general that they believe in *āḥād* narrations and even argue on the basis of them in their works (*yuʾminūna bi-l-akhbār al-āḥād bal yaḥtajjūna bihā fī muṣannafātihim*). See al-Qaṣṣāb al-Karajī, *Nukat*, 2:28–29.

189   See p. 61 above.

190   See here van Ess, "Autorité," 220 and 222; Brown, *Canonization*, 178–181; Usman Ghani, "The Concept of *Sunna* in Muʿtazilite Thought," in *The Sunna and its Status in Islamic Law: The Search for a Sound Hadith*, ed. Adis Duderija (New York: Palgrave, 2015), 68–70; and Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, "The Muʿtazilī and Zaydī Reception of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb al-Muʿtamad fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*: A Bibliographical Note," *Islamic Law and Society* 20 (2013): 93. On the status of *āḥād* narrations among the Ḥanafīs, see Sahiron Syamsuddin, "Abū Ḥanīfah's Use of Solitary *Ḥadīth* as a Source of Islamic Law," *Islamic Studies* 40, no. 2 (2001).

191   The Ẓāhirīs' name derives from the fact that they considered the injunctions conveyed in the imperative form in the sources to be in principle obligatory in accordance with their outward sense (*ẓāhir*) and not, for instance, as mere recommendations depending on the context, as in other schools. See the remarks of Christopher Melchert, who traces this position back to the influence of the Baghdadi Muʿtazila, in Christopher Melchert, "Dāwūd b. Khalaf," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2011-4. In the field of law, according to Amr Osman, the Ẓāhirīs occupy a middle position between *ahl al-raʾy* and *ahl al-ḥadīth* with a proclivity for *ahl al-raʾy*, contrary to what one might presume. See Amr Osman, *The Ẓāhirī Madhhab (3rd/9th–10th/16th Century): A Textualist Theory of Islamic Law* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), chap. 4.

192   See Osman, *Ẓāhirī* Madhhab, 152.

193   See Abū Muḥammad b. Ḥazm, *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, n.d. [ca. 1980]), 1:119 ff., esp. 119 and 121. His treatment is discussed in Abdel Magid Turki *Polémiques entre Ibn Ḥazm et Bāǧī sur les principes de la loi musulmane: Essai sur le littéralisme zahirite et la finalité malikite* (Algiers: n.p., n.d. [ca. 1973]), 100–112.

to the *khabar wāḥid*—that is, a report transmitted through a number of chains insufficient for it to count as *mutawātir*—and did not accept such reports even in matters of law, let alone theology.[194]

The traditionalist currents of the third/ninth century, referred to in the literature as the "proto *ahl al-ḥadīth*," likewise had no uniform position concerning the epistemic value of transmitted evidence. However, ʿAbd al-Majīd Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Majīd argues plausibly that they subscribed in their majority to the same position as that held by Dāwūd b. ʿAlī, namely, that *āḥād* reports are authoritative and potentially productive of certainty (*qaṭʿī*).[195] Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, who grew to become a leading figure of *ahl al-ḥadīth* in the aftermath of the *miḥna*, is credited, as is so often the case, with two contradictory opinions. In addition to the majority position just described, he is also said to have maintained that while *āḥād* reports can serve as an independent basis of evidence in both theology and law, they are *ẓannī* when viewed on their own—meaning that while there is good reason to believe that they have been reliably transmitted, we cannot affirm this with certainty.[196] This is also the position that won the day among the Ḥanbalīs[197] and to which Ibn Taymiyya likewise subscribed, as we elaborate in detail later. First, however, we provide a sketch of the position of the early Ashʿarīs in general and of al-Rāzī in particular.

As Ḥātim al-ʿAwnī has elaborated citing passages from the relevant works, both al-Ashʿarī himself and his most important early followers—namely, al-Bāqillānī, Ibn Fūrak, and al-Isfarāyīnī—held that textual evidence could be cited in questions of theology.[198] In his treatment of the topic, al-ʿAwnī encounters the theologians' use of language, previously discussed, according to which the terms *mutawātir* and *āḥād* refer to reports that yield certain knowledge and a well-supported supposition of knowledge, respectively. What is at play here, therefore, is an epistemological distinction, not one concerned with the number of chains of transmission.[199] Al-ʿAwnī refers several times to the substantive proximity of the Ashʿarī position to that of *ahl al-ḥadīth*.[200] Indeed,

---

194   See Osman, *Ẓāhirī* Madhhab, 46.
195   See ʿAbd al-Majīd Maḥmūd ʿAbd al-Majīd, *al-Ittijāhāt al-fiqhiyya ʿinda aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth fī al-qarn al-thālith al-hijrī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1979), esp. 242–243.
196   See Ibn Qudāma, *Rawḍat al-nāẓir*, 126–127.
197   Aḥmad's second opinion, according to Ibn Qudāma, corresponds to the stance of the majority and of the later generations of Ḥanbalīs (*qawl al-aktharīn wa-l-mutaʾakhkhirīn min aṣḥābinā*). See ibid., 126.
198   See al-ʿAwnī, *Yaqīnī*, 36 ff.
199   See ibid., 48–57.
200   See ibid., 127–129.

Ibn Taymiyya too believed the latter position to be consistent with the majority Ashʿarī view, which may explain why he wrote relatively little on the epistemic status of such evidence. By his time, it had long since ceased to be a question of the mere acceptance of transmitted evidence but had instead come to be one of how to interpret such evidence, that is, a question primarily of the valid framework of *taʾwīl*. But even though the *āḥād* report was now accepted as well, it was nevertheless downgraded in epistemic value in that it had to be interpreted in principle such that no attribute was ascribed to God that had not already been established through proofs that are certain. Thus, al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066), in the context of his treatment of God's attribute of having fingers (*aṣābiʿ*), takes the position that with respect to attributes that, on the one hand, are transmitted in hadith that are not unequivocally authentic and, on the other hand, are not supported, either verbatim or in terms of meaning, by the Quran or by unequivocally authenticed hadith, one is obligated to refrain from applying the names associated with these attributes to God (*fa-l-tawaqquf ʿan iṭlāq al-ism wājib*) and to interpret them as ruling out any assimilation of God to His creation. Al-Bayhaqī bases himself here on Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998), whom he cites.[201] In the opinion of both scholars, the hadith about the fingers of God fall under the purview of this principle and are accordingly interpreted through *taʾwīl*.[202] Al-Bayhaqī thus does not attribute fingers to God, though he does ascribe to Him two hands (*yadān*), as these are confirmed by reliably transmitted Quranic texts.

Al-Rāzī, on the other hand, adopts a more radical position, which explains why Ibn Taymiyya dedicates the bulk of his attention to it in discussing the question of the authority of textual indicants. Considering the question from within a history of ideas perspective, we may aver that Ibn Taymiyya had no need to expend such effort, for as van Ess correctly points out, al-Rāzī's stance, like that of al-Naẓẓām, is an extreme case that met with rejection even within the Ashʿarī school itself.[203]

---

201 The passage cited can be found in al-Khaṭṭābī, *Aʿlām al-ḥadīth*, 3:1898–1899.

202 See al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt*, 2:167–168.

203 See van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre*, 410 and 412. In addition to the critic al-Ījī discussed by van Ess, we may also name by way of example al-Āmidī, Sharaf al-Dīn b. al-Tilimsānī (d. 658/1260), al-Taftāzānī, and al-Zarkashī. See al-Āmidī, *Abkār al-afkār*; at 4:324–325, he refers to al-Rāzī's view without naming him, followed by al-Āmidī's criticism of it at 4:326. See further Sharaf al-Dīn b. al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ Maʿālim uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Nizār Ḥammādī (Amman: Dār al-Fatḥ, 2010), 94–95 and Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥ ʿalā al-Tawḍīḥ li-matn al-Tanqīḥ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, [1957?]), 1:128–129; here too al-Rāzī is not mentioned by name. Finally, see also al-Zarkashī, *Baḥr*, 1:39, citing al-Qurṭubī's criticism in support.

In a passage in his *tafsīr* work and elsewhere, al-Rāzī clarifies why he assigns textual indicants such a low epistemic value, categorically subordinating them to rational indicants as per the universal rule.[204] As al-Rāzī explains:

> Adhering to (*tamassuk*) linguistic indicants (*dalā'il lafẓiyya*) does not yield certainty, but following the proofs of reason (*dalā'il ʿaqliyya*) surely does, and that which is [merely] probable cannot oppose that which is certain (*al-maẓnūn lā yuʿāriḍu al-maqṭūʿ*).[205] We hold that linguistic indicants cannot engender certainty because they are based on foundations all of which, taken severally, are uncertain. Now, that which is built on something uncertain is itself [a fortiori] uncertain. We regard them as being built on uncertain foundations because they [or their correct interpretation] are based on the transmission of (1) the lexicon, (2) grammar, and (3) morphology. However, these things have not reached us through a multitude of transmitters whose number is known to have reached the level of mass transmission (*lā yuʿlamu bulūghuhum ilā ḥadd al-tawātur*), meaning that their transmission is merely probable (*maẓnūna*). Furthermore, they [i.e., the linguistic indicants or their correct interpretation] are based on the absence (*ʿadam*) of (4) homonymity (*ishtirāk*), (5) figurative usage (*majāz*), (6) specification (*takhṣīṣ*), (7) pleonasm (*iḍmār bi-l-ziyāda*), and (8) ellipsis (*iḍmār bi-l-nuqṣān*), as well as the absence of [unconventional word order in a sentence engendered by] (9) moving [certain elements] forward or backward [syntactically in the sentence] (*taqdīm wa-ta'khīr*).[206] These are all merely probable matters (*umūr ẓanniyya*) that are predicated, moreover, on the absence of (10) a rational proof to the contrary. Where such a proof exists, it is impossible to regard both [the textual and the rational indicants] simultaneously as true or as false. But giving priority to the textual indicant is impossible because reason is the basis of revelation; impugning (*al-ṭaʿn fī*) reason [thus]

---

204   Discussed in chapter 6, section 2.1.

205   In the sense that in the case of a contradiction, that which is based on knowledge is given priority such that the contradiction is always resolved.

206   Van Ess translates this term differently, believing it to be borrowed from philosophy. He elaborates this further with an example that relates to the Aristotelian understanding of substance. See van Ess, *Erkenntnislehre*, 410. In my view, however, the term *taqdīm wa-ta'khīr* here is not borrowed from philosophy at all. Rather, it stems from the linguistic sciences, where it was already being used in very early works in the sense in which it has been translated here. See, for instance, C.H.M. Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qurʾānic Exegesis in Early Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 122–123.

inevitably leads to undermining reason and revelation together. And [furthermore,] the absence of any rational proof to the contrary is [always] uncertain.[207]

Al-Rāzī attributes the words cited in this passage to an unidentified group of Muslims who hold the belief that non-Muslims will not suffer punishment in the hereafter.[208] It is fairly certain, however, that the view featured in the passage was held by none other than al-Rāzī himself.[209] We may state unequivocally that al-Rāzī did not adopt this extreme position merely on a temporary basis, nor only at the end of his life—when he developed an excessive scepticism[210]—for the gist of it is found in several of his earlier as well as later works. After an extensive investigation, I was able to put my finger on nine works, written over a period of more than thirty years, in which he expresses the view represented in the above quotation.[211] Now, does this mean that al-Rāzī accords textual indicants the capacity to engender, in principle, only well-supported suppositions? Tariq Jaffer and Mohd Shahran, the only authors of whom I am aware who deal with this topic in a Western language in more than a marginal manner, answer in the affirmative.[212] Ḥātim al-ʿAwnī, on

---

207   Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 2:57 (on Q. 3:7).

208   His treatment of this topic is discussed at pp. 289–290 below.

209   As stated above, van Ess had noted that al-Rāzī's position represents an extreme case, and later Ashʿarī sources, as far as I can tell, do not associate anyone other than him with it either.

210   On this, see Ayman Shihadeh, *The Theological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 155–203.

211   See al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*, 1:142–145; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Maḥṣūl fī ʿilm uṣūl al-fiqh*, ed. Ṭāhā Jābir al-ʿAlwānī, 9 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1987), 1:390–407; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-mutaʾakhkhirīn min al-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-ḥukamāʾ wa-l-mutakallimīn*, ed. Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raʾūf Saʿd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyya, [1978?]), 51; Ibn al-Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ Maʿālim uṣūl al-dīn*, 94 (al-Rāzī's *Maʿālim uṣūl al-dīn* was available to me only in the version annotated by Ibn al-Tilimsānī); al-Rāzī, *Asās al-taqdīs*, 234–235; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā, 2 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyya, 1986), 2:251–253; al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 1:28 (in addition to the passage cited above); and al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 9:113–118. On the dating of al-Rāzī's works, see Frank Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received," *Islamic Studies* 18, no. 3 (2007): 323, 326, and 344, as well as Shihadeh, *Theological Ethics*, 7–11. It should also be noted that al-Rāzī sometimes cites fewer than ten reasons or that he modifies them slightly. Thus, for example, he also cites as a reason that one can never be certain that a particular textual indicant has not been abrogated (*mansūkh*) or that there does not exist another textual indicant that contradicts it (*muʿāriḍ samʿī*).

212   See Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 81–83 and Mohd Farid Mohd Shahran, "The Priority of Rational Proof in Islam: The View of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," *Tafhim* 8 (2015).

the other hand, acknowledges—appealing to Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (d. 1371/1952), who tried to demonstrate that al-Rāzī's stance is less extreme than claimed—that there are probably cases in which al-Rāzī does credit textual indicants with the ability to engender certainty.[213] In precisely one single passage—which, however, is nowhere cited in the sources just mentioned—does al-Rāzī make an explicit statement in answer to the question just posed, where he says:

> Know that making this assertion [about the epistemic value of textual indicants] in an unqualified sense is incorrect, for it may be that textual indicants are accompanied by factors whose existence is known with certainty through mass transmitted reports (*akhbār mutawātira*), [with the result that] said factors then negate these possibilities [i.e., the ten possibilities cited in the quotation above on account of which textual indicants remain uncertain]. On this assumption, textual indicants that are accompanied by contextual factors guaranteed by mass transmitted reports engender certainty.[214]

To what extent and within what scope al-Rāzī applies this theoretical statement in his theology is a question we cannot examine here. What is certain, however, is that Ibn Taymiyya was convinced that al-Rāzī had taken the epistemic downgrading of textual indicants to the extreme in order to prepare a more hospitable ground for his theology—a theology that, in Ibn Taymiyya's view, stood in contradiction to the revealed sources. But before taking up Ibn Taymiyya's critique of al-Rāzī, we first examine his own position on the epistemic status of textual indicants.

As Ibn Taymiyya explains, it is only *mutawātir* reports that lead to certainty without exception. He subscribes to the majority opinion that the number of chains of transmission necessary to engender certainty cannot be determined generically but only in individual concrete cases.[215] He is aware that some scholars among the early *ahl al-ḥadīth* assigned a high epistemic value to *āḥād* reports as well. He cites, for instance, Isḥāq b. Rāhwayh (d. 238/853)—one of the teachers of al-Bukhārī—who, he informs us, is said to have held that a person who denies an *āḥād* hadith report that has been transmitted by trustworthy narrators has apostatised from Islam.[216] Ibn Taymiyya himself—and

---

213   See al-ʿAwnī, *Yaqīnī*, 138–139 (with n. 1).

214   Al-Rāzī, *Arbaʿīn*, 2:253.

215   See *Ḥadīth*, MF, 18:40.

216   See *Musawwada*, 245.

here, as elaborated above, he concurs with the majority position of the Ḥanbalī school—holds that an *āḥād* report considered in isolation leads only to a well-supported presumption rather than to certain knowledge. It is thus unsuitable for establishing fundamentals of theology, which require certainty, though it may be appealed to on finer questions of detail (*daqīq al-masāʾil*), such as when it comes to the interpretation of the names of God.[217] Ibn Taymiyya then cites cases in which an *āḥād* report can also reach the highest level of epistemic value. This obtains when either (1) the report has been transmitted by only two narrators but the possibility of collusion or error on their part can be ruled out,[218] (2) the substantive content of the report is corroborated by a large number of other reports (referred to technically as *mutawātir maʿnawī*), (3) the report has been accepted by the community of Muslims at large (*khabar al-wāḥid al-mutalaqqā bi-l-qabūl*)—Ibn Taymiyya is referring here to the principle of *ijmāʿ*—or (4) external evidence confirms the veracity of the report (*khabar al-wāḥid al-muḥtaff bi-l-qarāʾin*).[219] The majority of reports transmitted in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim meet at least the third condition, according to Ibn Taymiyya, and therefore engender certainty.[220] The fact that he holds this view is striking and probably, for the most part, ideologically motivated. Although this position was also held before him, most notably by the major systematiser of the hadith sciences Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245),[221] it is nevertheless based on a concept of *ijmāʿ* that Ibn Taymiyya rejects. To be sure, an *ijmāʿ* could theoretically emerge at any time, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, in which case it would be binding. But whether all scholars have in fact concurred on a given matter can be established, in his view, only for the early period of Islam. He appeals here to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, who, given the large number of scholars in his time and their physical distance from one another, is said to have remarked: "Whoever claims an *ijmāʿ* has lied, for how could he know that people did not in fact disagree? [Rather] he should say, 'I know of none who holds a different view.'"[222] But merely being unaware of a countervailing opinion, Ibn Taymiyya explains, only constitutes a silent consensus (*ijmāʿ sukūtī*), which produces merely probabilistic, or *ẓannī*, rather than cer-

---

217 See *Bayān*, 8:454–455, as well as *Musawwada*, 248.
218 See *Musawwada*, 243–244, as well as *Muqaddima*, MF, 13:347–348; ed. Zarzūr, 63; German trans., 38–39.
219 See *Ḥadīth*, MF, 18:41. With respect to the third condition, Ibn Taymiyya also lists several proponents as well as a few opponents. See *Muqaddima*, MF, 13:351–352; ed. Zarzūr, 67–68; German trans., 42.
220 See *Tawassul*, MF, 1:257 and *Ḥadīth*, MF, 18:41.
221 See Brown, *Canonization*, 253–254 and chap. 7.
222 See *Ikhnāʾiyya*, 459.

tain knowledge.[223] Ibn Taymiyya was accused several times during his life of having violated the consensus of the generations following the Salaf (that is, the *khalaf*). He attempted to defend himself against these charges in part through the view of *ijmāʿ* presented here.[224] Yet he contradicts himself when he claims to be able to establish the authority and the high epistemic value of the two previously mentioned *Ṣaḥīḥ* works, composed in the third/ninth century, on the strength of the argument that the vast majority of the reports they contain have met with the acceptance of the Muslim community. Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya's approach probably owes less to the rigorous quality than to the substantive content of these two works, which were certainly regarded as largely undisputable among Sunnis. Jonathan Brown sums up the matter aptly when he states, "The two works served as powerful weapons in polemics against Ashʿarīs over issues such as God's attributes, the nature of the Quran and invoking the intercession of dead saints."[225] Al-Bukhārī and Muslim (d. 271/875) were respected scholars who were not suspected of pursuing a particular theological agenda in composing their works. However, their *Ṣaḥīḥ* collections contain hadith that describe God in a manner that cannot easily be reconciled with the Ashʿarī conception of God. It is thus clearly in Ibn Taymiyya's interest to accord these two works the highest possible degree of authority and reliability, so it is comprehensible why he would subscribe here to an understanding of *ijmāʿ* that he otherwise rejects. This is not to say, however, that Ibn Taymiyya regards the two *Ṣaḥīḥ* works as beyond all criticism. On the contrary, he identifies several hadith in both works that, in his view, are to be rejected.[226]

Although Ibn Taymiyya directs his criticism mostly at those who, in his view, grant too little consideration to hadith when responding to questions of theology, he also reprehends the other extreme. Thus, he says, many who are counted among those who adhere to the Sunna and who hold the Sunna in high esteem as a source—he names here ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mandah (d. 470/1078), among others—have amassed a multitude of weak and fabricated reports concerning the attributes of God.[227] In addition, the majority of *āḥād* reports that have only one chain of transmission—and are thus *gharīb*—cannot withstand the critical scrutiny of the hadith sciences in terms of their reliability and must therefore be rejected.[228]

---

223   See Al-Matroudi, *Ḥanbalī School of Law*, 57–59 and 186–187.
224   See, e.g., *Ikhnāʾiyya*, 459–460.
225   Brown, *Canonization*, 224.
226   See ibid., 313–314 and 333.
227   See p. 58, n. 123 above.
228   See *Ḥadīth*, MF, 18:39.

We turn now in the remainder of this chapter to Ibn Taymiyya's critique of al-Rāzī's position as expounded above. In several of his works, Ibn Taymiyya refers to al-Rāzī's view briefly, usually commenting on it critically. He goes so far as to qualify al-Rāzī's epistemic devaluation of textual indicants as a fundamental methodological building block of heresy (*zandaqa*), though he does add that al-Rāzī at least acknowledges the theological and legal foundations of the religion:[229] "Thus," Ibn Taymiyya says, "he neither voids [the religion] in the manner of the Sabian *falāsifa* nor affirms [it] as do the knowledgeable and upright among the believers."[230] To my knowledge, a substantive discussion of al-Rāzī's position is to be found only in Ibn Taymiyya's *Bayān*.[231] In just under sixty pages, Ibn Taymiyya adduces seventeen arguments (*wujūh*), very similar in tenor, which we summarise in the following paragraph.

Ibn Taymiyya, in his treatment of the topic at hand, accords an important role to the *argumentum a fortiori*. According to him, if al-Rāzī's position were correct, then all textual indicants would be of secondary importance and reason alone would constitute the exclusive and decisive foundation. In this case, God's sending prophets and revealing Himself would be robbed of any meaning.[232] Moreover, the Quran itself would be incapable of establishing any theological foundations, for this can be done only on the basis of evidence capable of engendering certainty.[233] Ibn Taymiyya likewise makes reference here to the universal rule upheld by the *mutakallimūn*, which, in conjunction with al-Rāzī's low view of the epistemic value of textual indicants, accords absolute priority to reason.[234] Yet for Ibn Taymiyya, not only is al-Rāzī's position false— so that the consequences just described do not actually come to pass—but it also stems from the greatest sophistry imaginable (*min aʿẓam al-safsaṭa fī al-wujūd*), for while it may be true that what is intended by an utterance cannot always be ascertained unequivocally, the fact that this is not categorically and without exception the case is something that people know by necessity.[235] When parents speak to their child, for example, the child as a rule knows what it is they intend to say. It is decidedly not the case—and here the passage takes on a mocking undertone—that the meaning of the parents' speech is perceived by the child as uncertain on account of the ten possibilities men-

---

229 *Intiṣār*, 153–154.
230 *Intiṣār*, 154.
231 *Bayān*, 8:439–494.
232 *Bayān*, 8:449–450, also 490–491.
233 *Bayān*, 8:450.
234 *Bayān*, 8:448–449.
235 *Bayān*, 8:465, also 481–482.

tioned by al-Rāzī, all of which Ibn Taymiyya lists in this passage.[236] The same also applies, as a rule, to the spoken and written word used for communication among the common folk. And if this is true with respect to them, the speech of the scholars is even clearer, and what is true of the scholars, in turn, applies a fortiori to the prophets and, finally, even more so to the word of God sent down to mankind.[237] Moreover, transmitted linguistic indicants are usually clearer and less ambiguous than rational proofs. For this reason, there are more differences among those who debate with one another solely on the basis of reason than among those communities that are privy to a revelation; indeed, the more closely such communities adhere to this revelation, Ibn Taymiyya avers, the less prone they are to disagreement.[238]

In conclusion, the Muʿtazila may at first glance have lost the battle with *ahl al-ḥadīth* over the authority of textual indicants, for there was widespread agreement by Ibn Taymiyya's time—but also long before—that such indicants could be appealed to in theological questions and that they were binding. At second glance, however, it turns out that through the universal rule and the attendant expansion of the hermeneutical framework of the instrument of *taʾwīl*, the later generations of Ashʿarīs established a theological methodology that is much closer to that of the Muʿtazila than to that of *ahl al-ḥadīth*.[239] Even though al-Rāzī did not prevail in the end, he had not been the one to ground this methodology but had only taken it to an extreme with his attempt significantly to lower the epistemic value of textual indicants.

---

236   *Bayān*, 8:462–464.
237   *Bayān*, 8:464.
238   *Bayān*, 8:465–467.
239   On this, see chapter 6, section 2.1.

Summary

Part 2 of the present work has analysed a number of complex, interwoven themes, which we now summarise concisely.

On the question of ontology, we can identify three premises of Ibn Taymiyya's as foundational components of his methodological framework. The first declares that between any two existent things, regardless whether both belong to the empirical world or at least one of them transcends it, there necessarily exists a similarity or at least some form of resemblance. On the other hand, the two are never identical, nor are they ever fully dissimilar. A point that we elaborate on later but that we should keep in mind here is that this view constitutes the foundation of Ibn Taymiyya's position that, on the one hand—and contrary to what is claimed by many of the *mutakallimūn*—language is indeed well suited to describing both the Creator and that which is created and that, on the other hand, knowledge about God's essence and attributes can be gained through inferential methods that have reference to this world. Ibn Taymiyya designates the presumption of similarity between God and the world by the term *tashbīh*, which he distinguishes terminologically from the word *tamthīl*, that is, from the view that God and the world are of the same kind or that God possesses properties that are specific to created entities. Which properties are characteristics of created beings such that God may not legitimately be described by them can be determined, as further expounded below, through the technique of analogical inference known as *qiyās awlā*.

The second of Ibn Taymiyya's three premises is that human beings, after surveying the objects that exist in the external world, form categories and universal concepts that have a purely mental existence and that must therefore in no way be reified or regarded as ontologically real entities of which things are composed. Thus, the relationship in propositional statements between the subject and the predicates attributed to it has no real counterpart, but merely represents a conceptualisation of the external world in the human mind. This being the case, the question of the relationship between God's essence and His attributes, which was intensely debated in theological circles, is dissolved as a pseudo-problem. In line with his conceptualist ontology, Ibn Taymiyya holds that causal relations are neither purely natural nor necessary. Furthermore, space (here: *ḥayyiz*) and time do not represent independent existents; rather, they either do not exist at all or exist merely as part of the

existence of an object that occupies space or undergoes change—as a by-product, so to speak, of the object's existence.

Ibn Taymiyya's third and final premiss relates to being (*wujūd*) itself and postulates that each existent thing possesses its own particular *wujūd*. He thus opposes the Sufi doctrine of the unity of being advocated by Ibn ʿArabī, which, as far as Ibn Taymiyya is concerned, abolishes the distinction between God as the one who is worshipped and creation as that which worships—a distinction important for an inwardly lived faith—and, moreover, encourages antinomianism. In addition, Ibn Taymiyya interprets the term *wujūd*, in line with its lexical sense, as "findability," or "being there to be found." That God has a *wujūd* therefore means that He can be perceived by creatures—which undergirds the possibility of seeing Him on the day of judgement. From this, in turn, Ibn Taymiyya concludes that God is in a direction (*jiha*)—albeit a non-existent one—with respect to creation. This lays the ontological basis for his position, to be taken up in chapter 10, section 3, that God is above creation.

With his rejection of the linguistic distinction between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz*, which he replaces with the concept of *mutawāṭiʾ* versus *mushakkik*, Ibn Taymiyya reinforces the theoretical foundation of his position that language is equally suited to describing this world and the world beyond. He thus goes against the view that language, being rooted in our world, relates primarily to this-worldly objects and only in a derivative and deficient manner to other-worldly entities. Against the core premiss on which the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* distinction is built—namely, that words possess a meaning prior to their use in a concrete speech act—Ibn Taymiyya proposes his context-based theory of meaning as an alternative. According to this theory, linguistic signs only exist when they are used, with the result that they only have a concrete meaning when used as well. Homonymous terms that would be classified as *ḥaqīqa* or *majāz* in accordance with use are regarded by Ibn Taymiyya as always *ḥaqīqa*, independently of the specific meaning ascribed to them in concrete speech acts. As, therefore, the concept of literal meaning has no place in Ibn Taymiyya's theory of meaning, it is inaccurate to describe him as a literalist as has often been done in academic sources. Likewise, the term *ẓāhir* in the context of his theory cannot be equated with outward meaning, as has usually been the case. Rather, it is synonymous with the established meaning, that is, the meaning that has come to be established by considering all the circumstantial indicators (sing. *qarīna*) associated with the use of an expression in a concrete speech act.

In light of the foregoing, when God describes Himself or the phenomena of this world in the Quran, He is not borrowing words from a language that is tethered to this world and is therefore inherently inadequate for describing

transcendent realities. Rather, He creates new usages for the expressions He employs, expressions whose reference to mutually differentiated denotata in this world and the transcendent world is justified on the basis of mutually existing similarities that—as expounded in chapter 4 on ontology—are necessarily common to the denotata regardless of all their differences. Thus, for example, both the wine of this world and that of paradise, as well as both human and divine mercy, can legitimately be referred to equally by their respective homonymous terms despite the great differences that exist between their respective denotata.

Our analysis of various works written by Ibn Taymiyya over the span of several decades has revealed that he rejected the validity of *majāz*, despite the fact that he made contradictory statements about it. That he did not take a consistent position here may have to do with the fact that no given view of *majāz* necessitates a specific stance on the interpretation of statements describing God in the revealed sources. Since his motivation for dealing with the topic was predominantly theological rather than linguistic, he may have felt not only that it was unnecessary to call attention to his negative stance regarding the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* distinction every time he mentioned it but also that it was positively imperative, as will be addressed below, to define conditions for the validity of figurative interpretation (*taʾwīl majāzī*).

While the rejection of *majāz* bears no necessary consequences for theology, this is not so when it comes to linguistics. Yet Ibn Taymiyya's treatment of the theory of meaning remains insufficiently elaborated, as his interest in the topic was primarily a theological one and not a linguistic one per se. A follow-up study on this topic would be worthwhile, however, especially since there is an increasing number of voices in recent linguistics that, like Ibn Taymiyya, operate on the premiss that the distinction between *ḥaqīqa* and *majāz* cannot be derived from the language itself but is instead purely arbitrary.[1]

Given that verse Q. 3:7 confronts interpreters with particular exegetical challenges, it is not surprising that it has been interpreted in vastly different ways. The points of dispute relate primarily, though not exclusively, to the terms *muḥkam*, *mutashābih*, and *taʾwīl* mentioned in the verse, as well as to the fact that the meaning of the verse changes depending on whether one marks the end of a phrase at a particular point through a pause in recitation. Verse Q. 3:7 divides Quranic verses into the categories of *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*, with the *taʾwīl* of those in the latter category knowable only to God or—if one observes

---

1 The reader is reminded here of the sources listed at p. 163, n. 82 above.

the pause in question—knowable both to God and to the scholars. Ibn Taymiyya considers several interpretive possibilities to be valid here that are not mutually exclusive, and he regards the pause in recitation as optional. *Muḥkam* verses, in his view, are those in which the meaning intended by God is clear. By contrast, *mutashābih* verses, if one reads Q. 3:7 with the pause, are those that speak of metaphysical realities or future events. The respective *taʾwīl* of these verses is the metaphysical object or the event itself that the verses address, with the knowledge of their modality and/or the time of their occurrence reserved for God alone. On the purely semantic level, such verses are always comprehensible to at least some among created beings, who therefore have knowledge of their interpretation—this being the second valid meaning of the term *taʾwīl*. If, on the other hand, Q. 3:7 is recited without the pause, then the verses considered *mutashābih* are those whose *taʾwīl*—in both meanings of the word—is known by God and by those who are knowledgeable among created beings. Ibn Taymiyya's complex and at times original position on the meaning of Q. 3:7 not only supports his own view of how the verses describing God are to be understood but also negates the validity of the method of *tafwīḍ* that he criticises. The current study has demonstrated that verse Q. 3:7, contrary to what is claimed in the academic literature, represents a crossroads within Quranic exegesis only in a qualified sense. Rather, its relevance and importance lie in the fact that it came to be heavily charged theologically, unlike in the works of earlier exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī.

A hermeneutical principle in the Ashʿarī tradition, known as *al-qānūn al-kullī* (the universal rule), states that in the event of a contradiction between reason and revelation, reason must be given priority and revelation reinterpreted accordingly. This prescription is justified by the fact that reason is the basis on which the truth of revelation can be known, such that a lack of confidence in reason would necessarily undermine the plausibility of revelation as well. This line of reasoning, the gist of which can be found as early as in the works of al-Ashʿarī himself, was explicitly elevated by al-Ghazālī to the level of a hermeneutical principle for dealing with statements in revelation that describe God. Two generations later, al-Rāzī expanded the scope of its application considerably by asserting that language, as will be explained subsequently, is highly vague and indeterminate. Ibn Taymiyya, for his part, sharply criticised the universal rule and its further aggravation in the thought of al-Rāzī. As Ibn Taymiyya maintains, contradictory proofs from reason and revelation are never equally probative, and preference must always be given to the stronger one. In *Madaniyya*, moreover, he draws up a strict catalogue of criteria for the validity of figurative interpretations (sing. *taʾwīl majāzī*) according to which linguistic expressions may be interpreted figuratively only when the following

four conditions are fulfilled: (1) it is certain that these expressions may be used in a figurative sense in the Arabic language, (2) the speaker makes it known through contextual indicators that he intends to convey a figurative meaning by the expressions he is using, (3) there is no evidence that would render such an intention on the part of the speaker improbable, and finally (4)—and this applies to statements that appear in revelation—the Prophet Muḥammad himself, who was responsible for explicating the words of God, drew attention to their figurative meaning.

I have argued in the current work that the main point of conflict between Ibn Taymiyya and the Ashʿarīs, or the *mutakallimūn* in general, is not—as explained above—about the existence of *majāz* in language but about the valid scope for the application of *taʾwīl majāzī*. As previous studies have demonstrated, Ibn Taymiyya contradicts himself in at least one case by using *taʾwīl majāzī* in a manner that does not meet the four conditions mentioned above.

Tadmuriyya, an unusually systematic work for Ibn Taymiyya, also deals to a large extent with hermeneutical questions. In this work, Ibn Taymiyya establishes two principles and seven rules for the correct interpretation of statements in revelation that describe God and explicates them in detail. In doing so, he aims primarily to prove that the application of *taʾwīl majāzī* by the *mutakallimūn* in general, and by the Ashʿarīs in particular, is contradictory and to contrast this instrument with an alternative methodology for dealing with the revealed texts that undergirds his conception of God.

As Ibn Taymiyya plausibly demonstrates, it is not possible to establish a positive theology without recourse to analogical inferences (sing. *qiyās*) that take the perceptible world as their starting point. For this reason, the use of such procedures is found very early in Islamic thought. Furthermore, they constitute the standard method of proof in the Ashʿarī (particularly the early Ashʿarī) tradition for reliably establishing the seven essential attributes of God. Al-Juwaynī rejects this method, however, on the basis that God may not legitimately be compared with the world, a point on which many of his fellow Ashʿarīs agreed with him. Al-Āmidī, starting from the premiss that God is an absolutely perfect being, claims to have found a novel method of proof for substantiating the seven essential attributes, one that was meant to be free of the anthropomorphic element al-Juwaynī claimed to have identified in the inferential method of *qiyās*. Yet al-Āmidī, as I have shown, was unsuccessful in this. It is noteworthy, however, that al-Āmidī's method can be understood as a precursor to the approach subsequently adopted by Ibn Taymiyya, who to my knowledge is the first traditionalist theologian to have worked out a rational method of proof for reliably establishing all the attributes of God mentioned in revelation.

And while Ibn Taymiyya believes he can appeal in this point to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, he does so on the basis of the work *al-Radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa-l-zanādiqa*, which, as studies have shown, was not in fact written by Aḥmad.

Ibn Taymiyya argues that neither the analogical method of *qiyās al-tamthīl* that is common in law (*fiqh*) nor the syllogism popular among the *falāsifa* is suitable for acquiring knowledge about God. This is because both methods refer to God and to the world on the same level, yet God should be accorded a paramount rank vis-à-vis creation with respect to the element of comparison in which they share. For this reason, he advocates the *argumentum a fortiori* (*qiyās awlā*), which he applies in the follow manner: Every attribute that constitutes an unqualified perfection and that belongs to at least some things in creation must be ascribed a fortiori to God. On the other hand, every attribute that constitutes a deficiency and of which at least some things in creation are potentially to be absolved must be negated a fortiori with respect to God. Ibn Taymiyya, in contrast to al-Āmidī, does not claim to be able to avoid any and all comparison between God and the world. It is also unnecessary for him to do so, for he has already argued in his ontology that there can be no two existent objects, be they of this world or transcendent, that are not similar to each other in some manner. This similarity is captured in *mushakkik* terms and represents the common semantic denominator (*qadr mushtarak*) where the various possible usages of these terms converge. All expressions that designate attributes belonging to both God and creation are of this category. In contrast, the Muʿtazila and the Ashʿarīs, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, used these expressions in a univocal manner and thus fell prey to an anthropomorphism on the basis of which they identified the attribute in question as not being one of the divine attributes.

However, with the universal statement—relating both to this world and to the world of the unseen (and thus also to God)—that every being (*wujūd*) can potentially be perceived through the five human senses, Ibn Taymiyya does not make good on his claim to acquire or reliably to establish knowledge about God solely on the basis of the *argumentum a fortiori*. Moreover, he considers attributes such as laughter to be perfections without providing a plausible justification for this, which makes one inclined to surmise that the only reason he holds this is that God is described as laughing in revelation. Had laughter been identified in revelation as a property not befitting of God, Ibn Taymiyya most likely would have found ways to present it as a deficiency such that it could then not be legitimately ascribed to God.

