A COMPARATIVE STUDY: EPISTEMOLOGY AND THEOLOGY OF IBN Al-ʿARABĪ AND IBN TAYMIYYA

EMRAH KAYA

Thesis submitted to the University Of Nottingham

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2016

Abstract

This thesis explores the epistemology and theology of a Sufi theorist Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240) and one of the most controversial Muslim scholars Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) comparatively. Although scholars have long emphasized the differences between these two influential and significant figures, the purpose of this thesis is to focus on their potential similarities. The present work at the outset shows that both Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya regard revelation, the human intellect, and inspiration – unveiling (*ilhām – kashf*) to be the main epistemological means for acquiring religious knowledge. However, they differ over the relative value of these means or tools. Both Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya place revelation at the top of the hierarchy, but after that Ibn al-ʿArabī places inspiration – unveiling ahead of reason while Ibn Taymiyya reverses the order.

The other main subject elaborated in this thesis is the theological issue of the divine names and attributes. This subject is connected to many other theological problems, and both Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya pay considerable attention to it. Just as many similar approaches, ideas, and interpretations may be seen concerning their epistemological stances, it is possible to see similarities in their theological positions although there are crucial distinctions as well. The unique way of finding out this similarity is to keep in mind the existence of the duality found in the thought and expression of Ibn al-ʿArabī.

Briefly, the main finding of the thesis is that Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya are more similar in their epistemologies and theologies than many scholars have thought. They are benefitting from the same epistemological means while putting them in different order. Also, they share similar theological points concerning the divine names and attributes, creation, the divine will, and the incomparability of God while expressing them through different conceptions and styles.

Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for letting me achieve this success. Then, I should thank my supervisor Jon Hoover who has never withheld from me his significant and advisory help and knowledge. He, as a professional and well-disciplined academician, has been the best example and a tremendous mentor for me throughout my Ph.D programme. I thank Philip Goodchild, who is my second supervisor, because of his brilliant comments and suggestions. I would also like to thank the examiners Agata Bielik-Robson and Ian Richard Netton for letting me defend my thesis in an enjoyable and relaxed atmosphere.

Moreover, I would like to thank Burhanettin Tatar, M. Emin Özafşar, Ahmet Turan, Selahattin Güneş, Ruhi Uygun, Abdullah Çam, Ahmad Sirwan, Harith Ramli, Vincent Lloyd, Holger Zellentin, M. İsmail Kaya, Muammer İskenderoğlu, Abdullah Demir, Mehmet Bedii Kaya and others, who have supported me on this duration directly or indirectly.

A special thanks to my family. It is impossible to express my appreciation to my father, my mother, and my brothers and sister. Especially my brother Emir has always been helpful and encouraging me in my education. Also, I should thank my wife Esma for she has patiently listened to and stood by me throughout my research and writing up. I have always been feeling her support on my stressful years.

As the last, I want to express my appreciation to my sponsor Republic of Turkey, Ministry of National Education.

Table of Contents

Abstract ..... *i*

Acknowledgement ..... *ii*

Table of Contents ..... *iii*

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 6

1.1. General Approaches to Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya *12*

1.2. The Aim of the Thesis *25*

1.3. Methodology *30*

CHAPTER TWO: IBN AL-ʿARABĪ AND HIS EPISTEMOLOGY 39

2.1. INTRODUCTION 40

2.2. REVELATION 41

2.2.1. The Qur'ān *41*

2.2.2. Outer Expression and Inner Meaning *45*

2.2.3. Commentary (tafsīr) and Interpretation (ta'wīl) *48*

2.2.4. The Prophet and Ḥadīth (saying) *57*

2.3. UNVEILING (MYSTICAL WAY OF KNOWLEDGE) 68

2.3.1. The Friends of God (awliyā') and Friendship (walāya) *69*

2.3.2. The Heart (qalb) *81*

2.3.3. Gnosis (maʿrifa) *87*

2.4. THE HUMAN INTELLECT 96

2.4.1. Authority of the Intellect *97*

2.4.2. Limits of the Intellect *99*

2.4.3. Knowledge of God and Revelation through the Human Intellect *106*

2.4.4. Criticism of Philosophy and Theology *113*

2.5. CONCLUSION 123

CHAPTER THREE: IBN TAYMIYYA AND HIS EPISTEMOLOGY 125

3.1. INTRODUCTION 126

3.2. REVELATION 129

3.2.1. The Qur'ān 129

3.2.2. The Prophet and Ḥadīth 143

3.2.3. The Salaf (righteous ancestors) 149

3.3. THE HUMAN INTELLECT 157

3.3.1. Criticism of Theology (The Kalām) 158

3.3.2. Criticism of Philosophy 165

3.3.3. The Intellect and Revelation 172

3.3.4. Natural Constitution of Human Beings (fiṭra) 179

3.4. INSPIRATION (MYSTICAL WAY OF KNOWLEDGE) 187

3.4.1. Sufism (taṣawwuf) 187

3.4.2. Unveiling- Inspiration (kashf- ilhām) 202

3.5. CONCLUSION 217

CHAPTER FOUR: THE NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD 220

4.1. INTRODUCTION 221

4.2. IBN AL-ʿARABĪ AND THE NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD 222

4.2.1. General Approach to the Divine Names and Attributes 223

4.2.2. The Essence of God (dhāt) 228

4.2.3. The Knowledge of God (ʿilm) 231

4.2.4. The Will of God (irāda) 237

4.2.5. The Relationship between the Essence and the Divine Names 240

4.2.6. The Relationship between the Divine Names and the Cosmological Beings 244

4.2.7. Creation (khalq) 251

4.2.8. Oneness and Multiplicity *256*

4.2.9. Incomparability (tanzīh) and Similarity (tashbīh) of God *259*

4.3. IBN TAYMIYYA AND THE NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD 263

4.3.1. God and the Divine Attributes *263*

4.3.2. Oneness of God (tawḥīd) *269*

4.3.3. Creation (khalq) *280*

4.3.4. The Will of God (irāda) *286*

4.3.5. The Speech of God (kalām) *290*

4.3.6. The Wisdom of God (ḥikma) *294*

4.4. COMPARISON 298

4.4.1. The Essence of God and the Divine Names *298*

4.4.2. The Incomparability and Similarity of God *308*

4.4.3. Creation *312*

4.4.4. The Will of God *316*

4.5. CONCLUSION 320

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION 321

BIBLIOGRAPHY 337

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240) and Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) are two of the most prominent thinkers in the history of Islamic thought. Their opinions and doctrines have been influential not only on Islamic thought but also on contemporary political and social issues in Muslim countries.[1] While Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya, because of the depth and originality of their thoughts, have been followed by many people among Muslims, they always have been subjected to many objections and criticisms as well.

Ibn al-ʿArabī sometimes is characterized by some scholars to be a Ẓāhirī scholar in religious law on the one hand;[2] he is one of the mystics of Islam who expresses the mystical dimension of the religion in the best, elaborated, and systematic way on the other hand. For him, inner and outer aspects of a thing or conception together comprise reality. This attitude is easily witnessed in his religious thoughts. As a result of this comprehensive understanding of reality, he is known to be the Greatest Master (*Shaykh al-akbar*) and has been followed and referred to by many Muslims, especially by Sufis with a great esteem and trust.

---

1 Th. Emeril Homerin, "Ibn Arabi in the People's Assembly: Religion, Press, and Politics in Sadat's Egypt," *The Middle East Journal* 40 3 (1986): 462-477. Sherman A. Jackson, "Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial in Damascus," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 39 1 (1994): 41-85. Donald P. Little, "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4 (1973): 311-327. Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 92-93.

2 Ignaz Goldziher, *The Ẓāhirīs: Their Doctrine and their History: A Contribution to the History of Islamic Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 169. Eric Winkel, *Islam and the Living Law: The Ibn al-ʿArabī Approach* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 79. Also, see Mahmoud Al-Ghorab, "Muhyiddin Ibn al-ʿArabī Amidst Religions (adyān) and Schools of Thought (madhāhib)," in *Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabī: A Commemorative Volume,* ed. Stephen Hirtenstein and Michael Tiernan, (Shaftesbury: Element, 1993), 199-227.

As for Ibn Taymiyya, as a very productive and knowledgeable scholar of Islam, he, like Ibn al-ʿArabī, provided his opinions in detail in the fields of the Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), ḥadīth, commentary on the Qur'ān (*tafsīr*), theology (*Kalām*), and philosophy, and he is known among his followers as the master of Islam (*Shaykh al-Islām*). However, his sharp and defensive style of writing and the method of providing his opinions are quite different from the style of Ibn al-ʿArabī. While Ibn al-ʿArabī pays attention mostly to mystical explanations of the religious texts, Ibn Taymiyya follows a more traditional way, which is practical and less complex in relation to the mystical one, to explain what he understands from the religious texts. The social and political conditions which Ibn Taymiyya experienced, his personal characteristics, and his nearness to the Ḥanbalī legal school (*madhhab*) might be influential on his own style.[3]

These two thinkers have been considered to be two representatives of two opposite interpretations of Islam. While Ibn al-ʿArabī has been considered by Sufis to be one of the most important mystics, Ibn Taymiyya has been considered to be one of the most significant prime movers by Salafī and radical Muslim groups and organizations. However, some

---

[3] Even if on many issues there may be similarities between the opinions of Ibn Taymiyya and that of Ḥanbalī School, it is not precisely right to consider Ibn Taymiyya as a Ḥanbalī scholar. According to Özervarlı, Ibn Taymiyya was criticized by his contemporary Ḥanbalī scholars due to his opinions which are not compatible with the opinions of the school. Moreover, in this respect Bori says that even if Ibn Taymiyya is known as a Ḥanbalī scholar, it is evident that his opinions are far from the principles of the school, and he has an indifferent attitude toward the authority of the schools. M. Sait Özervarlı, "Divine Wisdom, Human Agency and the Fiṭra in Ibn Taymiyya's Thought," in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, ed. Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 37. Caterina Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya wa-Jamāʿatuhū: Authority, Conflict and Consensus in Ibn Taymiyya's Circle," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 43.

researches display that in Ibn al-ʿArabī's works there are traces of conventional or classic understandings –even if they are interpreted mystically– especially regarding jurisprudence and ḥadīth.[4] Similarly, it will be clear that in Ibn Taymiyya's works mystical elements —even if within some specific conditions— are well accepted. The nearness between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya will be the focus of this thesis.

As for my motivation behind the comparison of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya, I should make clear that it goes back my youth and environment where I have grown up. In other words, while my motivation was personal, I have been very keen on cultivating and shaping it within an academic discipline. A long time before I knew about Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya, I could have opportunities to observe Muslims well through my religious family, religious communities, religious schools where I had studied for twelve years, and my profession. Through my observation I have realized that there are mainly two tendencies among Muslims: those who read Islamic sources like the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths of the Prophet with a mystical lens; and those who read Islamic sources generally with a judicial lens through which rules, commands, prohibitions, red lines, etc., have become more conspicuous.

Almost all Sufi sects (*tarīqa*) and communities (*jamāʿa*), as said above, somehow refer to words and works of Ibn al-ʿArabī in their trainings, books, and speeches. He is one of the highest ranking mystics of

---

[4] Winkel, *Living Law*, 35-64. Also, see James Winston Morris, "Ibn ʿArabi's "Esotericism": The Problem of Spiritual Authority," *Studia Islamica* 71 (1990): 37-64.

Islam throughout the Islamic history. Because of the contents of his works themselves as well as the impact of social and political conditions, those who promote dialogue, tolerance, relationship with other faiths and beliefs, and mystical understanding of religion, esteem Ibn al-ʿArabī distinctively. Definitely, even if his profoundness and immensity on theology, philosophy, metaphysics, and various Islamic sciences may not be comprehended thoroughly by laymen, everyone who follows the mystical way of Islam finds something satisfactory and beneficial for him/herself among thoughts of Ibn al-ʿArabī. Apart from what Muslims think of Ibn al-ʿArabī, especially non-Muslim western scholars pay considerable attention to his works concerning his theological and philosophical depth. Therefore, it is possible to see some organizations in the west where the works of Ibn al-ʿArabī have been studied in great detail.

As for Ibn Taymiyya and his reputation, it may be said that in his times, Ibn Taymiyya was known to some extent through his sharp refutations against philosophers, theologians, various Muslims sects, Sufis, etc. Then, he was introduced to people by Muslim scholars, especially Ottoman scholars to be the one who claims God has a body. At the present time, his name is mentioned with generally radical, even terrorist organizations in the west and Muslims countries from Asia to Africa. Even if his works are elaborated academically by some scholars from the east and the west, he is assumed to be the one who inspires those who claim to have made jihad by planning various attacks to civil and military targets around the world. With the help of media and admiration of some terrorists, like

9/11 attackers, for Ibn Taymiyya, his theological disrepute has changed into a political disrepute over time.[5]

As it is seen clearly, there are two different profiles introducing Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya separately. Certainly, the reflections of these different profiles of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya are evident in Muslim communities even if most of people are not aware of their names, works, and teachings well. While the reflections of these profiles and followers of these figures seem very different from each other, I thought that they have some similarities. For example, while the followers of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya claim to have followed the Qur'ān precisely, they provide some interpretations which are sometimes different from the outer meaning of the Qur'ān. When they mention the Prophet Muhammad, they exalt him more than how the Qur'ān introduces him to us. That is, even though the Qur'ān introduces the Prophet to us to be just a human being, they consider him to be the one superior to human beings. Moreover, when the human intellect and its authority and functionality are in question, both of these groups react in a similar way. Definitely, these were completely my personal observations perceived and interpreted through my perspective. Nevertheless, these have been influential on my attempt to exert to find out some possible and latent similarities between these two tendencies of Muslims because realizing these kinds of similarities between them and how they have similar reactions on the same issues has led me to investigate them deeply.

---

[5] http://www.e-ir.info/2013/10/15/assessing-al-qaeda-from-the-teachings-of-ibn-taymiyya. Access, May 2016.

As a result of this realization, I have begun to focus on Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya who are the most systematic, fruitful, and influential figures of their schools even if they are not alone. Although my motivation was based on personal observation of the reflections of the profiles of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya on various Muslim communities, I have determined fairly their epistemologies as the departure point of my thesis because I consider epistemology to be the root of their teachings and theological thoughts and statements. As for the social and political effects of teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya in history and today, they are just leaves stemmed from their epistemologies and theologies. Therefore, in this thesis there is no place for the social, historical, and political issues shaping Muslims in history and today with the effect of the thoughts of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya.

I will be focusing on the epistemological tools, i.e., revelation, the human intellect, and inspiration, used by both Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya; and on a theological topic, the divine names and attributes to which they pay considerable attention, because I want to find out some important but mostly latent or ignored similarities between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya in order to display the existence of another perspective on the comparative study of these two thinkers.

1.1. General Approaches to Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya

It may be said that the number of studies treating Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya together are very few. As will be seen below, many scholars who mention Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya together in the same work

emphasize the criticisms of Ibn Taymiyya against Ibn al-ʿArabī and restrict Ibn Taymiyya to a few polemical issues. Hence, whatever we have about these two thinkers comparatively points out Ibn Taymiyya's strong objections as if he completely opposes Ibn al-ʿArabī. Similarly, those who study Ibn Taymiyya and mention Ibn al-ʿArabī in the same work, while disregarding Ibn Taymiyya's praises for some of Ibn al-ʿArabī's works in which he found benefits, emphasize Ibn Taymiyya's objections to the doctrines of the oneness of the existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), the indwelling of God in a human being (*ḥulūl*), unification of human beings with God (*ittiḥād*), and the idea of the seal of the friends (*khatam al-awliyā'*).[6]

Of course, it would not be correct to ignore Ibn Taymiyya's objections to the ideas developed by Ibn al-ʿArabī. However, restriction of Ibn Taymiyya's whole teaching to these few controversial issues and then judging him through these objections by ignoring all of his methodology and thought would be equally a mistake. Neither does Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching consist of merely these controversial issues nor does Ibn

---

[6] What Ibn Taymiyya calls benefit may be any methodological and theological similarity that I attempt to display in this thesis. Ibn Taymiyya says, "In the beginning, I was very much impressed by Ibn al-ʿArabī and held him in great esteem as I had found many of his discussions in the *Futūḥāt, Al-Kunh, Al-Muḥkam al-Marbūṭ, Al-Durrat al-Fākhirah, Maṭāliʿ an-Nujūm* and other such works very illuminating and useful." Ibn Taymiyya, also, says, "He [Ibn al-ʿArabī] has also many good things to say. For example, he distinguishes between the Real and its manifestations, and this provides room for God's commands and prohibitions, affirms the *Sharīʿa* as it is, and emphasizes in *sulūk* [spiritual way] the observance of morality and adherence to prescribed forms of worship." Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya*. Ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim and Muḥammad ibnʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad, 37 vols. (Madina: Mujammāʿ al-Malik Fahd, 2004), 2:464; 470-471; Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿat al-Rasā'il wa al-Masā'il.* Ed. Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā 5 vols. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-manār, 1922-1930), 1:171 and 176, (hereafter it will be abbreviated *MRM*) trans. in Muhammad ʿAbdul-Haqq Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam: Selected Writings of Shaykh al-Islam Taqi ad-Din Ibn Taymiyyah on Islamic Faith, Life, and Society* (Riyāḍ: General Administration of Culture and Publication, 2000), 179 and 184.

Taymiyya's theology consist of these issues only. Thus, making a judgement on these two thinkers by singling out a few questions is going to be deficient and insufficient. It will be helpful to give some concrete examples proving this problematic characterization of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya.

As an example of this kind of restricted approach to Ibn Taymiyya, Michel Chodkiewicz's words may be taken into account. He has two important books *An Ocean Without Shore* and *Seal of the Saints* in which he explains some vital points of Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching clearly. In the former book he focused on Ibn al-ʿArabī's method of understanding the revelation in general and the Qur'ān in particular. In the latter one Chodkiewicz explains the nature of friendship (*walāya*) with respect to its universality, function, and significance for having the prophetic inheritance that is to have true knowledge. Although Chodkiewicz in his work mentions Ibn Taymiyya only briefly, he shows Ibn Taymiyya to be an opponent of visiting tombs, celebrating the birthdays of the Prophet and the friends, and seeking for intercession (*shafāʿa*) from the Prophet. Moreover, Chodkiewicz holds Ibn Taymiyya responsible for various actions of the Wahhabi movement like destroying graves.[7]

---

[7] Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 8. Also, Chodkiewicz refers to a work of Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 1355), *Shifā' al-siqām* (Beirut, 1978), which has some ḥadīth reports to refute Ibn Taymiyya. This objection by al-Subkī to Ibn Taymiyya is not his only one. He in defending the Sunnī understanding criticizes also Ibn Taymiyya's thought about the eternity of the Fire. For al-Subkī, although the eternity of the Heaven and Fire is established by the consensus of the scholars, for Ibn Taymiyya, there is no a consensus on this matter. Thus, is al-Subkī's criticism of Ibn Taymiyya that Chodkiewicz refers to a result of a detailed analysing of Ibn Taymiyya's thought or a result of defence of the classical Sunnī understanding? For details of this issue, see Jon Hoover, "Islamic

Of course, Chodkiewicz is right on some points, but at least on the matter of intercession he is not quite right since Ibn Taymiyya has detailed explanations about the intercession that I will briefly touch on later. Ibn Taymiyya outlined the conditions of intercession which exclude polytheists (*mushrik*) while he affirms not only intercession of the Prophet but also that of some righteous people.[8] Therefore, even if this is a small example, it constitutes a misrepresentation of Ibn Taymiyya to some extent.

Another scholar, Mustafa Kara,[9] who is a professor of Sufism (*taṣawwuf*), considers Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya to be two margraves (*uçbeyi*)[10] of Islamic thought. The former represents the zenith of the spiritual tradition of Islamic thought while the latter represents the zenith of Salafi thought. For Kara, while Ibn al-ʿArabī looks into the Islamic sciences

---

Universalism: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Salafī Deliberations on the Duration of Hell-Fire," *The Muslim World* 99 1 (2009): 181-201. For the discussion, also see Jon Hoover, "Against Islamic Universalism: ʿAlī al-Ḥarbī's 1990 Attempt to Prove that Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya Affirm the Eternity of Hell-Fire," in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, ed. Birgit Krawietz and Tamer Georges, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 377-399. Gibril Fouad Haddad, *The Refutation of Him [Ibn Taymiyya] who Attributes Direction to Allāh [al-Raddu ʿalā man qāla bil-jiha]* (Birmingham: Aqsa Publications, 2008), 84-85. In addition, for more information about Ibn Taymiyya's approach to the birthday ceremony of the Prophet Muhammad concerning different readings of Ibn Taymiyya's writings, see M. Raquel Ukeles, "The Sensitive Puritan? Revisiting Ibn Taymiyya's Approach to Law and Spirituality in Light of 20th century Debates on the Prophet's Birthday (mawlid al-nabī)," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 319-337.

8 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 1:148 and 7:222. Also, see the section on revelation in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

9 Mustafa Kara, professor of Sufism, has an academic position at the Faculty of Theology, Uludağ University-Turkey. He has many works on Sufism, *ṭarīqah* (Sufi orders), and the history of Sufism in addition to some translations about the doctrine of the oneness of Existence and the concept of Existence in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching, such as İsmail Fenni Ertuğrul, *Vahdet-i vücûd ve Ibn Arabi*, translated by Mustafa Kara (İstanbul: Insan Yayınları, 1997).

10 *Uçbeyi*, a historical Turkish term, is a leader of the community aiming to defend the whole Muslim territory against any possible attack or penetration. Therefore, this term in the sense of Islamic scholarship may be reasonable applied to Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya who teach Muslims through books and treatises explaining the true meaning of religious principles including both creedal and practical.

through the pleasure and beauty of *taṣawwuf*, all of Ibn Taymiyya's attempts are to undermine Sufism primarily, then religious thought based on philosophy and theology. According to Kara, the reason for Ibn Taymiyya's harsh opposition is his Ḥanbalī background and the social and political conditions that emerged from the Mongol invasion. Moreover, for Kara, Ibn Taymiyya accuses everyone who does not share the same idea with him of apostasy. However, when we look at Ibn Taymiyya's works, it can be realized that on many issues he attempts to argue a particular problem by referring to the Qur'ān, ḥadīths, opinions of the Salaf, and intellectual evidences, respectively. Therefore, at best his argumentation and evidences can be discussed and criticized rather than blaming him with practising outright accusation of his opponents with apostasy. After these explanations, Kara counts about fifteen similarities between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. Unfortunately, all of them except one, that both of them respect ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, are historical similarities rather than theological ones.[11] However, it may not be fair to confine potential similarities between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya to some historical coincidences.

In addition, Mustafa Çakmaklıoğlu[12] wrote an article on the doctrine of friendship and prophethood in Ibn al-ʿArabī, and then he states Ibn

---

[11] Mustafa Kara, "Çok Uzak Çok Yakın: İbn Arabī – İbn Teymiye Mukayesesi," *Tasavvuf İlmî ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 9 21 (2008): 27-30. Besides this, in his another article written in 1986, Kara interestingly mentions Ibn Taymiyya's positive and partly affirmative attitude toward Sufism. Mustafa Kara, "İbn Teymiye'nin Tasavvuf Istılahlarına Bakışı," *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1 1 (1986): 53-61.

[12] He is a Turkish scholar teaching and researching about Sufism. He has works on Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching such as M. Mustafa Çakmaklıoğlu, *İbn Arabī'de Ma'rifetin İfadesi*

Taymiyya's criticisms against the doctrine. He says that Ibn Taymiyya basically is against the idea of "the seal of the friends" (*khatam al-awliyā'*), who is thought superior to the prophets, because both the term is innovated and superiority to the prophets is meaningless. According to Çakmaklıoğlu, although there are some esoteric (*bāṭinī*) groups who consider the friends to be superior to the prophets, among people of the Sunna (*ahl al-sunna*) there is no one providing such an idea at all. Also, Ibn Taymiyya frequently criticizes Ibn al-ʿArabī on this subject together with the names of some Sufis such as Ibn Sabʿīn (d. 1269) and of some philosophers such as Avicenna (d. 1037) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209). But through a detailed investigation, according to Çakmaklıoğlu, it is going to be seen that in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching there is no such an idea that the friends of God are superior to the prophets. Çakmaklıoğlu takes into account some theological and philosophical issues such as the understanding of revelation and the nature of the angel Gabriel which are generally found in the philosophy of Avicenna with a different form from the common understanding, as the base of Ibn Taymiyya's criticism against Ibn al-ʿArabī. Since Ibn Taymiyya considers Ibn al-ʿArabī to be a sincere follower of this philosophy, he includes Ibn al-ʿArabī in his criticism.[13] Eventually,

---

(İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2007) and M. Mustafa Çakmaklıoğlu, *İbn Arabi'ye Göre İbadetlerin Manevi Yorumları* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2011).

[13] In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya criticizes Ibn al-ʿArabī's statement found in *Fuṣūṣ*, "He [the Seal of the Friends] derives his knowledge from the same source as the angel who reveals it to the Messenger," (*Fa innahū akhadha min al-maʿdan alladhī ya'khudhu minhu al-malak alladhī yūḥī bihī ilā al-rasūl*). Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam.* Ed. Abul Ela Affifi, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1966), 63, translated in Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, *The Bezels of Wisdom: Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam,* translated by R. W. J. Austin (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 66. About this statement Ibn Taymiyya says that the source (*al-maʿdan*) indicates the intellect (*al-ʿaql*) and the angel indicates imagination (*khayāl*). Since the imagination depends on the intellect, it receives the knowledge from this source. These

for Çakmaklıoğlu, it is possible to say that Ibn Taymiyya misunderstood what Ibn al-ʿArabī provided. In this case, it is also possible to say that if it is so, Ibn Taymiyya's criticism is not against Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought itself but the philosophy of Avicenna and his followers.[14]

Another significant work is *Ibn ʿArabī in the Later Islamic Tradition* by Alexander D. Knysh. Knysh in this work reserves a chapter for Ibn Taymiyya's criticism against Ibn al-ʿArabī.[15] The centre of the criticism comprises the metaphysical and monistic doctrines such as the fixed entities (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*), the conception of existence (*wujūd*), and the unification of God and creatures (*ittiḥād*). At the beginning of the chapter Knysh emphasizes that what Ibn Taymiyya is against is monistic Sufism. The purpose of correct Sufism, according to Ibn Taymiyya, is to know and perform best the commands of God rather than attempt to know the essence of God. Through four treatises attributed to Ibn Taymiyya Knysh explains the nature of Ibn Taymiyya's criticism.[16] On the other hand, Knysh also reminds us that Ibn Taymiyya finds some useful points in various works of

---

explanations mean that Ibn al-ʿArabī and others like him receive their knowledge without any intermediary from the source of imagination which is the intellect [*al-ʿaql al-kullī*) while the prophets receive their knowledge through the angel which is imagination. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:232-3. M. Mustafa Çakmaklıoğlu, "İbnü'l-Arabī'nin Nübüvvet-Velayet Hakkındaki Görüşleri ve İbn Teymiyye'nin Bu Hususta Eleştirileri," *Tasavvuf Ilmî ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 21 (2008): 213-255 (218-222).

[14] It may be noted here that for Husaini, especially on the subject of unification (*ittiḥād*), Ibn Taymiyya really understood what Ibn al-ʿArabī said in his works. Even if these issues are different from each other in appearance, when it is taken into consideration that Ibn al-ʿArabī's whole teaching is interconnected, it may be said that Ibn Taymiyya's understanding Ibn al-ʿArabī is open to discussion concerning its accuracy and inaccuracy. S. A. Q. Husaini, *The Pantheistic Monism of Ibn al-ʿArabī* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1970), 38.

[15] Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi*, 87-111.

[16] According to Jon Hoover, Knysh made a mistake when he numbers the treatises because of overlooking differences of editions of Ibn Taymiyya's work, *Majmūʿat al-rasāil wa-al-masā'īl*. See Jon Hoover, review of *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam*, Alexander D. Knysh, *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 10.3 (2007): 392-394.

Ibn al-ʿArabī. Besides this, Ibn Taymiyya's main criticism is for *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*.[17] Also, since Ibn Taymiyya finds sound statements in Ibn al-ʿArabī's works, he considers Ibn al-ʿArabī to be one who is the closest to Islam in relation to other monist thinkers such as Ibn Sabʿīn.[18] Eventually, it can be said that Knysh's work contains a significant summary of Ibn Taymiyya's criticism against Ibn al-ʿArabī even if he does not mention at all any possible nearness between these two thinkers in the field of epistemology or theology. Rather, it may be understood from this work that these two thinkers without exception have nothing to share.[19]

It should be noted that such restricted characterizations are not found just on the side of those who study Ibn al-ʿArabī. The similar approaches may be seen on the side of those who study Ibn Taymiyya. While scholars studying Ibn al-ʿArabī insistently attempt to blame Ibn Taymiyya as a virulent enemy of Sufism in general, and Ibn al-ʿArabī in particular, scholars studying Ibn Taymiyya try to establish the objections of Ibn Taymiyya to Ibn al-ʿArabī's particular opinions continuously.

For instance, Muhammad Ansarī's work, *Ibn Taymiyya Expounds on Islam*, is very important to have a general idea about Ibn Taymiyya's teaching. The book with a long introduction comprises the translations of particular passages from Ibn Taymiyya's various works. Ansarī collected

---

17 Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 1:171.
18 Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 1:176.
19 In this respect, Knysh says, "Standing in sharp contrast are not only the religious and intellectual orientations of the two thinkers (e.g., nominalism vs. realism, transcendency vs. immanence, nomos vs. eros, activism vs. quietism, literalism vs. an allegorical vision of the world, extroversion vs. self-centeredness, common sense vs. visionary experience), but their discursive methods as well." Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 107.

the topics from many different fields such as Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), commentary of the Qur'ān (*tafsīr*), ḥadīth, Kalām, philosophy, Sufism, ethics, politics, and social life on which Ibn Taymiyya wrote treatises. Also, Ansarī translates passages on interpretation (*ta'wīl*), the divine names and attributes, the afterlife, prophethood, reason, the natural constitution of human beings (*fiṭra*), revelation, and spiritual experiences. In his comments, Ansarī considers Ibn al-ʿArabī to be one who added to the religion a new distortion in addition to the distortions of the theology and Greek philosophy. The assumption that Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching conveys non-Islamic principles mostly originated in Greek philosophy is one of the most influential reasons why Ibn al-ʿArabī is criticized by Ibn Taymiyya. For Ansarī, Ibn Taymiyya, as a renewer (*mujaddid*) of religion, struggles against these non-Islamic thoughts. Evidently, according to Ansari, Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching causes corruption of the religion.[20]

Muhammad Memon provides an additional example from those who study Ibn Taymiyya and at the same time give a place for the thought of Ibn al-ʿArabī. Memon in his work *Ibn Taymiyya's Struggle against Popular Religion* identified Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching with pure monism.[21] While there are some scholars such as Abdul Qadir Husaini who consider Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought to be a pantheism, monism, or pantheistic monism, there are other scholars such as William Chittick, James Morris, and Mohammad

---

[20] Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, xxx-xxxi.

[21] Muhammad Umar Memon, *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle Against Popular Religion: With an Annotated Translation of his Kitāb iqtiḍāʾ aṣ-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 35.

Rustom who do not accept such a claim.[22] Nevertheless, since Memon affirms this kind of claim, he evaluates Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought concerning some particular issues such as the conception of existence, unification (*ittiḥād*), incarnation (*ḥulūl*), and annihilation (*fanā'*) through a monistic lens. Rather, for Memon, in Ibn Taymiyya's estimation, what Ibn al-ʿArabī propounded as the doctrine of the oneness of existence is the great enemy destroying the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*).[23] Memon, who takes the doctrine as the centre for Ibn Taymiyya's objections to Ibn al-ʿArabī, gives the matter of evil as a brief example. For Memon, in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching there is no place for evil and sin because of his monist thought. Memon says that for Ibn al-ʿArabī evil is the absence of good because "evil was bereft of existence." Definitely, the purpose of Memon is to draw attention to Ibn al-ʿArabī's monist teaching by criticizing him from the perspective of ethics. Although Ibn Taymiyya affirms that Ibn al-ʿArabī accepts the religious law (*sharīʿa*), Memon underestimates this statement by saying that Ibn al-ʿArabī's approach is a philosophical way to negate the validity of the religious law.[24]

---

[22] Husaini, *Pantheistic Monism*; and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna, Suhrawardi, Ibn ʿArabī* (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1976), 105; Ian Richard Netton, *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 1989), 272-274; Mohammed Rustom, "Is Ibn al-ʿArabī's Ontology Pantheistic?," *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 2 (2006): 53-97; James Winston Morris, "Ibn ʿArabi and His Interpreters Part I: Recent French Translations," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 3 (1986): 539-551 (542-545); William C. Chittick, "Rūmī and waḥdat al-wujūd," in *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: The Heritage of Rūmī,* ed. Amin Banani, Richard Houannisian and Georges Sabagh, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 88; and William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 79. Chittick's work, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* hereafter will be abbreviated *SPK*.

[23] Memon, *Against Popular Religion*, 35.

[24] Memon, *Against Popular Religion*, 29-45. See, Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 1:184.

However, for Jon Hoover, there are three types of speaking about evil in Ibn Taymiyya's works. One of them is relevant to the absence of a good act or goodness. Since there is no good act, there is no an agent. It means that evil comes up as a result of an absence of good.[25] Therefore, in this point what Memon provided as a controversy between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya is not so clear. On the contrary, it seems possible to mention a nearness and shared opinion.

In this sense, unlike the general stance of other scholars, Hoover explicitly points out that Ibn Taymiyya shares some ideas surprisingly with Avicenna, Ibn al-ʿArabī, and al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) concerning some fundamental questions of monotheistic theology.[26] In the book *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* Hoover focused on the problem of evil, optimism (which means the world was created in the best possible form), the wise purpose of God, and the agency of the human act. Among these subjects, in addition to similar explanations of evil provided by Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya as mentioned above, Hoover displays nearness between these two thinkers on the subject of the best possible world. According to Hoover, since Ibn Taymiyya ascribes the highest perfection to God, he considers the world to be in the best possible form. This is similar what Ibn al-ʿArabī concludes on this matter.[27]

---

[25] Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 177-210.

[26] Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 1.

[27] Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 227. Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya.* 4 vols. (Cairo: n.p., 1911), 2:244.

In this respect, A. Hakim Ajhar's work *Su'āl al-ʿālam* written in Arabic must also be counted as one of the most significant comparative studies on Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya in terms of pointing out some similarities. Along with some information about these thinkers concerning historical and social conditions, Ajhar focuses mostly on the theological issues such as the essence, names, and attributes of God, the universe, creation, oneness of the divinity (*tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*) and lordship (*rubūbiyya*), duration of punishment in the afterlife, divine will with its divisions into creative will (*irāda al-kawniyya*) and religious will (*irāda al-sharʿiyya*), and the natural constitution of human beings. Certainly, for him there are many points on which Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya agree with each other although there are some differences as well. For example, while Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya agree on the matter of the oneness of divinity, they differ from each other slightly or considerably on the matters of the incomparability of God (*tanzīh*), the fixed entities (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*), and oneness of the lordship.[28] As far as it is seen, what Ajhar does in this work is to study these thinkers by singling out some particular theological issues on the axis of creation. Ajhar's work is comprehensive on comparison between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. While Ajhar makes this comparison by dealing with many theological issues which are related to creation, in this thesis I study the subject of the divine names and attributes only as a theological point. Rather, the distinctive focus of this

[28] A. Hakim Ajhar, *Su'āl al-ʿālam: Al-Shaykhān Ibn ʿArabī wa Ibn Taymiyya min fikr al-waḥda ilā fikr al-ikhtilāf* (Dār al-Bayḍā': Al-Markaz al-thaqāfī al-ʿarabī, 2011), 116 and 202.

thesis is to examine the epistemologies of these thinkers prior to their theological opinions.

Apart from these significant works, there are more works which focus on either Ibn al-ʿArabī[29] or Ibn Taymiyya specifically. Each of them is a production of hard endeavour and detailed research for sure. It may be noted that it is not possible to find as many English academic works about Ibn Taymiyya as about Ibn al-ʿArabī. Even though the reputation of Ibn Taymiyya in the west emerges from mostly political issues, there are many academic works concerning his theological thoughts as well.[30] In this thesis,

---

[29] For example, William Chittick's works, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* and *The Self-Disclosure of God* are two of the most important English works about Ibn al-ʿArabī because of their translations of Ibn al-ʿArabī's passages. He translates passages found especially in *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*. Along with Chittick's many articles and books, especially these two works listed here include a range of subject such as the Qur'ān, ḥadīth, belief, cosmology, epistemology, the divine names and attributes, creation, and hermeneutic. Certainly, Chittick is not alone in this field. The contributions of Michel Chodkiewicz, James Morris, who has many articles on Ibn al-ʿArabī, R. W. J. Austin, who has a translation of *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, Abu Ela Affifi, Stephen Hirtenstein, and Claude Addas must be noted. Each of them points out a different aspect of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought. For example, Chodkiewicz in his book *An Ocean without Shore* focuses on Ibn al-ʿArabī's approach to the Qur'ān while in the book *Seal of the Saints* he focuses on a very essential matter of Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching, i.e., *khatam al-awliyā'*. Moreover, while Stephen Hirtenstein in his work, *The Unlimited Merciful*, deals with spirituality and universality, what Claude Addas did in her work, *Red Sulphur*, was biographical. As for Affifi's work, *Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul Arabi*, it is important due to its critical approach to Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching.

[30] In addition to works of Memon, Ansari, and Hoover mentioned above, there are other scholars who have books and articles concerning different aspects of Ibn Taymiyya's teaching. For example, Yahya Michot who has books and articles on Ibn Taymiyya, is one of the most productive scholars. Especially in the book *Against Extremism* he focuses on various issues such as faith, divine will, good and bad, God's mercy and justice, love, oneness of God, obedience to the authorities, and Muslim and non-Muslim relations through selected translations in order to let Ibn Taymiyya explain himself. Moreover, Thomas Michel who has a useful work in which he focuses on Ibn Taymiyya's *Al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ* by translating passages relevant to conceptions of Christianity, A. Hakim al-Matroudi who is concerned with the relationship between Ibn Taymiyya and the legal school of Ḥanbalī in his book *The Hanbalī School of Law and Ibn Taymiyya*, M. Sait Özervarlı through articles studies divine wisdom, the natural constitution of human being, and the Qur'ānic rational theology in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching and has a book *Ibn Teymiyye'nin Düşünce Metodolojisi ve Kelāmcılara Eleştirisi* in which he elaborates Ibn Taymiyya's method of thinking and criticisms against theologians. Also, there are other books and articles referred in this thesis occasionally.

I benefitted from these works with respect to translation and analysis in order to provide an original outlook.

1.2. The Aim of the Thesis

Up to this point the approaches to Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya from both sides of scholarship comparatively have been displayed. It is seen that the problem is not lack of the information about Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. However, differences between these two figures have generally discouraged scholars from imagining that there may be interesting similarities. The purpose of this thesis is to point out that these two thinkers have many similarities concerning epistemological tools and theological issues. As a result of these similarities, it is not right to consider these thinkers as two opposite poles of Islamic thought. Sometimes they get closer to each other and sometimes not. To support this claim, primarily their epistemologies are elaborated in the thesis. It is evident that both of them accept the reality and validity of revelational, rational, and inspirational knowledge. The distinction on their epistemological stances is that while Ibn al-ʿArabī esteems revelation, the Qur'ān, inspirational knowledge (*ʿilm al-ladūn*), and the human intellect respectively, Ibn Taymiyya esteems revelation, the human intellect, and inspirational knowledge respectively. That is, as I will argue in the next two chapters, they affirm the same sources of knowledge, but order them into different hierarchies. As a result of this arrangement, Ibn al-ʿArabī explains revelation in a mystical way by placing the human intellect at the lowest level while Ibn Taymiyya explains revelation in a traditional way by placing inspirational knowledge at the lowest level. In this respect, it should be

noted that the purpose is not to criticize the epistemologies of these thinkers, but the purpose is to exposit the approaches of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya to their epistemological tools, i.e., revelation, the human intellect, and inspiration. Therefore, for example, instead of long and detailed explanations as to how Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya object to the human intellect itself, I preferred to focus on how they consider the intellect as a tool of knowledge.

Apart from this difference of arrangement, since they rely on revelation at the first place, and since they reject neither the position of the human intellect on knowledge nor the reality of inspiration as a way of acquiring knowledge, they provide similar theological statements to some extent. The theological statements of the thinkers might be considered to be a reflection of the hierarchies of epistemological tools. On this point, I should emphasize that since both Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya link their epistemologies and theologies somehow, my purpose is not to elaborate how they linked them. My purpose is to exhibit their similarities on epistemology and theology. In other words, for example, Ibn al-ʿArabī links already his epistemology and theology by claiming to have written all his works, which contain his theological thought extracted from the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths of the Prophet, by means of unveiling.[31]

Therefore, while I affirm the link between their epistemologies and theologies, my purpose is not to investigate how Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya linked their epistemologies to their theologies. Instead, I claim

---

[31] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:432; 3:457; Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 47.

that just as they have similarities on epistemology, they have similarities on theology rather than attempt to set up a cause and effect relation between their epistemologies and theologies. In this sense, the divine names and attributes as a theological subject will be studied from the perspectives of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya in order to support the claim that these thinkers have important similarities on their theologies along with their epistemologies. Because of the significance of the subject of the divine names and attributes about which both thinkers provided their opinions abundantly, I chose that subject to study in the thesis. On the other hand, it is possible to study other theological subjects such as the Heaven and Hell, reward and punishment, evil and God, predestination, and the relation of belief and action comparatively in the thought of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya.

It should be kept in mind that Ibn al-ʿArabī's expression and thinking style is a significant point to comprehend the base of similarities between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. The duality of Ibn al-ʿArabī's expression and thought enables him to affirm all aspects of a conception at once even if they are opposite. Definitely, it is possible through his "imaginal world." As William Chittick says, "the imaginal world is the realm where invisible realities become visible and corporeal things are spiritualized."[32] Besides this, duality of expressions and using terms and conceptions interchangeably are common in Ibn al-ʿArabī's works. For example, in the well-known dialogue with Ibn Rushd (d. 1198) for the same question Ibn al-

[32] Chittick, *SPK*, 9.

