

The Curse of Philosophy

Ibn Taymiyya as a Philosopher in Contemporary Islamic Thought

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Arabic philosophy, or *falsafa*, was born out of the translation of Greek and Syriac works of logic, philosophy and other sciences to meet the intellectual and practical challenges facing Muslims in Abbasid society. In the realm of Arabic, it flourished as a uniquely Muslim hybrid creatively integrating the intellectual traditions of Plato, Ptolemy and Aristotle. Though these thinkers were foreign and ancient, their reliance on sound reasoning established their reputation – especially that of Aristotle – as representatives of the highest truth to be attained by human intellectual endeavor.¹ In some cases, rational judgments might even be more esteemed than revealed knowledge; al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), for instance, did not consider religion to be the ultimate foundation unconditionally necessary for the existence of the virtuous city (*al-madīna al-fādila*), but rather viewed philosophy (*ḥikma*, also meaning “wisdom”, itself the basis for wise leadership) as essential for the perfect society’s survival.² Similarly, Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198) granted authority to philosophers – whom he describes as those well established in knowledge – to interpret Koranic statements as metaphorical if seeming to contradict reason. In doing so, Ibn Rushd endorsed a method for establishing harmony between reason and religion on the

1 Maimonides, who ascribes to Aristotle perfect knowledge in regards to the sub-lunar world, adequately represents this pertinent view in the pre-modern period of Arabic philosophy; knowledge of the supralunar world, on the other hand, is reserved for the prophets: *Dalālat al-ḥā’irīn*, edited by Ḥussayn Atay, Cairo n. d., part 2, chapter 22, pp. 342–343. English: Maimonides, Moses: *The Guide of the Perplexed*, translated by Shlomo Pines, Chicago 1963, pp. 319–320.

2 Al-Fārābī, Abū Naṣr: *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State. Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī’s Mabādī āra’ abl al-madīna al-fādila*, edited with introduction, translation and commentary by Richard Walzer, Oxford 1985, chapter 15, § 14, p. 252.

ground of rationality. Rationality becomes, thus, the criterion for the soundness of the scripture.³

A counterpoint to this lineage existed in *kalām* and *fiqh*, with scholars such as Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855)⁴ and al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/936)⁵ emphasizing the supremacy of revealed truth. This line of Islamic thought gained momentum in the twelfth century with the vast work of al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), whose rationalistic arguments against the *falāsifa* were seen as a staggering blow to philosophy, even though al-Ghazālī substantially included logic in the field of *fiqh*.⁶ After al-Ghazālī, al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153)⁷ and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209)⁸ utilized rational arguments to attack *falsafa* from vari-

3 Ibn Rushd (Averroes): *Kitāb Faṣl al-maqāl with Its Appendix (Ḍamīma) and an Extract from Kitāb al-Kashf ʿan manāhiḡ al-adilla*, Arabic text edited by George F. Hourani, Leiden 1959, pp. 13–15.

4 On his position: Laoust, Henri: Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, in: *EP*², vol. 1 (1960), pp. 272–277; Melchert, Christopher: *Aḥmad ibn Hanbal*, Oxford 2006.

5 See Watt, W. Montgomery: al-Ashʿarī, Abu'l-Hasan, ʿAlī b. Ismāʿīl, in: *EP*², vol. 1 (1960), p. 694; McCarthy, Richard C.: *The Theology of al-Ashʿarī. The Arabic Texts of al-Ashʿarī's Kitāb al-Luma' and Risālat Istiḡṣān al-khawḍ fi ʿilm al-kalām, with briefly annotated translations, and appendices containing material pertinent to the study of al-Ashʿarī*, Beirut 1953.

6 Al-Ghazālī's views on rationality in relation to religion have been subject of intensive study; for his position in general, see Frank, Richard: *Al-Ghazālī and the Ashʿarite School*, Durham 1994; Ormsby, Eric: *Ghazali: The Revival of Islam*, Oxford 2008; Griffel, Frank: *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, Oxford 2009. Most recently: Girdner, Scott Michael: *Reasoning with Revelation. The Significance of the Koranic Contextualization of Philosophy in al-Ghazālī's Mishkāṭ al-Anwār (the Niche of Lights)*, unpublished dissertation, Boston University 2010. See also the special issues of *The Muslim World* 101, 4 (October 2011) and 102, 1 (January 2012) on the occasion of al-Ghazālī's 900th anniversary with important contributions on several aspects of his work, and the forthcoming conference proceedings *Islam and Rationality. The Impact of al-Ghazālī*, vol. 1, edited by Georges Tamer and vol. 2, edited by Frank Griffel.

7 See Monnot, Guy: al-Shahrastānī, in: *EP*², vol. 9 (1997), pp. 214–216. Al-Shahrastānī's position is best exposed in the treatise: al-Shahrastānī, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm: *Kitāb Muṣārʿat al-falāsifa*, edited by Suhayr Muḥammad Mukhtār, Cairo 1976/1396; *Struggling with the Philosopher. A Refutation of Avicenna's Metaphysics*; a new Arabic edition and English translation of Moḥammed b. ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Aḥmad al-Shahrastānī's *Kitāb al-Muṣārʿa* by Wilferd Madelung and Toby Mayer, London and New York 2001.

8 See Anawati, Georges: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, in: *EP*², vol. 2 (1965), pp. 751–755. Al-Rāzī's main philosophical and theological work in particular contains his critical views on philosophy: al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn: *Kitāb al-Mabāḥith al-mashriqiyya fi ʿilm al-ilāhiyyāt wal-ṭabīʿiyyāt*, edited by Muḥammad al-Muṭaṣim bi-llāh al-Baghādī, Beirut 1990.

ous perspectives. Later, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) delivered a ferocious attack against the Greek philosophers and their Muslim followers; this was articulated in his substantial critique of logic, *al-Radd ʿalā al-mantiqiyyin*,⁹ as well as in his voluminous work *Darʾ taʾarud al-aql wal-naql* (Averting the Conflict between Reason and Religious Tradition)¹⁰. Ibn Taymiyya’s diatribe is possibly the fiercest assault on *falsafa* in the intellectual history of Islam: criticizing his predecessors among theologians and theorists of jurisprudence for their laxity in refuting both logic and the basic metaphysical ideas of Greek and Muslim philosophers, Ibn Taymiyya upholds the utter supremacy of the Koran and the Sunna of the Prophet. These, he asserts, are the exclusive gates to correct knowledge.

Interestingly, however, authors seeking to renounce philosophy were ensnared by the very methods they sought to refute; al-Ghazālī, for instance, was viewed with suspicion among traditionalists for his speculative leanings and for his infusion of logic into *fiqh*; furthermore, he was roundly condemned for simultaneously employing and being inextricably entangled with the very philosophical methods he sought to disprove.¹¹ Ibn Taymiyya, likewise, found himself criticized for his simultaneous rejection and absorption of philosophical principles. Though he railed against philosophers and repudiated the exalted position of their science, the Shāfiʿī scholar and historian Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348), in a famous statement, excoriates Ibn Taymiyya for having “repeatedly swallowed the poison of the philosophers and their works” (*qad balāʿta sumūm al-falāsifa wa-mušannafatihim marrāt*). As a result, Ibn Taymiyya’s body had become addicted to the frequent use of poison so that it was secreted in the very bones; through this route, his speech had likewise been corrupted.¹² Through an organic, recip-

9 See below, footnote 20.

10 *Darʾ taʾarud al-aql wal-naql*, edited by Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, Riyadh 1399–1403/1979–1983. Both works, *al-Radd* and *Darʾ*, need to be subjected to comparative study in order to uncover their relationship and how they complement each other.

11 Paradigmatic for the traditionalist critique against al-Ghazālī is Ibn Taymiyya’s famous dictum: *Wa-qad ankara ʿimmat al-dīn ʿalā Abī Ḥāmid ḥādbā fī kutubih, wa-qālū maraduhu al-shifā, yaʿnī Shifā Ibn Sīnā fī al-falsafa* (The religious leaders blamed Abū Ḥāmid for that what is in his books. They said: he is sick, and his sickness is “the healing”, meaning by this Ibn Sīnā’s book *The Healing* in philosophy), *Majmūʿ fatāwā Ibn Taymiyya*, Riyadh 1416/1995, vol. 10, p. 552.

12 For this, see Anke von Kügelgen’s valuable contribution in the present volume, especially n. 16.

rocal process which they, perhaps, had not consciously perceived, the enemies of *falsafa* had become philosophers themselves.

In confirmation of this, contemporary Muslim authors have not hesitated to appoint Ibn Taymiyya – with not a little irony – to the philosophical field. Identifying him, especially in regards to his comprehensive view, as a true philosopher, they describe him as equal to or even superseding the most famous medieval Muslim philosophers. Indeed, for these authors, Ibn Taymiyya is considered an “unequal genius” who entered “the bewitched house of philosophy” without being harmed; he is “a great philosopher” whose refutation of Aristotle’s logic is the foundation of John Stuart Mill’s logic and David Hume’s philosophy.¹³ A more recent author even attributes to Ibn Taymiyya “unique philosophical views” capable of opening new horizons for Arabic-Islamic studies.¹⁴ In a programmatic statement, the Egyptian Islamist Muḥammad ‘Amāra grants Ibn Taymiyya the title of “the philosopher and sage of Salafism” (*faylasūf al-salafiyya wa-ḥakīmuhā*), whose rationalism is a paradigm to be adopted in modern Islamic thought.¹⁵

Indeed, *Shaykh al-Islām* Ibn Taymiyya – who has often been criticized for his radical attitude against philosophy and his harsh critique of dialectical theology and Sufism; whose ideas play a fundamental role in Saudi Wahhabism;¹⁶ who is accused of being the “father of Islamic fundamentalism”;¹⁷ and whose words have been even used by Muslims to justify terroristic activities;¹⁸ – receives, despite all of this, a flat-

13 Nadvi, Syed Sulaiman: Muslims and Greek Schools of Philosophy, in: *Islamic Culture* 1 (1927), pp. 85–91, here p. 89.

14 ‘Abd al-Rāziq, Muṣṭafā: *Khamsa min ālām al-fikr al-islāmī*, Cairo n. d., p. 123.

15 ‘Amāra, Muḥammad: Faylasūf al-salafiyya, in: *Shabakat al-difā‘ an al-sunna* (<http://www.dd-sunnah.net/forum/showthread.php?t=67742>, accessed May 3, 2009).

16 Laoust, Henri: *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Takī-d-dīn Aḥmad b. Taymīya*, Cairo 1939, pp. 506–540. See Steinberg, Guido: *Religion und Staat in Saudi-Arabien. Die wahhabitischen Gelehrten 1902–1953*, Würzburg 2002, pp. 87–103, 337–341 et passim.

17 This cliché is discussed in Krawietz, Birgit: Ibn Taymiyya, Vater des islamischen Fundamentalismus? Zur westlichen Rezeption eines mittelalterlichen Schariatsgelehrten, in: Manuel Atienza, Enrico Pattaro, Martin Schulte, Boris Topornin and Dieter Wyduckel (eds.): *Theorie des Rechts und der Gesellschaft. Festschrift für Werner Krawietz*, Berlin 2003, pp. 39–62.

18 See Jansen, Johannes J.G.: The Creed of Sadat’s Assassins. The Contents of “The Forgotten Duty” Analyzed, in: *Die Welt des Islams* 25 (1985), pp. 1–30; idem: *The Neglected Duty. The Creed of Sadat’s Assassins and Islamic Resur-*

tering portrait in the works of contemporary Muslim authors. These authors depict him as a unique Muslim philosopher who alone knew how to destroy the house of Greek logic and metaphysics and how to erect, in its place, a house of genuine Islamic philosophy. According to this view, Ibn Taymiyya digested the “poison of philosophy” – yet, his brilliant mind turned the poison into honey. This very honey, extracted from the hive of his writings, can accordingly nourish a new era of modern Islamic philosophy. That Ibn Taymiyya himself, no doubt, would have taken umbrage at this sort of labeling of his work demonstrates how rich in irony the history of ideas can actually be!

In this study, I will present the main features of Ibn Taymiyya’s ‘philosophical identity’ as they appear in works of contemporary Muslim authors. The first section (1) includes Ibn Taymiyya’s refutation of Aristotle’s formal logic as presented by three characteristic Muslim scholars. The second section (2) is dedicated to Ibn Taymiyya as an Averroist. The third section (3) deals with his renewal of philosophy in Islam through the establishment of Islamic metaphysics. The fourth section (4) presents Ibn Taymiyya as an original representative of philosophical nominalism. In the final section (5), I will discuss the present views with a special focus on the concept of philosophy that emerges from proclaiming Ibn Taymiyya a philosopher. I will conclude by reviewing the symptomatic value, for the situation of contemporary Islamic thought, of celebrating Ibn Taymiyya as a philosopher.¹⁹

gence in the Middle East, New York 1986; Sivan, Emmanuel: Ibn Taymiyya. Father of the Islamic Revolution; *Medieval Theology & Modern Politics*, in: *Encounter* 60 (1983), pp. 41–50; idem, *Radical Islam. Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, New Haven 1985, pp. 96–107, 124 et passim. Most bluntly of all, the members of al-Qā’ida and other radical Islamic groups are called Ibn Taymiyya’s children in Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon: *Age of Sacred Terror*, New York 2002, pp. 38–94.

19 In clear difference to the positions presented in this study, Yahya Michot, a prominent scholar of Ibn Taymiyya, identifies him as a “classical Islamic” thinker, “theologian and mufti” and “a great spiritual master of the *via media*, the middle way that is at the heart of traditional Islam” (*Ibn Taymiyya* (d. 728/1328). *Against Extremisms; Texts translated, annotated and introduced by Yahya M. Michot, with a foreword by Bruce B. Lawrence*, Ozoir-la-Ferrière 2012, pp. xx–xxi). Some of the texts included in the manuscript are posted in French translation on the website muslimphilosophy.com as “Textes Spirituels d’Ibn Taymiyya.” I wish to thank Prof. Michot for generously making his manuscript available to me prior to its publication.