Concerning the epistemic value of textual indicants, there were significant differences between the positions of *ahl al-ḥadīth* and those of the *mutakallimūn* in the pre-classical period of Islam. While these differences were never

eliminated over the course of later historical developments, the *mutakallimūn* nevertheless drew closer over time to the positions of *ahl al-ḥadīth*. Ibn Taymiyya's view regarding the textual indicants relevant to theology conforms with those that had become widespread in Sunni legal theory. Accordingly, he regards *mutawātir* reports as engendering certainty (*yaqīn*), whereas those categorised as *āḥād*, he believes, can in principle be considered at most only probabilistically confirmed (*ẓann*). Nothwithstanding, he does assign *āḥād* reports a high epistemic value if they fulfil certain conditions. However, he attempts to justify his view that the great majority of reports found in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* works of al-Bukhārī and Muslim fall into this category through a concept of *ijmāʿ* that he rejects when it comes to other issues. His desire to classify these two works as being as reliable as possible probably stems from the fact that they contain many reports that seem to contradict the *mutakallimūn*'s conceptions of God.

Among Ashʿarīs, one encounters the widespread view that the descriptions of God found in *āḥād* reports must be traceable to one of the divine attributes that can be reliably established through *mutawātir* evidence. Nevertheless, we may assert that the debate between the Ashʿarīs and Ibn Taymiyya was not about the epistemic value of *āḥād* narrations but about their interpretation. The exception to this is al-Rāzī, whom Ibn Taymiyya criticises heavily for having maintained that an interlocutor can, in principle, never be certain what it is that a speaker—whether God or a human being—intends by anything he says. Al-Rāzī articulated ten reasons for why this is so. However, our analysis of his writings has shown that contrary to what is assumed in the academic literature, he only held this position—considered extreme even in *kalām*—subject to further qualifications.

Part 2 of this work has demonstrated that Ibn Taymiyya was able to work out a fundamentally comprehensible and consistent methodology for interpreting the descriptions of God found in the revealed texts. Whether or not he applied this methodology consistently in his stance on the attributes is one of the main questions to which we now turn in part 3.

PART 3

The Divine Essence and Attributes in Focus

∵

Temporally Originating States and Acts (ḥawādith) in the Divine Essence

With the view that God's essence is a substrate for temporally originating states and events, Ibn Taymiyya contravenes one of the basic premises on which *kalām* theology is built, namely, that the existence of all things that are subject to change has a beginning.[1] This is meant to be proved by the so-called *dalīl ḥudūth al-ajsām* (proof from the temporality of bodies),[2] which in *kalām*, as Davidson puts it, became the "demonstration par excellence" for the createdness of the world.[3] This proof is elaborated in numerous *kalām* works,[4] with a particularly concise presentation offered by Muḥammad al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1143) in his work *Nihāyat al-iqdām fī 'ilm al-kalām*, where he says:

> Thus, most of them [i.e., the *mutakallimūn*] trod the path of affirming [the createdness of the world] by first proving the existence of accidents (sing. *'araḍ*), then, second, their temporality. Third, they demonstrate that a substance (*jawhar*; also "atom") cannot be devoid of these [i.e., accidents] and, fourth, that an infinite regress is impossible. From all these

---

1 We find a similar idea in Western philosophy, expressed in the principle: *Nullum mutabile est necessarium hinc omne mutabile est contingens* (Nothing subject to change exists necessarily; thus, everything subject to change is contingent). See Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, 7th ed. (Halae Magdebvrgicae: C.H. Hemmerde, 1779), §131; also Christian Wolff, *Erste Philosophie oder Ontologie: Lateinisch-Deutsch*, ed. Dirk Effertz (Hamburg: Meiner, 2005), §296.

2 Also known as *dalīl ḥudūth al-a'rāḍ* (argument from the temporality of accidents).

3 Herbert Davidson, *Proof for Eternity, Creation, and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 134. Among the few *mutakallimūn* who rejected this argument is 'Abbād b. Sulaymān (or Salmān) (d. after 260/874). See Suleiman A. Mourad, "'Abbād b. Salmān," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, *THREE*, vol. 2009-3, ed. Gudrun Krämer et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 2.

4 See, e.g., al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 22, lines 6–16 (discussed in Lameer, *Al-Fārābī*, 211–215); Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn al-Nāṭiq bi-l-ḥaqq, *Baṣran Mu'tazilite Theology: Abū 'Alī Muḥammad b. Khallād's Kitāb al-uṣūl and Its Reception. A Critical Edition of the* Ziyādāt Sharḥ al-uṣūl *by the Zaydī Imām al-Nāṭiq bi-l-ḥaqq Abū Ṭālib Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. Hārūn al-Buṭḥānī (d. 424/1033)*, ed. Camilla Adang, Wilferd Madelung, and Sabine Schmidtke (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 5–48; al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 17–21; al-Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, 26 ff.; and Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, 4 vols. (Cairo: Lajnat Nashr al-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya, 1937–1939), 1:183–184.

---

basic premisses it follows that that which is not prior to[5] things that have
come to exist in time is itself a thing that has come to exist in time.[6]

To elucidate this quotation further, we explain briefly how the *mutakallimūn*
attempted to prove the temporality, and thus the non-eternality, of bodies. Con-
sider the example of Socrates' wife, Xanthippe, who consists of a body that
possesses accidents, such as being in motion (when, for example, she quar-
rels with Socrates) or being at rest (such as when she is sleeping). Like any
body, Xanthippe cannot be devoid of accidents, meaning that she cannot, for
example, be simultaneously neither in motion nor at rest. Were Xanthippe to
have existed from all eternity, one would have to posit a *regressus ad infinitum*
(*tasalsul fī al-māḍī*; henceforth *tasalsul*) of temporally originating accidents—
such as being in motion or at rest—that now ends with Xanthippe's current
state. Such a past regress is impossible, however, since a series of different tem-
porally originating accidents stretching back infinitely into the past can never
arrive at an end point, with the result that the current state could have never
been reached. What is true for Xanthippe is true for all other bodies and thus
for the world as a whole, which proves that the world is not eternal. Here is the
argument presented again in a clearer form:

(1)   Bodies are necessarily qualified by accidents (such as being in
        motion or at rest).
(2)   Accidents are temporal.
(3)   An infinite regress of temporal things is impossible.

_____

(Therefore)   Bodies are temporal.

It is on this argument that the *mutakallimūn* base their belief that no kind
of change can occur in God's essence, as God would then be temporal.[7] As
clarified above, the validity of this argument depends primarily on the truth
of the premiss that there can be no series of temporally originating entit-
ies or events that stretches back infinitely into the past. Ibn Taymiyya agrees
with this premiss only in a qualified sense, for he considers the impossibil-
ity in question to obtain solely in the case where the individual members of

_____

5   Reading *yasbiqu* instead of *yasbiquhu*.
6   Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Nihāyat al-iqdām fī ʿilm al-kalām*, ed. Alfred
    Guillaume (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 11, lines 7–10.
7   For an Ashʿarī exposition of this argument, consistent in substance with the above, see the
    exposition of Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī in Frank, "Knowledge and *Taqlīd*," 136–137.

the series stand in a causal relationship to one another. This kind of *tasal-sul*, he explains, was rejected not only by the *mutakallimūn* but also by the *falāsifa* and, indeed, by all those who are endowed with sound reason (*sāʾir al-ʿuqalāʾ*).[8]

In another type of *tasalsul*, the relationship between the individual members in the infinite series is not a causal but a conditional one. Thus, it holds for every temporally occurring event e_n of the series that it can come to be only on the condition that the immediately preceding event e_{n-1} has already occurred. Here, e_{n-1} is not the cause of, but only the condition for, the realisation of e_n. In contrast to Ibn Taymiyya and to well-known thinkers of the *falsafa* tradition such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, the *mutakallimūn* make no distinction with respect to the possibility of an infinite regress between different kinds of such regresses; rather, they consider them all equally impossible.[9] Al-Juwaynī seeks to substantiate this view in his work *al-Irshād*, arguing against unnamed critics who hold that if an infinite *regression* is impossible, then an infinite *progression*—that is, a never-ending series of temporal events that has a beginning but no end—would have to be impossible as well.[10] Al-Juwaynī cites these critics, who offer the following statement as an example of a *regressus ad infinitum*: "I will not give you a dirham unless I have previously given you a dinar, and I will not give you a dinar unless I have previously given you a dirham."[11] Al-Juwaynī agrees with his opponents that in the example cited, neither a dirham nor a dinar will ever be given. However, he argues that this scenario is not in any way analogous to an infinite progression and that the

---

8   This statement can be found in numerous works; see, e.g., *Darʾ*, 1:334 and 8:271. In fact, the view that a *regressus ad infinitum* based on a cause-and-effect relationship is impossible is probably as old as philosophy itself. It can be traced for the first time to the pre-Socratic philosopher Anaximander of Milet (d. ca. 550 BCE), who was followed therein by Plato and Aristotle. For a detailed discussion, see Nicholas Rescher, *Infinite Regress: The Theory and History of Varieties of Change* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 99 ff. Ibn Sīnā also firmly maintains that no causal chain can stretch back infinitely into the past but must have its origin in the Necessary Being, that is, God. See Ibn Sīnā [Avicenna], *Metaphysics–Ilāhiyyāt*, 257–261.

9   In fact, Ibn Taymiyya's position here is similar to that of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā within the *falsafa* tradition. Unlike Ibn Taymiyya, however, the two *falāsifa* were concerned to maintain both their view of the eternity of the world (and thus also of an eternal time and the eternal circular motion of the celestial spheres) and their rejection of an infinite causal regress in a consistent manner. See here Davidson, *Proof for Eternity*, 128–129 and 367–368.

10   An example of this is the successively occurring temporal events that take place in paradise.

11   Al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 26–27.

example thus does not constitute an argument for its impossibility, for an infinite progression would be akin to someone saying: "I will not give you a dirham without subsequently giving you a dinar, nor [will I give you] a dinar without subsequently giving you a dirham."[12] Al-Juwaynī explains that in this case, each dinar and each dirham will be given out successively in an infinite progression that will never come to an end.

Ibn Taymiyya agrees with al-Juwaynī that an infinite progression is possible and that the example al-Juwaynī cites in favour of it is valid.[13] A correct example of an infinite regress, according to Ibn Taymiyya, would follow the same structure and differ only in that it refers not to the future but to the past.[14] Al-Juwaynī's example of an infinite progression, however, merely describes a sequence of successively occurring events, whereas the example of an infinite regress places these events in a relationship of mutual conditionality.[15] An example that correctly illustrates an infinite regress, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, would be the following: "I have never given you a dirham without having previously given you a dinar, nor have I ever given you a dinar without having previously given you a dirham."[16] He then continues:

> Here it is stated that each past dinar was preceded by a dirham and that each dirham was preceded by a dinar. This is the analogue (*naẓīr*) of [a series of] past events in which each event was preceded by another. Similarly, his [al-Juwaynī's] statement "I will not give you a dirham without subsequently giving you a dinar, nor [will I give you] a dinar without subsequently giving you a dirham" is the analogue of [a series of] future events in which each event is followed by another. So, if this can be true

---

12   Ibid., 27.
13   See *Darʾ*, 9:186. Ibn Taymiyya engages al-Juwaynī's remarks in two places, namely, *Darʾ*, 9:186–188 and *Minhāj*, 4:435–438. These passages have been examined in previous studies. See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 93–94 and Kāmila al-Kawārī, *Qidam al-ʿālam wa-tasalsul al-ḥawādith bayna Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya wa-l-falāsifa maʿa bayān man akhṭaʾa fī al-masʾala min al-sābiqīn wa-l-muʿāṣirīn* (Amman: Dār Usāma, 2001), 132–133.
14   See *Minhāj*, 1:436.
15   The first example cited by al-Juwaynī seems similar to what Ibn Taymiyya refers to as a circular recursive chain (*dawr qablī*) of successively occurring events. Here, as in al-Juwaynī's example, the realisation of each of two events e_1 and e_2 depends on the previous occurrence of the other. As a consequence, neither of them ever occurs. For a detailed treatment of Ibn Taymiyya's views on *dawr qablī* as well as on *dawr maʿī* (where two [or more] simultaneously occurring events are mutually conditioned by each other), see *Minhāj*, 1:438; *Jawāb*, 4:297; and related comments in Hallaq, *Against the Greek Logicians*, 35, n. 5.
16   *Darʾ*, 9:186.

when asserted with respect to the future [i.e., an infinite progression], then it can likewise be true when asserted with respect to the past [i.e., an infinite regress].[17]

It is important for Ibn Taymiyya to demonstrate that his position follows logically from that of the Salaf. Thus, in his discussion of Q. 96:1, he cites statements of the Companion Ibn ʿAbbās to the effect that God has possessed His attributes from all eternity. If God's attributes are eternal, Ibn Taymiyya reasons, then an infinite series of objects resulting from God's attributes and His activity must also be possible.[18] He thus regards his treatment of the topic simply as a spelling out, based on rational argumentation, of the view already implicit in the Salaf that a *regressus ad infinitum* is indeed possible.[19]

Now, Ibn Taymiyya argues not merely for the possibility but also for the actuality of temporally originating events in God's essence, as we elaborate presently. His main argument takes the form of *qiyās awlā*, whereby he seeks to demonstrate that it is among God's perfections that temporal states and events should occur in His essence. Consistent with his methodology, presented in chapter 7, section 1.2, he says:

> Imagine two beings: One is characterised by attributes of perfection that, in your terminology [i.e., that of the *mutakallimūn*], are referred to as accidents and temporal events, such as knowledge, power, acting, and seizing. The other being, by contrast, cannot possess these attributes that consist of accidents and temporal events. In this case, the first being is more perfect [than the second] in the same way that a living thing, to which these attributes can be ascribed, is more perfect than inanimate matter.[20]

In addition, drawing support from a passage in al-Bukhārī's *Khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād* in which al-Bukhārī cites his teacher Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād (d. 228/843), Ibn Taymiyya adopts the view that one cannot describe as living any entity from which no activity issues forth.[21] In other words, if God's essence is sub-

---

17 *Darʾ*, 9:186–187.
18 See *Aʿlā*, MF, 16:367–370.
19 In Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of himself, this holds not only for his views on this point but for his thought in general. See Hoover, "Perpetual Creativity," 295.
20 *Akmaliyya*, MF, 6:91; ed. Sālim, 37.
21 See *Kaylāniyya*, MF, 12:365. The passage to which Ibn Taymiyya is referring can be found in Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād wa-l-radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa-ahl al-taʿṭīl*, ed. Fahd b. Sulaymān al-Fahīd, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Dār Aṭlas al-Khaḍrāʾ, 2005), 2:192.

ject to no change at all and no activities occur within Him, then by what virtue can He be referred to as living in distinction to inanimate matter? In my view, however, Ibn Taymiyya violates here the theory of meaning that he has developed through his concept of *tawāṭuʾ*.[22] According to this theory, the term "living" has no semantic essence but can be applied as an analogous (*mushakkik*) term with mutually different meanings. Thus, just as a man can be referred to as a lion either because of his courage or because of his mane-like hair, so too can God be qualified as living insofar as His manner of being alive is in some way similar to one of the ways in which created beings are alive. Moreover, if Ibn Taymiyya's argument were valid, it could be applied in a similar manner to other attributes. Thus, if one grants that God's attribute of being living means merely that temporal events occur within His essence, then one could equally claim that God's attribute of having two hands implies that He has limbs. Ibn Taymiyya denies this, however, on the basis that such an implication would only hold for created hands. To this, however, one might reply that Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of what it means to be living—namely, to be a locus for temporal events—applies only to created entities and may not legitimately be extended to God.

In further support of his position, Ibn Taymiyya draws on the philosopher Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. ca. 560/1165), who is reported to have said in his work *al-Muʿtabar fī al-ḥikma* that the Quran can legitimately refer to God as a disposer [of the world] (*mudabbir*) only if internal activities occur in His essence.[23] And as Ibn Taymiyya states in many passages in his works, probably with some gratification,[24] even the Ashʿarī Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī had conceded that although only the Karrāmiyya openly espoused the view that God's

---

22   On this, see chapter 5, section 2.

23   See *Ḥudūth*, 114 and 145. The description of God as *mudabbir* is found in, e.g., Q. 32:5. Al-Baghdādī's work has survived and has been edited and published in three volumes (vol. 1: logic; vol. 2: physics; vol. 3: metaphysics). I was unable to ascertain to which passage Ibn Taymiyya is referring, but it is likely that it is in the third volume. There, al-Baghdādī criticises in detail the view that an eternal being must be devoid of temporal states or events. In addition, he says clearly that God's particular state of will results from His particular state of knowledge (*irādatuhu al-juzʾiyya al-mutasabbiba min maʿārifihi al-juzʾiyya*). Thus, for example, God wills to punish the sinner, but after the latter's repentance, God wishes to forgive him, and this is why He can be referred to in a real sense as the one who hears prayers (*samīʿ al-duʿāʾ*). See Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar fī al-ḥikma*, 3 vols. (Hyderabad: n.p., 1358/[1939]), 3:179, line 17 ff. All of this indicates that al-Baghdādī, as Ibn Taymiyya claims, did in fact believe that temporal processes occur in God's essence. Al-Rāzī reports the same view of him. See al-Rāzī, *Asās al-taqdīs*, 1:170.

24   See, e.g., *Bayān*, 5:223.

essence was a substrate for temporal events,[25] this conclusion is nonetheless a necessary entailment of the positions adopted by the great majority of schools of thought, including the Ashʿarīs as well as the *falāsifa*.[26]

Finally, it is worth recalling Ibn Taymiyya's conception of time, which, in line with the views described here, he understands to be eternal given that it necessarily accompanies movement or change. Time, according to Ibn Taymiyya, possesses no independent existence; rather—and this against the backdrop of God's internal activity—it is consequent upon His existence (*min tawābiʿ wujūd al-Ḥaqq*).[27]

In the following chapter, we examine case studies of selected divine attributes, whereby we shall also have several occasions to address the question of God's inner activity.

---

25   On whom see p. 88, n. 294 above. Ibn Taymiyya also reports that the Karrāmiyya held this position. He adds that they likewise argued for the impossibility of an infinite regress and therefore held that the series of internal changes of state in God must have had a beginning in time. See *Ḥudūth*, 131.

26   Al-Rāzī subsequently expounds and discusses this claim over several pages. See al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 2:106–111, esp. 106–107; also al-Rāzī, *Asās al-taqdīs*, 1:168–173, esp. 168–169.

27   On this topic, see p. 123 above.

Case Studies of Selected Divine Attributes

1 *al-ʿAdl*: God's Justice

Ibn Taymiyya's conception of justice (*ʿadl*)—for which he normally uses the term "wisdom" (*ḥikma*)[1]—is of great theological (as well as legal) relevance for his thought. We can discern in his writings two definitions of justice that overlap in meaning. First, justice is "the realisation of things in conformity with their essence and the perfecting of them" (*taḥqīq al-umūr ʿalā mā hiya ʿalayhi wa-takmīluhā*).[2] Second, justice means putting things in their proper place (*waḍʿ kull shayʾ fī mawḍiʿihi*),[3] which involves the observance and preservation of the structural order inherent in creation. We may thus understand Ibn Taymiyya to be describing justice as the (normative) underpinning of all being (*mabnā al-wujūd kullihi ʿalā al-ʿadl*).[4] Ibn Taymiyya holds that whoever does justice will be successful regardless of religious affiliation, at least in this world.[5] He illustrates this principle through the example of a building, which a builder can prevent from collapsing only if he assures that the individual components of the building are well proportioned, properly placed, and duly aligned. Similarly, a garment will do *justice* to its wearer only if it is cut to his measurements.[6] The concept of justice in Ibn Taymiyya, with respect to both tangible and intangible things, is closely related to the idea of the good (*ḥusn*), which, in turn, is equivalent to that of benefit (*manfaʿa* or *maṣlaḥa*).[7] Injustice, by contrast, falls under the bad (*qubḥ*), which, in turn, is identical to harm (*maḍarra*). Knowledge of this, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, is found in the natural disposition (*fiṭra*) of man. In his words:

> When people say, "Justice is good and injustice is abhorrent," they mean that the innate natural disposition of man (*fiṭra*) loves justice and that

---

1 See, e.g., *Nubuwwāt*, 1:473, where he not only defines the word *ḥikma* in the same way as he does *ʿadl* but also contrasts it with the word "injustice" (*ẓulm*). See also Vasalou, *Theological Ethics*, 20, as well as 138 and 140.

2 *Radd*, 436.

3 *Istiqāma*, 1:464.

4 *Radd*, 436.

5 See *MF*, 28:146.

6 *Radd*, 436.

7 *Radd*, 436–437.

---

the establishment of it leads to joy and pleasure and brings benefit to the just, as well as to those who are justly treated; souls are therefore refreshed by it. And when they say, "Injustice is abhorrent," they mean that it constitutes harm for the unjust and for those who are unjustly treated and that it is detested. It [i.e., injustice] is accompanied by pain and sorrow, by which souls are aggrieved.[8]

In what follows, we explicate Ibn Taymiyya's concept of divine justice, our main purpose being to elucidate what it means for God to be just, why He is just, and whether He may choose to be unjust. Moreover, we uncover what bearing Ibn Taymiyya's concept of God's justice has on the answering of theological questions. We have selected as examples for this purpose the question of the eternity of hell and the question of the otherworldly fate of the children of non-Muslims who die before reaching adulthood. In both questions, it will become clear that Ibn Taymiyya assigns great argumentative weight to his conception of God's justice and that he interprets the relevant scriptural evidence accordingly. In the process, we shed light on an aspect of Ibn Taymiyya's thought that has been treated rather tangentially in previous studies,[9] several of which have likewise examined Ibn Taymiyya's conception of justice.

God, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, has never been unjust. Rather, "He has put each thing in its place though He has the power to do the opposite."[10] Thus, from all possible courses of action God always chooses the best one, a process through which His attribute of will is also constituted.[11] God has thus created the best of all possible worlds, though He has the freedom to bring a different kind of world into existence.[12] Ibn Taymiyya remarks that God's motive for action must have arisen in time, for otherwise the product of His action would be eternal. In other words, had it been more just or wiser from all eternity to bring a particular event e_n into existence, then this event would have had

---

8   *Radd*, 423.

9   The most important works on this topic are Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy* and Vasalou, *Theological Ethics*, esp. chap. 4.

10   *ʿĀdil*, *JR*, 1:129.

11   *ʿĀdil*, *JR*, 1:141.

12   *ʿĀdil*, *JR*, 1:141–142. Ibn Taymiyya thus follows the opinion of al-Ghazālī, which he also cites. Jon Hoover has detected here an influence of Ibn Sīnā on al-Ghazālī. See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 225. The matter is not so clear-cut, however, since the belief in the real world as the best possible world was also held long before Ibn Sīnā, such as by the Muʿtazilī ʿAbbād b. Sulaymān (d. after 260/874), building on the theory of the *aṣlaḥ*, upon which van Ess argues al-Ghazālī's position was also based. See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 4:32.

to exist or to be occurring from all eternity. Ibn Taymiyya anticipates the one possible objection to this view, namely, that if God's motive for action arose in time, then either it arose without a cause, which is impossible,[13] or it arose through a cause that, however, must equally have been caused by something else, which would entail the assumption of an infinite regress.[14] To explain how Ibn Taymiyya counters this objection, we must first present an overview of his doctrine of creation, which is perhaps best described as a doctrine of *creatio ex creatione* (creation from the created). According to this doctrine, God's creative activity is beginningless. As an aspect of this, God has always been in a dynamic and complex relationship with His creation. Ibn Taymiyya explains that everything other than God falls under the umbrella term *muḥdath* (temporally originated). Each of the individual things (sing. *shakhṣ*) in this category is preceded by non-existence, but taken together they form the beginningless genus (*nawʿ*) of individual created things. Yet in line with Ibn Taymiyya's conceptualist ontology, this genus exists only as an abstraction in the mind and not as an extramental eternal entity alongside God.[15] Every new formation of individual things and their constitution triggers the coming to be of a divine will to carry out a new process of creation in accordance with wisdom and justice. In God's wise plan for creation, any event e_n results in the occurrence of event e_{n+1} being better than its non-occurrence. Event e_n is thus the precondition (*sharṭ*) for the formation of God's will to bring about e_{n+1}.[16] This process is then repeated with event e_{n+2} and has neither beginning nor end. As partially elaborated in chapter 9, such an infinite chain of preconditions (*tasalsul fī al-shurūṭ*) is possible, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, unlike an infinite regress of efficient causes (*tasalsul fī al-ʿilal*).[17] As for the chain of efficient causes and their effects, it always ends with God in Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of creation.[18]

But Ibn Taymiyya was also aware that there is evil (*sharr*) in creation. In his view, however, this does not contradict God's having created the best possible world. As he says:

> God has not created anything except in virtue of a wisdom. He, the exalted, says, "[He] who made good all that He created,"[19] and He says, "the

---

13   This is based on the principle of sufficient reason.
14   *Aqwam*, MF, 8:151–152 and 155.
15   *Ḥudūth*, 132 and 107–108.
16   *Ḥudūth*, 89.
17   See also *Ḥudūth*, 87 and *Aqwam*, MF, 8:152.
18   *Aʿlā*, MF, 16:445.
19   Q. 32:7.

handiwork of God, who has fashioned all things perfectly."[20] That which has been created is therefore good and wise in view of the wisdom on the basis of which it was created, even when, from another perspective, it contains evil. For this matter [i.e., evil] is accidental and partial, not pure evil (*fa-dhālika al-amr ʿāriḍ juzʾī laysa sharr^(an) maḥḍ^(an)*). Rather, the evil through which a good is sought that outweighs [the evil] is ascribed as a good to the one who acts wisely. This is so even when it constitutes an evil for the one in whom it [i.e., the evil] inheres.[21]

Ibn Taymiyya thus maintains that some people can be afflicted by something evil that God has created, but that considering creation as a whole, this evil is always accompanied by a good that outweighs it. He adds to this that the essences of things and their interconnectedness (*ḥaqāʾiq al-umūr wa-irtibāṭ baʿḍihā bi-baʿḍ*) make it impossible for a world to be created that is free of all evil.[22]

Now, it may be the case that some people—or all people in some cases—are unable to discern the wisdom behind relative evil. Ibn Taymiyya illustrates this with the example of a statement attributed to Jahm b. Ṣafwān. Jahm, after seeing a leper, was said to have denied that a merciful God could have created such an affliction and concluded that God acts on the basis of His will alone (and not, that is, on the basis of wisdom). "This," Ibn Taymiyya says in response, "is due to his [i.e., Jahm's] ignorance. He did not know what wisdom, mercy, and benefit there are in affliction [such as leprosy]."[23]

That God has the ability to commit injustice is something that Ibn Taymiyya repeats in several works, mostly in contradistinction to the Muʿtazila and the Ashʿarīs.[24] The former hold that God is subject to the same moral standards as human beings but that He never contravenes these standards by virtue of a necessity grounded in His essence.[25] According to the Ashʿarīs, on the other hand, God cannot be unjust *by definition*, for injustice to them means either tampering with the property of others without their permission or disobeying the orders of a superior. God, however, owns all of creation and there is none

---

20 Q. 27:88.
21 *Jabr*, MF, 8:512.
22 Ibid.
23 *Nubuwwāt*, 2:915.
24 See, e.g., *ʿĀdil*, JR, 1:129; *Abū Dharr*, MF, 18:146; and *Minhāj*, 1:137.
25 This is the well-known view attributed to the Muʿtazila. However, it was by no means one that they held uniformly. See Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, *Taṣaffuḥ al-adilla*, 88, as well as van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 3:403–407.

superior to Him. Thus, whatever He does, He can never be unjust.[26] According to the Ashʿarīs, God could throw prophets into hell and admit sinners into paradise without this making Him unjust.[27] Ibn Taymiyya maintains that both the Muʿtazilī and the Ashʿarī perspectives entail that God deserves neither thanks nor praise, for deserving thanks and praise presupposes that He could act unjustly if He wanted to but that He laudably refrains from doing so.[28] Ibn Taymiyya further supports his view that God can choose to act unjustly with a hadith in which the Prophet reports that God said: "O My servants, I have forbidden injustice unto Myself (*yā ʿibādī innī ḥarramtu al-ẓulm ʿalā nafsī*) […]." If, according to Ibn Taymiyya, God could not be unjust at all, then this prohibition of injustice that He imposed upon Himself would be meaningless. Ibn Taymiyya adopts the same line of argument vis-à-vis the Quranic statement that God has obligated mercy upon Himself.[29] Here too it is the case that if God could not do other than to act mercifully, this self-imposed obligation would lose its meaning.[30]

But how can we be certain that God will always act justly? In response to this question, Ibn Taymiyya first refers to God's self-imposed obligation just mentioned. Second, by observing the wisdom and justice in creation, he infers through induction that God fundamentally acts in a wise and just manner and that we thus have every reason to presume that He will continue to do so in the future.[31] God, for example, has made the water in the sea salty, the water in the ears bitter, and the water in the mouth sweet for wise reasons. In addition, the arrangement of human limbs and even the lashes of the eyes bear witness to the fact that God creates with wisdom. If God proceeds in these matters with wisdom and justice, we may assume a fortiori that He will also guide people with wisdom and justice, which would entail not rewarding sinful behaviour or punishing upright conduct.[32] The third and final argument for God's justice is that injustice constitutes a deficiency and God is free of all deficiency.[33]

In at least one passage, Ibn Taymiyya describes the wisdom and justice of God as following necessarily from His essence. Since in several tracts, as explained above, he consistently asserts that God also has the ability to act

---

26   See, e.g., al-Ashʿarī, *Thaghr*, 241 and al-Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, 183–184.

27   See, e.g., al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 343, lines 3–10.

28   *Abū Dharr*, MF, 18:146.

29   See Q. 6:12.

30   *Abū Dharr*, MF, 18:145.

31   In contrast to Ibn Taymiyya, the Ashʿarīs limit themselves to this inductive approach. See p. 234, n. 71 above.

32   *Nubuwwāt*, 2:922–927, esp. 922 and 927.

33   *Abū Dharr*, MF, 18:146.

unjustly—and indeed this is of central important for him since it is the only way that God's praiseworthiness can be justified—it remains unclear whether Ibn Taymiyya is contradicting himself here or his words should be interpreted differently. The relevant passage reads as follows:

> If it has been established that He is wise and that His wisdom is concomitant to His knowledge and will, both of which are concomitants of His essence, then it is also the case that His wisdom is a concomitant of His essence. It is therefore impossible that He act other than with wisdom and for a wise purpose, and it is impossible that He act contrary to wisdom.[34]

Jon Hoover has provided a plausible explanation of this contradiction by arguing that Ibn Taymiyya most likely held that a wisdom that is concomitant to God's essence insofar as it is mediated by the attributes of power and will does not conflict with His freedom to act unjustly.[35]

We now move on to consider the two theological questions raised in the introduction to the current section, which will reveal to what extent Ibn Taymiyya's conception of a just God affects his interpretation of the often ambiguous source texts. As previously discussed, Ibn Taymiyya objects both to the Muʿtazilī view that God and mankind are subject to a common moral standard and to the Ashʿarī view that God's actions cannot be evaluated in light of any ethical criteria at all. In his view, it is entirely possible to argue, with reference to God's justice, that God will perform certain actions and refrain from others. This brings us to the first of the two theological questions, namely, whether God's punishment of hellfire is eternal.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī expounds upon this topic in several places in his *Tafsīr*. In one such passage, comprising just under five pages,[36] he first mentions arguments that he ascribes to an unspecified group of Muslims who held that there would be no punishment of hellfire in the hereafter at all. About halfway through the passage, al-Rāzī articulates the position—again without saying who is supposed to have held it—that although there is a hell, it will eventually pass away. Supporting this view is the argument that even in the case of the worst and most hardhearted person, his desire for revenge against his enemies would abate once he had punished them and he would grow weary of their continuing chastisement. Were he to torment them endlessly, any outside observer would adjudge his behaviour reprehensible. Moreover, a person can

---

34 *Nubuwwāt*, 2:926.
35 See Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," 640; also Hoover, "God Acts," 65–66.
36 Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, 1:54–58.

act in a manner that is sinful and worthy of punishment only until the point of death, making it incomprehensible why he should be punished indefinitely for the limited period of time in which he carried out his misdeeds. These are but a few of the arguments al-Rāzī puts forth. He presents the opposing view in a mere three lines out of the five pages, where he writes:

> As for those who held that the occurrence of [otherworldly] punishment is certain, they said: "The advent of the punishment has been mass transmitted (*mutawātir*) to us from the Prophet—may God's peace and blessings be upon him—so that to deny it is tantamount to accusing the Prophet of falsehood. As for the specious arguments (*shubah*) to which you have clung in your denial of the punishment, they are based on [the idea of the rational knowability] of good and evil (*mabniyya ʿalā al-ḥusn wa-l-qubḥ*), and we do not affirm this with respect to [the actions of] God. And God knows best."[37]

Al-Rāzī does not merely present this view but also subscribes to it himself. Thus, he writes in *Maṭālib* that rational knowledge of good and evil is possible within the sphere of creation, but not with respect to the actions of God.[38] It is therefore all the more surprising that he gives so much room to the view that eternal punishment cannot be reconciled with God's wisdom and justice. We can perhaps explain this by the fact that some Ashʿarīs— as the Māturīdī scholar Shaykhzādah (d. 944/1537) points out—attempted to support their position that God's actions do not necessarily flow from His wisdom precisely by arguing that eternal punishment in hell is real but at the same time devoid of wisdom.[39] Shaykhzādah himself counters this argument by asserting that our human inability to discern any wisdom behind eternal punishment in the hereafter does not entail that such wisdom does not exist.[40] Ibn Taymiyya also believes, as illustrated above with the example of Jahm, that the wisdom behind God's acts can be hidden from some or even all creatures. He therefore could have answered the objection here in a manner similar to Shaykhzādah. However, he maintains that there is no

---

37   Ibid., 1:58.

38   See al-Rāzī, *Maṭālib*, 3:289.

39   See ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī Shaykhzādah al-Ḥanafī, *Naẓm al-farāʾid wa-jamʿ al-fawāʾid fī bayān al-masāʾil allatī waqaʿa fīhā al-ikhtilāf bayna al-Māturīdiyya wa-l-Ashʿariyya fī al-ʿaqāʾid maʿa dhikr adillat al-farīqayn*, in *al-Masāʾil al-khilāfiyya bayna al-Māturīdiyya wa-l-Ashāʿira*, ed. Bassām al-Jābī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2003), 209.

40   See ibid.

wisdom in punishing someone for an unlimited time in hell, wherefore the punishment must be presumed to be of limited duration. In Ibn Taymiyya's words:

> It is not befitting that the evil and unjust souls [of people who have died]—who, were they to be brought back to this world [from the here-after] before receiving punishment, would return to forbidden things[41]—should remain in paradise, [for] this conflicts with [the souls' quality of] lying and [of] being unjust and evil. But if they are punished in the fire to the extent that they are purified from evil, the wisdom [behind this punishment] is rationally discernible. That is why there is punishment in this world [as well]. The wisdom behind creating someone in whom there is evil that is removed through punishment is [thus also] rationally discernible. However, the creation of souls that do evil in this world and the next and are [therefore] punished eternally is a contradiction in which the absence of wisdom and mercy is more clearly apparent than in any other matter.[42]

While Ibn Taymiyya also argues this view on the basis of scriptural evidence, it seems that he reads this evidence in light of his own conception and expectation of God's justice, without such evidence forming the actual starting point of his reasoning.

We find something similar when it comes to the second theological question, namely, the question of what will happen on the day of judgement to the children of non-Muslims who die before reaching adulthood. The Ashʿarī scholar Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), a contemporary of Ibn Taymiyya, lists four views on this question with the respective evidence supporting each position. The first view holds that these children will be admitted to paradise, the second that they will go to hell, the third that God's judgement concerning the matter is unknown, and the fourth that they will be subjected to a test on the day of judgement and will then go to paradise or to hell depending on the outcome.[43] Al-Subkī himself appears to be on the fence regarding which of the four opinions he favours and even declares at the end of the passage that he is reluctant to speak about such theological issues.[44] Al-Ashʿarī subscribed to the third

---

41   This is a reference to Q. 6:28.

42   *Fanāʾ*, 82–83.

43   See Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Fatāwā al-Subkī fī furūʿ al-fiqh al-Shāfiʿī*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Salām Shāhīn, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004), 2:328–332.

44   See ibid., 2:332.

(agnostic) position cited here and attributed it to the followers of the Sunna (*ahl al-sunna*) generally.[45] ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī remarks—perhaps with al-Ashʿarī in mind—that those who are cautiously reticent (*al-mutaḥarrijūn*) among *ahl al-sunna* refrained from taking a position on the issue because of the conflicting nature of the relvant narrations. He himself, however, appears to favour the fourth view (that of an otherworldly test),[46] as does Ibn Taymiyya.[47] In the context of the present study, it is of relevance that Ibn Taymiyya, in contrast to the Ashʿarīs, appeals to God's wisdom and justice to negate the view that God will punish those who have died in childhood with hellfire. As expounded above, God, according to the Ashʿarī view, would not be unjust even if He punished prophets and rewarded sinners. Ibn Taymiyya at one point remonstrates against the "*mujbira*,"[48] a term that, in the context of the debates over human free will, he wields against the Ashʿarīs, "who do not conceive of justice as a counterpart of possible injustice that He [however] does not commit. Rather, they say, 'Committing injustice is not possible [for God],' and they deem it admissible that children and others who have never committed a sin be punished."[49]

Both in this question and in the previously discussed question concerning the duration of punishment in hell, it is clear that Ibn Taymiyya's conception of divine justice has a substantial impact on the way he interprets the relevant statements of revelation. It is worth noting here that in Ibn Taymiyya's time and afterwards, the view prevailed that the eternity of hell was confirmed by *ijmāʿ*, particularly since the Quran also seems to indicate as much. This is one of the reasons why Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī considered Ibn Taymiyya's position tantamount to disbelief (*kufr*).[50] The fact that Ibn Taymiyya was most likely aware that his position would be perceived as scandalous and was yet unwilling to argue—in the manner, say, of the Māturīdī Shaykhzādah—for an unknowable yet nonetheless extant wisdom behind eternal punishment in the hellfire further underscores the findings of this section that we have identified above.