ʿArabī answers with "yes" and "no;"[33] he names the cosmological things as "existent" and "non-existent" at the same time. Also, for the cosmos he can say that the cosmos is He (the Real)/not He.[34]

In this respect, Abul Ela Affifi's words are important with respect to duality of Ibn al-ʿArabī's expressions. According to Affifi, while it is impossible to reconcile Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings with orthodox Islam, Ibn al-ʿArabī himself often tried to camouflage his pantheistic ideas with the orthodox dogmas of Islam. Moreover, Affifi says, "There are at least two possible ways of understanding him on any given point, the orthodox way and the pantheistic way, although in reality there is only one way in which he means to express himself, and this is the latter."[35] Of course, this statement seems to be a speculative claim, and it is not indisputable. Also, even though "orthodoxy" is understood by Affifi as opposite of pantheism," the limits and nature of "orthodoxy" are questionable. Nevertheless, the important point is that Affifi points out two dimensions of Ibn al-ʿArabī's expression and style. It means his words are susceptible to two different interpretations to some extent.

---

[33] The dialogue proceeds "He [Ibn Rushd] then put to me the following question, 'What solution have you found as a result of mystical illumination and divine inspiration? Does it coincide with what is arrived at by speculative thought?' I replied, 'Yes and no. Between the Yea and the Nay the spirits take their flight beyond matter, and the necks detach themselves from their bodies.' At this Ibn Rushd became pale and I saw him tremble as he muttered the formula, 'There is no power save from God.' This was because he had understood my allusion." Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:153 translated in R. W. J. Austin, *Sufis of Andalusia: The Rūḥ al-quds and the al-Durrat al-fākhirah* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 23. For alternative translation, see Chittick, *SPK*, xiii.

[34] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:379.

[35] Abul Ela Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid Dīn-Ibnul ʿArabī* (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), xviii-xix.

On this point, Knysh's approach may be supportive for what Affifi pointed out. Even though Knysh does not agree with Affifi, he also points out the duality of Ibn al-ʿArabī's expressions and thought recognized by Ibn Taymiyya. According to Knysh, since Ibn Taymiyya is capable of distinguishing various strands within monistic Sufism, Ibn Taymiyya thinks that Ibn al-ʿArabī vacillates between monism and theism.[36] It can be said that Ibn Taymiyya himself recognized duality in Ibn al-ʿArabī's expressions and thought to some extent through recognizing some monistic and theistic statements of Ibn al-ʿArabī. Concerning the expression and thinking style of Ibn al-ʿArabī Chittick also makes a comparison between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. According to Chittick, while Ibn Taymiyya believes that "there must be a simple, straightforward explanation for the relationship between God and the cosmos," Ibn al-ʿArabī holds that "the highest understanding is utter bewilderment (*ḥayra*) in the face of a reality that defies the categories of yes and no, either/or."[37]

Therefore, when a comparison between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya is in question, it is not correct to place Ibn al-ʿArabī against Ibn Taymiyya by ignoring duality of the former's thought and expression. If this is kept in mind, it is possible to see that even if Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya are very far away from each other from one perspective, they have epistemological and theological similarities from another perspective. Hence in order to establish the similarities firmly this duality should always be remembered.

---

[36] Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 107-108.
[37] Chittick, "Rūmī and waḥdat al-wujūd," 86.

1.3. Methodology

The thesis comprises of three main chapters in addition to the introduction and conclusion. Two of the main chapters focus on epistemology; the third one focuses on theology. Revelation, the human intellect, and inspiration as epistemological tools used by Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya will be studied in the first two chapters in order to exposit their attitudes. The purpose of these two chapters is not to argue the reality of epistemological tools, but examine epistemological tools used for acquisition of knowledge in the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. Also, examining the question how much these thinkers rely on the tools when they attain knowledge is the aim of these two chapters. It means that it should not be supposed to see, for example, the process of the human intellect on acquiring knowledge by making use of sense organs and the brain. Nor should it be supposed to see the steps of descending of the revelation to human beings while there is not an ontological connection between God and human beings. As for the chapter of theology, it focuses on the divine names and attributes in Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya comparatively.

The first chapter comprises three sections on the epistemology of Ibn al-ʿArabī, namely, revelation, inspiration, and the human intellect as ways of acquiring knowledge, respectively. Revelation in general and the Qur'ān in particular is at the top of his epistemological hierarchy. It is the most reliable source of knowledge. For him there can be no knowledge which is not found in the Qur'ān since it is the knowledge of the All-Knower. As provided in the well-known analogy, the Qur'ān is like an

ocean. The best possible way of benefiting from the ocean without being lost is to have inspiration.[38] As for the human intellect, it can access commentaries of the revelation only, but not its real meaning. In this section, some questions such as what Ibn al-ʿArabī understands from the Qur'ān, why it has the highest reliability on the matter of knowledge, and how the Qur'ān can be conceived truly according to Ibn al-ʿArabī will be studied.

The second section of the chapter examines inspiration as a way of knowledge. Inspirational knowledge is on the second level of the hierarchy of Ibn al-ʿArabī's epistemology. This is the best way of understanding the revelation because in inspirational knowledge there are two participants: God and the mystics who receive their knowledge either from God directly or from prophets who also receive their knowledge from God. It is possible to find numerous statements in Ibn al-ʿArabī's works proving the presence of two participants. For example, when Ibn al-ʿArabī hears a ḥadīth report, he asks the prophet whether he said these words, even if the report is found in the canonical ḥadīth collections. Then, the prophet says, "Yes, I said, or, no, I did not say these words."[39] Even if this is impossible historically, this dialogue takes place between the mystic and the prophet in the mystical world. Moreover, it is possible to come across Ibn al-ʿArabī saying, "This is a ḥadīth received through inspiration but not found in the canonical sources."[40] Briefly, inspiration as a way of knowledge and of understanding

---

[38] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:76.
[39] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:150. Chittick, *SPK*, 251.
[40] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:399.

the revelation occupies a very significant place in Ibn al-ʿArabī's epistemology.

As for the last section of the chapter, it focuses on the human intellect in Ibn al-ʿArabī. The human intellect concerning the limits and reliability is different than inspiration. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the intellect is incapable of grasping reality as a whole because reality consists of both visible and invisible dimensions while the intellect operates within the borders of visible area only. Therefore, especially on theological issues the human intellect is not competent to reach true knowledge.[41] In this section, the attitude of Ibn al-ʿArabī toward the human intellect, the reason why he does not trust the intellect, why he makes use of revelation, inspiration, and the intellect in that order, and how much credit Ibn al-ʿArabī gives to the intellect will be examined.

The next chapter is dedicated to the epistemology of Ibn Taymiyya. This chapter also consists of three sections: revelation, the human intellect, and inspiration. The first section examines revelation in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching. The revelation, the Qur'ān, has the highest esteem and is the most reliable source of knowledge according to Ibn Taymiyya. It is the word of God. So there is no mistake and doubt. Ibn Taymiyya considers the ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad and the opinions of the Salaf (righteous ancestors) necessary and complementary aspects of correct understanding of the revelation. In this section, a question of how the revelation should be

---

[41] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:291.

understood according to Ibn Taymiyya and how he considers the revelation will be elaborated.

The second section of the chapter focuses on the human intellect as a way of acquiring knowledge. Since the intellect is limited, it can be used for knowledge conditionally. If the intellectual statement is compatible with the revelation, it is accepted as true because it means that the intellect is sound. If the statement is not compatible with the revelation, it is not accepted because it means that the intellect is unsound.[42] Through this kind of outlook, Ibn Taymiyya evaluates intellectual statements provided on religious issues. Also, since there is a similarity between the sound intellect and the sound natural constitution of human being (*fiṭra*) on reaching true knowledge, the subject of the natural constitution will be explained within this section. In this respect, the limits and scope of the intellect, how Ibn Taymiyya considers the intellect, and why he criticizes philosophers and theologians will be explained.

As for inspiration as a way of knowledge, that will be examined in the last section of the chapter. It is not rejected by Ibn Taymiyya but considered to be acceptable, as long as there is no better and more reliable argument found from revelational and intellectual statements on a religious issue at hand.[43] This part may be surprising for those who assume that Ibn Taymiyya rejects inspirational knowledge as a whole due to his objections to Sufism in which inspiration plays a vital role. Rather, according to Fazlur

---

[42] Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar' taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa al-naql.* Ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, 11 vols. (Riyāḍ: Jamiʿat al-Imam Muhammad b. Saʿūd al-Islāmiyya, 1979-1983), 1:155; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:172; 6:525; 10:475.

[43] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:473.

Rahman, Ibn Taymiyya claims inspiration for himself.[44] In this respect, the focus of this section is to find out the nature of inspirational knowledge in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching, what Ibn Taymiyya understands from "inspiration," and which conditions allow one to benefit from inspirational knowledge on religious issues.

After displaying the epistemological similarities and different arrangements of the epistemological tools, the next chapter will focus on the subject of the divine names and attributes as a reflection of these epistemological stances of the thinkers. Over three sections, the divine names and attributes are elaborated with various aspects concerning the teachings of both thinkers comparatively. It will be seen that just as they come closer to each other on epistemology occasionally, they may share some ideas on their theologies as well. As emphasized above, because of the duality of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought and expressions it is possible to see different dimensions of his statements regarding to the divine names and attributes. On this point, Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya have similarities even if through mystical explanations the former is distinct from the latter. For example, as will be examined in the chapter, Ibn al-ʿArabī in one respect identifies the Essence of God beyond all names and attributes in such a way that contradicts Ibn Taymiyya's thought. In another respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī ascribes many names and attributes to the Essence of God in a way that corresponds to Ibn Taymiyya's thought. It is a shortcoming to

---

[44] Rahman claims that Ibn Taymiyya adopted Sufi terminology to some extent in order to reconcile the Sufi legacy with orthodox Islam for the sake of a positive contribution to the latter. In this respect, inspiration is affirmed with rejection of its quasi-infallibility. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 195.

consider the former statement as if it is Ibn al-ʿArabī's sole thought by ignoring the latter one. Briefly, this chapter will focus on such theological similarities in Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. It will be seen that Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya are very different from each other on the theological issue in one respect; they have many similarities on that issue in another respect.

As for the primary sources referred to in this thesis, they constitute one of the most difficult aspects of this study because of their great extent and number. Both Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya have many books and treatises, most of which contain many crucial passages dispersedly pertinent to the epistemological tools and the theological subject of the divine names and attributes. Since my purpose is to focus on the teachings of these thinkers in general rather than focus on their particular books or treaties, I have to enlarge the scope of the sources in order to comprehend their approaches broadly. In this point, I benefit mostly from the secondary sources, which focus on a specific issue in the works of the thinkers systematically to begin my research. Furthermore, as much as I focus on the primary sources in order to conceive the thought of the thinkers, I will use in places some of the secondary sources, which contain passages translated from the works of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. Definitely, these secondary sources referred to in the thesis helped me significantly to see the limits and focuses of the current comparative studies on these two figures.

Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya themselves are two of the most productive thinkers of Islamic scholarship. They also have some major works which reflect their thoughts comprehensively. For example, *Al-*

Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya of Ibn al-ʿArabī is one of the most cited sources in the thesis because in that work he through divine unveilings discusses various theological issues such as the Qur'ān, ḥadīth, religious law, the divine names and attributes, the relationship between God and creatures, faith, spiritual paths, and spiritual travelling.[45] As Chittick says, moreover, the work contains the modes of the knowledge of the Muhammadan inheritance and spiritual stages related to these modes of the knowledge.[46] Therefore, it is expected to find many sentences and passages from *Al-Futūḥāt* dealing with both epistemology and theology. Also, since Ibn al-ʿArabī claims to have written that work through inspiration utterly, which provides the most trusted knowledge, and since that work contains many theological issues, the work gives some clues to understanding how he explicates theological issues under the light of the method of inspiration, which occupies a significant place in Ibn al-ʿArabī's epistemology.

Also, the other significant work of Ibn al-ʿArabī is *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* to which I refer often. It is a kind of summary of Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings according to Chittick.[47] Also, *Fuṣūṣ* is an important work to see Ibn al-ʿArabī's mysticism clearly. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr said, the work may be considered to be the central text of the theoretical gnosis tradition.[48] At the same time, most of the criticisms of Ibn Taymiyya target the ideas of Ibn al-

---

[45] Chittick, *SPK*, xi. Also, as Morris expresses, *Al-Futūḥāt* is by far the longest and most comprehensive work of Ibn al-ʿArabī. Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, *The Meccan Revelations*, translated by Michel Chodkiewicz, William C. Chittick, James Winston Morris, Cyrille Chodkiewicz and Denis Gril (New York: Pir Press, 2002-2004), 6.

[46] William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 9.

[47] Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 1.

[48] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 213.

ʿArabī found in *Fuṣūṣ*, which is a controversial work of Ibn al-ʿArabī because of its very complicated and mystical content.[49] Also, since it is a comprehensive example of Ibn al-ʿArabī's mystical teaching, this work is an important source in order to see how he explains various subjects.

As for the main works of Ibn Taymiyya to which I refer in this study, they are very essential and significant to understand his teaching. Primarily I should note *Majmūʿ fatāwā* which is a collection of various independent treatises of Ibn Taymiyya. It is possible to find in that work treatises about different issues such as the Qur'ān, commentary (*tafsīr*), ḥadīth, Kalām, jurisprudence, Sufism, and creed.[50] Therefore, this work can be considered to be the most comprehensive work to see Ibn Taymiyya's thoughts in different areas. By means of secondary sources which focus on some parts of this huge collection, it is possible to figure out, even if partly, what this collection deals with. In addition to help from the secondary sources on finding relevant parts, passages, and treatises, I found arguments related to the thesis through the help of the last two volumes of the collection where a broad and detailed index is provided.

Ibn Taymiyya's thought is found dispersed in his various works in addition to that comprehensive work. I have occasionally referred to another significant work of Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar' taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa al-naql* which

---

[49] Ibn Taymiyya criticizes *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* due to its mystical explanations with respect to union (*ittiḥād*), incarnation (*ḥulūl*), and existence (*wujūd*) in order to support monistic thoughts. Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 1:171-174.

[50] In Jon Hoover's work there may be found useful information about these treatises concerning their full names and locations in the collection even though Hoover's purpose is not to provide a comprehensive catalogue of these treatises. See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 239-243.

contains criticism and refutations against philosophers and theologians. To examine what Ibn Taymiyya thinks especially of the subject of revelation and the human intellect, this work is necessary since he systematically has provided criticisms about the limits and authority of the human intellect, theological argumentations established by the intellect, and rational thinkers whose method is based on the intellect. As for another work of Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya*, he emphasizes in that work the importance of the Prophetic Sunna, the authority of ḥadīth, and understanding the revelation through the Prophetic perspective by criticizing the doctrines of Shīʿa sects. Therefore, also this work is necessary in order to see what Ibn Taymiyya thinks of the Prophet and his authority concerning the true knowledge in the religion. It should be remembered that it is possible to see in that work as well various issues discussed by Ibn Taymiyya rather than focusing on a particular topic only.[51]

Finally, most of the secondary sources mentioned at the beginning of the introduction have been based on these primary and comprehensive sources for the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. Certainly, it is not right to confine these thinkers to a few particular works. But, it is evident that these major works unavoidably are referred to by scholars who study the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. Therefore, in this thesis the centrality of these major works is acknowledged.

---

[51] For more general information of the works of Ibn Taymiyya, see M. Sait Özervarlı, *İbn Teymiyye'nin Düşünce Metodolojisi ve Kelâmcılara Eleştirisi* (Istanbul: İsam Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2008), 24-26. Abdul Hakim I. Al-Matroudi, *The Hanbali School of Law and Ibn Taymiyyah: Conflict or Conciliation* (London: Routledge, 2006), 23-30. Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, "Reason, Revelation and The Reconstitution of Rationality: Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya's Dar' Taʿāruḍ al-ʿAql wa-l-Naql" (Ph.D thesis, McGill University, 2013)102-109.

CHAPTER TWO: IBN AL-ʿARABĪ and HIS EPISTEMOLOGY

2.1. Introduction

This chapter explores revelation (*waḥy*), unveiling (*kashf*), and the human intellect (*ʿaql*) as tools of Ibn al-ʿArabī's epistemology. In this chapter, some questions such as why revelation, especially the Qur'ān, is important for acquisition of knowledge, why unveiling is necessity for truth, and what the position of the human intellect is in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching will be elaborated. He evaluates revelation to be a cooperation of the Qur'ān, which encompasses all knowledge, with the ḥadīths (sayings) of the Prophet Muhammad. While Ibn al-ʿArabī has his own method of understanding revelation such as allusion (*ishāra*) instead of interpretation (*ta'wīl*), the Prophet's active role on understanding of revelation is evident because of his both missional, he is a messenger (*rasūl*), and personal, he is the perfect man, (*al-insān al-kāmil*) features.

Moreover, Ibn al-ʿArabī pays considerable attention to unveiling as a sound method of knowledge right after revelation. By means of the divine unveiling, comprehension of the true meaning of revelation may be possible. Concerning the subject of unveiling, the conceptions of the friendship of God (*walāya*), special heart (*qalb*) owned by the friends, and seal of the friendship (*khatam al-walāya*) are worth focusing on. In addition, while Ibn al-ʿArabī considers the term inspiration (*ilhām*) synonymous with unveiling (*kashf*), he prefers to use the latter mostly. Therefore, in this chapter I prefer the term unveiling as well, while in the chapter on Ibn Taymiyya I will use the term inspiration mostly because he

prefers this word while he also considers inspiration and unveiling synonymous.

As for the human intellect, Ibn al-ʿArabī argues authority and limits of the intellect by questioning its reliability, soundness, and faultiness on knowledge, especially on knowledge about God. While he accepts some areas for the intellect, he has objections to the intellect itself and philosophers and theologians who hold it as a unique tool of truth.

2.2. Revelation

In this section, I will focus on Ibn al-ʿArabī's approach to revelation and the ḥadīths (sayings) of the Prophet. So, it will be clear how Ibn al-ʿArabī considers the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths to be sources of religious knowledge and what the position of revelation is in his epistemology. I highlight several aspects of the matter such as the Qur'ān and its comprehensiveness, methods of interpretations, the importance of the Prophet regarding the conception of the perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), and the ḥadīth reports.

2.2.1. The Qur'ān

The Qur'ān as a divine revelation has two significant aspects. It is the last revelation and the most comprehensive one so that, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, it encompasses not only all religions (*sharā'iʿ*) but also all knowledge relevant to everything in the cosmos.[1] In other words, since the Qur'ān is the knowledge of God, and since there is nothing in the universe

[1] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:107; 3:153.

independent of God's knowledge, the Qur'ān contains the knowledge of everything. When Ralph Austin writes his introduction to the chapter of *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* on the wisdom of being in the word of David, he mentions two kinds of vicegerents (*khalīfa*) that comprise of inner and outer functions. While the inner one is related to wisdom and spirituality, the outer one is related to the revelation of Scriptures and the religious heritages.[2] In this kind of approach even if a distinction may appear between spiritual and revelational realms, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, both of these realms are embraced in the Qur'ān because nothing can be found outside of the Qur'ān.[3]

He grounds this claim on a Qur'ānic verse, "We have not neglected in the Register a thing" (The Qur'ān, 6:38).[4] From this perspective, Ibn al-ʿArabī considers the Qur'ān to be *jamʿiyya* (all-comprehensiveness).[5] In addition, according to William Chittick, Ibn al-ʿArabī employs the word *qur'ān* with a meaning of gathering and collecting together, even though generally *qur'ān* (its root is *q-r-'*) is translated as "recitation."[6] In this respect, he says that while the Qur'ān is one book among the other books, as different from the others it possesses all-comprehensiveness.[7]

---

2 Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 198.

3 "He who has been given the Qur'ān has been given the perfect luminosity (*ḍiyā'*) which comprises every knowledge… so the sciences of the prophet, the angels, and every known tongue are comprised in the Qur'ān." Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:107, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 239.

4 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:56.

5 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:88.

6 Chittick, *SPK*, 239.

7 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:160; 2:107; 3:94.

In this regard, as Chittick states, Ibn al-ʿArabī considers the term *sharīʿa* (religious law or knowledge) to be a wide path of God rather than simple jurisprudence (*fiqh*). This approach comprises of two dimensions. The first, this wide path upon which all humanity walks implies all religions.[8] And the second one implies flexibility, wideness, and inclusiveness of Islamic religion. In consequence, Ibn al-ʿArabī can go beyond all criteria established by the scholars of commentary of the Qur'ān (*tafsīr*), the science of Ḥadīth, Islamic theology (*Kalām*), and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). In other words, through this admission he goes beyond conventional limits of understanding of revelation and religion. *Sharīʿa* as a wide path rather than a simple jurisprudence or interpretation of revelation means the way of the reality that is the Qur'ān as a whole.[9]

In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that the way of God is a general way upon which all humanity walks, so the way takes them to God. This way includes all religions which are based on the revelations. When a Muslim confirms the second part of the Islamic testimony (*shahāda*) that Muhammad is the messenger of God, he accepts the way of the Prophet Muhammad particularly. Then, he by referring to the verse, "to each of you We prescribed a law and a method" (Q, 5:48), continues to say that an Imam of Muhammadan religion follows the way of Muhammad and leaves the other ways by confirming and believing their truthfulness.[10] Obviously,

---

8 Chittick, *SPK*, 170-171.
9 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:563, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 260.
10 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:410, trans. in Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 145.

even though the Qur'ān is only one part of the paths of God, it is the most inclusive one among the others in Ibn al-ʿArabī's mind.

To explain clearly his thought on the comprehensiveness of Islamic revelation, the Qur'ān, and the other religions which are based on the divine revelation, Ibn al-ʿArabī makes use of the analogy of the sun and the stars. He says that all the revealed religions are lights. While the religion of Islam is like the light of the sun, the other religions are the lights of the stars. When the light of the sun appears, the light of the stars becomes hidden. However, it does not mean that the light of the stars does not exist or unreal. But, it is just hidden because of the light of the sun. Likewise, when the religion of Islam is revealed, the other religions were abrogated. But, through abrogation they do not become null (*bāṭil*) at all.[11] It may be said that for Ibn al-ʿArabī the religion established with the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad is not the same as the other divine religions because of their different functions and capacities.

Briefly, for Ibn al-ʿArabī the Qur'ān as the all-encompassing book and the knowledge of God contains all of the revelational information. Even though the Qur'ān, like other revelations, was sent down by God, it has a special importance because of its various characteristics mentioned above. Thus, the Qur'ān as a divine book must be followed by the believers.[12] In Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought there is no doubt that the Qur'ān is the noblest source of true knowledge. In this point, the significant question is how to

---

[11] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:153, trans. in Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 125.
[12] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:249, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 179.

understand the Qur'ān because Ibn al-ʿArabī sometimes benefits from different ways to comprehend what God revealed in the Book. In this respect, some conceptions such as *tafsīr* (commentary), *ta'wīl* (interpretation), *ishāra* (allusion), *ḥaqīqa* (real), and *majaz* (metaphor) are worth mentioning.

2.2.2. Outer Expression and Inner Meaning

The matter of commentary (*tafsīr*) and interpretation (*ta'wīl*) has a relationship with some conceptions such as *ḥaqīqa* (reality), *majaz* (metaphor), *ẓāhir* (outer), and *bāṭin* (inner). From a literalist perspective, the appearance of the text reflects God's intention precisely while from a mystical perspective the appearance of the text has some different and deeper meanings which are beyond the literal or outer forms of the text certainly.[13] As for Ibn al-ʿArabī, he always goes beyond the literal expression of the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth while he accepts the indisputable importance of the literal forms of the text. In this regard, he says that whoever combines the outer law with the inner one has all of the happiness.[14] Therefore, it should be noted that Ibn al-ʿArabī in this point differs from esotericist (*bāṭinī*) thinkers according to whom the reality itself is not found in the outer form of the revelation because it is hidden in the deep.[15]

---

[13] John Renard, *Knowledge of God in Classical Sufism: Foundations of Islamic Mystical Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 56.

[14] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:334. Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya.* Ed. Osman Yahya, 11 vols. (Cairo: Al-Hay'at al-Miṣriyya al-ʿÂmma li'l-Kitāb, 1972), 5:158.

[15] Kristin Zahra Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qurʾān in Classical Islam* (London: Routledge, 2006), 61.

According to William Chittick, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, there must be a balance between the literal expression of the revealed text and its inner meaning because the letters of the revelation as linguistic forms are a place where the words and intention of God become apparent and known.[16] It should be noted that it is not easy to understand what Ibn al-ʿArabī thinks a real meaning (*ḥaqīqa*) or a metaphorical one (*majāz*) is because his many ideas are susceptible to understanding metaphorically and literally at the same time. However, Ibn al-ʿArabī emphasizes frequently the importance of the literal form of the text because he considers all of the outer forms including letters, words, and structures to be an authentic, concrete, and the true embodiment of God's speech. Thus, as Chittick says, each letter and word of the revealed Book has a special significance for conceiving what God says and means exactly.[17] Also, it is important to note that each word of the text with its special and certain formation is a part of divine manifestation. In this regard, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that the Prophet Muhammed's mission was to transmit whatever was revealed to him by God. He had to keep the certain form of the revelation when he transmitted it to people since the meaning of the revelation was sent down on his heart through this certain form and combination of the letters, arrangement of the words, and order of the verses. In this way, the Qur'ān became constituted. This form of the Qur'ān is determined by God Himself. Otherwise, the

---

[16] Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 73.
[17] Chittick, *SPK*, xv.

Qur'ān would be in the form of the understanding of the Prophet rather than in the form which is the form of the revelation determined by God.[18]

However, on this matter there have been various interpretations of his ideas. For example, when R. Caspar writes about Ibn al-ʿArabī's approach to the revelation, he says that the letters of the revelation provide access merely to its outer form rather than its inner depth. To reach its "true" meaning there should be imagination or the knowledge of the heart.[19] It is clear that according to Caspar, there is a classification or graduation which separates the outer expression of the Qur'ān and its "true" and "inner" meaning. This claim may lead us to an assumption that the literal form does not contain true meaning of the text, so there are two aspects of the revealed Book and one of them is more valuable and reliable than the other. In addition, Caspar claims that for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the literal forms of the verses are deceptive.[20] On the contrary, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the literal form of the Qur'ān is the key to access to the meaning of the revelation.[21] Thus, it could be said that the main problem is not to accept or reject the outer meaning of the Qur'ān, but the problem is to be stuck within the limit of the literal forms of the text by ignoring the possibility of the existence of an inner meaning beyond the apparent forms.

---

[18] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:158, trans. in Michel Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore: Ibn ʿArabī, the Book, and the Law* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 23.

[19] R. Caspar, "Muslim Mysticism: Tendencies in Recent Research," in *Studies on Islam,* ed. Merlin L. Swartz, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 168.

[20] Caspar, "Muslim Mysticism," 172.

[21] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:567.

2.2.3. Commentary (*tafsīr*) and Interpretation (*ta'wīl*)

On the matter of understanding the revelation, the problem of commentary and interpretation are as important as the problem of the outer expression and the inner meaning of the text. Primarily, as Chittick says, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the commentaries of the Qur'ān (*tafsīr*) performed by the friends of God are quite different from the interpretations (*ta'wīl*) of the men of the intellect.[22] Since Ibn al-ʿArabī's method of understanding the Qur'ān is based on some spiritual principles in order to reach beyond the limits of the outer form of the text, his method may be considered sometimes to be a kind of interpretation (*ta'wīl*).[23] However, for him, the more valuable and appreciated method is commentary (*tafsīr*) fulfilled by the friends of God rather than interpretation (*ta'wīl*) fulfilled by men of the intellect.[24]

Besides this, he calls his own method allusion (*ishāra*) occasionally. It is a sort of commentary which does not exclude the literal or outer expression of the text. For example, when Ibn al-ʿArabī writes some explanations concerning Chapter fifty-two of the Qur'ān (*Sūra al-Ṭūr*), he prefers to use the term allusion (*ishāra*) instead of commentary (*tafsīr*).[25] Even though Ibn al-ʿArabī considers the commentary of the Qur'ān (*tafsīr*) to be a better method than the interpretation (*ta'wīl*), he prefers the term

---

[22] Chittick, *SPK*, 245.
[23] A. J. Arberry, *Revelation and Reason in Islam* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957), 16.
[24] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:257, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 246.
[25] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:526.

allusion (*ishāra*) for his own effort intended for explaining the text.[26] This matter will be touched on briefly again in further sections.

Ibn al-ʿArabī with a long passage explains the difference of commentary and interpretation by connecting with the matter of outer expression and inner meaning. Since the rational thinkers (*ʿuqalāʾ*), who interpret the verses of revelation, do not have unveiling (*kashf*) and sound faith, they attempt to reach the true meaning of the revelation by interpreting the outer form of the text. They ignore the reality of the outer form and always try to find some meaning different from what the outer form indicates. In contrast, the commentaries of the friends of God aim to find the real meaning of the revealed text by making use of the outer form itself as well. While the friends do this they do not ignore the outer form of the text at all. In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī divides people into two categories: the people of unveiling and faith and the people of rational thinking. The latter group, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, tries to pass from the outer meaning (*ẓāhir*) to the inner meaning (*bāṭin*) by ignoring the outer one. So, they separate between the outer expression and the inner meaning. It is because, as mentioned above, they do not have unveiling and faith truly. Nor do they have in their hearts a light to guide them. As for the friends of God who have unveiling and faith, they try to pass as well from the outer expression to the inner meaning, unlike the rational thinkers, by

---

[26] Even though Ibn al-ʿArabī is recognized by many Ismāʿīlīs as a thinker among themselves, according to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, he is different from Ismāʿīlīs because their method is based on generally allegory (*bāṭinī*). Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 39. Also, see Al-Ghorab, "Muhyiddin Ibn al-ʿArabī Amidst Religions (adyān) and Schools of Thought (madhāhib)," 199-227.

taking into consideration the outer expression itself along with the inner meaning. They do not ignore the necessity of the outer expression of the text at all. So, they have two eyes in order to witness the reality as a whole.[27]

Even though Ibn al-ʿArabī explains his ideas in that way, on this kind of categorization there is no agreement among scholars who study the mystical tradition of Islam. For example, on this matter Chittick criticizes the understanding of Henry Corbin concerning Ibn al-ʿArabī's method of understanding the Qur'ān. For Corbin, interpretation (*ta'wīl*) is one of the cornerstones of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought. However, even though Chittick accepts as partly true Corbin's claim, he emphasizes that in general the term interpretation (*ta'wīl*) is not used in a positive sense by Ibn al-ʿArabī.[28]

In addition, according to Eric Geoffroy, interpretation (*ta'wīl*), which means to restore the initial meaning to the verse, is the spiritual interpretation of the Qur'ān while commentary (*tafsīr*) is to interpret the Qur'ān with regard to its literal, grammatical, historical, and theological points.[29] This claim does not seem to be compatible sufficiently with what Ibn al-ʿArabī puts forward because, as will be showed, Ibn al-ʿArabī benefits from grammatical and literal arguments in order to explain the initial meaning of the verses. Whatever Geoffroy calls a spiritual

---

[27] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:257, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 246.

[28] Chittick, *SPK*, 199. When Henry Corbin comes to the conclusion like this, he departs from a presupposition regarding an interaction between Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Shīʿa in this issue. See Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ʿArabī* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 50.

[29] Eric Geoffroy, *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2010), 41.

interpretation of the Qur'ān is, in fact, the real meaning of the Qur'ān according to Ibn al-ʿArabī. It means that Geoffroy refers to the term interpretation (*ta'wīl*) while Ibn al-ʿArabī refers to the term commentary (*tafsīr*) or allusion (*ishāra*) in order to indicate the sound method of reaching the real meaning.

In this respect, it is worth noting that in Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought letters and their formation, numbers, symbols, number of letters in a word, and *abjad*[30] play a very important role. In this case according to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Ibn al-ʿArabī obviously applies the method of symbolic hermeneutics to the revealed text — the Qur'ān — in order to reach the inner meaning of the revelation which is hidden behind the veil of the outer forms of the Qur'ān.[31] As an example of Ibn al-ʿArabī's *sui generis* understanding of the method of allusion, Michel Chodkiewicz provides some explanations about a passage from Ibn al-ʿArabī's works. In this respect, Chodkiewicz says

> The first theophany (theophany of allusion), which corresponds to the first two verses (*alif lām mīm*) that is the book in which there is, no doubt, a guide for the pious), comes back to these letters. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the form of the writing (*raqīm*) to which it is an allusion (by the pronoun that, (*dhālika*), which is the demonstrative used for what is far away) is triangular. One of its 'angles' (the letter *alif*, which when written can be joined to no letter that follows it and that is the first letter of the name Allah) expresses 'the suppression of any relation of affinity between God and the creatures.' The second

---

[30] *Abjad* is a system of understanding of a text. In this system, each letter has a numerical value.

[31] Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna, Suhrawardi, Ibn ʿArabī*, 104.

> angle (the letter *lām*, often likened in traditional exegesis to *Jibrā'īl*, the angel of revelation) 'dissipates confusion', while the third (*mīm*, the first letter in Muhammad and a symbolic allusion to the Prophet, who is the model of excellence) makes evident the 'way of felicity': the terms used about the second and third 'angles' obviously translate the 'absence of doubt' (*lā rayba fīhi*) and the guidance (*hudā*) of the scriptural text.[32]

Moreover, Ibn al-ʿArabī sees interpretation (*ta'wīl*) to be a danger for the faith of believers because by means of interpretation the proofs provided by the intellect will rule over the revelation. In this case, the faith may be weakened.[33] In this regard, Ibn al-ʿArabī as a requirement for having faith suggests admission of the revelation, including its explicit (*muḥkam*) and ambiguous (*mutashābih*) verses without interpreting them with our intellect.[34] This point will be elaborated when what Ibn al-ʿArabī thinks of the human intellect is examined in a further section, so that the reasons why Ibn al-ʿArabī does not make use of the method of interpretation which is based on the human intellect and why Ibn al-ʿArabī says that what the messengers brought as revelation may be declared as impossible by the intellect are going to be more understandable.[35]

After these explanations about Ibn al-ʿArabī's approach to the method of understanding the Qur'ān, it can be said that Ibn al-ʿArabī benefits from commentary and allusion in order to understand the Qur'ān.

---

[32] Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore*, 85. See, "Kitāb al-Tajalliyāt" in Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Rasā'il Ibn al-ʿArabī.* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2001), 323.

[33] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:218, trans. in William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 4.

[34] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:660, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 201.

[35] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:218.

He has a very special comprehension of the Qur'ān through his own mystical approach which constitutes his allusions. This unique approach allows Ibn al-ʿArabī to reach beyond the limits of the traditional and common understanding of the revelation. For example, he may connect the meaning of the Qur'ān to the manifestation of the divine realities; thereby the eternal manifestations of the divine realities require endless meanings of the Qur'ān since the Real does not repeat Himself on the same form of His manifestations.[36] According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, each recitation of the verses reveals a new meaning because the recitation of the Qur'ān is something like recreation or renewal of the cosmological things. From this perspective, according to him, since everything or every action in the cosmos is an effect of God's speech, "*Kun*" (Be!), recitation of the revelation as well is considered to be the speech of God. He confines acquiring a new meaning of the Qur'ān by means of new recitations to those who have an insight (*baṣīra*) bestowed by God. These people who are guided by a light from God (Q, 39:22), with each recitation reach a different meaning of the revelation. On the contrary, whoever obtains the same meaning through different recitations is not on the true path.[37]

Every meaning of the Qur'ān indicates the truth so long as it is compatible with Arabic linguistic rules and the outer forms of the text. Also, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that every understanding of God's speech (*kalām*) is the intended meaning by God as long as it is supported not only by any verse of the Qur'ān but also that of all the divine books such as the Torah, the

---

[36] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:282.
[37] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:128, trans. in Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore*, 26-27.

Psalms, and the Gospel. This is because the knowledge of God encompasses every meaning. Thus, every interpreter may reach the intention of God correctly. The people of knowledge do not declare wrong any interpretation which is supported by the words (*lafẓ*). Whoever declares wrong the interpretation which is supported by the words is wrong and deficient in knowledge according to Ibn al-ʿArabī.[38]

It is clear that for Ibn al-ʿArabī linguistic rules and outer expressions are very important to determine the limits of meaning of the Qur'ānic verses. If a meaning is compatible with the rules, it should be accepted as true. It is the intention of God surely. Therefore, in Ibn al-ʿArabī's writings, it is very common to see various meanings ascribed to a single word through derivation from the root of the word. This method is applied by Ibn al-ʿArabī to some terms, so that *ʿadhāb* (punishment) is interpreted as *ʿudhūba* (sweetness) and *ʿaql* (intellect) is interpreted as a fetter (*ʿiqāl*) because of their etymological commonalities and grammatical compatibilities.[39]

In addition, when Ibn al-ʿArabī mentions the Malāmiyya whom he esteems as the highest ranking friends, he ascribes to them the term *kāfirūn* (unbelievers), which means those who cover or hide, by saying that they are those who hide what they see in their witnessing of secrets of the union with the Real. The point which Ibn al-ʿArabī utilizes is the literal meaning of the

---

[38] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:119; 2:567, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 244.

[39] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:198 and Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 94. See Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore*, 51. As a note, Ibn Taymiyya criticizes this kind of method of interpretation in his works. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 13:239.

root of this word: *k-f-r* (to hide something).[40] It shows that even though God uses this word in the Qur'ān frequently and clearly in order to indicate unbelievers who reject the truthfulness of the divine message, Ibn al-ʿArabī could use it with a different meaning and purpose by means of a linguistic probability and allowance.

Moreover, Ibn al-ʿArabī applies the same kind of method of understanding the Qur'ānic terms when he mentions the human being (*insān*) and genies (*jinn*). According to Gracia Anguita, Ibn al-ʿArabī grounds his statement again on the commonality of roots of the word *jinn* and *j-n-n* which is synonymous with *s-t-r* which means to cover and conceal; and the commonality of roots of the word *insān* and *ā-n-s* which means something seen or perceived. So, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, "genie" refers to spiritual, metaphysical, and inner (*bāṭin*) aspect of the human being while "man" (*insān*) refers to the physical and outer aspect (*ẓāhir*) of the human being. In this regard, Ibn al-ʿArabī provides a mystical commentary of the Qur'ānic verse, "I did not create men (*ins-insān*) and genies (*jinn*) except to worship Me" (Q, 51:56). He interprets the verse to say that genie is the inner part of human beings and man (*ins*) is the apparent part of human beings. Thus, worship, which is the purpose of the creation of the human being encompasses inner and outer performance and training such as deeds and purifying the soul and heart both physically and spiritually.[41]

---

[40] Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore*, 50. Also, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:115-116; 2:134.

[41] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:354. See Gracia López Anguita, "On the Inner Knowledge of Spirits Made of an Igneous Mixture: Chapter 9 of the Futūhāt al-Makkiyya," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 44 (2008): 1-252.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, according to Anguita, extends his commentary of the verse moving toward the epistemological field from the ontological concerning the words man and genie. In this regard, these terms refer not only to the inner and outer aspects of human beings but also refer to esoteric and exoteric aspects of knowledge. The term genie (*jinn*) refers to the non-manifest and unknown wisdom which is known by God only, while the other term man (*ins*) refers to the manifest and known wisdom.[42] All these examples are very significant in order to show the flexibility, richness, and dual perspective of Ibn al-ʿArabī's comments of the Qur'ānic verses concerning terms and conceptions.

Therefore, in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching rejection of any meaning of the Qur'ānic verses, while it is appropriate to the grammatical rules, would be a major mistake. The Qur'ān is the knowledge of God and His knowledge is limitless.[43] Thus, every meaning which comes from the Qur'ān should be affirmed and it should be noted that rejection of any possible meaning is to delimit God's knowledge according to Ibn al-ʿArabī.[44] Briefly, he warns people on this point by making an analogy between the Qur'ān and an ocean. He says that if your breath is not sufficiently powerful, you should limit yourself to the apparent sense of the Qur'ān and refrain yourself from plunging into this ocean. Otherwise, you

---

[42] Anguita, "Inner Knowledge," 2. See Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:101.
[43] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:36; 2:290; 3:121.
[44] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:28.

cannot come back again from the ocean of the Qur'ān and you will be lost since it is deep.[45]

2.2.4. The Prophet and Ḥadīth (saying)

In Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching the ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad have a special status. The ḥadīths constitute a significant part of the revelational knowledge. In the meanwhile, he specifically has a book of the ḥadīth, *Mishkāt al-anwār fīmā ruwiya ʿan Allāh min al-akhbār*.[46] Even though he uses the six books (*al-kutub al-sitta*)[47] as a source of the ḥadīths, he frequently uses various sayings of the Prophet although they are not necessarily found in the canonical ḥadīth collections.[48]

According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, even though the Prophet Muhammad is not living among us with his body, he is still a source of true knowledge because he was given all-comprehensive knowledge.[49] Certainly, there is a very strong connection between Ibn al-ʿArabī's attention to the ḥadīths as a source of true knowledge and his admission of the exceptional constitution of the Prophet Muhammad.[50] Therefore, in order to conceive accurately why and how the ḥadīths of the Prophet become a part of the revelational knowledge, it is necessary to know who the Prophet exactly is and what his mission is according to Ibn al-ʿArabī.

---

45 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:76, trans. in Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore*, 22.

46 For the translation of the book, see Stephen Hirtenstein and Martin Notcutt, *Divine Sayings: 101 Ḥadīth Qudsī, Mishkāt al-anwār of Ibn ʿArabī* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2004).

47 Al-Kutub al-Sitta (six books of ḥadīth): *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Sunan Abū Dāwud, Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī, Al-Sunan al-Ṣughrā, and Sunan Ibn Mājah or Muwaṭṭa' Ibn Mālik*.

48 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:399.

49 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:171.

50 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:60, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 241.