In the present study, I am not primarily interested in Ibn Taymiyya but rather in the way contemporary Muslim authors view him as a philosopher, utiliz-

1. Ibn Taymiyya's Philosophical Critique of Aristotelian Logic

Central to Ibn Taymiyya's ferocious defense of Islam by means of reason is his refutation of Aristotelian logic, which he clearly considered the foundation of the metaphysical system developed by the Greeks. For Ibn Taymiyya, this metaphysical system, which the philosophers of Islam had adopted, was in full disagreement with the Islamic worldview.²⁰ His critical assessment of Greek logic bears, thus, important implications for both his general attitude towards philosophy and his orientation towards certain schools of Islamic theology.²¹ As such, contemporary Muslim authors who deal with this subject cannot explicitly claim the identity of a philosopher for Ibn Taymiyya *per se*. In presenting how he utilized philosophical terminology to fight the logicians with their own weapons, however, these authors connect his critique to possible sources in the Greek philosophical tradition as well as to later European critics of logic. By doing so, these authors apparently grant Ibn Taymiyya space among the philosophers without attributing to him a clear philosophical identity.

ing his ideas in contemporary Islamic discourses intending a revival of Islamic philosophy with Ibn Taymiyya as its patron, As such, I will defer from dealing directly with his texts. References to the sources used by contemporary authors treated in this study will, however, be made when necessary.

- 20 His critique reached its highest point in *Naṣīḥat abl al-imān fī al-radd 'alā mantiq al-yūnān*, better known as *al-Radd 'alā al-mantiqiyyīn*, edited by 'Abd al-Ṣamad Sharaf al-Dīn al-Kutubī, reviewed by Muḥammad Ṭalḥa Bilāl Minyār, with an introduction by al-Sayyid Sulaymān al-Nadwī, Beirut 1426/2005. This new edition is identical with the first edition of the book by al-Kutubī published in Bombay 1368/1949. The page numbers of the first edition are given on the page margins in the new edition and will be mentioned in the present study following page numbers according to the new edition. Another edition of the book, done by 'Abd al-Sattār al-Nashshār and 'Imād Khafājī, was published in Cairo 1977. This extensive volume was abridged by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (849/1445–911/1505) as *Jahd al-qarība fī tajrīd al-naṣīha*, edited by 'Alī Sāmī al-Nashshār, Cairo 1947, and edited by Su'ād 'Abd al-Rāziq and 'Alī Sāmī al-Nashshār, Cairo 1970. It also is part of vol. 9 of *Majmū' fatāwā shaykh al-islām Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya*, edited by 'Abd Allāh b. Qāsim, Rabat 1961. An English translation of the abridged book is: *Ibn Taymiyya Against Greek Logicians. Translated with Introduction and Notes by Wael B. Hallaq*, Oxford 1993.
- 21 See Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, p. 46/4. The number preceding the backslash is the page number in the new edition, the number following the backslash refers to the first edition of the book. See above n. 20.

How do contemporary Muslim authors locate Ibn Taymiyya's critique of Aristotle's logic? Three examples should prove instructive; in one example, 'Alī Sāmī al-Nashshār²² – an Egyptian professor of philosophy who deals with this subject during the course of his attempt to present a specifically Islamic methodology – follows the structure of *al-Radd 'alā al-mantiqiyyīn* and presents Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the Aristotelian definition,²³ logical proposition²⁴ and syllogism.²⁵ Each critical section is divided into a subversive part, in which Ibn Taymiyya encounters the Aristotelian arguments, and a constructive part, in which he develops his alternatives.²⁶ The Iranian scholar Muṣṭafā Ṭabāṭabā'ī, for his part, delivers a concise presentation of Ibn Taymiyya's arguments.²⁷ In another case, C. A. Qadir's article published in the *International Philosophical Quarterly* is obviously less interested in discussing Ibn Taymiyya's arguments than in presenting him as a pioneer of modern critique of Aristotelian logic.²⁸

22 Al-Nashshār, 'Alī Sāmī: *Manābij al-baḥṭh 'inda mufakkirī al-islām*, 4th ed., Cairo 1978.

23 Al-Nashshār, *Manābij*, pp. 149–163. Ibn Taymiyya refers to the definition, as introduced by Aristotle and adopted by medieval Muslim philosophers and, since the eleventh century, by the *kalām*-theologians as well. See Kennedy-Day, Kiki: *Books of Definition in Islamic Philosophy. The Limits of Words*, London and New York 2003; Gutas, Dimitri: *The Logic of Theology (kalām) in Avicenna*, in: Dominik Perler and Ulrich Rudolph (eds.): *Logik und Theologie. Das Organon im arabischen und im lateinischen Mittelalter*, Leiden and Boston 2005, pp. 59–72; van Ess, Josef: *The Logical Structure of Islamic Theology*, in: Gustave E. von Grunebaum (ed.): *Logic in Classical Islamic Culture*, Wiesbaden 1970, pp. 21–50.

24 Al-Nashshār, *Manābij*, pp. 164–179.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 180–219.

26 Al-Nashshār's discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's refutation of Aristotle's logic is taken into account in von Kügelgen, Anke: *Ibn Taymiyyas Kritik an der aristotelischen Logik und sein Gegenentwurf*, in: Dominik Perler and Ulrich Rudolph (eds.): *Logik und Theologie. Das Organon im arabischen und lateinischen Mittelalter*, Leiden and Boston 2005, pp. 167–225, here pp. 177–179.

27 Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muṣṭafā: *al-Mufakkirūn al-muslimūn fī muwājahat al-mantiq al-yūnānī*, translated into Arabic by 'Abd al-Rahīm M. al-Balūshī, Beirut 1990.

28 Qadir, Chaudry Abdul: *An Early Islamic Critic of Aristotelian Logic. Ibn Taymiyyah*, in: *International Philosophical Quarterly* 8 (1968), pp. 498–512. Despite its strong arguments, the article contains remarkably few references to Ibn Taymiyya's works; as such, the author's assertions are somewhat suspect in regards to their textual foundation. In regards to Ibn Taymiyya as a pioneer, the conservative Moroccan author and political activist Muḥammad Yaṭīm ascribes to Ibn Taymiyya the foundation of an "Islamic logic" (*mantiq islāmī*) and an "Islamic epistemological method" (*manhaj al-marifa al-Islāmī*); Yaṭīm, Muḥammad: *Ibn Taymiyya wa-ma'salat al-'aql wal-naql*, in: *al-Furqān* 3:8 (1407/1987), pp. 16–24, here 17–18.

To begin, it is certainly worth noting that al-Nashshār, the first author, in a tone which can be considered representative of Islamic traditionalism, calls the transmission of Greek logic into Islamic culture a comprehensive “conspiracy” initiated by the Umayyads, encouraged by the Byzantines, and secretly carried out by converted Manicheans, Zoroastrians, and oriental Christians. Their goal, for al-Nashshār, was to contaminate pure Islamic thought; their strategy was to translate works of Greek logic into Arabic and, therewith, to destroy Islam from within.²⁹ Consequently, he asserts that Greek logic, intrinsically related as it is to Greek language, has been always alien to Arabic-Islamic culture.³⁰ Al-Nashshār identifies Stoic elements in Ibn Taymiyya’s critique of Aristotelian logic that are analogously alien to Islam.³¹ An important source of Ibn Taymiyya’s critique can furthermore be found in the writings of Sextus Empiricus³² as well as in the writings of Greek Skeptics and Sophists.³³

Even so, Ibn Taymiyya delivered the most substantial critique of Aristotelian logic from an Islamic point of view. Utilizing “philosophical language”,³⁴ he brought the Islamic critique of Aristotelian logic

29 Al-Nashshār, *Manābij*, pp. 5–7 et passim. According to al-Nashshār, ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Muqaffa’ – or rather his son Muḥammad – belongs to the earliest group of the conspirators, as he presumably prepared the first Arabic translation of certain books of Aristotle’s logic: *ibid.*, pp. 21, 169. See Gabrieli, Francesco: Ibn al-Muqaffa’, in: *EI*², vol. 3 (1971), pp. 883–885.

30 Al-Nashshār, *Manābij*, p. 29. Despite a dramatic plot, al-Nashshār’s argument is actually an old one popular among Muslim critics of logic, as the famous debate which took place in 938 between the grammarian Abū Sa’īd al-Sīrāfi (d. 368/979) and the Christian logician Abū Bishr Mattā ibn Yūnus (d. 328/940) clearly documents. The text of the debate is in al-Tawḥīdī, Abū Ḥayyān: *Kitāb al-Imtā’ wal-mu’ānasa*, edited by Aḥmad Amīn and Aḥmad al-Zayn, Beirut n. d., part 1, pp. 107–128. English translation: Margoliouth, David Samuel: The Discussion Between Abū Bishr Mattā and Abū Sa’īd al-Sīrāfi on the Merits of Logic and Grammar, in: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society NS*, 37 (1905), pp. 79–129. See Endreß, Gerhard: Grammatik und Logik. Arabische Philologie und griechische Philosophie im Widerstreit, in: Burkhard Mojsisch (ed.): *Sprachphilosophie in Antike und Mittelalter*, Amsterdam 1986, pp. 163–299, including a German translation of the debate, pp. 235–270, and of a text by Mattā’s student Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī (363/974) on the difference between logic and grammar, pp. 271–296; Kühn, Wilfried: Die Rehabilitierung der Sprache durch den arabischen Philologen as-Sīrāfi, in: Burkhard Mojsisch (ed.): *Sprachphilosophie in Antike und Mittelalter*, pp. 301–402, offers an analytical study of al-Sīrāfi’s arguments.

31 Al-Nashshār, *Manābij*, pp. 152, 175.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 170.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 159.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 168.

to its summit in a unique attempt to establish a uniquely Islamic logic.³⁵ In the view of the Muslim authors who dealt with this topic, Ibn Taymiyya undertakes the task without falling like al-Ghazālī into the trap of philosophy. Ultimately derived from the sacred texts of Islam, i. e. the Koran and Sunna, Ibn Taymiyya's alternatives to Aristotelian logic confirm, thus, the jurists' judgment that whoever studies logic is a heretic (*man tamantaq tazandaq*).³⁶

The core of Ibn Taymiyya's critique of Aristotle's logic is his denial of the logicians' claim that the "true definition" (*al-ḥadd al-ḥaqīqī*) is the only way to conceptually capture the quiddity of an existent (*taṣawwur al-mābiyya*).³⁷ Such a definition consists essentially of two elements: 1) the essential attributes which are common (*al-dhātiyya al-mushtaraka*) between the existent and other existents of the same genus (*jins*); and 2) the attributes which are common between the existent and its species (*naw*) and which distinguish a specific existent from other existents (*al-dhātiyya al-mumayyiza*), i. e. the difference (*al-faṣl*).³⁸ He furthermore argues that such a definition is either impossible or extremely difficult to develop, which makes definitions actually useless for the perception of truth.³⁹ For him, existents are too complicated to be conceptually captured through such insufficient and superficial logical constructions; natural beings should, rather, be investigated rationally and empirically. This is, actually, what Muslim scholars after Ibn Taymiyya failed to do, according to critical contemporary Muslim authors.⁴⁰ However, Ibn Taymiyya considers the definition useful in distinguishing the *definiendum* from other similar things. Definitions, thus, essentially resemble names; they do not lead to the conception of existents, but merely serve as "reminders".⁴¹ Ibn Taymiyya is, thus, a nominalist.⁴²

35 Ibid., p. 148.

36 Ibid., p. 169.

37 Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, p. 46/5. See Aristotle: *Topica et Sophistici Elenchi*, edited by Sir William David Ross, Oxford 1979, p. 5.

38 Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, p. 47/5.

39 Ṭabaṭabā'ī, *al-Mufakkirūn*, p. 94; Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, p. 50/9.

40 'Abd al-Rāziq, *Kḥamsa*, p. 125; Ṭabaṭabā'ī, *al-Mufakkirūn*, p. 98.

41 Ṭabaṭabā'ī, *al-Mufakkirūn*, 98; Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, p. 84/43. Ibn Taymiyya's views continue the tradition of Arab grammarians; see von Kūgelgen, *Ibn Taymīyas Kritik an der aristotelischen Logik*, pp. 187–188.

42 Qadir, *An Early Islamic Critic*, pp. 499–501. See the concise discussion of this subject in von Kūgelgen, *Ibn Taymīyas Kritik an der aristotelischen Logik*, pp. 187–192.

Ṭabaṭabāṭī develops his own reaction. Rejecting Ibn Taymiyya’s plea for the unity of the quiddity and the existence of an existent,⁴³ Ṭabaṭabāṭī maintains the cognitive separation of both categories and argues that the external existence of a certain existent is not identical with its identity or specific characteristics, as far as these can be cognitively captured.⁴⁴ Ṭabaṭabāṭī shares, however, Ibn Taymiyya’s view that existence in the real world is prior to the perception of the quiddity and that logical universals do not exist in reality outside the cognitive sphere.⁴⁵ As such, only that which is “partial and particular” (*juzʿī muʿayyan*) exists in the real world of existence.⁴⁶ Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya believes that universals (*al-qadāyā al-kullīya*) are constructed through a cognitive process of abstraction from particular existents.⁴⁷

Ṭabaṭabāṭī further discusses Ibn Taymiyya’s statement that everything that can be known by means of syllogism can be known without it,⁴⁸ rejecting, thus, syllogism as a source of new knowledge and demoting it to a mere way of “remembrance and repetition of knowledge” (*al-tadhakkur wa-takrār al-māʿrifa*).⁴⁹ Ibn Taymiyya replaced syllogism with analogy (*tamthīl*), which Muslim jurists employed as a way to develop similar judgments regarding two similar objects, rejecting the logicians’ view that analogy produces only assumptions.⁵⁰

Comparing the critique of Aristotelian logic by Muslim thinkers – such as, for example, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Taymiyya – with its critique by European philosophers like Roger Bacon, Francis Bacon, Descartes and John Locke, both Ṭabaṭabāṭī and Qadir, in their turn, emphasize the excellence of these Muslim critics who preceded – and in some ways exceeded – their counterparts in uncovering the shortcomings of Aristotle’s logical system.⁵¹ Ibn Taymiyya’s achievements in this field occupy much of

43 Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, 107/65: *fa-wujūd al-shayʿ fi al-khārij ʿayn māhiyyatihi fi al-khārij*. See von Kügelgen, *Ibn Taymīyas Kritik an der aristotelischen Logik*, pp. 181–182.

44 Ṭabaṭabāṭī, *al-Mufakkirūn*, pp. 99–100.

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 101–103; Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, p. 113/71.

46 Ṭabaṭabāṭī, *al-Mufakkirūn*, p. 105; Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, p. 126/84.

47 Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, pp. 101/59, 123–124/82–83.

48 Ṭabaṭabāṭī, *al-Mufakkirūn*, p. 111; Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, pp. 384–385/339–340.

49 Ṭabaṭabāṭī, *al-Mufakkirūn*, p. 109.

50 *Ibid.*, pp. 113–115; Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, pp. 156/115–117, 161–162/120–121, 399–401/354–356.

51 Ṭabaṭabāṭī, *al-Mufakkirūn*, pp. 126–148.