---

45   See al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt*, 1:296, lines 13–15.

46   See al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 261.

47   See *Fiṭra*, MF, 4:246–247.

48   Group name for those who hold that human beings have no free will.

49   *ʿĀdil*, JR, 1:125.

50   Al-Subkī, however, does not go so far as to wish to excommunicate Ibn Taymiyya from Islam for this reason. See Jon Hoover, "Islamic Universalism: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Salafī Deliberations on the Duration of Hell-Fire," *Muslim World* 99 (2009): 187.

2 *al-Kalām*: God's Speech

As Ibn Taymiyya informs us, there are a number of difficult, fine points of theology (*maqāmāt daqīqa mushkila*) that have split the Muslim community into various factions.[51] He certainly does not mean to relativise his own claim to truth by this observation; rather, he seeks to solicit leniency for the proponents of the views he considers false. Particularly with respect to the issue of the Quran (*masʾalat al-Qurʾān*), as he mentions a few pages earlier, not everyone who has committed an error, introduced an unlawful innovation, argued on the basis of ignorance, or followed an erroneous path is to be regarded as beyond the pale of Islam, indeed not even as a transgressor (*fāsiq*) or a sinner (*ʿāṣin*).[52] In fact, the question of the Quran—which garnered particular attention in Islamic theological works of the classical period in particular, probably on account primarily of the *miḥna* of Ibn Ḥanbal—led to bitter disputes among *ahl al-ḥadīth* as well. The most prominent victim in this was probably al-Bukhārī, as will be explained later. Ibn Taymiyya's plea for a magnanimous approach with respect to differing opinions must also be interpreted against the backdrop of these disputes.

The main goal of the current section is to elaborate how Ibn Taymiyya conceives of the divine attribute of speech[53] and to which of the theoretical foundations elaborated in part 3 he appeals in attempting to argue his position. It is striking that on this issue in particular, Ibn Taymiyya is much more concerned than usual to demonstrate that his views are in line with those of Ibn Ḥanbal. It will become clear through our analysis that Ibn Taymiyya interprets Ibn Ḥanbal's sparse and seemingly partially contradictory statements in a most creative manner in order to make them consistent with his own position. We also address in this context Wilferd Madelung's claim that Ibn Taymiyya's view that the Quran is uncreated but temporal in nature coincides with the view of the Salaf ("pious ancestors") but not with that of Ibn Ḥanbal, given that he considered the Quran to be eternal (*qadīm*).[54] While a considerable portion of Ibn Taymiyya's writings relevant to this section[55] also deal with the refuta-

---

51   *Miṣriyya I*, MF, 12:188–189.

52   *Miṣriyya I*, MF, 12:180.

53   This has previously been summarised in Laoust, *Essai*, 169–172 and Hoover, "Perpetual Creativity," 296–299.

54   See Wilferd Madelung, "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran," in *Orientalia Hispanica sive studia F.M. Pareja octogenario dictata*, ed. J.M. Barral, vol. I/1 (Leiden: Brill, 1974), reprinted as part 5, with original pagination, in Madelung, *Religious Schools and Sects*, 512–513 and 515.

55   Among the most important are *Tisʿīniyya*, *Azhariyya*, and vol. 12 of MF, esp. *Kalām Allāh*

tion of other views concerning God's speech, we address them here only to the extent that they are relevant to the objectives of the current section as laid out above. It is worthwhile, however, to outline the positions of the Muʿtazila and the Ashʿarīs,[56] as this will provide for greater contrast with Ibn Taymiyya's own views, which he often articulates against the backdrop of and in contradistinction to those positions.

Since from both the Muʿtazilī and the Ashʿarī perspectives (as presented in chapter 9) God is not a substrate for temporally originating events, both these theological schools concur that God's speaking cannot consist of a dynamically occurring act. The Muʿtazila were convinced of the temporality of speech and therefore also of its createdness. According to ʿAbd al-Jabbār, speech is

---

I, Aḥruf, Baʿlabakkiyya, Miṣriyya I, Miṣriyya II, Kalām Allāh II, Taḥqīq, and *Kaylāniyya,* as well as the following short treatises, located in the last one hundred pages of the volume: *Taklīm, Tilāwa, Qurʾān masmūʿ, Mutakallim, Muṣḥaf, Ḥurūf, Shakl, Kalām fī al-Qurʾān,* and *Ḥarf wa-ṣawt.*

56   There was also disagreement within these schools on questions of detail. It is sufficient for our current purpose to limit ourselves to the views of two prominent representatives of their respective schools, namely, ʿAbd al-Jabbār and al-Juwaynī. For a more elaborate account of the debate, see Daniel Gimaret, "Kalām," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 4, ed. C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1978). Other important studies include Madelung, "Origins"; Josef van Ess, "Lafẓ (2. In Theology)," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (Supplement); van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 3:446–520 (esp. on the *miḥna*), 4:179–227 and 4:625–630; van Ess, "Ibn Kullāb"; Griffel, "Rationalist Explanation," dealing with the view of the *falāsifa*; Hans Daiber, "The Quran as a 'Shibboleth' of Varying Conceptions of the Godhead: A 12th Century Ḥanbalite-Ashʿarite Discussion and Its Theological Sequel in the Protocol of Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī," in *Israel Oriental Studies: Concepts of the Other in Near Eastern Religions*, ed. Ilai Alon, Ithamar Grunewald, and Itamar Singer (Leiden: Brill, 1994); Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Maʾmūn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), chap. 4 (on Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal); Allard, *Attributs divins*, esp. 146–150 and 232–244; Peters, *God's Created Speech*, chap. 3; and Gimaret, *Doctrine*, 201–208 and 309–322. The third edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* now addresses the topic under its own entry; however, the corresponding article lags far behind the entries from the second edition cited above in terms of its informational content. See Richard Martin, "Createdness of the Qurʾān," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2015-3. A worthwhile discussion of the topic in Arabic can be found in al-Bukhārī, *Khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād*, 1:321–462 in the editor's introduction.

      Madelung rightly describes Ibn Taymiyya with respect to the dispute over speech as an attribute of God as "unusually well informed about the doctrinal issues in the early Muslim community" (Madelung, "Origins," 512–513), such that his (Ibn Taymiyya's) overview summaries of the various positions are also a useful source. These summaries can be found in *Kalām Allāh I, MF*, 12:14–36; *Aḥruf, MF*, 12:42–53; *Baʿlabakkiyya, MF*, 12:149–161; *Miṣriyya I, MF*, 12:162–185; *Taḥqīq, MF*, 12:308–322; and *Taklīm, MF*, 12:523–530.

"that in which a particular arrangement of these intelligible letters [of the alphabet] has come to be" (*mā ḥaṣala fīhi niẓām makhṣūṣ min hādhihi al-ḥurūf al-maʿqūla*),[57] with such an arrangement always consisting of discretely articulated sounds (*aṣwāt muqaṭṭaʿa*).[58] As an accident, speech requires a substrate (*maḥall*) in which to inhere.[59] In the case of divine speech, as stated above, this substrate cannot be God's essence; rather, God creates speech outside Himself. Thus, for example, when God spoke to Moses, it was a tree (*shajara*)[60] that served as the substrate of the divine discourse.[61] The Muʿtazila tried to sidestep the objection that the actual speaker (*mutakallim*) in this case would not be God but the tree (or whatever other respective substrate) by means of a creative definition of terms. To be a *mutakallim*, accordingly, does not mean that the speaker is a substrate for the accident of speech but rather that he performs (*faʿala*) the act of speech and instantiates (*aḥdatha*) it.[62] The Ashʿarīs, who subscribed to the doctrine of the uncreatedness of God's speech defended by Ibn Ḥanbal in the *miḥna*, took a different road. This, however, is where the agreement ends, for the intellectual forebear of the Ashʿarī position on God's attribute of speech was not a follower of *ahl al-ḥadīth* but the well-known *mutakallim* Abū Muḥammad b. Kullāb (d. 241/855).[63]

Al-Juwaynī explains concisely by way of a *reductio ad absurdum* why the Ashʿarīs objected to the view that God's speech is a phenomenon that occurs in time. If one were to posit that this speech is an accident occurring in time, then only one of the following could be true: either (1) it inheres in God's essence, (2) it inheres in a body outside of God, or (3) it is a self-standing, discrete entity that does not need a substrate. Al-Juwaynī rules out the third possibility on the grounds that accidents obviously do not constitute self-standing entities. He also rules out the second possibility since, in contrast to the Muʿtazila, he regards the speaker (*mutakallim*) not as the agent (*fāʿil*) of the speech but as the one in whom the speech inheres, so that on the assumption of the validity of this possibility, God Himself would not be the speaker. Finally, the first option

---

57 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 7:6.

58 Ibid., 7:7.

59 Ibid., 7:26–30.

60 ʿAbd al-Jabbār is referring here to Q. 28:30, where this word occurs. Included in the term is any plant that has a stem or a trunk. See Aḥmad b. Fāris, *Muʿjam maqāyīs al-lugha*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 6 vols. (n.p.: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), 3:246. Thus, it is not necessarily a tree that is meant.

61 ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*, 7:90.

62 Ibid., 7:48.

63 On Ibn Kullāb, see also pp. 75 and 84 above.

must also be rejected since otherwise God, insofar as He is the substrate of tem-
porally originated speech, would Himself necessarily be temporally originated
as well. Thus, according to al-Juwaynī, the premiss that speech is temporally
originated is refuted by the fact that every conceivable location of it based on
this presumption proves to be untenable. The only viable option, in his opin-
ion, is to view the divine speech as eternal, which allows for it to be located
unproblematically in God's essence.[64] In consequence, al-Juwaynī also rejects
the Muʿtazilī definition of speech given above, for if speech consisted of dis-
cretely articulated sounds originating in time—as the Muʿtazila claim—then,
on the assumption of its eternality, it would have to combine to form an infin-
ite series of individual sounds; this, however, is not possible as per the Ashʿarī
position. According to al-Juwaynī, those who adhere to the truth—and here he
naturally has in mind the Ashʿarīs—consider speech to be a phenomenon that
inheres in the soul, equivalent to thoughts that circulate in the mind (*al-fikr
alladhī yadūru fī al-khalad*).[65] The term *kalām nafsī* (inner speech) eventually
became the established term in Ashʿarī discourse to express this meaning. The
eternal speech inhering in God is a single unity in which, unlike with letters and
sounds, there is neither sequence nor arrangement.[66] Linguistic expressions
or other signs that are assigned meanings through convention do not them-
selves form part of speech, al-Juwaynī continues; rather, they simply indicate
this speech.[67] If these expressions be referred to as speech, then this is meant
figuratively, according to one view held by the Ashʿarīs, and homonymously
in al-Juwaynī's personal view.[68] God can make His speech audible either dir-
ectly, as in the case of His conversation with Moses, or through an intermedi-
ary.[69] The meaning that is understood (*mafhūm*) in this process constitutes the
eternal speech of God. In contrast, the letters that indicate this eternal speech
either as sounds or in written form belong to the created world and are thus
temporal.[70]

   Ibn Taymiyya regards both the Muʿtazilī and the Ashʿarī positions as devi-
ations, with one of them closer to the position of *ahl al-sunna* in some respects

---

64   See Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī, *Lumaʿ al-adilla fī qawāʿid iʿtiqād ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa*, ed.
      Fawqiyya Ḥusayn Maḥmūd, 2nd ed. (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1987), 102–103. Consequently,
      God's attribute of speech is not an accident either, for according to the Ashʿarīs, God con-
      sists of neither substance nor accidents. See p. 86 above.
65   See al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 105.
66   See al-Juwaynī, *Lumaʿ*, 105.
67   See al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 105, as well as al-Juwaynī, *Lumaʿ*, 103–104.
68   See al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 108.
69   See ibid., 134.
70   See ibid., 132.

and the other closer to it in other respects.[71] Thus, the Muʿtazila are correct in their assumption that letters and sounds fall under the concept of speech. Ibn Taymiyya welcomes the fact that, unlike the Ashʿarīs, the Muʿtazila, first, tie God's speaking to His will; second, acknowledge the verses of the Quran transmitted to the Prophet from the angel Gabriel as the speech of God in a real sense; and, third, escape the problem of having to explain how God's indivisible, eternal speech can refer to various different meanings.[72] On the other hand, the Ashʿarīs are correct to assume that only someone in whom the attribute of speech inheres can be qualified as speaking, just as a person may be qualified as knowing, powerful, or living only if the corresponding attributes are present in him.[73] If, now, both views on speech are taken together, we come to what Ibn Taymiyya maintains is known by all peoples of the world, namely, that speech consists of letters and sounds as well as meaning, similar to how a human being is composed of both body and soul.[74] Like the Ashʿarīs, Ibn Taymiyya considers the divine speech to be uncreated (*ghayr makhlūq*); in contrast to them, however, he describes God's speech as temporal (*muḥdath*) and therefore not eternal (*qadīm*). In doing so, he goes against the core Ashʿarī premiss that there is a logical connection between temporality and createdness. This connection, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, was denied by many of the Muʿtazila, such as Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf. Furthermore, it does not derive from the linguistic convention (*iṣṭilāḥ*) of *ahl al-ḥadīth* or the language of the Quran (*lughat al-Qurʾān*).[75] The idea that uncreatedness implies eternality also seems to have taken root among the authors of some contemporary academic studies, who, based on the fact that Ibn Taymiyya regarded the Quran as uncreated, hastily conclude that he must have characterised it as being eternal as well.[76]

Ibn Taymiyya next cites several Quranic verses, prophetic hadith, and statements of the Companions that, in his view, support the notion that God possesses a voice.[77] In his work *Kalām fī al-Qurʾān*, moreover, he references a hadith in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* that likewise attributes a voice to God.[78] He fur-

---

71   *Tisʿīniyya*, 3:961–962.
72   *Tisʿīniyya*, 3:962 and 963.
73   *Tisʿīniyya*, 3:962.
74   *Tisʿīniyya*, 3:967.
75   *Tisʿīniyya*, 2:427–428.
76   See Haque, "Ibn Taimīyyah," 803; Abdallah, "Ibn Taymiyyah's Theological Approach," 60; and Travis Zadeh, "'Fire Cannot Harm It': Meditation, Temptation and the Charismatic Power of the Qurʾan," *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 10, no. 2 (2008): 62–63.
77   *Tisʿīniyya*, 2:429.
78   See *Kalām fī al-Qurʾān*, MF, 12:580, as well as the chapter heading in al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1513 (bāb #32).

ther cites the following passage from al-Bukhārī, which consists of a chapter heading followed by commentary:

> Chapter on that which has been transmitted concerning the creation (*takhlīq*) of the heavens and the earth as well as other creatures: It [i.e., creation] is an action and a command (*amr*) of the Lord, blessed and sublime is He. The Lord is, along with His attributes, His actions, His command, and His speech, uncreated (*ghayr makhlūq*); [He is] the Creator and the one who confers existence (*mukawwin*). And that which results from His action, His command, His creative activity, and His [act of] conferring existence is made (*mafʿūl*), created (*makhlūq*), and was brought into existence (*mukawwan*).[79]

Ibn Taymiyya seems to take it for granted that al-Bukhārī—given that he, on the one hand, posits the uncreatedness of divine speech yet, on the other hand, understands God as speaking with a voice that can be heard by people at a specific moment—must have also held the position that God's speech is temporally originated. While this assumption is plausible, Ibn Taymiyya does not provide compelling evidence for it.[80] From Ibn Taymiyya's point of view—and he considers himself here to be in agreement with *ahl al-ḥadīth*—God's speech is eternal only in the sense that He has always possessed the attribute of speaking. Concrete acts of divine speech, such as God's dialogue with Moses, occur in time—precisely at the moment when, for instance, God willed to speak to Moses. These speech acts are considered uncreated because their existence originates in the attribute of speech and is therefore not a product of God's act of *creating*.

Through the *argumentum a fortiori* (*qiyās awlā*), Ibn Taymiyya attempts to substantiate the view that an entity that speaks dynamically in time is more perfect than one that—as per the Ashʿarī view—is endowed with an eternal, essential speech. In his words:

> One who speaks by virtue of his will and power is more perfect than one for whom speech is a necessary concomitant [of his essence] (*lāzim lahu*). Similarly, one who has had the ability to speak from all eternity whenever

---

79   Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:1507 (bāb #27). Ibn Taymiyya cites this in *Tisʿīniyya*, 2:429.

80   We treat the stance of *ahl al-ḥadīth* on the question whether God's speech is eternal below.

he wills is more perfect than one who came to have the ability to speak after speech had not been possible for him.[81]

With this last assertion, Ibn Taymiyya opposes the view propounded by the Ashʿarīs that God, though eternal, cannot have been speaking indefinitely since past eternity and that He must, therefore, have begun at some point to create sounds and letters that indicate His eternal speech. This is so, according to the Ashʿarīs, because if there were no beginning to this process, then God's individual acts of speech would have to be infinite in number, which would violate the Ashʿarī premise of the impossibility of an infinite regress. Ibn Taymiyya, by contrast, considers the number of divine speech acts—and thus the number of words spoken by God—indeed to be unlimited. As evidence, he cites Q. 18:109, which reads: "Say: Even if the ocean were ink for the words of my Lord, the ocean would run dry before the words of my Lord ran dry, even if We were to bring forth a like amount of ink."[82] But does it follow from the premise that God has been speaking since all eternity that individual letters and sounds are eternal? Ibn Taymiyya denies this emphatically and attempts to support this view with appeal to his conceptualist ontology. In his words:

> If it be said, "He [i.e., God] calls out with sounds and speaks with sounds," this does not entail the eternity of any particular sound (*ṣawt muʿayyan*). Thus, given that He has articulated in spoken words (*takallama bi*) [the substantive content of] the Torah, the Quran, and the Gospel, it is possible for Him to utter [the letter] *bāʾ* before *sīn*.[83] For even if the letters *bāʾ* and *sīn* as universals are eternal, it does not follow that a particular *bāʾ* or *sīn* is eternal. This is based on what is known concerning the distinction between universals and particulars—a distinction that exists with respect to [the divine attributes of] will, speaking, hearing, seeing, and other such attributes. The difficulties regarding the unity and multiplicity of these attributes and their eternality or temporality are thus resolved. Similarly, the difficulties that have arisen concerning God's actions, their eternality or temporality, and the origination of the world (*ḥudūth al-ʿālam*) are likewise resolved.

---

81   *Baʿlabakkiyya*, MF, 12:158. Ibn Taymiyya also cites *qiyās awlā* in other works. See, e.g., *Tisʿīniyya*, 2:506 and *Aḥruf*, MF, 12:52.

82   *Aḥruf*, MF, 12:38.

83   Whenever letters are cited by way of example in the debates on the speech of God, *bāʾ* and *sīn* are usually chosen because they appear at the beginning of the *basmala*, with which the Quran begins.

And if it be said, "The letters of the alphabet are eternal"—where what is meant is the universal—then this is possible. This is in contrast to someone saying, "The particular utterance of Zayd and ʿAmr is eternal," which would amount to an obstinate denial of sense experience. On the other hand, a speaker knows that the letters of the alphabet existed before him as universals. But as for a particular sound, in which a particular division and arrangement occur [when producing the sound], he [i.e., the speaker] knows that this [particular sound] itself did not exist before him. The narrations that go back to Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal] and other leading scholars of the Sunna are consistent with this view, as they objected to anyone who held that the letters of the alphabet are created.[84]

Another question that has been a point of controversy in Islamic intellectual history concerns the relationship between the Quran as the speech of God, on the one hand, and the Quran in written form (*muṣḥaf*) and as recited by human beings, on the other. Henri Laoust holds that this subject caused Ibn Taymiyya considerable trouble and that his indecisiveness with respect to it is reflected in his unclear treatment of it.[85] To my knowledge, Ibn Taymiyya did not address this question anywhere in a cohesive manner, but taking into account all his relevant writings, we may affirm without a doubt that he did, in fact, have a clear position on it.[86] In his discussion of the topic, he refers to the four-stage model of being discussed in chapter 4, section 1. As noted there, Frank has pointed out that al-Ghazālī also made use of this model to buttress the Ashʿarī understanding of God's attribute of speech. According to the four-stage model, speech is an entity existing in the external world to which the *muṣḥaf* and human recitation of the Quran merely refer. To illustrate the point by way of an example, the relationship between God's speech, on the one hand, and the written or recited Quran, on the other, is like the relationship of the real Mount Sinai to the written or orally recited word "Sinai" in the Quran.[87] Ibn Taymiyya disagrees emphatically with this view. According to him, this comparison holds only when reference is being made to the speech of God, as in Q. 26:196, which reads: "Verily, it [i.e., the Quran] is in the scriptures of those of old." What is meant by this, Ibn Taymiyya explains, is that the revelation of the Quran was foretold in these scriptures,

---

84   *Baʿlabakkiyya*, MF, 12:158–159.

85   See Laoust, *Essai*, 172.

86   Laoust's judgement may also be due to the fact that many of Ibn Taymiyya's texts were not available to him in 1939.

87   Sinai is mentioned in Q. 95:2.

not that the wording or substantive content of the Quran was to be found therein. This is to be distinguished from the statement that the Quran exists in a well-preserved book (*kitāb maknūn*) in written form.[88] "For," he writes, "the Quran is speech, and speech belongs to the third stage [in the model of being]. Between it [i.e., speech] and the pages [on which it is written] there is no intermediate stage. Rather, it is the speech itself (*nafs al-kalām*), only in written form."[89] What is true for the written form, that is, the *muṣḥaf*, is equally true for what is recited orally of the Quran: in both cases, it is the speech of God itself (*nafs kalām Allāh*).[90] This also holds for non-divine speech, according to Ibn Taymiyya, such as when one reads a prophetic hadith aloud or recites the verses of a poem. Ibn Taymiyya elaborates his stance as follows:

> No instance of speech has a like that is similar to it in every respect such that the latter would resemble it [completely]. Rather, it is something intelligible in its own right (*amr maʿqūl bi-nafsihi*). Thus, in the case of the created speech of Zayd—and even if, for instance, Zayd no longer existed and the attribute [of speech] that inhered in him was also no more—if it is transmitted by a narrator and we say, "This is the speech of Zayd," we are simply referring to the reality (*ḥaqīqa*) that originated with Zayd and by which he is qualified. This [reality] [i.e., the one that originated with Zayd] and that one [i.e., that which was transmitted by the narrator] are one and the same (*hādhihi hiya tilka bi-ʿaynihā*)—by this I mean the reality of the form (*ḥaqīqa ṣūriyya*), not that of the matter (*mādda*). The reason for this is that absolute sound (*al-ṣawt al-muṭlaq*) stands in the same relation to discretely articulated verbalised letters (*ḥurūf ṣawtiyya muqaṭṭaʿa*) as matter stands to form. It [i.e., the speech] is the speech of him who first articulated it [in this case Zayd], not on account of absolute sound—which is common to humans, the [from a human perspective] inarticulate beasts (*al-bahāʾim al-ʿujm*), and inanimate matter—but on account of the form that Zayd has put together (*allafa*) and the meanings he has assigned to it (*maʿa taʾlīfihi li-maʿānīhā*).
>
> The presence of the form in the two instances of matter is not like the presence of universals (*anwāʿ*) and particulars (*ashkhāṣ*) in individual things, nor like the presence of accidents in substances; nor is it like all

---

88 Ibn Taymiyya is referring here to Q. 56:77–78. See *Kaylāniyya*, MF, 12:384 and 385–386.
89 *Kaylāniyya*, MF, 12:385.
90 *Kaylāniyya*, MF, 12:384.

other forms in their material components that are constitutive of substance (*mawāddihā al-jawhariyya*). Rather, it [i.e., the discrete instance of speech] is an independently existing reality, and not every [such] reality has a like that is similar to it in every respect.[91]

Since this passage is not so easy to understand, it is worthwhile to restate the gist of it in other terms. Ibn Taymiyya holds that a speaker engaged in a speech act arranges letters, intending thereby a particular meaning. He refers to the result of this process as the reality of the form, which is concomitant to the reality of the matter—the latter referring, in turn, to the articulated sounds of the speaker. The reality of the form can be reproduced by someone other than the speaker, in which case not the speech but only its reproduction may be ascribed to the person reproducing it. Yet it is the speech itself that is being reproduced and not something that merely resembles it. Thus, the presence of the speech in the speech act of the speaker and in the speech acts of others who reproduce it is not to be conceived of in a manner similar to, for example, the presence of humanity in different human beings. This is because the humanity present varies from person to person and can only be subsumed under the generic concept of humanity on account of individual humans' similarities to one another.[92] With speech, however, it is one and the same speech in each case. If this same speech is produced on the occasion of two (or more) speech acts, then—as Ibn Taymiyya explains elsewhere—this would only count as a case of different particulars subsumed under a single universal if neither of the speakers intended to reproduce the speech of the other. Ibn Taymiyya illustrates this with the following example: Were someone to come up with a line of poetry without knowing that it had already been devised with precisely the same form and meaning by, say, the poet Labīd, then we would have to ascribe to both him and Labīd a speech belonging specifically to each one of them.[93]

The fact that the written or orally recited Quran is the uncreated speech of God does not in any way mean, for Ibn Taymiyya, that the *muṣḥaf* or the recitation of the Quran is likewise uncreated. On the contrary, the pages and the ink of the *muṣḥaf*, in his view, as well as the movements of the Quran reciter and the sounds and letters produced thereby, are all very much created. Yet when the Quran is recited, it is the divine speech itself that is heard, albeit medi-

---

91   *Kaylāniyya*, MF, 12:414–415.

92   This example is given by Ibn Taymiyya himself. See *Aḥruf*, MF, 12:75, as well as *Tilāwa*, MF, 12:547.

93   *Ḥurūf*, MF, 12:574.

ated through the Quran reciter rather than directly[94] as when God spoke, for instance, to Moses. Ibn Taymiyya elaborates on this point in another passage, where he says:

> Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal] has stated unequivocally that the speech of human beings is created. In their speech, they simply use the same words and letters whose analogue (naẓīr) is found in the speech of God Most High. But God, may He be exalted, expressed these through a voice and through letters belonging to Him that are uncreated. These attributes of God are unlike those of men, for there is nothing that is like unto God[95] with respect to His essence, His attributes, or His acts. The voice with which He will call people on the day of judgement and the voice that Moses heard is unlike the voices of created entities.[96]

Ibn Taymiyya expresses this idea in similar terms in another place, where he also reproduces the first rule for the interpretation of the divine attributes that he had elaborated in *Tadmuriyya*.[97] According to this rule, if it is unobjectionable to ascribe to God, for instance, knowledge, power, and life that are unlike those of created beings, then it is equally unobjectionable to ascribe to Him meaningful speech, a voice, and letters that are unlike those of created beings.[98]

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Ibn Taymiyya took pains to show that his position was consonant with that of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. He frequently cites the following statement, which he attributes explicitly to Aḥmad, but also to other unnamed scholars: "Whoever says, 'My articulation (lafẓ) of the Quran is created,' is a Jahmī. And whoever says, 'My articulation of the Quran is uncreated,' is among those who introduce unlawful innovations into the religion (mubtadiʿ)."[99] Aḥmad's son reports this sentiment of his father, at least in substance if not in these precise terms.[100] His contemporary Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889) cites this statement with almost the same words but considers it contradictory and concludes that Aḥmad could not have uttered something so absurd.[101] As Ibn Taymiyya informs us, figures such as al-Ashʿarī,

---

94   *Aḥruf*, MF, 12:98.
95   Ibn Taymiyya adopts this wording from Q. 42:11.
96   *Aḥruf*, MF, 12:64–65.
97   See here chapter 6, section 3.
98   *Tisʿīniyya*, 2:541–542.
99   See, e.g., *Aḥruf*, MF, 12:74.
100   Ibn Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, 1:165–166.
101   Abū Muḥammad b. Qutayba, *al-Ikhtilāf fī al-lafẓ wa-l-radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa-l-mushab-biha*, annot. ʿUmar b. Maḥmūd Abū ʿUmar (Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1991), 59–60.

al-Bāqillānī, Abū Yaʿlā, and later scholars like al-Zāghūnī regarded the statement as authentically traceable to Aḥmad. However, he maintains, they understood it incorrectly, for they thought that Aḥmad meant only to object to the use of the specific word *lafẓ* with respect to the Quran since it literally means "to fling" (*ṭarḥ*) or "to throw" (*ramy*)[102] and is therefore inappropriate as a term for describing the recitation of the Quran.[103] Ibn Taymiyya propounds a completely different interpretation of the statement attributed to Aḥmad, though I do not know whether he is the one who originated it. In any case, it impressively illustrates how Ibn Taymiyya, through a skilful handling of the mostly terse statements of scholars from the first three generations of Muslims, attempts to turn these into precursors of his generally complex and elaborate theological positions. Thus, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, it is the ambiguity of the term *lafẓ* that accounts for why Aḥmad expressed himself as he did in the statement cited above, for what is meant by the word *lafẓ*, according to Ibn Taymiyya, is either the act of articulating or that which is articulated. The act of articulating is a human act, which is created, while that which is articulated is the Quran, which is uncreated. Thus, an undifferentiated answer regarding the question whether the *lafẓ* of the Quran produced by a human being is created or not is illegitimate on account of the ambiguity described here.[104]

In my view, however, it is more likely the case that Aḥmad's statement is an expression of his well-known distaste for speaking about theological issues that are not addressed explicitly in the source texts.[105] Questions that go beyond the texts, on the other hand, such as whether a person's *lafẓ* of the Quran is created, are not ones that were raised by Aḥmad himself but by the speculative theologians whom he criticised so sharply.

Now, it is true that some among *ahl al-ḥadīth* did hold that one's *lafẓ* of the Quran was fundamentally uncreated, firmly believing that Aḥmad had also held this view. One of these was Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Dhuhlī (d. 258/873),

---

102   The term *lafẓ* refers to the articulation of words insofar as these are "flung" or "thrown" from the mouth of the speaker.

103   *Miṣriyya I*, MF, 12:209; also *Kaylāniyya*, MF, 12:362. Without going into Aḥmad's position, al-Ashʿarī treats of this in the manner presented here in al-Ashʿarī, *Ibāna*, 101.

104   Ibn Taymiyya elaborates on these ideas in several works. See, e.g., *Miṣriyya I*, MF, 12:210; *Taḥqīq*, MF, 12:306–307; and *Kaylāniyya*, MF, 12:373–374. The same argument referring to the ambiguity of the term *lafẓ* (or *lafẓ* and *qirāʾa*) can be found in Ibn Qutayba. As stated above, however, Ibn Qutayba, unlike Ibn Taymiyya, did not thereby resolve Aḥmad's seemingly contradictory statement quoted above. See Ibn Qutayba, *Ikhtilāf fī al-lafẓ*, 63–65.

105   On this, see, e.g., Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography*, 121.

who had fallen out with al-Bukhārī over this very issue and subsequently had him expelled from Nishapur.[106] Ibn Taymiyya acknowledges al-Dhuhlī's high rank but clearly takes sides with al-Bukhārī.[107] In a number of passages, he reports a conversation between Aḥmad and his student Abū Ṭālib[108] in which Aḥmad reproached the latter for asserting that one's *lafẓ* of the Quran is not created.[109] Ibn Taymiyya describes al-Bukhārī as a victim of some Ḥanbalīs from Khurasan who, as he writes, had less knowledge about Aḥmad's positions than their fellow Ḥanbalīs in Iraq.[110] In addition, he references a passage in al-Bukhārī's *Khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād* in which al-Bukhārī states that Aḥmad's complex views on this issue were most likely not well understood.[111] Finally, Ibn Taymiyya states in another work:

> I read the following on the back of the book *Kitāb al-ʿUdda*, written in the hand of al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā: "I have quoted from the last part of al-Bukhārī's *Kitāb al-Risāla* [words to the effect] that recitation (*qirāʾa*) is not the same as that which is recited (*maqrūʾ*).[112] He also said:[113] 'I have twenty-two narrations said to go back to Aḥmad, but they are all mutually contradictory. What is correct, in my view, is that no scholar has ever claimed that one's *lafẓ* of the Quran is uncreated.' In addition, he said, 'The followers of Aḥmad have split into around fifty factions.'"[114]

Ibn Taymiyya's remarks must be understood as his wishing to present his own position on the uncreatedness of the Quran as that which had also previously

---

106   As Jonathan Brown explains, there were other reasons for al-Dhuhlī's aversion to al-Bukhārī, thus making the issue of *lafẓ* more of a pretext he used to demand al-Bukhārī's expulsion. See Brown, *Canonization*, 66–67.

107   *Miṣriyya I*, MF, 12:207–208.

108   Laoust and, following him, Gimaret identify this person as Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (see Laoust, *Essai*, 172, n. 2 and Gimaret, "Kalām," 470a), who, however, died in the year 386/996 and was thus not a contemporary of Aḥmad. The person actually involved is Aḥmad b. Ḥamīd Abū Ṭālib al-Mishkānī (d. 244/858-9), on whom see Ibn Abī Yaʿlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, 1:39–40.

109   See, e.g., *Miṣriyya I*, MF, 12:168 and *Kaylāniyya*, MF, 12:350–351.

110   *Miṣriyya I*, MF, 12:208.

111   *Miṣriyya I*, MF, 12:168. The original passage can be found in al-Bukhārī, *Khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād*, 2:119, #228.

112   This is the same discussion as the one concerning the *lafẓ*.

113   It is unclear whether Ibn Taymiyya is the one saying these words, such that the pronoun "he" refers to Abū Yaʿlā, or Abū Yaʿlā is the speaker with the pronoun referring to al-Bukhārī. Given the context, I consider the latter more plausible (and have punctuated the passage accordingly).

114   *Kaylāniyya*, MF, 12:366.

been held by Aḥmad. In no other issue is this concern so clear, something that may have to do with the fact that from a Ḥanbalī perspective, it is particularly important that one's own position be consistent, even in points of detail, with that of the founder of the school concerning the question of God's attribute of speech that was so central to the *miḥna*. But Ibn Taymiyya must now explain why even loyal followers of Aḥmad understood him in such a different manner, and it is for this reason, as shown, that he appeals to their lack of knowledge, the complexity of Aḥmad's views, and the recalcitrant nature of the source materials.

As mentioned at the beginning of the current section, Wilferd Madelung has argued that Ibn Taymiyya's view of God's speech as uncreated but not eternal agrees with that of the Salaf but not with that of Aḥmad—based, among other things, on a letter of Aḥmad's to the caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–247/847–861). Madelung cites Aḥmad in the letter as having described the Quran as a part of God's uncreated knowledge; thus, according to Madelung, one should take it for granted that the Quran itself must be uncreated as well.[115] Madelung's assertion, however, seems plausible to me only if one supposes that Aḥmad considered the divine speech to consist solely of the meaning and not also of the letters and sounds, for we may well rule out that Aḥmad considered these (i.e., the letters and sounds) to be a part of divine knowledge. Interestingly, Ibn Taymiyya commented on this issue, attributing the view that Madelung seems to hold here to Ibn Ḥazm, among others. Ibn Taymiyya writes:

> One group, including Ibn Ḥazm, interpreted Aḥmad's statements to mean that he understood the *lafẓ* of the Quran to consist solely of the meaning and that he regarded the meaning as belonging ultimately to God's knowledge. On this interpretation, it [i.e., the Quran] is of the knowledge of God and he [i.e., Aḥmad] did not mean by the word "Quran" both the letters and the meaning. However, Aḥmad's alleged assertion that God does not speak with letters goes against the evidence of clear texts that have been transmitted from him. What one may assert [accurately] is that the Quran, which is eternal and not connected to His will, represents the meaning that God has referred to as knowledge. It [i.e., the Quran] is that which one who considers it temporal has placed himself outside the fold of Islam.[116]

---

115   Madelung, "Origins," 515.
116   *Tisʿīniyya*, 2:587–588.

If it is true that God, according to Aḥmad, speaks with sounds and letters, then Madelung's argument falls short, as I have stated, since it has only the meaning of God's speech in view. But even then, Aḥmad's precise stance remains unclear, unlike how Ibn Taymiyya would like to present it, for Aḥmad may well have considered the sounds and letters to be eternal, as was held by many scholars in the Ḥanbalī tradition in contrast to Ibn Taymiyya. Jon Hoover thus surmises that "on the verbal level, Ibn Taymiyya is faithful to the traditional Ḥanbalī doctrine of the Qurʾān's uncreatedness and he claims that his position is that of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. But his introduction of temporal sequence into the speech act of God may be novel in Ḥanbalism."[117] There are indications, however, that at least some Ḥanbalīs before Ibn Taymiyya subscribed to the view that the Quran was both uncreated and temporal and therefore not *qadīm*. The Māturīdī Abū al-Yusr Muḥammad al-Bazdawī (d. 493/1099) a little more than two centuries before Ibn Taymiyya, for instance, voiced his displeasure precisely over the view just mentioned, attributing it explicitly to the Karrāmiyya[118] and the Ḥanbalīs.[119] However, a systematic investigation of the history of Ḥanbalī thought on this issue is needed to determine with certainty whether anyone—and, if so, who—held Ibn Taymiyya's position in the Ḥanbalī school prior to him.[120]

3   *al-Istiwāʾ*: God's Rising over His Throne

The question of how to understand the Quranic statement that God has risen over (*istawā*)[121] His throne is one that Ibn Taymiyya not only addresses in various passages within larger works but one to which he also dedicates a number of short, independent tracts, several of which were written on request.[122] Ibn

---

117   Hoover, "Ḥanbalī Theology," 639–640.

118   On whom see p. 88, n. 294 above.

119   See Abū al-Yusr Muḥammad al-Bazdawī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Hans Peter Linss (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya lil-Turāth, 2003; first published 1963), 65. The gist of this passage is reproduced in Brodersen, *Der unbekannte* kalām, 325.