In Ibn al-ʿArabī's works it is easy to see the higher status and superiority of the Prophet Muhammad. Two reasons can be given to account for this superiority. The first is that the Qur'ān was given to him.[51] And the second is his exclusive constitution.[52] As mentioned above, since the Qur'ān is all-comprehensive words and the knowledge of God which definitely contains everything, the Prophet to whom God sent down the Qur'ān must be a superior person to others. In this point, Ibn al-ʿArabī sets a connection between the Qur'ān and the Prophet Muhammad by emphasizing the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān. According to him, the Qur'ān contains all knowledge which is not necessarily contained in the other scriptures. Thus, the Prophet Muhammad to whom such a book was given has the perfect luminosity (*ḍiyā'*). It means that the Prophet was given the all-comprehensive words (*jawāmiʿ al-kalīm*) in which every knowledge is found.[53]

As for his exclusive and favoured constitution, he is the best locus of the manifestation of God; thereby he must be followed by people. In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "You do not have a constitution like that possessed by Muhammad…You know how far you stand below Muhammad's degree in knowledge of his Lord through his plane. So cling to faith and follow him!"[54]

Moreover, Ibn al-ʿArabī claims that even the other prophets would be following the Prophet if they were alive. The other prophets were sent by

---

[51] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:363.
[52] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:251.
[53] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:107, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 239.
[54] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:251, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 352.

God to be deputies of the Prophet Muhammad in his physical absence in the earth. In fact, the Prophet Muhammad was a prophet before Adam was not created yet. Therefore, if the Prophet existed physically in the earth from beginning, there would not be any law of the other prophets. It is the reason why the Prophet Muhammad said that if Moses were alive, he would necessarily follow me.[55]

The Prophet's higher status is very clear in Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought not only because the Prophet's own knowledge which embraces everything in virtue of the Qur'ān but also because of his privileged constitution. On this point, the Prophet's special traits should be explained concerning conceptions such as the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) and Muhammadan Reality (*ḥaqīqa al-muḥammadiyya*) or the light of Muhammad (*al-nūr al-muḥammadiyya*).

As for the Prophet's superiority, in Sufi traditions there are many ḥadīth reports supporting his pre-existence and existentially exclusive status such as "I am the first man to have been created and the last to have been sent [i.e. as a prophet]."[56] Also, as al-Tirmidhī states, God mentioned the Prophet Muhammad as the first. It means that he was the first to appear in God's knowledge, then in God's will (*mashī'a*); then he was the first in the

---

[55] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:134, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 241.
[56] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 214, trans. in Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 63.

decrees (*maqādīr*); then he was the first in the well-guarded Tablet; then he was the first in the Covenant (*mīthāq*)…[57]

Moreover, Ibn al-ʿArabī by making use of these kinds of reports and his own unveilings (*mukāshafa*) says that when the Prophet Muhammad was asked about when he became prophet, he said, "I was a prophet when Adam was between clay and water."[58] Also, Ibn al-ʿArabī considers the Prophet Muhammad to be the head of the universe and the first created being who appeared in existence.[59] To make clear the superiority of the Prophet, Ibn al-ʿArabī in his various works emphasizes this claim repeatedly. He continues to say that since the Prophet is the most perfect of all humanity, all affairs start and seal (*khatm*) with him. "He was a prophet when Adam was between water and clay. He is also the seal of the Prophets (*khātam al-anbiyā'*)."[60]

---

[57] Al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmidhī, *Kitāb Khatm al-awliyā'.* Ed. Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī Yaḥyā ʿUthmān, (Beirut: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-kāthūlikiyya, 1965), 337, trans. in Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 66.

[58] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:243.

[59] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:119.

[60] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 214. After this sentence Austin goes on to translate Ibn al-ʿArabī's words in this way "he [the prophet] is the first the three singular ones." Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 272. Then, Austin explains the three singular ones with a reference of another passage of *Fuṣūṣ* by quoting that these three singular ones are "the Essence (*dhāt*), the Will (*irāda*), and the Word (*qawl*)" which are found in Chapter of the Prophet Ṣāliḥ. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 115 and Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 141. In this case, according to the translation of Austin, the Prophet if he is the first of the three singular ones can be understood as identical with the Essence. However, since the term, three singular ones (*al-afrād al-thalātha*) in *Fuṣūṣ* is not so explicit, it is susceptible to different understandings. In this regard, Caner K. Dagli says that "these three singular ones can be the Self, the Presence of the Divine Names, and the Spirit… To this ternary corresponds the human ternary consisting of one's immutable identity, one's obedience to the command of existence, and one's hearing that command." In addition, it may be necessary to say that Dagli, Burckhardt, and Affifi do not link this expression explicitly to the Prophet himself while Austin does. Briefly, while Austin clearly considers the Prophet to be the first of these three singular ones, the others do not mention it in this way. Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, *The Ringstones of Wisdom: Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, translated by Caner K. Dagli (Chicago: Great Books of the Islamic World, 2004), 277. Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, *The Wisdom of the Prophets: Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, translated by Titus Burckhardt and Angela Culme-Seymour

Definitely, the superiority of the Prophet is relevant to the concepts of the reality of Muhammad and the perfect man. It should be noted that the conception of the reality of Muhammad is very close to the idea of light (*nūr*) or logos. According to Arthur Jeffery, the origin of these conceptions does not belong to Islam. But, it is very possible to see their traces in different philosophical and religious traditions such as Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, and Christianity.[61] Nevertheless, on this point Rom Landau's distinctive statement is important concerning the difference between Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching about the Prophet and the Christian understanding of Logos. Landau says that Ibn al-ʿArabī explicitly rejects Christian Logos conceptions which are based on the doctrine of the Incarnation.[62] On the other hand, it is possible to find some supporting statements on the light of Muhammad from the Qur'ān (Q, 33:46 and 5:15),[63] the ḥadīths, even though they are not canonical ones, and from some spiritual masters of Sufi traditions such as Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, Sahl al-Tustarī, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, and Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj.[64]

The idea of the light of Muhammad is related to the concept of the perfect man (*al-insān al-kāmil*) which plays a very important role in Ibn al-ʿArabī's theology since the perfect man is one on which the highest divine

---

(Aldsworth: Beshara, 1975), 166. Abul Ela Affifi, *Li Muḥyī al-dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī: wa-l taʿlīqāt ʿalayhi* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1946), 2:322.

61 Arthur Jeffery, "Ibn al-ʿArabī's Shajarat al-Kawn," *Studia Islamica* 10 (1959): 43-77 (48-53).

62 Rom Landau, *The Philosophy of Ibn ʿArabī* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1959), 58. On the other hand, Reynold Nicholson for this kind of approach says the Islamic Logos doctrine. Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge: University Press, 1921), 86-88.

63 "And one who invites to Allah, by His permission, and an illuminating lamp." *The Qur'ān*, 33:46.

64 Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 65-66.

manifestation takes place.[65] In this case, it is necessary to explain the function of the perfect man. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, man as a creature has a special place among other creatures because of some features such as having a rational faculty through which he knows his Lord. In order to clarify this significance and function of the perfect man Ibn al-ʿArabī says that man (*insān*) embraces all realities. The perfect man is called the pupil of the eye (*insān*) since the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) gives His mercy to all creatures and looks at them through the man by that seeing is possible. He (man) is transient, eternal, perpetual, everlasting, discriminating, and unifying word. The cosmos is completed by the existence of the man. Just as the king protects his treasures by his seal, God preserves His creatures by the man who is called the Vice-Regent (*khalīfa*). So, the cosmos will be protecting as long as the perfect man remains in it.[66]

In his teaching, God manifests Himself perfectly in the perfect man only and at the same time through the perfect man God knows Himself perfectly as well.[67] In this regard, the ḥadīth report should be remembered that "I was a Treasure but was not known, so I loved to be known, and I created the creatures and made Myself known to them, then they came to know Me."[68] It is one of the most significant points in Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought. Being known for God is a very important reason for the act of

---

[65] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:469. Although similar ideas with the perfect man exist in Islamic mysticism, Ibn al-ʿArabī is the first one who used the term, the perfect man, according to Valerie Hoffman. Valerie J. Hoffman, "Annihilation in the Messenger of God: The Development of a Sufi Practice," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31 3 (1999): 351-369 (352).

[66] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 50, trans. in Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 51.

[67] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:469.

[68] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:231, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 66.

creation. So, the perfect man has achieved his importance from this feature that God manifests Himself upon the perfect man as the best; thereby He is known perfectly. It may be said that the perfect man encompasses the manifest and non-manifest dimensions of God. Briefly, the perfect man in terms of God's perfect manifestation has a very effective role on creation of the world. Therefore, Ibn al-ʿArabī connects the existence of the cosmos to the existence of the perfect man.[69]

The idea of the perfect man is one of the most famous, important, and complex points of Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching. In this regard, to understand the general interpretations of the perfect man, it will be helpful to look at some of the various scholars' thoughts. It should be noted that Ibn al-ʿArabī's statements are susceptible to different comprehensions since Ibn al-ʿArabī ascribes a very interesting and distinctive meaning to the perfect man. For example, according to Abul Ela Affifi, it may be correct to say that through a comprehensive examination of Ibn al-ʿArabī's notion of the perfect man concerning his function, mission, and meaning it will be conceived that Ibn al-ʿArabī by the perfect man does not mean a simple human being regardless of whether he is a prophet or a friend of God. It is to mean possibly the Holy Spirit (*rūḥ al-quds*) or God Himself.[70] Affifi's definitions and explanations of the perfect man indicate that the perfect man is more than the Prophet Muhammad. Contrary to this approach, for Chodkiewicz the perfection can be possessed by the Prophet Muhammad

---

[69] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:468. Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "If [perfect] man were to leave the cosmos, the cosmos would die" trans. in William C. Chittick, *Ibn ʿArabī: Heir to the Prophets* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 32.

[70] Affifi, *Mystical Philosophy*,85.

only. As for the friends of God, this perfection is just a goal for them.[71] Chodkiewicz is not alone in this opinion. For example, Arthur Jeffery says that the perfect man is Muhammad himself.[72] In addition to them, Landau's opinion on this matter is in the same direction.[73] In this case, it can be said that even if perfection of the human beings is a station, the perfect man who possesses this station is the Prophet Muhammad. Thus, the conception of the perfect man can be personalized with the Prophet's individuality.

As the last, the Prophet Muhammad is considered in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching to be superior to other creatures in respect of his existence, creation, mission, and capacity of knowing. As a result of this comprehension, Ibn al-ʿArabī links the superiority of the Prophet to epistemology and to the most valuable knowledge, the knowledge of God. He says that you should know how far your rank is below from the rank of Muhammad concerning the knowledge of the Lord. Therefore, place the Prophet before you as a mirror in which you see the forms. Then, you will know that God manifests Himself to him in his mirror. The most perfect, balanced, and beautiful manifestation of the Real is one which is in the mirror of Muhammad due to the quality of his mirror. What you perceived in the mirror of Muhammad regarding God cannot be perceived in your own mirror at all.[74]

---

71 Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 71.
72 Jeffery, "Ibn al-ʿArabī's Shajarat al-Kawn," 51.
73 Landau, *Philosophy*, 56.
74 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:251, trans. in Hoffman, "Annihilation in the Messenger of God: The Development of a Sufi Practice," 353. For alternative translation, see Chittick, *SPK*, 352.

The suggestion that we see God through Muhammad may indicate an ontological manifestation as well as an epistemological reality. Because of excellence of the Prophet regarding not only his existential specialities but also his being as an intermediary epistemologically between God and the believers, as Ibn al-ʿArabī expressed, people should follow him on the way of knowledge.

Up to this point some explanations concerning the superiority of the Prophet have been provided. This point was necessary in order to answer the question why Ibn al-ʿArabī considers the Prophet to be an indispensable part of the revelational knowledge. Certainly, without explaining the importance of the Prophet it would be difficult to demonstrate the significance of the ḥadīths in Ibn al-ʿArabī's epistemology.

Now, we are in better to explain Ibn al-ʿArabī's approach to the ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad. It is known that the science of the ḥadīth emerged after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. This science has its own special criteria and rules determined by the scholars of the ḥadīth. Elaborating these criteria and rules is not the aim of this work; therefore I will focus on how Ibn al-ʿArabī received the ḥadīths as one of the most essential components of his knowledge. Primarily, it is a well-known matter that Ibn al-ʿArabī establishes a spiritual connection and direct communication with the Prophet Muhammad.[75] In fact, this point, which will be examined in detail in the further sections, constitutes the ground of Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching.

---

[75] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:526. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 47.

It should be noted that the ḥadīths received by means of some spiritual ways play a very significant role in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching as well as the ḥadīths which are transmitted by the narrators of the ḥadīths. While he accepts both kinds of ḥadīths to be reliable, he much more esteems the ḥadīths received by the spiritual ways on account of their accuracy. For example, Ibn al-ʿArabī concerning the ḥadīth report about God's creation of Adam on the form of All-Merciful (*al-raḥmān*) –or on the form of him (Adam) – says that although the version which provides that Adam is created on the form of All-Merciful is not accepted by the authorities of the science of the ḥadīth, it is proven by unveiling (*kashf*) to be sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*). Thus, there is no ambiguity on this matter.[76]

It is a well-known fact that for Ibn al-ʿArabī the people of unveiling are superior to the rational thinkers on knowledge because while the former has an ability and opportunity to confirm knowledge directly from the source of the reality, the latter can only confirm knowledge produced by the human intellect by resorting again to their rational faculties.[77] This is a sort of vicious cycle. Since the subjects of unveiling and the intellect will be examined in the following sections of this chapter, I am leaving this discussion here. It is noted that even if Ibn al-ʿArabī does not consider the ḥadīths transmitted to be reliable as much as the ḥadīths received by unveiling, it does not mean that he does not benefit from ḥadīth reports even

---

[76] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:490, trans. in Ghasem Kakaie, "Know Yourself, According to the Qur'ān, and the Sunna: Ibn ʿArabī's View," *Philosophical -Theological Research* 9 1 (2006): 6-22 (11) and Chittick, *SPK*, 399-400.

[77] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:291.

though, according to Stephen Hirtenstein, all ḥadīth sources Ibn al-ʿArabī used have either a Sufi or esoteric affiliation.[78]

In order to clarify the extraordinary approach of Ibn al-ʿArabī to the matter of the ḥadīth it is worth stating here what he says about it. In this respect, he says that there are many ḥadīth reports which are not accepted because of the weakness of their transmission chains though some of them are sound. Also, there are many reports which are accepted because of the soundness of their transmission chains though some of them are not sound in fact. Therefore, the friends of God ask the Prophet directly about the reports. Then, the Prophet says, "I said this or I did not say this." Thereafter the friends know the weakness of the reports even if some people accept them as sound because of the soundness of the transmission chains.[79]

From this statement it is understood that Ibn al-ʿArabī uses the spiritual ways to reach and to be sure about knowledge through communication with the Prophet directly. Besides this, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the ḥadīth of the Prophet Muhammad regardless of whether they are transmitted or inspired constitutes a part of the revelational knowledge not only because of the Prophet's special and perfect constitution but also because of his knowledge comprised of the Qur'ān which is the all-comprehensive book (*jawāmiʿ al-kalīm*).

---

[78] Hirtenstein, et al., *Mishkāt al-anwār*, 102.

[79] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:150, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 251. Also, see Armin Eschraghi, "'I was a Hidden Treasure.' Some Notes a Commentary Ascribed to Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī: Sharḥ ḥadīth: 'Kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan…'," in *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages: Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation, in Honour of Hans Daiber*, ed. Anna Akasoy and Wim Raven, (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 92.

Finally, it is possible to say that in Ibn al-ʿArabī's epistemological ranking the revelational knowledge consisted of the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths is at the highest level in terms of comprehensiveness, reliability, and certainty. It should be remembered that the Qur'ān plays the determinative role on Ibn al-ʿArabī's epistemology. He evaluates inspiration and the human intellect as ways of acquiring knowledge from this standpoint.

2.3. Unveiling (Mystical Way of Knowledge)

In this section the conception of unveiling (*kashf*), inspiration (*ilhām*) as a significant and indispensable part of the process for acquiring true knowledge is going to be elaborated from Ibn al-ʿArabī's perspective.[1] Primarily, various conceptions have been used in order to express this mystical way of knowledge. According to William Chittick, in the Islamic texts there are terms such as inspiration (*ilhām*), direct tasting (*dhawq*), opening (*fatḥ*), insight (*baṣīra*), and witnessing (*mushāhada*) which are used as synonyms of unveiling (*kashf*).[2] Although Ibn al-ʿArabī uses direct tasting (*dhawq*) to be a synonym of unveiling sometimes, he acknowledges a small difference between these two terms. That is, tasting is an inward experience while unveiling is outside of oneself.[3] For a definition of unveiling, Chittick says that unveiling is a third way of knowledge

---

1 What is meant by unveiling and inspiration is the divine bestowal of knowledge. While Ibn al-ʿArabī esteems the divine inspirations, he accepts that other kinds of thoughts may come to the heart of human beings. In this regard, Chittick says, "incoming thoughts (*khawāṭir*) which reach the heart into four categories: divine (*ilāhī*), spiritual (*rūḥānī*), ego-centric (*nafsānī*), and satanic (*shayṭānī*)."Chittick, *SPK*, xiii

2 Chittick, *SPK*, 168.

3 Chittick, *SPK*, 221.

bestowed by God directly to the people. So, God opens the door to the perception of invisible realities.[4]

While Ibn al-ʿArabī frequently emphasizes the importance of the revelational knowledge encompassing the ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad, the value of unveiling is not less than the value of the revelation since he considers unveiling to be the key of true knowledge. Therefore, in this section, the conception of unveiling will be examined in detail together with its complementary elements such as the friends of God (*awliyā'*) who are the possessors of unveiling, the heart (*qalb*) as the organ of unveiling, and the gnosis (*maʿrifa*) as the mystical knowledge itself coming through unveiling. Moreover, while these conceptions are examined, some significant details such as the stations of the friendship and the relation of the friends with the prophets will be provided because they contain very important information and remarks exposing the nature of unveiling clearly.

2.3.1. The Friends of God (*awliyā'*) and Friendship (*walāya*)

The friends of God have a distinctive status among other people, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, since they have a special heart (*qalb*) in a mystical sense. The significance and function of this special heart will be examined in the next part of this section. But, it is better to explain

---

[4] Chittick says, "Ibn al-ʿArabī sees three basic routes to gain knowledge –acceptance of reports, rational investigation, and unveiling. Reports are everything transmitted to us from others. In evaluating the reliability of reports, we need to look at the source and the chain of transmission. Reports stemming from God by reliable chains are of course the most authoritative, and these include the scriptures, the Qur'ān in particular. Other important sources include the prophets, whose words may be assimilated to those of God, and the friends of God." Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, xxii.

primarily those who can have this special heart whereby they communicate with God and His messengers and prophets in order to have true knowledge. The friendship of God is mentioned a few times in the Qur'ān. Thus, it is not difficult to find a supporting statement for the friendship of God from the Qur'ān. In addition, in the Qur'ān there are many verses related to the term *walī* (friend-saint). These verses indicate different types of friendship.[5] The term friend (*walī*) in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching occupies a very special place because it denotes a spiritual station (*maqām*).

In order to ground the conception of unveiling firmly it is necessary to comprehend the conception of friendship. One of the most prominent supporting statements of the friendship is a divine saying (*ḥadīth qudsī*) that Ibn al-ʿArabī quotes frequently:

> Whoever treats a friend of Mine [God] as an enemy, on him I declare war. My servant draws near to Me by nothing dearer to Me than that which I have established as a duty for him. And My servant does not cease to approach Me through supererogatory acts until I love him. And when I love him, I become his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks. And if he asks Me [for something], I give it to him. If he seeks refuge with Me, I place him under My protection.[6]

Besides this ḥadīth report, there are various other reports as well. In these reports there is very detailed information about the friends of God such as

---

[5] Different kinds of friendships (*walāya*) may occur among believers (The Qur'ān 8:72; 9:71), among disbelievers (Q, 8:73), between God and believers (Q, 2:257; 10:62; 25:18; 45:19), and between Satan (*shayṭān*) and disbelievers (Q, 4:76; 7:27; 7:30). From all these verses, it is understood that *walī* means a helper and supporter as well as a friend in a general sense.

[6] Hirtenstein, et al., *Mishkāt al-anwār*, 70 (no: 91).

their numbers, rankings, proximities to God, and responsibilities. For example, in one report it is said that there are some people who are envied by the prophets and martyrs because of their nearness to God while they are neither prophets nor martyrs. Instead, they are the friends of God.[7] In this regard, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that among people there are forty who are on Noah's heart, seven who are on Abraham's heart, five who are on Gabriel's heart, three who are on Mīkāīl's (Michael) heart, and one who are Isrāfīl's (Raphael) heart...[8] In another report, it is said that when some people spoke of the people of Syria in the presence of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, he transmitted whatever he heard from the Messenger of God about the *abdāl* (a kind of spiritual men) who will be in Syria. Their number is forty. Whenever one of them dies, God replaces him with another man. Through them victory is achieved and by virtue of them rain is sent according to this report.[9] These special people also are called men of the unseen (*rijāl al-ghayb*) who are the representatives of God in the world and have an influence on the control of the world as well as that of the human life.[10]

As seen through these explanations, the function of the friends of God is broad. Although in the Qur'ān the mission and responsibility of the prophets is explained clearly, the mission and responsibility of the friends is

---

7 Imam Abū ʿĪsā Muhammad al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī*, "Kitāb al-zuhd," ḥadīth no: 53. Hirtenstein, et al., *Mishkāt al-anwār*, no:3, trans. in Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 25. Also, Chodkiewicz gives a place for other reports of the friendship in pages 24-25.

8 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:10. Also, for the numbers of these people who are on the heart of a particular prophet or angel, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:160.

9 Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ḥanbal, *English Translation of Musnad Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal.* Nasiruddin Khattab, (Riyad: Darussalam, 2012), 1:438, (Ḥadīth no: 896). Ibn al-ʿArabī affirms that their number is certain; thereby when one of them dies, the position is replaced with another man. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:160.

10 Turan Koç, *Varolmanın Boyutları* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1997), 43.

not clear. Also, according to the Qur'ān, while being a prophet is possible only through being chosen by God (Q, 16:36; 25:51), being a friend of God depends on either being chosen or an individual effort or both together. Thus, it is possible to ask about the reason why some people have this special status while others do not.

It should be noted that in Islamic mysticism, whether the position of friendship is either achieved as a reward in response to an individual effort or given as a gift by God is not so clear. By taking into consideration the relationship between the friendship and the mystical knowledge, Souad Hakim, by pointing to al-Ghazālī and his work *Iḥyā al-ʿulūm al-dīn* mentions two kinds of the mystical knowledge: the knowledge of conduct and the knowledge of unveiling. The former, the knowledge of conduct needs some special training and efforts while the latter, the knowledge of unveiling does not necessarily need special training. Ibn al-ʿArabī, Abū Yazīd (d. 874), Shiblī (d. 946), Junayd (d. 910), and Ḥallāj (d. 922) possess this kind of knowledge.[11] Regardless of the types of the mystical knowledge, there are four external and five internal principles of the way of the friendship. The external principles are hunger, wakefulness, silence, and solitude. The internal ones are veracity, trust, patience, resolution, and certainty according to Hakim.[12] These necessities are fulfilled by all the friends of God, and as a result of the fulfilment the friends can acquire knowledge.

---

[11] Souad Hakim, "The Way of Walāya (Sainthood or Friendship of God)," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 18 (1995): http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/wayofwalaya.html3.

[12] Hakim, "Way of Walāya," 2.

When A. Ateş examines Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching on the stages of friendship, he mentions the path concerning three types of spiritual journey. The first journey is from God (*al-safar ʿan Allāh*), the second journey is to God (*al-safar ilā Allāh*), and the last one is in God (*al-safar fī Allāh*). The first two journeys have an end while the third one is endless. For Ateş, every man does not have the capacity to complete all types of the spiritual journey, but only those who are endowed may reach the vision of God. Moreover, in the third journey, there are some conditions that the traveller has to supply. Although all the friends of God share similar conditions to some extent, some of them are special because they are chosen.[13] According to Franz Rosenthal, Ibn al-ʿArabī thought of himself being one of the chosen friends.[14] Some of Ibn al-ʿArabī's sayings indicate that friendship is possible through being a person chosen by God while some of his sayings point out that it is possible by individual effort. Thus, it may be said that even though one is chosen by God as a friend, he has to supply some conditions based on individual practices such as worship, remembrance, and purifying the heart.

In *Kitāb al-qurba* Ibn al-ʿArabī enumerates some steps of the path of acquiring knowledge directly from God such as cleaning of the place of knowledge, which is the heart, purifying of the self or the soul, and making them ready for receiving knowledge from God. When a servant passes

---

[13] Ahmet Ateş, "Ibn al-ʿArabī." *EI2*. Ed. P. Bearman, Brill Online, 2014.

[14] Franz Rosenthal, "Ibn ʿArabī between Philosophy and Mysticism: Sūfism and Philosophy are Neighbors and Visit Each Other," *Oriens* 31 (1988): 1-35 (34).

through these steps successfully, all matters will be clarified for him.[15] According to this suggestion, acquiring knowledge from God directly depends on the individual effort obviously.

Furthermore, in order to denote the function of the individual effort in acquiring knowledge, Henry Corbin's remarks are significant. In this respect, he mentions three types of people: the disciples of the science of the heart (*aṣḥāb al-qulūb*), the disciples of the rational intellect (*aṣḥāb al-ʿuqūl),* and simple believers. Then, he claims that under normal conditions a simple believer can develop into a mystic through spiritual training.[16] In this case, Corbin affirms that the individual practice allows one to be among the disciples of the science of the heart (*aṣḥāb al-qulūb*). One more example pointing out the role of the individual effort rather than being chosen is that when Ibn al-ʿArabī went to his master, Abū Jaʿfar al-ʿUryānī who gave advice to him by saying "If you will shut out the world from you, sever all ties and take the Bounteous alone as your companion, He will speak with you without the need for any intermediary."[17] All these statements show that acquiring knowledge from God directly does not necessarily require chosen in one respect.

On the other hand, in his treatise *Kitāb al-fanā' fi-l mushāhada* Ibn al-ʿArabī says that God cleansed the hearts of those whom He chooses among His servants, and then He does not allow any doubts and confusion,

---

15 Ibn al-ʿArabī, "Kitāb al-qurba," in Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Rasā'il,* 70.
16 Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, 230.
17 Austin, *Sufis of Andalusia*, 25 and 63.

in their hearts, that cause sickness.[18] In this point, it should be remembered that for Ibn al-ʿArabī even if being chosen by God to be a friend plays a very important role in acquiring mystical knowledge, he does not ignore the special and specific attributes of the friends entirely. When he mentions the knowledge of unveiling, he says that even if this knowledge, which is the knowledge of the states (*ʿilm al-aḥwāl*), is a bestowal (*mawāhib*), it is bestowed upon those who have some specific attributes.[19] Clearly, in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching, there are generally two kinds of the friendships of God. One of them is based on the individual efforts such as invocations, prayers, and seclusion while the other one is based on the divine bestowal with supplying of the conditions of the former in addition to having some specific attributes.

Moreover, the friends of God are not alone in their spiritual travelling. Even though the prophets are not living physically among us, spiritual training under the guidance of the prophets is a significant part of having the knowledge of unveiling for Ibn al-ʿArabī.[20] This kind of spiritual guidance is a distinctive sign of friendship. For example, Ibn al-ʿArabī claims to have started travelling with Jesus on the spiritual path. Then, he

---

[18] Ibn al-ʿArabī, "Kitāb al-fanā' fī-l mushāhada," in Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Rasā'il,* 17.

[19] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:221, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 222.

[20] It should be noted that this kind of spiritual training under the guidance of the prophets is one of the requirements of the friendship. A friend of God has to know about all religions and faiths together because the friends are those who see God beyond all forms and definitions. It is a task for the friends of God to conceive God in every form through considering all sects and beliefs, lest they deny any manifestation of God. So, the training with different prophets may help the friends on this purpose. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:161.

was taken to all the prophets such as Moses and Hūd until he was taken to Muhammad.[21]

As for another aspect of friendship in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching, it is the special and exclusive position of the seal of the friends (*khatam al-awliyā'*) whom God helps directly, among the other friends of God.[22] Definitely, there are various aspects of friendship, but in Ibn al-ʿArabī's intellectuality being the seal of the Muhammadan friendship plays a very important role. When Ibn al-ʿArabī mentions the high status of the seal of the friends, he says that just as the Prophet Muhammad was a prophet when Adam was between water and clay, the seal of the friends as well was the friend when Adam was between water and clay. As for the other friends of God, they could be named as a "friend" only after they met the conditions of friendship.[23]

Through statements of Ibn al-ʿArabī it is understood that he considers himself to be the seal. In this regard, he says, "I am the seal of friendship, without a doubt, for I am the heir of Hāshimīte (family of the Prophet Muhammad) and the Messiah."[24] Also, Ibn al-ʿArabī mentions his

---

[21] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:223, trans. in Stephen Hirtenstein, *The Unlimited Mercifier: The Spiritual Life and Thought of Ibn ʿArabī* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 1999), 68. It should also be noted that God is the first teacher of Ibn al-ʿArabī on the path of knowledge since he did not take any spiritual training in his early life with a spiritual master according to Hirtenstein. Hirtenstein, *Unlimited Mercifier*, 52. Also, see Hüdaverdi Adam, "The Place Of Intellect, Contemplation And Unveiling In The Thought Of Ibn Al-ʿArabī," *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi* 21 (2004): 149-162 (150).

[22] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 66.

[23] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 64, trans. in Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 67.

[24] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:244, trans. in Hirtenstein, *Unlimited Mercifier*, 142. Also, Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn ʿArabī* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 119. It is possible to think of the seal of the friends to be someone other than Ibn al-ʿArabī himself because of his a passage, overall statements of him indicates that he himself is the seal. In the passage Ibn al-ʿArabī says "As for the Seal of

dream in which he assimilates the position of himself as the seal of the friends (*khatam al-awliyā'*) to the position of the Prophet Muhammad as the seal of the Prophets (*khatam al-anbiyā'*). In this sense, he tells the dream that the *Kaʿba* (the house of God in Mecca) was built with gold and silver bricks. But there were two bricks missing. One of them was gold and the other was silver. Also, one of them was on the top row while the other is on the row below it. Then, he saw himself being put into the place of the missing bricks. So, he thanked God and said, "I am to the other followers of my kind (the friends) as the Messenger of God is to the other prophets."[25]

It is very clear that Ibn al-ʿArabī, according to himself, is the seal of the friends.[26] The significant point is that the true divine knowledge is bestowed to one who possesses this special status. The seal of the friends receives all his knowledge directly from the prophets especially the Prophet Muhammad along with God. In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī mentions his companionship with the some prophets such as Muhammad, Abraham, Jesus, Moses, Hūd, and David. In this companionship he learned and benefitted from these prophets. For instance, by means of Jesus he turned

---

Muhammadan Friendship [sainthood], he is a man of the Arab race, one of the noblest in lineage and power. He is alive in our time today, and I came to know (or: met) him in 595. I saw the distinctive sign which he possesses, which God has hidden in him from the eyes of His servants, but which He revealed to me in the town of Fez so that I might see in him the Seal of Friendship. He is the Seal of the unlimited prophethood, but most people do not know him. God has tested him by people denying him in regard to what he has verified of the Truth in his innermost being in his knowledge of Him." Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:49 translated in Hirtenstein, *Unlimited Mercifier*, 140.

25 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:318-9, trans. in Austin, *Sufis of Andalusia*, 37. Also, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 63.

26 In the Islamic history, according to Chodkiewicz, there are some famous mystics such as Muḥammad Wafā (d. 1398), Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624), ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1731), and Aḥmad Tijānī (d. 1815) who either claimed to have been the seal or are considered by their followers to be the seal of the friends. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 134-136.

back to God while through Moses he had knowledge of unveiling and enlightenment. Ibn al-ʿArabī explicitly considers his visions and companionships to be distinguishing signs of the status.[27]

In addition, according to him, the Prophet Muhammad is very influential in knowledge possessed by the friends. As explained in the previous section, the Prophet has a special and significant status because he is given all-encompassing word, the Qur'ān. Thus, all knowledge of the Prophet comes from God, and then the knowledge transmits to the friends. Hence, it is true to say that even if a friend of God receives his knowledge by mystical ways from any one of the prophets, it actually belongs to the Prophet Muhammad on behalf of God. In this point, Ibn al-ʿArabī sets a connection between the friends of God and the prophets. That is, whoever is a friend of God is an heir of a prophet necessarily. And then, he says that whoever has inherited knowledge from any prophet has actually inherited Muhammadan knowledge.[28] Also, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the seal of the Muhammadan friends and the Qur'ān are brothers; the seal is the most knowledgeable one among all created beings not only in his time but also in time after him.[29] Certainly, the most important thing in this kind of claim put forward by Ibn al-ʿArabī is the connection among the Qur'ān, the Prophet Muhammad, and the seal because this connection enables the friends to reach true and divine knowledge.

---

[27] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:77, trans. in Hirtenstein, *Unlimited Mercifier*, 86.
[28] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:398, trans. in Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 59.
[29] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:329.

Furthermore, it is obvious that in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching the relationship between the friends and the prophets is very strong and interactive. In this respect, it is helpful to explain briefly what Ibn al-ʿArabī thinks of the positions of the friends and the prophets. Primarily, it is known that in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching the relationship between friendship and prophethood has a very complex structure. On this point, it should be noted that the prophets and messengers share different levels of the friendship for Ibn al-ʿArabī who says that every messenger (*rasūl*) is a prophet (*nabī*) and every prophet is a friend (*walī*).[30] And friendship is a position which has a universal and comprehensive function that never stops or finishes.[31]

In respect of the positions of friendship and prophethood, there is a discussion of superiority between them. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, a friend with regard to his personality is not superior to a prophet or messenger. Friendship itself as a station is higher than prophethood because prophethood is a temporal mission while friendship is a permanent station. In this case, it is possible to say that a prophet's friendship is more valuable than his prophethood. Ibn al-ʿArabī emphasizes that the superiority is in one person, instead of more than one individual. It means that it is mistake to compare a prophet and a friend of God concerning superiority since the prophet certainly is superior. He means that a prophet's friendship is higher than his prophethood.[32]

---

[30] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:256.
[31] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 134.
[32] In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "When the prophet speaks on matters that lie outside the scope of law, he is then speaking as a saint and a gnostic, so that his station as a knower [of truth] is more complete and perfect than that as an apostle or lawgiver. If you hear any of

It is worth noting that the matter of superiority between friendship and prophethood is one of the most controversial problems for those who criticize Ibn al-ʿArabī. The claim that he considers the friends to be superior to the prophets.[33] Definitely, on such an understanding, Ibn al-ʿArabī's complex and dual expressions may be influential. For example, Ibn al-ʿArabī in his work *Kitāb al-qurba* says that the Prophet Muhammad as a gnostic (*ʿārif*) and a friend (*walī*) is higher and more honourable than his aspect of being a messenger.[34] On the other hand, in another work *Al-Futūḥāt* he says that there is a distinction between prophethood and friendship, where the former is more complete, great, and honourable.[35]

As mentioned above, the friendship of God, which encompasses Ibn al-ʿArabī who is a higher ranked friend of God, is very influential element in attaining to the true and divine knowledge by virtue of its exclusive and privilege position. Since friendship as the position of possessors of knowledge of unveiling is a vital complementary aspect of the conception

---

the Friend saying or transmitting sayings from him to the effect that friendship is higher than prophecy, he means only what we have just said. Likewise, if he says that the friend is superior to the prophet and the apostle, he means only that this is so within one person, this is because the apostle, in his friendship, is more perfect than he is as a prophet or an apostle. It does not mean that any friend coming after him is higher than he, since one who follows cannot attain to the one who is followed…" Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 135, trans. in Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 168.

33 In this subject, Ibn Taymiyya has an objection to the idea of Ibn al-ʿArabī. Ibn Taymiyya uses two different conceptions in his text as "prophet and prophethood and friend and friendship." Then, he claims that for Ibn al-ʿArabī the seal of the friends is superior to some of the prophets. However, as Ibn al-ʿArabī clarifies, as a position or status friendship is superior to prophethood, but a specific friend is not superior to a prophet. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:221-251; 2:357; 7:588-589. Also, see Çakmaklıoğlu, "İbnü'l-Arabī'nin Nübüvvet-Velayet Hakkındaki Görüşleri ve İbn Teymiyye'nin Bu Hususta Eleştirileri," . Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb bughyat al-murtād fī al-radd ʿalā al-mutafalsifa wa al-qarāmiṭa wa al-bāṭiniyya.* Faraj Allāh Zakī al-Kurdī al-Azharī, (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-kurdistān al-ʿilmiyya, 1911), 86-87, trans. in Thomas F. Michel, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ* (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1985), 10.

34 Ibn al-ʿArabī, "Kitāb al-qurba," in Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Rasā'il,* 73.

35 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:229.

of unveiling, in this section it has been given a broad place in order to highlight better its significance in acquiring knowledge of unveiling.

2.3.2. The Heart (*qalb*)

The heart of the friends of God, the organ and place of unveiling, has a very strong connection with its possessors. It is the centre of unveiling and divine knowledge, the best place of the most complete manifestation of the Real.[36] Ibn al-ʿArabī elaborates the heart in his works as *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, especially in the chapter of the heart in the word of Shuʿayb.[37] According to Henry Corbin, the heart is not only the organ of the knowledge of unveiling but also the place where true knowledge is produced and the mirror whereby God sees Himself and reveals Himself to Himself.[38] Thus, the heart of the friends of God has the highest significance on the matter of proximity with God.

Regardless whether friendship either comes with God's choice or is a reward in return of individual effort, cleansing the heart from worldly things, desires, and passions is a precondition of true knowledge. As Ibn al-ʿArabī says, the darkness of ignorance, which is both rational reflections and worldly things, makes the heart blind.[39] In fact, the cleanliness of the heart means that in the heart there should be no worldly desire or reflective thinking because as will be explained in the next section, the section on the

---

[36] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:91.
[37] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 119.
[38] Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, 221.
[39] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:369.

human intellect, rational thinking is not a reliable way for the friends of God.

Ibn al-ʿArabī sets a connection between the purity of the heart and knowledge which comes from God. It is a kind of preparation of the heart for the divine knowledge. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, by emptying the heart from the rational thoughts, the friends of God sit together with the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*) on the carpet of good manners (*adab*), spiritual attentiveness (*murāqaba*), presence, and readiness in order to acquire whatever comes from God who teaches them by means of unveiling (*kashf*) and spiritual realization (*taḥqīq*). As a result of this nearness and giving up all rational thought the heart becomes purified and open for knowledge.[40]

Here, the expression "sitting with the Real" (*yajlisu maʿa al-Ḥaqq*) is one of the most important points in terms of explaining the proximity with God. Already, it should be known that in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching realization of the oneness of the Creator and His manifestations occupies a significant place. It means that all existent beings take their existence from Him.[41] Since only human beings have a potential to realize this relationship, man is superior to other creatures. In this case, sitting with God means realizing this relationship that is possible through unveiling only. Human beings can grasp mysteries, secrets, and the knowledge of God through the heart rather than the intellect which is limited according to Ibn al-ʿArabī.

---

[40] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:89, trans. in James Winston Morris, "Listening for God: Prayer and the Heart in the Futuhat," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Arabi Society* 13 (1995): 28.

[41] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:90; 3:299.

In Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching the heart with its unlimited capacity stands opposite the human intellect. Thus, he says, "My heart has become capable of every form."[42] In this saying, the meaning of the form is not restricted into corporeal aspects of the existent things since they already can be perceived through sense organs. If this was the case, the heart would be unnecessary to understand the meaning of the forms. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, thus, the perfect knowledge which encompasses everything is possible through drawing back the veils from the heart by God, so that, the heart is able to perceive everything including the existents, the non-existents, the impossible, and the necessary ones.[43] To clarify and explain in detail the significance of the heart in respect to the true and divine knowledge which comes from God only, Ibn al-ʿArabī says,

> So the servant turned his face totally toward Him and cut himself off from every faculty that takes him away from Him. When the servant turned his face, God effused from His light a divine knowledge, teaching him by way of witnessing and self-disclosure that God is not received or rejected by any engendered thing. That is why He said, "Surely in that is a reminder for him who has a heart" (Q, 50:37). He mentions only the heart because the heart is known through constant fluctuation in states; since it does not remain in a single state… The heart does not delimit, but quickly fluctuates in every state. That is why the Lawgiver said, "The heart is between two of the fingers of the All-merciful; He makes it fluctuate as He desires." The heart fluctuates with the fluctuation of self-disclosures, but the rational faculty is not like that. The heart is the faculty (*quwwa*) which is

---

[42] Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, *The Tarjumān al-ashwāq: A Collection of Mystical Odes,* translated by Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1911), poem 11, 67.

[43] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 133, trans. in Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 166.

> beyond the stage of reason. If in this verse God had meant by "heart" the rational faculty, he would not have said, "for him who has a heart," since every human being has a rational faculty, but not every human being has been given the faculty which is beyond the stage of reason and which is named "heart" in this verse.[44]

Moreover, despite a contention between the heart, which has an unlimited capacity, and the intellect, which is limited and restrictive, in terms of being the authority on comprehension of the reality in the best sense, there may be a third option which is the inspired intellect. In this kind of approach, cooperation of the heart and the intellect may happen.[45] For this theory, Peter Coates suggests using the terms the heart and the intellect synonymously because each tool of human perception such as senses, reason, and imagination is subservient to the intellect, so that the intellect takes all knowledge from the heart.[46] It is accepted that all human faculties including the intellect become subservient to the heart; thereby it is called an inspired intellect. The point is that it is possible and expected that the intellect follow the heart to knowledge of the Real. In fact, it is not difficult to find from Ibn al-ʿArabī's works this kind of intellect which follows the heart. He mentions the rational faculty which may receive knowledge from the heart.[47]

There is another aspect of the matter of the heart. It is the question of whether knowledge which comes through unveiling and the knowledge

---

[44] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:289, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 111.

[45] Hakim Souad, "Knowledge of God in Ibn ʿArabī," in *Muḥyiddīn Ibn ʿArabī: A Commemorative Volume,* ed. Stephen Hirtenstein and Michael Tiernan, (Shaftesbury: Element, 1993), 278-279.

[46] Peter Coates, *Ibn ʿArabī and Modern Thought: The History of Taking Metaphysics Seriously* (Oxford: Anqa Publication, 2002), 133.