Ṭabaṭabā'ī's presentation of this topic: compared with Francis Bacon (1561–1626)⁵², Ibn Taymiyya argues “in clear scientific language” that a judgment achieved through syllogistic evidence is correct if the premises are proven to be correct; this can only be done through empirical investigation prior to establishing the form of syllogism. In this regard, Ṭabaṭabā'ī notes that Ibn Taymiyya uses analogy to ascribe a decisive role to practical experience in developing philosophical judgments. For Ibn Taymiyya – and thus for Ṭabaṭabā'ī – empirical knowledge results from “both sense and reason” (*al-ḥiss wal-ʿaql kilāhumā maʿan*); Ibn Taymiyya's favorite examples come from medicine and jurisprudence, both disciplines in which theory and practice are intrinsically interconnected.⁵³ Furthermore, his methodological doubt regarding the value of Aristotelian logic for the achievement of rational knowledge precedes the critique made by John Locke (1632–1704),⁵⁴ and the readers of Ibn Taymiyya's critique of Aristotelian logic would find the same arguments and nominal interpretation of the definition⁵⁵ brought by John Stuart Mill (1806–1873)⁵⁶ five centuries later. Finally, Ibn Taymiyya's nominal definition predates Bertrand Russell's (1872–1970) critique of Aristotle and can even answer some of his questions.⁵⁷

In conclusion to this section, it is relevant to point out that Ibn Taymiyya's refutation of logic has been connected, so al-Nashshār, to ancient philosophers who raised doubt concerning the epistemological value of Aristotle's logic. Nevertheless, it seems nearly impossible to establish any concrete link between Ibn Taymiyya and Sextus Empiricus or any of the Skeptics, as their writings were, as far as known, never

52 Bacon, Francis: *Novum Organon/The New Organon*, edited by Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne, Cambridge and New York 2000.

53 Ṭabaṭabā'ī, *al-Mufakkirūn*, pp. 130–131; Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, pp. 437–438/393–394.

54 Ṭabaṭabā'ī, *al-Mufakkirūn*, pp. 135–138. See Locke, John: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Collated and Annotated with Biographical, Critical and Historical Prolegomena by Alexander Campbell Fraser*, New York 1959, especially book 4, chapter 17.

55 Ṭabaṭabā'ī, *al-Mufakkirūn*, pp. 145–147. Al-Nashshār, *Manāḥij*, pp. 162, 170, 178, is also interested in showing similarities between Ibn Taymiyya's and Mill's critique of Aristotle's logic.

56 Mill, John Stuart: *A System of Logic*, New York 1919.

57 Al-Nashshār, *Manāḥij*, p. 162; Qadir, *An Early Islamic Critic*, pp. 499–501. Further similar statements are referred to in von Kügelgen, *Ibn Taymīyas Kritik an der aristotelischen Logik*, pp. 215–217.

translated into Arabic.⁵⁸ At best, isolated skeptical thoughts could have indirectly reached the Abbasid society.⁵⁹ This, of course, does not mean that Islamic civilization did not know situations “that independently may have given rise to intellectual developments that were similar, or at least receptive, to Stoic, Sceptic, and other ideas”.⁶⁰

Beyond this, the explicit claim – very often pronounced by contemporary Muslim scholars – that Ibn Taymiyya was a nominalist and empiricist who foreshadowed British empiricism appears groundless by a comparative study of the sources. Of course, striking similarities between Ibn Taymiyya’s views and teachings of British empiricists can be identified; the equivalence of analogy and syllogism exists in Mill and Locke; Mill and Hume emphasize the role of induction and analogy, based on empirical experience and sensual perception, for knowledge; Mill and Locke even consider the axioms of mathematics and logic derived from particulars.⁶¹ Other similarities are captured by Ṭabaṭabā’ī; Anke von Kügelgen indicates even more.⁶² These parallels, nevertheless, seem limited in regards to their function within the philosophical system of each one of these thinkers: Francis Bacon places the empirical methods for obtaining knowledge in the service of technology;⁶³ Locke and Hume consider knowledge primarily to be

58 See Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians*, p. xli. See *ibid.*, pp. xxxix–xxxx; Gutas, Dimitri: Pre-Plotinian Philosophy in Arabic (Other than Platonism and Aristotelianism). A Review of the Sources, in: Wolfgang Haase (ed.): *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, vol. II. 36.1, Berlin and New York 1994, pp. 4939–4973, here 4943.

59 Van Ess, Josef: Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought, in: Charles Malik (ed.): *God and Man in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, Beirut 1972, pp. 83–98, especially pp. 84, 86–87. [The article was first published in *Al-Abhath* 21 (1968), pp. 1–18].

60 Gutas, Pre-Plotinian Philosophy in Arabic, p. 4948. See his critique of proponents of a “hidden tradition” of transmitting Greek philosophical ideas into Arabic, *ibid.*, pp. 4944–4949, and his rejection of the views in van Ess, Skepticism in Islamic Religious Thought, in: Charles Malik (ed.): *God and Man in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, p. 94. See on the influences of Stoic ideas in Islam: Jadaane, Fehmi: *L'influence du stoicisme sur la pensée musulmane*, Beirut 1968.

61 This topic has been investigated by Nicholas Heer: Ibn Taymiyah’s Empiricism, in: Farhad Kazemi and Robert Duncan McChesney (eds.): *A Way Prepared. Essays on Islamic Culture in Honor of Richard Bayly Winder*, New York and London 1988, pp. 109–115.

62 Von Kügelgen, Ibn Taymiyyas Kritik an der aristotelischen Logik, pp. 216–217.

63 Milton, John R.: Bacon, Francis, in: Craig, Edward (ed.): *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, London 1998, 2003, <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/DA002SECT1>, accessed February 06, 2012.

a psychological process;⁶⁴ Mill ascribes to natural sciences the ability to explain everything that happens in the world.⁶⁵ In deep contrast to these cosmetic similarities, for Ibn Taymiyya the object of knowledge is the real existent in the external world; each and every thing has its specific quiddity which can be captured only through sensual perception. Abstraction can only produce vulnerable individual knowledge.⁶⁶ Ibn Taymiyya's basic empiricist approach is not a vehicle for the development of natural science and technology, but serves a religious agenda based on his conviction that the knowledge of essence, as such, is both naturally possible for God and completely impossible for humans. Finally, acknowledging sacred writings as the ultimate source of secure knowledge, Ibn Taymiyya takes a course which European empiricists could simply never share.

2. Ibn Taymiyya's Averroistic Attitudes

In Islam, Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and Ibn Taymiyya represent two contrary fields of knowledge with antithetical approaches to the relationship between religion and rationality: Ibn Rushd established his philosophy on Aristotle's works, on which he diligently commented; truth, for Ibn Rushd, was strictly apodictic. On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyya, as it has been made clear in the previous section, rejected Aristotelian logic; for him, truth was what is clearly attested by the Koran or the Hadith. In addition to their difference in method and position, their legacies took remarkably different paths: Ibn Rushd's works, in their Hebrew and Latin translations, fertilized rational discourses in Europe through the 19th century, almost until the time they were rediscovered by Arab intellectuals in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁶⁷ Ibn

64 Copleston, Frederick S.J.: *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 5: *Hobbes to Hume*, London 1959, pp. 108–109, 263–264.

65 Copleston, Frederick S.J.: *Modern Philosophy. Empiricism, Idealism, and Pragmatism in Britain and America*, London 1959, pp. 50–92; see von Kügelgen, Ibn Taymīyas Kritik an der aristotelischen Logik, p. 217.

66 This view is shared by von Kügelgen, Ibn Taymīyas Kritik an der aristotelischen Logik, p. 218.

67 See Niewöhner, Friedrich and Sturlese, Loris (eds.): *Averroismus im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, Zurich 1994; von Kügelgen, Anke: *Averroes und die arabische Moderne. Ansätze zu einer Neubegründung des Rationalismus in Islam*, Leiden 1994; Tamer, Georges: Averroism, in: *EI*³, <http://static.ribo.brill>.

Taymiyya, as discussed above, has become – not incidentally – perhaps the most influential author in Muslim conservative circles.

In several of his writings, Ibn Taymiyya spared no critique of Ibn Rushd.⁶⁸ Despite fundamental discrepancies, however, both thinkers seem to agree on one thing: namely, the unity of truth, which is accessible to human beings through divine revelation and by means of rationality equivalently.⁶⁹ Arguing against the prevailing view that Ibn Rushd's influence is to be sought in late Medieval and Renaissance Europe rather than in the Islamic world, the Moroccan scholar 'Abd al-Majīd al-Ṣaghīr presents Averroistic positions in Ibn Taymiyya's work to demonstrate aspects of Ibn Rushd's legacy in the pre-modern Islamic context.⁷⁰ His study serves also as a response to the alleged epistemological break, proclaimed by none less than Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, between intellectual discourses in the Islamic East and the Islamic West.⁷¹ In the following, al-Ṣaghīr's views will be presented.

First, al-Ṣaghīr makes clear that Ibn Taymiyya shares a basic methodological principle with Ibn Rushd: the ultimate agreement between reason and religion. For Ibn Taymiyya, clear reason necessarily agrees with true tradition transmitted through the Koran and the authentic statements of the prophet. In stating, therefore, that the purpose of the Koran is identical with the purpose of pure rational demonstration, Ibn Taymiyya actually adds nothing new to Ibn Rushd's teachings.⁷²

According to al-Ṣaghīr, both thinkers respectively developed their critique of Muslim philosophers and *kalām*-theologians based on

semcs.net/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/averroism-COM_24253, accessed April 10, 2011.

68 Sa'd, al-Ṭablāwī Maḥmūd: *Mawqif Ibn Taymiyya min falsafat Ibn Rushd fī al-ʿaqīda wa-ilm al-kalām wal-falsafa*, Cairo 1409/1989, provides a thorough presentation of Ibn Taymiyya's critical attitude towards Ibn Rushd's major theological and philosophical views.

69 See on this topic von Kügelgen, Anke: Dialogpartner im Widerspruch. Ibn Rushd und Ibn Taymiyya über die "Einheit der Wahrheit", in: Rüdiger Arnzen and Jörn Thielmann (eds.): *Words, Texts and Concepts 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*, Leuven 2004, pp. 455–481.

70 Al-Ṣaghīr, 'Abd al-Majīd: Mawāqif "rushdiyya" li-Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya?, in: *Dirāsāt Maghribiyya muḥdāt ilā al-mufakkir al-Maghribī Muḥammad 'Azīz al-Habbābī*, Casablanca 1987², pp. 164–182.

71 He articulates this view in several works. See e.g. al-Jābirī, Muḥammad 'Ābid: *Nahnu wal-turāth*, Beirut 1993⁶, pp. 49–50, 212.

72 Al-Ṣaghīr, Mawāqif, p. 166.

their shared conviction that reason and revelation stood in fundamental agreement. Ibn Taymiyya's "critical project" (*al-masbrū' al-naqdī*) resulted from a comprehensive vision similar to that of his predecessor: Muslim theologians were to be criticized because they did not distinguish between "clear reason" (*al-ʿaql al-ṣarīḥ*) on the one hand and corrupt dialectic and syllogism on the other. While "clear reason" was desirable, Greek logic could only lead them astray from the very Koran and Hadith they claimed to be defending. As a result of the theologians' adoption of the corrupt methods of the philosophers, so al-Ṣaghīr, Ibn Taymiyya took to calling them "the Harranian Sabians" (*al-ṣābiʿa al-ḥarrāniyya*), accusing them of corrupting the original philosophy of Aristotle.⁷³

Al-Ṣaghīr acknowledges the differing outcomes of both Ibn Rushd's and Ibn Taymiyya's critical projects in regards to the relation between religion and philosophy. He states, nevertheless, that Ibn Taymiyya's critique of Islamic philosophy in the East (*al-mashriq*) actually "enriches and supports" Ibn Rushd's critique. Due to his intellectual environment, Ibn Taymiyya was well acquainted with the "Eastern ideas" under which influence this philosophy deviated from its Aristotelian origins; his critique of *kalām*-theology is, thus, an extension of Ibn Rushd's critique of the Ashʿarī school and particularly of al-Ghazālī.⁷⁴ Furthermore, al-Ṣaghīr points out that both personalities, although living under different social and political circumstances, shared a strong desire to reject established theological traditions and to both challenge and transform the predominant intellectual situation in which they respectively flourished. Ibn Taymiyya fought rigorously for the political and dogmatic unity of the *umma*, a goal which had been formulated by Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130). This was also the aim of Ibn Rushd.⁷⁵

Discussing specific Averroistic ideas in Ibn Taymiyya's works, al-Ṣaghīr highlights the following:

73 Ibid., p. 167. On Harran and its famous school of philosophy, which had a considerable impact on Arabic philosophy, see Fehérvári, G.: Ḥarrān, in: *ET*, vol. 3 (1971), pp. 227–230; Chwolsohn, Daniel: *Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus*, St. Petersburg 1856; Lewy, Hans: *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy*, Paris 1978; Theurgus, Iulianus: *The Chaldean Oracles. Text, translation and commentary by Ruth Majercik*, Leiden 1989.

74 Al-Ṣaghīr, Mawāqif, pp. 167–168.

75 Ibid., p. 168. A possible influence of Ibn Tūmart on Ibn Taymiyya is contested by Al-Matroudi, Abdul Hakim I.: *The Hanbalī School of Law and Ibn Taymiyya. Conflict or Conciliation*, London and New York 2006, p. 18.

1. Like Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymiyya was aware of the need to criticize the syllogism of the *kalām*-theologians and fundamental notions related to it: indeed, the arguments the *kalām*-theologians used to prove God's existence were based on thinking that the invisible could be held as analogous to the visible (*qiyās al-ghā'ib 'alā al-shāhid*). This inductive view, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Rushd point out, radically differs from the deductive method used in the Koran.⁷⁶

2. Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Rushd share a negative attitude towards the theologians' rejection of God's corporeal attributes. For both of them, these arguments empty the divinity of any attributes (*ta'tīl*) whatsoever. They differ, however, in the way they deal with Koranic anthropomorphisms: Ibn Taymiyya advocates, in the name of both reason and scripture, a literal reading of such passages; Ibn Rushd strongly argues for their allegorical interpretation. Nevertheless, they again seem to be on the same line; in the name of both the Koran and rationality, they defend the theological teaching about God's spatiality – i. e., His “being somewhere” (*al-jihā*) – against the Ash'arīs.⁷⁷

3. Ibn Taymiyya follows Ibn Rushd in rejecting the theological arguments for the createdness of the world; their response to the most controversial question in Islamic philosophy is, therefore, the same.⁷⁸ By stating that the createdness of the world was made possible without reason (*al-tarjīh bilā sabab*), the *kalām*-theologians not only opposed rationality, but moreover supported the Dahrīs and those who argued for the eternity of the world.⁷⁹ Though both philosophers and the theologians brought arguments to assert a maker (*al-šāni*) for the world, Ibn Taymiyya, similar to Ibn Rushd, dismissed these assertions as useless and confusing, emphasizing thereby the proof of predestination (*dalīl al-ināya*). This proof, in a simple, understandable way, presented

76 Al-Ṣaghīr, Mawāqif, p. 169. Regarding this, see Ibn Rushd: *al-Kashf'an manābij al-adilla fī 'aqā'id al-milla*, edited by Muṣṭafā Ḥanafī and Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, Beirut 1998, pp. 100–102; Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar'*, edited by Sālim, vol. 3, pp. 389–438; vol. 8, pp. 136–251; vol. 9, pp. 68–105.