120   Yasir Qadhi considers the traditionalist scholar Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/924)—who, however, was not a Ḥanbalī—to be a predecessor of Ibn Taymiyya in this question. See Qadhi, "Salafī–Ashʿarī Polemics," 443–444.

121   This statement occurs in seven passages. See Q. 7:54, 10:3, 13:2, 20:5, 25:59, 32:4, and 57:4.

122   On this, see esp. vol. 1 of *Bayān* and the index by the editor in *MF*, 36:102–105 under the key words *ʿuluww* (God's attribute of being on high) and *istiwāʾ*. Most of the references there refer to the fifth and sixth volumes of *MF*, in which the short tracts just mentioned are also located. Additional short writings are included in the collected work *JM*; see *JM*, 1:61–64, 3:183–192, 3:193–209, 7:335–343, and 7:347–353.

Taymiyya's zeal on this score is not surprising given that the issue, like the question of the attribute of speech, had by his time long since acquired a symbolic character; indeed, the larger dispute between *ahl al-ḥadīth* and the speculative theologians over the correct approach to interpreting the descriptions of God in the sources was often fought out with specific reference to these two attributes.[123] According to a student of Ibn Taymiyya, Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. ʿAlī al-Bazzār (d. 749/1349), Ibn Taymiyya even wrote around thirty-five quires (sing. *kurrāsa*) just on the verse "The All-Merciful has risen over the throne (*al-ʿarsh*),"[124] which probably corresponds to about either 560 or 840 manuscript pages.[125] However, the fact that Ibn Taymiyya treated the topic so extensively does not mean that he expounded in detail on the meaning of God's attribute of rising (*istiwāʾ*).

---

123 Numerous works were dedicated to the attribute of *istiwāʾ*. They can usually be recognised by their titles as they often contain words like *istiwāʾ*, *ʿuluww*, or *ʿarsh* (throne). We mention three such works here by way of example, all of which come from the first half of the eighth/fourteenth century: (1) Ibn Taymiyya's *Irbiliyya* (see index of Ibn Taymiyya's works at the back of this work for full title), (2) *al-Risāla al-ʿArshiyya*, by Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, and (3) Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī's *al-Kalām ʿalā masʾalat al-istiwāʾ ʿalā al-ʿarsh*.

124 See al-Bazzār, *Aʿlām*, 24. The verse cited here is Q. 20:5. It is impossible to translate this verse free of any theological presuppositions that do not derive from the text. Following are three other translations by German scholars that illustrate this problem. Rudi Paret translates the verse in a way that would probably be interpreted in *kalām* as inadmissible anthropomorphism: "The Merciful has settled Himself on the throne (in order to govern the world)" (Der Barmherzige hat sich auf den Thron zurechtgesetzt [um die Welt zu regieren]). Frank Bubenheim and Nadeem Elyas, in a German translation issued by the Saudi Ministry of Religious Affairs, render the verse in the following manner: "The All-Merciful is exalted above the throne" (Der Allerbarmer ist über dem Thron erhaben). A footnote refers the reader to the appendix, in which this verse is explained with reference to scholars from *ahl al-ḥadīth* according to the method of *bi-lā kayfa*. See Frank Bubenheim and Nadeem Elyas, *Der edle Qurʾān und die Übersetzung seiner Bedeutungen in die deutsche Sprache* (Medina: King Fahd Complex, 1422/[2001-2]), 611. (Interestingly, this is by far the longest entry in the index.) Finally, according to the translation and explanation of Amir Zaidan, which are fully in line with late Ashʿarī theology (on which see the main text with nn. 126 and 127 below), the verse means that God rules completely over the *ʿarsh*—a term Zaidan leaves untranslated. The appendix of the volume then addresses the linguistic meaning of the word *ʿarsh*, merely stating in negative terms what this word, when used in reference to God, does *not* mean. Thus, "Muslims do not understand [thereby] […] anything material (a throne or similar) on which ALLAH (taʿala) sits, for ALLAH (taʿala) is exalted above being dependent on place or time and His attributes are not comparable to those of human beings." Amir Zaidan, *at-Tafsir: Eine philologisch, islamologisch fundierte Erläuterung des Quran-Textes* (Offenbach: Adib, 2000), 409. (The words in round brackets are from Zaidan.)

125 A quire typically consists of four (or six) bifolios, which, in turn, are made up of eight (or twelve) leaves, resulting in sixteen (or twenty-four) pages. See Adam Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 213.

On the contrary, in his statements on the issue, he displays the unwillingness typical of *ahl al-ḥadīth*, when it comes to describing the attributes of God, to go beyond the content of transmitted reports regarded as authoritative. The extent of his expositions relevant to this section can thus be explained by the high degree of redundancy that characterises them, as well as by the fact that they are primarily aimed at invalidating the positions he considers erroneous on this contentious issue—particularly that of the Ashʿarīs. Nevertheless, he largely limits his critique of the Ashʿarīs to the figure of al-Juwaynī and scholars who came after him (such as al-Ghazālī and, particularly, al-Rāzī) who, in contrast to al-Ashʿarī himself, had explicitly advocated interpreting the divine attribute of *istiwāʾ* via the hermeneutical instrument of *taʾwīl majāzī* as *istīlāʾ* (ruling, overpowering) or similar.[126] Yet al-Ashʿarī, as previously stated, firmly rejected such an interpretation of this attribute,[127] and his predecessor Ibn Kullāb, likewise a speculative theologian, had possibly even held that God was in contact with the throne over which He had risen.[128] This idea, however, which can also be found in Ibn Taymiyya,[129] was considered completely unacceptable by the speculative theologians, at least of later times.[130]

Following these introductory considerations, we now turn our attention to the objective of the current section, which is to delineate Ibn Taymiyya's views regarding the attribute of *istiwāʾ*. In doing so, we focus primarily on the question of the extent to which Ibn Taymiyya's arguments are consistent with his methodology described in part 2 of this study.

According to Ibn Taymiyya, *istiwāʾ* is an attribute of action (pl. *ṣifāt al-afʿāl*), namely, one that God can either perform or refrain from performing as a function of His will and power. For this reason, *istiwāʾ* is one of the attributes that can only be known on the basis of scriptural evidence. The attributes of action are to be distinguished from those attributes whose existence does not depend

---

126   See al-Juwaynī, *Irshād*, 40 (interpretation of *istiwāʾ* as *qahr* [subjugation] and *ghalaba* [overpowering]); al-Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, 51 ff., esp. 55–56 (figurative interpretation as a method for the scholars [*ʿulamāʾ*] but not for the masses [*ʿawāmm*]); and al-Rāzī, *Asās al-taqdīs*, 9.

127   Thus, he writes: "His rising (*istiwāʾ*) over the throne may by no means be interpreted as domination or ruling (*istīlāʾ*), as argued by the advocates of *qadar* [i.e., the Muʿtazila], for the All-Powerful and Exalted has been ruling all things since all eternity." Al-Ashʿarī, *Thaghr*, 233–234.

128   See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 4:192 (with n. 75).

129   For more on which, see below.

130   More than a hundred years before Ibn Taymiyya, the Ḥanbalī Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) attempted to argue against this presumption, which was widespread among his Ḥanbalī peers. See van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 4:408–409.

on God's will but that belong of necessity to His essence. These are referred to as attributes of essence (*ṣifāt al-dhāt*) and include, for instance, the fact that God is above creation (*ʿuluww*) and that He possesses immense greatness (*ʿaẓama*) and power (*qudra*).[131]

As a consequence of the foregoing, Ibn Taymiyya posits that there was a time in which God did not possess the attribute of *istiwāʾ*, for the action of *istiwāʾ* ensued only after the creation of the heavens and the earth and relates exclusively to the throne.[132] Before bringing together Ibn Taymiyya's sparse statements on the question of how we are to understand the attribute of *istiwāʾ*, we first present what this attribute can in no wise mean for him, namely—and he repeats this in numerous works—that God has risen over His throne in the same way that created entities such as kings do. Not only is this conception of a comparable modality wrong, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, but it is also the reason why it was ever considered necessary to reinterpret the divine attributes in the first place. In his words:

> As for the origin of the misguidance [that has led to the nullification of the attributes], it is the belief that the attributes of God are like the attributes of creatures, such that God is on His throne just as a king sits on his seat, [but] this is anthropomorphism (*tamthīl*) and erroneous belief. This is so because a king is in need of his seat and were it no longer there, he would fall. But God is not dependent on the throne or on any other thing; [rather,] the throne and everything else other than He are dependent on Him. He upholds the throne and those that carry the throne.[133] His attribute of being above it does not entail that He is in need of it, for God has created some things within creation [itself] as being above and others as being below, and He created that which is above in such a manner that it is not dependent on what is beneath it. Thus, for example, He placed the air above the earth without the former thereby being dependent on the latter. He likewise created the sky above the air, also without the former being in need of the latter. Thus, with respect to the Exalted, the Most High, the Lord of the heavens and the earth and of all that is in between

---

131 *Nuzūl*, MF, 5:523; ed. al-Khamīs, 395. We find something similar in *Jamʿ*, MF, 5:226–227. The distinction between attributes of essence and attributes of action, which became very widespread, can be traced back originally to Muʿtazilī scholars of the third/ninth century. See on this p. 85 above.

132 *Jamʿ*, MF, 5:225–226. Ibn Taymiyya borrows this wording from Quranic verses dealing with the topic of *istiwāʾ*.

133 On the throne bearers, see Q. 40:7 and 69:17.

> them, it is *a fortiori* true that He is not dependent on the throne or on any other created thing, even though He is above them all.[134]

In this passage, Ibn Taymiyya's attitude towards *qiyās* (which we examined in detail chapter 7, section 1) comes out clearly. In the first half of the passage, he attempts to argue that the position of *taʿṭīl*, that is, of nullifying the divine attributes, is based on *qiyās al-tamthīl* and therefore on a type of anthropomorphism in which God is equated with His creation. With respect to *istiwāʾ* over the throne, the line of reasoning is that this term must be reinterpreted since otherwise God would be dependent on the throne as a supporting element in the same manner as a human king. In the second half of the passage, Ibn Taymiyya seeks to demonstrate that this line of reasoning is, however, incorrect and that a figurative interpretation of *istiwāʾ* becomes superfluous if we resort instead to an analogical inference in the mode of the *argumentum a fortiori* (*qiyās awlā*).

If we examine other relevant passages of Ibn Taymiyya's works, however, it becomes apparent that, similar to the question of seeing God, he does not live up to his claim of restricting himself only to this form of *qiyās*.[135] His argument here is based on the belief, presented in chapter 4 on ontology, that every being that exists is simultaneously one that exists *there*,[136] in the sense that it can be located relationally to other beings. Thus, for Ibn Taymiyya, the view held by Ashʿarī scholars like al-Rāzī that God is neither inside nor outside the world (*lā dākhil al-ʿālam wa-lā khārijahu*) only describes that which does not exist (*al-maʿdūm*) or even, indeed, that which cannot exist (*al-mumtaniʿ*).[137] On this basis, Ibn Taymiyya propounds a "sublime rule" (*qāʿida jalīla*) meant to demonstrate that God is on high above His throne "just as it is affirmed in the Quran and the Sunna, as well as through the consensus of the scholars, the clear and correct use of reason, and the sound human disposition (*fiṭra*) that has remained in its original state."[138] Thus, he writes:

---

134   *Fāṣil*, *JM*, 3:201 (emphasis mine).

135   On this point, see p. 251 above.

136   Original: "dass ein jedes Sein zugleich ein *Da*-Sein ist" (Suleiman, *Attribute Gottes*, 316), involving a play on the German word for existence, *Dasein*, which is a compound of the adverb *da* (there) and the verb *sein* (being, to be), thus literally meaning "being *there*," which implies a relationality whereby something can only exist—i.e., "be there"—in relation to something else. Ibn Taymiyya discerns a similar relationality in the Arabic word for existence, *wujūd* (lit. "finding"), and the cognate term *mawjūd* (existent/existing), which literally means "found" or "there to be found." [Translator's note.]

137   *Bayān*, 1:322. For al-Rāzī's position, see al-Rāzī, *Asās al-taqdīs*, 15.

138   *ʿUluww*, *JM*, 1:63.

> This [rule] consists in saying: God existed and nothing existed besides Him, then He created the world. Thus, it can only be the case either that He created it in Himself and is connected with it—which, however, is impossible since God, the mighty and powerful, is transcendently beyond coming into contact and being connected with filth, ritually impure substances, and devils—or that He created it outside Himself and subsequently entered into it. Yet this is also impossible since God is transcendently beyond indwelling (*ḥalla*) in His creatures. There is no disagreement among Muslims regarding [the falsity] of these two conceptual possibilities. Or [, third,] He created it outside Himself without indwelling in it. This, then, is the truth to which there can be no valid alternative.[139]

It is possible that Ibn Taymiyya himself recognised that his assertion that all existent things must stand in a spatial relationship to each other amounts to a universal proposition that includes both God and creation, one that cannot be reliably established through *qiyās awlā* and that therefore renders his position vulnerable to attack. He notes in at least one passage, albeit only in passing, that this proposition need not be substantiated through *qiyās* at all, its truth being known through the natural human disposition (*fiṭra*).[140] But Ibn Taymiyya was well aware that this argument would not convince those who held a different view. Thus—and this is typical of *ahl al-ḥadīth*—he adduces numerous reports that go back to well-known and respected scholars of the early period and that concur in locating God above the throne, indeed sometimes with the explicit addition of the words "*bi-dhātihi*" (in His very essence).[141] Ibn Taymiyya explains that *ahl al-ḥadīth* disagreed whether God is above the throne in His very essence even when, as per a hadith, He descends to the lowermost heaven in the last third of every night. Ibn Taymiyya himself, however, has no doubt that this is the case, and he attempts to demonstrate through *qiyās awlā* that no contradiction ensues from this position—for even a person's soul during sleep is transported up to the throne in the uppermost heaven to prostrate before God[142] while nevertheless remaining located the whole time within the sleeping person himself.[143] Ibn Taymiyya's point here is that if the soul is capable of

---

139   Ibid.

140   *Bayān*, 2:311.

141   See, e.g., *Bayān*, 1:167–218 and *Marrākushiyya*, MF, 5:180–193; ed. Haque, 310–318.

142   On this, see Q. 6:60 and 39:42. The tradition contains more extensive reports of a similar import that purportedly go back to the Prophet.

143   *Jamʿ*, MF, 5:242–243.

such a thing, then God is a fortiori able to remain above the throne in His very essence while simultaneously descending to the lowermost heaven.

In addition, Ibn Taymiyya discusses the shape of the throne and concludes, on the basis of hadith, that it is arched (*muqabbab*) and that it surrounds creation's outermost heaven. Ibn Taymiyya raises here the possible objection that if God is above the throne and the throne surrounds creation, then He must be located in all directions from the perspective of the earth's inhabitants and not just in an upward direction. To make things worse, if God is above a particular person, then He would be in a downward direction from the perspective of someone located on the other side of the globe. Ibn Taymiyya counters this objection by setting the centre of the earth as the absolute zero point. Thus, he explains, if two people located on opposite sides of the globe were to slide into the earth until the soles of their feet met at the earth's centre, neither of the two would be underneath the other, for there is no more "under" at the centre of the earth. The sky, on the other hand, would still be above with respect to both.

Ibn Taymiyya does not stop at critiquing the, in his view, anthropomorphic reasoning on the basis of which the *mutakallimūn* deem themselves compelled to reinterpret the divine attribute of *istiwāʾ*. Rather, he also takes issue with figurative interpretation itself, and specifically with the widespread view that sees God's *istiwāʾ* over His throne as a metaphor for dominating or ruling over (*istīlāʾ*) creation. In building up this critique, he advances twelve arguments (some very similar in substance),[144] which we summarise below and situate with respect to the four conditions governing the correct use of *taʾwīl majāzī* as elaborated by Ibn Taymiyya in his treatise *Madaniyya*.[145] For one, Ibn Taymiyya affirms that none of the Prophet's Companions or any of their students engaged in reinterpretation of the word *istiwāʾ*. He argues furthermore that the leading scholars composed numerous works in which they spoke out against figurative interpretation: one would have to accuse them all of error were he to insist that *istiwāʾ* must be understood in the sense of *istīlāʾ*.[146] Although Ibn Taymiyya does not refer directly to *Madaniyya*, we can glean from his comments that he considers the fourth condition mentioned there—namely, that a specific figurative interpretation of an expression must have been taught by the Prophet himself—not to have been fulfilled.

In the course of presenting his twelve arguments, Ibn Taymiyya discusses a verse of poetry that the proponents of figurative interpretation cite in order to show that it is admissible in the language to say that one has "risen over" a thing

---

144   *Istiwāʾ*, MF, 5:144–149.

145   On this point, see chapter 6, section 2.2.

146   *Istiwāʾ*, MF, 5:144 and 147–148.

meaning thereby that he has dominion over it and rules it. The verse in question reads: "Then Bishr rose (*istawā*) over Iraq without having [wielded] a sword or shed any blood." According to Ibn Taymiyya, however, this verse is of questionable authenticity on account of its weak chain of transmission and therefore cannot serve as valid proof that the term *istiwāʾ* may be used this way in the language. Moreover, the Arabic philologists—among whom he cites al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (d. 175/791 or 170/786 or 160/776)—are said to have explicitly denied that such a use of the word *istiwāʾ* is valid in Arabic. By this token, the first condition laid out in *Madaniyya* has also not been met. Other scholars of the language argued for the linguistic validity of this usage but added that the word *istiwāʾ* may be used in the sense of *istīlāʾ* only when meant to express the idea that someone was initially weak and then became powerful. But since no such thing may be asserted of God,[147] a figurative interpretation in this case would violate the third condition laid down in *Madaniyya*. The same is true for the second condition, namely, that every figurative interpretation must be supported by circumstantial indicators (sing. *qarīna*), for according to Ibn Taymiyya, there is no indication in the Quran or Sunna that *istiwāʾ* is to be understood in the sense of *istīlāʾ*.[148]

We reproduce below Ibn Taymiyya's second, third, and fourth arguments, through which he seeks to demonstrate that the meaning of the term *istiwāʾ* was well-known to the early scholars and that they nevertheless did not attempt to interpret this word figuratively. As we shall see, Ibn Taymiyya's remarks on this issue are in line with his conception of the *mutashābih*.[149]

> The second [argument is]: The meaning of this word [i.e., *istiwāʾ*] is well-known, so when Rabīʿa b. Abī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [d. 133/750-1 or 136/753-4] and Mālik b. Anas were asked about His saying, "The All-Merciful has risen (*istawā*) over the throne,"[150] they said, "The [word] *istiwāʾ* is known [in terms of its meaning], the how [or modality, i.e., of the divine act of *istiwāʾ*] is unknown, the belief [that God undertook the action of *istiwāʾ*] is obligatory, and asking about it [i.e., the modality of it] is an unlawful innovation."[151] And it [i.e., this statement] does not assert that the meaning of *istiwāʾ* is known in the language but not in the verse of the Quran, for the question was about the term *istiwāʾ* in the verse [specifically and

---

147   *Istiwāʾ*, ᴍꜰ, 5:146.
148   *Istiwāʾ*, ᴍꜰ, 5:147.
149   See here chapter 6, section 1.
150   Q. 20:5.
151   This well-known statement reads in Arabic: *al-istiwāʾ maʿlūm wa-l-kayf majhūl wa-l-īmān bihi wājib wa-l-suʾāl ʿanhu bidʿa.*

not in the language in general] and whether it is meant in the same way in which humans engage in *istiwāʾ*.[152]

The third [argument is]: If it [i.e., the word *istiwāʾ*] is known [in terms of its meaning] in the Arabic language in which the Quran was revealed, then it is [consequently] also known in the Quran.

The fourth [argument is]: If it [i.e., the word *istiwāʾ*] were not known [in terms of its meaning] in the verse, then it would be superfluous to say that the how [or modality] is unknown, for negating knowledge of the modality is [meaningfully] done only with respect to something that is in principle known, just as we say that we accept God and believe [in His existence] but do not know His "how."[153]

Ashʿarī scholars too refer to this statement of Rabīʿa and Mālik, but with the aim of identifying them as proponents of *tafwīḍ*.[154] Moreover, such Ashʿarīs interpret the statement as denying not only that the how, or modality, of God's attributes can be known but also that they have a modality at all.[155] This view is incompatible with Ibn Taymiyya's conception of *mutashābih*, according to which there are no words in the Quran whose meaning is not known to anyone whatsoever. The modality of the divine essence and attributes, on the other hand, is unknown to created beings, though it does exist in reality. In fact, an interpretation of Rabīʿa's and Mālik's statement consistent with this position is plausible, for, as Ibn Taymiyya himself argues, it would be difficult to explain why the modality is described in the statement as unknowable if there is presumed to be no modality at all. Even so, this statement has been transmitted in various versions, with the following version more closely approximating the Ashʿarī conception: Mālik, when asked about how the *istiwāʾ* of God takes place, is said to have responded, " 'The All-Merciful has risen over the throne'[156] exactly as He [i.e., God] has described Himself, and it is not permissible to inquire into the how. Any how [of the act of *istiwāʾ*] must be negated (*wa-kayfa ʿanhu marfūʿ*)."[157]

---

152   The text seems to me to be distorted here. I cite the relevant portion of the passage with my own addition in brackets: *li-anna al-suʾāl ʿan al-istiwāʾ fī al-āya* [*hal huwa*] *ka-mā yastawī al-nās*. In any case, Ibn Taymiyya is concerned here to substantiate the view that Mālik did not employ the method of *tafwīḍ* in his response. On this point, see also p. 66 ff. above.

153   *Istiwāʾ*, MF, 5:144–145.

154   See p. 66 ff. above.

155   See, e.g., al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-dīn*, 112–113 and Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 4:287–288.

156   See Q. 20:5.

157   Interestingly, al-Baghdādī and al-Subkī did not refer to this version. On the various versions of this report and the discussions surrounding them, see p. 65 ff. above.

As stated earlier, Ibn Taymiyya emphasises repeatedly that one may not comprehend the divine attributes through any comparison with created beings. This is equally true for *istiwāʾ*, where Ibn Taymiyya argues in terms of the two principles set forth in *Tadmuriyya*[158] that whatever is true of God's essence or any particular one of His attributes must be presumed to be true of all His other attributes as well. Thus, he writes:

> God has an essence in the real sense and man too has an essence in the real sense, but His essence is not like that of creatures. In the same way, He possesses [the attributes of] knowing, hearing, and seeing in the real sense while man too possesses [the attributes of] knowing, hearing, and seeing in the real sense, without man's knowing, hearing, and seeing being like God's knowing, hearing, and seeing. And God possesses [the attribute of] speech in the proper sense just as man possesses [the attribute of] speech in the proper sense, but the speech of the Creator is not like the speech of created beings. And God, the exalted, also has an act of rising over the throne (*istiwāʾ ʿalā al-ʿarsh*) just as man has an act of boarding a ship (*istiwāʾ ʿalā al-fulk*).[159] The *istiwāʾ* of the Creator, however, is not like the *istiwāʾ* of creatures, for God is neither dependent on anything nor in need of anything; rather, He is transcendently above all things. God upholds the throne and those that bear the throne, and He upholds the heavens and the earth so that they do not vanish.[160] Thus, whoever believes that the statement of the leading scholars that God has risen over the throne in a real sense necessarily entails that His *istiwāʾ* is like the *istiwāʾ* of a person on a ship or a riding animal must also hold that their statement that God possesses the attributes of knowing, hearing, seeing, and speaking in the real sense necessarily entails that His knowing, hearing, seeing, and speaking are like those of creatures.[161]

The anti-anthropomorphic undertone of this passage, however, contrasts with other statements in Ibn Taymiyya's works that he puts forth, seemingly with some reluctance, in extremely concise form and in only a few places. At issue are five questions on which he apparently felt obliged to take a position, possibly because they were part and parcel of the discourse that preceded him. But if Ibn Taymiyya were consistent in maintaining his position that the modality

---

158   On these principles, see chapter 6, section 3.
159   The example of boarding a ship is based on Q. 23:28.
160   This is a segment of Q. 35:41.
161   *Irbiliyya*, MF, 5:198–199.

of *istiwāʾ* remains unknowable, then, in my view, he would have had to classify at least one of these questions as invalid and unanswerable. The first of the five questions is whether any contact (*mumāssa*) takes place between God and the throne. The other four have to do with the validity of reports stating that God sits (*yajlisu*) on the throne, that the Prophet too will sit next to God on the throne on the day of judgement, that an area the width of four fingers has been left unoccupied on the throne next to God, and that the throne groans (*yaʾiṭṭu*) under God's weight. We present Ibn Taymiyya's answers to these questions here below.

Concerning the question of *mumāssa*, I know of only one passage in Ibn Taymiyya's vast corpus where he takes a position on the issue. In this passage, he states that there is nothing objectionable about the reports that support the possibility of *mumāssa*, for even the Quran indicates as much insofar as it speaks, for instance, of God as being located on the throne and of the creation of Adam as having come about by the hands of God. If it is possible to see God, Ibn Taymiyya argues, then one must also grant that it is possible for contact to occur between God and a created entity.[162] Ibn Taymiyya concedes, however, that not only some proponents of *kalām* but also some among *ahl al-ḥadīth*— including some Ḥanbalīs—denied the possibility of contact between God and His creation. But, in fact, only a few pages earlier he cites a statement precisely to this effect, without objecting to it in any way.[163] If Ibn Taymiyya's view may have been widespread in some circles among the early *ahl al-ḥadīth*,[164] it seems to have been quite unacceptable in his time even among his own students.[165]

Drawing upon various reports, Ibn Taymiyya also answers in the affirmative the question whether God's *istiwāʾ* may be understood to mean that He sits (*yaqʿudu*) on the throne. In addition, he cites hadith according to which a dead person will sit upright in his grave while being questioned by the angels. But since the person's material body is surrounded by dirt, Ibn Taymiyya

---

162 *Bayān*, 4:342–343.

163 *Bayān*, 4:281.

164 See Mustafa Shah, "Al-Ṭabarī and the Dynamics of *tafsīr*: Theological Dimensions of a Legacy," *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 15, no. 2 (2013): 105–113, esp. 112. As mentioned, Ibn Kullāb also seems to have subscribed to this idea. See p. 309, n. 128 above.

165 Both Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and al-Dhahabī reject the idea that God has contact with the throne. See editor's remarks in al-Dhahabī's *Kitāb al-ʿArsh*, which are interesting not only because no word is mentioned there of Ibn Taymiyya as an advocate of the possibility of *mumāssa* but also because one gets the impression that he actually denied it. Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Kitāb al-ʿArsh*, ed. Muḥammad b. Khalīfa al-Tamīmī, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Maktabat Aḍwāʾ al-Salaf, 1999), 1:231–235.

explains, the sitting involved here must be of a different form than that with which we are conventionally familiar.[166] He sums up the point in the form of an *argumentum a fortiori* (*qiyās awlā*):

> If the sitting of a dead person in his grave is different from the sitting of human bodies, then words like *al-quʿūd* and *al-julūs* with reference to God, the exalted, that have been transmitted in reports going back to the Prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, […] must also [be understood] *a fortiori* as being unlike the attributes of human bodies.[167]

Regarding whether the Prophet will be seated on the throne next to God on the day of judgement, it appears that Ibn Taymiyya answers this question too in just a single passage, again in an explicitly affirmative manner.[168] He appeals here to a statement attributed to the well-known scholar of *tafsīr* Mujāhid (d. 104/722), who is said to have identified the "praiseworthy station" (*maqām maḥmūd*) that God, according to Q. 17:79, will assign to the Prophet on the day of judgement with the throne. Ibn Taymiyya affirms correctly that this report is also attributed directly to the Prophet in some versions, but does not say that these are considered to have been transmitted unreliably.[169] In addition, he cites from the *Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī, who also maintains that the Prophet will sit next to God on the throne.[170] Ibn Taymiyya thus subscribes

---

166   *Nuzūl*, MF, 5:524–527; ed. al-Khamīs, 396–400.

167   *Nuzūl*, MF, 5:527; ed. al-Khamīs, 400 (emphasis mine).

168   See *Tafḍīl*, MF, 4:374. Nāṣir b. Ḥamad al-Fahd questions the authenticity of this work, primarily based on the observation that its style and word choice diverge from those of other writings. See Nāṣir b. Ḥamad al-Fahd, *Ṣiyānat Majmūʿ al-fatāwā min al-saqṭ wa-l-taṣḥīf* (Riyadh: Maktabat Aḍwāʾ al-Salaf, 2003), 8 and 38–43. While his arguments deserve consideration, they are ultimately not compelling. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya informs us elsewhere that he composed an independent work on the question whether God-fearing human beings are to be considered superior to the angels (see MF, 4:344). This is precisely what is at issue in *Tafḍīl*, and I am not aware of any other tract on this topic in Ibn Taymiyya's corpus. As for the writing style and word choice, which indeed seem to be atypical for Ibn Taymiyya, they may perhaps be explained by the fact that this is possibly a very early work.

169   See, e.g., Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Kitāb al-ʿUluww lil-ʿAlī al-ʿAẓīm*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ al-Barrāk, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1999), 1:716. See also Rosenthal, *History of al-Ṭabarī*, 75.

170   The fact that al-Ṭabarī also holds that the "praiseworthy station" refers to the permission to intercede (*shafāʿa*) has led scholars to suspect that he may have adopted the view that the Prophet will be seated on the throne simply because of pressure from the Ḥanbalīs, with whom he was at odds. As Rosenthal notes, however, this cannot be substantiated. See Rosenthal, *History of al-Ṭabarī*, 75–76.

to a position that was not only advocated vociferously by *ahl al-ḥadīth* in the third/ninth century but was even elevated to a marker of identity.[171] But while people at that time had dedicated entire books to the subject,[172] Ibn Taymiyya in his day graced it with but a few lines within his numerous writings. As an interesting side note, the contemporary scholar Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (d. 1420/1999), who saw himself as standing in the tradition of *ahl al-ḥadīth*, firmly rejected the possibility of the Prophet's sitting next to God on the throne and criticised scholars of high standing such as Ibn al-Qayyim and al-Dhahabī for having advocated such a position.[173] As in the question of *mumāssa*, therefore, a change seems to be taking place or to have already taken place here in the sense of moving closer to the positions of the *mutakallimūn*.[174]

As for the report stating that God fills the entire throne except for a surface area the width of four fingers, one might surmise in view of the preceding discussion that Ibn Taymiyya considers it acceptable, as he could then identify this area as the place where the Prophet will be seated.[175] This turns out not to be the case at all, however, and the preceding question plays no role in his larger treatment of the issue. Rather, he affirms that the report concerning the empty place on the throne is, on the one hand, weak and has, on the other hand, been transmitted in contradictory versions. What is certain in his view, however, is that God is much greater than the throne and that this report is therefore also to be rejected on the basis of its content.[176]

Finally, we come to Ibn Taymiyya's position on the hadith according to which God is over the throne and the throne "groans on His account as a saddle groans on account of its rider" (*innahu la-ya'iṭṭu bihi aṭīṭ al-raḥl bi-l-rākib*).[177] Ibn Taymiyya reports that some scholars criticised this hadith to support the position of the Jahmiyya, albeit without understanding the views of the Jahmiyya or realising to what extent they had aimed to divest the divine attributes of any

---

171   See ibid., 71–72.

172   See Shah, "Al-Ṭabarī," 109.

173   See the introduction to al-Albānī's abridged version of al-Dhahabī's *Kitāb al-ʿUluww*: Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *Mukhtaṣar al-ʿUluww lil-ʿAlī al-Ghaffār*, ed. Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1981), 15–21.

174   Tracing the internal dynamics of *ahl al-ḥadīth* over the course of Islamic intellectual history remains a scholarly desideratum.

175   Ibn Taymiyya is referring to the unidentifiable scholar Ibn al-ʿĀyidh, who is said to have done this. See *Aʿlā*, MF, 16:436.

176   See *Aʿlā*, MF, 16:435–439; also *Minhāj*, 2:628–631.

177   See *Bayān*, 3:249. Ibn Taymiyya refers to this hadith numerous times, citing different versions that nevertheless converge in substance on the point in question.

substantive reality whatsoever.[178] Others like Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1175), remarks Ibn Taymiyya, rejected this report out of repugnance at the notion of groaning (*aṭīṭ*) and argued that it had been transmitted solely by Muḥammad b. Isḥāq (d. 151/768), who did not state explicitly that he had heard it directly from his reported source.[179] Ibn Taymiyya counters that the report was, in fact, transmitted through various strands by different scholars. He refers, among others, to the hadith scholar Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/889), to Ibn Ḥazm, and to Ibn Khuzayma (d. 311/923), who composed his work *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* with the stipulation that he would only cite reliably transmitted reports, and he included in it this hadith.[180] From Ibn Taymiyya's perspective, it is clear that

> this hadith and other, like versions [of it], as well as those similar in wording and meaning, have always been in circulation (*mutadāwal*) among scholars and transmitted [by them] from one generation to the next. And [from the beginning], the Salaf of the Muslim community and its leading scholars have continuously transmitted [this report] in a widely attested manner, refuting therewith those among the Jahmiyya who rejected it. [In doing so,] they have received it with acceptance [as authentic] (*mutalaqqīna li-dhālika bi-l-qabūl*).[181]

In being accepted by the community of Muslims at large (*mutalaqqā bi-l-qabūl*), the report has come to enjoy a particularly high epistemic status, as we have previously discussed.[182] But it is not primarily the question of the acceptance of the hadith that became a point of contention between *ahl al-ḥadīth* and the *mutakallimūn*. Thus, for instance, even the Ashʿarī Ibn Fūrak had no objection to acknowledging the report as having been reliably transmitted. He was concerned, however, to emphasise that the groaning of the throne could not be caused by the weight of a body (*thiql al-juththa*) since God, given that He is

---

178   *Bayān*, 3:254.

179   *Bayān*, 3:254–255. Ibn Isḥāq, who gained particular notoriety for his work on the life of the Prophet Muḥammad, is regarded among hadith scholars as a so-called *mudallis* (disguiser) whose transmissions are accepted only when he explicitly indicates that he heard them directly from his reported source. See, e.g., Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Taʿrīf ahl al-taqdīs bi-marātib al-mawṣūfīn bi-l-tadlīs*, ed. ʿĀṣim b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qarwītī (Amman: Maktabat al-Manār, 1983), 51. Al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) also rejects the hadith that speaks of a groaning of the throne, referring to the narrator Ibn Isḥāq. See al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt*, 2:319.

180   *Bayān*, 3:255–258.

181   *Bayān*, 3:255.

182   On this point, see chapter 7, section 2, esp. p. 262.

not a body, has no weight. Rather, according to Ibn Fūrak, the groaning of the throne is induced by the weight of the glorification and exaltation of God (*thiql al-taʿẓīm wa-l-ijlāl*). Indeed, one may also say of the truth that it "weighs heavily" despite the fact that it has no bodily weight.[183] As we shall see, it remains unclear what position Ibn Taymiyya, who discusses the word *thiql* in relation to God *en passant* in several passages, ultimately takes on this issue. For instance, he cites a report going back to the Companion Kaʿb al-Aḥbār stating that the heavens, over which are the throne and God, groan from the weight of God above them (*min thiql al-Jabbār fawqahunna*). Ibn Taymiyya comments that this narration was transmitted by the most venerable of scholars, then sums the matter up with the assertion that "had they considered such a statement [about the weight of God] to be something blameworthy (*munkar*) in the religion of Islam, they would not have transmitted it in this manner."[184] He then cites a lengthy passage from Abū Yaʿlā's *Ibṭāl wa-taʾwīlāt* in which Abū Yaʿlā argues that the weight bearing on the throne comes about by virtue of God's essence (*thiqluhu yaḥṣulu bi-dhāt al-Raḥmān*). Abū Yaʿlā is thus clearly critical of interpretations along the lines of Ibn Fūrak's.[185] Ibn Taymiyya's own position on the matter remains unclear, however, since he says that he quoted this passage only to show what opinions exist on the matter. He then states that he will perhaps (*rubbamā*) address the question of lightness (*khiffa*) and heaviness (*thiql*) in a suitable place.[186] I am unaware whether Ibn Taymiyya followed through on this or not. At any rate, I have been unable to find any such discussion in his works.

4   *al-Maʿiyya*: God's "Withness"

In numerous verses, the Quran informs its reader that God is with (*maʿa*) all people wherever they may be. Often too particular groups of people are addressed specifically and told that God is with them.[187] Ibn Taymiyya discusses and interprets these verses against the backdrop of his criticism of

---

183   See Ibn Fūrak, *Mushkil al-ḥadīth*, 229–230. A similar argument is also made by the Ashʿarī hadith scholar Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998), Ibn Fūrak's contemporary. See al-Bayhaqī, *al-Asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt*, 2:320.

184   *Bayān*, 3:268.

185   *Bayān*, 3:269–274.

186   *Bayān*, 3:274.