[47] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:289.

of the heart are the same or they are different from each other. Even if the heart is considered to be the place of knowledge of unveiling, some scholars distinguish knowledge of the heart from knowledge of unveiling. An underlying reason is an acceptance of different levels of the spiritual path, different capacities of the friends, and different levels of the heart itself. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, the friends of God vary according to their spiritual capacities even though all of them receive their knowledge from the one source. Ibn al-ʿArabī draws an analogy between this spiritual knowledge and water. Since water flows in different areas, its taste is sometimes sweet and sometimes is salty although water remains the same in terms of its reality. Similarly, spiritual knowledge is based on the same source, and its reality is the same even though its capacity, scope, and functionality may vary according to the capacity of the heart and that of the possessors of the knowledge.[48]

Nevertheless, the matter of the difference or sameness of the knowledge of the heart and the knowledge of unveiling is open to various interpretations. For example, according to Hüdaverdi Adam,[49] Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching includes three types of knowledge: certain knowledge (*ʿilm al-yaqīn*) which is knowledge based on evidence; certain experience (*ʿayn al-yaqīn*) which is knowledge that occurs as a consequence of contemplation and unveiling; and real certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*) which is

---

[48] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 107, trans. in Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 131.

[49] Hüdaverdi Adam, a Turkish professor of Islamic theology, has some works on Ibn al-ʿArabī and Sufism. See Hüdaverdi Adam, *İbn Arabi: Kaza ve Kader* (Adapazarı: Değişim Yayınları, 1998).

knowledge that occurs in the heart.[50] According to this statement, unveiling is at the second level of knowledge, not the highest one. This kind of approach is compatible with Hirtenstein's statements. For him there are three kinds of people: common people (believers); gnostics (elites); and verifiers (elite of elites or *muḥaqqiqūn*).[51] I mean for these two scholars, mystical knowledge is not exactly a production of unveiling because unveiling is at the second highest level. It is the heart which occupies the highest level. In contrast, Chittick and Chodkiewicz use these terms synonymously. For Chittick, the possessors of unveiling are the highest ranking friends of God.[52] For Chodkiewicz a friend (*walī*) may be called gnostic (*ʿārif*), verifier (*muḥaqqiq*), ṣūfi, heir (*wārith*), and man (*rajul*).[53] This proves that they may use these terms synonymously. Briefly, the knowledge of the heart may be classified with different attributions, but the common point is that this kind of knowledge comes from God directly even if some features, capacities, and functionalities of this kind of knowledge seem to be various.

Up to this point complementary requirements of the knowledge of unveiling such as the friends of God who can only possess this knowledge and the heart as the organ of unveiling have been examined. These two conceptions play very significant roles in possessing knowledge because this special knowledge is bestowed by God to some special people rather

---

50 Adam, "Place Of Intellect," 158.
51 Hirtenstein, *Unlimited Mercifier*, 99.
52 Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, xxiii.
53 Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 47.

than all human beings. Thus, it was necessary to explain those who are able to have this kind of knowledge.

2.3.3. Gnosis (*maʿrifa*)

As the last aspect of this section, the knowledge of unveiling itself regarding some questions such as what unveiling is and why it is the most reliable knowledge in Ibn al-ʿArabī will be examined. Whatever Ibn al-ʿArabī calls knowledge is the true and divine knowledge which comes through the spiritual way only.[54] It is because following a spiritual way to acquire knowledge from God allows the followers of the way to communicate with the Living God. However, other kinds of knowledge come from rational thinking which is based on reflections of people, most of whom lived in the past. In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī transmits the Iranian Sufi Abū Yazīd al-Basṭāmī's words, "You all took your knowledge like a dead person (receiving it) from another dead person. But we took our knowledge from the Living One who never dies."[55] It shows that the communication with God is the way of receiving all mystical knowledge.

Furthermore, in addition to the fact that unveiling is a kind of communication with the Living One, it has various characteristics such as certainty, unchangeable,[56] unquestionable, and limitlessness.[57] For instance, to explain the limitlessness and certainty of the mystical knowledge Ibn al-

---

54 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:473.
55 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:280, trans. in in James Winston Morris, "How to Study the Futūḥāt: Ibnʿ Arabī's Own Advice," in *Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabī: A Commemorative Volume,* ed. Stephen Hirtenstein and Michael Tiernan, (Shaftesbury: Element, 1993), 76.
56 Rosenthal, "Philosophy and Mysticism," 10.
57 Ibn al-ʿArabī, "Kitāb al-fanāʾ fī-l mushāhada," in Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Rasāʾil,* 22.

ʿArabī says that while there is a limit for the intellect which cannot go beyond it, a possessor of unveiling and certainty is allowed to go beyond the limit.[58] It is clear that for Ibn al-ʿArabī unveiling and certainty are very close conceptions.

Unveiling is the essential method for acquisition of knowledge in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching. There are many arguments from the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths of the Prophet in order to support the method. For example, as the Qur'ānic argument, the story of Moses with a knowledgeable servant (Q, 18:65), who in Sufi tradition is al-Khaḍir, has a very important place in that tradition.[59] The verse "And We sent not before you, [O Muhammad], except men to whom We revealed [the message], so ask the people of the message if you do not know" (Q, 21:7) is another Qur'ānic argument. It is accepted that the people of the message expressed in the verse indicate the people of unveiling. Also, there is another verse "And it is not for any human being that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a partition or that He sends a messenger to reveal, by His permission, what He wills. Indeed, He is Most High and Wise" (Q, 42:51). These verses are sufficient evidences in order to prove that, in addition to revelation, unveiling is a Qur'ānic way of communication between God and creatures.

As for the arguments from the ḥadīths of the Prophet, one of them is very essential. The Prophet Muhammad said, "[Among the communities

---

[58] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 209.

[59] For a detailed exploration about al-Khaḍir (a knowledgeable servant) from Ibn al-ʿArabī's perspective, see Ian Richard Netton, *Seek Knowledge: Thought and Travel in the House of Islam* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996), 59-69.

who were before you there were "those who are spoken to" (by God), although they were not prophets, and] if there are "those who are spoken to" in my community, ʿUmar is among them."[60] Moreover, arguments among the tradition, the sayings of Abū Hurayra and Ibn ʿAbbās are very important because they pointed out the existence of "other" knowledge. Abū Hurayra, in this respect, said, "I retained from the Envoy two sorts of knowledge. I exposed one, but if I had exposed the other, they would have cut my throat."[61] Also, in regard to the verse "God it is Who created the seven heavens, and of the earth like them; the (divine) Command descends through them" (Q, 65:12), Ibn ʿAbbās said, "If I were to mention the (Prophet's) interpretation of this verse you would stone me! (Or you would say I was an unbeliever!)."[62] All these statements prove the existence of "another kind" of knowledge.

By taking into consideration all these arguments from the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths, it can be said that unveiling occupies the best and highest place on true knowledge in Ibn al-ʿArabī's mind. It is the most powerful, beyond all questions, and the most reliable way to acquire knowledge. Any knowledge which comes through unveiling is beyond the limits of the human intellect since it is a God-given knowledge (*ʿilm ladūn*).[63] It is

---

60 Imām al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Faḍāil al-aṣḥāb- The Companions*, Vol.5, Book 57, Number 38. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:32, trans. in Morris, "How to Study the Futūḥāt: Ibnʿ Arabī's Own Advice," 78. It should be noted that this ḥadīth report is referred by Ibn Taymiyya as well in order to prove the reality of unveiling. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:476.

61 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-ʿilm,* no: 42. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:32, trans. in Denis Gril, "Hadith in the Work of Ibn ʿArabī," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 50 (2011): http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/ibn-arabi-and-hadith.html3.

62 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:32, trans. in Morris, "How to Study the Futūḥāt: Ibnʿ Arabī's Own Advice," 78.

63 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:324.

possible to say that this kind of knowledge constitutes the base for Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching. While knowledge which comes through unveiling is considered to be precisely correct and unquestionable knowledge, without unveiling it is not possible to reach true knowledge at all. Thus, he says that one who has no unveiling does not have any knowledge in reality.[64]

According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, there are two ways of knowledge.[65] One of them is the way of unveiling which gives an incontrovertible knowledge. The prophets and the friends of God follow this way while the other way is reflective thinking which is not so reliable.[66] As the way of the prophets and the friends of God and as a divine bestowal, unveiling, through which the prophets and the friends know the true meaning of the divine Books and the special knowledge which is reserved for these people only, is the pre-requisite of true knowledge. Ibn al-ʿArabī says that if any knowledge is not based on unveiling, it cannot be the knowledge of the friends because the friends rely on unveiling only instead of the intellect.[67] Also, according to him, God purified the prophets and the friends from all knowledge, like rational knowledge, based on something other than unveiling.[68] This distinction is so obvious in Ibn al-ʿArabī's works. Moreover, he claims that exoteric scholars who utilize rational thinking are heavy and troublesome

---

64 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:218.

65 In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "The way of gaining knowledge is divided between reflection (*fikr*) and bestowal (*wahb*), which is the divine effusion (*fayḍ*)… Hence it is said that the sciences of the prophets and the friends of God are beyond the stage of reason." Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:261, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 169. At the beginning of this section, I quoted from Chittick who says that for Ibn al-ʿArabī, there are three routes to gain knowledge. It should not cause confusion. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, even though unveiling and revelation are different in one respect, they are the same in comparison to reflection in another respect since they comes from the same source, God.

66 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:319, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 169.

67 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:574.

68 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:116.

for the friends of God. By making an analogy between the pharaohs and the rational thinkers he says, "In relation to the friends of God the exoteric scholars are like the pharaohs in relation to God's messengers."[69]

In this point, several aspects can be counted in order to explain why the unveiling-based knowledge is indisputably and undoubtedly correct, reliable, and fundamental in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching. First, knowledge based on unveiling is compatible with the revelation. This knowledge complies with the real meaning of the revelation in fact. Thus, he considers all knowledge of the friends to be true knowledge since they take their knowledge through unveiling which corresponds with the revelation and the sayings of the messengers of God.[70] Furthermore, Ibn al-ʿArabī by referring to the verse (Q, 41:42) claims that the exegesis of the friends of God of the Qur'ānic verses is sent down from God.[71] In this respect, he declares that the friends of God are those who most deserve to explain the Qur'ān because the explanation is a sending down from God to the hearts of the friends (*tanzīlan min ʿind allāhi ʿalā qulūbi ahl allāh*).[72]

Second, Ibn al-ʿArabī really believes that in order to know something which is beyond basic sense perceptions, human beings need the gift bestowed by God. This gift is a necessity to comprehend the truth. According to him, for example, since human beings do not know anything about God's knowledge of them, they cannot know anything about the final

---

69 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:279, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 247.
70 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:271, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 168.
71 *The Qur'ān*, 41:42. "Falsehood cannot approach it from before it or from behind it; [it is] a revelation from a [Lord who is] Wise and Praiseworthy."
72 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:280.

end, what they need for their felicity, what will happen to them in the afterlife, what God really wants them to do, and why He created them. Therefore, human beings need knowledge bestowed by God as a divine gift to be able to have knowledge on these issues.[73]

Third, the friends of God can know everything by means of unveiling. That is, unveiling is the door of God's knowledge because God, the All-Knower, becomes the teacher of the friends. Ibn al-ʿArabī says that there is nothing which cannot be known through unveiling (*kashf*) and spiritual experience (*wujūd*). So, everything is known through unveiling.[74] Fourth, the certainty of knowledge can be guaranteed through unveiling only. While the knowledge of the friends which is given through unveiling emerges from the one source, rational scholars take their knowledge from different teachers and books.[75] Consequently, they will have various ideas and claims even on a particular issue. In this case, it is impossible to mention the certainty of knowledge at all. In contrast, as said, knowledge based on unveiling comes from the same source, God, so that there is the certainty of this kind of knowledge.

Even though the levels, contents, and scope of knowledge may be different according to the ranking of the prophets and the friends or the capacities of the hearts, this knowledge will not contain any contradiction

---

[73] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:83, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 180.

[74] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:523, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 203. As a note, the term *wujūd* means both existence and ecstasy. In this respect, for the term *wajd* (the same root with *wujūd*) Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "[*wajd*] is the states (*aḥwāl*) that come upon the heart unexpectedly…" and for *wujūd*, he says, "[it is] finding the Real in ecstasy." Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:537; 536, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 212.

[75] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 107.

within itself. Ibn al-ʿArabī confines true knowledge with that which is given by God since the Knower (*al-ʿÂlim*) is God only. While those who acquire their knowledge from God do not have any contradiction, obfuscation, and ambiguity, rational thinkers and learned scholars always have disagreements among themselves.[76] Ibn al-ʿArabī does not accept any disagreement among those who take their knowledge from God. It should be noted that Ibn al-ʿArabī reserves "certainty" for knowledge which is based on unveiling on the one hand, and he reserves disappearance of disagreement for the prophets only, on the other hand. This may be seen as a contradiction or an exclusion of the friends from certain knowledge. However, it is not so because apart from the prophets, the friends also have knowledge through unveiling which is saved from disagreements. So, it is not a contradiction but different aspects of God-given knowledge. In this case, certainty should be reserved not only for the prophets but also for the friends of God.[77]

On this point it may be useful to recall that the certainty of unveiling-based knowledge is open to discussion even if Ibn al-ʿArabī claims certainty for this kind of knowledge. For example, when Stephen Hirtenstein examines the Kurdish thinker Said Nursi's (d. 1960) passages about the doctrine of the oneness of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) of Ibn al-ʿArabī, he says that Said Nursi follows biased opinions of earlier scholars,

---

[76] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:290; 1:319, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 169-170.
[77] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:628.

especially Ibn Taymiyya.[78] It is because according to Nursi, many mystics, like Ibn al-ʿArabī, reduce the existence of other things to the level of delusion and imagination. They claim that there is no existence but Him. For them, existence is not ascribed to things when the Necessary Existence is in question.[79] On this point, the problem is not whether Nursi misinterprets Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine, but the problem is that like Ibn al-ʿArabī, Said Nursi as well claims to have written everything by means of unveiling (*kashf-ilhām*) instead of rational reflection or the books of scholars while two inspirational statements contradict each other.[80] In that case, it is difficult to have indisputable certainty on the unveiling-based knowledge. Moreover, since there is no clear and indisputable method of demonstration for the accuracy of inspirational knowledge, it does not seem possible to refute one of them by referring to other inspirational knowledge.

Apart from this controversy, as for Ibn al-ʿArabī's unveilings, he claims to have written his works according to unveilings sent down from the divine source upon his heart. This kind of belief is not rare in his works. As stated repeatedly above, the friends of God do not have any knowledge

---

[78] Stephen Hirtenstein, "Visions of Plurality in Unity: Said Nursi, Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi, and the Question of the Unity of Being," in *Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-i Nur,* ed. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabiʿ, (Albany: State University of New York, 2008), 297.

[79] Said Nursi, *Letters*, 20th letter, 2nd station, 296. See, Hirtenstein, "Plurality in Unity," 297. In this point, it should be noted that according to Hirtenstein, what Nursi knows to be the doctrine of the oneness of existence belongs to the school of this doctrine which developed after Ibn al-ʿArabī himself. Thus, for Hirtenstein, what Nursi does is not a critique of the teaching of Ibn al-ʿArabī, but the teaching of the school of the oneness of existence. Definitely, it is a kind of defence of Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching against possible critical interpretations. Since Hirtenstein believes some adaptions of Nursi come from Ibn Taymiyya, he considers Nursi's statements in a way through which the followers of Ibn al-ʿArabī consider Ibn Taymiyya's statements. Hirtenstein, "Plurality in Unity," 297-299.

[80] Said Nursi, *Şualar*, Birinci Şua, 623, 650; *Sikke-i Tasdik-i Gaybi*, Birinci Şua,9; and *Bibliography of Said Nursi*, Part Two (The New Said), 489.

other than the knowledge of unveiling. Therefore, Ibn al-ʿArabī's claim is consistent with the rest of his works. For instance, Ibn al-ʿArabī explicitly tells how he wrote *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, which, according to Hossein Nasr, is accepted as the central text of theoretical gnosis tradition.[81] According to Ibn al-ʿArabī's statement, the Messenger of God came with a book that is *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, and commanded him to take and bring the book to people who may benefit from it. At this, he obeyed the command of the messenger.[82]

As for the other significant work *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Ibn al-ʿArabī claims to have written the book in accordance with what he received through divine unveiling and what God dictated.[83] Also, he emphasizes that his work is not a place of rational reflections but divine unveiling.[84] Moreover, according to his claim, even the order of the book is determined by divine unveiling rather than his management.[85] It is very obvious that after highlighting the certainty, correctness, reliability of the knowledge of unveiling, Ibn al-ʿArabī bases his all works on divine unveiling.

Finally, this section aimed to focus on explaining the significance and function of unveiling as a way of acquiring knowledge in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching. For him, this special way, whereby true knowledge is achieved, is used by some special people, the friends of God. Also, this way is necessary for true understanding of the revelation because it provides

---

81 Nasr, *Islam's Mystical Tradition*, 213.
82 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 47, trans. in Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 45.
83 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:432; 3:457. Also, see Chodkiewicz, Chittick, Morris, Chodkiewicz and Gril, *The Meccan Revelations*, 1:8.
84 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:389.
85 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:59; 2:163. Also, see Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 18.

certain, unchangeable, and doubtless knowledge. Already, the purpose of unveiling is to attain the true meaning of the revelation. In other words, the revelation contains the ultimate true knowledge while unveiling is secondary tool to attain that knowledge. After that point, intellect-based knowledge can be examined as the least reliable and the most questionable way of knowledge.

2.4. The Human Intellect

In the previous two sections revelation and inspiration as two ways for acquisition of knowledge were elaborated from Ibn al-ʿArabī's perspective. This section of the chapter aims to show clearly the position of the human intellect as another epistemological tool in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching. In this part, in order to elaborate the relationship between the intellect and true knowledge, I will touch on sources, limits, and reliability of the intellect. Moreover, this section contains some of Ibn al-ʿArabī's critical statements against rational thinkers in addition to the intellect itself because of its imperfect, limited, and deficient nature. In order to clarify Ibn al-ʿArabī's attitude toward the human intellect on the process of possessing true knowledge, some aspects of the subject such as authority of the intellect, limits of the intellect, and objections to philosophers and theologians will be treated.

2.4.1. Authority of the Intellect

The intellect is a third faculty human beings have while animals have cognitive (*ʿilmī*) and practical (*ʿamalī*) faculties only.[1] The conception of the intellect should be thought together with some other conceptions such as consideration (*naẓar*) and reflection (*fikr*).[2] The intellect, like the other five sense organs, has a capacity for perception of things. The intellect needs reflection, which is a power of thinking in order to gain a new idea or knowledge either by interpreting what it perceives by means of sense organs or with the help of reflection. Therefore, Ibn al-ʿArabī takes into consideration the intellect together with other five senses: sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste.[3]

Along with the intellect, there is a mechanism controlling human beings. It is passion (*shahwa*), which, like the intellect, is fed by sense organs as well. Different from the intellect, it does not have an interpretive power. So the intellect and passion conflict with each other as long as either the human intellect is not controlled by passion or passion is not controlled by spiritual, moral, or religious discipline.[4] In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī gives brief information about passion. For him, there are two kinds of passions. One of them should not be followed by those who possess the intellect. The other one, with the permissions of the Divine Law, should be

---

1 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:260, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 162.

2 Although there are various terms denoting rational thinking, all of them refer to the endeavours of the rational thinkers such as philosophers and theologians. In this regard, Chittick says that "possessors of consideration" (*ahl al-naẓar*) are used synonymously with "people of reflection" (*ahl al-fikr, aṣḥāb al-afkār*), the "people of rational faculties" (*ahl al-ʿuqūl*), and "the rational thinkers" (*al-ʿuqalā'*)." Chittick, *SPK*, 160.

3 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:213. See Chittick, *SPK*, 160.

4 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:319.

followed because it is appropriate for human nature. It is obvious that in relation to passion the intellect as a control mechanism of human beings is in the leading position. It is thus because the intellect should not be under the control of the first type of passion. In the second type of passion, the intellect should take into consideration the Divine Law while it follows this passion.[5]

When the intellect and passion are in question, Ibn al-ʿArabī, of course, prefers the authority of the intellect instead of authority of passion.[6] However, when the authority of God and authority of the intellect are in question, he emphasizes the necessity of the divine authority absolutely. It was explained in the first section of this chapter when answering the question why the revelation should be followed. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, in order to possess true knowledge human beings must follow the divine authority only since true knowledge belongs to God alone.[7] Otherwise, it is not possible to know and worship the Real (*al-Ḥaqq*), which is the main purpose of creatures.[8] Thus, for him, human beings can either follow the authority of God, the authority of their intellect, or the authority of passion; but, the only acceptable authority is the authority of God.[9]

---

5 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:191, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 160.

6 "Many of those who desire religion and exoteric knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-rasmī*) are governed by their passion. But the man of reason is not like that, since the rational faculty refuses everything except qualities of excellence (*faḍā'il*). For reason delimits its possessor, not allowing him to enter into that which is improper. That is why it is called reason from fetter." Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:333, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 161.

7 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:36; 3:44.

8 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:143.

9 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:298.

In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī asks how it can be appropriate to use the intellect to separate true rational thinking from the false, while by means of the intellect itself some intellectual knowledge is classified as true and false. In other words, as will be touched on later, if the intellect were able to distinguish true and false knowledge sufficiently, it would not already produce false knowledge at all. Hence, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, rational thinking is a station of danger subjected to incorrect thoughts; whereby a rational thinker may possibly follow correct or incorrect ways without knowing its correctness or incorrectness.[10] Man, who is possessor of the intellect, needs a criterion to distinguish true and false. The criterion, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, is obviously the divine guidance, the authority of God.[11]

Eventually, it can be said that the human intellect along with passion and the Divine Law is one of the authorities over human beings. While passion should be controlled by the intellect, the intellect because of limits and imperfectness should be subservient to the Divine Law, revelation, which is the absolute source and authority.

2.4.2. Limits of the Intellect

In the first place, it should be noted that for Ibn al-ʿArabī *ʿaql* (intellect) has the same Arabic root as *ʿiqāl* (fetter).[12] That is, the intellect binds the human capacity of knowing even though it is at the centre of our conscious actions. Before stating limits and imperfectness of the intellect, it will be useful to examine briefly what knowledge is in Ibn al-ʿArabī's

[10] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:230; 2:281, trans. in Chittick, *SPK,* 165.
[11] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:290.
[12] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:198.

teaching because if the conception of knowledge is understood, then the limits of the intellect may be understood better. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, there are three kinds of knowledge. The first is rational knowledge acquired through the intellect (*ʿilm al-ʿaql*). The second is knowledge of the spiritual states (*ʿilm al-aḥwāl*) received through immediate experience only which cannot be defined intellectually such as sweetness of honey. And the third is knowledge of the divine secrets (*ʿilm al-asrār*) which is beyond the limits of the intellect. This knowledge as the noblest comes to the heart and belongs to the prophets and the friends of God.[13] The most important absolutely is the knowledge of the divine secrets which is beyond the capacity of the intellect. Thus, what the human intellect deals with as knowledge is considered less valuable than knowledge which comes to the heart.

For Ibn al-ʿArabī, knowledge is one existent being among all existent beings. That is, it is simply one manifestation of God among His endless manifestations. Therefore, knowledge is a form, as Peter Coates reminds us, indicating God. Even though there are various concepts such as knowledge, known, and knower, each of them is a manifestation of the One who is the Real Knower.[14] To make this point clear, by emphasizing the same root (*ʿ-la-ma*) of the words cosmos, knowledge, and mark, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that "We refer to the 'cosmos' (*'ālam*) with this word to give 'knowledge' (*'ilm*) by which we mean that He has made it a 'mark'

---

[13] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:31, trans. in Chittick, *SPK,* 169. For alternative translation, see Morris, "How to Study the Futūḥāt: Ibnʿ Arabī's Own Advice," 76.

[14] Coates, *Ibn ʿArabī and Modern Thought*, 8-9.

(*ʿalāma*)."[15] Through this statement Ibn al-ʿArabī points out the aim of human beings. It is to realize the oneness of God. This realization occurs with knowledge possessed by the prophets and the friends of God. Therefore, Ibn al-ʿArabī highlights the significance of knowledge by referring to the Qur'ānic verse, "Say: 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge'" (The Qur'ān, 20:114).[16] Also, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, God commanded the Prophet to seek knowledge only, which is the greatest gift, because all good (*khayr*) is found therein.[17]

In addition to the types of knowledge, the conceptions of gnosis (*maʿrifa*) and knowledge (*ʿilm*) should be mentioned briefly. Gnosis as one of the most important concepts of Sufi terminology is usually considered different than knowledge (*ʿilm*). This classification is strongly related to the concepts of the friendship, heart, and unveiling (*kashf*) which were treated in the previous section. According to general admission, gnosis refers to unveiling and mystical knowledge, while knowledge (*ʿilm*) refers to intellectual knowledge.[18] According to William Chittick, Ibn al-ʿArabī

---

[15] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:473, trans. in William C. Chittick, "Ibn ʿArabī on the Benefit of Knowledge," in *The Essential Sophia,* ed. Katherine O'Brien Seyyed Hossein Nasr, (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2006), 131.

[16] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:117, 612, 620; 3:448; 4:129.

[17] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:370, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 148.

[18] In this subject, John Renard, who translates some passages from Sufi masters concerning the conception of knowledge, gives a place in his book for the terms gnosis and knowledge. In this respect, Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī, a Sufi master expresses the general approach to the terms by saying that "Sahl al-Tustarī put it, "*maʿrifa* is the intimate awareness of one's ignorance… *ʿilm* is confirmed by *maʿrifa*, and the intellect rests on *ʿilm*, whereas *maʿrifa* ratifies itself…" and "Another Sufi has said, "Investigation of the outward meanings of things yields *ʿilm*, while investigation of their inward meanings by means of revelatory disclosure yields *maʿrifa*." and "Yet another has said, "God has made *ʿilm* available to the generality of people but has reserved *maʿrifa* for His Friends."" Abū Bakr Al-Kalābādhī, *At-taʿarruf li-madhhab ahl al-taṣawwuf*, translated by John Renard (Cairo: Maktabat al-Kulliyāt al-Azharīya, 1969), 81-82, trans. in Renard, *Knowledge of God*, 104. Also, for detailed explanations concerning the terms *maʿrifa* and *ʿilm* see Renard, *Knowledge of God*, 286-293.

usually follows the general Sufi approach in which gnosis represents the higher ranking of knowledge.[19] Ibn al-ʿArabī accepts disagreement found among Sufis on this issue. He is aware of different ideas. That is, according to him, some Verifiers (*muḥaqqiqūn*) such as Sahl al-Tustarī, Abū Yazīd, Ibn al-ʿArīf, and Abū Madyan consider gnosis (*maʿrifa*) to be lordly (*rabbānī*) while they consider knowledge (*ʿilm*) to be divine (*ilāhī*). Other Sufis claim that gnosis is lordly and knowledge is below it. However, he says that both groups mean the same thing. What the former means by gnosis is the same as what the latter mean by knowledge. Hence, this discussion or disagreement is nothing more than a simple verbal disagreement.[20]

Let us get back to the intellectual knowledge again. In contrast to the certainty of the knowledge of unveiling, the knowledge of the intellect does not have any certainty. Ibn al-ʿArabī does not consider the intellect as a sufficient source of knowledge because arguments provided by scholars who take their knowledge from the intellect are undoubtedly refused after a time by other scholars who also take their knowledge from the intellect. According to him, if the intellect were a reliable source, it would not accept a mistaken argument as a proof the first time. In this regard, he mentions discussions that took place among scholars who attempt to prove their arguments through intellectual proofs which are accepted true unless a

---

[19] Chittick, "Ibn ʿArabī on the Benefit of Knowledge," 126.
[20] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:318, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 149.

contradictory proof appears. Whenever a proof refusing the previous proofs appears, the scholars refuse what they accepted earlier as a sound proof.[21]

Furthermore, according to him, it is not possible to find anyone among rational scholars who has certain knowledge and rational evidences apart from the law to say something firmly. In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that although rational scholars investigate the Essence of God, they do not achieve any knowledge upon which they agree. They discuss whether He is a body, He is in a direction, or He is a substance. Moreover, although rational scholars investigate the soul (*rūḥ*) and its function, its governance on human bodies, its place, and whether it has a substance, they do not have certainty at all.[22] In addition, he considers uncertainty of this kind of knowledge to be a problem for faith of believers as well. For him, faith based on surmise (*ẓann*) is not accepted because God accepts true faith which is based on true knowledge only. In this respect, he refers to the verses, "[They have no knowledge thereof; they follow only surmise,] and surmise avails naught against the Real" (Q, 53:28) and "They follow only surmise and the caprice of their souls" (Q, 53:23).[23]

As for limit of the intellect, it is the reason why the human intellect is not capable of reaching true and certain knowledge. The intellect itself leads human beings to doubt and mistakes because of its limits.[24] As mentioned above, the intellect interprets the data collected by human sense

---

[21] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:645; 2:389. Also, see Rosenthal, "Philosophy and Mysticism," 11.
[22] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:81, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 63.
[23] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:612, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 151.
[24] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:456.

organs on the process for acquisition of knowledge. However, sense perceptions, sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell themselves are limited because they are already incumbent to perceive a limited thing, the world. In that case, the limited nature of the human intellect should be accepted necessarily.[25] However, the reality, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, is beyond limits as God says, "There is nothing like Him" (Q, 42:11). In this case, how can the human intellect which is based on the data of limited sense organs give true and certain knowledge about the Real who is not similar to physical and limited forms?[26] For Ibn al-ʿArabī, the intellect may conceive the existence, the non-existence, or the attributes of a thing with some principles based on sense perception (*ḥiss*), experience (*tajruba*), and self-evidence (*ḍarūra*). However, God Himself is not within the domain of these principles. Thus, the intellect can conceive only the existence and oneness of God and the dependency of creatures on Him (*muftaqir ilayh*).[27]

Eventually, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the intellect does not give anything about God more than the knowledge of His existence. This is one of the most emphasized points in Ibn al-ʿArabī's works because for him, using the intellect and trying to reach God through rational argumentation will place a veil between man and God.[28] This veil is the human intellect which prevents man from realizing his Creator and cuts off certain a connection between creatures and the Creator. This connection is what has been emphasized with the doctrine of the oneness of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). Using the

---

[25] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:288-289.
[26] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:288.
[27] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:92.
[28] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:523.

intellect will avoid the realization of the oneness that is the main purpose of creation of human beings.

Another significant harm of this veil is to throw human beings into a way where the veils are endless, so that the intellect prevents man from believing God as He manifests Himself. In other words, since God does not manifest Himself twice in the same form, as long as you follow your rational thinking you will constantly encounter another veil. Each attempt with the intellect to conceive a manifestation of God, which will always occur in a new form, will cause one to encounter a new veil since the veils are produced by the intellect itself according to Ibn al-ʿArabī.[29]

Moreover, while Ibn al-ʿArabī accepts that all knowledge derives from God because everything other than God comes from God in one respect,[30] he sees some knowledge is useless in another respect since it prevents human beings from possessing true knowledge. True knowledge is the knowledge of God which can be received through God Himself. In this regard, Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "Human beings have no eminence save in their knowledge of God. As for their knowledge of other than God, this is a diversion (*ʿulāla*) through which veiled human beings divert themselves. The right thinking man (*al-munṣif*) has no aspiration save toward knowledge of Him."[31]

---

[29] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:105; 4:19, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 231.
[30] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:170.
[31] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:129, trans. in Chittick, "Ibn ʿArabī on the Benefit of Knowledge," 128.

2.4.3. Knowledge of God and Revelation through the Human Intellect

In Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching the knowledge of God (*maʿrifa allāh*) plays a very significant role. Knowing, realizing the Real is the primary purpose of human beings. Ibn al-ʿArabī frequently repeats that the intellect is an insufficient tool to grasp God as a whole.[32] Even though the intellect is capable of perceiving something in respect of the existence of God and some divine aspects, it cannot perceive Him with His names and attributes.[33] For him, God must be considered together with His incomparable (transcendence, *tanzīh*) and similar (immanence, *tashbīh*) aspects.[34] However, since the intellect is based only on the data which comes from the consideration of the physical world through our limited sense organs, it is not possible for the intellect to grasp God with His incomparability and similarity together.

According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, since the intellect because of its inadequacy can accept the incompatibility of God only, it is an unreliable and imperfect tool concerning the knowledge of God. This is one of the most important reasons why Ibn al-ʿArabī criticizes rational thinking. In his work *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* in order to indicate togetherness of the incomparability and similarity of God, he refers to the verse, "There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing" (Q, 42:11). In addition, he refers to another verse, "Exalted is your Lord, the Lord of might, above what they describe" (Q, 37:180), so as to criticize usage of the

---

[32] Chittick, "Rūmī and waḥdat al-wujūd," 73.
[33] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:183.
[34] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:691; 2:110, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 58.

intellect. In this matter, he says that the latter verse is related to those who know God only in compatible with what their intellect dictates. So, they delimit Him with His incomparability. Therefore, God is exalted and beyond how they describe Him.[35]

Ibn al-ʿArabī continues to explain the position of the intellect on the knowledge of God. As will be elaborated in the fourth chapter, God describes Himself in the Qur'ān with many different attributes most of which are shared with creatures. Although modality (*kayf*) of this kind of similarity between God and creatures is not open to the human intellect, the intellect delves into this modality persistently.[36] The intellect is not aware of the fact that God is beyond perceptions, senses, and imagination. When Ibn al-ʿArabī emphasizes the significant and special status of the prophets and the friends of God, he says that their position is beyond the stage of rational thinking, so that they are able to know God in the entirety of incomparability and similarity.[37] Hence, revelation may affirm what the intellectual proofs negate from God.[38]

From all these statements and explanations, it is possible to deduce that for Ibn al-ʿArabī thinking of God rationally leads to believing that something other than God is God in reality. Therefore, rational reflections upon God give rise gods apart from Him.[39] For him, those, who believe whatever their intellect teaches as God, have disagreement on their beliefs

---

35 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 182, trans. in Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 230.
36 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:291; 1:272, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 72.
37 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:291.
38 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:307, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 74.
39 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:143.

because there is no certainty on the intellectual knowledge. Also, each of them refutes the belief of others which is based also on the intellect. And each of them declares that the others are ignorant of God.[40]

Briefly, in the first place, in order to know God truly, as mentioned in the section of mystical knowledge, there is a need for some spiritual methods and training such as retreat (*khalwa*), spiritual endeavour (*mujāhadāt*), and isolation (*infirād*) through which the heart and the soul are purified from all impurities of rational reflection (*shawā'ib al-afkār*).[41] Even though the intellect is capable of knowing some issues such as the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*), the righteousness of the Messenger of God, and the universe governed by God, at the same time, it is not capable of understanding some issues such as the realities of the divine names and attributes, the relationship among the names-attributes and the Essence, how God manifests Himself in the worldly things, and what the nature of the relationship between the One God and the multiple existent beings.[42]

As a note, there is no need for unveiling to understand the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) since God is known as self-evident.[43] Ibn al-ʿArabī by the statement that God is not known through the intellect means that the Essence of God (*al-dhāt*) is not known through the intellect, but not His Divinity (*ulūhiyya*) and Lordship (*rubūbiyya*) because God's Divinity and

---

[40] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:218, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 201.
[41] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:289, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 111.
[42] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:288.
[43] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:291.

Lordship can be known through the intellect due to their relationships with creatures.[44]

As for comprehension of the revelation, which is God's knowledge, through the human intellect, since the intellect is limited, imperfect, and insufficient, the intellect does not interpret the revelation correctly. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, any interpretation of the revelation made by the intellect does not conform to commentaries made through unveiling. For him, the true understanding of the revelation is not shared with the majority of humans who use their intellect to possess true knowledge. Thus, he says that even though there are many believers, the number of gnostics, who receive knowledge through their heart, is very few.[45] In this point, there is a very important example indicating a misinterpretation made by the intellect. This example from *Al-Futūḥāt*, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, proves the limits of the intellect and its misleading character. This example is such:

> This is what happened to me during a meeting I attended in 586. A certain philosopher (*shakhṣ faylasūf*) was present, a man who denied prophecy in the sense that it is defined by Muslims, rejected the miracles performed by the prophets and maintained that realities are immutable (*al-ḥaqā'iq lā tatabaddalu*). This happened during the winter, when the weather was particularly cold; in front of us was a larger brazier (*manqal*). This incredulous liar explained that although the common herd claims [on the authority of the account in the Qur'ān] that Abraham was thrown into the fire which did not burn him, in truth fire by its very nature necessarily burns combustible matter; therefore the fire in question as mentioned by the Qur'ān in

---

[44] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:257.
[45] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 83.

> the story about Abraham was no more than a [symbolic] expression of Nimrod's anger and rage- in other words it was really the fire of wrath…When he had come to the end of his speech, one of those who were present and who had attained to this station [i.e. the station of abandonment of charismata]…said to him: "Is that [the man pointed the brazier] not fire that burns?" "Yes," the other man replied. "Well see for yourself!" he cried, and threw some of the coals straight at the other man's chest; they remained clinging to his clothes until the man returned them with his hands. When the infidel saw that they did not burn him, he was surprised and placed them back in the brazier. Then [the man] said to him: "Now put your hand near the fire." He did so and burned himself…The disbeliever was converted, and from that time onwards acknowledged [miracles].[46]

From this passage, it is understandable that following rational thinking leads people to interpret the revelation according to what is acceptable to their intellect only, without questioning whether its capacity is sufficient or not. Unlike the unchangeable, certain, and limitless features of unveiling, the intellect is limited, changeable according to conditions and provides uncertain knowledge.[47] Thus, Ibn al-ʿArabī claims to have written all his works with unveiling rather than the intellect, so that his works, according to him, are not a place of rational proofs, but the place of what is bestowed to him by God.[48]

For the intellect does not know God, and so it is not capable of understanding the revelation correctly, God sent the prophets lest people go astray through following their intellects and lest they deserve the

---

[46] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:371, trans. in Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 106.
[47] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:372.
[48] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:389.

punishment of the hell. In this regard, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that God did not send the messengers without a purpose. If the intellect were capable of knowing the realities, the existence of the messengers would be unnecessary (*ʿabath*).[49]

On this point, a confusion may arise because, while Ibn al-ʿArabī considers the purpose of the messengers to be a guidance for human beings whose intellect is not sufficient to find the truth correctly, at the same time he says that what the messengers brought as revelation and what the friends of God received as gnosis (*maʿrifa*) may be declared as impossible by the intellect.[50] His aim obviously is to prove the superiority of unveiling to the intellect. But, if the messengers were sent because of the insufficiency of the human intellect and if the intellect sometimes can declare impossible what the revelation and unveiling put forward, how can people, who do not have revelation and unveiling but follow their intellect even though it is an unreliable and misguiding tool, be supposed to obey and confirm what the prophets say?

Nevertheless, apart from this possible confusion, Ibn al-ʿArabī eventually warns people not to follow rational thinking on issues concerning the Real because of the insufficiency of the human intellect. True knowledge is more comprehensive and greater than the capacity of the intellect. Therefore, he is against not only following the intellect but also evaluating knowledge which comes through revelation and unveiling with

---

[49] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:83.
[50] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:218.

rational criterion. Otherwise, it may cause heresy and punishment in hell. To emphasize the incapacity of intellectual knowledge, he says

> When knowledge from God comes to you, do not place it in the scale of reflection and do not appoint any route for your rational faculty to reach it, lest you immediately perish. For the Divine knowledge does not enter into any scale, since it set up the scale. How can the scale bring Him who established it under its property?[51]

Eventually, as a useful summary of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thoughts on the intellect and its capacity on the matter of knowledge, Peter Coates explains five reasons pointing out why the intellect is not a reliable tool for Ibn al-ʿArabī. Coates says that the first is that using the intellect is simply an inappropriate method. Second, it is a veil. Third, the intellect becomes the ultimate arbiter of truth for the men of rational faculties. Fourth, cognitive acts imply the ontological separation of a thinker and God or the servant and the Real, but this separation implicitly is in contradiction with the idea of the oneness of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*).[52] And last, the intellect can only accept what is acceptable to itself, while what is logically impossible or self-contradictory cannot be accepted by the intellect.[53] However, as stated before, there are some realities such as the similarity of God with creatures which can be known to be impossible according to intellectual criterion.

---

[51] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:291, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 255.
[52] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:358.
[53] Coates, *Ibn ʿArabī and Modern Thought*, 40.

2.4.4. Criticism of Philosophy and Theology

Ibn al-ʿArabī criticizes philosophers and theologians because of their intensive relationship to the intellect. In his works may be seen many arguments against the philosophers and the Kalām theologians (*mutakallimūn*) whose method is based on rational argumentation. According to him, the intellect is the primary tool for true knowledge in these rational thinkers. It should be emphasized that the underlying reason why Ibn al-ʿArabī criticizes philosophers and theologians is not only their constant appeal to the intellect but also that their considering the human intellect to be a unique and independent tool to attain true knowledge.[54] However, as is stressed frequently, the human intellect itself is a limitation according to both Ibn al-ʿArabī and those who accept limits on the intellect even though they rely firmly on the intellect at the same time.[55]

The intellect in terms of its capacity is an imperfect scale in Ibn al-ʿArabī's mind. Although philosophers and theologians consider the intellect-based knowledge to be useful and correct, it is itself an obstacle, a veil for people who seek true knowledge. In this respect, for instance, Chittick says that for the jurists, "searching for knowledge" means learning details of God's Law, and for the Kalām theologians or philosophers, "searching for knowledge" means employing the intellect (*ʿaql*) as a primary tool for acquiring knowledge. As for Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought, these

---

[54] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:523, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 203.
[55] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:291, 299.

kinds of knowledge may be considered to be useful to some extent, but the most real and useful knowledge is something taught by God Himself.[56]

Moreover, it is helpful to give an account of some concrete criticisms made by Ibn al-ʿArabī against rational thinkers. For example, reflection upon God's Essence (*dhāt*) in any way is forbidden to believers as mentioned above.[57] It is a Divine command. Since His Essence is independent of all relationships with the cosmological things, thinking of the Essence is prohibited. But, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the Kalām theologians object to this Divine command. In this matter, by referring to the verse, "God warns you of Himself" (Q, 3:28), he says that even though this verse obviously prevents people from thinking of God's Essence, the theologians always argue about Him. One of them says that He is a body while another says that He is not a body. One of them says that He is a substance or in a direction while another says that He is not a substance nor in a direction, and so on, although God never commanded any of His servants to reflect upon His Essence at all.[58]

As another example, Ibn al-ʿArabī points out endless disagreements among the Kalām theologians who take the intellect as the essential element for their method. A view of the Muʿtazila which is accepted true by taking into account their proofs is denied as false by Ashʿarīs. Similarly, an Ashʿarī view which is accepted as true, which is also based on the proofs of the Ashʿarīs, is denied as false by the Muʿtazila. Moreover, there is no

---

[56] Chittick, *SPK*, 147.
[57] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:271.
[58] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:81, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 63.

school of thought all of whose masters agree or disagree on a particular question. Each of them put forward a different idea although all of them are from the same school of thought. He continues saying that although all of them are Ashʿarī, Abu al-Maʿālī disagrees with the Qāḍī, and the Qāḍī disagrees with the Ustādh, and the Ustādh disagrees with the Shaykh. This is the same in other schools like the school of the Muʿtazila, and among the philosophers' doctrines about God.[59]

Moreover, in a story, Ibn al-ʿArabī stresses the incapacity of the intellect and its misguiding function by mentioning two men in their allegorical ascensions (*miʿrāj*). One of them is a man of faith, a traveller on the spiritual path, who follows the prophet while the other one is a philosopher relying on his intellect. At the end of the story, it is said that at the last heaven the philosopher is prevented from reaching the ultimate reality, but the man of faith, the follower of the prophet, is permitted to reach the Divine Presence.[60]

After all these explanations about epistemological, methodological, and creedal mistakes of the rational thinkers, it can be said that these rational thinkers will be punished in hell because of their ignorance of the reality according to Ibn al-ʿArabī.[61] The reason why they deserve punishment—that is a result of being deprived of unveiling and opening—is

---

[59] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:82, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 63. Also, Chittick says about the passage that "The references are probably to the famous Ashʿarites Abu al-Maʿālī ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d. 1085), al-Qāḍī Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013), al-Ustādh Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm al-Isfarāyinī (d. 1027), and al-Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 935), founder of the school." *SPK*, 390, n:8.