77 Al-Ṣaghīr, Mawāqif, pp. 175–176. See Ibn Rushd, *al-Kashf*, pp. 138–142, 145–148; Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar'*, edited by Sālim, vol. 6, pp. 212–249; vol. 9, pp. 105–132, 334–400; vol. 10, pp. 147–157, 197–317. See von Kügelgen, Dialogpartner, pp. 462–470.

78 See Al-Alouṣī, Husām Muḥī Eldīn: *The Problem of Creation in Islamic Thought*, Baghdad 1968.

79 Al-Ṣaghīr, Mawāqif, p. 170. On the Dahrīs see Goldziher, Ignaz and Goichon, Amélie Marie: Dahriyya, in: *EP*, vol. 2 (1965), pp. 95–97; Shaki, Mansour: Dahri I (In Middle Persian Literature), in: *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 6, p. 587b.

God's care for the world and, thus, His continuous creating activity.⁸⁰ Wielding the same verses against the *kalām*-theologians, Ibn Taymiyya points out that the Koran does not teach creation out of nothing⁸¹; like Ibn Rushd, he refutes the theological principle that "whatever is not free of caused beings is itself caused" (*mā lā yakhlū min ḥawādith fa-ḥuwa ḥādith*), declaring it invalid according to both reason and the Koran. In nearly Ibn Rushd's own words Ibn Taymiyya states that the "truth does not contradict itself" (*al-ḥaqq lā yatanāqad*).⁸²

Ibn Taymiyya, in a position close to Ibn Rushd's, as al-Ṣaghīr states, asserts that the Koran and Hadith do not include any statement supporting the theologians' view that the contingent existents came into being at a precise instant (*al-ḥawādith lahā ibtidā*); indeed, this would imply that God's activity began at a certain point in time. This, however, does not mean that the world is eternal, as the philosophers argued: for, believing in God's eternal creating activity does not mean accepting that the world is eternal; agency (*al-fāʿiliyya*) precedes action just as the agent precedes the act. Ibn Taymiyya refers, in this regard, to the same Koranic verses used by Ibn Rushd in a similar context and interprets them in an astonishingly similar way.⁸³ Al-Ṣaghīr concludes that a "unity of mind" (*wiḥdat al-rūḥ*) must exist between Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Rushd, who both use the same arguments to obtain the same results. Yet, it must be noted that despite this basic agreement, each thinker treats the Koranic text differently: Ibn Rushd, on the one hand, draws it closer to Aristotle's position, making demonstration the highest criterion of truth and asserting that the interpreted scripture necessarily must agree with demonstration. Ibn Taymiyya, on the other hand, strictly holds the view that the literal text of the Koran is valid and does not need interpretation.⁸⁴

4. Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Rushd deal also similarly with the theological question of causality. Criticizing the Ash'arīs' rejection of other causes than God, they both assert with similar arguments that accept-

80 Regarding this, see von Kügelgen, *Dialogpartner*, pp. 470–472 with references to relevant passages in Ibn Rushd's and Ibn Taymiyya's oeuvre.

81 Al-Ṣaghīr, *Mawāqif*, pp. 170–171. See, for instance, Koran (41:11).

82 Al-Ṣaghīr, *Mawāqif*, p. 172. See Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl*, p. 13; Ibn Taymiyya, *Minḥāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya fī naqḍ kalām al-shī'a al-qadariyya*, edited by Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, Riyadh n. d., vol. 1, p. 300.

83 Al-Ṣaghīr, *Mawāqif*, pp. 173–175. Ibn Rushd, *al-Kashf*, pp. 171–172; idem, *Faṣl*, p. 21.

84 Al-Ṣaghīr, *Mawāqif*, p. 175.

ing natural causality is a requirement of both reason and the Koranic belief in God's wisdom as well. To deny the impact of causes is inconceivable for both of them, inasmuch as such a denial would render God's wisdom and knowledge useless.⁸⁵

5. Both Ibn Rushd and Ibn Taymiyya agree, furthermore, that the endeavor to harmonize *kalām* and *falsafa* failed on both sides. For Ibn Taymiyya, those theologians who attempted to bring theological and philosophical arguments to a synthesis defaulted into error and contradiction. Al-Ghazālī is a favorite target of critique from both thinkers, who accuse him of using contradictory rhetorical statements (which he claimed to be demonstrative) and of being inconsistent with his position. They likewise agree to criticize Ibn Sīnā; Ibn Taymiyya interestingly traces Ibn Sīnā's erroneous ideas back to the "deviated (*munḥarifa*) Harranian Sabiasm", a heritage he similarly imputes to al-Fārābī.⁸⁶ It is mainly Ibn Sīnā's attempt to provide proof for the existence of God that draws both Ibn Rushd's and Ibn Taymiyya's ire; after all, Ibn Sīnā differentiated between two kinds of existence: the necessary (*al-wājib*) and the possible (*al-mumkin*), in order to describe the heavens as both eternal and possible.⁸⁷

6. Al-Ṣaghīr points out that, in the context of his critique of Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Taymiyya admits Ibn Rushd's closeness to Aristotle, acknowledging that the Andalusian philosopher surpassed his Greek master in his explanation of the movement of the heavenly spheres.⁸⁸ Additionally, Ibn Taymiyya's critical advance against the Muslim philosophers of the East resembles that of Ibn Rushd, originating as it did from similar principles. One of the reasons for the agreement is, according to al-Ṣaghīr, the "traditionalist character" (*al-ṭābī al-salafī*) of Ibn Rushd's approach in discussing theological questions, especially in his philosophical-theological writings *Tabāfut al-Tabāfut*, *Faṣl al-maqāl* and *al-Kashf an manābij al-adilla*. Ibn Rushd's traditionalism is found in his return to the "original, authentic, not distorted and not interpreted" texts of Aristotle and the Koran.⁸⁹ Furthermore, both Ibn Rushd

85 Ibid., pp. 176–177. See Ibn Rushd, *al-Kashf*, pp. 166–169, 193–194; Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, p. 315/270.

86 Al-Ṣaghīr, *Mawāqif*, pp. 177–178.

87 Ibid., p. 179. On Ibn Sīnā's position and Ibn Rushd's critique of it see Davidson, Herbert A.: *Proofs for Eternity, Creation and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy*, New York and Oxford 1987, pp. 281–335.

88 Al-Ṣaghīr, *Mawāqif*, p. 180.

89 Ibid., p. 181.

and Ibn Taymiyya view the history of ideas as a history of decline. Al-Ṣaghīr suggests that the latter remains within the framework of the former's critique of Muslim theologians and philosophers, insofar as he aimed to restore them to their respective origins: the Koran and Aristotle. Ibn Taymiyya, who knew that Ibn Rushd was the closest Muslim philosopher to Aristotle, considered him also to be "the closest philosopher to Islam" – "a testimony which Ibn Rushd would have most liked!"⁹⁰ In his final remarks, al-Ṣaghīr assumes that the striking similarities of both positions are traceable to common sources of thought or to Ibn Rushd's influence on Ibn Taymiyya, which, of course, the latter did not display openly. Ibn Taymiyya would be, thus, like Thomas Aquinas – "one of the firstlings of Averroism in a different environment than its first Moroccan milieu."⁹¹

In conclusion, al-Ṣaghīr presents Ibn Taymiyya's position as "an echo, application and extension of Ibn Rushd's philosophical critique" to previous Muslim philosophers and *kalām*-theologians. He does this in order to make a case for Ibn Rushd's uninterrupted influence in the Islamic East (*al-mashriq*).⁹² In his view, Ibn Taymiyya's propagated agreement of "clear reason and sound traditional knowledge" is identical with Ibn Rushd's principle of the oneness of truth. Al-Ṣaghīr, however, by means of the interrogative form of the title as well as several cautious statements within the study itself, demonstrates his awareness of the highly hypothetical nature of his arguments and conclusions.

Nevertheless, al-Ṣaghīr is silent about Ibn Taymiyya's explicit accusation that Ibn Rushd, in his writings, concealed his true belief in the so-called "double truth": that the truth of theological teachings is reserved exclusively for philosophers, while common people are fed pious fictions. Al-Ṣaghīr likewise completely ignores the numerous polemical attacks against the Córdoba philosopher in Ibn Taymiyya's works.⁹³ Obviously, Ibn Taymiyya does not take Ibn Rushd's profes-

90 Ibid., p. 182. In her abovementioned study, Anke von Kügelgen, *Dialogpartner*, pp. 472–475, states that Ibn Taymiyya does not treat Ibn Rushd in a better way than al-Ghazālī deals with his predecessors. She, furthermore, briefly indicates major points of agreement and disagreement between both thinkers, referring to relevant passages in Ibn Taymiyya's works.

91 Al-Ṣaghīr, *Mawāqif*, p. 182.

92 Ibid., p. 165.

93 For instance: Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʿ*, edited by Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, vol. 1, p. 11 et passim, vol. 11, s. v. Ibn Rushd.

sion of the oneness of truth seriously.⁹⁴ As the study makes clear, some of his positions can be considered “Averroistic”; these positions, nonetheless, serve Ibn Taymiyya’s fundamental conviction of the absolute primacy of Koran and *sunna* over philosophical reasoning – and this is doubtlessly *contra* Averroes.

3. Ibn Taymiyya’s Resumption of the Philosophical Discourse in Islam

In a monograph on the resumption of philosophy in Islam, the Moroccan scholar ‘Abd al-Ḥakīm Ajhar extensively examines a number of Ibn Taymiyya’s teachings.⁹⁵ His analysis includes Ibn Taymiyya’s concept of God’s oneness (*tawḥīd*), the relationship between God’s essence and attributes,⁹⁶ and Ibn Taymiyya’s teaching in regards to God’s eternal creation of the world and to locating the accidents (*ḥawādith*) in the divine essence.⁹⁷ Through this selection of purely metaphysical topics, the author intends to demonstrate that Ibn Taymiyya revived Islamic philosophy after it was stalemated by the death of Ibn Rushd. After presenting Ajhar’s conception of Ibn Taymiyya as a philosopher and the justification he offers for this view, I will present a summary of his analysis of Ibn Taymiyya’s main philosophical assertions.

Ibn Taymiyya, so Ajhar, possesses “an intellectual project” and “a philosophical position which resembles any other philosophical position in the history of philosophy in Islam”. His worldview is coherent and “based on clear and solid philosophical and logical foundations”. Ajhar describes this aspect of Ibn Taymiyya’s thought as “the other hidden side” which is difficult to discover because of Ibn Taymiyya’s use of “a twofold language”,⁹⁸ with which he articulated one truth in a philosophical and a religious way. Unlike Ibn Rushd, however, he did not attempt to establish a philosophical system paralleling religion; rather, moving uniquely and rationally, he treated highly speculative

94 A similar conclusion is in von Kügelgen, *Dialogpartner*, p. 476.

95 Ajhar, ‘Abd al-Ḥakīm: *Ibn Taymiyya wa-stīnāf al-qawl al-falsafī fī al-Islām*, Casablanca and Beirut 2004.

96 *Ibid.*, pp. 43–93.

97 *Ibid.*, pp. 145–226. The middle chapter (pp. 97–141) deals with several theological and philosophical teachings on the originating of the world (*ḥudūth*) and causality, which build Ibn Taymiyya’s background in dealing with the topic.

98 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

topics within a religious system utilizing, therewith, the same arguments and Koranic statements used by Ibn Rushd.⁹⁹

Although Ibn Taymiyya explicitly rejected *taʿwīl* (the interpretation of the Koran), he actually developed his position through practicing *taʿwīl*, as he steadily claimed to be “correcting the philosophers’ and theologians’ misunderstanding” of the sacred and philosophical texts to which they referred. In doing so, he considered reason to be the “activity of interpreting the text [of the Koran]” (*al-nashāt al-taʿwīlī lil-naṣṣ*).¹⁰⁰ This unique understanding of rationality, intrinsically connected to the Scripture, enabled him, furthermore, to “justify his philosophy as the harmony (*insijām*) and congruence (*muṭābaqa*) between clear reason and true text.” Ibn Taymiyya’s “clear reason” (*ṣarīḥ al-māqūl*) is nothing else but philosophy, as he knew it through Ibn Rushd and Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. after 560/1164); he, however, avoids using this term because of its negative connotations in Islam.¹⁰¹ Ibn Taymiyya’s philosophy can, thus, be considered as a project of “rational interpretation (*taʿwīl ʿaqlī*) which goes beyond the outward of the text (*ẓāhir al-naṣṣ*) to its rational interior (*bāṭinihi al-ʿaqlī*).” Ibn Taymiyya’s project closely resembles that of Ibn Rushd, who, however, did not conceal it as he himself did.¹⁰² Ibn Taymiyya’s philosophy is a reformatory enterprise; its purpose is to return reason and religious tradition to the original concord that existed before they were misconceived in philosophy and theology as “two antipodes.”¹⁰³ Ibn Taymiyya formulates

a position which is totally in agreement with the rational norms of his time regarding the questions of God’s unity and His creation [of the world], [His] being somewhere (*al-jiba*), the teaching of causality and the concept of eternity. In order to justify his ‘implied’ philosophical system (*manzūmatahu al-falsafīyya ʿal-dīmniyya*) [...] he resorted to the text [of the Koran].¹⁰⁴

The “philosopher” Ibn Taymiyya develops a two-track strategy. On one hand, regarding almost all matters of society, history, politics and eschatology, he rejects any philosophical interpretation of the Koran

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 16–17, n. 1.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 218, n. 174.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 17 and footnote.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 16–17.

and accepts literally-stated religious views exclusively; on the other hand, “in rare rational boldness [...] he establishes a creative ontology which combines oneness and multiplicity in a way which goes beyond former philosophical schools.”¹⁰⁵ When dealing with philosophical-theological matters such as God’s unity and the creation of the world, however, he utilizes an exoteric-esoteric style that enables him to express ideas in a way that corresponds with a traditional religious understanding.