187   Some of these verses are cited below by way of example.

alternative views. A review of the relevant passages in Ibn Taymiyya's works[188] reveals that there are three opposing positions. First is the view that Ibn Taymiyya says was held by the early Jahmiyya (*qudamāʾ al-jahmiyya*), namely, that the verses in question indicate that God is in all places in creation in His very essence (*bi-dhātihi*). This, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, amounts to pantheism (*ḥulūl*), which was attractive to the common masses (*ʿāmma*) among the Jahmiyya, including the ascetics and the Sufis among them (*ʿubbād al-jahmiyya wa-ṣūfiyyatuhum*).[189] Second is the position of the Ashʿarīs, who maintain that the verses do not indicate that God is with creation in His very essence but only with His knowledge or—depending on the context of the verse—with His support and help as well.[190] As we shall see, this view coincides in substance with Ibn Taymiyya's own position though not in terms of the methodology through which it was derived. The third position rejected by Ibn Taymiyya does not, in contrast to the first two, address the ontological relationship of God to His creation at all. Rather, it deals specifically with Q. 9:40, which is about two men in a cave one of whom says to the other, "Grieve not, for verily God is with us." According to the Islamic tradition, the speaker is the Prophet Muḥammad, who, along with his companion Abū Bakr, had sought refuge in the cave of Thawr from the pursuit of the polytheistic Meccans during the emigration from Mecca to Medina. The Shīʿī scholar Ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325) argues—prompting Ibn Taymiyya to discuss the meaning of the "withness" of God in Q. 9:40—that this verse should not be understood as ascribing any form of excellence (*faḍīla*) to Abū Bakr.[191]

In the following, we present Ibn Taymiyya's own understanding of God's *maʿiyya*, elucidating how he positions himself vis-à-vis the three views mentioned above.

As Ibn Taymiyya explains, the particle *maʿa* is an analogous (*mushakkik*) expression,[192] which entails that it can be used to express different meanings that share a semantic intersection (*qadr mushtarak*). The particle *maʿa*,

---

188   The most important of these are *Taʾwīl*; *Minhāj*, 8:372–382; *Bayān*, 5:118–120 and 314–316; *Ḥamawiyya*, MF, 5:102–106 (ed. al-Tuwayjirī, 520–525); and *Nuzūl*, MF, 5:494–502 (ed. al-Khamīs, 356–368).

189   See *Minhāj*, 8:374–375, as well as *Ḥujaj*, MF, 2:298.

190   See, e.g., al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 260–262; Ibn Fūrak, *Mushkil al-ḥadīth*, 110; and al-Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, 53–54.

191   *Minhāj*, 8:364–365 and 372–374. The passage to which Ibn Taymiyya is referring can be found in Ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, *Minhāj al-karāma fī ithbāt al-imāma*, lith. repr. of a MS ([Iran]: n.p., 1294/[1877]), 88, line 8 ff.

192   See *Ḥamawiyya*, MF, 5:105–106; ed. al-Tuwayjirī, 524–525. We discussed Ibn Taymiyya's concept of *mushakkik* expressions in chapter 5, section 2.

he explains, essentially denotes an unspecified (*muṭlaq*) kind of being with (*mujāmaʿa*), accompanying (*muṣāḥaba*), or association (*muqārana*).[193] The specification of the semantic intersection and the accrual of further meanings occur in light of the context (*siyāq*) in which a particular speech act takes place.[194] Ibn Taymiyya explains this in the following words:

> Next, the term *maʿiyya* differs in terms of what is to be understood by it, depending on the ways in which it is used (i.e., its *mawārid*). When [God] said: "He knows that which enters into the earth and that which issues from it, that which comes down from the heavens and that which ascends into them, and He is *with* you wheresoever ye may be,"[195] the established meaning of these words (*ẓāhir al-khiṭāb*)[196] that is to be understood by this *maʿiyya* is that He observes you [i.e., mankind], is a witness over you, watches over you, and knows you [in the most intimate manner]. This is the meaning of the statement of the Salaf when they said, "He is with you in His knowledge (*bi-ʿilmihi*)." And this is the established and true meaning of the words. And so it is too with respect to His statement, "There is no secret parley of three but that He is the fourth among them," until His statement, "and He is with them wheresoever they may be."[197]
>
> When the Prophet—may God's peace and blessings be upon him— said to his companion in the cave, "Fear not, for verily God is with us,"[198] this was the [pure] truth when it is understood according to the established meaning. The circumstances [in which the speech act took place] indicate that in addition to [God's] observing, this *maʿiyya* must also be understood to include [His] assistance (*naṣr*) and support (*taʾyīd*). This is likewise the case with His statement, "Truly, God is with those that are God-fearing and those that work good,"[199] and His statement to Moses

---

193 See *Ḥamawiyya*, *MF*, 5:103 and 104; ed. al-Tuwayjirī, 519 and 523. See also *Nuzūl*, *MF*, 5:499; ed. al-Khamīs, 362–363. In one passage, he replaces the word *mujāmaʿa* with the word *mushāraka* (participation). See *Taʾwīl*, *JM*, 3:166.

194 *Taʾwīl*, *JM*, 3:164–165.

195 A segment of Q. 57:4 (emphasis mine).

196 I have not chosen here the (at first glance) obvious translation "the outward meaning of this speech," as it is inconsistent with Ibn Taymiyya's concept of *ẓāhir*. See p. 147, n. 25 above.

197 Both are segments of Q. 58:7.

198 A segment of Q. 9:40.

199 Q. 16:128.

and Aaron, "Truly, I am with you; I hear and I see."[200] Here [too] *maʿiyya* is to be understood in accordance with its established meaning (*ẓāhir*), namely, assistance and support.[201]

Ibn Taymiyya's treatment of the topic mostly coincides with that of al-Bāqillānī, in terms of both the selection of verses and their interpretation. This is not the case, however, regarding the *process* of interpretation. Al-Bāqillānī believes that he must resort to *taʾwīl*—by which he means *taʾwīl majāzī* as discussed in chapter 6, section 2—in order to avoid what, in his view, would constitute an incorrect pantheistic understanding of the verses, namely, that they indicate that God is present everywhere in His very essence.[202] The same approach can be found in Ibn Fūrak[203] and even more strongly in al-Ghazālī, who assigns the particle *maʿa* both a literal and a figurative meaning. The literal meaning is the one that first occurs to the mind of an ignorant person (*jāhil*) upon reading the verses in question, while the figurative meaning is the one that first occurs to the mind of a knowledgeable person (*ʿālim*).[204] The fact that Ibn Taymiyya would reject such an interpretation can already be gathered from the passage above. He articulates his criticism more explicitly in the treatise *Taʾwīl*, where, after defining *taʾwīl majāzī*, he puts forth two counterarguments:

> The first of the two [arguments] is that none of the scholars of the language have said that *maʿiyya* [in terms of its meaning] necessarily denotes a comingling (*mumāzaja*) or a mixing (*mukhālaṭa*), or that [it] entails [a spatial relationship involving] right and left, or other such meanings that must be negated of God's *maʿiyya* with respect to His creation. The only thing that it [i.e., the term *maʿiyya*] necessarily denotes is [the meaning of] unspecified association and accompaniment (*al-muqārana wa-l-muṣāḥaba al-muṭlaqa*).[205]

In the second argument, Ibn Taymiyya cites several Quranic verses that speak of the "withness" of two or more entities without intending to indicate their common presence in the same place. He then goes on to say:

---

200 A segment of Q. 20:46.
201 *Ḥamawiyya*, MF, 5:103–104; ed. al-Tuwayjirī, 521–522.
202 See al-Bāqillānī, *Tamhīd*, 261–262.
203 See Ibn Fūrak, *Mushkil al-ḥadīth*, 110.
204 See al-Ghazālī, *Iqtiṣād*, 53–54.
205 *Taʾwīl*, JM, 3:161.

> There are many such [verses] in the book of God and nothing [that would indicate] that the meaning of [the term] *ma'iyya* entails that one [entity] inheres in the other or comingles or mixes with it. Thus, whoever asserts that the established meaning (*ẓāhir*) of His statement "And He is with you [...]" (*wa-huwa ma'akum*)[206] and of others like it entails that God comingles or is blended with His creatures and located within them or that He has contact with them (*mumāss lahum*) is guilty of propagating falsehood with respect to the Quran and the language of the Arabs while claiming, moreover, that this disbelief is rooted in the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*)[207] of the Quran. But this is [to utter] falsehood against God and His prophet unsubstantiated by any argument or proof.[208]

This passage underscores what we elaborated in chapter 5 of this study, namely, that it is erroneous to conclude from Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of *taʾwīl majāzī* that he himself adheres to a literalistic hermeneutic.

Finally, a discussion of the above-mentioned dispute between Ibn Taymiyya and al-Ḥillī regarding the correct interpretation of verse Q. 9:40 is in order. According to Ibn Taymiyya, God's *ma'iyya* can be divided into a general (*'āmm*) and a specific (*khāṣṣ*) *ma'iyya*. In its general form, it encompasses the entirety of creation, in the sense that God has knowledge of all things. God's *ma'iyya* in the specific sense, on the other hand, extends only to the God-fearing and denotes divine support and assistance. Al-Ḥillī argues that the Prophet's consolation of Abū Bakr described in Q. 9:40 and his assertion that God was with them are, among other things, proof of Abū Bakr's scant trust in God, as well as his impatience and fearfulness.[209] Contrary to this, Ibn Taymiyya sees the verse as honouring Abū Bakr because, among other things, it describes him as a companion (*ṣāḥib*) to the Prophet. Ibn Taymiyya compares this passage to another Quranic verse in which God says to Moses and Aaron, "Truly, I am with you; I hear and I see."[210] Both verses have to do with prophets and their companions, and both, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, involve the special form of *ma'iyya*, namely, that which consists of God's support and assistance, which are granted only to the God-fearing.[211]

---

206   From Q. 57:4.

207   It seems to me that Ibn Taymiyya is using the term *ẓāhir* here in the common sense, that is, not in the sense of established meaning.

208   *Taʾwīl*, *JM*, 3:162.

209   See al-Ḥillī, *Minhāj al-karāma*, 88, lines 12–13, also cited in Ibn Taymiyya's *Minhāj*, 8:365.

210   A segment of Q. 20:46.

211   *Minhāj*, 8:372–375; see also the passage cited on p. 323 above.

Summary

With his position that not all forms of infinite regress are impossible, Ibn Taymiyya goes against a basic presumption that is widespread in *kalām*. This allows him to conceive of God as a being that has been acting dynamically from all eternity and in which temporally originated processes occur. Among such processes are, for instance, God's inner activity of formulating a specific act of will, of speaking, and of rising over His throne. This view contrasts sharply with that of the Ashʿarīs, for instance, who hold that God is an eternally changeless being who has formulated every specific act of will of His from all eternity, whose speech has inhered in Him from all eternity, and whose act of rising over the throne neither took place separately from Him nor is to be interpreted in a figurative sense.

As for God's speech, Ibn Taymiyya considers it to be uncreated (*ghayr makhlūq*) yet not, as one might presume, eternal (*qadīm*) but rather temporal (*ḥādith*). It is uncreated in that the cause of its existence is not God's act of creating but His act of speaking. Yet it is temporal insofar as God, as described above, interacts dynamically with His creation and thus, for instance, spoke to Moses at a specific point in time. In this manner, Ibn Taymiyya clearly sets his position apart from those of the Muʿtazila and the Ashʿarīs. In fact, his view may even represent a novelty in the Ḥanbalī school itself, as the school is not known ever to have regarded God's speech as being temporal. Yet Ibn Taymiyya considers himself on this point to be in agreement with Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. Given the problematic nature of the sources, however, it is not possible to determine whether he is correct in this assertion or not.

The divine attribute of rising (*istiwāʾ*) over the throne is generally acknowledged and affirmed among *ahl al-ḥadīth*, though they hold differing interpretations of it on points of detail. Ibn Taymiyya's views on this question coincide with those of the more stridently traditionalist and *kalām*-critical wing of *ahl al-ḥadīth*. Accordingly, he holds that God's rising over the throne may legitimately be described as sitting (*julūs*), that God remains permanently above the throne in His essence (even when He descends to the lowermost heaven in the last third of each night), and that God has contact with the throne. Even some of Ibn Taymiyya's own students, including Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and al-Dhahabī, rejected this last position, albeit without mentioning their teacher's name in connection with it. Moreover, according to Ibn Taymiyya, God's throne groans under the weight bearing down upon it, though he is unclear about

whether the weight in question is that of God or not. Furthermore, he upholds the view that the Prophet Muḥammad will be honoured on the day of judgement by being accorded a seat on the throne next to God. As for the modality (*kayfiyya*) of God's *istiwāʾ* with respect to the throne, Ibn Taymiyya considers it to be unknown, as is the case with all other divine attributes. Nevertheless, the way in which he argues for these positions, especially the idea of contact between God and the throne, would seem to contradict this assertion.

Concerning the Quranic verses that speak of God's presence or "withness" (*maʿiyya*) with respect to creation, Ibn Taymiyya interprets these as meaning that God is with creatures in His knowledge and also, for the God-fearing among them, with His support and assistance. This is consistent with the view of the Ashʿarīs, which, however, they derive by an application of *taʾwīl majāzī* to the relevant verses. Ibn Taymiyya, by contrast, rejects this approach and instead interprets the verses in light of his linguistic premises, according to which the particle *maʿa* ("with" or "by") is classified as *mushakkik*.

As for justice (*ʿadl*), Ibn Taymiyya understands this quality, which he often equates with wisdom (*ḥikma*), as consisting in dealing with things in a manner that accords with their nature and that leads to their perfection. God always acts justly, though not out of any necessity grounded in His essence, as some of the Muʿtazila hold, nor because He cannot act unjustly by definition, as the Ashʿarīs maintain. Rather, Ibn Taymiyya works from the premiss of a self-imposed obligation on God's part to act justly. Accordingly, he holds that God is worthy of praise and glorification on account of His justice only because He could just as well act unjustly if He so willed. This position, which Ibn Taymiyya maintains consistently across numerous works, contrasts with a passage in which he appears to attribute justice to God as an essential, and therefore necessary, attribute. It is not clear whether Ibn Taymiyya's position in fact involves a contradiction. We can, however, clearly recognise that his concept of God's justice has implications for his position on other theological questions. This is evident with respect to the question whether punishment in hell is eternal and how the children of non-Muslims who died before reaching adulthood will be treated on the day of judgement. The former question was considered in Ibn Taymiyya's time (and probably also in many other periods) to have been definitively answered through *ijmāʿ* to the effect that punishment is eternal. With respect to the otherworldly status of non-Muslim children, the relevant reports within the authoritative textual corpus are highly contradictory, resulting in a multitude of opinions on the matter. Considering this, it is noteworthy that Ibn Taymiyya, on the one hand, assumes the finiteness of punishment in hell yet, on the other hand, firmly maintains that the children of non-Muslims will be subjected to a test on the day of judgement that will decide

their subsequent fate. He upholds both positions decisively with appeal to the justice of God. In so doing, he sets his position apart from the Ashʿarī view that God's actions are not subject to evaluation in accord with worldly standards and, indeed, that they would be just even if He were to reward sinners and punish prophets.

Evaluation and Conclusion

The present work has demonstrated that Ibn Taymiyya did indeed articulate a theory of the divine attributes, a finding that contradicts the conclusion of previous scholarship that he merely attempted to deconstruct the positions of others without making a positive contribution of his own to the debate.[1] The core of Ibn Taymiyya's theology consists in the belief that God is a being who is absolutely free from defects and perfect in every sense, who has been interacting with His creation in manifold ways from all eternity in a dynamic—and time-bound—manner, and who is spatially above His creation. It is hardly surprising that Ibn Taymiyya claims that his views flow from the texts of revelation themselves and that he frequently quotes from these texts in support of his positions. Textual citation is not, however, the only or even the central method of argumentation by which he seeks to substantiate his positions. Rather, Ibn Taymiyya worked out a full-blown methodology for dealing with statements in revelation that describe God, a methodology comprising ontological, linguistic, hermeneutical, and epistemological dimensions. The current study has investigated this methodology and its application in detail. Since we have already summarised the results of this investigation in chapters 8 and 11, we proceed here directly to answering the other points of inquiry raised in the introduction.

1 What Role Does Reason Play in Ibn Taymiyya's Methodology?

Ibn Taymiyya's profound knowledge of the texts and sources relevant to the themes with which he engages enables him to present his theological positions as if they were the logical result of an objectively valid methodology of interpreting the revealed texts. He constructs his intellectual edifice on the traditionalist ground that had been laid in the centuries before him by those among *ahl al-ḥadīth* who were theologians. It is thus understandable that a number of academic works have characterised Ibn Taymiyya's theological methodology as text-centred, pessimistic about reason, and conservative. On the one hand, however, this judgement fails to recognise the gap—larger or smaller depend-

---

1 Such an assessment, as demonstrated in chapter 1, section 1 dealing with the state of the field, can be found in a number of studies and is asserted explicitly in Sayoud, "Sans comment."

ing on the issue at hand—between the text and its interpretation, a gap that Ibn Taymiyya is able to exploit in a most creative manner. On the other hand, it overlooks the fact that even, for instance, a scholar like Ibn Sīnā—whose methodology one would not be wont to describe in the terms mentioned above—can be said to have developed his worldview within a framework determined by Peripatetic-Neoplatonic premises, with the result that he too is committed to a particular set of traditions. If we distance ourselves from the belief in an allegedly neutral rationality independent of tradition and instead conceptualise reason against the backdrop of its historical contingency, both cultural and intellectual, then both Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Sīnā, despite their differing approaches to questions of religious import, can readily be identified as rationalist thinkers.

Ibn Taymiyya himself resolutely maintains the view that reason is a valuable instrument of human knowledge and is thus at pains to articulate his theological views in accordance with it—a task in which, however, I believe he is by no means always successful. For example, he evades the obligation to provide proof for his position that the term "existence" (*wujūd*) can potentially mean the ability to be found by asserting that the validity of this view is confirmed by the natural human disposition (*fiṭra*). Yet we should bear in mind that, contrary to what one might expect, the concept of the *fiṭra* plays but a marginal role in the methodology underpinning Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the attributes. This fact is remarkable considering that the academic literature posits—still rightly, in my opinion—that Ibn Taymiyya sought to upgrade the value of the *fiṭra* as an instrument of knowledge over against that of reason.[2] I was unable, however, to discern any such intent at least with regard to the methodology underlying his theory of attributes, and it is for this reason that I have not treated his concept of *fiṭra* separately in the current study.

Ibn Taymiyya is, to my knowledge, the first traditionalist theologian to have claimed the ability to determine whether God possesses any given attribute by means of a rationally-based procedure—namely, the *argumentum a fortiori* (*qiyās awlā*)—in other words, without recourse to revelation. But even in his interpretation of revelation, Ibn Taymiyya often goes far beyond previous conventional interpretations or he rejects these. Thus, for example, he concludes from the fact that God is described in revelation as living that He also possesses an inner activity or change of state. Furthermore, he opposes the view upheld by the vast majority of Muslim scholars that the Quran unambiguously affirms the eternity of hell. Indeed, it is not so much scriptural evidence that Ibn Tay-

---

2   See p. 208 above.

miyya cites on this point but rather his conception of God's attribute of justice. According to this conception, it cannot be the case that a just God should condemn a human being—no matter how sinful his temporally finite life may have been—to a temporally infinite chastisement.

Finally, we should mention Ibn Taymiyya's view that the position of the Salaf regarding the eternality of the divine attributes necessarily implies the possibility of an infinite regress. This is so because if God, for example, can be described from all eternity as the Creator, then He must have also been capable from all eternity of bringing objects into existence. And this would result—and for Ibn Taymiyya, as we have seen, it does in fact result—in a series of created entites stretching back to infinity.

2   Does Ibn Taymiyya Apply the Methodology He Has Worked Out Consistently in Practice?

We may answer this question, generally speaking, in the affirmative. Nevertheless, we have shown that in his use of *qiyās awlā*, which represents a key element of his methodology, Ibn Taymiyya allows himself some leeway that enables him to employ this procedure in a variety of ways without exposing himself to the charge of methodological inconsistency. For instance, he builds the inferential technique of *qiyās awlā* on the premiss that every attribute can be identified as entailing either perfection or deficiency and must accordingly be either affirmed or negated of God, respectively. However, there are no clear and intersubjectively comprehensible criteria on the basis of which this categorisation of the attributes might be carried out. This lack of clear and objective criteria became apparent with respect to laughter, which is identified in the revealed sources as a divine attribute and which, unsurprisingly, turns out to be an attribute of perfection according to Ibn Taymiyya as well. His argument that a being capable of laughter should be deemed more perfect than a being incapable of laughter seems uncompelling. We may therefore presume that had revelation negated laughter of God, Ibn Taymiyya would have made a similar argument for the deficiency of laughing beings. We have shown further that in one case, Ibn Taymiyya uses syllogistic methods of inference based on universal statements that refer not just to creation but to God as well—a procedure that he criticises in several works and against which he attempts to make a case for *qiyās awlā* as an alternative.

Ibn Taymiyya is also inconsistent when he, on the one hand, argues that created beings can have no knowledge of the modalities (sing. *kayfiyya*) of God's essence and attributes but then, on the other hand, concludes, in light of the

Quranic affirmation that God created Adam with His two hands, that contact
between God and His creation is possible. Had he been consistently agnostic
regarding the modality of the divine attributes—such an agnosticism repres-
enting one of the cornerstones of his theory of the divine attributes—such a
line of argument, in my view, should not have arisen.

3   Is Ibn Taymiyya's View of Himself as neither a Literalist nor an Anthropomorphist Justified?

Although Ibn Taymiyya adopted contradictory positions on the *ḥaqīqa–majāz*
dichotomy, this study has shown that he was, ultimately, opposed to it. In con-
sequence, he developed an alternative theory of meaning related to homonym-
ous expressions according to which linguistic signs never possess a meaning
in the abstract but always exclusively in the context of their concrete usage.
Accordingly, this meaning cannot be known on the basis of a priori criteria
but only in light of the contextual indicators (sing. *qarīna*) that accompany
any concrete speech act. The concepts of literal and outward meaning (*ẓāhir*)
have no place in Ibn Taymiyya's theory of meaning. Taking this theory seri-
ously means divorcing oneself from the concepts of the dominant majority
discourse, which is premised—and not only in Islamic thought—on the valid-
ity of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy. Since, however, this point has all too often
been missed, numerous studies exist that characterise Ibn Taymiyya as a liter-
alist. Yet his interpretation of the terms used to describe God is not identical to
what the proponents of *majāz* regard as the true or literal meaning, for Ibn Tay-
miyya too holds that words like *ʿayn* (eye), *wajh* (face), and *yad* (hand) mean
something different depending on whether they are ascribed to God or to cre-
ation.

Building on this point, we may assert that Ibn Taymiyya—at least in terms of
his methodological orientation—is staunchly opposed to anthropomorphism
in the sense of *tamthīl*, provided that one understands this to mean, as Ibn Tay-
miyya himself does, that one may infer the modalities pertaining to the Creator
from the modalities pertaining to created things. As is well-known, however,
anthropomorphism was construed much more broadly than this within *kalām*
and *falsafa*, being conceptualised in each on the basis of particular presuppos-
itions not shared by the other. In my view, it is not sensible to consider one par-
ticular understanding of the term *tamthīl* to be universally valid and to measure
the conceptions of God found in different theological schools against it. We are
therefore left with the acknowledgement that Ibn Taymiyya may rightly claim
not to have fallen into any anthropomorphism as far as his own theory of the

divine attributes is concerned. Things are less clear, however, when it comes to his concrete application of this theory. We have previously remarked, in the context of responding to the foregoing question, that Ibn Taymiyya attempted to corroborate his position that God can come into contact with creation by appealing to the Quranic verse in which God is described as having created Adam with His hands. The view that such an occurrence implies contact, however, seems to me to presuppose an understanding of the modality of the process of creation and of the roll of God's hands in it as being identical to the modality of how human beings produce objects through manual labour. But if this is so, then Ibn Taymiyya's inference based on the creation of Adam would qualify as an instance of *tamthīl* even by his own definition of the term.

4 What Relationship Do Ibn Taymiyya's Positions Have to the Development of Ideas That Preceded Him?

In the various strands of Islamic thought, we find techniques of argumentation typical to each, some of which are combined in Ibn Taymiyya. In some of his works, like *Ḥamawiyya*, for instance, we find the approach characteristic of *ahl al-ḥadīth* that consists in citing pages' worth of evidence from the sources and statements of recognised scholars to strengthen a given position. Rarely if ever does one encounter this in the works of the *mutakallimūn*, which feature the *argumentum ex remotione* (*sabr wa-taqsīm*) as the common means for substantiating positions. As presented in part 2 of this work, we can discern some influence of *kalām* methodology on Ḥanbalī works of theology long before Ibn Taymiyya. Be that as it may, Ibn Taymiyya's use of techniques of argumentation typical of *kalām* is so conspicuous that one can understand why, at least from this perspective, he has been characterised in some of the literature as a *mutakallim*. Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya makes use of syllogistic methods of inference such as are especially common in *falsafa*.

With regard to his substantive positions, we may also affirm that Ibn Taymiyya drew inspiration from various schools of thought. In his critique of other intellectual trends, he takes advantage of their centuries-long attempts at refuting one another, which produced a rich collection of disputation literature on which he could draw as a source of ideas. In addition, his conception of space and time, for example, is similar to that of Aristotle, and in working out his method of *qiyās awlā*, he profited in particular from the ideas of the Ashʿarī theologian al-Āmidī. In other words, Ibn Taymiyya draws inspiration from the ideas that preceded him over the course of Islamic thought, without exhibiting fear of intellectual contamination or setting himself any ideological barriers.

On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyya also clearly distances himself from certain concepts that were dominant in Islamic thought. For example, he considers God to be a substrate (*maḥall*) for temporally occurring events, thereby turning on its head the doctrine that lies at the heart of the conceptions of God held by most of the *mutakallimūn* and the *falāsifa*, namely, that only deficient objects are subject to temporal change and that complete immutability is an attribute of divine perfection. I was unable to find any precedent for Ibn Taymiyya's position on this point, at least not with such clarity, even in the works of the Ḥanbalīs. He thus adopts a view that is clearly in the minority, even if the Ashʿarī theologian al-Rāzī plausibly demonstrates that this position is implicitly entailed—even if inadvertently—by the conceptions of God found in the vast majority of Muslim schools of thought.[3] Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya advocates an ontology in which the essence of an object and its attributes can only be reified and set in a differentiated relation to each other conceptually within the mind. Thus, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, the problem with which various groups of *mutakallimūn* had been contending—namely, the question of how to conceptualise God's essence and His attributes without having to postulate that He consists of separable parts—arises only because they had failed sufficiently to distinguish between what is conceptualised intramentally and the reality of the external world. Another substantive difference between Ibn Taymiyya's position and that of *kalām*, at least in its Muʿtazilī and Ashʿarī variants, lies in the fact that—as previously addressed in the answer to the first question above— Ibn Taymiyya allows for the possibility of an infinite regress. In my opinion, this allowance—along with Ibn Taymiyya's position on what conditions must be met for the instrument of *taʾwīl* to be validly applied—marks the crossroads at which the various groups' conceptions of God were subsequently further elaborated in different ways.

Ibn Taymiyya likewise stands opposed to the view of the vast majority through his rejection of the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy. His theory of meaning, which makes use of philosophical terminology and concepts, may furthermore be original in its claim to offer a linguistic alternative to this dichotomy. This may also be the case for his view that God's speech is simultaneously uncreated and temporal, although here Ibn Taymiyya considered himself to be in agreement with Ibn Ḥanbal. As much as Ibn Taymiyya differs from the early *ahl al-ḥadīth* in method and technique of argumentation, he nevertheless remains close to them in concrete questions concerning the divine attributes—closer,

---

3   On al-Rāzī and the fact that Ibn Taymiyya's position bears similarities both to that of the Karrāmiyya and to that of Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, see p. 282 above.

at any rate, than many other traditionalist theologians of his time. This became evident primarily in our discussion of the divine attribute of *istiwāʾ*, where Ibn Taymiyya maintained the view that God has contact with the throne and sits (*yajlisu*) on it, that the throne groans under the weight (of God?) bearing down upon it, and that the Prophet Muḥammad will be seated on the throne next to God on the day of judgement. These views were very common within traditionalist scholarship in the early period; in Ibn Taymiyya's day, however, they were partly rejected even by some of his own students.

The current study can serve as a point of departure for future scholarship in several ways. Within *uṣūl al-fiqh* (legal theory), for example, Ibn Taymiyya's rejectionist stance with respect to *majāz* and the alternative theory of meaning he proposes could be explored to determine the extent to which they may be of use to contemporary reform efforts. Such an exploration is also of particular relevance in light of the parallels that exist between Ibn Taymiyya's views and those recently put forth in contemporary linguistics. Finally, to gain a better understanding of the history of Islamic thought, Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the divine attributes should be brought into conversation and compared with those of Ibn Rushd and Ibn ʿArabī. Such a comparative study could be used to test the tenability of the thesis suggested in some works that Ibn Taymiyya's thought was strongly influenced by these two thinkers—in other words, that he did not harbour as hostile an attitude towards them as a superficial reading of his works may suggest. Another worthwhile study might involve a comparison between Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the divine attributes and that of the current-day Salafī movement. Such an investigation could use the theologically central topic of the divine attributes as a case study for examining to what extent adherents of contemporary Salafism are justified in appealing to Ibn Taymiyya as one of their most important intellectual forebears.

Bibliography

Collected Writings and Works by Ibn Taymiyya Arranged by Short Title or Abbreviation

Posthumous Collections of Various Writings

JM Ibn Taymiyya. *Jāmiʿ al-masāʾil*. Edited by Muḥammad ʿUzayr Shams. 8 vols. Mecca: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawāʾid, 1422–1432/[2001-2–2010-11].

JR Ibn Taymiyya. *Jāmiʿ al-rasāʾil*. Edited by Rashād Sālim. 2nd ed. 2 vols. Jeddah: Dār al-Madanī, 1984.

MF Ibn Taymiyya. *Majmūʿ fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*. Edited by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Qāsim and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Qāsim. 37 vols. Riyadh: Maṭābiʿ al-Riyāḍ, n.d. [ca. 1962–1967].

MMF Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Mustadrak ʿalā Majmūʿ fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*. Edited by Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Qāsim. 5 vols. N.p.: n.p., 1418/[1997-8].

Works and Shorter Writings

Abū Dharr In *MF*, 18:136–209. This work has no known title. I have followed Jon Hoover in my choice of short title. See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 240.

ʿĀdil Ibn Taymiyya. *Risāla fī kawn al-Rabb ʿādil^{an} wa-fī tanazzuhihi ʿan al-ẓulm*. In *JR*, 1:119–142.

Afʿāl al-ʿibād In *MF*, 8:406–427 (title unknown). The question submitted to Ibn Taymiyya begins with *mā taqūlu al-sāda* [...] *fī afʿāl al-ʿibād* [...]; hence the short title.

Aḥruf Ibn Taymiyya. *Masʾalat al-aḥruf allatī anzalahā Allāh ʿalā Ādam*. In *MF*, 12:37–116.

Akmaliyya Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Risāla al-Akmaliyya fī-mā yajibu li-Llāh min ṣifāt al-kamāl*. Edited by Rashād Sālim. Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, 1983. Also in *MF*, 6:68–140.

Aʿlā Ibn Taymiyya. *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Aʿlā*. In *MF*, 16:251–479.

Aqwam Ibn Taymiyya. *Aqwam mā qīla fī al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar wa-l-ḥikma wa-l-taʿlīl*. In *MF*, 8:81–158.

Aṣfahāniyya Ibn Taymiyya. *Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Aṣfahāniyya*. Edited by Muḥammad b. ʿAwda al-Saʿawī. Riyadh: Dār al-Minhāj and Dār Jawda, 1430/[2008-9].

Baʿlabakkiyya Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Baʿlabakkiyya*. In *MF*, 12:117–161.

Bayān Ibn Taymiyya. *Bayān talbīs al-jahmiyya fī taʾsīs bidaʿihim al-kalāmiy-*

	ya. Edited by Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Hunaydī et al. 10 vols. Medina: Mujammaʿ al-Malik Fahd li-Ṭibāʿat al-Muṣḥaf al-Sharīf, 1426/[2005-6]. This work was previously published in an incomplete form under another title: Ibn Taymiyya, *Naqḍ Asās al-taqdīs*. Edited by Mūsā b. Sulaymān al-Duwaysh. Medina: Maktabat al-ʿUlūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 1425/[2004-5].
Ḍābiṭ	Ibn Taymiyya. *Ḍābiṭ al-taʾwīl*. In *JM*, 5:35–93 (only partially preserved)
Darʾ	Ibn Taymiyya. *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*. Edited by Rashād Sālim. 11 vols. Riyadh: Muhammad Ibn Saud University, 1979.
Fanāʾ	Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Radd ʿalā man qāla bi-fanāʾ al-janna wa-l-nār*. Edited by Muḥammad al-Samharī. Riyadh: Dār Balansiyya, 1995.
Fāṣil	Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Jawāb al-fāṣil bi-tamyīz al-ḥaqq min al-bāṭil*. In *JM*, 3:193–209 (where it is listed under the title *Masʾala fī al-ʿuluww*). Also: Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Jawāb al-fāṣil bi-tamyīz al-ḥaqq min al-bāṭil*. In *Majallat al-buḥūth al-Islāmiyya* 29, edited by ʿAwwād b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Muʿtiq (1410–1411/[1990]): 279–314; here 282–313. An abridged version can be found in *MF*, 5:256–261.
Fiṭra	Ibn Taymiyya. In *MF*, 4:245–249. In this short treatise without a title, Ibn Taymiyya answers, among other things, the question of what the word *fiṭra* means; hence the corresponding choice of short title.
Furqān I	Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Furqān bayna al-ḥaqq wa-l-bāṭil*. In *MF*, 13:5–229.
Furqān II	Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Furqān bayna awliyāʾ al-Raḥmān wa-awliyāʾ al-shayṭān*. In *MF*, 11:156–310.
Ghāʾib	Ibn Taymiyya. In *MF*, 14:51–53. This short work without a title discusses the word *ghāʾib*; hence the choice of short title.
Ḥadīth	Ibn Taymiyya. In *MF*, 18:38–42. In this short work without a title, Ibn Taymiyya discusses terms related to the hadith sciences. Hence my choice of the short title.
Ḥamawiyya	Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya al-kubrā*. Edited by Ḥamad b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Tuwayjirī. Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumayʿī, 2004. Also: *MF*, 5:5–120.
Ḥammūya	Ibn Taymiyya. *Risāla fī al-radd ʿalā baʿḍ atbāʿ Saʿd al-Dīn al-Ḥammūya*. In *JM*, 4:387–435 (probably incomplete).
Ḥaqīqa	Ibn Taymiyya. *Ḥaqīqat madhhab al-ittiḥādiyyīn wa-waḥdat al-wujūd*. In *MF*, 2:134–285 (clearly incomplete).
Ḥarf wa-ṣawt	In *MF*, 12:582–598 (title unknown).
Ḥ/M	Ibn Taymiyya. *Qāʿida fī al-ḥaqīqa wa-l-majāz*. In *MF*, 20:400–497.
Ḥudūth	Ibn Taymiyya. *Masʾalat ḥudūth al-ʿālam*. Edited by Yūsuf al-Ūzbikī. Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir, 2012.

Ḥujaj	Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Ḥujaj al-ʿaqliyya wa-l-naqliyya fī-mā yunāfī al-Islām min bidaʿ al-jahmiyya wa-l-ṣūfiyya*. In MF, 2:286–361. Also known under the title *Risāla fī ibṭāl waḥdat al-wujūd*.
Ḥurūf	In MF, 12:571–575 (title unknown).
Ikhlāṣ	Ibn Taymiyya. *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*. In MF, 17:214–503.
Ikhnāʾiyya	Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Ikhnāʾiyya aw al-Radd ʿalā al-Ikhnāʾī*. Edited by Aḥmad b. Muwannis al-ʿAnzī. Jeddah: Dār al-Kharrās, 2000.
Ikhtiyāriyya	Ibn Taymiyya. *Faṣl fī al-ṣifāt al-ikhtiyāriyya*. In MF, 6:217–267, as well as JR, 2:3–70.
Iklīl	Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Iklīl fī al-mutashābih wa-l-taʾwīl*. In MF, 13:270–313.
Īmān	Ibn Taymiyya. *"Kitāb al-Īmān al-kabīr" li-Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya: Dirāsa wa-taḥqīq.* By Muḥammad Saʿīd Ibrāhīm Sayyid Aḥmad. 2 vols. PhD dissertation, Umm al-Qurā University, 1423/[2002]. Also: MF, 7:5–460. Translation: Ibn Taymiyyah. *Kitab Al-Iman: Book of Faith*. Translated by Salman Hassan al-Ani and Shadia Ahmad Tel. Bloomington, IN: Iman Publishing House, 1999.
Intiṣār	Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Intiṣār li-ahl al-athar*. Edited by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥasan Qāʾid. Mecca: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawāʾid, 1435/[2013-14]. This work is also known under the title *Naqḍ al-manṭiq* and has been published in low-quality editions (e.g., in separated form in MF, 4:1–190 and 9:5–81).
Iqtiḍāʾ	Ibn Taymiyya. *Iqtiḍāʾ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm li-mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm*. Edited by Nāṣir b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-ʿAql. 2 vols. Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1998. Translation: Muhammad Umar Memon, *Ibn Taymīya's Struggle against Popular Religion, with an Annotated Translation of his Kitāb Iqtiḍāʾ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm li-mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm*. The Hague: Mouton, 1976.
Irbiliyya	Also known under the title *Jawāb hal al-istiwāʾ wa-l-nuzūl ḥaqīqa wa-hal lāzim al-madhhab madhhab*. This work has been separated in MF; the first part is located at 5:194–225 and the second part at 20:217–219.
Islām	Ibn Taymiyya. *Fī al-Islām wa-ḍiddihi*. In JM, 6:219–252.
Istiqāma	Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Istiqāma*. Edited by Rashād Sālim. 2nd ed. 2 vols. N.p.: Cultural Department of Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud University, 1991.
Istiwāʾ	Ibn Taymiyya. *Jawāb fī al-istiwāʾ wa-ibṭāl man taʾawwalahu bi-l-istīlāʾ*. In MF, 5:136–149.
Iʿtirāḍāt	Ibn Taymiyya. *Jawāb al-iʿtirāḍāt al-Miṣriyya ʿalā al-futyā al-Ḥama-*

wiyya. Edited by Muḥammad ʿUzayr Shams. Mecca: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawāʾid, 1429/[2008].