[60] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:273-9. Also, see Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 106.

[61] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:284.

that they weigh God with their limited and imperfect scale.[62] It is clear that on the matter of punishment or misguidance he does not see a difference between philosophers and the Kalām theologians because they all use the intellect for speaking of the reality and seeking for God.

On the other hand, Ibn al-ʿArabī is not against rational efforts as a whole. For him, the efforts of philosophers are valuable and acceptable to some extent.[63] As Coates clarifies, philosophy has two meanings. The first is the love of wisdom, and the second is the rational thinking. The prophets and the friends of God are in the first category. The second category consists of two groups. One of them considers the intellect necessary, but not the only way; the other group considers the intellect as a unique reliable source.[64] Also, in Ibn al-ʿArabī's mind, there are two kinds of philosophers: a believer and an infidel. If a philosopher, like Plato, by contemplation and spiritual experience endeavours to perfect his knowledge, he can deserve to be called a "gnostic" (*ʿārif*).[65] Moreover, according to Nasr, even though Ibn al-ʿArabī hardly criticized the rational thinkers who lived before him, he is considered to be one of the greatest figures of mystical philosophy[66] and was called in his times the Plato of his day.[67] Thus, Ibn al-ʿArabī because of

---

62 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:120.

63 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:32. *Al-faylasūf laysa kullu ʿilmihī bāṭilan*.

64 Coates, *Ibn ʿArabī and Modern Thought*, 37-38. In his work, Coates reserves a chapter (p. 37-80) for Ibn al-ʿArabī and reason (intellect) by considering some philosophical stances. Also, Coates gives a brief explanation about Averroes – Averroes considers the intellect as capable of grasping the truth even if it is not the only way– and Ibn al-ʿArabī concerning philosophy which is based on the intellect.

65 Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, 105-107. Also, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:523; Chittick, *SPK*, 203; and Coates, *Ibn ʿArabī and Modern Thought*, 37.

66 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 115.

67 Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy*, 40. Netton, *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology*, 269.

his depth, complexity, and style was blamed for evolving Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) to philosophy, according to Franz Rosenthal.[68]

In addition, it is worth noting that even though Ibn al-ʿArabī criticizes the method of the rational thinkers, in a few occasions such as struggling against the enemies of the religion and disproving statements of disbelievers the rational argumentation may be seen as a necessary method. For him, in every region there should be one theologian who is able to use rational methods in order to refute the arguments of disbelievers which are based on rational argumentation.[69] Briefly, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the value of knowledge is evaluated in accordance with its method, aim, and result. If any knowledge leads people to the realization of the oneness (*tawḥīd*) that is the true knowledge of God, —it is possible only through unveiling instead of rational argumentation— this kind of knowledge is valuable.

Ibn al-ʿArabī's attitude toward the intellect and rational thinking on some points such as the Essence of God does not confine him in an irrational worldview. In other words, he should not be assimilated with those whose religious teachings are based on superstitions since he does not prefer to use the intellect to find out the divine realities. In this point, it will help us to give some information clarifying where Ibn al-ʿArabī gives credit to the intellect.

---

[68] Rosenthal, "Philosophy and Mysticism," 5. For Austin, even if some scholars think of Ibn al-ʿArabī a philosopher because of his way of expression, in fact, he is a mystic. Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 24.

[69] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:36.

The intellect can conceive the physical world. And each faculty in human beings has a special area to be effective. There are some forms or things perceived by hearing only while others can be perceived by sight only. For hearing while there is no difference between salty and sweet water, but for tasting there is a great difference between them. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, when we look at the world by following this kind of example, it is seen obviously that any sense organ of human beings is not sufficient to comprehend a thing in its wholeness. Therefore, while he recognizes some special areas to each sense organ and rational reflection, he emphasizes their limited nature. Hence, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that each faculty and sense organ which feeds the intellect with their data should operate within its own area. Otherwise, error is unavoidable end.[70]

In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī distinguishes sciences related to the world from knowledge of God and knowledge of the other world. Even though these worldly sciences have some benefits in their own fields, their influence is limited. Thus, they are not considered necessary or beneficial in the absolute sense. In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī's statement to the great Kalām theologian Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī (d. 1210) has a special importance. He says,

> The intelligent individual must study all those sciences that serve to perfect his essence and move along with him wherever he goes. The only science (that serves perfection and moves along with him) is the knowledge of God obtained as a gift and derived from direct witness (*mushāhada*). For instance, medicine is needed only in the world of

---

[70] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:281, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 165.

> sickness or disease. When you move on to a world in which there is no sickness or disease, whom could you cure with medical knowledge? The intelligent individual should make no effort to learn about it, even if he were to obtain it by way of a (divine) gift as the medicine of the prophets (was obtained by them as a divine gift). The same applies to geometry (*handasa*). It is needed in the world of measurement. When you move on, you leave it in its world, and the soul continues on unburdened with anything. The same applies to the occupation with every science which the soul leaves when it moves on to the world beyond. Therefore, an intelligent individual must not seize any knowledge except what is absolutely needed. Rather, he must make an effort to achieve what moves on with him when he moves on. This, in particular, is two sciences, the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the homesteads (*mawāṭin*) of the other world.[71]

From this passage, it may be seen that Ibn al-ʿArabī recognizes very limited areas for the sciences which are based on the intellect while he, by taking into consideration a gradation between the knowledge of unveiling and the knowledge of the intellect, clearly esteems the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the other world which are based on the knowledge of revelation and unveiling. Moreover, Ibn al-ʿArabī gives conditional credit to the sciences such as arithmetic, geometry, mathematic, and logic which are based on rational thinking. It means that, if these sciences help man to realize God, they may be accepted to some extent.[72]

---

[71] Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Risālah ilā l-imām al-Rāzī*, (Hyderabad, 1948), 6, trans. in Rosenthal, "Philosophy and Mysticism," 21. Alternative translations of this paragraph can be found in Mohammed Rustom, "Ibn ʿArabī's Letter to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: A Study and Translation," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25 2 (2014): 113-137 (136); William C. Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 103. Also, for some divisions of sciences and knowledge, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:166-167.

[72] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:558, trans. in Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 151.

Not only these sciences which are based on the intellect, but also other sciences like Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh* or *sharīʿa*) do not have an essential importance because they are relevant to this world only. In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī says,

> Knowledge is of two sorts: The first knowledge is needed in the same way that food is needed. Hence it is necessary to exercise moderation, to limit oneself to the measure of need. This is knowledge of the *Sharī'a*'s (Islamic law- *al-aḥkām al-sharʿiyya*) rulings. One should not consider these rulings except in the measure that one's need touches on them at the moment, for their ruling property pertains only to acts that occur in this world. So take from this knowledge only in the measure of your activity! The second knowledge, which has no limit at which one can come to a halt, is knowledge that pertains to God and the homesteads of the resurrection.[73]

The root of this approach is that Ibn al-ʿArabī sets a connection between intellectual knowledge and the physical world which is less important and temporal; and between revelational and inspirational knowledge and God. The latter is of course more important and valuable because He is eternal.

It may be useful to mention different approaches to the problem of the mystical knowledge and intellectual knowledge. While some scholars think of cooperation between unveiling and the intellect on attaining knowledge, others confirm a distinctive separation of them. For example, according to Henry Corbin, in Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought, there is an unbridgeable gulf between Sufis (*aṣḥāb al-qulūb*), who rely upon mystical knowledge, and the intellectuals, who are the Kalām theologians

[73] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:581, trans. in Chittick, "Ibn ʿArabī on the Benefit of Knowledge," 130.

(*mutakallimūn*) and the philosophers (*aṣḥāb al-ʿuqūl*).[74] Also, for James Winston Morris, one who is not among the Verifiers (*muḥaqqiqūn*), whose knowledge is based on unveiling, can never understand the works of Ibn al-ʿArabī because of their blocked comprehension.[75] As mentioned before, Ibn al-ʿArabī's works are based on the knowledge of unveiling explicitly rather than the intellect.

On the other hand, Seyyed Hossein Nasr states that Sufism and the science of the Kalām are two different ways going to the same destination. For him, one of the aims of Sufism is to illuminate the intellect with the help of the light of God and to activate the heart as the organ for the attainment of the supreme knowledge.[76] From this perspective, obviously for Nasr, who already considers Ibn al-ʿArabī to be one of the greatest figures of the mystical philosophy, the mystical and the intellectual dimensions of Islam share the same purpose with different methods. In this manner Nasr is not alone, Chittick also thinks like Nasr. According to Chittick, Ibn al-ʿArabī gathered the mystical perspective of Sufism with the rational statements of the Kalām, Islamic Jurisprudence and other Islamic sciences.[77]

Nevertheless, through consideration of all these statements, it may not be incorrect to say that for Ibn al-ʿArabī, any effort by the intellect in

---

[74] Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, 230.

[75] James Winston Morris, *Rhetoric and Realisation in Ibn 'Arabī: How Can We Communicate His Meanings Today?,* in The Proceedings of the International Conference on "Ibn 'Arabī and the World Today" (Rabat: 2002), 2-3.

[76] Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy*, 135.

[77] William C. Chittick, "Ibn al-ʿArabī's Hermeneutics of Mercy," in *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture*, ed. Steven T. Katz, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 153.

order to comprehend the reality and some metaphysical issues, including the knowledge of God, understanding the revelation truly, the nature of the soul, and the other world, is useless and vain with few exceptions. The uselessness and unworthiness of this attempt is clearly declared by Ibn al-ʿArabī referring to the verse, "[They are] those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work" (Q, 18:104).[78]

Finally, the purpose of this section was to clarify the position of the human intellect in Ibn al-ʿArabī's epistemology. The questions about what Ibn al-ʿArabī thinks of the intellect, why he does not trust the intellect, and the limits and unreliability of the intellect have been answered. In this case, it is obvious that he accepts the intellect within a very restricted area because of its incapacity, unreliability, and uncertainty. Thus, it can be said that intellect-based knowledge in Ibn al-ʿArabī's epistemology has the least reliability concerning true knowledge.

[78] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 125.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the positions of revelation, unveiling, and the human intellect in Ibn al-ʿArabī's epistemology, respectively, have been examined. It was clear that the Qur'ān, which occupies the highest level of Ibn al-ʿArabī's epistemology, is the most reliable, comprehensive, and soundest source of knowledge. It is the words of God and must be followed to attain true knowledge. Ibn al-ʿArabī evaluates methods of understanding the Qur'ān such as commentary (*tafsīr*), interpretation (*ta'wīl*), and allusion (*ishāra*); he considers commentary to be sounder than interpretation while he occasionally prefers allusion to name his method of understanding the Qur'ān. He is against interpretation because it is a product of the human intellect. Moreover, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the Prophet plays a very essential role in true understanding the revelation. The Prophet must be followed because of his special status. That is, he was given the Qur'ān which encompasses everything; he is the perfect man who is the loci of the perfect manifestation of God. Therefore, the Prophet and his guidance are necessary in order to understand the Qur'ān correctly.

Just after the revelation, unveiling, as a way for acquisition of knowledge, comes first. Through unveiling it is possible to attain the true meaning of the revelation, the Qur'ān. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, the Qur'ān, because of its comprehensiveness, contains various meaning. Unveiling enables one to grasp all meaning together. Also, unveiling is the divine guidance for human beings, especially for the friends of God who have a special organ, the heart, to receive knowledge. Ibn al-ʿArabī attempts to

support his idea with arguments from the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths of the Prophet. Moreover, as mentioned clearly before, Ibn al-ʿArabī bases his works on the divine unveiling and the Prophetic guidance by means of unveiling. He esteems knowledge which comes through unveiling very much. It is certain, undeniable, unquestionable, and limitless knowledge according to Ibn al-ʿArabī. Therefore, it is possible to say that unveiling as a way of knowledge occupies the second highest level of Ibn al-ʿArabī's epistemology right after the revelation.

As for the last level of his epistemology, it is occupied by the human intellect which is the least reliable source of knowledge. While Ibn al-ʿArabī recognizes dominions for the intellect to some extent, on the religious issues especially concerning God the human intellect is incapable of attaining and grasping true knowledge. For him, rational knowledge, in this regard, is uncertain, limited, deceptive, and doubtful. As a result of these negative features of the intellect, Ibn al-ʿArabī criticizes philosophers and theologians because of their unsound method in which the human intellect is seen as a unique tool of true knowledge.

CHAPTER THREE: IBN TAYMIYYA and HIS EPISTEMOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In Ibn Taymiyya's teaching, revelation, the Qur'ān plays the essential role for acquisition of true knowledge. The Qur'ān as the words of God provides the most reliable, comprehensive, and soundest knowledge for human beings. Ibn Taymiyya, like Ibn al-ʿArabī, pays considerable attention to the correct comprehension of revelation. Ibn Taymiyya criticizes the Kalām method of interpretation (*ta'wīl*) and prefers the method of commentary (*tafsīr*) which is seen to be closer to the intention of God.

In the process of understanding revelation, the Prophet Muhammad's guidance is a necessity because he, to be more than a simple messenger, both delivered the divine word and explained it as the best. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya considers the Sunna of the Prophet (whole of sayings and practices of the Prophet) as an indispensable part of revelational knowledge. Moreover, concerning understanding of revelation, the Qur'ān, the position of the Salaf (righteous ancestors) must be examined because these people play a key role in understanding the revelation. Ibn Taymiyya provides several arguments to explain why the Salaf should be followed and why their opinions are sounder than ours. Eventually, according to Ibn Taymiyya, reaching revelational knowledge, which is the noblest, may be possible through the guidance of the Prophet and opinions of the Salaf.

Another source of knowledge is the human intellect in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching. It is significant to comprehend what revelation propounds. Ibn Taymiyya's statements about the human intellect occupy a

broad place in his works. While he criticizes philosophers and the Kalām theologians who base their opinions on the intellect, Ibn Taymiyya does not deny its necessity. For him, the intellect should be accepted as true as long as the knowledge provided is compatible with revelational knowledge. Eventually, in this chapter, I will examine what the position of the human intellect is for acquisition of true knowledge, why Ibn Taymiyya criticizes philosophers and theologians, and which conditions make the intellect an acceptable and unacceptable source. The reason why I put the intellect right after revelation in Ibn Taymiyya's thought is that the intellect is necessary to find out the truthfulness of the Prophet who delivers and explains the words of God.

As for the last part of the chapter, it is related to inspiration (*ilhām*), the mystical way of knowledge. In fact, Ibn Taymiyya's attitude toward inspiration as a method of knowledge is not vague. However, his sharp criticism against Sufism, in which inspirational knowledge is foundational as in Ibn al-ʿArabī, puts his approach toward inspiration into the shade. So long as inspirational knowledge is not rejected by the revelational and rational knowledge, it may be accepted and followed because inspiration is a reality according to Ibn Taymiyya. Briefly, in order to evaluate better Ibn Taymiyya's approach to inspiration as a way of knowledge, I attempt to display his opinions about Sufism and his opinions about inspiration separately. In this case, it may enable me to explain clearly what Ibn Taymiyya thinks of inspiration as an epistemological tool. As a note, Ibn Taymiyya considers inspiration (*ilhām*) and unveiling (*kashf*) synonymous while he prefers to use the term inspiration generally. So, in this chapter I

will use the term inspiration in order to stay loyal to his ideas as much as possible.

3.2. Revelation

The divine revelation, the Qur'ān as the source of knowledge, has an undeniable status in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching. Even though the Qur'ān itself contains many answers and explanations in detail, it cannot be thought and understood without the cooperation of the Prophet according to Ibn Taymiyya. In addition, the opinion of the Salaf (righteous ancestors), as the best comprehension and explanation of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's ḥadīths, is necessary to conceive the true meaning of revelation. This triplicity enables to acquire true religious knowledge for Ibn Taymiyya. So, in this section, I will focus on Ibn Taymiyya's approach to the Qur'ān, the ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad, and the opinions of the Salaf as a way for acquisition of true knowledge.

3.2.1. The Qur'ān

The Qur'ān is accepted as the primary source of religious knowledge. Since the Qur'ān, for Ibn Taymiyya, contains all knowledge on religious matters such as God's existence, His oneness, the afterlife, and prophecy, and since the Qur'ān includes all knowledge of what the other scriptures include, it is indisputably the authority on religious knowledge.[1] In general, when the Qur'ān is in question, Ibn Taymiyya focuses on the debates concerning whether or not the Qur'ān is created. He emphasizes the eternity of God's speech;

[1] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 19:159-160; 169; 174. See, Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 18; Rahman, *Islam*, 237.

whereby the Qur'ān, which is the speech of God, is uncreated.[2] Since the matter of whether or not the Qur'ān is created is not an aim of this section, the position of the Qur'ān in his epistemology will be examined. In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya pays considerable attention to how to understand the Qur'ān correctly. In order to understand the Qur'ān Muslims have applied different methods. In the science of commentary on the Qur'ān (*ʿilm al-tafsīr*), three main methods generally may be counted: 1) commenting on the Qur'ān by referring to the Qur'ān directly, the ḥadīths of the Prophet, and the opinions of the Salaf (*tafsīr bil-riwāya*); 2) commenting on the Qur'ān, in addition to the first type of commentary, by referring to the sound intellect of human beings and the linguistic rules of Arabic (*tafsīr bil-dirāyah* or *tafsīr bil-ra'y*); and 3) commenting on the Qur'ān by referring to mystical experiences and Sufi unveilings (*tafsīr bil-ishāra*).[3] As for Ibn Taymiyya's method of understanding of the Qur'ān, it is clearly based on resorting to the Qur'ān itself, the ḥadīths, and the opinions of the Salaf.[4]

---

2 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 12:54; 5:28.

3 İsmail Cerrahoğlu, *Tefsir Usûlü (ʿilm al-uṣūl al-tafsīr)* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1971), 224-226; Süleyman Ateş, *İşari Tefsir Okulu* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1974); Sands, *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qurʾān in Classical Islam*, 47-56; 140-144.

4 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 13:363-364. Victor E. Makari, *Ibn Taymiyyah's Ethics: The Social Factor* (California: Scholars Press, 1983), 56. In addition, Walid Salih by referring to Ibn Taymiyya's work, *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr*, counts four steps for understanding the Qur'ān best. In other words, the Qur'ān is understood by means of the Qur'ān itself, the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, the views of the Companions, and the interpretations of the Successors (*tābiʿīn*). Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr.* Ed. ʿAdnān Zarzūr (Kuwait: Dār al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, 1971), 93-95 and Walid A. Saleh, "Ibn Taymiyya and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics: An Analysis of An Introduction to the Foundations of Qur'ānic Exegesis," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,* ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 144-146.

In Ibn Taymiyya's approach to the Qur'ān, two different aspects may be observed. The first one is related to the conceptions of literalism and interpretation (*ta'wīl*); the second one is the matter of consistency of Ibn Taymiyya's ideas with the Qur'ān concerning its bare meaning. The former is mostly related to God, including His names and attributes regarding to anthropomorphic verses. The second one is mostly related to creatures such as prophethood (*nubuwwa*), intercession in the afterlife (*shafāʿa*), ascension (*miʿrāj*), and holy war (*jihād*). In fact, these two aspects are strongly related to each other. On this point, further explanations with some concrete examples and Qur'ānic verses are important because they will show how Ibn Taymiyya attains knowledge by referring to the Qur'ān, or, as a source of knowledge, how the Qur'ān plays a role in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching. The purpose of this section is neither to criticize nor support his idea, but the purpose is to clarify his attitude toward the Qur'ān.

As for the first aspect, the conceptions of literalism and interpretation (or, re-interpretation) (*ta'wīl)* should be explained in order to make clear the position of Ibn Taymiyya. One of the most distinctive features of Ibn Taymiyya is the claim of having strict adherence to the Qur'ān's literal expression. It is clearly seen especially in the consideration of the names and attributes of God. Ibn Taymiyya's inflexible rejection of the figurative interpretations of some verses of the Qur'ān does not mean that he is a literalist. Literalism may have various definitions but Ibn Taymiyya's loyalty to the literal expression of the text may be called, as Yunis Ali expresses, an immediacy which means that the

addressed person takes the first meaning as an intended meaning, which occurs to the mind when he hears it.[5]

For Ibn Taymiyya, the meaning of a word is related to the context. On the contrary, for a literalist, there is a default meaning of the word, and the meaning is known by the linguistic rules or forms. In this case, the difference between a literalist and Ibn Taymiyya is that Ibn Taymiyya understands a text with a context while a literalist understands the same text within its grammatical structure. For example, the word "hand" means a physical organ of a body in one context, while in another context, it means help.[6] So, the word "hand" in both of these cases is read in its apparent (*ẓāhirī*) and the real (*ḥaqīqa*) meanings. Or, take the word "lion." Sometimes it indicates an animal; and sometimes it denotes courage, but it does not have a meaning without a certain context. In this respect, it is difficult to call Ibn Taymiyya a literalist because of his objection to a distinction between literal and non-literal meaning of a text.[7] Ibn Taymiyya's main concern is to prevent arbitrary interpretations which are not based on the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths. For him, these arbitrary interpretations usually stem from a possible confusion between literal and metaphorical meanings of a term. For Ibn Taymiyya, if the context is suitable for the meaning of "hand" as "help", the literal meaning of the word is "help" in this context, but not a physical organ. From this perspective, for Ibn

---

5 Mohamed M. Yunis Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics: Sunni Legal Theorists' Models of Textual Communication* (London: Routledge, 2000), 125.

6 El-Tobgui, "Reconstitution of Rationality," 215.

7 Robert Gleave, *Islam and Literalism: Literal Meaning and Interpretation in Islamic Legal Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 22.

Taymiyya, the text of the Qur'ān literally is valid and sufficient to guide people, and the text does not need any metaphorical interpretation because the text itself with its individual context clarifies the meaning of the words.[8]

As for the matter of interpretation (*ta'wīl)*, Ibn Taymiyya does not accept this method as valid to understand the divine text. According to Yunis Ali, interpretation (*ta'wīl)* literally means "to make something be something else" and "to bring something back." In Islamic literature, it means the diversion of an expression from *al-iḥtimāl al-rājiḥ* (the preponderant, probable interpretation) to *al-iḥtimāl al-marjūḥ* (the outweighed, improbable interpretation).[9] Also, according to Ibn Taymiyya, there are three types of interpretation (*ta'wīl*). The first one is interpretation of the theologians who leave the most probable meaning of a word or a text, and then find less probable meaning. Concerning this type of interpretation, Ibn Taymiyya criticizes the later Kalām theologians (*mutaakhkhirūn*) on account of ascribing different meanings to the same words without a proof. The second one is interpretation of the Salaf like Mujāhid (d. 718) and Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 687). This kind of interpretation means explanation of the Qur'ān called commentary or exegesis (*tafsīr*) which is known by some scholars who are well-grounded in

---

[8] Georges Tamer, "The Curse of Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya as a Philosopher in Contemporary Islamic Thought," in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya,* ed. Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 345.

[9] Yunis Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics*, 127. Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:235 and Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:35-37; 13:277; 17:361-370; 33:184. Ibn Taymiyya is not against the term *ta'wīl* at all. He opposes the misusing of the term by the Kalām theologians. M. Sait Özervarlı, "The Qur'ānic Rational Theology of Ibn Taymiyya and his Criticism of the Mutakallimūn," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,* ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmad, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 87-88.

knowledge (*rāsikhūn*).[10] As for the last type of interpretation known by God only, it is related to the unseen (*ghaybī*) matters such as various rewards in the heaven and punishments in the hell, time of the last day, and real meaning of God's names attributes as said in the Qur'ān, "…as no one knows its [true] interpretation except God..." (Q, 3:7).[11]

In this regard, Ibn Taymiyya insists on denying any figurative interpretation (*majāz*) of some ḥadīths of the Prophet and the verses of the Qur'ān which are susceptible to anthropomorphic interpretations such as the hands (Q, 38:75; 48:10) and face (Q, 2:115; 76:9) of God, God's being with human beings (Q, 57:4), and God's sitting on the Throne (Q, 7:54; 20:5; 25:59). To understand these kinds of verses, for Ibn Taymiyya, the correct way is to read these verses with their apparent expressions. It means that God's hand means God's hand, and God's face means only God's face. Ibn Taymiyya follows the opinion of the people of the ḥadīth (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) who are among the Salaf. According to these people, these kinds of statements, verses, and prophetic words should be affirmed and believed as how they come to us. By doing so, it is possible to stand away from both interpretation which leads to stripping off (*taʿṭīl*) or negation (*nafy*); and descriptive questioning (*takyīf*) which leads to anthropomorphism (*tamthīl*).[12]

---

[10] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:35.

[11] Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 54. Also, Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:55-56; 5:36; and Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:14. As the translation of the Qur'ān, I use the translation of Sahih International version.

[12] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:355, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 153.

It is clear that this kind of expression does not mean that Ibn Taymiyya accepts that God has hands as a human being has. What Ibn Taymiyya means by the hands in those contexts is not a physical organ. He clearly says that it is possible in the outer expression (*ẓāhir*) that the hand of God is seen to be an organ of human beings; that His anger may be explained as human anger like demanding taking revenge; or that His being in the heavens is seen to be similar with the water's being in the pot. However, if someone says that they are not the intended meanings of these verses and ḥadīths, he is definitely right and the best.[13]

Ibn Taymiyya accepts neither any interpretation of these kinds of verses nor assimilation between God and human beings. However, in this point there are controversial explanations about Ibn Taymiyya's approach to this matter. For example, one of them is the report of the Muslim traveler, Ibn Baṭūṭa (d. 1377 or 1369). According to Ibn Baṭūṭa's report, in a Friday ceremony, Ibn Taymiyya in order to make clear the point of descending of God, descended from the pulpit and said that is exactly as I am descending now (*ka nuzūlī hādhā*).[14] For this report, there is no difference between the actions and attributes of God and the actions and attributes of human beings. According to

---

[13] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:356, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 153.

[14] H. A. R. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325-1354* (Cambridge: The Hakluyt Society at the University Press, 1958), 136. Also, Jeffry R. Halverson, *Theology and Creed in Sunni Islam: The Muslim Brotherhood, Ashʿarism, and Political Sunnism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 40. Arberry, *Revelation and Reason in Islam*, 22.

the report, as Ignaz Goldziher also uses it in the same form, Ibn Taymiyya tries to explain how God descends.[15]

On the contrary, on the matter of these kinds of verses, Ibn Taymiyya uses the words of Mālik b. Anas. Mālik, in response to the question of modality of God's sitting on the Throne says, "God's sitting on the Throne (*istiwā')* is known, but its modality (*kayf*) is unknown (*majhūl*), and believing in it is necessary (*wājib*), and questioning about it is an innovation (*bidʿa*)."[16] On this point, Binyamin Abrahamov's evaluation is important. For him, Ibn Taymiyya's whole effort is not to explain how God descended or sat upon the Throne, but to prove the possibility of this kind of action for God as well as the fact that this action happens in a different form than human actions.[17]

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya opposes interpretation (*ta'wīl)* because of the incoherence of the proponents of interpretation (*ta'wīl*). Their incoherence is that some of them affirm the limit of the intellect while others rely on it on understanding of revelation. While they know their intellect is limited to grasp everything, how can they produce new meanings in order to explain the divine text on the basis of their intellect? Briefly, if the intellect does not grasp something because of its limitations, it is not eligible to ascribe a meaning to

---

[15] Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 93.

[16] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:278. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:41.

[17] Binyamin Abrahamov, "The 'Bi-lā kayfa' Doctrine and Its Foundations in Islamic Theology," *Arabica* 42 3 (1995): 365-379 (376).

the words of God.[18] Thus, Ibn Taymiyya, concerning understanding the Qur'ān, adopts the method which is based on accepting these kinds of verses without questioning their modalities.

As for the second aspect of Ibn Taymiyya's approach to the Qur'ān, it is relevant to some particular subjects rather than specific verses. In these subjects, Ibn Taymiyya's arguments are generally based on ḥadīth reports. It should not be ignored that these reports have been criticized by the scholars of ḥadīth by means of various methods of the science of ḥadīth. For example, on the subject of the ascension *(miʿrāj),* intercession (*shafāʿa*), and length of time of punishment in hell Ibn Taymiyya follows his own view even if it is not clearly expressed in the Qur'ān.[19]

For instance, the intercession of the Prophet Muhammad (*shafāʿa*), one of the most controversial matters in Islam, may be given to be an example to analyze Ibn Taymiyya's position. Although the existence of the intercession of the Prophet in the afterlife is affirmed by Muslims in general, some of them such as Muʿtazila concerning some of the Qur'ānic verses reject this kind of intercession for the forgiveness of sinful believers.[20] In the Qur'ān, God has

---

[18] Abrahamov, "Bi-Lā Kayfa," 369.

[19] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 1:103-104; 108-109; 6:6-7. Also, as an example of discussion about the length of the time of the punishment in hell, see Hoover, "Islamic Universalism: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Salafī Deliberations on the Duration of Hell-Fire," . Hoover, "Against Islamic Universalism: ʿAlī al-Ḥarbī's 1990 Attempt to Prove that Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya Affirm the Eternity of Hell-Fire," 377-399.

[20] Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025) who is one of the most eminent scholars of Muʿtazila, in his work *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa,* gives details of the subject of the intercession. While he affirms the intercession of the Prophet Muhammad by referring the consensus of the Muslim community (*ummah*), he argues the particular conditions of the intercession. Qāḍī ʿAbd al-

declared that each person will be assessed according to his own obedience. Some of these explicit verses are such as, "And the earth will shine with the light of its Lord, and the record [of deeds] will be placed, and the prophets and the witnesses will be brought, and it will be judged between them in truth, and they will not be wronged. And every soul will be fully compensated [for] what it did; and He is most knowing of what they do" (Q, 39:69-70); "And fear a Day when no soul will suffice for another soul at all, nor will intercession be accepted from it, nor will compensation be taken from it, nor will they be aided" (Q, 2:48); and "O you who have believed, spend from that which We have provided for you before there comes a Day in which there is no exchange and no friendship and no intercession. And the disbelievers - they are the wrongdoers." (Q, 2:254)

Definitely, Ibn Taymiyya endeavors to ground his idea of intercession on the ḥadīth reports, as well as verses which are open to various interpretations since they do not dictate an explicit meaning.[21] For example, in order to prove the existence of intercession he uses the verses such as "He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they cannot intercede except on behalf of one whom He approves. And they, from fear of Him, are apprehensive" (Q, 21:28) and "And how many angels there are in the heavens whose intercession will not avail at all except [only] after Allah has permitted

---

Jabbār Ibn Aḥmad, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa*. Ed. ʿUthmān ʿAbd al-Karīm, (Cairo: Wahba Library, 1996), 687-693. Also, see A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965), 61

[21] Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 1:10-24.

[it] to whom He wills and approves" (Q, 53:26). Ibn Taymiyya in his work *Kitāb al-īmān*[22] highlights that intercession is possible only through God's permission.[23]

Although there are some verses, as showed above, which are very clear on denial of any intercession in the afterlife, Ibn Taymiyya gives very detailed information of types of intercession by referring to other verses. Their meanings are not as clear as the former verses.[24] In his work *al-ʿAqīda al-wāsiṭiyya*[25] Ibn Taymiyya mentions three types of intercession. The first is that intercession for those who are in the process of being judged. The second, intercession for those who already deserve to enter the paradise. The third one is that intercession for those who deserve to be sent to the hell. Actually, he provides more detailed information on the last part of intercession. He claims that some people, who already entered hell, can be released from hell by virtue of the intercession of not only the Prophet Muhammad but also that of the other prophets and men of virtue (*ṣiddīqūn*).[26] It should be noted that this intercession is completely different from the mercy of God because Ibn Taymiyya makes a different category for those who can leave hell without intercession, but through God's mercy and kindness.

---

22 This treatise is found in Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 7:4-460.
23 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 7:77.
24 Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb iqtiḍā' aṣ-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm.* Ed. Ahmad Hamdi Imam, (Jeddah: Dār al-madanī, 1986), 443-444, trans. in Memon, *Against Popular Religion*, 321. In these pages, Ibn Taymiyya says that the Salaf affirms the intercession of the Prophet Muhammad, the other prophets while some Muslim sects deny it. Also, Ibn Taymiyya gives a place for some ḥadīth reports supporting the existence of the intercession of the Prophet Muhammad. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 1:154.
25 This treatise is found in Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:129-159.
26 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:147; 1:147-148.

In another place, Ibn Taymiyya continues to explain his ideas of intercession that for him, the Prophets' intercession will not benefit anyone unless he fulfills certain conditions such as having faith and obeying what the Prophet brought us.[27] Moreover, according to Ibn Taymiyya, sinners among believers can benefit from the Prophets' intercession as long as they believe in Islam even though the Prophet is the intercessor for all creatures with his greatest intercession.[28] In this case, Ibn Taymiyya limits intercession with the believers only. It means that none of disbelievers can benefit from the intercession of a prophet. On the other hand, according to him, there is a consensus among the Companions (*ṣaḥāba*), the followers, and the imams of Muslims on intercession for the sinners of the believers.[29] What is rejected by the Qur'ān, for Ibn Taymiyya, is any kind of intercession for polytheists and disbelievers. Also, for Ibn Taymiyya, those who reject the intercession of the Prophet are the people of innovation (*ahl al-bidʿa*) such as Khawārij, Muʿtazila, and Zaydiyya.[30] Certainly, on the base of this approach to the matter of intercession, there is a well-known ḥadīth report. According to this report, the Prophet Muhammad will intercede for those believers who have major sins.[31] In addition to this report, to support the idea of intercession Ibn Taymiyya mentions some of the ḥadīth reports such as "Every prophet is allowed one answered prayer. As for me, I delayed my request in order to

---

[27] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 1:145.
[28] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 1:143; 147.
[29] Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 1:10.
[30] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 1:148.
[31] "My intercession will be for those of my people who have committed major sins" Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, Kitāb al-Sunnah, Section of Intercession, no: 4739.

intercede for my community on the Judgment Day"[32] and "God takes out of the Fire whoever has an atom's weight of *īmān* (faith)."[33] Thus, Ibn Taymiyya affirms that whoever testifies the Islamic testimony (*shahāda),* that there is no god, but God, will be interceded.[34] In other words, it may be said that while Ibn Taymiyya rejects intercession for disbelievers and polytheists, he accepts intercession and allows it to the believers only.

Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya mentions a consensus of the Salaf on intercession. It should be noted that the existence of the consensus on this matter is affirmed by only some of the Muslim scholars who are on agreement because other scholars who do not accept this kind of intercession are blamed by Ibn Taymiyya as heretics. In this regard, Ibn Taymiyya criticizes the Muʿtazila and the Khawārij because of their objections to the validity of the Prophet's intercession.[35] From Ibn Taymiyya's perspective, this point is very clear but in fact, it is not so clear because even if he accepts intercession for believers, as quoted the verse (Q, 2:254) above, God addressed believers in this verse by saying, "O you who have believed" (*yā ayyuha-lladhīna āmanū*). In this verse, the addressed people, who are warned with a day in which there is no intercession and friendship, are already believers, they are not unbelievers. On the other hand, on the judgment day, God already has a conditional mercy

---

[32] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 7:222, trans. in Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-īmān: Book of Faith,* translated by Salman Hassan Al-Ani; Shadia Ahmad Tel (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2009), 230.
[33] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 7:184, trans. in Tel, *Kitāb al-īmān*, 194.
[34] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 7:78.
[35] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 1:148.

for sinners among believers. Many verses of the Qur'ān emphasize the forgiveness of God. For example, it is in the Qur'ān that "If you avoid the major sins which you are forbidden, We will remove from you your lesser sins and admit you to a noble entrance [into Paradise]" (Q, 4:31). Also there is another verse that "Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful" (Q, 25:70). So, in the Qur'ān, the case of being saved is very clear at least for the believers.

Thus, it should be noted that the intercession of the Prophets or that of the other people is not the same kind of salvation with God's forgiveness and mercy. God says in the Qur'ān "And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives. And that his effort is going to be seen" (Q, 53:38-39). While Ibn Taymiyya accepts this verse as a precondition of being saved from the punishment, he offers intercession as another way in addition to the mercy of God. Even though he says that if a meaning does not conflict with the outer expression of a verse, it cannot be pronounced false,[36] it is difficult to say that intercession in the afterlife is explicitly and undoubtedly confirmed with the outer expression of the Qur'ān.

Briefly, the purpose of these explanations was to show that Ibn Taymiyya's loyalty to the outer expression of the Qur'ān is not consistent in every particular subject. He follows the outer expressions on some occasions

---

[36] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 13:236. See, Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 47.

such as the divine names and attributes by rejecting any interpretation while on the other occasions such as intercession he delivers some opinions which are not compatible properly with the outer expression of the Qur'ān. By doing so, he interprets the verses rather than taking their outer meaning. So, these illustrative explanations help us for understanding the method of Ibn Taymiyya whereby he attempts to acquire knowledge from revelation.

3.2.2. The Prophet and Ḥadīth

The position of the Prophet may be examined by two dimensions: his mission and personality. Clarifying these two dimensions may help to understand better why the Prophet must be followed in Ibn Taymiyya's thought. As the first dimension, the Prophet's mission (*nubuwwa*) is significant. The Prophet, as a complementary part of revelation concerning its true meaning, is considered to be a source of the truth because he never says anything except the truth.[37] In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya says that our responsibility, in fact, is to obey God. But, without the Messenger there is no way to know the words and commands of God truly. Therefore, since the Messenger transmits and explains the words and commands of God explicitly, we should affirm and obey what the Messenger brought to us.[38] The Prophet,

---

[37] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 19:157.
[38] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 19:69, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 241.

who makes clear everything related to the religion, should be obeyed because of his mission to explain the Qur'ān.[39]

Furthermore, since the Prophet conveys God's words, his explanations concerning religious matters are religious statements or religious judgments. Moreover, the mission of the Prophet is to be a bridge between God's commands and prohibitions and humans' needs in terms of guidance because it is possible for believers to understand the Qur'ān through the Prophet's guidance only. In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya says clearly that if the meaning of a term found in the Qur'ān or in the ḥadīth has been clarified by the Prophet, there is no need to search another ground for this meaning from the linguistic experts or anyone else.[40] It shows the certain and unshared position of the Prophet Muhammad on the explanation of revelation, the Qur'ān. As Ibn Taymiyya states, the Prophet not only brought the Qur'ān to his companions but also he explained its meaning to them clearly.[41]

Since the Prophet took the mission from God, he is saved from mistakes on his mission. His religious speeches, which are based on revelation, contain no mistake.[42] However, the Prophet's decisions related to non-religious matters such as political, social, or economic matters may not be correct. Ibn Taymiyya

---

39 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 19:155-160.

40 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 7:286; 19:236, trans. in Gleave, *Islam and Literalism: Literal Meaning and Interpretation in Islamic Legal Theory*, 182.

41 Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr,* 35. See Saleh, "Foundations of Qur'ānic Exegesis," 128.

42 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 8:91, trans. in Racha El-Omari, "Ibn Taymiyya's 'Theology of the Sunna' and his Polemics with the Ashʿarites," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,* ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 106.

says that the scholars of the Muslims have an agreement on the innocence of the Prophet concerning his mission and what he brings to us from God. Also, even if the Prophets may err, the error is corrected through his repentance.[43] As a note, Ibn Taymiyya blames some of the Islamic sects such as Rāfiḍa, a group of Shīʿa Islam, who share the Prophet's special position with their imams by claiming that the Prophet and their Imams are innocent. Nevertheless, for Ibn Taymiyya, this is not an idea approved by the great majority of Muslim scholars.[44]

It is clear that the authority of the Prophet Muhammad on religious issues is an indisputable fact. Ibn Taymiyya's loyalty to the ḥadīths of the Prophet is a well-known reality as well because affirmation of the Prophet is a requirement of Islamic belief.[45] In this regard, when Ignaz Goldziher mentions Ibn Taymiyya's method, he says that Ibn Taymiyya relied on the Sunna and on the Sunna alone.[46] The question is how people who lived after the Prophet's time can acquire the prophetic reports correctly which are the essential parts of the revelation concerning its true meaning. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya's approach to the science of ḥadīth gains more importance. In the science of ḥadīth, the successive narration (*mutawātir*) comes first as criterion of accuracy

---

[43] Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya fī naqḍ kalām al-Shīʿa al-Qadariyya.* Ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, 9 vols. (Riyāḍ: Jāmiʿat al-Imām Muḥammad b. Suʿūd al-Islāmiyya, 1986), 1: 470; 2:396-400, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 245. Also, see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 193, n.71; Shahab Ahmed, "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Satanic Verses," *Studia Islamica* 87 (1998): 67-124 (86-87; 90-100).