Ibn Taymiyya employs his exoteric-esoteric approach, according to Ajhar, especially in regards to the rejection of the metaphorical interpretation of God’s anthropomorphic attributes; it also is demonstrated by his particularly vehement critique of foregoing Muslim rational philosophers and *kalām*-theologians. In both cases, Ibn Taymiyya followed the traditionalist strand in Islam *expressis verbis*.¹⁰⁶ A more careful reading of his work, however, reveals him to be a “philosopher” who attempted to “revive and activate rational thinking in Islam”, utilizing, like the philosophers, the method of rational argumentation and critique.¹⁰⁷ In many other cases, “he justifies his real intentions, as he declares that he does not reject *kalām* and philosophy as a whole, but rather particular formulas and concepts” in these disciplines. This means that he is not hostile to rational discourses as such, but rather objects “to the way *kalām*-theologians and philosophers [discussed] essential ontological issues.” In this sense, he rebukes them for their failure “to defend Islam by means of reason.”¹⁰⁸

In Ajhar’s view, Ibn Taymiyya consciously and deliberately employed such a style; its vagueness allowed him to establish rational and philosophical foundations for Sunni Islam without being counted among the philosophers or *kalām*-theologians. Besides this, the obscurity of his discourse can be attributed to the historical fact that his ideas are spread out within polemical debates requiring deep knowledge of their historical and intellectual backgrounds; it is this polemical context that primarily determines the tone of his arguments.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya negotiates complicated philosophical topics in an unusual and untraditional way – this approach was an additional reason for the obscurity of his style. By negotiating these topics, his

105 Ibid., p. 17.

106 Ibid., p. 22.

107 Ibid., p. 23.

108 Ibid., pp. 83–84 and n. 100.

109 Ibid., pp. 24–25, 218.

“philosophical reason” was open to the philosophers – even to those whom he considered enemies.¹¹⁰

Of basic relevance for Ibn Taymiyya’s project is his conception of knowledge as a special relation between man and the world with no other medium but universal notions, which are based on “real objects”. Human knowledge is, thus, “a totally objective process which is determined by the essential epistemological factors which human reason creates through its relation with the world”, such as logic.¹¹¹ Knowledge

is a process which is limited to the realm of this world; it is rational in the Aristotelian sense, stripped of metaphysics. This is the reason why Ibn Taymiyya always asserts that knowledge has to be formulated through meaningful expressions of real significance.¹¹²

Such a concept of knowledge does not play any role in man’s relation to God, which is distinctively a religious relation based upon worship “and the fulfillment of the religious laws conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad, which have been formulated and fixed by the jurists and the Hadith-scholars in reliance upon revelation.” Ibn Taymiyya, so Ajhar, separates clearly between rational knowledge and religion; “each one of the two has its own field and practices.”¹¹³

In a critical hint, Ajhar states that Ibn Taymiyya’s emphasis on reason and its agreement with the text of the Koran did not lead to the revival of rational thought in Islam; on the contrary, it became common among Muslims to reject all forms of rational thinking in the name of good religious tradition. Ibn Taymiyya contributed to this negative development in Islamic intellectual history through his use of “a double-leveled language” which attacked the philosophers and theologians on one hand and adopted “the most daring philosophical opinions in the history of Islamic thought” on the other. As such, his discourse was “ambiguous” and difficult to understand.¹¹⁴

Ajhar extensively presents Ibn Taymiyya’s philosophical views on the topics which are addressed in the following chapters.

110 Ibid., pp. 21–22.

111 Ibid., p. 230.

112 Ibid., p. 231.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid., p. 23.

3.1. God's Oneness, His Attributes and the Multiplicity of Created Beings

It was hard for *kalām*-theologians to explain how God's absolute oneness could be reconciled with His creation of multiple existents. Muslim philosophers, such as al-Fārābī, adopted the Neoplatonic theory of emanation, which allowed the multiplicity of existents to originate in the first intellect, not in God, preserving thus His absolute oneness.¹¹⁵ According to Ibn Taymiyya, multiplicity originates in God's attributes, which are one with God's essence. Being the highest universals, they are, at the same time, not separate from their particulars. This double-sided function enables God's attributes to establish, in a rationally explicable way, the relationship between God's absolute oneness and the multiplicity of world affairs; the oneness, transcendence and eternity of God's divine essence remain, thus, unaffected. What comes into being within the divine essence is the "divine action" (*al-fīl al-ilāhī*) itself, which means the transformation of the universals to a less universal status through particularization. It is a "conceptual creation" (*ḥudūth mafhūmī*) which preserves the ontological difference between the transcendental divine essence and the world of being and corruption.¹¹⁶

Following the Aristotelian strand pursued by Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymiyya does not consider God's essence as an *abstractum*, void of attributes, but as an objective reality which includes the attributes (*al-ṣifāt*) as a real part.¹¹⁷ Therefore, he rejects the Mu'tazilī attempt to divest God of His attributes, dismissing this as a way of annihilating the idea of God; yet, he also rejects God's anthropomorphism.¹¹⁸ For him, God, who is free of corporeal attributes, is not located at a certain space; the world is of a planetary shape, and God encompasses it from all sides infinitely. Though encompassing the world, God is always above it; this is actually an attribute of His transcendence. Even if God is apart from the world, He is at the same time not careless about it. His relation to the world is carried out by His attributes.¹¹⁹

115 See Fakhry, Majid: *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, New York 2004, pp. 121–128; Davidson, Herbert: *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect*, New York and Oxford 1992, pp. 44–126.

116 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, pp. 19–20.

117 Ibid., pp. 50–51.

118 See van Ess, Josef: *Tashbīh wa-tanzīh*, in: *EI*², vol. 10 (2000), pp. 341–342.

119 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, pp. 60–61. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Daʾ taʾrūd al-ʿaql wal-naql aw muwāfaqat ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl li-ṣarīḥ al-māʿqūl*, edited by ʿAbd al-Latīf

According to Ajhar, Ibn Taymiyya dealt with the complicated relationship between God's attributes and His essence in a "unique and courageous way" which deserves to be considered not only as a contribution "to the formulation of the original philosophical problem; it also breaks with intellectual premises which remained untouched throughout a long period of Islamic thought." In regards to the topics he treated, Ibn Taymiyya was clearly concerned with developing a logical justification of his opinions. Dealing critically with former philosophers and *kalām*-theologians on this topic, he rejected some of their views while adopting many others. This philosophical act of selection makes it difficult for the reader to discover which philosophical views he "put in a different philosophical framework" and adopted, especially since his views are scattered throughout several books. As "his new concepts and ideas" demonstrate, however, Ibn Taymiyya remains both "a *mutakallim* and a philosopher" deeply immersed in both *kalām* and *falsafa*.¹²⁰

Ibn Taymiyya considers God's essence and attributes to be one, forming together "God's oneness and objective existence". In order to define the nature of the divine attributes and their relation to the divine essence, he utilized a philosophical rather than a philological approach, declaring God an inseparable unity consisting of both the essence and the attributes. In this sense, God's attributes, such as His omniscience, omnipotence, life, hearing, seeing etc., are actually not additions (*zā'ida*) to His essence nor different from it (*ghayr*). They possess a "conceptual being" (*al-kaynūna al-mafhūmiyya*)¹²¹ and, as such, they are universals, both genera and species. Together with God's essence, these constitute a unified one being. In this regard, Ibn Taymiyya's teaching that "God and the attributes are one" appears to be very close to the teaching developed by the Mu'tazilī theologian Abū al-Hudhayl al-'Allāf (d. 841), stating that the attributes are God Himself (*hiya huwa*).¹²² For the Ḥanbalī scholar, however, God's oneness is not merely imagined

¹²⁰ Abd al-Rahmān, Beirut 1417/1997, vol. 3, pp. 277–293. See in general the illuminating study by Jan Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism*, Leiden 2007.

120 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 83. See on this Özervarli, M. Sait: The Qur'ānic Rational Theology of Ibn Taymiyya and His Criticism of the *Mutakallimūn*, in: Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmad (eds.): *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, Oxford 2010, pp. 78–100.

121 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 85.

122 Ibid., pp. 86–88. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar'*, edited by 'Abd al-Laṭīf 'Abd al-Rahmān, vol. 5, pp. 328–329; Nyberg, Henrik Samuel: Abu'l-Hudhayl al-'Allāf, in: *EP*, vol. 1 (1960), pp. 127–129; see Ibn Rushd's critique of the

but is also objective; although not composite, it is the source of an eternal agency that does not begin or end in time.¹²³

This ingenious philosophical concept, combining God's oneness with the plurality of His attributes intends, according to Ajhar, to offer a rational explanation for the creation of the manifold world by the one God. Ibn Taymiyya rejects, therefore, the classical theological classification of God's attributes into essential (*dhātiyya*) and abstract (*ma'nawiyya*) qualities, claiming an equality for all divine attributes as eternal universals in perpetual action united with the divine essence. Each one of these attributes produces its particulars according to specific functions.¹²⁴

Separating himself from traditional *kalām's* view on God's oneness, Ibn Taymiyya obviously aimed to "establish a new philosophical position" different from mainstream *kalām* and *falsafa*. His "philosophical principles" are the unity of God's essence and attributes; the eternity of the divine attributes which are both genera and species; and the eternity of the divine agency.¹²⁵ Ajhar states that such a view is "unique in the history of Islamic thought and particularly in the history of Islamic theology".¹²⁶ Distinguishing between Ibn Taymiyya's divine attributes and Plato's ideas, he states that the divine attributes do not, like Plato's forms, exist autonomously beyond time and space, with real existents seeming to be no more than their pale imitations. On the contrary, the divine attributes exist in the very essence of God united with His essence, and this unification produces God's oneness. All existents in the material world have their origin in the divine attributes through an eternal process of creation.

Another focus of Ibn Taymiyya's philosophical endeavor is the nature of God's knowledge, which he considers to be, like the divine attributes, one genus with multiple manifestations that cause the objects of knowledge (*al-mālūmāt*).¹²⁷ It is, once again, God's will which plays a mediating role in relating God's knowledge to the perceptible world. As Ajhar relates, Ibn Taymiyya uniquely offers "a systematic

Mu'tazila on this point, which has been criticized by Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Kashf*, pp. 134–136.

123 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 89. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar'*, edited by 'Abd al-Laṭīf 'Abd al-Raḥmān, vol. 1, p. 215.

124 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 90. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar'*, edited by 'Abd al-Laṭīf 'Abd al-Raḥmān, vol. 2, pp. 108–109.

125 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 91.

126 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

127 *Ibid.*, pp. 181–182; Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar'*, edited by 'Abd al-Laṭīf 'Abd al-Raḥmān, vol. 5, pp. 262–263.

philosophical critique” of the theologians who, in their conceptions of divine knowledge, neglected the role of the divine will. Based on premises borrowed from philosophy, Ibn Taymiyya states that God’s will, just as it acts in harmony with the other attributes, also acts in concord with His knowledge. This cooperation makes it possible that God both creates and knows the particulars.¹²⁸ God’s knowledge, however, acts in eternal succession, which Ibn Taymiyya often describes as “self-renewal” (*tajaddud*).¹²⁹ Ajhar points out that Ibn Taymiyya was primarily concerned with offering the most rational explanation of the process of creation, even if doing so “would lead [him] to destroy all foundations of Islamic *kalām*.” Ibn Taymiyya’s “intellectual and philosophical adventure could have been easier and ‘safer’, in a religious dogmatic sense, if he would have determined his premises arbitrarily, without philosophical justification, as his predecessors used to do.” In regards to the teaching of creation, however, Ibn Taymiyya “was, on a philosophical level, committed to the rational and logical demands which he held to be in agreement with the Koran and the Sunna in a state of real purity.”¹³⁰

3.2. Creation of the World

Ibn Taymiyya’s views regarding the creation of the world are to be situated, according to Ajhar, in the context of the intensive debate on this topic between Muslim philosophers and theologians. By emphasizing God’s will and power as the means by which God created the world, the *kalām*-theologians were unable to develop a worldview which could include causal relations between the existents. According to the theologians, existents – being totally dependent on divine will – are void of any latent ability to come into being or influence other existents. This is in sharp contrast with the philosophers’ view, which saw the world as subordinated to a determined order due to a natural causality actually reflective of God’s eternal plan for the world.¹³¹

128 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 188; Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʿ*, edited by ʿAbd al-Laṭīf ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, vol. 5, pp. 295–296.

129 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 189. Ibn Taymiyya, *Jāmiʿ al-Rasāʾil*, edited by Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, Cairo 1969, p. 180.

130 *Ibid.*, pp. 189–190.

131 See, for instance, Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity*, pp. 147–172; Fakhry, Majid: *Islamic Occasionalism and Its Critique by Averroës and Aquinas*, London and

Ibn Taymiyya, of course, did not wish to diminish God's absolute power and freedom. He sought, therefore, a rationally accepted explanation of how existence occurred, and developed a unique model wherein the act of creation functions as a mediator between the creator and the created. In order to illustrate how the act of creation fulfills this function, Ajhar expounds Ibn Taymiyya's theory on divine actions and their operation in the world.

For Ibn Taymiyya, divine actions (*af'āl Allāh*) have a mediatory status between God and the world. These are actually the divine attributes, as they have moved from their universal status as genera to their particular status as species. Divine actions emerge, thus, from God's eternal attributes; they are connected to them and follow them in time. This interval is the time needed for a universal divine attribute to become a particular divine action, occurring outside the divine essence. As Ajhar states, divine actions play "a double philosophical role": they connect the agent, i. e. the divine essence together with the attributes, to the perceptible world, on one hand, and separate both sides from each other, on the other, thus preventing God and the world from being inevitably conceptualized as one being. Due to the divine act of creation, which originally occurred in God's essence, the origin of the created world can be found nowhere else save within the divine essence itself. This is the only way, as Ajhar represents Ibn Taymiyya's view, to reconcile causality with the divine will: God must possess temporal priority against the world.¹³² Nevertheless, by these Peripatetic gymnastics, Ibn Taymiyya exceeds all Muslim theologians – including al-Ghazālī – in the "philosophical effort" he expends.¹³³

The divine will plays a central role in Ibn Taymiyya's conception of eternal creation, as "it brings forth out of each one of God's attribute

New York 2008; idem: The Classical Islamic Arguments for the Existence of God, in: *The Muslim World* 47 (1957), pp. 133–145; Frank, Richard M.: *The Metaphysics of Created Being According to Abū L-Hudhayl al-'Allāf. A Philosophical Study of the Earliest Kalām*, Istanbul 1966; idem: *Beings and Their Attributes. The Teaching of the Basrian School of the Mu'tazila in the Classical Period*, Albany 1978.