Jabr In *MF*, 8:448–515 (title unknown). I have followed Jon Hoover in the choice of short title. See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 241.

Jamʿ Ibn Taymiyya. *Faṣl fī al-jamʿ bayna ʿuluww al-Rabb ʿazza wa-jalla wa-bayna qurbihi min dāʿihi wa-ʿābidīhi*. In *MF*, 5:226–255.

Jawāb Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*. Edited by ʿAlī b. Ḥasan, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Ibrāhīm al-ʿAskar, and Ḥamdān b. Muḥammad al-Ḥamdān. 7 vols. Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1999.

Kalām Allāh I Ibn Taymiyya. *Qāʿida fī al-Qurʾān wa-kalām Allāh*. In *MF*, 12:5–36.

Kalām Allāh II In *MF*, 12:258–295 (title unknown).

Kalām fī al-Qurʾān In *MF*, 12:579–581 (title unknown).

Kasb In *MF*, 8:386–405. This work has no known title. I have followed Jon Hoover in my choice of short title. See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 241.

Kaylāniyya Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Kaylāniyya*. In *MF*, 12:323–501.

Madaniyya Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Risāla al-Madaniyya*. Edited by al-Walīd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Farriyān. Riyadh: Dār al-Ṭība, 1408/[1987-8].
          Also: *MF*, 6:351–373.

Manbijī Ibn Taymiyya. *Risāla ilā Naṣr al-Manbijī*. In *MF*, 2:452–479.

Marrākushiyya Ibn Taymiyya. Haque, Serajul. "The *Qāʿida Marrākushīya* of Ibn Taymīya." In *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A.R. Gibb*, edited by George Makdisi, 293–318 (here 296–318). Leiden: Brill, 1965.
          Also: *MF*, 5:153–193.

Minhāj Ibn Taymiyya. *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya fī naqḍ kalām al-Shīʿa al-qadariyya*. Edited by Rashād Sālim. 8 vols. in 4. Reprint. Riyadh: Muʾassasat al-Rayyān, 2003.

Miṣriyya I Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Masʾala al-Miṣriyya fī al-Qurʾān*. In *MF*, 12:162–234.

Miṣriyya II Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Futyā al-Miṣriyya*. In *MF*, 12:235–245.

Muqaddima Ibn Taymiyya. *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr*. Edited by ʿAdnān Zarzūr. 2nd ed. N.p.: n.p., 1972.
          Also: *MF*, 13:329–375.
          German translation:——. *Einführung in die Methodologie der Qurʾānexegese*. Translated by Elsayed Elshahed. Riyadh: Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud University, 2000.

Musawwada Taqī al-Dīn b. Taymiyya, Shihāb al-Dīn b. Taymiyya, and Majd al-Dīn b. Taymiyya. *al-Musawwada fī uṣūl al-fiqh*. Edited by Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, 1964.

Muṣḥaf In *MF*, 12:564–568 (title unknown).

Mutakallim	In *MF*, 12:560–563 (title unknown).
Nubuwwāt	Ibn Taymiyya. *Kitāb al-Nubuwwāt.* Edited by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ṭawi-yān. 2 vols. Riyadh: Maktabat Aḍwāʾ al-Salaf, 2000.
Nuzūl	Ibn Taymiyya. *Sharḥ ḥadīth al-nuzūl.* Edited by Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Khamīs. Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1993. Also: *MF*, 5:321–582.
Qurʾān masmūʿ	In *MF*, 12:554–559 (title unknown).
Radd	Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn.* Edited by ʿAbd al-Ṣamad Sharaf al-Dīn al-Kutbī. 2nd ed. Lahore: Idārat Tarjumān al-Sunna, 1977. For an English translation of an abridged version by al-Suyūṭī, see Wael B. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
Radd aqwam	Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Radd al-aqwam ʿalā mā fī kitāb Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam.* In *MF*, 2:362–451.
Rafʿ	Ibn Taymiyya. *Rafʿ al-malām ʿan al-aʾimma al-aʿlām.* In *MF*, 20:231–290. English translation with introduction and commentary in Abdul-Hakim I. Al-Matroudi, "The Removal of Blame from the Great *Imāms*: An Annotated Translation of Ibn Taymiyyah's *Rafʿ al-Malām ʿan al-Aʾimmat al-Aʿlām*," *Islamic Studies* 46, no. 3 (2007): 317–380.
Shakl	In *MF*, 12:576–578 (title unknown).
Suʾāl ʿan al-Murshida	In *MF*, 11:476–491. Untitled response to a request for a fatwa on Ibn Tūmart's work *al-Murshida.*
Ṣūra	Ibn Taymiyya. *Ṣūrat kitāb ʿan Ibn ʿArabī wa-l-iʿtiqād fīhi.* In *JM*, 7:245–259.
Tabbat	Ibn Taymiyya. *Tafsīr Sūrat Tabbat.* In *MF*, 16:602–603.
Tadmuriyya	Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Tadmuriyya: Taḥqīq al-ithbāt fī al-asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt wa-ḥaqīqat al-jamʿ bayna al-qadar wa-l-sharʿ.* Edited by Muḥammad b. ʿAwda al-Saʿawī. 6th ed. Riyadh: Maktabat al-ʿUbaykān, 2000. Also: *MF*, 3:1–128.
Tafḍīl	Ibn Taymiyya. *Tafḍīl ṣāliḥī al-nās ʿalā sāʾir al-ajnās.* In *MF*, 4:350–392. The authenticity of this work has been questioned; see p. 318, n. 168 above.
Taḥqīq	Ibn Taymiyya. *Taḥqīq kawn al-Qurʾān kalām Allāh munazzal minhu.* In *MF*, 12:296–332.
Taklīm	In *MF*, 12:523–531 (title unknown).
Tawassul	Ibn Taymiyya. *Qāʿida jalīla fī al-tawassul wa-l-wasīla.* In *MF*, 1:142–368.
Tawba	I am not aware of any title for this work, which consists of a response to a question about the meaning of Q. 9:6 and 9:19 (Sūrat al-Tawba) and is located in *MF*, 12:258–295.

Taʾwīl	Ibn Taymiyya. *Masʾala fī taʾwīl al-āyāt wa-imrār aḥādīth al-ṣifāt ka-mā jāʾat*. In *JM*, 3:157–180.
Tilāwa	In *MF*, 12:534–553 (title unknown).
Tisʿīniyya	Ibn Taymiyya. *al-Tisʿīniyya*. Edited by Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-ʿAjlān. 3 vols. Riyadh: Maktabat al-ʿĀrif, 1999.
ʿUluww	Ibn Taymiyya. *Qāʿida jalīla fī ithbāt ʿuluww Allāh ʿalā jamīʿ khalqihi*. In *JM*, 1:63–64.

Works by Other Authors in Arabic or in European Languages and Translated Works of Ibn Taymiyya

Abdallah, Ssekamanya Siraje. "Ibn Taymiyyah's Theological Approach Illustrated: On the Essence (*dhāt*) and Attributes (*ṣifāt*) of Allah." *Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 9, no. 1 (2004): 43–61.

al-ʿAbd Allāh, Khadīja Ḥammādī. *Manhaj al-imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī bayna al-Ashāʿira wa-l-Muʿtazila*. 2 vols. Damascus: Dār al-Nawādir, 2012.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-Qāḍī. *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-ʿadl*. Edited by Ibrāhīm Madhkūr et al. 14 vols. printed in 16. Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa-l-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1960–1965.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-Qāḍī. *al-Mukhtaṣar fī uṣūl al-dīn*. In *Rasāʾil al-ʿadl wa-l-tawḥīd*, edited by Muḥammad ʿImāra, vol. 1, 197–282. Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1988.

ʿAbd al-Jabbār, al-Qāḍī. *Mutashābih al-Qurʾān*. Edited by ʿAdnān Zarzūr. 2 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1969.

ʿAbd al-Laṭīf, Aḥmad. *Manhaj imām al-ḥaramayn fī dirāsat al-ʿaqīda: ʿArḍ wa-naqd*. Riyadh: Markaz al-Malik Fayṣal lil-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya, 1993.

ʿAbd al-Majīd, ʿAbd al-Majīd Maḥmūd. *al-Ittijāhāt al-fiqhiyya ʿinda aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth fī al-qarn al-thālith al-hijrī*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1979.

Abdul-Raof, Hussein. *Schools of Qurʾanic Exegesis: Genesis and Development*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Abrahamov, Binyamin. "The *Bi-Lā Kayfa* Doctrine and Its Foundations in Islamic Theology." *Arabica* 42, no. 3 (1995): 365–379.

Abrahamov, Binyamin. "al-Dārimī, Abū Saʿīd." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2015-3, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 74b–75. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Abrahamov, Binyamin. *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.

Abrahamov, Binyamin. "Al-Ḳāsim ibn Ibrāhīm's Argument from Design." *Oriens* 29/30 (1986): 259–284.

Abrahamov, Binyamin, ed. *Ibn al-ʿArabī's Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam: An Annotated Translation of "The Bezels of Wisdom"*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Abrahamov, Binyamin, ed. *Al-Ḳāsim b. Ibrāhīm on the Proof of God's Existence:* Kitāb al-Dalīl al-Kabīr. Leiden: Brill, 1990.

Abū Ḥayyān, Muḥammad b. Yūsuf. *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ.* Edited by ʿĀdil ʿAbd al-Mawjūd et al. 8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1993.

Abū Yaʿlā b. al-Farrāʾ. *al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-dīn.* Edited by Wadi Zaidan Haddad. Beirut: Dar El-Machreq Éditeurs, 1974.

Abū Yaʿlā b. al-Farrāʾ. *al-ʿUdda fī uṣūl al-fiqh.* Edited by Aḥmad al-Mubārakī. 6 vols. Riyadh: n.p., 1993.

Abū Zayd, Bakr. Introduction (taqdīm) to Shams and al-ʿImrān, *al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām*, 5–35.

Abū Zayd, Naṣr Ḥāmid. *al-Ittijāh al-ʿaqlī fī al-tafsīr: Dirāsa fī qaḍiyyat al-majāz fī al-Qurʾān ʿinda al-Muʿtazila.* 3rd ed. Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 1996.

Acar, Rahim. "Reconsidering Avicenna's Position on God's Knowledge of Particulars." In *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam*, edited by Jon McGinnis, with the assistance of David C. Reisman, 142–156. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Acar, Rahim. *Talking about God and Talking about Creation: Avicenna's and Thomas Aquinas' Positions.* Leiden: Brill, 2005.

Adamson, Peter. *The Arabic Plotinus: A Philosophical Study of the 'Theology of Aristotle'.* London: Duckworth, 2002.

Adamson, Peter. "The Existence of Time in Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*." In Hasse and Bertolacci, *Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin Reception*, 65–100.

Adamson, Peter. "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on Place." *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 27 (2017): 205–236.

Adamson, Peter. "Galen and al-Rāzī on Time." In *Medieval Arabic Thought: Essays in Honour of Fritz Zimmermann*, edited by Rotraud Hansberger, Afifi al-Aktiti, and Charles Burnett, 1–14. London and Turin: Warburg Institute and Nina Aragno Editore, 2012.

Adamson, Peter. *Al-Kindī.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Adamson, Peter. "Al-Kindī and the Muʿtazila: Divine Attributes, Creation and Freedom." *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 13 (2003): 45–77.

Adamson, Peter. "Philosophical Theology." In Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 297–312.

Adamson, Peter, and Andreas Lammer. "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Platonist Account of the Essence of Time." In *Philosophical Theology in Islam*, vol. 5, *Later Ashʿarism East and West*, edited by Ayman Shihadeh and Jan Thiele, 95–122. Leiden: Brill, 2020.

Adang, Camilla, and Sabine Schmidtke, eds. *A Common Rationality: Muʿtazilism in Islam and Judaism.* Würzburg: Ergon, 2016.

Adem, Rodrigo. "The Intellectual Genealogy of Ibn Taymiyya." PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2015.

Aertsen, Jan. *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought: From Philip the Chancellor (ca. 1225) to Francisco Suárez*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Affifi, Abul Ela. *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid Dín-Ibnul ʿArabí*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939.

Aigle, Denise. "The Mongol Invasions of Bilād al-Shām by Ghāzān Khān and Ibn Taymīyah's Three 'Anti-Mongol' Fatwas." *Mamluk Review Studies* 11, no. 2 (2007): 89–120.

Ajhar, Abdel Hakim. "The Metaphysics of the Idea of God in Ibn Taymiyya's Thought." PhD dissertation, McGill University, 2000.

Ajhar, Abdel Hakim. *Suʾāl al-ʿālam: al-Shaykhān Ibn ʿArabī wa-Ibn Taymiyya min fikrat al-waḥda ilā fikrat al-ikhtilāf*. Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2011.

Alami, Ahmed. *L'ontologie modale: Étude de la théorie des modes d'Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī*. Paris: J. Vrin, 2001.

Al Ghouz, Abdelkader. "Kontingenzbewältigung als Zügel der Herrschaft: Ibn Taymīyas Herrschaftsverständnis zwischen religiöser Normativität und politischem Pragmatismus." *Das Mittelalter* 20, no. 1 (2015): 47–61.

Ali, Mohamed M. Yunis, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics: Sunni Legal Theorists' Models of Textual Communication*. London: Curzon, 2000.

Aliyu, Nūr al-Dīn. "Ibn Taymiyya's Attitude towards Ṣūfism and His Critique of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Mystical Philosophy." PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1981.

Allard, Michel. "Un pamphlet contre al-Ašʿarī." *Bulletin d'études orientales* 23 (1970): 129–165.

Allard, Michel. *Le problème des attributs divins dans la doctrine d'al-Ašʿarī et de ses premiers grands disciples*. Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965.

Al-Matroudi, Abdul Hakim I. *The Ḥanbalī School of Law and Ibn Taymiyyah: Conflict or Conciliation*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Al-Matroudi, Abdul Hakim I. "The Removal of Blame from the Great *Imāms*: An Annotated Translation of Ibn Taymiyyah's *Rafʿ al-Malām ʿan al-Aʾimmat al-Aʿlām*." *Islamic Studies* 46, no. 3 (2007): 317–380.

Almond, Ian. *Sufism and Deconstruction: A Comparative Study of Derrida and Ibn ʿArabi*. London: Routledge, 2004.

al-Sarhan, Saud. "Early Muslim Tradition: A Critical Study of the Works and Political Theology of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal." PhD dissertation, University of Exeter, 2011.

al-Ālūsī, Ḥusām. *al-Zamān fī al-fikr al-dīnī wa-l-falsafī al-qadīm*. Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr, 1980.

al-Āmidī, Sayf al-Dīn. *Abkār al-afkār fī uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Mahdī. 5 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa-l-Wathāʾiq al-Qawmiyya, 2004.

al-Āmidī, Sayf al-Dīn. *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām*. Edited by ʿAbd al-Razzāq ʿAfīfī. 4 vols. Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumayʿī, 2003.

Amitai-Preiss, Reuven. "Ghazan, Islam, and Mongol Tradition: A View from the Mamlūk Sultanate." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 59, no. 1 (1996): 1–10.

Amitai-Preiss, Reuven. "The Mongol Occupation of Damascus in 1300: A Study of Mamluk Loyalties." In Levanoni and Winter, *Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, 21–44.

Anjum, Ovamir. *Politics, Law, and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

al-Anṣārī, Abū al-Qāsim. *al-Ghunya fī al-kalām*. Edited by Muṣṭafā Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Hādī. 2 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2010.

Ansari, Hassan, and Sabine Schmidtke. "The Muʿtazilī and Zaydī Reception of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's *Kitāb al-Muʿtamad fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*: A Bibliographical Note." *Islamic Law and Society* 20 (2013): 90–109.

Ansari, Muhammad Abdul Haq. "Ibn Taymiyya and Sufism." *Islamic Studies* 24, no. 1 (1985): 1–12.

Aparicio, Mònica Colominas. "ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabīʿa and Ṯurayyā in *Rawḍat al-qulūb wa-nuzhat al-muḥibb wa-al-maḥbūb*." *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 5–6 (2010–2011): 187–198.

Aristotle. *Aristoteles: Physikvorlesung*. Translated by Hans Wagner. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979. Arabic translation: Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn, *al-Ṭabīʿa: Tarjamat Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn maʿa shurūḥ Ibn al-Samḥ wa-Ibn ʿAdī wa-Mattā b. Yūnus wa-Abī al-Faraj b. al-Ṭayyib*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, photomechanical reprint of first edition, vol. 1 (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 1984).

Aristotle. *Kategorien. Lehre vom Satz. Lehre vom Schluß oder Erste Analytik. Lehre vom Beweis oder Zweite Analytik*. Translated by Eugen Rolfes. Hamburg: Meiner, 1995.

Aristotle. *Kitāb al-Maqūlāt*. In *Manṭiq Arisṭū*, translated by Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn, vol. 1, 33–76. Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1980.

al-Ashʿarī, Abū al-Ḥasan. *Al-Ashʿarī's* Kitāb al-Ḥathth ʿalā al-baḥth. Edited by Richard Frank. *Mélanges de l'Institut dominicain d'études orientales* (*MIDEO*) (1988): 83–152. Reprinted as part 9, with original pagination, in Frank, *Early Islamic Theology*.

al-Ashʿarī, Abū al-Ḥasan. *al-Ibāna ʿan uṣūl al-diyāna*. Edited by Fawqiyya Ḥusayn Maḥmūd. Cairo: Dār al-Anṣār, 1977.

al-Ashʿarī, Abū al-Ḥasan. *Kitāb al-Lumaʿ fī al-radd ʿalā ahl al-zaygh wa-l-bidaʿ*. Edited by Ḥammūda Ghurāba. Cairo: Maktabat Miṣr, 1955.

al-Ashʿarī, Abū al-Ḥasan. *Kitāb Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa-ikhtilāf al-muṣallīn*. Edited by Hellmut Ritter. 2 vols. Istanbul: Maṭbaʿat al-Dawla, 1929–1933.

al-Ashʿarī, Abū al-Ḥasan. *Risāla ilā ahl al-thaghr bi-Bāb al-Abwāb*. Edited by ʿAbd Allāh al-Junaydī. Medina: Maktabat al-ʿUlūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 2002.

al-ʿAṣrī, Sayf. *al-Qawl al-tamām bi-ithbāt al-tafwīḍ madhhab[an] lil-salaf al-kirām*. Amman: Dār al-Fikr, 2010.

Assef, Qais. "Le soufisme et les soufis selon Ibn Taymiyya." *Bulletin d'études orientales* 60 (2012): 91–122.

Avicenna [Abū ʿAlī b. Sīnā]. *The Metaphysics of* The Healing [*al-Shifāʾ*: al-Ilāhiyyāt]. Translated by Michael E. Marmura. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005.

al-ʿAwnī, Ḥātim. *al-Yaqīnī wa-l-ẓannī min al-akhbār: Sijāl bayna Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī wa-l-muḥaddithīn*. 2nd ed. Beirut: Arab Network for Research and Publishing, 2013.

al-Baghdādī, ʿAbd al-Qāhir. *Kitāb Uṣūl al-dīn*. Istanbul: Maṭbaʿat al-Dawla, 1346/1928.

al-Baghdādī, Abū al-Barakāt. *Kitāb al-Muʿtabar fī al-ḥikma*. 3 vols. Hyderabad: n.p., 1358/[1939].

al-Bāqillānī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad. *Kitāb al-Tamhīd*. Edited by Richard McCarthy. Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya, 1957.

al-Barbahārī (or Ghulām Khalīl). *Sharḥ al-Sunna*. Edited by Khālid al-Ridādī. Medina: Maktabat al-Ghurabāʾ al-Athariyya, 1993.

Bashīr, Zakariyyā. "Qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid." *Majallat al-Sharīʿa wa-l-Qānūn* 8 (1994): 143–202.

al-Baṣrī, Abū al-Ḥusayn. *al-Muʿtamad fī uṣūl al-fiqh*. Edited by Muhammad Hamidullah. 2 vols. Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1964–1965.

al-Baṣrī, Abū al-Ḥusayn. *Taṣaffuḥ al-adilla*. Edited by Wilferd Madelung and Sabine Schmidtke. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006.

Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb. *Metaphysica*. 7th ed. Halae Magdebvrgicae: C.H. Hemmerde, 1779.

al-Bayhaqī, Abū Bakr. *al-Asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt*. Edited by ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥāshidī. 2 vols. Jeddah: Maktabat al-Sawādī, 1993.

al-Bazdawī, Abū-l-Yusr Muḥammad. *Uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by Hans Peter Linss. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya lil-Turāth, 2003. First published 1963.

Bazzano, Elliott. "The Qurʾan according to Ibn Taymiyya: Redefining Exegetical Authority in the Islamic Tradition." PhD dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2013.

al-Bazzār, ʿUmar b. ʿAlī. *al-Aʿlām al-ʿaliyya fī manāqib Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*. Edited by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Jadīda, 1976.

Becker-Klein, Dorothea. "Der ‚Heilige' in der Kritik Ibn Taymīyas." PhD dissertation, Free University of Berlin, 1957.

Behler, Thomas. *Die Ewigkeit der Welt: Problemgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den Kontroversen um Weltanfang und Weltunendlichkeit in der arabischen und jüdischen Philosophie des Mittelalters*. Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1965.

Belhaj, Abdessamad. "Ibn Taymiyya et la négation de la métaphore." In *Continuity and Change in the Realms of Islam: Studies in Honour of Professor Urbain Vermeulen*, edited by Kristof D'Hulster and Jo van Steenbergen, 65–75. Leuven: Peeters, 2008.

Belhaj, Abdessamad. *Questions théologiques dans la rhétorique arabe*. Piliscsaba, Hungary: Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2009.

Ben Cheneb, Mohammed. "Ibn Taimīya." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed., vol. 2, edited by M.Th. Houtsma, A.J. Wensinck, and T.W. Arnold, 447–450. Leiden: Brill, 1927.

Berger, Lutz. *Islamische Theologie*. Vienna: Facultas Verlags- und Buchhandels AG, 2010.

Bin Ramli, Harith. "The Predecessors of Ashʿarism: Ibn Kullāb, al-Muḥāsibī and al-Qalānisī." In Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 215–224.

Birk, Bettina. "Konnotation im Deutschen: Eine Untersuchung aus morphologischer, lexikologischer und lexikographischer Perspektive." PhD dissertation, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, 2012.

Bori, Caterina. *Ibn Taymiyya: Una vita esemplare. Analisi delle fonti classiche della sua biografia*. Pisa and Rome: Instituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 2003.

Bori, Caterina, ed. "Ibn Taymiyya: Receptions (14th–17th Century)." Special issue, *Muslim World* 108, no. 1 (2018).

Bosworth, Clifford. "The Qurʾanic Prophet Shuʿaib and Ibn Taymiyya's Epistle Concerning Him." *Le Muséon* 88 (1974): 425–440.

Bramsen, Dorthe. "Ibn Taymiyya og de guddommelige egenskaber." *Religionsvidenskabeligt Tidsskrift* 42 (2003): 27–41.

Brockelmann, Carl. *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*. 2nd ed. (matched to Supplement volumes). 2 vols. Plus Supplement, 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1937–1949.

Brodersen, Angelika. "Abū Isḥāq al-Isfarāyīnī." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2008-2, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 19b–21a. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Brodersen, Angelika. "Sunnitische Identitätssuche im Transoxanien des 5./11. Jahrhunderts: Abū Šakūr as-Sālimī und sein *Tamhīd fī bayān at-tauḥīd*." In *Rationalität in der islamischen Theologie*, vol. 1, *Die klassische Periode*, edited by Maha El Kaisy-Friemuth, Reza Hajatpour, and Mohammed Abdel Rahem, 324–350. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019.

Brodersen, Angelika. *Der unbekannte* kalām*: Theologische Positionen der frühen* Māturīdīya *am Beispiel der Attributenlehre*. Münster: Lit, 2014.

Brown, Jonathan A.C. *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunnī Ḥadīth Canon*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Brown, Jonathan A.C. *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2017.

Bubenheim, Frank, and Nadeem Elyas. *Der edle Qurʾān und die Übersetzung seiner Bedeutungen in die deutsche Sprache*. Medina: King Fahd Complex, 1422/[2001-2].

al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl. *Khalq afʿāl al-ʿibād wa-l-radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa-ahl al-taʿṭīl*. Edited by Fahd b. Sulaymān al-Fahīd. 2 vols. Riyadh: Dār Aṭlas al-Khaḍrāʾ, 2005.

al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. 3 vols. Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000.

Chabbi, Jacqueline. "ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2009-1, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 11b–14. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

Chaumont, Eric. "Ambiguity." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2013-4, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 50b–54a. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Chittick, William. *Ibn ʿArabi: Heir to the Prophets*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2012.

Chittick, William. *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Problem of Religious Diversity*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Chittick, William. "Rūmī and *waḥdat al-wujūd*." In *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: The Heritage of Rūmī*, edited by Amin Banani, Richard Hovannisian, and Georges Sabagh, 70–111. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Chittick, William. *The Self-Disclosure of God*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Chittick, William. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1989.

Chittick, William. "Time, Space and the Objectivity of Ethical Norms: The Teachings of Ibn ʿArabī." *Islamic Studies* 39, no. 4 (2000): 581–596.

Chodkiewicz, Cyrille. "Les premières polémiques autour d'Ibn ʿArabī: Ibn Taymiyya (661–728/1263–1328)." PhD dissertation, University of Paris, 1984.

Chodkiewicz, Michel. "Le procès posthume d'Ibn ʿArabī." In *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, edited by Frederick De Jong and Bernd Radtke, 93–123. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

Chodkiewicz, Michel. *Seal of the Saints: Prophet and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī*. Translated by Liadain Sherrard. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993. Original title: *Le Sceau des saints: Prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d'Ibn Arabî* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986).

Cook, Michael. *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Cook, Michael. *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source-Critical Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Cooperson, Michael. *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Maʾmūn*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Daiber, Hans. *Bibliography of Islamic Philosophy*. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1999 and 2007.

Daiber, Hans. "The Quran as a 'Shibboleth' of Varying Conceptions of the Godhead: A 12th Century Ḥanbalite-Ashʿarite Discussion and Its Theological Sequel in the Protocol of Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī." In *Israel Oriental Studies: Concepts of the Other in Near Eastern Religions*, edited by Ilai Alon, Ithamar Grunewald, and Itamar Singer, 249–295. Leiden: Brill, 1994.

d'Ancona, Cristina. "Aristotle and Aristotelianism." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2008-1, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 153b–169a. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

al-Dārimī, Abū Saʿīd. *Radd al-imām al-Dārimī ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd ʿalā Bishr al-Marīsī al-ʿanīd*. Edited by Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Faqqī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004.

Davidson, Herbert. *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Davidson, Herbert. *Proof for Eternity, Creation, and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

al-Dawādārī, Abū Bakr. *Kanz al-durar wa-jāmiʿ al-ghurar*. In Shams and al-ʿImrān, *al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām*, 224–240.

Demircan, Adnan, and Atay Rifat. "*Tafsir* in Early Islam." In Leaman, *Qurʾān: An Encyclopedia*, 624a–631.

Demiri, Lejla. *Muslim Exegesis of the Bible in Medieval Cairo: Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī's (d. 716/1316) Commentary on the Christian Scriptures*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn. *Dhayl Tārīkh al-Islām*. Edited by Māzin b. Sālim Bāwazīr. Riyadh: Dār al-Mughnī, 1998.

al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn. *Kitāb al-ʿArsh*. Edited by Muḥammad b. Khalīfa al-Tamīmī. 2 vols. Riyadh: Maktabat Aḍwāʾ al-Salaf, 1999.

al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn. *Kitāb al-ʿUluww lil-ʿAlī al-ʿAẓīm*. Edited by ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ al-Barrāk. 2 vols. Riyadh: Dār al-Waṭan, 1999.

al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn. *Muʿjam al-shuyūkh al-kabīr*. Edited by Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb al-Hīla. 2 vols. Taif: Maktabat al-Ṣiddīq, 1988.

al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn. *Mukhtaṣar al-ʿUluww lil-ʿAlī al-Ghaffār*. Edited by Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī. Damascus: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1981.

al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn. *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*. Edited by Shuʿayb al-Arnaʾūṭ (intro.). 25 vols. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1996.

Dhanani, Alnoor. "Atomism." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2013-1, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 32–39a. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Dhanani, Alnoor. *The Physical Theory of Kalām: Atoms, Space, and Void in Basrian Muʿtazilī Cosmology*. Leiden: Brill, 1994.

Dhanani, Alnoor. "Space." In Kalin, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Science, and Technology in Islam*, vol. 2, 273b–277.

Dziri, Amir. *Die Ars Disputationis in der islamischen Scholastik: Grundzüge der muslimischen Argumentations- und Beweislehre*. Freiburg: kalam, 2015.

Ebstein, Michael. *Mysticism and Philosophy in al-Andalus: Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Ismāʿīlī Tradition*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

El-Bizri, Nader, ed. *The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and Their Rasāʾil: An Introduction*. Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Elmaz, Orhan. "Wenn Pausen Grenzen setzen: Über den Koranvers Q 3:7 und die Qualität einer Rezitationspause." In *Religion übersetzen: Übersetzung und Textrezeption*

als Transformationsphänomene von Religion, edited by Marianne Grohmann and Ursula Ragacs, 203–216. Vienna: V&R unipress, 2012.

el Omari, Racha. "Accommodation and Resistance: Classical Muʿtazilites on Ḥadīth." *Near Eastern Studies* 71, no. 2 (2012): 231–256.

el Omari, Racha. "Ibn Taymiyya's 'Theology of the Sunna' and His Polemics with the Ashʿarites." In Rapoport and Ahmed, *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, 101–119.

el Omari, Racha. *The Theology of Abū l-Qāsim al-Balkhī/al-Kaʿbī (d. 319/931)*. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

El-Rouayheb, Khaled. "From Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 1566) to Khayr al-Dīn al-Ālūsī (d. 1899): Changing Views of Ibn Taymiyya among Non-Ḥanbalī Sunni Scholars." In Rapoport and Ahmed, *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, 269–318.

El-Rouayheb, Khaled. *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

El-Rouayheb, Khaled. "Theology and Logic." In Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 408–431.

El-Rouayheb, Khaled, and Sabine Schmidtke, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

El-Tobgui, Carl Sharif. *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation: A Study of Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*. Leiden: Brill, 2020.

Endress, Gerhard, ed. *Proclus Arabus: Zwanzig Abschnitte aus der* Institutio Theologica *aus arabischer Übersetzung*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1973.

Escovitz, Joseph. "The Establishment of Four Chief Judgeships in the Mamlūk Empire." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 102, no. 3 (1982): 529–531.

al-Fahd, Nāṣir b. Ḥamad. *Ṣiyānat Majmūʿ al-fatāwā min al-saqṭ wa-l-taṣḥīf*. Riyadh: Maktabat Aḍwāʾ al-Salaf, 2003.

Fakhry, Majid. *Ethical Theories in Islam*. Leiden: Brill, 1994.

al-Fārābī, Abū Naṣr. *Kitāb al-Qiyās al-ṣaghīr ʿalā ṭarīqat al-mutakallimīn*. In *al-Manṭiq ʿinda al-Fārābī*, edited by Rafīq al-ʿAjam, vol. 2, 65–93 and 45–64. Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986.

Fatani, Afnan. "Aya." In Leaman, *Qurʾān: An Encyclopedia*, 85b–103.

Fons, Emmanuel. "À propos des Mongols: Une lettre d'Ibn Taymiyya au sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn." *Annales Islamologiques* 43 (2009): 31–73.

Frank, Richard. "The Ašʿarite Ontology. 1: Primary Entities." *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 9 (1999): 163–231. Reprinted as part 9, with original pagination, in Frank, *Classical Islamic Theology*.

Frank, Richard. "Attribute, Attribution, and Being: Three Islamic Views." In *Philosophies of Existence: Ancient and Medieval*, edited by Parviz Morewedge, 258–278. New York: Fordham University Press, 1982. Reprinted as part 5, with original pagination, in Frank, *Classical Islamic Theology*.

Frank, Richard. *Beings and Their Attributes: The Teaching of the Basrian School of the Muʿtazila in the Classical Period*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1978.

Frank, Richard. *Classical Islamic Theology: The Ashʿarites*. Edited by Dimitri Gutas. Texts and Studies on the Development and History of Kalām 3. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008.

Frank, Richard. "The Divine Attributes according to the Teaching of Abū al-Hudhayl al-ʿAllāf." *Le Muséon* 82 (1969): 451–506. Reprinted as part 2, with original pagination, in Frank, *Early Islamic Theology*.

Frank, Richard. *Early Islamic Theology: The Muʿtazilites and al-Ashʿarī*. Edited by Dimitri Gutas. Texts and Studies on the Development and History of Kalām 2. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

Frank, Richard. "Elements in the Development of the Teaching of al-Ashʿarī." *Le Muséon* 104 (1990): 141–190. Reprinted as part 6, with original pagination, in Frank, *Early Islamic Theology*.

Frank, Richard. *Al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite School*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994.

Frank, Richard. "Ḥāl." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (Supplement), edited by P.J. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, 343b–348. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Frank, Richard. "Knowledge and *Taqlīd*: The Foundations of Religious Belief in Classical Ashʿarism." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, no. 1 (1989): 37–62. Reprinted as part 7, with original pagination, in Frank, *Classical Islamic Theology*.

Frank, Richard. "Al-Ustādh Abū Isḥāḳ: An *ʿAḳīda* Together with Selected Fragments." *Mélanges de l'Institut dominicain d'études orientales* (*MIDEO*) (1989): 129–202. Reprinted as part 14, with original pagination, in Frank, *Classical Islamic Theology*.

Fudge, Bruce. *Qurʾānic Hermeneutics: Al-Ṭabrisī and the Craft of Commentary*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Gacek, Adam. *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers*. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

Gardet, Louis. "Allāh." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, edited by H.A.R. Gibb, J.H. Kramers, E. Lévi-Provençal, B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat, and J. Schacht, 406a–417. Leiden: Brill, 1960.

Gardet, Louis. *Dieu et la destinée de l'homme*. Paris: J. Vrin, 1967.

Ghani, Usman. "The Concept of *Sunna* in Muʿtazilite Thought." In *The Sunna and its Status in Islamic Law: The Search for a Sound Hadith*, edited by Adis Duderija, 59–73. New York: Palgrave, 2015.

Gharaibeh, Mohammad. *Zur Attributenlehre der Wahhābīya unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Schriften Ibn ʿUṯaimīns (1929–2001)*. Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2012.

al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayna al-Islām wa-l-zandaqa*. Edited by Maḥmūd Bījū. N.p.: n.p., 1993.

al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. 4 vols. Cairo: Lajnat Nashr al-Thaqāfa al-Islāmiyya, 1937–1939.

al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *al-Iqtiṣād fī al-iʿtiqād*. Edited by İbrahim Agâh Çubukçu and Hüseyin Atay. Ankara: Nur Matbaası, 1962.

al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *al-Maʿārif al-ʿaqliyya*. Edited by ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1963.

al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa*. Edited by Maḥmūd Bījū. Damascus: Maṭbaʿat al-Ṣabāḥ, 2000.

al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Miḥakk al-naẓar fī al-manṭiq*. Edited by Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn al-Naʿsānī and Muṣṭafā al-Qabbānī. Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Adabiyya, [1925?].

al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Miʿyār al-ʿilm fī fann al-manṭiq*. Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-ʿArabiyya, 1927.

al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *al-Mustaṣfā min ʿilm al-uṣūl*. 2 vols. Cairo (Būlāq): al-Maṭbaʿa al-Amīriyya, 1322–1324/[1904–1907]. Photographic reprint, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.

al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *al-Mustaṣfā min ʿilm al-uṣūl*. Edited by Ḥamza Ḥāfiẓ. 4 vols. Medina: al-Jāmiʿa al-Islāmiyya, 1443/[1992-3].

al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Qānūn al-taʾwīl*. Edited by Maḥmūd Bījū. N.p.: n.p., 1993.

Gibbs, Raymond W., Jr., ed. *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Gilliot, Claude. "Exegesis of the Qurʾān: Classical and Medieval." In *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, vol. 2, 99b–124a. Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Gimaret, Daniel. *La doctrine d'al-Ashʿarī*. Paris: Patrimoines, 1990.

Gimaret, Daniel. "Kalām." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 4, edited by C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, B. Lewis, and Ch. Pellat, 468b–471a. Leiden: Brill, 1978.

Gimaret, Daniel. "al-Mutawallī." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 7, edited by C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, and Ch. Pellat, 781. Leiden: Brill, 1993.

Gimaret, Daniel. *Les noms divins en Islam: Exégèse lexicographique et théologique*. Paris: Patrimoines, 1988.