[44] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 4:319-321; Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 2:453-468.

[45] Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-Nubuwwa.* ʿAbd al-ʿazīz bin Ṣāliḥ (Riyādh: Aḍwā' al-Salaf, 2000), 37.

[46] Goldziher, *Introduction*, 240.

of a ḥadīth report. Successive narration is one of the indications of soundness of the chain of the ḥadīth. According to Sait Özervarlı, Ibn Taymiyya esteems Imam al-Bukhārī and Imam Muslim after Ahmad b. Ḥanbal's work, *Musnad* on the matter of ḥadīths. Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya accepts the methods of the classical science of ḥadīth to be a standard for the veracity of a ḥadīth report. If the report is not compatible with the criterion of the science of ḥadīth, he does not accept the report as a base of his idea even if the report is compatible with the opinions of his school (*madhhab*).[47]

On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyya criticized some of the ḥadīth reports as well. According to Maulana Muhammad Abū Bakr Ghāzipūrī, Ibn Taymiyya rejects some authentic ḥadīths even though they were accepted by al-Bukhārī and al-Tirmidhī. For example, Maulana Muhammad claims that Ibn Taymiyya rejects the following ḥadīth "My *Rabb* (Lord) Most Honorable and Majestic came to me in the best of forms…" by saying that "Every ḥadīth that states that Muhammad saw his *Rabb* with his eyes on earth (*fī al-ʿarḍ*) is a lie…similarly the ḥadīth which people of knowledge narrate, "I saw my *Rabb* in such and such a state…""[48] Certainly, this issue belongs to the ḥadīth criticism, but it is obvious that Ibn Taymiyya does not accept whatever ḥadīth report he hears

---

[47] Özervarlı, *Kelâmcılara Eleştirisi*, 23.

[48] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:386, trans. in Moulana Muhammad Abu Bakr Gazipuri al-Ansari, *Was Ibn Taymiah from the Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaʿah* (Karachi: Zam Zam, 2010), 62. This report is found in Imam Abū ʿīsā Muhammad al-Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī,* Chapters on Tafsīr, Book 47, ḥadīth no: 3541-3542. In this collection, this report is classified as "Good" (*Hasan*). The vision of God is a controversial point. According to Ibn Taymiyya, the important point is that the Prophet Muhammad did not see God on earth absolutely. As to whether the Prophet saw God in the night of ascension (*al-layla al-miʿrāj*) is not certain while according to Ibn ʿAbbās and majority of scholars of the Sunna, the Prophet saw God at that time.

even though he confirms the authority of ḥadīths in the religion because of compatibility of the ḥadīths with the Qur'ān.[49]

As for the second dimension, it is the Prophet's personality as a human being. He is the best among creatures according to Ibn Taymiyya.[50] This is a little bit different from the divine message because in this case the point stressed is the Prophet himself. While Ibn Taymiyya accepts the possibility of some minor mistakes and lapses of memory in the prophets because of their human nature, he does not reject some reports which show the Prophet as something superior naturally to a normal human being.[51] Indeed, while the matter of intercession explained above is a significant example of exalting the Prophet per se, there may be found additional examples to show this kind of approach to the Prophet. For example, in *Kitāb iqtiḍā' aṣ-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm* Ibn Taymiyya did not reject an incident in which the Prophet from his grave helped someone who complained of the drought. Thereupon the Prophet asked him to go to ʿUmar and asked him to perform prayer with the people in an open area for rain.[52]

In addition, the matter of being an intermediary or means (*wasīla*) may be provided as another example. The Prophet Muhammad, according to Ibn

---

[49] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:49.

[50] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 1:145. Ibn Taymiyya states that *wasīla* (intermediary), which is a principle in faith and religion, means to seek help of God through the intercession and supplication of the Prophet. Denying of this meaning makes man disbeliever. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 1:153.

[51] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:472.

[52] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtiḍā',* 373, trans. in Memon, *Against Popular Religion*, 293.

Taymiyya, is an intermediary to approach to God. In fact, as said above, the Prophet is a bridge between God's message and the need of guidance of human beings. But it may be understood as if he is the bridge between God and human beings. Thereby, it is possible to consider the Prophet's mission and his human nature as the same. In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya uses the verse "You who believe! Do your duty to God, seek the means of approach unto Him" (Q, 5:35) as a starting point of his idea. Also, he makes a definition of the intermediary (*wasīla*) by saying that it is something to approach God by means of what the Prophet has taught us. There is no way to approach God other than that way.[53] In fact, as Ibn Taymiyya mentioned clearly, we should seek for intermediaries to approach God by following the footsteps of the Prophet. Although, the point here is the message of the Prophet rather than his personality, Ibn Taymiyya affirms seeking for an intermediary (*wasīla*) as acceptable only if it is sought through the Prophet.[54] In that case, any kind of understanding of the Prophet in which there is an exaltation of him may lead people to an assumption that the Prophet is much more than he really is. For instance, Ibn Taymiyya mentions a blind man who asked the Prophet to pray for him. Then, when the Prophet prayed for him, God gave him back his sight.[55] Even more, ʿUmar's words that "whenever we experienced drought before, we sought access to You [God]

---

[53] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 1:200, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 250.

[54] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 1:104-105. According to Özervarlı, the reports informing that people will ask for intercession from the Prophet in the Judgement Day indicate permissibility of a means (*wasīla*) which is a kind of supplication. Özervarlı, *Kelâmcılara Eleştirisi*, 39.

[55] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 1:222, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 253. For *wasīla*, see *Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī*, Chapter on Supplication, Ḥadīth no: 3578.

through our Prophet," proves the Prophet's position in this sense.[56] These incidents in which the Prophet became an intermediary by which to approach God are considered by Ibn Taymiyya to be among the miracles of the Prophet.

Eventually, it can be said that in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching, the Prophet's position on knowledge is based on two reasons. One of them is that the Prophet was given revelation, the Qur'ān which encompasses all religious realities, all knowledge found in the other revealed scriptures, and rational proofs which support the revelational information. Also, the Prophet, who has the best knowledge of revelation, is the best source of the meaning of revelation. The other one is his exclusive personality that makes him one who should be followed. Hence, when revelational knowledge is in question in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching, the Prophet's ḥadīths should be assessed to be one of the complementary parts of the revelational knowledge.

3.2.3. The Salaf (righteous ancestors)

The *Salaf* or *Salaf al-Ṣāliḥīn* (the righteous ancestors) refers to the first three generations of Muslims. They are the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (*ṣahāba*), the Successors (*tābiʿūn*), and the Followers of the Successors (*tabāʿu al-tābiʿīn*).[57] The definition of the Companions is significant because the Companions are the closest people to the source of

---

[56] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtiḍā',* 415, trans. in Memon, *Against Popular Religion*, 310. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book of Invoking God for Rain, Ḥadīth no: 123. Also, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 1:104.

[57] Saleh, "Foundations of Qur'ānic Exegesis," 154.

Islam. According to Imams such as Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, al-Shāfiʿī, and Mālik, whoever saw the Prophet and believed in him, even if it was very short time, is one of his Companions. Ibn Taymiyya benefits especially from what Mālik said, "Anyone who kept the company of the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, for a year, a month, or a day, or just saw him, and believed in him, is one of his Companions."[58] Definitely, all three generations are very precious. For Ibn Taymiyya the Companions (*ṣahāba*) are the best among them. In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya uses a ḥadīth report in which the Prophet said, "The best of my people are those I live among them. Then those who will follow them, and then those who will come after them."[59] For Ibn Taymiyya, the Companions are the best in knowledge and obedience, and therefore the Companions are on the true path completely.[60] As for morality and piety, Ibn Taymiyya mentions the heart of the Salaf. In order to support his idea on this subject, Ibn Taymiyya appeals to some of the statements from the Salaf. For example, he says that according to ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd (d. 653), the Companions possess the purest heart, the deepest knowledge, and the least artificiality (*takalluf*). God had chosen them as companions of His messenger and for establishing the religion (*iqāma*).[61] Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya supports his idea by referring to the Qur'ānic verse, "You are the best nation produced

---

[58] Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Ṣaḥiḥ madhhab ahl al-madīna: The Madinan Way: The Soundness of the Basic Premises of the School of the People of Madina,* translated by Aisha Bewley (Norwich: Bookwork, 2000), 5.

[59] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 20:294-5. Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 480. Also, Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Faḍā'il al-ṣaḥāba, 210; 211; 212; 214.

[60] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:222-223.

[61] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:69 and Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 2:79.

[as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in God" (Q, 3:110).[62] Eventually, this feature of the Salaf strengthens their authority on religion in Ibn Taymiyya's mind.

It is obvious that both the ḥadīth reports and Ibn Taymiyya indicate the superiority of the Salaf. This superiority answers the questions of why Muslims should follow the Salaf and why consensus (*ijmāʿ*) is limited to the Salaf only. This superiority, from Ibn Taymiyya's perspective, may be examined with two aspects: nearness to the Islamic sources, which are the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths; and the intellectual capacity of the Salaf. It should be noted that for Ibn Taymiyya, the Salaf are all trustworthy and the best of Muslims. However, these people were not free from error.[63] It means that Ibn Taymiyya considers the Salaf to be the best of Muslims not because of they are free from error, but because they are closer to the Qur'ān and the Prophet than the other Muslims are.

The primary reason for the superiority of the Salaf is their nearness to Islamic knowledge which is based on the Qur'ān and the Prophet. Each Muslim group of the three generations, according to George Makdisi, is qualified according to their nearness to the Qur'ān and the Prophet. Inherently, the

---

[62] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:509.

[63] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 2:456-457. Concerning the mistakes of the Salaf, Ibn Taymiyya takes into account some of their opinions. For example, some of the Companions deny that death can hear the living one; some of them do not accept that the ascension of the Prophet took place wakeful; and others deny that Muhammad saw his Lord. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 12:492.

Companions are at the highest level of this ranking.[64] The Companions are recognized to be the people of the ḥadīth (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) and have a privileged status because they had an opportunity to listen to the Prophet directly.[65]

Ibn Taymiyya, as mentioned above, considers the ḥadīths of the Prophet to be a complementary part of revelational knowledge, whereby the Salaf, the transmitters of the ḥadīths, become indirectly another part of the revelational knowledge. As said before, for Ibn Taymiyya, the best way of understanding the Qur'ān is to resort to the Qur'ān itself. If the answer expected is not found in the Qur'ān, the Sunna of the Prophet is searched, and then the interpretations of the Companions are looked at in order to find the best meaning of the text.[66] Following the first two steps, the Qur'ān and the Sunna, depends on following the path of the Companions who are the most knowledgeable people among the Muslim community. Ibn Taymiyya says,

> We know that the Qur'ān was read by the Companions and the Successors and their Successors and that they were the most informed about its meanings and interpretation. They were also fully aware of the truth that Muhammad was given. Whoever disagrees with their views and contradicts their interpretation is wrong both in his new interpretation and the meaning he gives to the words themselves (the *madlūl* and *dalīl*).[67]

---

[64] George Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," in *Studies on Islam,* ed. Merlin L. Swartz, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 216-274, (257).

[65] Saleh, "Foundations of Qur'ānic Exegesis," 137.

[66] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr,* 93-95, trans. in Saleh, "Foundations of Qur'ānic Exegesis," 144-146.

[67] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr,* 91, trans. in Saleh, "Foundations of Qur'ānic Exegesis," 142. Also, see Yossef Rapoport, "Ibn Taymiyya's Radical Legal Thought: Rationalism, Pluralism and the Primacy of Intention," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,* ed.

Therefore, it can be said that in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching every idea and practice, as Muhammad Memon says, should be tested with the Qur'ān, the Sunna, and the opinions of the Salaf.[68] Also, since the Salaf has more reliable knowledge of the Qur'ān and the prophetic reports by finding more opportunities to be able to record what the Prophet brought and said, they remarkably deserve to be followed more than anyone else.[69]

As for the intellectual capacity of the Salaf, Ibn Taymiyya in his works frequently repeats their peculiarity concerning their best qualified intellects. In this regard, he says that everyone knows that the intellects of the Companions, the Successors, and their followers are superior to the intellects of other people.[70] He attempts to provide a firm ground for his statements about the Salaf especially the Companions. In this respect, he continues this effort by quoting from Imam Shāfiʿī who, in order to emphasize the intellectual capacity and the perspicacity of the Companions, says that they (the Companions) are superior to us in every intellectual matter and they are more knowledgeable people than us. Also, they are superior to us in every means through which true knowledge and opinion are acquired. So, what they think of us is superior to what we think of ourselves.[71]

Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, (Karachi: Oxford Universtiy Press, 2010), 195. Bewley, *Madinan Way*, 21.

[68] Memon, *Against Popular Religion*, 24; 77. *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10.

[69] Bewley, *Madinan Way*, 6.

[70] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:72.

[71] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:73.

Since the Salaf has these features such as nearness to the Prophet, special intellectual capacity, and the highest morality and piety, according to Ibn Taymiyya, they have a certain authority on religious issues. As a result of these features, Ibn Taymiyya pays more attention to the subject of consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the Salaf as well. For Ibn Taymiyya, the way of the Salaf in general, that of the Companions in particular, is the safest (*aslam*) and the most accurate way in terms of the knowledge of the religion.[72] Also, the opinions of the Companions are binding for Muslims because, for him the Companions are the most perfect (*akmal*) of Muslims (*umma*) on understanding of the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths.[73]

In this respect, it is worth noting that Ibn Taymiyya's loyalty to the Salaf may appear better in his examination of the conception of consensus (*ijmāʿ*). According to him, the Salaf indisputably has an authority in Islam because for him, the Companions are the best generation of generations.[74] He, in this matter, says that whoever takes into consideration a way of a certain scholar, jurist, or an ascetic to be better than way of the Companions is wrong, a heretic and an innovator.[75] Also, since they do not have an essential disagreement on their understanding the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths, Ibn Taymiyya

---

[72] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:379.
[73] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 2:80.
[74] Th. Emeril Homerin, "Ibn Taimīya's al-Ṣūfīyah wa-al-Fuqarā," *Arabica* 32 2 (1985): 219-244 (238). Al-Matroudi, *Conflict or Conciliation*, 18; Ibn Taymiyya, "al-ṣūfiya wa-al-fuqarā," is found in *MF*, 11:5-24.
[75] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:15. Also, see Rapoport, "Legal Thought," 201.

restricted consensus to the Salaf's opinions.[76] As another reason, it can be said that after the time of the Salaf, there is no real consensus among Muslim scholars because later Muslim scholars are numerous and dispersed to a wide area. Thereby, it is difficult to mention a valid consensus established to which all the Muslim scholars can attend.[77] By doing so, Ibn Taymiyya closes the door of providing any opinion against the opinions of the Salaf because the practice of the Companions is a proof in religion.[78]

Furthermore, it is already clear that for Ibn Taymiyya the significance of opinions of the Salaf is unquestionable. In addition to direct praises of the Companions, his stance toward them may be understood clearly through his statements of condemnation and praise for other Muslim scholars. For example, when Ibn Taymiyya criticizes the Kalām theologians (*mutakallimūn*), he asks that how can the theologians' propositions be accepted to be true in terms of the principles of Islam as long as they do not have a proof from the Book of God, His messenger's reports, and opinions of the Companions?[79] In addition, when Ibn Taymiyya praises Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, he says that Ahmad has almost no statement contradicted by revelation since Ahmad has well qualified in

---

[76] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr,* 79-81; 38. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 20:583. Rapoport, "Legal Thought," 205.

[77] Muhammad Al-Atawneh, "Wahhābī Legal Theory As Reflected in Modern Official Saudi Fatwās: Ijtihād, Taqlīd, Sources, and Methodology," *Islamic Law and Society* 18 3-4 (2011): 327-355. Also, Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb maʿārij al-wuṣūl ilā anna uṣūl al-dīn wa-furūʿuh qad bayyanahā al-Rasūl* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Salafiyya, 1967), 29-30. Rapoport, "Legal Thought," 204.

[78] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 20:304, trans. in Rapoport, "Legal Thought," 206.

[79] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:315.

knowledge of the Qur'ān, the ḥadīth, and opinions of the Companions.[80] These statements obviously indicate that one of the most important things for Ibn Taymiyya is compatibility with the opinions of the Salaf in addition to the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths of the Prophet.

Finally, revelation as the most comprehensive and reliable source of knowledge is essential in Ibn Taymiyya's epistemology. The Qur'ān includes what the other revealed books contain, and rational proofs. As for the ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad, they are necessary in order to conceive truly what God sent us. The Prophet must be followed because he was given the Qur'ān and he is superior to us by virtue of his special position before God. As for the Salaf, the first three generations of Muslims, since they had found opportunities to listen to and observe the Prophet when the Qur'ān was revealed to him, they are considered to be the most reliable and correct authority for understanding revelational knowledge. Therefore, the ḥadīths and the views of the Salaf are recognized as a cornerstone of attaining to the true revelational knowledge in Ibn Taymiyya's thought.

---

[80] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 20:229. See Rapoport, "Legal Thought," 200.

3.3. The Human Intellect

In this section, the role of the human intellect (*ʿaql*) for acquisition of knowledge in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching will be examined.[1] As mentioned in the previous section, Ibn Taymiyya emphasizes the importance of revelation, the ḥadīths of the Prophet, and views of the Salaf to acquire true knowledge. However, following the Qur'ān, the Prophet, and the Salaf on many issues may not prevent some questions provided by philosophical and theological methods which are based on the human intellect arising. Ibn Taymiyya takes account of reasoning and consideration (*iʿtibār*) as a third method for acquisition of knowledge in addition to reports (*khabar*) and sense (*ḥiss*).[2] It should be made clear that according to Ibn Taymiyya, reasoning, definitely, is not forbidden by the Islamic Law (*sharīʿa*). He posits the intellect as integral for acquisition of knowledge. In this regard, he says that while the intellect is not independent but a faculty placed in the self (*nafs*), it is the precondition of knowledge.[3]

Moreover, the function of the intellect is not only to understand revelation properly, but also it may develop knowledge to some extent. In this respect, statements may be offered in order to prove Ibn Taymiyya's acceptance for a productive role of the intellect on knowledge. For example, in his *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr* he says that knowledge is that which is

---

1 According to Ibn Taymiyya, the term *ʿaql* means an atom (*jawhar*) in Greek philosophy. But, for Muslims it means the human intellect through which the human being contemplates. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:231.

2 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 7:324. In this context, even though "sense" seems to be distinct from the intellect, they must be interconnected because only the intellect can give a meaning to what sense organs see, hear, taste, smell, and feel.

3 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:338-9. Also, see Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 6.

transmitted from an innocent (*maʿṣūm*) or a statement to which there is well-known evidence (*dalīl al-maʿlūm*).[4] So, knowledge can be generated and evaluated through the human intellect. According to this statement, it may be said that the human intellect has a capacity to produce knowledge as well as affirmation or negation of knowledge as well.

After these explanations, this section will continue with some details in order to make clear Ibn Taymiyya's approach to the human intellect which is a fundamental tool of theology and philosophy to which he has enormous objections. His objections are not to these sciences themselves; but to their way of using the intellect. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya's approach to the intellect may be examined by classifying the problems as criticism of theology, criticism of philosophy, cooperation of the intellect and revelation, and the relationship between the intellect and the natural constitution of the human being (*fiṭra*). I attempt to look at the problem from the different aspects, but the core is the same, that is, how Ibn Taymiyya considered the intellect for acquisition of knowledge and what he thinks of the relationship between the intellect and revelation.

3.3.1. Criticism of Theology (The Kalām)

Ibn Taymiyya's criticism against the theologians (*mutakallimūn*) through various elaborated arguments is significant in terms of showing his

---

[4] Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr,* 33, trans. in Saleh, "Foundations of Qur'ānic Exegesis," 126. In this work, Saleh identifies the proof as "logical." Also, he affirms that for Ibn Taymiyya there are two kinds of the knowledge: Divine and rational knowledge. It is worth noting that Ibn Taymiyya in different place categorizes knowledge as that which is known by revelational or traditional proofs (*adilla al-samʿiyya*), that which is not known by rational proofs (*adilla al-ʿaqliyya*), and that which is known by both revelational and rational proofs.Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 13:137-138.

attitude toward the human intellect. The underlying reason of his criticism, according to Fazlur Rahman, is a proposition that the science of Kalām theology has not been based on the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths, especially after 3rd century.[5] The science of Islamic theology has been known through several names such as *uṣūl al-dīn* (the principles of religion), *al-fiqh al-akbar* (the greatest understanding), *ʿilm al-tawḥīd* (science of the oneness), and *ʿilm al-dhāt wa'l-ṣifāt* (science of the essence and the attributes) while Ibn Taymiyya does not accept some of the above names, especially the principles of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*) since theology does not make use of the evidences from the Qur'ān, the ḥadīth, and the Companions.[6]

His criticism of theology, in fact, is a result of the unsound methodology of the theologians. In other words, the theologians separate the principles of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*) into rational (*ʿaqlī*) and scriptural (*samʿī*). According to this separation, the rational statements are not known or explained by revelation.[7] For the theologians, the proofs, also, are divided into two categories: rational and scriptural. On the contrary, for Ibn Taymiyya, the proofs can be classified as religious and non-religious which

---

5 Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), 134.

6 Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:315. Ibn Taymiyya criticizes the Kalām theologians who without having referred to the Qur'ān, the ḥadīth, and the opinions of the Companions dictate their claims as the principles of religion. See, Yahya Michot, "From Al-Ma'mūn to Ibn Sabʿīn via Avicenna: Ibn Taymiyya's Historiography of Falsafa," in *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion,* ed. Felicitas Opwis and David Reisman, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 463.

7 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:199.

are the proofs based on innovation rather than the real sources of the religion such as the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths of the Prophet.[8]

Their incorrect method of utilizing from the human intellect through classifying the arguments as scriptural and rational leads them to a distinction of the principles of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*) and the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) as well. Traces of this approach may be seen on the separation of faith (*imān*) and practice (*ʿamal*). On the contrary, Ibn Taymiyya has a special doctrine in this matter: theological *fiqh* (jurisprudence).[9] According to Hoover, in this view there is no difference between the theological realities and the principles of law and ethics. In other words, the knowledge of God's attributes is not different from the knowledge of the practical duties of Islam. Ibn Taymiyya emphasizes the mistake of the well-known distinction between principle (*uṣūl*) and branch (*furūʿ*) as they are seen in Islamic theology and jurisprudence. For him, there is no any difference between knowing the obligation of God's commands and prohibitions which are the practical issues and knowing that God has the attributes of perfection which are the theological issues. Thus, he does not accept such a distinction at all.[10]

Ibn Taymiyya continues to outline some mistakes of the theologians which arise not only from their misunderstandings but also from their methodological unsoundness. For instance, when two proofs seem to be

---

[8] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:198-200. While Ibn Taymiyya refers to the term *al-adilla al-sharʿiyya* (religious proofs) to express rational and scriptural proofs together, he refers to the term *al-bidʿa* in order to express the non-religious statements.

[9] Jon Hoover in his book elaborates in detail Ibn Taymiyya's view concerning this matter. See Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 19-69.

[10] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:56-7. Also, see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 24.

contradictory, either both of them are certain (*qaṭʿī*) which is impossible because two opposite proofs cannot be true and certain at the same time since the certain proof denies any statement which is against the proof itself, or one of them is certain and the other is conjectural (*ẓannī*) even though both of them seem to be certain. At this time, the one which is nearer to certainty should be preferred according to all of the intelligent people since the conjectural proofs cannot be preferred instead of the certain proofs.[11] Therefore, it may be said that the theologians' claim that arguments are classified as scriptural and rational is not so acceptable because the important point for Ibn Taymiyya is certainty of the proofs and statements rather than whether the proofs are scriptural or rational. It means that the unsound method of the theologians leads them to an unsound establishment and categorization of the proofs.

In another criticism of the Kalām theologians, Ibn Taymiyya focuses on some of the terms used by the theologians frequently. For him, when the theologians explain their arguments in order to prove the existence of God, His power and will, and creation of possible things, they use the terms such as substance (*jawhar*), matter (*jism*), and accident (*ʿarāḍ*) which are not appropriate terms to explain the subjects from the religious perspective because these terms are not found in the revelational sources of religion.[12] For example, when the theologians attempt to prove the existence of God, which is one of the essential matters in Islamic theology, they, according to

---

[11] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:79, trans. in Özervarlı, "Rational Theology of Ibn Taymiyya," 86-87.

[12] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:45.

Ibn Taymiyya, generally resort to the cosmological argument (*dalīl al-ḥudūth*). This argument is based precisely on some of the terms such as substance (*jawhar*), matter (*jism*), accident (*ʿarāḍ*), and space (*ḥayz*) that do not exist in the real world, but exist in the mind only. However, God in the Qur'ān always points to the real stages of the creation of human beings and contemplation of nature which is the concrete world itself in order to declare His existence.[13]

Criticism of Kalām theology in Ibn Taymiyya is not limited to these points. He mentions a contradiction occurred among the theologians. He says that while the theologians themselves separate arguments into scriptural and rational, how can they claim infidelity (*kufr*) for one who opposes their opinions which can be known through the intellect? In the religion, there is no statement in which those who reject some of the rational arguments are called infidels. Only those who reject what the Prophet delivered to us can be accused with infidelity; this kind of approach of the theologians is inconsistent and contradictory according to Ibn Taymiyya.[14] If a statement is based on the rational proofs only, its rejection cannot cause infidelity because the term infidelity belongs to the scriptural domain. In this case, if a distinction between scriptural and rational arguments is affirmed, the result of an objection to a rational argument can be expressed with a term like ignorance or narrow-mindedness rather than infidelity.

---

[13] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 16:270-272.
[14] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:242, trans. in Özervarlı, "Rational Theology of Ibn Taymiyya," 83.

As another example of the Kalām theologians' mistakes, their misinterpretations of some anthropomorphic verses of the Qur'ān may be given. For example, he mentions the matter of God's sitting on the Throne (*istawā*) and His knowledge (*ʿilm*). Neither the former is used by Arabs, for him, to express specifically man's sitting on a seat nor the latter, knowledge (*'ilm*) is used specifically to explain what man has in his mind and heart as necessary or acquired.[15] In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya claims that even if the theologians affirm some of the divine names and attributes such as life, knowledge, power speech, hearing, and seeing, they do not comprehend, for example, what the oneness of God is (*tawḥīd*) correctly.[16] Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya criticizes again the theologians by pointing out their misunderstanding and misusage of Qur'ānic terminology. As a result of this misunderstanding, they consider the verse to be ambiguous (*mutashābih*).[17] A further step of this kind of misguided method is to accept the method of interpretation (*ta'wīl*) which by ignoring the outer meaning of the text causes a distortion (*taḥrīf*) on the meaning of revelation. According to Ibn Taymiyya, this method is adopted by many Kalām theologians who constituted their schools of thought on such a weak base.[18]

Briefly, when Ibn Taymiyya's statements about theology are examined, it should be noted that Ibn Taymiyya is not against the intellect as a tool of knowledge, but he is against the method of theologians, which is

---

15 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 33:185,
16 Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 3:294. See Michot, "Ibn Taymiyya's Historiography of Falsafa," 470.
17 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:77.
18 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:12-15.

based on the intellect only, and the categorization made by the theologians into rational and scriptural proofs. It is obvious that even though Ibn Taymiyya criticizes some Ashʿarī theologians such as al-Ghazālī, who could not attain the prophetic heritage because he inherited some doubts from theology, his main objection is directed toward especially Muʿtazilīs and Ashʿarīs rather than all of the theologians.[19] On rejection of the theological arguments and method, Ibn Taymiyya follows the way of the Salaf, people of the ḥadīth (*ahl al-ḥadīth*) especially Ḥanbalīs, and the Imams of the Islamic legal schools (*madhhab*). In this regard, Ibn Taymiyya refers to some of the words of the Imams like from Imam Shāfiʿī whose judgement on theology is that the theologians be whipped and exposed in public by announcing that these people, the theologians, left the Book and the Sunna, but followed theology. Also, Ibn Taymiyya quotes from Imam Abū Yūsuf who says that whoever demands the religion through theology is an unbeliever (*zindīq*).[20] It is possible to witness that Ibn Taymiyya's main effort is to refute the ideas of some of the theological schools like the Muʿtazila who are far away from the way of the Qur'ān and the people of

---

[19] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 4:64. In this respect, Makdisi says, "Ibn Taymiyya's conception of the Muslim community may be described by a series of concentric circles whose common centre is marked by the Qur'ān and tradition. Around this common centre the various schools of theology are located, each of them arranged according to the degree of its orthodoxy. The sole criterion of orthodoxy is the scripture supported by the consensus of the Muslim community. In the first circle, inside all the others, the one which encloses the common centre, we find the Salaf. Then come the *ahl al- sunna wa-l ḥadīth* who are follower of the Qur'ān and the Tradition of the Prophet. Next come the Sufis. And after them the *ahl al-kalām*, proponents of rationalist theology. These latter are divided into two groups: the *ahl al-ithbāt* [affirmers] and the *ahl al-nafy* [deniers], also called *al-ṣifātiyya* and *al- nufāt*, respectively. The former is composed of those rationalist theologians (*mutakallimūn*) who accept the divine attributes; the latter refers to the theologians who deny the attributes of God. The former [affirmers] are divided into three groups: the Ashʿarīya, the Kullābīya, and the Karrāmīya, while the second [deniers] are represented by the Muʿtazila… Only the Jahmīya are outside the community." Makdisi, "Hanbalite Islam," 257.

[20] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:261.

the ḥadīth rather than to discard the human intellect as a whole on acquiring knowledge.

3.3.2. Criticism of Philosophy

As for criticism of philosophy, Ibn Taymiyya's main concern is Aristotelian logic (*manṭiq*) and its effects on Muslim thinkers. The reason for this concern is that according to Ibn Taymiyya, Aristotle and his followers are the furthest from the reality concerning theological-metaphysical issues.[21] Moreover, he criticises al-Farābī (d. 950), Avicenna (d. 1037), and Averroes (d. 1198) due to their involvement in Greek philosophy and adoption of many opinions of Aristotle and Plato, such as that reasoning leads people to the solution of metaphysical problems and to ultimate happiness.[22]

Certainly, Ibn Taymiyya's objection to philosophy does not stem from a prejudged decision.[23] It is known that he is very familiar with the main philosophical ideas and thinkers. At first, he says that he thought that some philosophical and logical propositions could be true. At the same time, intelligent people do not need to learn Greek logic; ignorant people cannot grab anything from it either. Then, he thinks that these propositions

---

[21] Wael B. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), xiv; Sobhi Rayan, "Translation and Interpretation in Ibn Taymiyya's Logical Definition," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19 6 (2011): 1047-1065; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:301; Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:236.

[22] Anke von Kügelgen, "The Poison of Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya's Struggle For and Against Reason," in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya,* ed. Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 256.

[23] For detailed and organized explanations of why Ibn Taymiyya objects philosophy, see Serajul Haque, "Ibn Taymiyya," in *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought,* ed. Ian Richard Netton, 4 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 4:97-121.

are wrong.[24] Thereupon, he wrote *Al-radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn*[25] (refutation of the logicians) and *Naqd al-manṭiq*[26](criticism of the logic) in order to display their incorrect aspects. In this respect, he makes use of the philosophical arguments to refute the philosophers' statements. He benefits mostly from the contradictions occurred among the philosophers themselves.

On the other hand, since Ibn Taymiyya dealt with philosophy so much, it is said that Ibn Taymiyya swallowed the poison of philosophy although his essential purpose, according to Wael B. Hallaq, was to dissuade Muslims from false statements of philosophy.[27] This intensive occupation with philosophy causes Ibn Taymiyya to be considered by some scholars to be a philosopher. For example, as Anke von Kügelgen noted, Al-Sayyīd Sulaymān al-Nadwī (d. 1953) sees Ibn Taymiyya as a forerunner of David Hume (d. 1776) and John Stuart Mill (d. 1873), while Moroccan scholar Muhammad Yatīm (b. 1956) considers Ibn Taymiyya to be one of the most eminent philosophers in history. Also, some of them interpret Ibn Taymiyya's criticisms of philosophy to be a philosophical revolution.[28] Definitely, there may be seen similarities between Ibn Taymiyya and certain philosophers such as Averroes. Both of them, as George Tamer notes, agree

---

[24] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 9:82.

[25] Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ṣamad Sharaf al-Dīn al-Kutubī, (Lahore: Idārat al-tarjumān al-sunna), 1976.

[26] Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Naqḍ al-Manṭiq*, ed. Shaykh Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq Hamza, (Cairo: Maṭbaʿa al-sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1951). In Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 4:1-190 and 9:5-81.

[27] Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, *al-Naṣīḥa al-dhahabiyya li-Ibn Taymiyya*. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī, (Damascus: 1928-1929), 33. Also, Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy," 257 and Yahya Michot, "Ibn Taymiyya's Commentary on the Creed of al-Ḥallāj," in *Sufism and Theology*, ed. Ayman Shihadeh, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 123. Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, L.

[28] Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy," 283.

on many issues of theology such as criticism of the syllogism of Kalām theology, the rejection of creation of the world in time, and criticism against the Ashʿarīs' rejection of causes other than God.[29]

However, applying some philosophical arguments against the philosophers does not make him a philosopher because, despite all these similarities, Ibn Taymiyya is fundamentally against arguments of philosophy. For example, since the philosophers consider God to be something among existent beings, when they attempt to prove the existence of God, they depart from other existent beings toward God. Eventually, as Jon Hoover noted when he discusses Ibn Taymiyya's view of God's perfection, Ibn Taymiyya's method on this matter places him closer to the philosophers, but it does not mean Ibn Taymiyya is a philosopher.[30]

Now, I will focus on particularly on some reasons why Ibn Taymiyya is against philosophy. Primarily, according to him, while philosophers do not agree with each other even on the same matters, they claim that rational argumentation leads people to truth and certainty. He asks which truth is acceptable when each one of the philosophers reaches different results. For example, even though definitions (*ḥadd*) are very significant in the Aristotelian logic, the logicians could not establish yet a definition which is acceptable for everyone and encompassing all of their criterion. Even though the definition of a human being as "a being who is

---

[29] Tamer, "The Curse of Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya as a Philosopher in Contemporary Islamic Thought," 344-348.

[30] Jon Hoover, "Perpetual Creativity in the Perfection of God: Ibn Taymiyya's Hadith Commentary on God's Creation of This World," *Journal Of Islamic Studies* 15 3 (2004): 287-329 (295).

capable of speaking" is famous, there is no agreement on it.[31] Thus, Ibn Taymiyya warns Muslims about the dangers of logic which is far away from truth while he notes that philosophers are more knowledgeable than theologians in the fields of the nature, physics, and mathematic.[32]

While Ibn Taymiyya struggles to display the dangers and mistakes of philosophy and logic, he is wary and careful on the classification of philosophical ideas and thinkers. He says in his *Minhāj al-Sunna* that philosophy cannot be rejected or affirmed completely on account of the fact that there is no answer agreed by philosophers concerning theology, resurrection, prophecy, law, natural sciences, mathematic, and even logic on the one hand.[33] On the other hand, he says that whatever they agree on are some rational and perceptible realities which are not denied by any person because these realities are observable by all people. And, whoever claims that philosophers agree on a matter does not know anything about them, their schools of thought, and their differences. Looking at the approaches of the followers of Aristotle, who are Themistius (d. 387), Alexander of Aphrodisias, Proclus (d. 485), al-Fārābī (d. 950), Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), Suhrawardī al-maqtūl (d. 1191), Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), and Abū al-Barakāt (d. 1165), is sufficient in order to understand the differences of philosophers.[34]

---

[31] Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn.* Ed. ʿAbd al-Ṣamad Sharaf al-Dīn al-Kutubī, (Beirut: Muassasa al-rayān, 2005), 50-53. See Özervarlı, *Kelâmcılara Eleştirisi*, 108.

[32] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:359; 3:287.

[33] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:357; Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:193.

[34] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:357-358. See Özervarlı, *Kelâmcılara Eleştirisi*, 17.

This irreconcilable nature of the philosophers is an important argument for Ibn Taymiyya when he refutes their ideas. He, also, has some other objections to the philosophers' approaches to theological issues. For example, on the matter of the relationship between the divine attributes and the Essence of God (*dhāt*), he does not accept the possibility of imagining separation between the attributes and the essence because for him, a being qualified with knowing, seeing, hearing, speaking, and power is definitely more perfect than a being which is not qualified with these attributes.[35] Upon this, he claims that in order to affirm the perfectness of God, His essence should be contemplated together with these attributes. Otherwise, as philosophers claim, the attributes would make God perfect. For him, when one talks about the essence, he already talks about these attributes because the attributes subsist in the essence. Therefore, he says, thinking about God's essence without attending to the attributes, which are essential, is to think of nothing.[36]

In addition, Ibn Taymiyya criticizes philosophers concerning the origin of creation. According to philosophers like Al-Fārābī and Avicenna, the origin of existent beings is the Necessary Existent, God from which the First Intellect, the other intellects, and then all existent beings through emanation come out respectively.[37] But, according to Ibn Taymiyya, since

---

[35] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:95. This issue will be elaborated in the last chapter of the thesis when I focus on comparison between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. As a note, in this regard Ibn Taymiyya thinks of Ibn al-ʿArabī influenced from the philosophers. Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xi-xiv.

[36] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:100.

[37] Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992)13-15; 29-31; 45-46. Jon McGinnis, *Avicenna* (Oxford: Oxford

this kind of understanding makes God a passive agent of creation of the world, it is wrong. God is the active agent of creation; due to His perfection He creates with wisdom and will, in contrast to the view of the philosophers that God is a kind of source of the world which emanates from Him without will.[38] The roots of this kind of ideas in Islamic philosophy are found in Greek philosophy.[39] Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya provides objections to Greek philosophy, logic, metaphysics, and Muslim philosophers who adopted this kind of philosophy and logic.

Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya classifies Muslim theologians in accordance with their occupation with philosophy. According to him, the worst of them are those who are much more than others contaminated with philosophy. For example, on demonstration of the attributes and the oneness of God, theologians such as al-Rāzī (d. 1209) and al-Âmidī (d. 1233) who mixed theology with philosophy are inferior to al-Juwaynī (d. 1085); and al-Juwaynī is inferior to al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013); and al-Bāqillānī is inferior to al-Ashʿarī (d. 936); and al-Ashʿarī is inferior to Ibn Kullāb (d. 855); and Ibn Kullāb is inferior to the imams of the Salaf. In addition, the imams of Muʿtazila and Ashʿarīya are superior to some of Ashʿarīs who are contaminated with philosophy like al-Rāzī and al-Âmidī; and they are superior to philosophers like Avicenna; and they are superior to the ancient

---

University Press, 2010), 203-205. Netton, *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology*, 114-135; 162-174.

38 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 8:137-145. Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Ibn Taymiyyah's Critique of Aristotelian Metaphysics," *Afkār: Journal of ʿAqīdah and Islamic Thought* 11 (2010): 167-190

39 Richard Walzer, "Platonism in Islamic Philosophy," in *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought*, ed. Ian Richard Netton, 4 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1:160-174. Walzer, "Islamic Philosophy," 1:108-133.

(*qudamā'*) philosophers like Aristotle.[40] Absolutely, al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) may be taken as standing at the bottom of this ranking because, although he wrote many treatises and books in order to refute philosophy, his works were very influential in spreading philosophical conceptions and terminology of logic in the religious sciences.[41]

Briefly, in Ibn Taymiyya's works, it is possible to find many judgments about the inconsistency, deficiency, and mistakes of philosophy and logic, and its incapacity for reaching truth. He says that Greek philosophers and their followers who consider God to be a condition for the universe are ignorant of theological issues such as the oneness of God, His names and attributes, the creation of the universe, and prophecy.[42] However, as it will be seen below, Ibn Taymiyya's objections are for the misusage of the intellect in philosophy. Thus, even if some scholars like A. J. Arberry who denounce Ibn Taymiyya as an opponent of rational thinking, it is not so acceptable in this respect.[43]

It is helpful to remember that Ibn al-ʿArabī, like Ibn Taymiyya, objects to wrong methods of the philosophers and Kalām theologians. Especially on the matter of the divine names and attributes, according to both Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya, the misusing of the human intellect

---

[40] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 3:293-295.
[41] Özervarlı, *Kelâmcılara Eleştirisi*, 52. Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-radd*, 56.
[42] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 3:283-9. See Michot, "Ibn Taymiyya's Historiography of Falsafa," 466-7.
[43] Arberry, *Revelation and Reason in Islam*, 69.

leads the rational thinkers to various assumptions about God such as corporealism (*tajsīm*) and denudation of God's attributes (*taʿṭīl*).[44]

3.3.3. The Intellect and Revelation

Up to this point I have focused on reasons why Ibn Taymiyya is against theology and philosophy. Now, I will examine the relationship between the human intellect and revelation since Ibn Taymiyya pays considerable attention to this point. This subject may be approached with two aspects: the superiority between the intellect and revelation and whether or not they are dependant of each other. As for the first aspect, the theory of the Universal Law (*qānūn al-kullī*) of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209) is very important on the subject of the relationship between the intellect and the revelation. Ibn Taymiyya explains what he understands from the universal law of al-Rāzī by saying

> If scriptural and rational indications, or revelation and reason, or the obvious outward meaning of the revealed texts and the definitive conclusions of rational thought - or other such ways of phrasing it - are in conflict, then either: (1) they must both be accepted, which is impossible as this would violate the Law of Non-Contradiction [claiming both p and -p]; (2) they must both be rejected, which is also impossible as this would violate the Law of the Excluded Middle [claiming neither p nor -p]; (3) precedence must be given to revelation, which is impossible since revelation is grounded in reason, such that if we were to give priority to the former over the latter [that is, to revelation over reason], this would amount to a rejection of both

[44] Ian Almond, "The Shackles of Reason: Sufi/Deconstructive Opposition to Rational Thought," *Philosophy East and West* 53 1 (2003): 22-38 (23-25). See Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Shajarat al-Kawn*, translated by Arthur Jeffery (Lahore: Aziz, 1980), 88-89.