132 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, pp. 145–146.

133 Ibid., p. 150. Al-Ghazālī's concept of causality has been extensively studied in a large number of articles and monographs. See e. g. Griffel, Frank: *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, Oxford 2009, pp. 147–149, 175–177, 215–217, and the bibliography; Daiber, Hans: God versus Causality. Ghazālī's Solution and Its Historical Background, in: Georges Tamer (ed.): *Islam and Rationality. The Impact of al-Ghazālī*, vol. 1 Leiden (forthcoming).

its own single elements.” Thus, the divine will functions as a mediator between the attributes and the particulars resulting from them. Fulfilling this function means that the divine will acts according to a certain logic. At this very point, Ibn Taymiyya is radically different from the *kalām*-theologians, especially the Ash‘arīs and Māturīdīs, who ascribe unrestricted freedom of action to God’s will. He, in contrast, believed that genera and species produce only that which logically belong to them. Thus, “the sperm of man produces nothing else but man, the egg nothing else but a bird, the seed nothing else but a tree, and the tree nothing else but fruits.”¹³⁴ The divine will also

does not function but according to a definite logic (*manṭiq muḥaddad*) which consists in bringing that which exists in the attributes potentially (*mawjūd bil-quwwa*) to actual existence (*al-wujūd bil-fi‘l*). Consequently, there is no cosmic arbitrariness in creation. The idea of the absolute freedom of the divine will does not bear with chaos, and the idea of miracle cannot be generally applied to the entire divine creation. [...] God’s voluntative actions subsist in His essence through His will and His power.¹³⁵

Distinguishing the divine action (*al-fi‘l*) from both the subject (*al-fā‘il*) and the object (*al-maf‘ūl*) and depicting it as a mediator between them, Ibn Taymiyya rejects the temporal correlation between God and the world, linking them, however, “according to the logic of necessity (*wifqa manṭiq al-darūra*)”.¹³⁶ Thus, that God’s actions begin in His essence does not impair His transcendence. In this sense, Ibn Taymiyya, like Ibn Rushd, suggests that God’s creation of the world is eternal, inasmuch this act did not begin and will not end at a certain moment of time. God’s eternal creation of the world is intrinsically related to His eternal activity, which itself is without beginning or end.¹³⁷ Ajhar makes clear that the connecting role between the one God and the world of multiplicity, which Ibn Taymiyya ascribes to the

134 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, pp. 160–161; Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar‘*, edited by ‘Abd al-Laṭīf ‘Abd al-Rahmān, vol. 3, p. 399.

135 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 161. See also 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: Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmad (eds.): *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, pp. 55–77.

136 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 165; Ibn Taymiyya: *Majmū‘at al-rasā’il wal-masā’il*, edited by Rashīd Ridā, Beirut 1983, vol. 5, p. 371. In this context, Ajhar points out especially Ibn Rushd’s influence on Ibn Taymiyya.

137 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 166.

divine actions, is the same role Muslim philosophers ascribed to the heavenly spheres.¹³⁸

Ibn Taymiyya's philosophical explanation of creation – that is, as an eternal action involving the particularization of universal divine attributes which are located and united with God's essence – goes, as Ajhar states, beyond all former theological attempts to explain the relationship between God and the world. Clearly, though, this explanation had no adverse effects on the divine transcendence. Ibn Taymiyya accomplishes this through distinguishing between two kinds of coming into being (*ḥudūth*): one is related to the genera (*al-ajnās, jins al-ḥawādith*), i. e. the divine attributes, and one is related to the particular accidents (*al-ārād al-khāṣṣa al-muḥaddada*) which come into being and perish in time.¹³⁹ His philosophical conception integrates various elements taken from the works of former philosophers and *kalām*-theologians, such as Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044) and Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī; it is, however, especially indebted to Ibn Rushd. As such, it earned vehement critique from his contemporary theologians.¹⁴⁰

According to Ajhar's interpretation, Ibn Taymiyya's world is in perpetual renewal due to a continuous state of agency (*fā'iliyya*). This agency "is the divine creation and the motion through which the existents move from one state into another. Each state is a necessary condition for the following state which results from it."¹⁴¹ This perspective is a result of Ibn Taymiyya's "philosophical courage", which also manifests in his bold connection of his own philosophical views to major authorities of Hadith, such as al-Bukhārī, and traditional *kalām*, such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. In referring to them, he aims not only to support his position, but also to impute his own philosophical views on creation and divine actions to the traditionalists.¹⁴² Ibn Taymiyya's philosophical ideas seem to be "a creative synthesis of the views of former philosophers", through which he succeeded in negotiating topics crucial to the Muslims of his time. In particular,

138 Ibid., p. 167.

139 Ibid., pp. 171–173.

140 Ibid., pp. 174–175. For an overview of the conflicts around Ibn Taymiyya, see Bori, Caterina: *Ibn Taymiyya wa-Jamā'atuhu*. Authority, Conflict and Consensus in Ibn Taymiyya's Circle, in: Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmad (eds.): *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, pp. 23–52.

141 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 190.

142 Ibid., p. 191.

Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī provided Ibn Taymiyya with significant rational support.¹⁴³

As Ibn Taymiyya emphasizes God's eternal agency, he also negates the theological teaching of *creatio ex nihilo*. For him, the state of non-existence is nothing but

a state of being in potentia (*bil-quwwa*) [...]. Ibn Taymiyya does not acknowledge at all a state of nonexistence preceding existence as a whole. Even a particular existent is not preceded by nonexistence, but it was latent (*kāmin*) [...] in a preceding thing which constitutes its condition from which it results. The state of nonexistence which precedes the existent is for Ibn Taymiyya nothing but a state of latency.¹⁴⁴

Ajhar points out, furthermore, that Ibn Taymiyya utilizes the same Koranic verses used by Ibn Rushd in his treatise *Faṣl al-maqāl* to assert that the world was not created out of nothing.¹⁴⁵

In contrast to the philosophers, Ibn Taymiyya understands causality in a way that maintains a temporal difference between God and the world, therefore upholding God's temporal priority. Against the *kalām*-theologians, he acknowledges the eternity of God's agency and acknowledges its connection to His eternal will and power.¹⁴⁶ Accordingly, Ibn Taymiyya argues both rationally and philosophically for the infinite regress of the causes as an inevitable premise for God's eternal agency. As infinite as the chain of causes could be, each one of the causes is naturally in a state of potential existence and necessarily requires another cause to move it into the state of actual existence. God remains, thus, the absolute cause of the world; He brings all existents into being through their immediate natural causes.¹⁴⁷ In his view, the cause (*'illa*) does not create an existent, but it functions as a "necessary condition" (*shart ḍarūrī*) for it to come into being.¹⁴⁸ God's will and

143 Ibid., pp. 197–198. For his views see al-Baghdādī, Abū al-Barakāt Hibat Allāh b. 'Alī b. Malkā: *Kitāb al-Muṭabar fī al-ḥikma al-ilāhiyya*, Haydarabad 1357–1358/1938–1939.

144 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 213; Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar'*, edited by 'Abd al-Laṭīf 'Abd al-Raḥmān, vol. 5, p. 217.

145 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 217. See Koran (11:7; 14:48; 41:11); Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl*, pp. 21–22; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'at al-rasā'il*, vol. 5, p. 352.

146 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 21.

147 Ibid., pp. 199–201; Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar'*, edited by 'Abd al-Laṭīf 'Abd al-Raḥmān, vol. 2, pp. 198–199.

148 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, pp. 204–206. The *kalām*-theologians denied the immediate effect of natural causes, seeing God to be the immediate cause of everything in the world. They often illustrated their position by saying that man

His agency are for him “a continuous force pushing the beings so that they do not stop and maintain their efficiency.”¹⁴⁹

Maintaining a position close to Ibn Rushd’s conception of double causality, Ibn Taymiyya believes that every existent “is a condition or an instrument for the divine activity (*shart aw āla lil-fāiliyya al-ilāhiyya*)”. Each caused existent results from two things: “the existent which precedes it and is a condition for its existence, and the divine action which occurred in God’s essence for the sake of bringing that existent into being.”¹⁵⁰ Through His actions, God operates as the causal core of “an infinite chain of causes [...] due to the fact that each existent has necessarily to be conditioned through another existent which has, again, to be conditioned through another existent *ad infinitum*.” Ibn Taymiyya attempts, thus, to reconcile God’s role as creator of the world with natural causality. This attempt, properly considered, is also an effort to reconcile theology with philosophy.¹⁵¹

Ibn Taymiyya’s theory of God’s eternal and continuous creation of the world offers, so Ajhar, a major contribution to the explanation of important dogmatic and philosophical questions in Islam. In most cases, Ibn Taymiyya avoids employing terminology used by the philosophers in order to distinguish himself from them; in other cases, he attacks the philosophers vigorously. Sometimes he agrees with them; suddenly he changes his attitude and opposes them. He obviously was convinced that “clear reason” corresponded with the majority of the philosophers’ ideas. He, however, was also aware of the bad reputation philosophers had among Muslims; this led him to articulate, within his own works, the accumulated historical animosity against philosophy found in Islamic thought. Yet, this side of his writings, adopted and further developed by his students, is merely the external one. Exam-

becomes sated *upon* (*inda*) eating bread and quenches his thirst *upon* (*inda*) drinking water. It is God, however, who causes the state of being sated and quenched. Ibn Taymiyya, in contrast, rejects this idea, substituting the preposition *inda* by the preposition *bi-* which expresses a causal relationship. Thus, man becomes sated *through* eating bread and quenched *through* drinking water: *ibid.*, p. 222; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘at al-rasā’il*, vol. 1, p. 100; vol. 5, p. 330. See el Omari, Racha: Ibn Taymiyya’s “Theology of the Sunna” and His Polemics with the Ash‘arites, in: Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmad (eds.): *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, pp. 101–119.

149 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 223.

150 *Ibid.*, p. 209. For Ibn Rushd’s “double causality” see Arnaldez, Roger: Ibn Rushd, in: *EI*², vol. 3 (1971), pp. 909–920.

151 Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya*, pp. 210, 219.

ined in depth, Ibn Taymiyya's writings betray the strong influence of the philosophers. The hidden side of his work "was probably not known to any of his followers, or it might have been known to some of them, who, nevertheless, kept silent about it for the same reasons which forced their master to hide it."¹⁵²

4. Ibn Taymiyya's Nominalism and the Renaissance of Arabic Philosophy

The previously discussed scholars are primarily interested in presenting the historical value of Ibn Taymiyya's philosophical thought in the context of theological-philosophical discourses of Islamic thinking in the past. In contrast, the Tunisian professor of philosophy Abū Yaʿrub (Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb) al-Marzūqī (b. 1947) ascribes to Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Khaldūn the development of a new stream of modern, nominalistic Arabic-Islamic philosophy that supersedes Plato's and Aristotle's realism and the modern philosophy influenced by them in the West.¹⁵³

According to al-Marzūqī, the philosophy of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Khaldūn represents the "ultimate stage" (*al-manzila al-ghāya*) of Arabic philosophy in regards to defining the nature of the theoretical and the practical Universal (*al-kullī*). Both thinkers belong to the realm of philosophy in its theoretical and practical dimensions as known in Greek civilization, inasmuch as they belong to the realm of

152 Ibid., p. 226.

153 Al-Marzūqī presents his interpretation extensively in his monograph *Iṣlāḥ al-ʿaql fī al-falsafa al-ʿarabiyya. Min wāqīʿiyyat Aristū wa-Aflātūn ilā ismiyyat Ibn Taymiyya wa-Ibn Khaldūn* (Reformation of Reason in Arabic Philosophy. From the Realism of Aristotle and Plato to the Nominalism of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Khaldūn), Beirut 1996². This book builds upon the earlier voluminous work *Manzilat al-kullī fī al-falsafa al-ʿarabiyya fī al-Aflātūniyya wal-ḥanīfiyya al-muḥdathatayn al-ʿarabiyyatayn* (The Position of the Universal in Arabic Philosophy in Arabic Neoplatonism and Neohanifism), Tunis 1994. Both books are part 1 and 2 of al-Marzūqī's lengthy Ph.D. thesis with over 1000 pages. A concise article, *Fikr Ibn Taymiyya al-iṣlāḥī. Abʿāduhu al-falsafiyya* (Ibn Taymiyya's Reformatory Thought. Its Philosophical Dimensions), published in the Moroccan periodical *al-Munātaf* 18–19 (2001), and made available online: http://www.alfalsafa.com/fikr_ibn_taymia.html (accessed on August 16, 2011), contains a useful summary of al-Marzūqī's understanding of Ibn Taymiyya. It is widely published on several Arabic websites.

theology (*kalām*) in its theoretical and practical dimensions as known in Arabic civilization. Thus, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Khaldūn represent the utmost convergence of philosophy and theology, theory and practice, “Arabic Neoplatonism” (*al-aflātūniyya al-muḥdatha al-ʿarabiyya*) and “Arabic Neohanifism” (*al-ḥanīfiyya al-muḥdatha al-ʿarabiyya*).¹⁵⁴

Al-Marzūqī defines Arabic Neoplatonism as the entirety of pre-modern Arabic philosophy, which he divides into a connective (*al-waṣliyya*) and a separative (*al-faṣliyya*) part. The connective part includes, with Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ (Brethren of Purity) a Platonic branch, and with the Peripatetics, such as al-Fārābī, an Aristotelian branch. The separative part, again, includes a Platonic branch with al-Suhrawardī’s (d. 587/1191) Illuminationist philosophy, and an Aristotelian branch with Ibn Rushd’s philosophy.¹⁵⁵ Arabic Neohanifism signifies

all theological (*kalāmiyya*) and mystical (*ṣūfiyya*) intellectual attempts whose authoritative text are the Koran and Hadith, as Islam is the neo-ḥanīf religion which goes back to the ‘true’ (*ḥanīf*) religion following Judaism¹⁵⁶ and Christianity¹⁵⁷ and the alteration (*taḥrīf*) they caused, as stated in the Koran.¹⁵⁸

Al-Marzūqī likewise divides Arabic Neohanifism into a connective part, which encompasses the two branches of pre-Ghazalian theology (*kalām*) and mysticism (*taṣawwuf*), and a separative part, which includes the two branches of theology and mysticism, which flourished in the time between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyya.