Gimaret, Daniel. "Ṣifa (2. In Theology)." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 9, edited by C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, and G. Lecomte, 551b–552a. Leiden: Brill, 1997.

Gimaret, Daniel. "Sur la conversion: L'exemple du théologien musulman Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ašʿarī (m. 324 h./935 AD)." In *De la conversion*, edited by Jean-Christophe Attias, 107–118. Paris: Patrimoines, 1997.

Glassen, Erika. *Der mittlere Weg: Studien zur Religionspolitik und Religiösität der späteren Abbasidenzeit*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1981.

Gleave, Robert. *Islam and Literalism: Literal Meaning and Interpretation in Islamic Legal Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

Glucksberg, Sam. "How Metaphors Create Categories—Quickly." In Gibbs, *Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, 67–83.

Gobillot, Geneviève. *La fitra: La conception originelle. Ses interprétations et fonctions chez les penseurs musulmans*. Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 2000.

Goldziher, Ignaz. *Die Ẓāhiriten: Ihr Lehrsystem und ihre Geschichte*. 1884. Reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967.

Griffel, Frank. *Apostasie und Toleranz im Islam: Die Entwicklung zu al-Ġazālī's Urteil gegen die Philosophie und die Reaktionen der Philosophen*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

Griffel, Frank. "Between al-Ghazālī and Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī: The Dialectical Turn of Philosophy in Iraq and Iran during the Sixth/Twelfth Century." In *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century*, edited by Peter Adamson, 45–75. London: The Warburg Institute, 2011.

Griffel, Frank. "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī." In *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy between 500 and 1500*, edited by Henrik Lagerlund, vol. 1, 341–345. Dordrecht: Springer, 2011.

Griffel, Frank. "Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist: The Universal Rule for Allegorically Interpreting Revelation (*al-Qānūn al-Kullī fī t-Taʾwīl*)." In *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of al-Ghazālī. Papers Collected on His 900th Anniversary*, vol. 1, edited by Georges Tamer, 89–120. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Griffel, Frank. *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Griffel, Frank. "Ibn Taymiyya and His Ashʿarite Opponents on Reason and Revelation: Similarities, Differences, and a Vicious Circle." *Muslim World* 108, no. 1 (2018): 11–39.

Griffel, Frank. "Muslim Philosophers' Rationalist Explanation of Muḥammad's Prophecy." In *The Cambridge Companion to Muḥammad*, edited by Jonathan E. Brockopp, 158–179. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Griffel, Frank. "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received." *Islamic Studies* 18, no. 3 (2007): 313–344.

Griffel, Frank. Review of *Der unbekannte* kalām*: Theologische Positionen der frühen Māturīdīya am Beispiel der Attributenlehre*, by Angelika Brodersen. *Der Islam* 93, no. 2 (2016): 585–588.

Gutas, Dimitri. *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works*. 2nd rev. and exp. ed. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Gutas, Dimitri. "Die Wiedergeburt der Philosophie und die Übersetzungen ins Arabische." In Rudolph, *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt*, vol. 1, 55–91.

Gwynne, Rosalind Ward. "The *A Fortiori* Argument in *Fiqh*, *Naḥw* and *Kalām*." In *Studies in the History of Arabic Grammar II*, edited by C.H.M. Versteegh and Michael Carter, 165–177. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1990.

al-Ḥāfiẓ, Muṭīʿ. *Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Sukkariyya: Suknā Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm b. Taymiyya*. Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 2003.

al-Ḥakīm, Suʿād. *al-Muʿjam al-ṣūfī: al-Ḥikma fī ḥudūd al-kalima*. Beirut: Dandara, 1981.

Hallaq, Wael B. "The Authenticity of Prophetic Ḥadîth: A Pseudo-problem." *Studia Islamica* 89 (1999): 75–90.

Hallaq, Wael B. *Ibn Taymiyya against the Greek Logicians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Halm, Heinz, et al., eds. *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients (TAVO)—Teil B*. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1977–1984.

Hansu, Hüseyin. "Notes on the Term *Mutawātir* and its Reception in *Ḥadīth* Criticism." *Islamic Law and Society* 16 (2009): 383–408.

Haque, Serajul. "Ibn Taymīyyah." In *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, edited by M.M. Sharif, 796–819. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966.

Hardy, Paul-A. "Epistemology and Divine Discourse." In *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, edited by Tim Winter, 288–306. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Hasse, Dag Nikolaus, and Amos Bertolacci, eds. *The Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Physics and Cosmology*. Boston: De Gruyter, 2018.

Hauser, Rollen. "Essence and Existence in Ibn Sīnā." In *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy*, edited by Richard Taylor and Luis Xavier López-Farjeat, 212–224. London: Routledge, 2016.

Heer, Nicholas. "The Priority of Reason in the Interpretation of Scripture: Ibn Taymīyah and the *Mutakallimūn*." In *The Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy*, edited by Mustansir Mir (in collaboration with J.E. Fossum), 181–195. Princeton: Darwin Press, 1993.

Heidemann, Stefan. *Das Aleppiner Kalifat (A.D. 1261): Vom Ende des Kalifates in Bagdad über Aleppo zu den Restaurationen in Kairo*. Leiden: Brill, 1994.

Heinrichs, Wolfhart. "Contacts between Scriptural Hermeneutics and Literary Theory in Islam: The Case of *Majâz*." In *Tafsīr: Interpreting the Qurʾān*, edited by Mustafa Shah, vol. 2, 25–49. London: Routledge, 2013. First published in *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 7 (1991–1992): 253–284.

Heinrichs, Wolfhart. "On the Genesis of the *Ḥaqîqa-Mazâj* Dichotomy." *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984): 111–140.

al-Ḥillī, Ibn Muṭahhar. *Minhāj al-karāma fī ithbāt al-imāma*. Lithographic reprint of a manuscript. [Iran]: n.p., 1294/[1877].

Hirschler, Konrad. *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Hofer, Nathan. *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173–1325*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.

Höffe, Otfried. *Aristoteles*. 2nd ed. Munich: Beck, 1999.

Hoffmann, Thomas Sören. "Zeitlosigkeit." In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 12, edited by Gottfried Gabriel, 1274–1277. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004.

Holtzman, Livnat. "Accused of Anthropomorphism: Ibn Taymiyya's *Miḥan* as Reflected in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *al-Kāfiya al-Shāfiya*." *Muslim World* 106 (2016): 561–587.

Holtzman, Livnat. "Anthropomorphism." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2011-4, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 46b–55a. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

Holtzman, Livnat. "'Does God Really Laugh?'—Appropriate and Inappropriate Descriptions of God in Islamic Traditionalist Theology." In *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times*, edited by Albrecht Classen, 165–200. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010.

Holtzman, Livnat. "The *miḥna* of Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 513/1119) and the *fitnat* Ibn al-Qushayrī (d. 514/1120)." In Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 660–678.

Homerin, Thomas Emil. "Ibn Taimīya's *al-Ṣūfīyah wa-al-fuqarāʾ*." *Arabica* 32, no. 2 (1985): 219–244.

Honigmann, Ernst. "Raʾs al-ʿAyn." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 8, edited by C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, and G. Lecomte, 433b–435a. Leiden: Brill, 1995.

Hoover, Jon. "Creed." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2014-3, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 67–73a. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Hoover, Jon. "God Acts by His Will and Power: Ibn Taymiyya's Theology of a Personal God in his Treatise on the Voluntary Attributes." In Rapoport and Ahmed, *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, 55–77.

Hoover, Jon. "Ḥanbalī Theology." In Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 625–659.

Hoover, Jon. "Ḥashwiyya." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2016-5, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 86a–87. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

Hoover, Jon. "Ibn Taymiyya." In *Christian–Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*. Vol. 4, *1200–1350*, edited by David Thomas and Alex Mallett, 825–878. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Hoover, Jon. "Ibn Taymiyya." *Oxford Bibliographies Online*. Last modified 24 April 2012. https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0150.xml.

Hoover, Jon. "Ibn Taymiyya as an Avicennan Theologian: A Muslim Approach to God's Self-Sufficiency." *Theological Review* 27, no. 1 (2006): 34–46.

Hoover, Jon. "Ibn Taymiyya between Moderation and Radicalism." In *Reclaiming Islamic Tradition: Modern Interpretations of the Classical Heritage*, edited by Elisabeth Kendall and Ahmad Khan, 177–203. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

Hoover, Jon. *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Hoover, Jon. "Islamic Universalism: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Salafī Deliberations on the Duration of Hell-Fire." *Muslim World* 99 (2009): 181–201.

Hoover, Jon. "Perpetual Creativity in the Perfection of God: Ibn Taymiyya's Hadith Commentary on God's Creation of this World." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15, no. 3 (2004): 287–329.

Hoover, Jon. Review of *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam*, by Alexander Knysh. *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 10, no. 3 (1999): 392–394.

Hoover, Jon, and Marwan Abu Ghazaleh Mahajneh. "Theology as Translation: Ibn Taymiyya's Fatwa permitting Theology and its Reception into his *Averting the Conflict between Reason and Revealed Tradition* (Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql)." *Muslim World* 108, no. 1 (2018): 40–86.

Horst, Heribert. "Zur Überlieferung im Korankommentar aṭ-Ṭabarīs." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 103 (1953): 290–307.

Hurvitz, Nimrod. "al-Maʾmūn (r. 198/813–218/833)." In Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 649–659.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr. *al-Tamhīd li-mā fī al-Muwaṭṭaʾ min al-maʿānī wa-l-asānīd*. Edited by Muḥammad al-Falāḥ et al. 26 vols. Rabat: al-Awqāf al-Maghribiyya, 1967–1992.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. *Juzʾ fī kalām al-ʿulamāʾ ʿalā al-ḥadīth al-mansūb lil-nabī ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama ʿan tawājudihi wa-tamzīq ridāʾihi*. Edited by Muḥammad al-Takla. Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir, 2005.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. *al-ʿUqūd al-durriyya fī dhikr baʿḍ manāqib Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*. Edited by ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿImrān. Mecca: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawāʾid, 2011.

Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim, Abū Bakr. *al-Sunna*. Edited by Bāsim al-Jawābirī. Riyadh: Dār al-Ṣumayʿī, 1998.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm musnadan ʿan Rasūl Allāh ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallama wa-l-ṣaḥāba wa-l-tābiʿīn*. Edited by Asʿad al-Ṭayyib. 9 vols. Riyadh: Maktabat Nizār Muṣṭafā al-Bāz, 1997.

Ibn Abī al-ʿIzz. *Sharḥ al-ʿAqīda al-Ṭaḥāwiyya*. Edited by ʿAbd Allāh al-Turkī and Shuʿayb al-Arnaʾūṭ. 2 vols. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1990.

Ibn Abī Rabīʿa, ʿUmar. *Dīwān ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa*. Edited by Fayz Muḥammad. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1996.

Ibn Abī Yaʿlā al-Farrāʾ. *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*. Edited by Muḥammad Ḥamīd al-Faqqī. 2 vols. Cairo: al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1952.

Ibn Aḥmad, ʿAbd Allāh. *Kitāb al-Sunna*. Edited by Muḥammad b. Saʿīd b. Sālim al-Qaḥṭānī. 2 vols. Dammam: Dār Ibn al-Qayyim, 1986.

Ibn ʿAqīl, Abū al-Wafāʾ. *al-Wāḍiḥ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*. Edited by ʿAbd Allāh al-Turkī. 5 vols. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1999.

Ibn ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. Edited by Abū al-ʿIlā ʿAfīfī. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1946.

Ibn ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*. 4 vols. Cairo: Būlāq, 1852–1857.

Ibn ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*. Edited by ʿUthmān Yaḥyā. 2nd un-changed ed. 14 vols. Unfinished. Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 1977–1992.

Ibn ʿAsākir, Abū al-Qāsim. *Tabyīn kadhib al-muftarī fī-mā nusiba ilā al-imām Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī*. Edited by Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Qudsī. Damascus: Maṭbaʿat al-Tawfīq, 1347/[1928-9].

Ibn ʿAṭiyya. *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz fī tafsīr al-kitāb al-ʿazīz*. Edited by ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad. 6 vols. Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2001.

Ibn Baṭṭa, Abū ʿAbd Allāh. *La profession de foi d'Ibn Baṭṭa*. Edited and translated by Henri Laoust. Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1958.

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Shams al-Dīn. *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa: Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār fī gharāʾib al-amṣār wa-ʿajāʾib al-asfār*. Edited by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-ʿAryān and Muṣṭafā al-Qaṣṣāṣ. 2 vols. Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-ʿUlūm, 1987.

Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Shams al-Dīn. *Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah*. Edited and translated by Charles Defrémery and Beniamino Sanguinetti. 4 vols. Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1853–1858.

Ibn al-Dahhān, Muḥammad. *Taqwīm al-naẓar fī masāʾil khilāfiyya dhāʾiʿa wa-nubadh madhhabiyya nāfiʿa*. Edited by Ṣāliḥ al-Khuzaym. 5 vols. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2001.

Ibn Fāris, Aḥmad. *Muʿjam maqāyīs al-lugha*. Edited by ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn. 6 vols. N.p.: Dār al-Fikr, 1979.

Ibn Fāris, Aḥmad. *al-Ṣāḥibī fī fiqh al-lugha al-ʿarabiyya wa-masāʾilihā wa-sunan al-ʿArab fī kalāmihā*. Edited by Aḥmad Ḥasan Basj. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997.

Ibn Fūrak, Abū Bakr. *Kitāb Mushkil al-ḥadīth* aw *Taʾwīl al-akhbār al-mutashābiha*. Edited by Daniel Gimaret. Damascus: Institut français d'études arabes de Damas, 2003.

Ibn Fūrak, Abū Bakr. *Mujarrad Maqālāt al-shaykh Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī*. Edited by Daniel Gimaret. Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1987.

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī. *Fatḥ al-Bārī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Edited by Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī. 13 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifa, 1370/[1959-60].

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī. *Taʿrīf ahl al-taqdīs bi-marātib al-mawṣūfīn bi-l-tadlīs*. Edited by ʿĀṣim b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qarwītī. Amman: Maktabat al-Manār, 1983.

Ibn Ḥanbal, Aḥmad [pseudo]. *al-Radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa-l-zanādiqa*. Edited by Daghash b. Shubayb al-ʿAjmī. Kuwait: Gharāsh, 2005.

Ibn Ḥazm, Abū Muḥammad. *al-Fiṣal fī al-milal wa-l-ahwāʾ wa-l-niḥal*. 5 vols. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Adabiyya, 1317/[1899-1900]. Photographic reprint, Cairo: Maktabat al-Salām al-ʿĀlamiyya, n.d.

Ibn Ḥazm, Abū Muḥammad. *al-Iḥkām fī uṣūl al-aḥkām*. Edited by Iḥsān ʿAbbās. 8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, n.d. [ca. 1980].

Ibn al-Jawzī. *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism: Ibn al-Jawzī's Kitāb Akhbār as-Ṣifāt*. Edited and translated by Merlin Swartz. Leiden: Brill, 2002.

Ibn al-Jawzī. *al-Muntaẓam fī tārīkh al-mulūk wa-l-umam*. Edited by Muṣṭafā ʿAṭā and Muḥammad ʿAṭā. 37 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1995. Translated into German by Adam Mez as *Die Renaissance des Islāms* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters, 1922).

Ibn Kathīr, Abū al-Fidāʾ Ismāʿīl [b. ʿUmar]. *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*. In Shams and al-ʿImrān, *al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām*, 404–447.

Ibn Khuzayma, Abū Bakr. *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd wa-ithbāt ṣifāt al-Rabb ʿazza wa-jalla*. Edited by ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Shahwān. Riyadh: Dār al-Rushd, 1988.

Ibn Manẓūr, Muḥammad. *Lisān al-ʿArab*. Edited by ʿAbd Allāh ʿAlī al-Kabīr, Muḥammad Aḥmad Ḥasb Allāh, and Hāshim Muḥammad al-Shādhilī. 6 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.

Ibn Mattawayh, Abū Muḥammad. *al-Majmūʿ fī al-Muḥīṭ bi-l-taklīf*. Edited by Jean Joseph Houben. Vol. 1. Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kāthūlīkiyya, 1965.

Ibn al-Nadīm. *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm*. Edited by Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid. 2 vols. printed in four parts. London: Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage, 2009.

Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī, Muwaffaq al-Dīn. *Ibn Qudāma's Censure of Speculative Theology: An Edition and Translation of Ibn Qudāma's Taḥrīm an-naẓar fī kutub ahl al-kalām*. Edited and translated by George Makdisi. London: Luzac, 1962.

Ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī, Muwaffaq al-Dīn. *Rawḍat al-nāẓir wa-junnat al-munāẓir*. Edited by Muḥammad Mirābī. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla Nāshirūn, 2009.

Ibn Qutayba, Abū Muḥammad. *al-Ikhtilāf fī al-lafẓ wa-l-radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa-l-mushabbiha*. Annotated by ʿUmar b. Maḥmūd Abū ʿUmar. Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1991.

Ibn Qutayba, Abū Muḥammad. *Taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*. Edited by Salīm b. ʿĪd al-Hilālī. Annotated by ʿUmar b. Maḥmūd Abū ʿUmar. Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Qayyim, 2009.

Ibn Rajab, Abū al-Faraj. *al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*. Edited by Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Faqqī. 2 vols. Cairo: al-Sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1953.

Ibn Rushayyiq. *Asmāʾ muʾallafāt Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*. In Shams and al-ʿImrān, *al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām*, 282–311.

Ibn Rushd, Abū al-Walīd. *al-Kashf ʿan manāhij al-adilla fī ʿaqāʾid al-milla*. Edited by Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī. Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 1998.

Ibn Rushd, Abū al-Walīd. *Maßgebliche Abhandlung: Faṣl al-maqāl*. Translated by Frank Griffel. Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010.

Ibn Sīnā, Abū ʿAlī. *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*. Edited by Mujtabā al-Zirāʿī. 3rd ed. Qom: Būstān, 1434/[2012-13].

Ibn Sīnā, Abū ʿAlī. *al-Shifāʾ: al-Manṭiq—al-madkhal*. Edited by al-Ab Qanawātī, Maḥmūd al-Khuḍayrī, and Fuʾād al-Ahwānī. Cairo: Wizārat al-Maʿārif al-ʿUmūmiyya, 1952.

Ibn Sīnā, Abū ʿAlī. *al-Taʿlīqāt*. Edited by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī. Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 1973.

Ibn Surayj. *al-Imām Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Surayj (t. AH 306) wa-risālatuhu fī ṣifāt Allāh taʿālā*. Edited by Saʿd al-Shahrānī. N.p.: n.p., 2005.

Ibn al-Tilimsānī, Sharaf al-Dīn. *Sharḥ Maʿālim uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by Nizār Ḥammādī. Amman: Dār al-Fatḥ, 2010.

al-ʿImrān, ʿAlī b. Muḥammad, ed. *Takmilat al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya khilāla sabʿat qurūn*. 2nd ed. Riyadh: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawāʾid, 1423/[2002-3].

al-Iṣfahānī, Abū Nuʿaym. *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfiyāʾ*. 10 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1996.

Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn. *al-Ṭabīʿa: Tarjamat Isḥāq b. Ḥunayn maʿa shurūḥ Ibn al-Samḥ wa-Ibn ʿAdī wa-Mattā b. Yūnus wa-Abī al-Faraj b. al-Ṭayyib*. Edited by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī. Photomechanical reprint of first edition. Vol. 1. Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 1984.

Izharul-Haq, Muhammad. "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Literal and Non-Literal Meaning of the Qurʾan." *Pharos* (Research Journal of the Shaykh Zayed Islamic Centre, University of Peshawar) 3, no. 11 (1996): 43–57.

Izutsu, Toshihiku. *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Jabr, Farīd, et al. *Mawsūʿat muṣṭalaḥāt ʿilm al-manṭiq ʿinda al-ʿArab*. Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān Nāshirūn, 1996.

Jackson, Sherman A. "Ibn Taymiyya on Trial in Damascus." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 39, no. 1 (1994): 41–85.

Jackson, Sherman A. *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's* Fayṣal al-Tafriqa. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Jaffer, Tariq. *Rāzī: Master of Qurʾānic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

al-Jāḥiẓ, Abū ʿUthmān ʿAmr b. Baḥr. *Ḥujaj al-nubuwwa*. In *Rasāʾil al-Jāḥiẓ*, edited by ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, vol. 3, 223–281. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1979.

Janssens, Jules. "Avicennian Elements in Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Discussion of Place, Void and Directions in the *al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya*." In Hasse and Bertolacci, *Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin Reception*, 43–63.

Jarrar, Maher. "Ghulām Khalīl." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2015-4, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 145–149. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

al-Jayāmī, Ibrāhīm. "Faṣl fī-mā qāma bihi Ibn Taymiyya wa-tafarrada bihi wa-dhālika fī taksīr al-aḥjār." In Shams and al-ʿImrān, *al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām*, 132–150.

al-Jishumī, al-Ḥākim. *Taḥkīm al-ʿuqūl fī taṣḥīḥ al-uṣūl*. Edited by ʿAbd al-Salām b. ʿAbbās al-Wajīh. Amman: Muʾassasat al-Imām Zayd b. ʿAlī al-Thaqāfiyya, 2001.

Johnson, Mark. "Metaphor in the Philosophical Tradition." In *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor*, edited by Mark Johnson, 3–47. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981.

Jokisch, Benjamin. *Islamisches Recht in Theorie und Praxis: Analyse einiger kaufrecht-licher Fatwas von Taqī'd-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1996.

al-Jurjānī, ʿAbd al-Qāhir. *Kitāb Asrār al-balāgha*. Edited by Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shā-kir. Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Madanī, 1991. Translated into German by Hellmut Ritter as *Die Geheimnisse der Wortkunst* (*Asrār al-balāġa*) *des ʿAbdalqāhir al-Curcānī* (Wies-baden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1959).

al-Jurjānī, al-Sharīf. *Muʿjam al-taʿrīfāt*. Edited by Muḥammad Ṣiddīq al-Minshāwī. Cairo: Dār al-Faḍīla, 2004.

al-Juwaynī, Abū al-Maʿālī. *al-Burhān fī uṣūl al-fiqh*. Edited by ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Dīb. 2 vols. Qatar: Khalīfa b. Ḥamad Āl Thānī, 1399/[1979-80].

al-Juwaynī, Abū al-Maʿālī. *Kitāb al-Irshād ilā qawāṭiʿ al-adilla fī uṣūl al-iʿtiqād*. Edited by Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsā and ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Munʿim ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1950.

al-Juwaynī, Abū al-Maʿālī. *Lumaʿ al-adilla fī qawāʿid iʿtiqād ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa*. Edited by Fawqiyya Ḥusayn Maḥmūd. 2nd ed. Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1987.

Kabbani, Marwan. "Die Heiligenverehrung im Urteil Ibn Taymīyas und seiner Zeitge-nossen." PhD dissertation, University of Bonn, 1979.

al-Kaʿbī, Abū al-Qāsim. *Qabūl al-akhbār wa-maʿrifat al-rijāl*. Edited by Abū ʿAmr al-Ḥusaynī b. ʿAmr b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm. 2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2000.

Kalin, Ibrahim, ed. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Science, and Technology in Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

al-Kalwadhānī, Abū al-Khaṭṭāb. *al-Tamhīd fī uṣūl al-fiqh*. Edited by Mufīd Abū ʿAmsha. 4 vols. Jeddah: Markaz al-Baḥth al-ʿIlmī wa-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1985.

Kaukua, Jari. "Avicenna on the Soul's Activity in Perception." In *Active Perception in the History of Philosophy: From Plato to Modern Philosophy*, edited by José Filipe Silva and Mikko Yrjönsuuri, 99–116. Cham: Springer, 2014.

al-Kawārī, Kāmila. *Qidam al-ʿālam wa-tasalsul al-ḥawādith bayna Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya wa-l-falāsifa maʿa bayān man akhṭaʾa fī al-masʾala min al-sābiqīn wa-l-muʿāṣirīn*. Amman: Dār Usāma, 2001.

Kazi, Yasir [also: Qadhi]. "Reconciling Reason and Revelation in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328): An Analytical Study of Ibn Taymiyya's *Darʾ al-taʿāruḍ*." PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2013.

Khalil, Mohammad Hassan. *Islam and the Fate of Others: The Salvation Question*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

al-Khallāl, Abū Bakr. *Kitāb al-Sunna*. Edited by ʿAṭiyya al-Zahrānī. 7 vols. Riyadh: Dār al-Rāya, 1989.

al-Khaṭṭābī, Abū Sulaymān. *Aʿlām al-ḥadīth fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Edited by Mu-ḥammad b. Saʿd. 4 vols. Mecca: Umm al-Qurā University, 1988.

Knebel, Sven. "Universalien—1. Antike." In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 11, edited by Gottfried Gabriel, 179–187. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchge-sellschaft, 2011.

Knysh, Alexander. *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999.

Knysh, Alexander, and Ali Hussain. "Ibn al-ʿArabī." *Oxford Bibliographies Online*. Last modified 25 February 2016. http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0206.xml.

Koutzarova, Tiana. *Das Transzendentale bei Ibn Sīnā*. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

Krämer, Gudrun. *Geschichte des Islam*. Munich: Beck, 2005.

Krawietz, Birgit. "Ibn Taymiyya, Vater des islamischen Fundamentalismus? Zur westlichen Rezeption eines mittelalterlichen Schariatsgelehrten." In *Theorie des Rechts und der Gesellschaft: Festschrift für Werner Krawietz zum 70. Geburtstag*, edited by Manuel Atienza, Enrico Pattaro, Martin Schulte, Boris Topornin, and Dieter Wyduckel, 39–62. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2003.

Krawietz, Birgit. "Ibn Taymiyya, Vater des islamischen Fundamentalismus? Zur westlichen Rezeption eines mittelalterlichen Schariatsgelehrten." In *Salafismus in Deutschland: Ursprünge und Gefahren einer islamisch-fundamentalistischen Bewegung*, edited by Thorsten Gerald Schneiders, 67–88. Bielefeld: transcript, 2014.

Krawietz, Birgit, and Georges Tamer, eds. *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.

Kuhn, Peter. *Gottes Trauer und Klage in der rabbinischen Überlieferung* (*Talmud und Midrasch*). Leiden: Brill, 1978.

Lagarde, Michel. "De l'ambiguïté (*mutašābih*) dans le Coran: Tentatives d'explication des exégètes musulmans." *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 3 (1985): 45–62.

Lameer, Joep. *Al-Fārābī and Aristotelian Syllogistics: Greek Theory and Islamic Practice*. Leiden: Brill, 1994.

Lane, Andrew. *A Traditional Muʿtazilite Qurʾān Commentary: The Kashshāf of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī* (*d. 538/1144*). Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Laoust, Henri. "La biographie d'Ibn Taymīya d'après Ibn Kaṯīr." *Bulletin d'études orientales* 9 (1942): 115–162.

Laoust, Henri. *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Taḳī-d-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taimīya*. Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1939.

Laoust, Henri. "Ibn Taymiyya." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 3, edited by B. Lewis, V.L. Ménage, Ch. Pellat, and J. Schacht, 951–955. Leiden: Brill, 1971.

Laoust, Henri. "al-Nashʾa al-ʿilmiyya ʿinda Ibn Taymiyya." In *Usbūʿ al-fiqh al-Islāmī wa-mahrajān al-imām Ibn Taymiyya*, edited by Muḥammad Abū Zahra, 831–843. Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Majlis al-Aʿlā li-Riʿāyat al-Funūn wa-l-Ādāb wa-l-ʿUlūm al-Ijtimāʿiyya, 1963.

Laoust, Henri. "Les premières professions de foi hanbalites." In *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, vol. 3, 7–35. Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1957.

Laoust, Henri. *La Profession de foi d'Ibn Taymiyya: La Wāsiṭiyya*. Paris: Geuthner, 1986.

Larcher, Pierre. "Arabic Linguistic Tradition II: Pragmatics." In *The Oxford Hand-

book of Arabic Linguistics, edited by Jonathan Owens, 185–212. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Leaman, Oliver. *Averroes and His Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Leaman, Oliver, ed. *The Qurʾān: An Encyclopedia*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Legenhausen, Muhammad. "Ibn Sina's Concept of God." *Ishraq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook* 1 (2010): 317–344.

Levanoni, Amalia, and Michael Winter, eds. *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Little, Donald P. "Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?" *Studia Islamica* 41 (1975): 93–111.

Little, Donald P. "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4, no. 3 (1973): 311–327.

Lizzini, Olga. "Wuǧūd-Mawǧūd/Existence-Existent in Avicenna: A Key Ontological Notion of Arabic Philosophy." *Quaestio* 3 (2003): 111–138.

Lohr, Charles H. "Logica Algazelis: Introduction and Critical Text." *Traditio* 21 (1965): 223–290.

Lucas, Scott. *Constructive Critics, Ḥadīth Literature, and the Articulation of Sunnī Islam: The Legacy of the Generation of Ibn Saʿd, Ibn Maʿīn, and Ibn Ḥanbal*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

MacDonald, Duncan B. *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory*. 1902. Reprint, London: Darf, 1985.

Madelung, Wilferd. "Abu l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2007-1, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 16–19. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Madelung, Wilferd. "Abu l-Muʿīn al-Nasafī and Ashʿarī Theology." In *Studies in Honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth*, vol. 2, *The Sultan's Turret: Studies in Persian and Turkish Culture*, edited by Carole Hillenbrand, 318–330. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

Madelung, Wilferd. "The Origins of the Controversy Concerning the Creation of the Koran." In *Orientalia Hispanica sive studia F.M. Pareja octogenario dictata*, edited by J.M. Barral, vol. I/1, 504–525. Leiden: Brill, 1974. Reprinted as part 5, with original pagination, in Madelung, *Religious Schools and Sects*.

Madelung, Wilferd. Review of *Die Festung des Glaubens*, by Tilman Nagel. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 53, no. 1 (1990): 130–131.

Madelung, Wilferd. "The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks." *Biblios* 46 (1970): 109–168. Reprinted as part 2, with original pagination, in Madelung, *Religious Schools and Sects*.

Madelung, Wilferd. *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1985.

Madhbūḥī, Muḥammad. "al-Majāz fī al-Qurʾān al-karīm bayna al-Muʿtazila wa-l-Ashā-

ʿira fī al-qarnayn al-khāmis wa-l-sādis al-hijriyyayn." PhD dissertation, University of Abou Bekr Belkaïd Tlemcen, 2005.

Madjid, Nurcholish. "Ibn Taymiyya on Kalām and Falsafa: A Problem of Reason and Revelation in Islam." PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1984.

al-Maḥmūd, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. *Mawqif Ibn Taymiyya min al-Ashāʿira*. 2 vols. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 1995.

Makdisi, George. "Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites in Islamic Religious History I." *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962): 37–80.

Makdisi, George. "Ashʿarī and the Ashʿarites in Islamic Religious History II." *Studia Islamica* 18 (1963): 19–39.

Makdisi, George. "The Hanabali School and Sufism." *Humaniora Islamica* 2 (1974): 61–72.

Makdisi, George. *Ibn ʿAqīl: Religion and Culture in Islam*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997.

Makdisi, George. "Ibn Taymiyya: A Sufi of the Qadiriya Order." *American Journal of Arabic Studies* 1 (1973): 118–129.

Makdisi, George. *L'Islam hanbalisant*. Paris: Geuthner, 1983. [Reprint of two articles first published in 1974 and 1975.]

Makdisi, George. *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981.

Makdisi, George. "The Sunnī Revival." In *Islamic Civilization 950–1150*, edited by Donald Sidney Richards, 155–168. Oxford: Cassirer, 1973.

March, Andrew. "Falsafa and Law." In *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Law*, edited by Anver Emon and Rumee Ahmed, 146–175. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. Online 2016.

al-Mardāwī, ʿAlī. *al-Taḥbīr sharḥ al-Taḥrīr fī uṣūl al-fiqh*. Edited by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jibrīn. 8 vols. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2000.

Marmura, Michael. "Avicenna's Chapter on Universals in the *Isagoge* of His *Shifāʾ*." In *Probing in Islamic Philosophy: Studies in the Philosophy of Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali and Other Major Muslim Thinkers*, by Michael Marmura, 33–59. New York: Global Academic Publishing, 2005. [Reprint of original book chapter from 1979.]

Marmura, Michael. "The Islamic Philosophers' Conception of Islam." In *Islam's Understanding of Itself*, edited by Richard Hovannisian and Jr. Speros Vryonis, 87–102. Malibu: Undena, 1983.

Marmura, Michael. "Quiddity and Universality in Avicenna." In *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, edited by Parviz Morewedge, 77–87. New York: Suny Press, 1992.

Marmura, Michael. "Some Aspects of Avicenna's Theory of God's Knowledge of Particulars." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 82, no. 3 (1962): 299–312.

Martin, Richard. "Createdness of the Qurʾān." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2015-3, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 70b–72a. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

al-Matʿanī, ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm Ibrāhīm. *al-Majāz fī al-lugha wa-l-Qurʾān al-karīm bayna al-ijāza wa-l-manʿ: ʿArḍ wa-taḥlīl wa-naqd*. 2 vols. Cairo: Maktabat al-Wahba, 1985.

al-Matʿanī, ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm Ibrāhīm. *al-Majāz ʿinda al-imām Ibn Taymiyya wa-talāmīdhihi bayna al-inkār wa-l-iqrār*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Wahba, 1995.

McAuliffe, Jane. "Text and Textuality: Q 3:7 as a Point of Intersection." In *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qurʾān*, edited by Issa Boullata, 56–76. Richmond: Curzon, 2000.

McCarthy, Richard. *The Theology of al-Ashʿarī*. Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953.

McGinnis, Jon. *Avicenna*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

McGinnis, Jon. "The Topology of Time: An Analysis of Medieval Islamic Accounts of Discrete and Continuous Time." *Modern Schoolman* 81 (Nov. 2003): 5–25.

Meier, Fritz. "Das sauberste über die Vorherbestimmung: Ein Stück Ibn Taymiyya." In Fritz Meier, *Bausteine I–III: Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Islamwissenschaft*, edited by Erika Glassen and Gudrun Schubert, vol. 2, 696–711. Istanbul: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992. Translated by John O'Kane, with the editorial assistance of Bernd Radtke, as "The Cleanest about Predestination: A Bit of Ibn Taymiyya," in *Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism*, ed. Fritz Meier, 309–334 (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

Meinhardt, Helmut. "Neuplatonismus." In *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 6, edited by Karlfried Gründer, 754–756. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984.

Melchert, Christopher. *Ahmad ibn Hanbal*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006.

Melchert, Christopher. "al-Barbahārī." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2007-3, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 160–161. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Melchert, Christopher. "Dāwūd b. Khalaf." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2011-4, edited by Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 127–128. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

Melchert, Christopher. "Religious Policies of the Caliphs from al-Mutawakkil to al-Muqtadir, A.H. 232–295/A.D. 847–908." *Islamic Law and Society* 3, no. 3 (1996): 316–342.

Memon, Muhammad Umar. *Ibn Taymīya's Struggle against Popular Religion, with an Annotated Translation of his Kitāb Iqtiḍāʾ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm li-mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm*. The Hague: Mouton, 1976.

Meyer, Egbert. "Ein kurzer Traktat Ibn ʿArabī's über die *-aʿyān aṯ-ṯābita*." *Oriens* 27–28 (1981): 226–265.

Meyer, Egbert. "Philosophischer Gottesglaube: Ibn Sīnās Thronschrift." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 130, no. 2 (1980): 226–277.

Michel, Thomas. "Ibn Taymiyya's Critique of Falsafa." *Hamdard Islamicus* 6, no. 1 (1983): 3–14.

Michel, Thomas, ed. *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's al-Jawab al-Sahih*. Ann Arbor, MI: Caravan Books, 1985.

Michot, J. Yayha. "Un célibataire endurci et sa maman: Ibn Taymiyya (m. 728/1328) et les femmes." In *La femme dans les civilisations orientales*, edited by Christian Cannuyer et al. *Acta Orientalia Belgica* 15, 165–190. Brussels: La Société belge d'études orientales, 2001.

Michot, Yahya. "From al-Maʾmūn to Ibn Sabʿīn via Avicenna: Ibn Taymīya's Historiography of *Falsafa*." In Opwis and Reisman, *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion*, 453–475.

Michot, Yahya. *Ibn Taymiyya: Against Extremism*. Paris: Albouraq, 2012.

Michot, J. Yayha. "A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary on Avicenna's *Risāla Aḍḥawiyya*, being a translation of a part of the *Darʾ al-Taʿāruḍ* of Ibn Taymiyya, with introduction, annotation, and appendices, Part 1." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2003): 149–203.

Michot, J. Yahya. "A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary on Avicenna's *Risāla Aḍḥawiyya*, being a translation of a part of the *Darʾ al-Taʿāruḍ* of Ibn Taymiyya, with introduction, annotation, and appendices, Part 2." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 3 (2003): 309–363.

Michot, Yahya. "Misled and Misleading … Yet Central in their Influence: Ibn Taymiyya's Views on the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ." In El-Bizri, *The Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ and Their* Rasāʾil, 139–179.

Michot, Yahya. *Muslims under Non-Muslim Rule: Ibn Taymiyya*. Oxford: Interface Publications, 2006.

Michot, Yahya. "Pour une tombe, à Damas …" SaphirNews, 21 September 2006. Accessed 15 October 2023. http://www.saphirnews.com/Pour-une-tombe-a-Damas_a4483.html.

Mill, John Stuart. *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*. 2 vols. London: John W. Parker, 1843.

Morewedge, Parviz. "Universal and Particular." In Kalin, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Science, and Technology in Islam*, vol. 2, 395–398.