> reason and [by extension] that which is grounded by reason [i.e., revelation]. One must, therefore, (4) give precedence to reason over revelation, then either make figurative interpretation of scripture (*ta'wīl*) [to accord with reason], or negate the apparent meaning of scripture but refrain from assigning to it a definite, particular metaphorical meaning (*tafwīd*).[45]

As for Ibn Taymiyya's position, he does not admit this kind of separation between the human intellect and revelation. According to this separation, a conflict or inconsistency between the intellect and revelation would be possible. It would also be possible to imagine a statement which may be valid for the intellect while invalid for revelation. Or revelation would contain something which is not acceptable to the intellect. On the contrary, for Ibn Taymiyya the intellect and revelation are compatible with each other absolutely. Ibn Taymiyya, in this regard mentions two kinds of Qur'ānic indications (*dalāla*). The first is God's trustworthy message and the second is the Qur'ān's parables and its explanations of rational proofs. The second one is both revelational and rational (*dalāla sharʿiyya ʿaqliyya*) because they are revealed in the Qur'ān and known through the human intellect.[46] It is clear that Ibn Taymiyya does not separate the intellect and rational arguments from revelation. He considers the intellect to be a part of revelational knowledge. He suggests that the Qur'ān should be considered

---

[45] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:4, trans. in El-Tobgui, "Reconstitution of Rationality," 132. Also, see Binyamin Abrahamov, "Ibn Taymiyya on the Agreement of Reason with Tradition," *The Muslim World* 82 3-4 (1992): 256-273 (257). I quote this passage not because in order to elaborate al-Rāzī's thought here but because it is a good summary of the conflict between the intellect and the revelation. For a general approach of al-Rāzī to the subject of the intellect and the revelation, see Tariq Jaffer, "Muʿtazilite Aspects of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Thought," *Arabica* 59 (2012): 510-535.

[46] Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Rasā'il wa-fatāwā shaykh al-islām.* Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, (Cairo: 1992), 2:45, trans. in Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology*, 51.

to be not only an essential resource of religious knowledge but also as a source of rational proofs.[47]

Furthermore, al-Rāzī's universal law (*qānūn al-kullī*) not only gives precedence to the intellect over revelation but also restricts revelation into the limits of the human intellect. This is another reason why Ibn Taymiyya refutes the rule. It should be remembered that for Ibn Taymiyya, revelation including the ḥadīths of the Prophet contains rational argumentations, so revelation is not opposed to the intellect at all.[48] Rather, according to Ibn Taymiyya, the Salaf and their followers knew that the rational and revelational proofs entailed each other while the revelational knowledge such as the existence of God, His names and attributes, and His commands and prohibitions can be conceived through the human intellect.[49] Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya recognizes the authority of the intellect in the natural sciences in addition to confirming the truthfulness of transmitted knowledge. For him, the intellect is a precondition of studying and understanding sciences. Through the intellect the religious duties can be carried out in a correct way.[50]

As for the second aspect, it is the question of whether the intellect and revelation are independent from each other. This is another central issue

---

47 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 19:159.
48 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 19:159-160; Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-radd,* 427.
49 Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 31. And see "A Letter of Ibn Taymiyya to Abū l-Fidā'," ed. Serajul Haque, in *Documenta Islamica Inedita*, ed. Johann W. Fück, 155-161 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1952), 159.
50 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:338.

in Islamic philosophy and theology.[51] Ibn Taymiyya is very careful on the distinction between the intellect and revelation. He says that revelation, the Qur'ān, is full of the rational proofs and certain evidences.[52] From this perspective the intellect is that which can work within the area of revelation. Also, for him, while the preference of the scriptural or traditional arguments over rational ones is sound, the preference of rational arguments over the traditional ones is impossible and unsound.[53]

Along with Ibn Taymiyya's statements about the relationship between the intellect and revelation, his position on this matter has been interpreted in different ways by scholars. For example, according to Binyamin Abrahamov, in Ibn Taymiyya's thought, the intellect is an organ dependent on revelation.[54] It means that the intellect on the theological issues cannot generate a new idea because it is limited and can only work within the boundaries of revelation. In this case, the function of the intellect is only to understand and confirm the revelational information. On this point, Jon Hoover draws attention to Abrahamov's updated opinion.[55] According to this opinion, Abrahamov suggests that for Ibn Taymiyya the human intellect is an organ independent from revelation, which allows the intellect to generate some new theological opinions in addition to confirming the revelational statements. Nevertheless, the rational statements provided by the intellect can be valuable only so long as they accord with

---

51 A. S. Tritton, "Reason and Revelation," in *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought,* ed. Ian Richard Netton, 4 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 2:5-15.

52 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 13:137.

53 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:191, trans. in Abrahamov, "Reason with Tradition," 259.

54 Abrahamov, "Reason with Tradition," 271-272.

55 Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 29-30.

revelation.[56] According to this second opinion, Abrahamov confirms the independent status of the human intellect. Furthermore, Hoover mentions another interpretation of the position of Ibn Taymiyya provided by Yahya Michot. It is that even though the intellect and revelation are separate from each other, they come together because something that contradicts revelation is not in the circle of rationality.[57]

On the other hand, for M. Sait Özervarlı, in Ibn Taymiyya's thought, there is not a separate area for the intellect which should be internalized within the revelational field. He suggests that Ibn Taymiyya defends a kind of rationality which is based on the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths. This method also is sound according to the leaders of the Salaf who, unlike al-Rāzī's philosophical method, did not need to separate the intellect and revelation. They considered the intellect to be a tool working within the boundaries of revelation.[58] Also, Carl El-Tobgui in his thesis states that according to Ibn Taymiyya, the revelational information can be confirmed by the intellect alone.[59] It is understood that it is not easy to determine the exact position of the intellect across the revelational knowledge. But, it is clear that the intellect is an important tool alongside revelation.

Ibn Taymiyya tries keeping his middle position between revelation and the intellect. According to his judgement, if a commentary on the Qur'ān (*tafsīr*) is based on the intellect only without referring to the Qur'ān,

---

[56] Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology*, 51.
[57] Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 30. For the original version of the book, see Jean R. Michot, *Ibn Taymiyya: Lettre à Abū l-Fidā'* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, 1994), 18.
[58] Özervarlı, *Kelâmcılara Eleştirisi*, 82. Also, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 16:471.
[59] El-Tobgui, "Reconstitution of Rationality," 161.

the Prophet's ḥadīths, and the Companions' opinions, it is forbidden for Muslims.[60] He suggests that in order to write a commentary on the Qur'ān, Muslim scholars must resort to Qur'ān along with the ḥadīths. Also, even though there are some objections to its authenticity, he refers to the ḥadīth report, "Whoever talks about the Qur'ān merely on the basis of his intellect is a sinner, even if what he says is correct."[61] In this regard, it may be said that in Ibn Taymiyya's thought, the intellect and rational arguments are not sufficient means to talk about the Qur'ān.

It is clear that Ibn Taymiyya is anxious about using rational arguments for establishing the principles of religion not because he is against reasoning but because he thinks that the Prophet clearly explained what is obligatory to know about God, His oneness, and His attributes.[62] If Ibn Taymiyya were against benefitting from the intellect for the acquisition of knowledge and if he were underestimating the intellect, he would not call philosophers and theologians, who mixed philosophy with theology, deficient and incapable of understanding the rational proofs about which God mentioned in His book.[63] His objections would be meaningless. Instead, rational proofs are valuable as long as they are compatible with the Qur'ān.

---

60 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 13:370.

61 Abū Dāwud, *Sunan*, Kitāb al-ʿilm, 12. The grade of this report is weak (*ḍaʿīf*). Also, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 13:370, quoted in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 22.

62 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 7:286. Ibn Taymiyya considers what the Prophet brought as revelation to be more perfect and reliable while he affirms that God's oneness, His existence, and His some attributes cannot be known by means of the intellect. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 13:138.

63 Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 3:288. "*Innahum qaṣṣarū fī maʿrifati al-adillati al-ʿaqliyyati dhakarahā allāhu fī kitābihī."*

In this respect, it is worth mentioning that Ibn Taymiyya highlights the conception of the uncontaminated intellect (*ṣarīḥ ʿaql*) which may be considered to be a precondition of the consistency of the intellect and revelation. According to Ibn Taymiyya, the authentic text of the revelation (*nuṣūṣ al-thābita*) brought by the Prophet cannot contradict what is put forward by the intellect explicitly, but it contradicts that which contains confusions, doubt, and uncertainty.[64] Moreover, when Ibn Taymiyya criticizes theologians claiming that their statements oppose both the authentic revelation (*ṣaḥīḥ manqūl*) and the evident rational inferences (*ṣarīḥ maʿqūl*), he attempts to prove the cooperation of the uncontaminated intellect and revelation.[65]

Ibn Taymiyya on this matter has a special argument which is based on a presupposition. That is, if the intellect affirms what the Prophet brought, it is considered to be an uncontaminated intellect. When Ibn Taymiyya comes up with such an outcome, he both restricts the intellect to revelation and ignores outright any rational argumentation which is not supported by revelation explicitly. In this regard, he says that the intellect has proved the correctness of revelation brought by the Prophet because the message absolutely corresponds with the uncontaminated intellect.[66] In this case, if the intellect did not prove something from revelation, it means that the intellect is impure. Eventually, for Ibn Taymiyya, the interaction

---

64 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:155.

65 For this issue, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:172; 6:525, 580; 7:665; 10:475; 12:47, 80, 229; 16:463; 18:240. Also, Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 20.

66 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:138, 170; 9:67.

between revelation and the intellect depends mostly on an affirmation of revelation by the human intellect.

3.3.4. Natural Constitution of Human Beings (*fiṭra*)

As the last part of this section, the natural constitution (*fiṭra*) in Ibn Taymiyya's epistemology will be examined briefly. The natural constitution (*fiṭra*), which is based on the root (*f-ṭ-r*) literally means creation. It may be translated into English with different terms such as natural constitution, inborn human nature, primordial nature, natural tendency, and natural intelligence.[67] The term *fiṭra* has a basis in the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth. According to the verse, "So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the *fiṭra* of God upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of God. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know" (Q, 30:30). It is obvious that God created human beings according to His nature. Also, in the famous ḥadīth of the natural constitution (*fiṭra*), the Prophet says "No child is born except on *al-fiṭra* and then his parents make him Jewish, Christian or Magian (*mā min mawlūdin yūladu illā ʿalā al-fiṭrati*)…"[68]

---

[67] Özervarlı, "Rational Theology of Ibn Taymiyya," 91; Livnat Holtzman, "Human Choice, Divine Guidance and the 'Fiṭra' Tradition: The Use of Hadith in Theological Treatises by Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,* ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmad, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 167; Yahya Michot, *Against Extremisms* (Beirut: Albouraq Editions, 2012), 116-117; Özervarlı, "Divine Wisdom," 45-46.

[68] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 6:67 and 7:426. Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-Janā'iz, no: 122, Abū Dāwud, *Sunan*, Kitāb al-Sunna, no: 119, Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī*, Kitāb al-Qadar, no: 2287. It should be noted that there is no a consensus on both the meaning and the text of this ḥadīth report even though it is graded authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*). Although in the reports found in Bukhārī and Abū Dāwūd the term *fiṭra* is used, the term is translated into English as 'true faith' and 'Islam.' As for Tirmidhī, in this report instead of the term '*fiṭra*' the term '*milla*' (religion) is used.

For Ibn Taymiyya, the natural constitution in the ḥadīth refers to the religion of Islam, even if indirectly. Even though there is no Islam for a child when he is born, the child is created with a nature corresponding to Islam because of the primordial covenant between God and the souls of human beings as stated in the verse "[The Lord says] Am I not your Lord? They said, yes, we have testified" (Q, 7:172). In fact, Ibn Taymiyya clarifies that the term Islam means accepting the testimony, "There is no god but God."[69]

Concerning the meaning of *fiṭra*, there are various understandings among those who study Ibn Taymiyya. For Özervarlı, the term *fiṭra* indicates the pure, clean, and uncorrupted nature of human beings created by God. This nature has a potentiality to develop and change in time.[70] As for A. Hakim Ajhar's view, the natural constitution does not mean the religion of Islam nor a pure or empty nature. The natural constitution is a readiness for knowledge. It means, as Ajhar points out, a capacity or potentiality in the human being toward seeking for true knowledge. Therefore, the ḥadīth indicates this potentiality of having or seeking for knowledge rather than the religion of Islam specifically.[71] However, from the viewpoint of Ibn Taymiyya, it is said that if there is a possibility that the natural constitution in the ḥadīth referred to any religion or faith other than Islam, in the ḥadīth it would be necessary to count Islam along with Jews,

---

[69] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 4:245-7 and Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 8:383.
[70] Özervarlı, *Kelâmcılara Eleştirisi*, 133.
[71] A. Hakim Ajhar, "The Forgotten Rational Thinking in the Ḥanbalite Thought With Special Reference to Ibn Taymiyya," *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 14 (2014): 137-154 (142).

Christians, and Magians.[72] Therefore, even if the term refers to a pure and clean nature or a power inclined toward true knowledge, it is Islam because the sound nature of human beings inherently head toward Islam according to Ibn Taymiyya.[73]

Furthermore, Livnat Holtzman approaches the subject of the natural constitution from a perspective in which the central points are whether the term *fiṭra* is an inborn tendency toward monotheism in general or specifically toward Islam and the role of the natural constitution on the predetermined happiness or misery of human beings. According to Holtzman, Ibn Taymiyya with reference to Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal connects predetermination to the natural constitution indirectly by saying that "God is the one who predetermined and ordained misery and happiness."[74] Ibn Taymiyya also affirms that while Ibn Ḥanbal's view that *fiṭra* means misery and happiness is correct, this view does not contradict that *fiṭra* equals Islam. It is because, as Holtzman says, misery and happiness depend on rejection or acceptance of Islam, respectively.[75]

As for Hoover and Kügelgen, their effort intensifies generally on the relationship of the natural constitution (*fiṭra*) and the intellect (*ʿaql*). Even if the human choice as the opposition of predetermination is relevant to a kind of rational activity, focusing on the relation between the natural constitution and the human intellect directly is more appropriate for the aim of this

---

[72] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 8:444.
[73] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 8:371-372; 455-456.
[74] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 8:361, trans. in Holtzman, "'Fiṭra' Tradition," 168.
[75] Holtzman, "'Fiṭra' Tradition," 169.

section. Therefore, my effort is not about whether or not the natural constitution means the religion of Islam.

The relationship between the natural constitution and the intellect has a significant role for acquisition of knowledge. When Hoover discusses the relationship, he says that Ibn Taymiyya sometimes uses the natural constitution and the intellect as parallel to each other. Moreover, two possible statements may be offered about the relationship: the intellect is the basis of the natural constitution and the natural constitution is the basis of the intellect.[76] In this sense, Kügelgen's approach to this matter is compatible with Hoover's statement that rational knowledge is based on the sound and healthy natural constitution (*fiṭra*).[77] For Hoover, according to Ibn Taymiyya, the intellect and the natural constitution on the one hand and the Law and prophecy on the other hand affirm the existence of God.[78] In this point, it should be remembered that the intellect apart from revelation can know the existence of God. As a note, according to Özervarlı, while the natural constitution as a means of realizing or knowing the existence of God is not used by most of theologians, who generally focus on cosmological arguments (*ḥudūth*) and design arguments (*niẓām*), along with a few theologians like al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) Ibn Taymiyya by constructing the concept of *fiṭra* as an alternative to the Kalām cosmological argument is concerned with the natural constitution of human beings.[79]

---

[76] Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 39.
[77] Kügelgen, "Poison of Philosophy," 299.
[78] Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 46.
[79] Özervarlı, "Divine Wisdom," 47-48.

One of the most important points concerning the subject of the natural constitution is whether or not its nature is corrupted. According to Ibn Taymiyya, human beings are created by God with a good nature which may be corrupted by Satan later on. In this respect, he says that God has sent the Prophets in order to restore the corrupted nature of human beings by displaying sound rational proofs.[80] He also says that what the Prophet brought and commanded agrees with what is right according to the sound intellect and the pure hearts (*al-qulūb al-salīmiyya*). Also, what he brought and commanded agrees with what is the obligation of the natural constitution of the human being.[81] This view is important in terms of proving the agreement and relation between the intellect, revelation, the natural constitution, and the heart, all of which have influential somehow on acquiring knowledge.

It should be noted that Ibn Taymiyya uses the term pure hearts (*al-qulūb al-salīmiyya*) in an interesting way. He considers purifying the soul and spiritual disciplines to be one of the best ways to reach necessary knowledge.[82] Compatible with this approach, Ovamir Anjum claims that Ibn Taymiyya's comprehension of the natural constitution (guided *ʿaql*) as an epistemological tool may be compared to al-Ghazālī's conception of unveiling (*kashf*-spiritual disclosure).[83] This comparison needs a brief explanation because according to the Qur'ān, a guided intellect (*ʿaql*) or

---

[80] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 9:242.

[81] Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-nubuwwāt*, (Beirut: Dār al-qalam), 430, trans. in Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 44.

[82] Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 43.

[83] Ovamir Anjum, *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 228.

criterion (*furqān*) is given to believers as a reward for sincere obedience to the commands and prohibitions of God (Q, 8:29). The natural constitution is not a result, but it is a beginning, namely, creation. In this case, it may be said that obedience to and worshipping God is to return to the nature of human beings; whereby the guided intellect (*ʿaql*) may achieve its functionality. That is a kind of restoring of the natural constitution. Therefore, the unveiling of the Sufis, in one respect, may be compared to the natural constitution of human beings. It means that just as Sufis may benefit from their hearts as an epistemological tool by means of remembrance and worshipping God, human beings in general may benefit from their pure natural constitution by means of observing and obeying the religious law. The subject of the heart will be examined in the next section of this chapter.

As for the natural constitution again, if it is not corrupted, it has a capacity to know something. Indeed, what is known by the natural constitution is not different than what is called necessary knowledge (*ḍarūrī*). In this kind of knowledge, just as a baby demands his mother's milk with his natural inclination,[84] a human being by means of his natural constitution knows the perfection of God,[85] the existence of God, the need for Creator, basic rules of thought, and likeness and differences of things.[86] Moreover, for Ibn Taymiyya, the existence of the possible things takes people to the existence of the Creator with the assistance of the natural

---

[84] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 8:464.
[85] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:73.
[86] Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 40.

constitution because the principles of the affirmation of the Creator are placed by God in the hearts of all human beings and genies (*jinns*).[87] The placing of these principles in the heart is the natural constitution of human beings because the natural constitution is created in accordance with accepting God without any proof.[88] Furthermore, according to Ibn Taymiyya, in addition to the knowledge of God's existence, knowledge of the truth and its affirmation and what is false and its rejection can be known by the natural constitution just as human beings naturally can separate the useful from the harmful.[89] In this respect, he says that the natural constitution naturally accepts whatever is true just as it rejects whatever is false.[90]

Consequently, even though the natural constitution is given different names, it has the capacity for acquisition of some knowledge such as the knowledge of the existence of God and the knowledge of right and wrong. Also, since the natural constitution is always in danger of being corrupted by Satan, the mission of the Prophets and revelations is to remedy the natural constitution and to disclose knowledge which is placed in human beings. Eventually, it is possible to say that even though borders cannot be determined clearly, in Ibn Taymiyya's mind the sound intellect (*ṣarīḥ ʿaql*) and the uncorrupted natural constitution (*fiṭra salīmiyya*) are in agreement with each other on the matter of true knowledge.

---

87 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 8:482.
88 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2: 6.
89 Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-radd,* 474.
90 Nurcholish Madjid, "Ibn Taymiyya on Kalam and Falsafa: A Problem of Reason and Revelation in Islam" (Ph.D thesis, University of Chicago, 1985) 67. Also, Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Naqḍ al-Manṭiq*, ed. Shaykh Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq Hamza, (Cairo: Maṭbaʿa al-sunna al-Muḥammadiyya, 1951), 29. Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:62.

In this section the human intellect as one of the most important epistemological tools in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching has been examined. Since the intellect is one of the essential instruments of theology and philosophy, at first, I focused on Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of theology and philosophy. Then, I examined the relationship of the intellect and revelation, and then the relationship between the intellect and the natural constitution of human beings (*fiṭra*). It is clear that Ibn Taymiyya's objection is not to the intellect itself. He criticizes theologians and philosophers because of their unsound methodology which is based on the intellect. Despite his criticism it is possible to say that Ibn Taymiyya is not against using the intellect in order to acquire rational knowledge and to comprehend and confirm what the revelational knowledge provides.[91] Moreover, since revelation, the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths of the Prophet, contain rational proofs, it may be said that the intellect is a necessary tool of true knowledge second only to revelation.

[91] Briefly, it should be remembered that Ibn Taymiyya is not against the human intellect for acquiring knowledge while he pursues the consistency between revelation and rational knowledge. As for what Ibn al-ʿArabī thinks of the intellect, he does not pay considerable attention to the consistency between revelation and rational knowledge because the intellect, according to him, already is insufficient in religious issues, especially in the divine names and attributes.

3.4. Inspiration (Mystical Way of Knowledge)

The aim of this section is to explain the subject of inspiration (*ilhām*) as an epistemological tool in addition to revelation and the human intellect. It should be taken into consideration that just as studying the human intellect in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching as an epistemological tool without referring to the sciences of theology and philosophy is an insufficient method, studying inspiration as another epistemological tool without referring to Sufism, that is the mystical dimension of Islam, becomes an insufficient and a weak method also.[1] Therefore, I organize this section into two main parts: Sufism and inspiration. These two parts are related to each other. Focusing on Sufism and inspiration separately will help us to assess inspiration clearly in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching.

3.4.1. Sufism (*taṣawwuf*)

In this part, the attitude of Ibn Taymiyya toward Sufism will be examined. It is possible to define Sufism in several ways such as the mystical dimension of Islam, an Islamic life style based on asceticism (*zuhd*) and piety (*taqwā*), and a kind of belief of some Muslims based on non-Islamic principles.[2] Ibn Taymiyya approaches Sufism from a very

---

[1] As Michel Chodkiewicz explains, Sufism, knowledge, and friendship are inseparable. Therefore, it is a necessity to study these conceptions together in order to look at the subject broadly. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 13.

[2] Memon, *Against Popular Religion*, 5; 27. Also, John Renard translates from *The Book of Flashes (Kitāb al-lumaʿ)* written by Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, that "people are of various opinions about it [Sufism]. Some praise it excessively and elevate it above its rightful place; some consider it beyond the limits of rational and scientific investigation. Others regard it as little more than a pastime, a trifling game for the feeble-minded. Still other associate it with piety, asceticism, woollen garments, affection in the use of idio-syncratic jargon, habits of dress, and other such things. Some go so far as to impale the Sufis on the

broad perspective which contains all of these different definitions. In this case, it is not correct to say outright that either Ibn Taymiyya is an opponent of Sufism or a Sufi himself.

Basically, Sufism may be examined through two main distinctions in Ibn Taymiyya's mind: early and later Sufism. Early Sufism in general is based on asceticism and piety in the light of the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad. As for later Sufism, it is divided into two types: philosophical Sufism which is based on heretical ideas and doctrines of philosophers and practical Sufism which is based on innovations like Sufi whirling (*samāʿ*), repeating the same words as invocation (*dhikr*), and listening to music as a part of worship. Obviously, for Ibn Taymiyya, there are very explicit differences between the early and the later Sufis' practices and ideas. Here, I will focus on philosophical Sufism, practical Sufism, and the Sufism of Ibn Taymiyya respectively.

At first, what Ibn Taymiyya means by philosophical Sufism may be seen in different works of scholars as pantheistic, monistic, metaphysical, and speculative Sufism.[3] As objections to this kind of Sufism Ibn Taymiyya wrote particular treatises such as *Ḥaqīqat madhhab al-ittiḥādiyyīn wa waḥdat al-wujūd*,[4] *Fī Ibṭāl waḥdat al-wujūd,*[5] and *Fī risālatihī ilā Naṣr al-*

---

gibbet of their own terminology by accusing them of free thinking and doctrinal error." Renard, *Knowledge of God*, 65-66.

3 Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xii. Rom Landau, "The Philosophy of Ibn ʿArabī," in *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought*, ed. Ian Richard Netton, 4 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 4:139. Abul Ela Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyi al-Din Ibnul Arabī* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1979). Anna Akasoy, "Andalusi Exceptionalism: The Example of "Philosophical Sufism" and the Significance of 1212," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 4 1 (2012): 113-117.

4 Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, "Ḥaqīqat madhhab al-ittiḥādiyyīn wa waḥdat al-wujūd," in Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:134-285, and Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 4:1-101.

Manbijī.[6] While Ibn Taymiyya in many occasions outlines Sufi doctrines comprehensively, the refutation of doctrine of the oneness of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) is one of the most famous critiques of philosophical Sufism. Despite Ibn Taymiyya's strong and harsh criticism on this subject, the refutation does not reflect his total idea about Sufism. Ibn Taymiyya's opposition to philosophical Sufism focuses on what Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers put forward regarding the oneness of existence.[7] Actually, the problem is not related directly to Sufism itself, but is specifically related to the subject of the oneness of existence which is based on some theological and philosophical propositions. Also, since the doctrine plays an essential role in philosophical Sufism, predictably Ibn al-ʿArabī, the Greatest Shaykh (*shaykh al-akbar*) is one whom Ibn Taymiyya criticizes harshly.

Before starting the explanation of the nature of Ibn Taymiyya's criticism, even though it is mentioned at the beginning of the thesis, it is useful to recall that Ibn Taymiyya is neither against Ibn al-ʿArabī's personality nor all his works totally. Rather, he likes and esteems some works of Ibn al-ʿArabī. In this respect, he says that when he read some works of Ibn al-ʿArabī, he was impressed and he esteemed him since he found many useful and illuminating points in his *al-Futūḥāt, Al-Kunh, Al-Muḥkam al-Marbūṭ, Al-Durat al-Fākhira, Maṭāliʿ al-Nujūm* and others.[8] This statement may indicate both that Ibn Taymiyya is very familiar with

---

5 Ibn Taymiyya, "Fī ibṭāl waḥdat al-wujūd," in Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:286-361, and Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 1:61-120.

6 Ibn Taymiyya, "Fī risālatihī ilā Naṣr al-Manbijī," in Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:452-479, and Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 1:161-182.

7 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:134-285; 2: 286-361.

8 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:464, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 179.

Ibn al-ʿArabī's works and that Ibn Taymiyya does not reject Ibn al-ʿArabī's intellectual capacity and his uncommon deepness. On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyya claims that Ibn al-ʿArabī in his *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* exceeds the limits of the Qur'ān and the Sunna. However, Ibn Taymiyya on the issue of the oneness of existence blames Ibn al-ʿArabī for being monist and ignorant because of his claim that early Sufis like Junayd ibn Muḥammad (d. 910), Sahl ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Tustārī (d. 896), and Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Khawwāṣ (d. 923?), who affirmed the distinction between the Lord and servants, could not realize what the true oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) was.[9]

As noted above, Ibn Taymiyya's opposition to Ibn al-ʿArabī's idea is due to its monistic basis even though for some scholars Ibn al-ʿArabī is instead a monotheist.[10] When Ibn Taymiyya explains the ideas of monists, he claims that monists do not accept the existence of the Creator in terms of the act of creation because there is not, in fact, an act of creation due to shared existence between the Creator and creatures; but there is emanation.[11] In this case, Ibn Taymiyya says that for monists, and hence for Ibn al-ʿArabī, there is simply no difference between worshipping God and worshipping something other than God.[12]

---

9 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 13:239.

10 Rustom, "Is Ibn al-ʿArabī's Ontology Pantheistic?," (66). On the other hand, for Austin who distinguishes pantheism and monism, Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought may be monism rather than pantheism even though none of these terms identifies his thought precisely. See Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 26. As another way there is Husaini's work in which he calls Ibn al-ʿArabī's ideas pantheistic monism. Husaini, *Pantheistic Monism*, viii. Morris, "Ibn ʿArabi and His Interpreters Part I: Recent French Translations," (542-545); Chittick, "Rūmī and waḥdat al-wujūd," 88; Chittick, *SPK*, 79.

11 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:466.

12 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:467. See, Memon, *Against Popular Religion*, 40.

An underlying reason of this accusation is a proposition that Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers, according to Ibn Taymiyya, do not distinguish the mental existent from the corporeal existent, whereby they fell into error on the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*).[13] This is relevant to the doctrine of the oneness of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) because Ibn al-ʿArabī by the term "the fixed entities" (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*) means "the non-existent objects of God's knowledge or non-existent possible things."[14] Even though Ibn Taymiyya blames Ibn al-ʿArabī for being monist, he considers him closer to Islam by separating him from other unificationalists-monists (*ittiḥādiyyūn*) such as al-Tilimsāni and Ibn Sābʿīn.[15] In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya criticizes Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers for their misunderstanding of the oneness of God. For Ibn Taymiyya, the reason of their misunderstanding is their inability to apprehend the difference between God and creatures. Since God exists and creatures exist as well, they assume the existence of God is not different from their existence.[16] When Muhammad Memon explains the reason for Ibn Taymiyya's criticism against the conception of the fixed entities (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*), he describes them as pure non-existents. It seems that Memon does not take into account the duality of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought and expression because for Ibn al-ʿArabī, as will be explained in the

---

13 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:470.

14 Chittick, *SPK*, 11.

15 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:143. See, Abul Ela Affifi, "Ibn ʿArabī," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy: With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands,* ed. Mian Mohammad Sharif, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1963), 407.

16 Michel, *Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 6. Also see Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:294, and Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 4:4.

next chapter, even if these entities are non-existent in one respect, they cannot be called absolute non-existents in fact.[17]

With respect to Ibn Taymiyya's objection to Ibn al-ʿArabī's inability to distinguish God and creatures, the conceptions of the unification of God with all creatures (*ittiḥād al-ʿamm*) and the unification of God with some specific creatures (*ittiḥād al-khaṣṣ* or *ḥulūl-* incarnation) need special attention. Both of these conceptions are different aspects of the doctrine of the oneness of existence according to Ibn Taymiyya.[18] Thus, their meeting point is the conception of existence (*wujūd*). The former unification expresses the oneness of the existence of God and the existence of creatures. It means that they do not have an existence apart from the existence of God at all.

As for the unification of God with some specific individuals, incarnation (*ḥulūl*), it is also based on the presupposition that the existence of creatures is taken from the existence of God. Ibn Taymiyya pays attention to this point since this kind of idea leads people to mistakes on the subject of the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*). According to him, on this matter Sufis, Shiʿīs, and some of Christians are very close to each other in mentality since, for them, God may indwell in some creatures. With a small exception Ibn Taymiyya separates some Sufis such as Junayd (d. 910) who

---

17 Memon, *Against Popular Religion*, 37.

18 Michel, *Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 8. Also, Michel gives place for the subject of the incarnation in the first chapter of the book and pages 288-297. Also, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:465, 2:286-361, and Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*. ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. Nāṣir, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Ibrāhīm al-ʿAskar, and Ḥamdān b. Muḥammad al-Ḥamdān, 7 vols. (Riyāḍ: Dār al-ʿāṣima li-l-nashr wa al-tawzīʿ, 1999), 3:332-349. For more details, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 5:335-338.

denies incarnation (*ḥulūl*) by demarcating between originated creatures (*al-muḥdath al-makhlūq*) and the eternal Creator (*al-qadīm al-khāliq*).[19] On the other hand, Ibn Taymiyya alternatively offers another understanding of incarnation (*ḥulūl*) in which the existence of God is not shared with creatures at all. Instead, incarnation (*ḥulūl*) means the remembrance of His names, worship of Him, love of Him and His light and guidance. This may be a kind of indwelling of the intellective representation (*al-mithāl al-ʿilmī*) as mentioned in the Qur'ān (Q, 6:3).[20] It is obvious that this explanation is far from what the incarnationalist Sufis understand from the incarnation (*ḥulūl*).

It should be noted that there are objections to Ibn Taymiyya's understanding of Ibn al-ʿArabī. For instance, according to William Chittick, Ibn Taymiyya did not understand correctly what Ibn al-ʿArabī meant exactly with the oneness of existence. For Chittick, Ibn Taymiyya's objections to Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers are based on some presuppositions such as that they have no faith in God and His prophets and the judgement day.[21] Moreover, according to Ibn Taymiyya's claim, in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching there is no distinction between the existence of God and that of creatures.[22] In this respect, Chittick emphasizes that according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the existence of God and the existence of creatures cannot be identical because there is not already a real existence of creatures apart from

---

19 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:230-231.

20 Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawāb,* 3:332. See Michel, *Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 288. "And He is Allah, [the only deity] in the heavens and the earth. He knows your secret and what you make public, and He knows that which you earn." *The Qur'ān,* 6:3.

21 Chittick, "Rūmī and waḥdat al-wujūd," 85.

22 Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 4:73 and Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:4.

the existence of God.[23] It means that Ibn al-ʿArabī denies incarnation clearly by saying that whoever says the Real indwells in forms is ignorant of both God and creatures.[24] It is because there is no form absent from God. However, since Ibn Taymiyya does not accept a non-existent form of creatures in reality, he acknowledges creatures with their existence simultaneously; therefore, it is impossible to mention a kind of unity between God and corporeal forms.

Eventually, the main reason for the contention between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya is their different approaches to existence. While Ibn al-ʿArabī defends the oneness of existence, Ibn Taymiyya explicitly rejects this claim. Nevertheless, this matter requires elaboration in detail. However, the purpose of these pages was only to display some of the main points of philosophical Sufism like the oneness of existence and the unity of God with creatures to which Ibn Taymiyya objects. Eventually, Ibn Taymiyya, as Caterina Bori says, blames those who defend incarnation (*ḥulūl*), the unity between God and His creatures (*ittiḥād*), and deification (*ta'alluh*) as heretics (*zanādiqa*).[25]

As for practical Sufism, for Ibn Taymiyya, it is neither based on the Qur'ān nor the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad but stems from ignorance of the essential sources of Islam. This ignorance, for him, opens the door to

---

[23] Chittick, "Rūmī and waḥdat al-wujūd," 86. As a note, according to Abul Ela Affifi, Ibn al-ʿArabī differs from Ḥallāj al-Manṣūr on the matter of incarnation even though his monistic theory combines "the Ashʿarī theory of universal substance, Ḥallāj's theory of *Lāhūt* (divinity or essence) and *Nāsūt* (humanity or form), and the Neoplatonic theory of the One." Affifi, *Mystical Philosophy*, 13-15. Also, see Arnaldez, R. "Lāhūt and Nāsūt." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. ed. P. Bearman. Brill Online, 2015.

[24] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:376, trans. in Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 56.

[25] Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya wa-Jamāʿatuhu," 27.

all innovated ideas and practices so that these innovations (*bidʿa*) prevent Muslims from returning back to the Qur'ān and the Sunna. Satan beautifies these innovated practices for people and he makes the lawful path seem hateful to them. As a result of performing these innovated practices, the people go away from the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths of the Prophet. What is more, they do not like hearing and learning them at all.[26]

These innovated practices sometimes may appear to be excessiveness in an established religious duty and sometimes they appear to be a new kind of practice such as Sufi whirling (*samāʿ*).[27] For him regardless of whether they are innovated or performed excessively, these practices are not found in the life of the Salaf.[28] When the Companions witness any excessiveness in a religious matter, they struggle with it by warning people. For example, Ibn Taymiyya mentions Abū Jahīr al-Aʿmā who, because of his extraordinary spiritual feelings and experience, died when Ṣāliḥ al-Murrī recited the Qur'ān to him. Also, there were some people of Baṣra who lost their consciousness when they heard recitation of the Qur'ān. However, there is not such case among the Companions. In contrast, when the Companions and the Successors (*tābiʿīn*) such as Asmā'

---

[26] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:411-412. Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM,* 5:81-104 (98-99), trans. in Michel, *Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 35.

[27] The word *samāʿ* means "listening." Ibn Taymiyya in some contexts uses the word in order to denote a legal practice increasing faith and love of believers. In this respect, he says, "What is intended here is only to allude to the servants' love for their God, and it has become manifest that this is the foundation of the actions of the faith….and they used to boost this love by means of that by which God has prescribed boosting it: the [various] kinds of legal acts of worship, such as the gnosis of the faith (*al-ʿirfān al-īmānī*) and the listening to the *Furqān* (*al-samāʿ al-furqānī*) [listening to the Qur'ān]." Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:75-79, trans. in Michot, *Against Extremism*, 147.

[28] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:612-615; 14:468-469; 20:150.

bint Abū Bakr, ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Zubair, Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn realized such an excessiveness, they rejected it.[29]

Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya continues his criticism of these kinds of practices of Sufism by focusing on all kinds of innovations by referring to the ḥadīth report, "The worst of all things are innovations; and every innovation is error."[30] In this respect, he accuses some Sufis for leading people to innovations in the religion. For example, Ibn Taymiyya blames Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) due to his misleading statements of invocation (*dhikr*). While Ibn Taymiyya affirms some benefits found in al-Ghazālī's book *Al-Iḥyā al-ʿulūm al-dīn*[31] he says that some Sufis such as al-Ghazālī lead people to innovations which are the messenger (*barīd*) of unbelief. They command their disciples (*murīd*) something not found in the Qur'ān. They may command, for example, to say repeatedly *Allāh, Allāh,* (God, God) in order to empty the heart.[32]

Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of al-Ghazālī's innovations is not limited to this example. Also, he gives very detailed information of what al-Ghazālī says about different invocations (*dhikr*) for people concerning their spiritual rankings. According to him, al-Ghazālī says that the invocation of common people is to say repeatedly *lā ilāha illā allāh* "(There is no god, but God)"; the invocation of elites (*khawās*) is to say *Allāh Allāh* "(God, God)"; and the invocation of the elites of elites is to say *hū hū* "(He, He)." This kind of

---

[29] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:7. Also, see Homerin, " al-Ṣūfīyah," (223).
[30] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtiḍā',* 270. Memon, *Against Popular Religion*, 232.
[31] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:551.
[32] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:397. Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM,* 5:81-104 (87). See, Michel, *Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 38.

classification for invocation is not justified in the Book and the Sunna.[33] Ibn Taymiyya, in this respect, says that this kind of invocation is the furthest from the Sunna of the Prophet and the closest to the perversion of Satan.[34] Thus, he rejects not only these innovated invocation methods but also he rejects some practices such as whirling, music, and celebrations of some special days.[35]

Invocation and Sufi whirling, in Ibn Taymiyya's mind, are just two examples of the practical dimension of heretical Sufism. The meeting point of philosophical and practical Sufism is inspiration because they do not have a basis directly in the Qur'ān and the Sunna while they mystically link these ideas and practices to the religion. Thus, it is clear that they constitute their doctrines, training methods, and types of worshipping God through inspirational knowledge. Therefore, examination of Ibn Taymiyya's attitude toward these two kinds of Sufism before studying his understanding of Sufism and before studying his approach to inspiration was significant in order to grasp his admission of inspiration as an epistemological tool. Hence, now I focus on what Ibn Taymiyya thinks of Sufism apart from heretical doctrines and practices.

As for early Sufism in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching, it is based on the Qur'ān and the Sunna. This Sufism is uncontaminated with philosophical doctrines and innovated practices which are heretical. In this respect, he mentions a lot of Sufi masters who strictly follow the Qur'ān and the Sunna.

---

[33] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:396; 10:556-7.
[34] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:227.
[35] Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 1:57.

One of the most explicit characteristics of these masters is their attention and sensitivity to religious observance. He considers these early masters (*mashāyīkh al-salaf*), such as Fuḍayl ibn ʿIyāḍ, Ibrāhīm ibn Adham, Abū Sulaimān al-Dārānī, Maʿrūf al-Karkhī, al-Sarī al-Saqatī, al-Junayd ibn Muḥammad, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, Shaykh Ḥammād, and Shaykh Abū al-Bayān, to be followers of the true path because they never give permission to depart from the divine command and prohibition.[36]

Moreover, while all of these Sufi masters are praised by Ibn Taymiyya, some of them such as ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 1166) have a special position. For example, Ibn Taymiyya wrote a commentary entitled *Sharḥ Futūḥ al-Ghayb*[37] for al-Jīlānī's work *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* (Openings of the Unseen). In this commentary, Ibn Taymiyya highlights al-Jīlānī's strict adherence to religious commandments.[38] He affirmatively mentions three spiritual stages put forward by ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī: the stage of piety (*taqwā*); the stage of Reality (*ḥaqīqa*); and the stage of the Reality of the Reality (*ḥaqq al-ḥaqq*). Strict observance to the religious commandments and the prohibitions is the prerequisite for each stage. To explain the nature of these stages, it is said that the one who is at the stage of piety still has desires for unlawful things. The one who is at the stage of reality must obey

---

[36] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:516. Also see, Michel, *Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 27. As an important note, Maʿrūf al-Karkhī (d. 815-6) who is among those whom Ibn Taymiyya venerates, is said to have been one who formulated the Islamic testimony of faith (*shahāda*) as "There is nothing in *wujūd* but God." This formulation is one of the basic principles of the theory of the oneness of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). Even if Maʿrūf al-Karkhī's approach is seen to be opposite to Ibn Taymiyya's criticism against the oneness of the existence, he might praise al-Karkhī's loyalty of the religious duties. See Chittick, "Rūmī and waḥdat al-wujūd," 91-92.

[37] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:455-548.

[38] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:488.

all external commandments of the religious law (*sharīʿa*), and if he knows, must obey internal commandments which are neither obligation clearly in the law, nor is it unlawful.[39] The one who is at the stage of the Reality of the Reality witnesses that God is the one who acts.[40]

Furthermore, even though Ibn Taymiyya is not a disciple of a Sufi master, he, according to George Makdisi, explicitly displayed his admiration for some Sufi masters, especially to ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī.[41] Makdisi says that Ibn Taymiyya wore the Sufi cloaks of Sufi masters from various spiritual paths (*tarīqa*) and that one of these masters is al-Jīlānī.[42] In the Sufi tradition wearing a cloak of a master means being an agent or representative of a certain master. The reason why Ibn Taymiyya did not become a member of a traditional Sufi path (*tarīqa*) may be his endeavour to keep his middle position between full acceptance and rejection of Sufism. He considers to be blameworthy both those who censure Sufism by saying that they are innovators and outside of the Sunna and those who claim that Sufis are the best of mankind.[43] Therefore, it may be said that as a spiritual path Sufism is not Ibn Taymiyya's main concern, but his concern is accordance of doctrines and practices of Sufism with the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet.

---

[39] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:457-463. Internal principles in the spiritual path are various such as veracity, trust, patience, resolution, and certainty. Hakim, "Way of Walāya," 2.

[40] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:524-528.