Through this structural and historical mapping of Arabic philosophy, al-Marzūqī aims to define the “reformatory attempts” of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Khaldūn at the end of the medieval period and the beginning of the Arab Renaissance.¹⁵⁹ He calls their philosophical position “nominalism” (*ismiyya*), which he describes as the negation of the jump from general concepts to universal concepts on an epistemological and an

154 Al-Marzūqī, *Iṣlāḥ*, p. 13.

155 Al-Marzūqī also subsumes practices like magic and astrology under the category of Arabic Neoplatonism: *ibid.*, p. 15, n. 6.

156 According to al-Marzūqī: “*al-tawrātiyya*,” “Torahism”. *Ibid.*, p. 15, n. 7.

157 According to al-Marzūqī: “*al-injīliyya*,” “Evangelism”. *Ibid.*, p. 15, n. 7.

158 Al-Marzūqī, *Iṣlāḥ*, p. 15, n. 7.

159 *Ibid.*, p. 15. The Arab Renaissance begins, according to al-Marzūqī, in the 19th century following four centuries of decline (*ʿaṣr al-inḥiṭāt*), which he subsequently reduces to two centuries, the 16th and 17th: *ibid.*, p. 15, n. 8.

existential level.¹⁶⁰ In the way they deal with philosophical problems, both thinkers appear to be “philosophically closer to Plato and Aristotle, and religiously closer to Moses and Jesus” than earlier philosophers and theologians of both Arabic Neoplatonism and Neohanifism.¹⁶¹

As this overview makes clear, al-Marzūqī’s presentation of Ibn Taymiyya’s philosophy is heavily loaded with conceptual and philosophical-historical arguments. A full analysis of his model would go beyond the scope of the present study.¹⁶² Therefore, I will discuss, in the following passages, only the main aspects of al-Marzūqī’s interpretation of Ibn Taymiyya’s “nominalistic philosophy”, leaving aside his discussion of Ibn Khaldūn.

In al-Marzūqī’s view, Ibn Taymiyya might be the most important philosopher in the history of Islam; he

abolished the realism of the natural Universal through presenting its positivistic character and let theoretical science become historical [...] the act of philosophy (*al-tafalsuf*) became a historical science [...]. Ibn Taymiyya’s work theorized, first, theory and, consequently, it also theorized practice.¹⁶³

Ibn Taymiyya’s nominalistic understanding of the definition leads, furthermore, to the abolishment of the traditional difference between the outward (*al-zāhir*) and inward (*al-bāṭin*) levels in both natural and religious knowledge as well.¹⁶⁴ In opposition to that what was predominant in philosophy before his time, Ibn Taymiyya’s approach led to

160 Ibid., p. 20 and n. 17. Al-Marzūqī discusses the concept of the Universal in Arabic philosophy extensively in his abovementioned book *Manzilat al-kullī fī al-falsafa al-‘arabiyya*.

161 Ibid., p. 22.

162 According to al-Marzūqī, “Plotinus turned philosophy into religion, and Muhammad turned religion into philosophy. The first made religion the ultimate purpose of philosophy through sealing science and putting an end to it (*bi-khatm al-‘ilm wa-qatlib*). The second made religion into philosophy by sealing revelation and putting an end to it (*bi-khatm al-wahy wa-qatlib*).” While Plotinus, by sealing science, cast man out of history in regards to science and practice, Muḥammad brought man back into history in regards to science and practice, as it was necessary for revelation to be sealed: *ibid.*, 37, n. 34. Ibn Taymiyya put an end to Neoplatonism, and, presumably without being aware it, also put an end to Neohanifism: *ibid.*, p. 38. Such over-generalizations characterize al-Marzūqī’s method in dealing with the history of philosophy and religion.

163 Al-Marzūqī, *Iṣlāḥ*, p. 71.

164 Ibid., p. 78, with reference to Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, pp. 81–82/39–40.

a new situation in which language, pronounced and written, became decisive for determining cognitive concepts.¹⁶⁵ Theoretical and practical meanings, accordingly, were demoted to mere symbols¹⁶⁶; absolute congruence exists between the written form of a word, its pronunciation and its meaning.¹⁶⁷ With definitions and theoretical concepts proclaimed by Ibn Taymiyya as “human inventions” (*mukhtarāāt insāniyya*), the traditional dichotomy of theory and practice loses its foundation; both become interdependent – a development which is truly “an epistemological coup”.¹⁶⁸

Furthermore, al-Marzūqī describes Ibn Taymiyya’s work as “a practical spiritual revolution” (*thawra ‘amaliyya rūḥiyya*) which is based on redefining the status of the “theoretical Universal” (*al-kullī al-naẓarī*). Ibn Taymiyya challenged the “spiritual priestly rule” (*sultān al-kahanūt al-rūḥī*) which collaborated with the “temporal military rule” (*sultān al-‘askarūt al-zamānī*) and obtained, consequently, unrestricted power on the life of the people through “negating the command of the religious law” (*naḥī al-amr al-sharī*) and being restricted to universal “pure determinism” (*al-jabriyya al-khālīṣa*).¹⁶⁹

Al-Marzūqī states that Ibn Taymiyya resolved the main dilemma of Arabic-Islamic thought, which he describes as an intellectual “dissociation” resulting in an ongoing “cold war” between reason and the worldly sciences, on one side, and religious tradition and the sciences of the Hereafter on the other. Ibn Taymiyya achieved, thus, the goal which al-Ghazālī and other Muslim thinkers had failed to accomplish.¹⁷⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, however, did not leave systematic philosophical writings, but “philosophical seeds”; these are spread throughout

165 Ibid., p. 80, referring to Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʿ*, edited by Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, vol. 3, p. 216.

166 Ibid., p. 81.

167 Ibid., pp. 105–106, 176–177; Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʿ*, edited by Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, vol. 3, p. 216.

168 Ibid., pp. 118–119. In his enthusiastic account of Ibn Taymiyya’s “philosophy”, al-Marzūqī neglects to mention that much of Ibn Taymiyya’s arguments against Aristotle’s logic can be found in works of *kalām*-theologians, especially the Ashʿarīs, although he refers to a passage in Ibn Khaldūn’s *Muqaddima*, in which this pre-Taymiyyan critique is precisely summarized: *ibid.*, p. 190. See Ibn Khaldūn: *The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History*, translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal, New York 1958, vol. 3, chapter 6, section 22, pp. 143–147.

169 Al-Marzūqī, *Iṣlāḥ*, p. 394.

170 The following presentation of al-Marzūqī’s interpretation of Ibn Taymiyya’s thought is based on the abovementioned article: *Fikr Ibn Taymiyya al-iṣlāḥī*.

his books – some of which bear a philosophical touch – as well as in fatwas and in isolated statements. Despite this enticing trail of clues, however, there are “substantial” (*dhātiyya*) obstacles that make a philosophical reading of his work difficult. These impediments are the fragmented nature of Ibn Taymiyya’s philosophical writing and his “practical” interest in calumniating the arguments of his opponents without systematically discussing their positions. These hurdles cause, furthermore, two “accidental” (*ārida*) deterrents: 1) that the Islamic institutions of some countries have employed Ibn Taymiyya’s thought to abolish true theoretical religious and philosophical thinking; and 2) that Islamic opposition movements fighting against secular ideas use only negative aspects of his thought. Therefore, a penetrating reading of Ibn Taymiyya’s works must first eliminate all of these hindrances in order to extract the philosophical essence that reveals Ibn Taymiyya’s identity as “a great philosopher”.

Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya’s writings contain “the project of a philosophical revolution which, had it been realized, would have saved Arabic-Islamic thought from the theoretical and practical dilemmas which deactivated its scientific creativity.” Indeed, this very lack of creativity affected Muslims’ reactions to natural and historical phenomena. The modern interpreter has to define the “necessary and sufficient conditions” (*al-shurūṭ al-darūriyya wal-kāfiya*) of the normative critique Ibn Taymiyya applied against the philosophical and religious thought predominant in his age, as presented in the works of Ibn Rushd, al-Suhrawardī, Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240), and al-Rāzī, on the other.

Al-Marzūqī connects these Muslim thinkers to dilemmas caused in Islamic philosophical and religious thought on a theoretical and practical level. These dilemmas led to Ibn Taymiyya’s critique of their ideas, through which he attempted to revive the “Muhammedan Reformation” (*al-iṣlāḥ al-muḥammadi*) in its rejection of the religious distortion that had happened in the Torah and the Gospels. Analogously, Ibn Taymiyya campaigned, as abovementioned, against the philosophical distortion of the philosophy of Plato by Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, and against the deformation of the philosophy of Aristotle by Peripatetics such as Ibn Rushd. In opposition, Ibn Taymiyya endeavored to develop an alternative metaphysics and an alternative meta-history, deriving their sources from the reinterpretation of the Koran and the prophetic tradi-

Ab’āduhu al-falsafiyya, available online: http://www.alfalsafa.com/fikr_ibn_taymia.html, accessed on August 16, 2011.

tion (*sunna*) in a way that illuminated the scientific-theoretical and the practical-ethical dimensions of the “Islamic revolution”.

Al-Marzūqī asserts that this twofold endeavor, if fulfilled, could save humanity from the “evils of globalism” (*shurūr al-ʿawlama*). Manifesting through philosophical teachings which declared existence to be a natural unity – as in the works of the Peripatetics and the Brethren of Purity – or a historical unity – as in the works of Ibn ʿArabī and al-Rāzī – the evil of globalism had already become visible in Ibn Taymiyya’s age.

According to al-Marzūqī, Ibn Taymiyya’s critical treatment of logic and metaphysics located the origin of philosophical thought within an endogenous Arabic-Islamic epistemological practice. Exceeding the superficial opposition of philosophy and religion, this practice claimed to establish the theoretical correspondence of “true religious tradition and clear reason.” This was a reaction to the hermeneutical norm predominant in *kalām* and philosophy, which divided human knowledge into esoteric and exoteric strata. On the contrary, “the Muhammedan revolution” (*al-thawra al-muḥammadiyya*), by declaring Islam the religion of human disposition (*al-fiṭra*) and elevating religious thought to a universal state, abolished the contradiction between the natural and the revealed religion: this stratification of knowledge was thus rendered obsolete.¹⁷¹ Through a “methodological revolution”, Ibn Taymiyya was able to remove all accretions in order to reveal the real harmony of clear reason and true religious tradition. His method led to removing falsification (*taḥrīf*) from philosophy, as it eliminated the “metaphysical absolutization” which made religious law appear to contradict cosmological necessity. Ibn Taymiyya’s diagnosis of metaphysics distinguishes between cosmological necessity and “religious command” (*al-amr al-sharʿī*), ascribing to this the prerequisite of human freedom, as the fulfillment of religious commands is based on free choice.¹⁷²

Al-Marzūqī states, furthermore, that Ibn Taymiyya articulates his critique of both philosophy and religious thought on A) an epistemological and B) an existential level. On the epistemological level, he deals with the traditionally pretended opposition of analysis (*taḥlīl*) and interpretation (*taʿwīl*) of objects of knowledge; on the existential level, he deals with the traditionally pretended opposition of truth

171 Al-Marzūqī refers to Koran (7:172–173).

172 Al-Marzūqī, *Fikr Ibn Taymiyya al-iṣlāḥī*, http://www.alfalsafa.com/fikr_ibn_taymia.html, accessed on August 16, 2011.

(*ḥaqīqa*) and metaphor (*majāz*) in regards to the Koran. The goal of Ibn Taymiyya's critique is to abolish the "dualism of knowledge" so that "monotheism (*al-tawḥīd*) becomes philosophical monotheism which fulfills what Islam proclaims, which is to be the theory of the universal religion". This universal religion includes, as its primary attribute, the congruence of "the sealing revealed religion" and "the rational natural religion, meaning the religion of natural disposition (*fiṭra*)".¹⁷³

A. Ibn Taymiyya's epistemological critique, again, is divided into two parts:

1. The first part deals with "clear reason" and includes the clearness of pure and applied rational knowledge. Ibn Taymiyya aims here at "reforming the theory of rational knowledge, logic, metaphysics and natural philosophy."¹⁷⁴

2. The second part deals with "sound religious tradition" and includes the soundness of pure and applied traditional knowledge. Ibn Taymiyya aims here at "reforming the theory of traditional religious knowledge, history, meta-history and the philosophy of history and civilization based on that."¹⁷⁵

Through his comprehensive treatment of the relationship between analysis and interpretation, Ibn Taymiyya was able to free Arabic thought from the false assumption that analysis and truth represent rational sciences, while interpretation and metaphor represent religious sciences. Demonstrating that this dichotomy is superficial, Ibn Taymiyya's treatment of this issue occurred on two levels:

1. Through his critique of Aristotle's logic and the metaphysics based on it, Ibn Taymiyya declares that the essential attributes and definitions, i.e. the primary truths which are the principles of logic and metaphysics, are no more than "cognitive values" (*muqaddarāt dhibniyya*) set in relation to the existents so that these can be known. As a result, definitions (*ḥudūd*) do not establish the essence and the truth of existents; they are mere "scientific names" (*asmā' ilmiyya*) which occur in the human mind. Demonstrative knowledge, exalted in Peripatetic philosophy as

173 Al-Marzūqī, Fikr Ibn Taymiyya al-iṣlāḥī, http://www.alfalsafa.com/fikr_ibn_taymia.html, accessed on August 16, 2011, *al-Maqāla al-thāniyya. Kayfa ṣāra fīl al-tafalsuf mumkinan.*

174 Al-Marzūqī, Fikr Ibn Taymiyya al-iṣlāḥī, http://www.alfalsafa.com/fikr_ibn_taymia.html, accessed on August 16, 2011.

175 Al-Marzūqī, Fikr Ibn Taymiyya al-iṣlāḥī, http://www.alfalsafa.com/fikr_ibn_taymia.html, accessed on August 16, 2011.

the most accurate form of human knowledge, consists, thus, of nothing else but “cognitive values”; this renders knowledge (*al-ilm*), as such, to be “hypothetic and deduced” (*faradī istintāji*). Related to the form of an existent, it is equally as approximate in regards to its matter. Aristotelian demonstration is, thus, changed into the relative epistemological outcome of a nominalistic process. An analytical result is reduced to a formal one; its truth is merely a subject of cognitive evaluation. Consequently, science cannot be absolute, as the pure rational axiomatic principles are not part of the external existents, but belong to the realm of subjective “cognitive values”. Analytical systems, then, are developed out of optional starting points, each according to a specific practice, in order to explain certain phenomena. Analysis (*taḥlīl*) results necessarily from interpretation (*taʿwīl*) and is not opposite to it.