Mourad, Suleiman A. "ʿAbbād b. Salmān." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2009-3, edited by Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 2–3. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

Mourad, Suleiman A. "Towards a Reconstruction of the Muʿtazilī Tradition of Qurʾanic Exegesis: Reading the Introduction to the *Tahdhīb* of al-Ḥākim al-Jishumī (d. 494/1101) and Its Application." In *Aims, Methods and Contexts of Qurʾanic Exegesis (2nd/8th–9th/15th C.)*, edited by Karen Bauer, 101–137. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Moustafa, Mohamed. "Upholding God's Essence: Ibn Taymiyya on the Createdness of the Spirit." *Nazariyat* 3, no. 2 (2017): 1–43.

Muqātil b. Sulaymān. *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaymān*. Edited by ʿAbd Allāh Maḥmūd Shiḥāta. 5 vols. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Tārīkh al-ʿArabī, 2002.

Muqātil b. Sulaymān. *al-Wujūh wa-l-naẓāʾir fī al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*. Edited by Ḥātim al-Ḍāmin. Baghdad: Markaz Jumʿa al-Mājid lil-Thaqāfa wa-l-Turāth, 2006.

Murad, Hasan Qasim. "Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial: A Narrative Account of his *Miḥan*." *Islamic Studies* 18, no. 1 (1979): 1–32.

al-Murshidī, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. "Qiyās al-ghāʾib ʿalā al-shāhid fī al-fikr al-Islāmī." PhD dissertation, Al-Azhar University, n.d.

Muslim, Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj b. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. 2 vols. Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000.

al-Mutawallī al-Shāfiʿī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. *al-Ghunya fī uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by ʿImād al-Dīn Aḥmad Ḥaydar. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, 1987.

Nagel, Tilman. *Die Festung des Glaubens: Triumph und Scheitern des Rationalismus im 11. Jahrhundert*. Munich: Beck, 1988.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines: Conceptions of Nature and Methods Used for Its Study by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, al-Bīrūnī, and Ibn Sīnā*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1964.

al-Nāṭiq bi-l-ḥaqq, Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn. *Baṣran Muʿtazilite Theology: Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad b. Khallād's* Kitāb al-uṣūl *and Its Reception. A Critical Edition of the* Ziyādāt Sharḥ al-uṣūl *by the Zaydī Imām al-Nāṭiq bi-l-ḥaqq Abū Ṭālib Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn b. Hārūn al-Buṭḥānī (d. 424/1033)*. Edited by Camilla Adang, Wilferd Madelung, and Sabine Schmidtke. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

Nawas, John Abdallah. *Al-Maʾmūn, the Inquisition, and the Quest for Caliphal Authority*. Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2015.

al-Nawawī, Yaḥyā b. Sharaf. *Das Buch der vierzig Hadithe: Kitāb al-Arbaʿīn mit dem Kommentar von Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd*. Translated by Marco Schöller. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2010.

Netton, Ian. *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology*. London: Routledge, 1989.

Neuwirth, Angelika. "Reclaiming Babylon: The Multiple Languages of the Qurʾān." In *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages: Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation, in Honour of Hans Daiber*, edited by Anna Akasoy and Wim Raven, 565–592. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Nguyen, Martin. "Abū Bakr al-Fūrakī." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2013-4, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 128b–129a. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Nguyen, Martin. "Ibn Fūrak, Abū Bakr Muḥammad." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2017-2, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 130b–132. Leiden: Brill, 2017.

al-Nuwayrī, Shihāb al-Dīn. *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*. In Shams and al-ʿImrān, *al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām*, 159–187.

Ogren, Brian. *Time and Eternity in Jewish Mysticism: That Which Is Before and That Which Is After*. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Olesen, Niels. *Culte des saints et pèlerinages chez Ibn Taymiyya*. Paris: Geuthner, 1991.

Opwis, Felicitas, and David Reisman, eds. *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Osman, Amr. *The Ẓāhirī Madhhab (3rd/9th–10th/16th Century): A Textualist Theory of Islamic Law*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Özervarli, Mehmet Sait. "Divine Wisdom, Human Agency and the *fiṭra* in Ibn Taymiyya's Thought." In Krawietz and Tamer, *Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, 37–60.

Park, Seung-Chan. *Die Rezeption der mittelalterlichen Sprachphilosophie in der Theologie des Thomas von Aquin, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Analogie*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

Perler, Dominik, and Ulrich Rudolph, eds. *Logik und Theologie: Das Organon im arabischen und im lateinischen Mittelalter*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.

Peters, Jan. *God's Created Speech: A Study in the Speculative Theology of the Muʿtazilî Qâḍî l-Quḍât Abû l-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Jabbâr bn Aḥmad al-Hamaḏânî*. Leiden: Brill, 1976.

Poonawala, Ismail. "Taʾwīl." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 10, edited by P.J. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, 390a–392a. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

Proclus. *The Elements of Theology*. Translated by Eric R. Dodds. Reprint of second revised edition of 1963. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

Qadhi, Yasir. "Salafī–Ashʿarī Polemics of the 3rd & 4th Islamic Centuries." *Muslim World* 106 (2016): 433–447.

al-Qaraḍāwī, Yūsuf. *Fuṣūl fī al-ʿaqīda bayna al-salaf wa-l-khalaf: Āyāt wa-aḥādīth al-ṣifāt, al-awliyāʾ wa-karāmātuhum, al-qubūr wa-mubtadaʿātuhā, al-tawassul*. Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 2005.

Qārīʾ, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. *al-Taqrīr al-ʿilmī ʿan muṣḥaf al-Madīna al-nabawiyya*. Medina: Wizārat al-Ḥajj wa-l-Awqāf, 1985.

al-Qāsimī, Jamāl al-Dīn. *Tafsīr al-Qāsimī al-musammā Maḥāsin al-taʾwīl*. Edited by Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī. 17 vols. [Cairo?]: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1957.

al-Qaṣṣāb al-Karajī, Abū Aḥmad Muḥammad b. ʿAlī. *Nukat al-Qurʾān al-dālla ʿalā al-bayān fī anwāʿ al-ʿulūm wa-l-aḥkām*. 4 vols. Edited by ʿAlī b. Ghāzī al-Tuwayjirī (vol. 1), Ibrāhīm b. Manṣūr al-Junaydil (vols. 2 and 3), and Shāyiʿ b. ʿAbduh b. Shāyiʿ al-Asmarī (vol. 4). Dammam: Dār Ibn al-Qayyim, 2003.

Quiring-Zoche, Rosemarie. "How al-Buḥārī's Ṣaḥīḥ Was Edited in the Middle Ages: ʿAlī al-Yūnīnī and His 'Rumūz.'" *Bulletin d'études orientales* 50 (1998): 191–222.

Radtke, Bernd. "Ibn Taimīya: Der erste sunnitische »Fundamentalist«." In *Die Welten des Islam: Neunundzwanzig Vorschläge, das Unvertraute zu verstehen*, edited by Gernot Rotter, 33–38. Frankfurt: Fischer, 1994.

al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, Abū al-Qāsim. *Muqaddimat Jāmiʿ al-tafāsīr maʿa tafsīr al-Fātiḥa wa-maṭāliʿ al-Baqara*. Edited by Aḥmad Ḥasan Faraḥāt. Kuwait: Dār al-Daʿwa, 1984.

Rahmati, Fateme. *Der Mensch als Spiegelbild Gottes in der Mystik Ibn ʿArabīs*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007.

Rapoport, Yossef. "Ibn Taymiyya on Divorce Oaths." In Levanoni and Winter, *Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, 191–217.

Rapoport, Yossef. Review of *Ibn Taymiyya's Theological Ethics*, by Sophia Vasalou. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 80, no. 1 (2017): 144–146.

Rapoport, Yossef, and Shahab Ahmed, eds. *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010.

al-Rassī, al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm. "Munāẓara maʿa mulḥid." In *Majmūʿ kutub wa-rasāʾil lil-imām al-Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm al-Rassī*, edited by ʿAbd al-Karīm Aḥmad Jadbān, vol. 1, 293–318. Sanaa: Dār al-Ḥikma al-Yamāniyya, 2001.

Rayan, Sobhi. "Ibn Taymiyya's Criticism of the Syllogism." *Der Islam* 86 (2011): 93–121.

Rayan, Sobhi. "Nominal Definition in the Writings of Ibn Taymiyya." *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 23, no. 2 (2009): 123–141.

Rayan, Sobhi. "Translation and Interpretation in Ibn Taymiyya's Logical Definition." *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19, no. 6 (2011): 1047–1065.

al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn. *al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by Aḥmad al-Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā. 2 vols. Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyya, 1986.

al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn. *Asās al-taqdīs*. Edited by Aḥmad al-Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā. Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyya, 1986.

al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn. *al-Maḥṣūl fī ʿilm uṣūl al-fiqh*. Edited by Ṭāhā Jābir al-ʿAlwānī. 9 vols. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1987.

al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn. *al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliya*. Edited by Aḥmad al-Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā. 9 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1987.

al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn. *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-mutaʾakhkhirīn min al-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-ḥukamāʾ wa-l-mutakallimīn*. Edited by Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raʾūf Saʿd. Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyya, [1978?].

al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn. *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl fī dirāyat al-uṣūl*. Edited by Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Fūda. 4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Dhakhāʾir, 2010.

al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn. *Sharḥ ʿUyūn al-ḥikma*. Edited by Aḥmad al-Ḥijāzī al-Saqqā. Tehran: Muʾassasat al-Ṣādiq, 1415/[1995-6]. Reprint of original edition, Cairo: n.p., n.d. [ca. 1986].

al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn. *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr aw Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*. 32 vols. Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyya, 1934–1964.

Recanati, François. "The Alleged Priority of Literal Interpretation." *Cognitive Science* 19 (1995): 207–232.

Rescher, Nicholas. *Infinite Regress: The Theory and History of Varieties of Change*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010.

Rescher, Nicholas, ed. *Al-Fārābī's Short Commentary on Aristotle's* Prior Analytics. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963.

Rizvi, Sajjad. *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*. London: Routledge, 2009.

Rosenthal, Franz, trans. *The History of al-Ṭabarī*. Vol. 1, *General Introduction and From the Creation to the Flood*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.

Rosheger, John. "A Note on Avicenna and the Divine Attributes." *Modern Schoolman* 77, no. 2 (2000): 169–177.

Ruano, Delfina Serrano. "Later Ašʿarism in the Islamic West." In Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 515–533.

Rudolph, Ulrich. "Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī." In Rudolph, *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt*, vol. 1, 363–457.

Rudolph, Ulrich. *Al-Māturīdī und die sunnitische Theologie in Samarkand*. Leiden: Brill, 1997. Translated by Rodrigo Adem as *Al-Māturīdī and the Development of Sunnī Theology in Samarqand* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

Rudolph, Ulrich, ed., with the assistance of Renate Würsch. *Philosophie in der islamischen Welt*. Vol. 1, *8.–10. Jahrhundert*. Basel: Schwabe, 2012.

Sabra, Abdelhamid. "The Simple Ontology of Kalām Atomism: An Outline." *Early Science and Medicine* 14 (2009): 68–78.

Saʿd, al-Ṭablāwī. *Mawqif Ibn Taymiyya min falsafat Ibn Rushd*. Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Amāna, 1989.

al-Ṣafadī, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr wa-aʿwān al-naṣr*. Edited by ʿAlī Abū Zayd et al. 6 vols. Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1998.

al-Ṣaffār, Abū Isḥāq. *Talkhīṣ al-adilla li-qawāʿid al-tawḥīd*. Edited by Angelika Brodersen. 2 vols. Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut, 2011.

Saflo, Mohammed. *Al-Juwaynī's Thought and Methodology, with a Translation and Commentary on Lumaʿ al-adillah*. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2000.

Sarrio, Diego. "Spiritual Anti-Elitism: Ibn Taymiyya's Doctrine of Sainthood (*walāya*)." *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 22, no. 3 (2011): 275–291.

Sayoud, Souheil. "Sans comment: Ibn Taymiyya et le problème des attributs divins." In *Lumières médiévales*, edited by Géraldine Roux, 67–73. Paris: Van Dieren, 2009.

Schacht, Joseph. "New Sources for the History of Muhammadan Theology." *Studia Islamica* 1 (1953): 23–42.

Schimmel, Annemarie. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. 35th anniversary ed. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

Schmidtke, Sabine. "Early Ašʿarite Theology: Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) and His *Hidāyat al-mustaršidīn*." *Bulletin d'études orientales* 60 (2011): 39–71.

Schmidtke, Sabine. Introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, edited by Sabine Schmidtke, 1–23. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Schmidtke, Sabine. "Neuere Forschungen zur Muʿtazila unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der späteren Muʿtazila ab dem 4./10. Jahrhundert." *Arabica* 45, no. 3 (1998): 379–408.

Schmidtke, Sabine. "Rationale Theologie." In *Einheit und Vielfalt einer Weltreligion*, edited by Rainer Brunner, 167–190. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016.

Schmidtke, Sabine, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Schöck, Cornelia. "Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/745–6) and the 'Jahmiyya' and Ḍirār b. ʿAmr (d. 200/815)." In Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 55–80.

Schöck, Cornelia. *Koranexegese, Grammatik und Logik: Zum Verhältnis von arabischer und aristotelischer Urteils-, Konsequenz- und Schlußlehre*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Schöller, Marco. "Ibn Taymiyah und nochmals die Frage nach einer Reformation im Islam." In *Studien für Semitistik und Arabistik: Festschrift für Hartmut Bobzin zum 60. Geburtstag*, edited by Otto Jastrow, Shabo Talay, and Herta Hafenrichter, 363–384. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008.

Schreiner, Martin. "Beiträge zur Geschichte der theologischen Bewegungen im Islām." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 52 (1898): 513–563 and 53 (1899): 51–88.

Sezgin, Fuat. *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*. 15 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1967–2010.

al-Shāfiʿī, Ḥasan. *al-Āmidī wa-ārāʾuhu al-kalāmiyya*. Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 1998.

Shah, Mustafa. "The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the *tawfīq–iṣṭilāḥ* Antithesis and the *majāz* Controversy—Part I." *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1999): 27–46.

Shah, Mustafa. "The Philological Endeavours of the Early Arabic Linguists: Theological Implications of the *tawfīq–iṣṭilāḥ* Antithesis and the *majāz* Controversy—Part II." *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2000): 43–66.

Shah, Mustafa. "Al-Ṭabarī and the Dynamics of *tafsīr*: Theological Dimensions of a Legacy." *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 15, no. 2 (2013): 83–139.

Shahran, Mohd Farid Mohd. "The Priority of Rational Proof in Islam: The View of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī." *Tafhim* 8 (2015): 1–18.

al-Shahrastānī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm. *Nihāyat al-iqdām fī ʿilm al-kalām*. Edited by Alfred Guillaume. London: Oxford University Press, 1934.

Shams, Muḥammad ʿUzayr, and ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-ʿImrān, eds. *al-Jāmiʿ li-sīrat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya khilāla sabʿat qurūn*. 2nd ed. Riyadh: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawāʾid, 1422/[2001-2].

al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn. *Amālī al-Murtaḍā: Ghurar al-fawāʾid wa-durar al-qalāʾid*. Edited by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. 2 vols. Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1954.

Shashdīw, Aḥmad Mānkdīm. [*Taʿlīq*] *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsa* [falsely attributed to al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār]. Edited by ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān. Cairo: Maktabat al-Wahba, 1965.

Shaykhzādah al-Ḥanafī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī. *Naẓm al-farāʾid wa-jamʿ al-fawāʾid fī bayān al-masāʾil allatī waqaʿa fīhā al-ikhtilāf bayna al-Māturīdiyya wa-l-Ashʿariyya fī*

al-ʿaqāʾid maʿa dhikr adillat al-farīqayn. In *al-Masāʾil al-khilāfiyya bayna al-Māturī-diyya wa-l-Ashāʿira*. Edited by Bassām al-Jābī, 165–266. Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2003.

al-Shibl, ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. *al-Athbāt fī makhṭūṭāt al-aʾimma: Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya wa-l-ʿallāma Ibn al-Qayyim wa-l-ḥāfiẓ Ibn Rajab*. Riyadh: Malik Fahd al-Waṭaniyya, 2002.

Shihadeh, Ayman. "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī: 6th/12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology." *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 15 (2005): 141–179.

Shihadeh, Ayman. *The Theological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Shihadeh, Ayman. "Theories of Ethical Value in *Kalām*: A New Interpretation." In Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 384–407.

al-Shīrāzī, Abū Isḥāq. *al-Lumaʿ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*. Edited by Muḥyī al-Dīn Dīb Mistū and Yūsuf ʿAlī Badīwī. Beirut: Dār al-Kalim al-Ṭayyib and Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1995.

al-Shujayrī, Hādī Aḥmad Farḥān. *al-Dirāsāt al-lughawiyya wa-l-naḥwiyya fī muʾallafāt Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya wa-atharuhu fī istinbāṭ al-aḥkām al-sharʿiyya*. Beirut: Dār al-Bashāʾir al-Islāmiyya, 2001.

al-Sijistānī, Abū Yaʿqūb. *al-Maqālīd al-malakūtiyya*. Edited by Ismail Poonawala. Tunis: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2011.

Sirry, Munʾim. "Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī and the Salafi Approach to Sufism." *Die Welt des Islams* 51, no. 1 (2011): 75–108.

Skinner, Quentin. "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas." *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 3–53.

Sperber, Dan, and Deirdre Wilson. "A Deflationary Account of Metaphors." In Gibbs, *Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, 84–105.

Spitta, Wilhelm. *Zur Geschichte Abûʾl-Ḥasan al-Aśʿarîs*. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichʾsche Buch-handlung, 1876.

The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary. Edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E.B. Lumbard, and Mohammed Rustom. New York: HarperCollins, 2015.

al-Subkī, Tāj al-Dīn. *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā*. Edited by Maḥmūd al-Ṭanāḥī and ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ al-Ḥulw. 10 vols. Cairo: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1964.

al-Subkī, Taqī al-Dīn. *Fatāwā al-Subkī fī furūʿ al-fiqh al-Shāfiʿī*. Edited by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Salām Shāhīn. 2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004.

al-Subkī, Taqī al-Dīn, and Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī. *al-Ibhāj fī sharḥ al-Minhāj*. Edited by Aḥmad Jamāl al-Zamzamī and Nūr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Jabbār Ṣaghīrī. 7 vols. Dubai: Dār al-Buḥūth lil-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya wa-li-Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth, 2004.

Suleiman, Farid. "A Call to Unity: Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī's Middle Way Approach to the Interpretation of the Divine Attributes." In *Unity and Diversity in Contemporary Muslim Thought*, edited by Abbas Poya and Farid Suleiman, 63–84. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2017.

Suleiman, Farid. "Ibn Taymīyas Theorie der Koranexegese." In *Koranexegese als »Mix*

and Match«: Zur Diversität aktueller Diskurse in der tafsīr-Wissenschaft, edited by Abbas Poya, 15–43. Bielefeld: transcript, 2017.

Suleiman, Farid. *Ibn Taymiyya und die Attribute Gottes*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019.

Suleiman, Farid. Review of *Ibn Taymiyya's Theological Ethics*, by Sophia Vasalou. *Die Welt des Islams* 57, no. 2 (2017): 261–264.

Sulṭān, ʿAbd al-Muḥsin. *Fikrat al-zamān ʿinda al-Ashāʿira*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2000.

al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn. *al-Laʾāliʾ al-maṣnūʿa fī al-aḥādīth al-mawḍūʿa*. Edited by Ṣāliḥ ʿUwayda. 2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1996.

Swartz, Merlin. "A Seventh-Century (A.H.) Sunnī Creed: The ʿAqīda Wāsiṭīya of Ibn Taymīya." *Humaniora Islamica* 1 (1973): 91–131.

Syafruddin, Didin. "The Principles of Ibn Taymiyya's Qurʾanic Interpretation." Master's thesis, McGill University, 1994.

Syamsuddin, Sahiron. "Abū Ḥanīfah's Use of Solitary *Ḥadīth* as a Source of Islamic Law." *Islamic Studies* 40, no. 2 (2001): 257–272.

Syamsuddin, Sahiron. "*Muḥkam* and *Mutashābih*: An Analytical Study of al-Ṭabarī's and al-Zamakhsharī's Interpretations of Q. 3:7." *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 1, no. 1 (1991): 63–79.

al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad b. Jarīr. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*. Edited by Maḥmūd Shākir and Aḥmad Shākir. 16 vols. to date. Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1954–.

al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad b. Jarīr. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*. Edited by ʿAbd Allāh al-Turkī. 30 vols. in 24, plus 2 vols. indices. Cairo: Dār Hajr, 2001.

al-Taftāzānī, Saʿd al-Dīn. *Sharḥ al-ʿAqāʾid al-Nasafiyya*. Edited by Shuʿbat al-Kutub al-Dirāsiyya. 2nd ed. Karachi: Maktabat al-Madīna, 2012.

al-Taftāzānī, Saʿd al-Dīn. *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥ ʿalā al-Tawḍīḥ li-matn al-Tanqīḥ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*. 2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, [1957?].

Tamer, Georges. "The Curse of Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya as a Philosopher in Contemporary Islamic Thought." In Krawietz and Tamer, *Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, 329–374.

Taylor, Christopher. *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyāra and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt*. Leiden: Brill, 1998.

al-Thaʿlabī, Abū Isḥāq Aḥmad. *al-Kashf wa-l-bayān*. Edited by Abū Muḥammad b. ʿĀshūr. 10 vols. Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2002.

Thiele, Jan. "Abū Hāshim al-Jubbāʾī's (d. 321/933) Theory of 'States' (*aḥwāl*) and its Adaption by Ashʿarite Theologians." In Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 364–383.

Thiele, Jan. "Between Cordoba and Nīsābūr: The Emergence and Consolidation of Ashʿarism (Fourth–Fifth/Tenth–Eleventh Century)." In Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 225–241.

Thiele, Jan. *Theologie in der jemenitischen Zaydiyya: Die naturphilosophischen Überlegungen des al-Ḥasan ar-Raṣṣāṣ*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Thielmann, Jörn. *Ibn Taymiyya: A Social Market Economist avant la lettre?* Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2014.

Tholib, Udjang. "The Reign of the Caliph al-Qādir Billāh (381/991–422/1031)." PhD dissertation, McGill University, 2002.

Thomas, David. "Al-Ašʿarī." In Thomas and Mallett, *Christian–Muslim Relations*, vol. 2, 209–216.

Thomas, David. "Al-Bāqillānī." In Thomas and Mallett, *Christian–Muslim Relations*, vol. 2, 446–450.

Thomas, David, and Alex Mallett, eds. *Christian–Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 2, *900–1050*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

Treiger, Alexander. "Avicenna's Notion of Transcendental Modulation of Existence (*taškīk al-wuǧūd, analogia entis*) and Its Greek and Arabic Sources." In Opwis and Reisman, *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion*, 327–363.

Treiger, Alexander. "Origins of *Kalām*." In Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 27–43.

al-Ṭūfī, Najm al-Dīn. *Ḥallāl al-ʿuqad fī bayān aḥkām al-muʿtaqad* wa-huwa *Qudwat al-muhtadīn ilā maqāṣid al-dīn*. Edited by Lejla Demiri and Islam Dayeh. Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī, 2016.

Turki, Abdel Magid. *Polémiques entre Ibn Ḥazm et Bāǧī sur les principes de la loi musulmane: Essai sur le littéralisme zahirite et la finalité malikite*. Algiers: n.p., n.d. [ca. 1973].

al-Turkī, Ibrāhīm. *Inkār al-majāz ʿinda Ibn Taymiyya bayna al-dars al-balāghī wa-l-lughawī*. Riyadh: Dār al-Maʿārij al-Dawliyya, 1996.

Uraibi, Muhammed Yasin El-Taher. "Al-Ghazalis Aporien im Zusammenhang mit dem Kausalproblem." PhD dissertation, University of Bonn, 1972.

van Ess, Josef. *Anfänge muslimischer Theologie: Zwei antiqadaritische Traktate aus dem ersten Jahrhundert der Hiǧra*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977.

van Ess, Josef. "L'autorité de la tradition prophétique dans la théologie muʿtazilite." In *La notion d'autorité au Moyen Âge: Islam, Byzance, Occident*, edited by George Makdisi, Dominique Sourdel, and Janine Sourdel-Thomine, 211–226. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982.

van Ess, Josef. *Der Eine und das Andere*. 2 vols. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011.

van Ess, Josef. *Die Erkenntnislehre des ʿAḍudaddīn al-Īcī*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1966.

van Ess, Josef. "Ibn Kullāb." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (Supplement), edited by P.J. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, 391b–392. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

van Ess, Josef. "Lafẓ (2. In Theology)." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (Supple-

ment), ed. P.J. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, 546b. Leiden, Brill: 2004.

van Ess, Josef. "The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology." In *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*, edited by Gustav E. von Grunebaum, 21–50. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1970.

van Ess, Josef. *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*. 6 vols. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991–1997.

van Ess, Josef. "Ein unbekanntes Fragment des Naẓẓām." In *Der Orient in der Forschung: Festschrift für Otto Spies zum 5. April 1966*, edited by Wilhelm Hoenerbach, 170–201. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1967.

van Ess, Josef. *Zwischen Ḥadīṯ und Theologie: Studien zum Entstehen prädestinatianischer Überlieferung*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975.

van Renterghem, Vanessa. "Controlling and Developing Baghdad: Caliphs, Sultans and the Balance of Power in the Abbasid Capital (Mid-5th/11th to Late 6th/12th Centuries)." In *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture*, edited by Christian Lange and Songül Mecit, 117–138. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.

Vasalou, Sophia. *Ibn Taymiyya's Theological Ethics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Versteegh, C.H.M. *Arabic Grammar and Qurʾānic Exegesis in Early Islam*. Leiden: Brill, 1993.

Voigt, Uwe. "Von Seelen, Figuren und Seeleuten: Zur Einheit und Vielfalt des Begriffs des Lebens (ζωή) bei Aristoteles." In *Was ist ,Leben'? Aristoteles' Anschauungen zur Entstehung und Funktionsweise von Leben*, edited by Sabine Föllinger, 17–34. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010.

von Kügelgen, Anke. "Dialogpartner im Widerspruch: Ibn Rushd und Ibn Taymīya über die ,Einheit der Wahrheit'." In *Words, Texts and Contexts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea: Studies on the Sources, Contents and Influences of Islamic Civilization and Arabic Philosophy and Science Dedicated to Gerhard Endress on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, edited by Rüdiger Arnzen and Jörn Thielmann, 455–481. Leuven: Peeters, 2004.

von Kügelgen, Anke. "Ibn Taymīyas Kritik an der aristotelischen Logik und sein Gegenentwurf." In Perler and Rudolph, *Logik und Theologie*, 167–225.

von Kügelgen, Anke. "The Poison of Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya's Struggle For and Against Reason." In Krawietz and Tamer, *Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, 253–328.

Waines, David. "Ibn Baṭṭūṭa." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2016-5, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 112b–117a. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

Waines, David. "Ibn Taymiyya." In *The Islamic World*, edited by Andrew Rippin, 374–379. London: Routledge, 2008.

Walker, Paul. "Bāṭiniyya." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, vol. 2009-1, edited by

Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson, 170–174a. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

Wansbrough, John. *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2004.

Watt, Montgomery. *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973.

Watt, Montgomery. *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: An Extended Survey*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1962.

Wein, Clemens. "Die islamische Glaubenslehre (*ʿAqīda*) des Ibn Taimīya." PhD dissertation, University of Bonn, 1973.

Weiss, Bernard. "Medieval Muslim Discussions of the Origin of Language." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 124, no. 1 (1974): 33–41.

Weiss, Bernard. *The Search for God's Law: Islamic Jurisprudence in the Writings of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī*. Rev. ed. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010.

Wensinck, Arent Jan. *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1932.

Whittingham, Martin. *Al-Ghazālī and the Qurʾān: One Book, Many Meanings*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2007.

Williams, Wesley. "Aspects of the Creed of Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal: A Study of Anthropomorphism in Early Islamic Discourse." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 3 (2002): 441–463.

Wirmer, David. *Vom Denken der Natur zur Natur des Denkens: Ibn Bāǧǧas Theorie der Potenz als Grundlegung der Psychologie*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014.

Wöhler, Hans-Ulrich, ed. *Texte zum Universalienstreit*. Vol. 1, *Vom Ausgang der Antike bis zur Frühscholastik*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992.

Wöhler, Hans-Ulrich, ed. *Texte zum Universalienstreit*. Vol. 2, *Hoch- und spätmittelalterliche Scholastik*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994.

Wolff, Christian. *Erste Philosophie oder Ontologie: Lateinisch-Deutsch*. Edited by Dirk Effertz. Hamburg: Meiner, 2005.

Wolfson, Harry Austryn. "The Amphibolous Terms in Aristotle, Arabic Philosophy and Maimonides." *Harvard Theological Review* 31, no. 2 (1938): 151–173.

Wolfson, Harry Austryn. "Avicenna, Algazali and Averroes on Divine Attributes." In *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Religion*, edited by Isadore Twersky and George Williams. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973. Reprint, with different pagination, of the 1956 edition, published by the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Madrid.

Wolfson, Harry Austryn. *The Philosophy of the Kalam*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976.

Woozley, Anthony. "Universals: A Historical Survey." In *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Donald M. Borchert, 2nd ed., vol. 9, 587b–603a. New York: Thomas Gale, 2006.

Würtz, Thomas. "Reactions of Ibn Taymiyya and Taftāzānī upon the Mystic Conception of Ibn ʿArabī." In *Mysticism East and West: The Concept of the Unity of Being*, edited by Heike Stamer, 41–52. Lahore: Multi Media Affairs, 2013.

Yahya, Osman. *Histoire et classification de l'œuvre d'Ibn Arabī*. Damascus: Institut français de Damas, 1964.

Yaman, Hikmet. "Ḥanbalīte Criticism of Sufism: Ibn Taymiyya (d. 795[*sic*]/1328), a Ḥanbalīte Ascetic (*Zāhid*)." *Ekev Akademi Dergisi* 14, no. 43 (2010): 37–56.

Yousef, Mohamed Haj. *Ibn ʿArabī: Time and Cosmology*. London: Routledge, 2008.

Yukio, Iwakuma. "ʿVocales,' or Early Nominalists." *Traditio* 47 (1992): 37–111.

al-Zabīdī, Murtaḍā. *Itḥāf sādat al-muttaqīn bi-sharḥ Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. 20 vols. Cairo: al-Maymaniyya, 1893.

Zadeh, Travis. "ʿFire Cannot Harm It': Meditation, Temptation and the Charismatic Power of the Qurʾan." *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 10, no. 2 (2008): 50–72.

al-Zāghūnī, Abū al-Ḥasan. *al-Īḍāḥ fī uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by ʿIṣām Sayyid Maḥmūd. Riyadh: Markaz al-Malik Fayṣal lil-Buḥūth wa-l-Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyya, 2003.

Zaidan, Amir. *at-Tafsir: Eine philologisch, islamologisch fundierte Erläuterung des Quran-Textes*. Offenbach: Adib, 2000.

al-Zamakhsharī, Muḥammad b. ʿUmar (Jār Allāh). *al-Minhāj fī uṣūl al-dīn*. Edited by Sabine Schmidtke. Beirut: Arabic Scientific Publishers, 2007.

al-Zarkān, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ. *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wa-ārāʾuhu al-kalāmiyya wa-l-falsafiyya*. Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1963.

al-Zarkashī, Badr al-Dīn. *al-Baḥr al-muḥīṭ fī uṣūl al-fiqh*. Edited by ʿAbd al-Qādir al-ʿĀnī. 2nd ed. 11 vols. Hurghada: Dār al-Ṣafwa, 1992.

al-Zarkashī, Badr al-Dīn. *al-Burhān fī ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*. Edited by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. 4 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, [1957?].

Zysow, Aaron. *The Economy of Certainty: An Introduction to the Typology of Islamic Legal Theory*. Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2013.

Zysow, Aaron. "Karrāmiyya." In Schmidtke, *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, 252–262.

Index of Quranic Verses

Index of People and Subjects

For the purposes of alphabetisation, no account is taken of the Arabic definite article (whether at the beginning of an entry or within it), with the exception of Arabic names of contemporary authors who have published in a language using the Roman script (e.g., el Omari, El-Tobgui).

Jackson, Sherman   6, 7*n*34, 59, 60*n*129, 155*n*57, 157*n*67, 160*n*73

Jaffer, Tariq   91*n*313, 198, 261

al-Jāḥiẓ, ʿAmr b. Baḥr (d. 255/869)   64, 146*n*17, 224, 255

Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/746)   40, 41, 156, 204, 225, 227, 287

Jahmiyya. *See under* schools of thought

Jarrar, Maher   70

al-Jawharī, Ḥammād (d. 393/1002-3)   182

jealousy (as divine attribute). *See under* God: attributes of

Jesus (prophet)   136

al-Jīlī (or al-Jīlānī), ʿAbd al-Qādir (d. 561/1166) 78

al-Jishumī, al-Ḥākim (d. 494/1101)   256

John Philoponus (d. ca. 575 CE)   51

joy (as divine attribute). *See under* God: attributes of

al-Jubbāʾī, Abū ʿAlī (d. 303/916)   42*n*20, 44, 46, 82, 86, 96*n*13, 183*n*53, 190, 256

al-Jubbāʾī, Abū Hāshim (d. 321/933)   42*n*20, 45–46, 48, 232*n*62

al-Jurjānī, ʿAbd al-Qāhir (d. 471/1078)   143*n*7

al-Jurjānī, al-Sharīf (d. 816/1413)   118

justice (as divine attribute). *See under* God: attributes of

al-Juwaynī, Abū al-Maʿālī (d. 478/1085)   26*n*17, 36, 48, 89–91, 97*n*13, 102, 203, 229–233, 238, 243, 250–251, 271, 279–280, 294*n*56, 295–296, 309

al-Kaʿbī, Abū al-Qāsim (d. 319/931)   42*n*20, 47*n*54, 48, 227*n*23, 255

kalām (speech; disputation; speculative theology)   8, 41, 42, 45, 56–57, 58, 60, 76–78, 83–84, 89, 90, 177, 192, 198*n*116, 206*n*152, 227, 228, 246, 247, 250, 255, 256*n*182, 273, 277, 308*n*124, 317, 326, 332, 333, 334

as divine attribute (*see under* God: attributes of)

al-Kalwadhānī, Abū al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 510/1116) 228

Karrāmiyya. *See under* schools of thought

al-Kawtharī, Muḥammad Zāhid (d. 1371/1952) 262

al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī. *See* al-Farāhīdī, al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad

al-Kharazī, Abū al-Ḥasan (d. 391/1001)   172

al-Khaṭṭābī, Abū Sulaymān (d. 388/998)   65, 70, 259, 321*n*183

khayr (good)   50, 53. See also *ḥusn*

al-Khayyāṭ, Abū al-Ḥusayn (d. 300/913)   42*n*20, 227*n*23, 255–256

al-Khiḍr (Quranic figure)   179

al-Kindī, Abū Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq (d. between 247/861 and 252/866)   49–51, 58

Knysh, Alexander   2, 132*n*195, 137–139

Krawietz, Birgit   1, 2

al-Kūrānī, Ibrāhīm (d. 1101/1690)   128

Lagarde, Michel   176

Lameer, Joep   225

Laoust, Henri   5–6, 19*n*90, 58*n*120, 59, 62, 300, 305*n*108

laughing (as divine attribute). *See under* God: attributes of

law

of excluded middle   219, 220, 245

of sufficient reason   125*n*149, 286*n*13

Leibniz, Gottfried (d. 1716)   119*n*116

life (as divine attribute). *See under* God: attributes of

loathing (as divine attribute). *See under* God: attributes of

Locke, John (d. 1704)   106

love (as divine attribute). *See under* God: attributes of

MacDonald, Duncan   5, 23*n*2

Madelung, Wilferd   75, 226*n*19, 293, 294*n*56, 306–307

Madhbūḥī, Muḥammad   142*n*3

māhiyya (quiddity)   52, 95*n*3, 107, 110, 180, 183*n*53

majāz (figurative usage; metaphor)   16–18, 73, 80, 103, 141–156, 159–163, 167–172, 177*n*17, 180*n*36, 195, 200–202, 204, 205, 206*n*148, 209, 260, 268, 269, 270, 271, 332, 334, 335

Makdisi, George (d. 2002)   36*n*66, 58*n*120, 59, 73, 75, 91, 128*n*171, 149*n*32

Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/796)   66–67, 145, 314, 315

Mālikīs. *See under* schools of thought

Mamluks. *See under* dynasties

al-Maʾmūn (r. 198–218/813–833)   61, 73

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ
وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ البَصِيرُ

FARID SULEIMAN,
Ph.D. (2018), is Lecturer in Islamic
Theology at Greifswald University.
His current research takes the insights
on language gained from Ludwig
Wittgenstein as a departure point for
shedding new light on the character
and development of Islamic
intellectual history.

In *Ibn Taymiyya and the Attributes of God* (orig. published in German, 2019), Farid Suleiman pieces together, on the basis of statements scattered unsystematically over numerous individual treatises, an overall picture of the methodological foundations of Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of the divine attributes. He then examines how Ibn Taymiyya applies these foundational principles as exemplified in his treatment of selected divine attributes. Throughout the book, Suleiman relates Ibn Taymiyya's positions to the larger context of Islamic intellectual history. The book was awarded the Dissertation Prize 2019 by the Academy for Islam in Research and Society (AIWG) and the Classical Islamic Book Prize by Gorgias Press (2020).

This book is volume 125 in the series
ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY, THEOLOGY AND SCIENCE.
TEXTS AND STUDIES