2. On the second level, Ibn Taymiyya attempted to achieve a “revolution” seeking to overthrow the “theory of science inherited from the Greeks and the theory of existence supporting it, as well”. The outcome of his endeavor is the knowledge that both religious and rational sciences can share the same object, as religious sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-naqliyya*) can deal with natural phenomena and rational sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-aqliyya*) can deal with religious issues as well. All objects of knowledge are nothing but rational, as reason is the only organ of knowledge – which is also valid in regards to religious knowledge as well. In this sense, religious sciences, such as the interpretation of the Koran, do not differ from rational sciences except in regards to the subject matter handled.

B. The second problem Ibn Taymiyya addresses on an existential level is the traditionally imagined opposition of truth (*ḥaqīqa*) and metaphor (*majāz*) in regards to the Koran. This topic is actually “the center of his works and the theoretical pillar of his responses to *kalām*, mysticism and especially philosophy”. This occurs, again, on two levels:

1. On the first level, Ibn Taymiyya rejects the opposition of truth and metaphor as a later invention, baseless and unknown as it was to the early great authorities of philology, *tafsīr* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

2. On the second level, Ibn Taymiyya rejects the concept of interpretation which “determines the truth of that what an issue, in itself or in its reference, results in”¹⁷⁶, without taking into account the capability

176 Al-Marzūqī, Fikr Ibn Taymiyya al-iṣlāḥī, http://www.alfalsafa.com/fikr_ibn_taymia.html, accessed on August 16, 2011.

of human languages when describing objects the Koran considers as unseen. Only God knows objects such as sanctions in the Hereafter, God's essence, and God's attributes. Ibn Taymiyya also rejects the act of interpretation as the search for a truth beyond the metaphor, which ascribes to the text an outward level in opposition to an inward one. Dismissing this opposition as invalid, Ibn Taymiyya raises awareness of the fact that the metaphorical and real meanings of expressions are bound to "verbal conditions" (*quyūd lafziyya*); he utilizes Arabic philosophical and linguistic materials in his argumentation in a way that, according to al-Marzūqī, should help resolve the contemporary dilemma of Koranic exegesis. Ibn Taymiyya develops, furthermore, a philosophical theory of language according to which single expressions do not have significance except when constrained by linguistic evidence and the state of discourse of which they are part. This achievement is important for the understanding of science, as such: based on this premise, a science is "an artificial language whose function is to analyze a phenomenon in a way presupposing that its logical and analytical system consists of pure cognitive values"¹⁷⁷.

5. Conclusions

Contemporary Muslim authors overwhelmingly intrigued by philosophical elements in Ibn Taymiyya's works do not limit his impact to his critique of past philosophers and *kalām*-theologians; on the contrary, they ascribe specific philosophical qualities to him, qualifying him as a philosopher in his own right. What's more, some of these authors widely extend his philosophical impact to include theoretical alternatives he suggested, which, they allege, possess worth beyond their historical value in regards to the establishment of modern Islamic philosophy. Naturally, imputing the status of a philosopher to Ibn Taymiyya means connecting him to former and later philosophers; his refutation of Aristotelian logic is seen, therefore, both as a continuation of Stoic and Skeptic positions and as a predecessor of early modern empiricism. Furthermore, his nominalistic interpretation of basic elements of logic and his realistic conception of existence are presented as an ambitious philosophical project, based on the founda-

177 Al-Marzūqī, *Fīkr Ibn Taymiyya al-iṣlāhī*, http://www.alfalsafa.com/fīkr_ibn_taymia.html, accessed on August 16, 2011.

tion of Koran and Sunna, whose aim was to correct the Platonic and Aristotelian schools. According to another strand of interpretation, the most manifest point is Ibn Taymiyya's philosophical connection to Ibn Rushd's philosophy, whose powerful spell Ibn Taymiyya was not able to completely break and which thus, confers on Ibn Taymiyya the identity of an Averroist – even if he would not admit it.

Ibn Taymiyya is one of the giants of Islamic intellectual history. His writings clearly display his exemplary mastery of Islamic religious sciences, philosophy and *kalām*-theology. Furthermore, he was a prolific *mujtahid* who did not slavishly follow the Ḥanbalī school of *fiqh*, but developed his own views on important religious, social and political topics.¹⁷⁸ His striving to present the unity of rationality and religion and to defend faith against the attacks of critical philosophers is conducted through intensive usage of philosophical terminology and argumentation.

Nevertheless, how much of a philosopher is Ibn Taymiyya, actually? Ibn Taymiyya was an extremely committed Muslim who endeavored with the utmost effort to defend Sunni Islam with both sword and pen: having courageously fought with the Mamluk army against the Crusaders, the Tatars, the Shiites and the Armenians, he enthusiastically wrote against every idea and practice in which he saw a threat against orthodox Islam. For him, writing was just as much a form of holy jihad as military service. This might be an explanation for his dedicating a major part of his legal statements (*fatwās*) to important doctrinal topics. Hereby, Ibn Taymiyya departed from the traditional style of theologians and philosophers alike, who were primarily interested in addressing their peers while preventing the uneducated majority (*al-awāmm*) from taking part in specialized debates.¹⁷⁹ On the contrary, Ibn Taymiyya made doctrinal discussions not only a privilege for scholars, but also a matter for the public sphere. Combining great zeal for his religion with a vast and deep knowledge of philological and religious tradition, theology and philosophy, he unfolded many of his teachings in sharp polemical writings which unmistakably reflect, besides his erudition, his deep faith and piety.

Ibn Taymiyya's methodological principle that clear reason and sound tradition necessarily agree is fundamentally based on his belief

178 Al-Matroudi, *The Ḥanbalī School*, pp. 186–191.

179 A prime example of this attitude is al-Ghazālī's treatise *Iljām al-awāmm 'an 'ilm al-kalām* (Restraining the Ordinary People from the Science of *Kalām*), edited by Muḥammad al-Mu'taṣim bi-llāh al-Baghādāi, Beirut 1406/1985.

that whatever contradicts the literal text of Koran and Hadith cannot be rational at all. In this, he diametrically opposes Ibn Rushd who, in the case of disagreement between the Koran and the requirements of rationality, argues for interpreting the Koranic text in a way that favors rationality. For Ibn Taymiyya, it is the revealed text and the statements of the prophet which ultimately determine what is rational and what is not. Pure rationality is embodied in the Koran and Hadith; what is not in agreement with them is both unoriginal and rationally corrupt. Accordingly, true knowledge is that which is taken directly from Koran and Hadith, and there is no certain evidence other than what is included in the revealed corpus as transmitted by the infallible prophet Muḥammad. Whatever does not agree with this corpus is disqualified from the realm of reason. As philosophy is essentially a rational activity of investigation and critique independent of the authority of revelation, Ibn Taymiyya's conception of rationality as part of the outcome of revelation provides just the opposite of that what philosophy is.¹⁸⁰

Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya's works include philosophical components appropriately assimilated into a comprehensive theological image, different aspects of which are spread throughout his numerous writings. These philosophical components are utilized to support his theological arguments and to attack the philosophers with their own weapons. It has also been stated that, beyond his deep knowledge of philosophy, he "shares with the philosophers the philosophical spirit" which strives to penetrate thoroughly into the essence of subjects, and like them he is mindful of "determining the meaning of words accurately".¹⁸¹ Despite this shared spirit, however, Ibn Taymiyya's

180 Abrahamov, Binyamin: Ibn Taymiyya on the Agreement of Reason with Tradition, in: *The Muslim World* 82 (1992), pp. 256–272, presents Ibn Taymiyya's arguments rejecting the preference of reason to tradition, as they are included in *Dar' ta'arud al-aql wal-naql*, and locating the truth exclusively in revelation. On this intensively debated question in Islamic philosophy and theology, see, for instance: Arberry, Arthur J.: *Revelation and Reason in Islam*, London 1957; Frank, Richard M.: *Reason and Revealed Law. A Sample of Parallels and Divergences in Kalām and Falsafa*, in: Roger Arnaldez and Simone van Riet (eds.): *Recherches d'Islamologie. Recueil d'articles offert à Georges C. Anawati et Louis Gardet par leur collègues et amis*, Louvain 1978.

181 Fu'ād, 'Abd al-Fattāh Aḥmad: *Ibn Taymiyya wa-mawqifuhu min al-fikr al-falsafī*, Alexandria 1980, p. 273. In a more recent publication, Fu'ād declares Ibn Taymiyya as the representative of *ahl al-sunna* in their critique of "the philosophers of Islam and the Sufis": Fu'ād, 'Abd al-Fattāh Aḥmad: *Falāsifat*

religious understanding of rationality makes it difficult to label him as a philosopher. While the philosophers held that the highest happiness could be achieved by the intellectual contemplation of non- or extra-doctrinal metaphysical truths, Ibn Taymiyya, in contrast, held that true happiness comes from knowledge of God and the perfection and salvation of the soul in the afterlife. The Koran – not human reason – was the appropriate guide on this path; as such, scripture was the ultimate basis for all truth and took direct precedence if in conflict with reason. In this context, Ibn Taymiyya would consider it a curse to be called a philosopher.

Despite obvious historical and cultural differences as well as the different theological conception of scriptures in Christianity and Islam, Ibn Taymiyya's usage of philosophy reminds me of the way the Church Fathers of the East used Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic and Neoplatonic concepts to articulate Christian doctrines. The work of these Fathers cannot be considered philosophy; Ibn Taymiyya, compared to them, is just as unqualified to be called a philosopher as they are. Furthermore, Thomas Aquinas called philosophy the maid of theology, thus giving philosophy a separate though subordinate state in relation to theology. Ibn Taymiyya, in fundamentally subsuming rationality to the words of Koran and Hadith, goes farther to deny rationality a similar state.

In this context, the role Ibn Taymiyya ascribes to the prophet Muhammad is pivotal. As Muhammad is the deliverer of revelation, he is the absolute authority in regards to the truth: what he said is true and serves as criterion to determine the truth of theological and philosophical statements. Muḥammad's authority passes to the body of religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*), who are “the heirs of the prophets” (*al-ʿulamāʾ warathat al-anbiyāʾ*) according to a famous tradition in Islam.¹⁸² Yet, the articulated truth of these scholars depends on their participation in the community consensus (*ijmāʾ*) founded exclusively on the ultimate source of this spiritual lineage: namely, the Koran and Hadith. Ibn Taymiyya's reasoning, therefore, reveals its conclusively circular form.

al-islām wal-ṣūfiyya wa-mawqif ahl al-sunna minhum, Alexandria 2006, pp. 10–11, 98–100, 120–122, 129–130, 133–136 et passim.

182 Rosenthal, Franz: *Knowledge Triumphant. The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam; with an introduction by Dimitri Gutas*, Leiden and Boston 2007, p. 38.

In making Ibn Taymiyya a philosopher, which consequences arise for the conception of philosophy? Ibn Taymiyya unwaveringly asserts in his writings that the text of the Koran and the Sunna are the sole, solid, and unquestionable fundament of truth. Intrinsicly, then, it seems that depicting him as a philosopher necessarily leads to a unique concept of “islamicized philosophy” totally dependent on Islamic sacred writings. Such a philosophy is stripped of its most significant qualities, viz., the search for truth through critical investigation of traditions and the quest to intellectually penetrate the essence of things. This quintessentially philosophical quest must continue even if this means challenging established religious doctrine. When philosophy loses this piercing motion, it loses its meaning and essence; it is transformed into a specialized way of thinking whose main goal is to satisfy religious restrictions epitomized in the concept of the fear of God known analogously to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Such a philosophy loses, furthermore, its status as a critical power in society. It becomes a sterile enterprise, loaded with predetermined conclusions, with no promise of growth and no energy to change.

Celebrating Ibn Taymiyya as a philosopher bears, furthermore, an important symptomatic value for the assessment of contemporary Islamic thought. In general, the authors who contributed to creating his philosophical identity represent an influential trend in conservative groups. These groups consider the only worthwhile rationality to be the religious rationality originating solely from Koran and Sunna. However, while authors like ‘Abd al-Ḥakīm Ajhar label Ibn Taymiyya a philosopher in his own intellectual context, authors like Abū Yaʿrub al-Marzūqī tend to attribute a creative role to Ibn Taymiyya in the development of modern Islamic philosophy. Keeping in mind that Ibn Taymiyya’s conception of rationality is strictly bound to revelation, whatever this group of contemporary Muslim authors labels as Ibn Taymiyya’s philosophy can only be a “scriptural philosophy” deriving its theoretical principles and basic arguments exclusively from scripture and tradition.

How, and, indeed, to what extent is this “philosophy” different from theology? Wouldn’t it be more appropriate to call Ibn Taymiyya a theologian, instead? This would, in a much more satisfying way, suit Ibn Taymiyya’s self-understanding and, at the same time, preserve the nature of philosophy from violation. Ultimately, considering Ibn Taymiyya a philosopher is part of a political ideology that describes traditional Islam as perfectly matched with modernity; oddly and

astoundingly, this mindset represents a pre-modern state of Islamic thought that somehow, anachronistically, manages to hold power over the minds of contemporary Muslims. In the end, we must conclude that calling Ibn Taymiyya a “philosopher” is a case of imputed – not actual – identity.¹⁸³

183 Against the background of claiming for Ibn Taymiyya being a philosopher, a valiant attempt to present the historical context of his critical attitude towards philosophy and the negative influence of his views on the status of the study of philosophy at Saudi universities is provided by the Saudi author Sa‘ūd al-Sarḥān in his monograph *al-Hikma al-maṣlūba. Madkhal ilā ma-wqif Ibn Taymiyya min al-falsafa* (Crucified Wisdom. An Introduction to Ibn Taymiyya’s Attitude from Philosophy), Beirut 2008. He asserts that, based on Ibn Taymiyya’s views, philosophy is viewed in Saudi Arabia as “disbelief and error” (*kufr wa-dalāl*). As a consequence, philosophy is still not taught there; *ibid.*, p. 12. According to the author, Ibn Taymiyya did not study philosophy systematically and for its own purpose, but eclectically in order to obtain arguments against *kalām*-theologians, Sufis and Shii scholars. He, thus, instrumentalized philosophy for his polemical purposes (pp. 20, 35–36). Although Ibn Taymiyya predominantly accused philosophers of disbelief (pp. 37–39), he, in contrast to former critics of philosophy, utilized philosophical terminology in order to address philosophers critically “in their language” (p. 76). See Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʿ*, edited by Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, vol. 1, p. 43.