[41] George Makdisi, *Religion, Law, and Learning in Classical Islam* (Hampshire, Great Britain: Variorum, 1991), 121. Hallaq, *Greek Logicians*, xii.

[42] Makdisi, *Religion*, 123.

[43] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:17, trans. in Homerin, " al-Ṣūfīyah," 232.

It is obvious that Ibn Taymiyya is not against Sufism, but he has own criteria to judge the doctrines of Sufism and their accordance with the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth. According to Memon, Ibn Taymiyya is a Sufi and his purpose is to sweep out all heretical and innovated ideas and practices from the pure Sufism (the early Sufism). In Ibn Taymiyya's thought, whatever is not found in the Qur'ān and the Sunna is an innovation, which it should be censured.[44]

To be more specific it may be said that some metaphysical conceptions in Sufi terminology are subjected to Ibn Taymiyya's objections. It should be noted that Ibn Taymiyya does not deny the existence of metaphysical conceptions as a whole, but he denies some of them while reinterpreting others. However, this matter is controversial. For example, according to Alexander D. Knysh, in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching the correct Sufism completely excludes metaphysical conceptions since he considered these conceptions to be a radical departure from the authentic Sufism of the first Islamic centuries.[45] For Knysh, the reason why Ibn Taymiyya does not accept the metaphysical conceptions in Sufi terminology is their absence among the Sufis of the first Islamic centuries. From this perspective it is true because it is a well-known fact that Ibn Taymiyya attempts to ground his ideas, affirmations, and negations on the essential sources of the religion which are the Qur'ān, the Sunna, and the views of the Salaf. Thus, he explains the reason of his objections to some doctrines and practices of

---

[44] Memon, *Against Popular Religion*, 7.
[45] Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi*, 88.

Sufism by saying that they did not exist at the time of Salaf.[46] Also, it is known already that for Ibn Taymiyya on religious issues the criterion is the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions because he considers the Prophet as the best of humankind and the Companions as the best generation of generations.[47]

This criticism, which is based on a rejection of innovated ideas and practices of the later Sufis, is a reason why Ibn Taymiyya was considered to be a neo-Sufi by some scholars such as Fazlur Rahman. According to Rahman, Ibn Taymiyya is not only a neo-Sufi but also a pioneer of this new trend although he is considered to be a sworn enemy of Sufism. For him, Ibn Taymiyya's aim through adopting some Sufi terminology was to regenerate and develop the orthodox activism which is based on the traditional sources such as the Qur'ān, the Sunna of the Prophet, and the opinions of the Companions. Moreover, Fazlur Rahman emphasized that as a neo-Sufi Ibn Taymiyya approaches Sufism from a different perspective, and also he, unlike Knysh, claims that in this type of neo-Sufism some metaphysical conceptions are accepted and interpreted according to principles of the traditional understanding. In this respect, Rahman says, "The neo-Sufis also allowed, to some extent, the claims of intellectual Sufism: they accepted the Sufi *kashf* (unveiling-inspiration) or intuitive revelation…Both Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350) [a student of

---

[46] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 19:275.

[47] See the part of the Salaf in the first section of this chapter. Also, see Homerin, " al-Ṣūfīyah," 238.

Ibn Taymiyya], in fact, patently claim *kashf* (unveiling) for themselves."[48] On the contrary, Jeffry R. Halverson claims that neo-Sufism, unlike traditional forms of Sufism, does not welcome mystical expressions, ideas, practices, and intuitions.[49]

Along with some discussions concerning details of the subject there is the fact that Ibn Taymiyya does not reject Sufism entirely. His objections to Sufism intensify on some of the non-Qur'ānic doctrines and practices innovated by the later Sufis. After this examination of Sufism through Ibn Taymiyya's perspective, the subject of inspiration itself as an epistemological tool can be focused on. The further explanations are important in order to show that Ibn Taymiyya's objections to some aspects of Sufism do not necessarily require rejection of the reality of inspirational knowledge which is an essential point in Sufi traditions.

3.4.2. Unveiling- Inspiration (*kashf- ilhām*)

As an alternative way of acquiring knowledge, inspiration has own components, as mentioned in the chapter of Ibn al-ʿArabī, such as the heart (*qalb*), friendship (*walāya*), and inspirational knowledge itself (*ilhām* or *kashf*). Through the coming together of these components it is possible to attain to true inspirational knowledge. At first, it can be said that the heart has a privileged position in this kind of knowledge. As an organ of inspiration, the heart of spiritual traveller (*sālik*) or disciple (*murid*) should be eligible to receive inspirational knowledge through mystical training and

---

[48] Rahman, *Islam*, 195.
[49] Halverson, *Theology and Creed*, 67.

religious observances. Ibn Taymiyya in order to emphasize the reality of the heart refers to the some of the ḥadīth reports such as, "God has sent down trust [true faith] into the hearts of men, so they have learned from the Qur'ān and they have learned from the Sunna."[50] Even though there is no certain method of receiving this kind of knowledge, it may take place sometimes in sleep and sometimes awake.[51]

Furthermore, in order to prepare the heart for receiving knowledge it must be purified from any spiritual (*maʿnawī*) illness. According to Ibn Taymiyya, purifying the heart from moral or spiritual illnesses such as ignorance, doubt,[52] and envy[53] is one of primary duties of each believer because if the believer does not clean the heart carefully, it is possible that the heart is going to be corrupted over time. Its corruption then is going to cause receiving an unsound knowledge and then a corruption on faith, knowledge, life, and even body will come after. Therefore, the remedy of the heart is more necessary and important than that of the body first of all.[54] After cleaning and remedying the heart through sincere religious observation it will be under the control of God. In this case, according to Ibn Taymiyya, even if a person does not know exactly whether the matter in

---

[50] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:474, quoted in Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Sharḥ al-Futūḥ al-Ghayb: Commentary on Revelations of the Unseen: Concerning the Discourses of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī,* translated by Muhtar Holland (Fort Lauderdale: Al-Baz Publication, 2010), 21. Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-radd,* 428.

[51] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:638; 2:336.

[52] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:94.

[53] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:111.

[54] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:141.

question is good or bad, since his/her heart is governed by God, the heart will follow what God loves and renounce what He dislikes.[55]

As a result of governance by God, the heart may become an independent way of acquiring knowledge. In this respect, it can be said that just as the human intellect and the natural constitution have a role on attaining true knowledge, the heart through a faculty distinguishes true and false; useful and harmful.[56] Rather, Ibn Taymiyya clearly recognizes the function of the heart on this matter. Eventually, by referring to a ḥadīth report he says that in the heart of every believer there is a preacher who guides him according to the commands and prohibitions of the Qurʾān.[57] It proves that the heart is capable of receiving inspiration (*ilhām*) apart from the revelational and rational knowledge.

Another component of inspiration is the conception of friendship (*walāya*). Friendship, as a spiritual position and one of the most important doctrines of the mystical dimension of Islam, is among the conceptions to which Ibn Taymiyya pays attention. While he acknowledges the existence of this kind of spiritual position, he has his own definition of friendship. Two main objections may be provided to friendship: misunderstanding of friendship; and ascribing some supernatural events (*khawāriq*) to some people in order to affirm their specialness.

---

55 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:472. See, Holland, *Sharḥ al-Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, 19.

56 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:62. Also, see Yahya J. Michot, "A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary on Avicenna's Risāla Aḍḥawiyya: Being a Translation of a Part of the Dar' al-Taʿāruḍ of Ibn Taymiyya with Introduction, Annotation, and Appendices. Part 2.," *Journal Of Islamic Studies* 14 3 (2003): 309-363 (337).

57 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:475.

As for what friendship is, Ibn Taymiyya is clear in his statements. He mentions generally three groups of people: those who oppress their self (*al-ẓālim li-nafsihī*) by disregarding sins; those who fulfil the obligations and avoid the prohibitions (*al-muqtaṣid*); and those who are pioneers in goodness (*al-sābiq bi-l khayrāt*) by undertaking supererogatory deeds (*mustaḥab*) and avoiding reprehensible ones (*makrūh*) in addition to fulfilling the obligations (*wājib*) and avoiding prohibitions (*ḥarām*). All people among the last two groups are the friends of God, but while the second group consists of common believers (*ʿāmm*), the third one consists of the elites (*khāṣṣ*).[58] In another place Ibn Taymiyya treats the subject of the friendship of God through different conceptions. He says that there are two kinds of friendship: those who are on the right side (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*) observe the religious commands and prohibitions; and those who are intimate pioneers (*al-muqarrabīn al-sābiqīn*) observe the supererogatory deeds (*mustaḥab*) and avoid reprehensible ones (*makrūh*) as well.[59] Also, through similar categorization, Ibn Taymiyya mentions spiritual travelling (*sulūk*) as a path of friendship on which some of spiritual masters such as al-Jīlānī walked.[60]

These definitions are showing that Ibn Taymiyya insistently emphasizes the relationship between religious observance and the friendship of God. According to him, as stated clearly in the Qur'ān (Q, 2:257; 10:62-63), every believer is a friend of God even though their levels depend on

---

[58] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:6.
[59] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:179, 549.
[60] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:463.

their piety and religious observance.[61] Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya uses a ḥadīth report which is referred to frequently by Sufis in order to affirm inspiration as an alternative method of acquiring knowledge. According to this famous report, God says that My (God's) servant comes close to me through extra deeds in addition to obligations till I love him. When I (God) love my servant, I become his ear through which he hears, his eye through which he sees, his hand through which he holds, and his foot through which he walks…[62]

It should be noted that while Ibn Taymiyya refers to this report in order to emphasize the relationship between the friendship and religious observance, Sufis refer to this report in order to establish inspiration as an epistemological tool belonged to some special people on the other hand.[63]

---

[61] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:61, 159, 175. "God is the ally of those who believe." (*The Qur'ān,* 2:257). "Unquestionably, [for] the allies of God there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve. Those who believed and were fearing God." *The Qur'ān,* 10:62-63.

[62] "God's Messenger said, "God said, 'I will declare war against him who shows hostility to a pious worshipper of Mine. And the most beloved things with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing *Nawāfil* (praying or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory) till I love him, so I become his sense of hearing with which he hears, and his sense of sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he grips, and his leg with which he walks; and if he asks Me, I will give him, and if he asks My protection (Refuge), I will protect him; (i.e. give him My Refuge) and I do not hesitate to do anything as I hesitate to take the soul of the believer, for he hates death, and I hate to disappoint him." Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Kitāb al-riqāq, ḥadīth no: 91. Ibn Taymiyya quotes this ḥadīth in some places such as Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:7; 11:61; and 11:159.

[63] In this respect, for example, Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "That which brings together all the supererogatory acts [*nawāfil*] is the fact that the Real loves the servant, since these acts result in God's love for him. But this love is not just any love. It is a love through which the Real is your hearing through which you hear, your sight through which you see, your hand through which you grasp, and your leg through which you run." Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:168, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 325. Also, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:614; 3:162.

On the contrary, for Ibn Taymiyya, inspiration is not a necessary result of friendship.[64]

As for the second objection which is to ascribe supernatural events to some people, Ibn Taymiyya in this respect argues the validity of inspiration apart from the conception of friendship. In other words, Ibn Taymiyya evaluates inspiration as a subdivision of supernatural events (*khawāriq*) rather than as a proof of friendship. According to Ibn Taymiyya, there are three kinds of supernatural events (*khawāriq*): those which are praised by the religion; those which are condemned by the religion; and those which are neither praised nor condemned explicitly.[65] These supernatural events may appear to be an effect (*ta'thīr*) or unveiling-inspiration (*kashf- ilhām*).[66] Ibn Taymiyya examines the effect (*ta'thīr*) as the part of power (*bāb al-qudra*) while he examines inspiration as the part of knowledge (*bāb al-ʿilm*) of supernatural events (*khawāriq*).[67]

Furthermore, according to him, the term miracle (*muʿjiza*) is used for expressing all supernatural events. The predecessors (*al-mutaqaddimūn*) such as Imam Aḥmad called miracles signs (*āyāt*) while the later generations (*al-muta'akhkhirūn*) divided it into two: miracle is for the prophets and oracle (*karāmāt*) is for the friends of God, while both of them are among the supernatural events. For instance, Ibn Taymiyya by referring

---

[64] Additionally, see Diego R. Sarrio, "Spiritual anti-elitism: Ibn Taymiyya's Doctrine of Sainthood (walāya)," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22 3 (2011): 275-291. And Çakmaklıoğlu, "İbnü'l-Arabī'nin Nübüvvet-Velayet Hakkındaki Görüşleri ve İbn Teymiyye'nin Bu Hususta Eleştirileri," .

[65] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:320.

[66] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:319.

[67] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:313-314.

to some Qur'ānic verses says that the Prophet was asked many times to display both effect (*ta'thīr*) and unveiling (*kashf*) so as to supply some worldly benefits such as house, garden, food, and knowledge of the unseen (*ghayb*).[68]

It is clearly seen that Ibn Taymiyya does not argue for the possibility of these supernatural events. While he rejects most supernatural events including the effect and inspiration claimed by Sufis, he accepts some of them especially for some particular people, even though Sufis have similar stories on these points. For instance, Ibn Taymiyya accepts a report that when ʿAbd al-Wāḥid bin Zayd had a stroke, he wanted God to heal him only when he performed ablution before prayer. Then, God accepted his prayers and he was healed.[69] Or, he accepts that some pious people in addition to the prophets may hear requests from their graves and help with some questions.[70]

On the other hand, for Ibn Taymiyya performing some supernatural events regardless of whether they appear as an effect or as knowledge is not an indication of friendship at all. For him, these supernatural events can be performed by polytheists (*mushrik*), infidels (*kāfir*), the people of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*), and the people of innovation (*ahl al-bidʿa*).[71] Therefore, while Ibn Taymiyya accepts that it is possible for some special men to perform supernatural events which may appear sometimes as an action and

---

[68] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:311-312.
[69] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:274-282.
[70] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtiḍā',* 373. al-Ansari, *Was Ibn Taymiah from the Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaʿah*, 30-32.
[71] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:213-214.

sometimes may appear as hearing and perception, he provides some criteria in order to single out the divine inspirations (*raḥmānī*) from devilish ones (*shayṭānī*).[72] These criteria focus on the purposes and means of performance of these supernatural events. In this matter, Ibn Taymiyya says that the aim of non-devilish supernatural events is only to fulfil what is commanded and abstain from what is prohibited by the religious law. If a supernatural event is performed through something other than the religious means (*al-asbāb al-sharʿiyya*), it is blameworthy. If the way of performing is acceptable while its purpose is not acceptable by the religion, it is also blameworthy. If performing the supernatural event helps in the performance of a permissible deed in the religion, but it is not used for obedience, it belongs to the righteous people (*al-abrār*). And if the supernatural event is performed both through the religious means and with the intention of observing the divine commands and prohibitions, it is the supernatural event of the intimate pioneers (*khawāriq al-muqarrabīn al-sābiqīn*).[73]

From these explanations it is clearly understood that for Ibn Taymiyya there is no need to discuss the reality of supernatural events. He certainly believes in them. They may be sometimes be effects and sometimes knowledge received through inspiration. Unlike the general Sufi understanding of inspiration in which it is considered to be special communication with God, the prophets, and the friends, Ibn Taymiyya treats inspiration simply as one event among many supernatural events. Therefore, while Ibn Taymiyya accepts the reality of inspiration as a means

---

[72] Makari, *Ibn Taymiyyah's Ethics: The Social Factor*, 60.
[73] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:499, trans. in Holland, *Sharḥ al-Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, 47.

through which knowledge is acquired, he investigates the accuracy of each piece of information received through inspiration. It is helpful to recall that in Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought inspiration- unveiling was the most reliable way in order to conceive the true meaning of revelation. Also, it was stated in the previous chapter that Ibn al-ʿArabī has direct communication with God, the Prophet, and the other prophets by means of spiritual way, unveiling.[74]

As for what Ibn Taymiyya understands from inspiration itself as an epistemological tool, at the outset it should be said that the conception of inspiration is very broad in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching.[75] For example, something provided by the Prophet concerning some future events such as the result of the controversy between Persians and Byzantines and the war against Turks are a kind of unveiling (*kashf*).[76] According to Ibn Taymiyya, a supernatural event concerning inspiration, which is the part of knowledge, sometimes appears as a sound which is heard by a person that others do not hear, sometimes as a sight which is seen by a person that others do not see. And it emerges sometimes as knowledge which is known by a person as a

---

[74] In this point, it should be noted that Ibn Taymiyya says "*faqad thabata anna li-awliyā' Allāhi mukhāṭabātin wa-mukāshafāt,*" in "Al-Furqān bayna Awliyā' Allāh wa-Awliyā' al-Shayṭān," placed in Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:205. Gibril Fouad Haddad translates the term, *mukhāṭabāt* as "communication" instead of "addressing" or "speeches." It may cause confusion because a communication may require two active participants. However, as mentioned above, inspiration is considered to be a kind of guidance or redirecting by God through the heart of the believers. Haddad, *The Refutation of Him [Ibn Taymiyya] who Attributes Direction to Allāh [al-Raddu ʿalā man qāla bil-jiha]*, 44.

[75] Here the conception of inspiration (*ilhām*) is elaborated in terms of epistemology. However, it is worth noting that Ibn Taymiyya uses the term inspiration in another context which is creation. As Hoover stated, Ibn Taymiyya by referring to a verse (Q, 91:7-10) sets a connection between creation and inspiration. Therefore, inspiration in this context may be thought to be a part of the process of constitution of the natural disposition of the human being (*fiṭra*). For the details of this different approach of the term, see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 115. Also, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 16:229-235. "And [by] the soul and He [God] who proportioned it. And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness. He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who instills it [with corruption]." *The Qur'ān*, 91:7-10.

[76] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:315.

revelation and inspiration that others do not know. This kind of access to knowledge is denoted with many names such as insight (*farāsa*) and unveiled knowledge (*ʿilm al-mukāshafa*) but it is known generally to be unveiling (*kashf*).[77]

Ibn Taymiyya affirms that there is something known through inspiration when God lifts the cover from the heart.[78] When the cover is lifted from the heart inspiration comes to the servant sometimes in the forms of speech, knowledge, supposition, and belief, and sometimes it appears in the forms of practice, love, wish, and demand. So, the heart may tend to what is more preferable, obvious, and right.[79] In this way, the heart of the believer can be controlled by God in order to choose the right option. Ibn Taymiyya is very cautious on the subject of inspiration concerning its reliability. While he accepts the reality of inspiration as an epistemological tool, he also accepts that inspirational knowledge may contain mistakes along with some correct information. Therefore, as offered in the matter of rational knowledge, in order to test the correctness of inspirational knowledge sent to the heart, resorting to the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths of the Prophet is necessary because when the religion is in question, if knowledge is not based on the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths, it is unaccepted according to Ibn Taymiyya.[80]

In this respect, he says that, like the people of rational thinking (*ahl al-naẓar*), the people of unveiling (*ahl al-mukāshafā*) sometimes are right

---

77 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:313.
78 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:321; 11:318.
79 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:476, trans. in Holland, *Sharḥ al-Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, 22.
80 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:349-351.

and sometimes wrong. Therefore, it is required for all of them to hold the Book of God and the Sunna of His messenger firmly in order to weigh the accuracy of their mystical experiences (*mawājīd*), witnesses (*mushāhada*), opinions, and rational statements according to the Book of God and the Sunna of His messenger.[81] It is seen that when Ibn Taymiyya stipulates the consistency between inspirational knowledge and the Qur'ān and the Sunna, he focuses on the religious validity of any individual inspirational knowledge rather than its epistemological validity because he already accepts it as a way of knowledge.

Just as he accepts the validity of rational statements so long as they are confirmed by revelation, he accepts the validity of inspirational knowledge only if they are not denied by revelation. In this regard, Ibn Taymiyya says that there are some heretics who claim that the inner reality opposes the outer expression of the religion. On the contrary, for the people of faith, the true inner statement is consistent with the true outer reality.[82] Therefore, he criticizes those who say that we need the Prophet for the outer knowledge (*ʿilm al-ẓāhir*) rather than the inner knowledge (*ʿilm al-bāṭin*) or we need him for the knowledge of religion (*ʿilm al-sharīʿa*) rather than the knowledge of reality (*ʿilm al-ḥaqīqa*). This kind of attitude means only believing in the religion partly according to Ibn Taymiyya.[83] Through this misunderstanding some people think of their spiritual masters as if they can go beyond the religious law by means of their inspirational knowledge. For

---

[81] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā*, 11:65.
[82] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:86, trans. in Michot, "Commentary on Avicenna's Risāla Aḍḥawiyya," 360.
[83] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:225.

this assumption they provide the example of Moses and al-Khiḍr (a knowledgeable servant).[84] But, giving this example, according to Ibn Taymiyya, displays only their ignorance and heresy because there is no violation of the religious law in this example at all.[85] Thus, in order to affirm the validity of any inspirational knowledge it is necessary to look at its aims, means, and results. Only if the aims, means, and results are compatible with the revelational knowledge, its validity is affirmed.[86]

In addition, there should be a proof in order to clarify whether inspirational knowledge is compatible with the revelational knowledge. At first, Ibn Taymiyya as a general approach says that in the hearts of most of the people of unveiling some ideas such as this food is forbidden (*ḥarām*), this man is disbeliever (*kāfir*) or sinner (*fāsiq*), and this belonging is lawful (*ḥalāl*) come out without apparent evidence. Or they may have love for some individuals saying that these men are the friends of God. However, there should be an evidence for such inspirational knowledge.[87] On the other hand, he clearly states that some cases, which are not known by the majority of people through apparent religious evidence, are known by some people, whom God inspires with knowledge regarding the case of a certain

---

[84] According to this Qur'ānic parable, al-Khiḍr by considering benefits for other people does something such as piercing the ship and killing a boy which are unacceptable for Moses because they are bad actions apparently. However, al-Khiḍr's intention, which was hidden to Moses, was to help and save people. For this parable, see *The Qur'ān,* 18:60-82.

[85] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:422.

[86] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:500.

[87] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:476-477.

belonging and the case of a certain individual through evidence which is not apparent to majority.[88]

In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya recalls the parable of Moses and al-Khiḍr as an example in which there is no opposition to the law of God.[89] It is not permissible for either a prophet or a friend to violate the law of God. However, there may be knowledge of the case of certain things through inner ways. It is like one who enters a house to take something among its belongings. While he is permitted by the owner of the house, other people may not be aware of this permission. In this case, this act is not lawful according to apparent evidence while it is lawful according to hidden evidence which is not known by anyone except the person and the owner of house. This kind of example is many among the people of true inspiration.[90] Similarly, the parable of Moses and al-Khiḍr implies that there may be some hidden evidences on some occasions. Otherwise, it does not mean that al-Khiḍr violated the law of God. Therefore, it may be better to say that according to Ibn Taymiyya, the important point is that inspiration should not be against an apparent evidence of the religion. But, sometimes it may seem to be without apparent evidence while it has a hidden one in fact.

It is a fact that Ibn Taymiyya recognizes inspiration as a valid method for acquisition of knowledge. Rather, in this case he gets closer to Sufis who, like Ibn Taymiyya, refer to the same ḥadīth reports in many

---

88 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:478-479.

89 As mentioned in the previous page, even though this parable may be used to be a permission to go beyond the law, Ibn Taymiyya draws attention to a difference. For him, al-Khiḍr does not go beyond the law; Moses' unawareness of al-Khiḍr's intention does not mean that some people are allowed to go beyond the divine law.

90 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:479.

occasions in order to confirm the inspiration-based method of knowledge. For example, Ibn Taymiyya, like Ibn al-ʿArabī, uses the ḥadīth report such as "In religious communities before you, there used to be recipients of inspired advice [*muḥaddathūn*], so if there is one in my Community, ʿUmar Ibn Khaṭṭāb is among them,"[91] "…so I [God] become his sense of hearing with which he hears, and his sense of sight with which he sees…"[92] and "Beware of the believer's intuition, for indeed he sees with God's light."[93] However, despite these supportive statements of inspiration, Ibn Taymiyya at the same time has some objections concerning its misapplication. He criticizes some Sufis such as Ibn al-ʿArabī and al-Ghazālī who primarily interpret revelation through their inspirations. For example, al-Ghazālī, according to Ibn Taymiyya, takes inspiration to be a scale to weigh the law provided by revelation.[94] As a note, while Ibn Taymiyya opposes weighing the revelational knowledge with inspirational knowledge, he affirms a place for inspiration in religious matters if there is no apparent religious evidence. In such cases, in Ibn Taymiyya, inspiration is preferable as stronger than most of the weak analogies, weak ḥadīth reports, and weak literal arguments.[95]

For Ibn Taymiyya, inspiration does not have certainty. While he considers inspiration to be a source of knowledge conditionally, he,

---

[91] Imam Bukhāri, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* "Fadāil al-aṣḥāb-The Companions," Volume 5, Book 57, Number 38. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:476. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:32.

[92] Imam Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* "Kitāb al-riqāq," ḥadīth no: 91. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:7; 11:61 and 11:159. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:65, 126, and 3:67.

[93] Imam Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī*, "Kitāb tafsīr al-Qurʾān," no: 3127. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:473.

[94] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 4:64. Also, see Rahman, *Revival and Reform*, 129.

[95] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:473. Also see, Homerin, " al-Ṣūfīyah," 242.

according to Yahya Michot, thinks that the issues related to the principles of religion cannot be known by inspiration.[96] Therefore, it can be said that Ibn Taymiyya is very careful on inspirational knowledge. He is critical of the accuracy and inaccuracy of inspirational knowledge. Inspirational knowledge is considered to be unsound if it contradicts rational and revelational knowledge since the sound intellect (*ṣarīḥ ʿaql*) as well does not contradict revelation. Whatever is contradictory to the intellect is contradictory to revelation according to Ibn Taymiyya.[97] It is clear that Ibn Taymiyya's objection is not to all inspirational knowledge, but some of it which is against the intellect and revelation. It means that it is possible to receive knowledge to some extent through inspiration as long as it is compatible with revelation and the intellect. Thus, he attempts to check the validity of all inspirational knowledge by taking it to the Qur'ān and the Sunna. Hence, he says that those who reject inspiration as a method are mistaken like those who recognize it an absolute religious method.[98]

In conclusion, this section focused on inspiration as a way to acquire knowledge in addition to revelation and the human intellect. Definitely, the divine inspiration, unveiling, which is the guidance and bestowal of God, is a part of the whole. It was necessity to examine the subject of inspiration together with its close conceptions like the friendship of God and the heart of the friends. It is clear that while Ibn Taymiyya has some objections to philosophical and practical Sufism which are based on innovations, it does

---

[96] Michot, "Ibn Taymiyya's Commentary on the Creed of al-Ḥallāj," 132.
[97] Michel, *Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 11. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:478.
[98] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:473.

not mean that he is against Sufism as a whole; it does not mean that he denies the reality of inspirational knowledge which is a cornerstone of the mystical traditions of Islam. As a result of this section, it can be said that Ibn Taymiyya affirms the existence of inspirational knowledge as long as this knowledge is not rejected by revelation and the human intellect.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter focused on Ibn Taymiyya's epistemological tools: revelation, the human intellect, and inspiration, respectively. Revelation, the Qur'ān, as the word of God is the most comprehensive and reliable source of true knowledge according to Ibn Taymiyya. As seen, Ibn Taymiyya deals with the question of how the Qur'ān can be understood correctly rather than whether or not the Qur'ān is an authority on knowledge. That is because the Qur'ān is already at the highest level in Ibn Taymiyya's epistemological hierarchy. He focuses on the methods of understanding revelation. When he compares commentary (*tafsīr*) and interpretation (*ta'wīl*), he confirms the former as the true method because attempts to understand the Qur'ān rationally are insufficient and misleading.

In this point, the Prophet Muhammad's function is significant because Ibn Taymiyya considers the Prophet not only to be a messenger but also a teacher who explains the divine message best. Thus, the Prophet's ḥadīths are necessary to grasp the true meaning of the revelation. Also, the Salaf have a special status in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching. It is because the Salaf could find opportunity to listen to and learn directly what the Prophet brought from God. Opinions of the Salaf are binding in religion for Ibn

Taymiyya. Eventually, it is possible to say that in Ibn Taymiyya's mind the Qur'ān as the most reliable source of knowledge is understood correctly under the light of the ḥadīths of the Prophet and the opinions of the Salaf.

For Ibn Taymiyya, the human intellect is another way of acquiring knowledge. Reasoning is not forbidden by Islamic law. On the one hand, Ibn Taymiyya accepts the limited nature of the intellect; he affirms some areas for the intellect on the other hand. He has criticisms against philosophy and theology not because they use the intellect but because they use the intellect with wrong methods and they consider it to be the soundest and unique source of knowledge. For him, correct application of the intellect leads human beings to confirmation of what revelation propounds. While Ibn Taymiyya emphasizes the agreement between revelation and the intellect, he offers revelation as the criterion to test the accuracy of the rational knowledge. Therefore, the intellect comes after revelation in Ibn Taymiyya concerning true knowledge.

As for inspiration as a way of knowledge, it is affirmed by Ibn Taymiyya clearly. With preparation of the heart, which is the place of inspirational knowledge, God may guide people to truth whereby the heart may have knowledge. In this chapter, elaboration of Sufism was necessary because Sufism bases itself mostly on inspirational knowledge which comes to the heart of the friends of God. Since Ibn Taymiyya has objections to Sufism from various angles, it may lead to the assumption that he is against inspiration as a way of knowledge. On the contrary, it is understood from the chapter that he affirms the reality of inspiration. However, inspiration is the least reliable source of knowledge according to him. In order to test the

accuracy of inspirational knowledge, it should be taken to the revelation and the intellect. This criterion of confirmation, which is to take inspirational knowledge to revelation first and then to the intellect, proves that inspiration as a way of knowledge comes after revelation and the intellect.

Finally, it may be said that in Ibn Taymiyya's epistemological hierarchy revelation is the highest one; the intellect is lower than the first; and then inspiration comes last. Concerning the epistemological hierarchy of Ibn Taymiyya, it is seen that he has some similarities with Ibn al-ʿArabī's epistemological tools and hierarchy. Both of them affirm the revelation, the Qur'ān as the most reliable source of knowledge. Both of them affirm the validity of the human intellect and inspiration for acquiring knowledge. The difference, while the intellect has a higher status than inspiration in Ibn Taymiyya's epistemology, inspiration has a higher status than the intellect in Ibn al-ʿArabī. The details of this comparison will be mentioned in the conclusion of the thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

4.1. Introduction

The subject of the divine names and attributes is one of the most significant points in the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. Both of them provide detailed and comprehensive explanations on this issue. Ibn al-ʿArabī links his thoughts to the divine names and attributes frequently, and Ibn Taymiyya takes the issue to be one of the main reasons for his criticisms against the Kalām theologians. Therefore, in this thesis I chose the subject of the divine names and attributes as the topic of comparison along with the epistemological stances of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. As mentioned at the beginning of the thesis, it would be possible to examine other theological issues such as prophethood, reward and punishment, evil and God, Heaven and Hell, and predestination. But, because of the essential role of the divine names and attributes in their theologies, this chapter will explore them.

The reason why the thought of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya on the divine names and attributes are elaborated through each individual section in this chapter is to express independently what they provide in this issue. Otherwise, it would cause a kind of ambiguity and imposition of my claim without explaining their opinions clearly. Expositing them separately will allow explaining first what Ibn al-ʿArabī thinks, then what Ibn Taymiyya thinks, and then the similar points that they share concerning the divine names and attributes. In addition, since they use different terms and conceptions while they focus on the same points, examination of their views separately may be more efficient.

Moreover, even though Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya ascribe many names and attributes to God, only some of them will be examined in this chapter because these names and attributes may help to compare their opinions better. For example, while both of them affirm that God is Provider (*razzāq*), I will not focus on this name because, for example, the names Knowing (*ʿālim*), Creator (*khāliq*), and Desirer (*murīd*) are more suitable for this kind of comparison. These names are more important and useful to explain their thought on this matter.

Eventually, this chapter will focus on the views of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya comparatively concerning the divine names and attributes. At the end, potential similarities along with differences between these two figures will be shown.

4.2. Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Names and Attributes of God

The divine names and attributes constitute the base of the theology of Ibn al-ʿArabī because whatever exists in the cosmos or in the mind of God is explained with the divine names and attributes. To show this interactive relationship among God, the divine names and attributes, and creation I am going to examine several aspects of the subject such as the Essence of God (*dhāt*), the relationship between the Essence and the divine names, and the relationship between the divine names and the created things. In the meanwhile, one of the most difficult parts of this section is to put these aspects in order since all the divine names and attributes are connected to each other. Therefore, it should be noted that important points seem to be repeated by Ibn al-ʿArabī, but, in fact, his purpose is either to

emphasize the enormous significance of the particular point or to draw the attention of the reader to different aspects of the point in each new reading.

4.2.1. General Approach to the Divine Names and Attributes

Primarily, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, God did not mention in the scripture the terms 'attributes of God' or 'relationships,' but uses instead the term 'names' of God. The Kalām theologians among the rational thinkers use the term 'attribute' (*ṣifa*) while the verifiers (*muḥaqqiqūn*) use the term 'relationships' (*nisba*) even though God uses 'names' clearly for Himself.[1] Moreover, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that for sound rational faculties (*al-ʿuqūl al-salīmiyya*) it is 'relationship,' and for narrow rational faculties (*al-ʿuqūl al-qāṣira*) it is 'attribute.'[2] Nevertheless, Ibn al-ʿArabī after referring to the verse, "To Him belong the best names" (Q, 7:180; 59:24) prefers to use the term 'relationships' since the divine names indicate a kind of relationship between God and the things according to him.

Concerning the names and attributes of God, Ibn al-ʿArabī underscores the significance of following the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad. He says that we have to describe God as He describes Himself and His Messenger describes Him. When God denies something for Himself, we deny it for Him; when He affirms something for Himself, we affirm it for Him.[3] Therefore, it is observed in Ibn al-ʿArabī's works that he identifies many names and attributes such as creation, giving life, speech, deception, mockery, bestowal, decision, decree, laughter, wonder, foot,

---

1 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:294. Chittick, *SPK*, 52.
2 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:289, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 34.
3 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 154.

hands, and eyes by referring to the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths of the Prophet. Even though we, as human beings, do not know how God can be qualified with these names and attributes, we should affirm these attributes without claiming their impossibility for Him.[4] Moreover, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, names such as hunger, thirst, illness, wrath, hands, foot, and joyfulness should not be understood in a metaphorical sense as the Kalām theologians do, since these names are taught us by God and His messenger. Hence, we have to affirm these names without adding a name which is not found in the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths.[5]

Even though Ibn al-ʿArabī follows the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths on the matter of the names and attributes of God, he provides elaborate and extensive explanations about the names that may not be found explicitly in the Qur'ān. Also, although there is no exact number of divine names in the Qur'ān, Ibn al-ʿArabī, by referring to some ḥadīths reports, provides some numbers of the names. Besides this, even though he accepts ninety-nine names for God by referring to these reports, he claims infinity for the number of the divine names.[6]

Another point is the ranking of the divine names. Just as it is possible to say that this person is superior to that person, it is possible to say that this name or attribute is superior to that name or attribute. On the superiority of the names, the essential factor is the function of the particular

---

4 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:242.
5 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:538.
6 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:288. While he quotes some lists of the names from some sources, for example from Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), he gives a very large place for the names and attributes of God in his works. See *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:303. Also in *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:196-326, there are very detailed explanations of the names of God.

name. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, every name of God has a special feature and function which determines the ranking generally.[7] While the essence of the divine names is the same, each one of the names has a different degree relevant to their functionalities rather than their essences. This kind of graduation takes place both among the divine names themselves and between the names and the cosmological things. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the graduation is necessary to separate one thing from other things. In this way only, it becomes possible to realize the differences of the things in the world.[8] For example, God's names Alive (*al-ḥayy*) and Knowing (*al-ʿālim*) have a special status among the other names because their range of influence is more comprehensive than that of the others. For him, the name Alive is a precondition of the other names. Also, since God's knowledge encompasses everything, the name Knowing has a higher degree than, for example, the names Desiring (*al-murīd*) and the Powerful (*al-qādir*) as well as the names Hearing (*al-samīʿ*), Seeing (*al-baṣīr*), Grateful (*al-shakūr*), Pitying (*al-raʾūf*), and Compassionate (*al-raḥīm*).[9]

Furthermore, Ibn al-ʿArabī classifies the names as the mothers of the names, the daughters of the names, and the imams of the names. In this respect, he considers the names Alive, Knowing, Desiring, Powerful, Speaking, Director (*al-mudabbir*), and Distinguisher (*al-mufaṣṣil*) to be the mothers of the names. As for Generous (*al-jawād*) and Just (*al-muqsiṭ*), he

---

7 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 153.
8 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:34, 416, 469; 3:494, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 48.
9 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:527; 3:447, 450; 4:99, 228. Chittick, *SPK*, 51. Also, see *The Qur'ān*, 65:12.

calls them the daughters of the last two names, Director and Distinguisher.[10] He continues, by singling out the name Alive as the leader (*imām*) of the names, saying that the name Knowing follows this name; the Desiring follows the Knowing; the Speaker follows the Desiring; the Powerful follows the Speaker; the Generous follows the Powerful; and the last of them is the name the Just.[11]

Beside these categorizations, Ibn al-ʿArabī considers seven names of God (the Living, Knowing, Speaking, Desiring, Powerful, Hearing, and Seeing) to be the names of perfection which encompass all the divine names.[12] All these names are necessary concomitants of the divine perfection because God manifests Himself on things by means of all these names.[13] To show the significance of these names, as Michel Chodkiewicz indicates, when Ibn al-ʿArabī wrote his book, *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, he organized the book according to the six of these names of perfection. The first section, knowledge (*maʿārif*) is related to the name Knowing; the second section, behaviours (*muʿāmalāt*) is related to Desiring; the third, spiritual states (*aḥwāl*), is related to the Powerful. And the forth section, stations (*manāzil*), is related to the Speaker; the fifth, the encounter of God

---

[10] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:100. According to this original text, there is a kind of ambiguity about which names are the daughters. However, it is seen from the statements of Ibn al-ʿArabī (Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:427) the names Generous and Just are below all the five names in addition to the names Director and Distinguisher. Therefore, for Gerald Elmore, the text should be read with all points that Ibn al-ʿArabī indicated together. Nevertheless, the point here is to show the realities of ranking among the divine names rather than to determine which names are daughters exactly. Gerald Elmore, "Four Texts of Ibn al-ʿArabī on the Creative Self-Manifestation of the Divine Names," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 29 (2001): 1-39 (23).

[11] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:100.

[12] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:50. Also, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt (Yahya's edition),* 1:224-5.

[13] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:588.

and man (*manāzilāt*), is related to the Hearing; and the last one, statuses (*maqāmāt*), is related to the Seeing.[14] It is clearly understood that Ibn al-ʿArabī establishes a connection between his works and the divine names and attributes.

Even though the ranking of the divine names is stated from one perspective, there cannot be a ranking among the divine names from another. Even if this statement seems contradictory, it is not in fact. On the contrary, it is a good example of the duality of Ibn al-ʿArabī's method. It means that when the relationships between the divine names and the Essence of God are in question, it is not possible to state a ranking because each of their relationships to the Essence is the same. But, when the relationships between the divine names and the originated beings in the cosmos are in question, they have rankings according to their scopes.[15] Briefly, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, as a general approach to the divine names and attributes, God, out of respect to Him, should not be described by any name which is not found in the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad.[16] But, since there is in the cosmos nothing which is not a manifestation of a name of God, the names and attributes of God encompass everything that exists.

---

[14] These names are known by Ibn al-ʿArabī in a vision happened during a pilgrimage. In each circumambulation (*shawṭ*) around the House (*Kaʿba*) he realized one of these names (the Living, Knowing, Speaking, Desiring, Powerful, Hearing, and Seeing). While the last six names are in relation with created things, the first name, the Living remains hidden to created things and the other survive with it. Moreover, according to Chodkiewicz's report, the importance of the number six may stem from the six days of the creation and the six directions in space. Therefore, arrangement of *Al-Futūḥāt* with the six names reflects somehow the names of perfection. Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean without Shore*, 97-8; 160 n.65. Also, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:11-30; Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:493.

[15] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:61, 226, 580; 3:157.

[16] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:373.

4.2.2. The Essence of God (*dhāt*)

In Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching the distinction between the Essence of God (*dhāt*) and the Divinity of God (*al-ulūhiyya*) plays an essential role.[17] While he separates the Essence from the Divinity, he never allows a dualistic understanding of God. Since the Essence is not manifest (*ẓāhir*) to creatures at all, it can never be reflected upon.[18] It is beyond all perceptions, contemplations, the names and attributes, the human intellect, and even unveilings. God's Essence is unreachable, unknowable, and undefinable.[19]

To talk about the Essence of God would be to define it, but there is no definition for His Essence.[20] Also, since everything in the cosmos individually has a different relationship to God, no prospective definition can be comprehensive and true. Thus, it is impossible to define God completely without restricting Him.[21] It should be noted that God's Divinity indicates similarities with the cosmos by means of the names. Therefore, some definitions of God's Divinity may be possible. But, His Essence is not similar to any creature. Hence, it is impossible to reflect upon the Essence's quiddity (*māhiyya*).[22] Ibn al-ʿArabī grounds his idea concerning thinking about the quiddity of the Essence on the Qur'ānic verse, "And God warns

---

17 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:597, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 59-60.
18 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:128.
19 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:69; 2:230; 3:429; 2:619; 2:257. For translation, see Chittick, *SPK*, 59-66.
20 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:619.
21 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 68.
22 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:289.

you of Himself" (Q, 3:28), by saying that God prohibits us to reflect upon (*tafakkur*) His Essence at all.[23]

On the other hand, even though Ibn al-ʿArabī suggests that the perfection of the Essence requires being independent of all the names, attributes, or relationships,[24] he identifies names in his work, *Inshā' al-dawā'ir,* as the names of the Essence. In this work, he categorizes the names as the names of the Essence (*asmā' al-dhāt*), the names of the attributes (*asmā' al-ṣifa*), and the names of the acts (*asmā' al-afʿāl*). For example, while he identifies twenty-four names under the names of the attributes in relation to the seven perfection names (Living, Knowing, Speaking, Desiring, Powerful, Hearing, and Seeing), under the names of the Essence he counts thirty names including God, Lord (*al-rabb*), Hidden (*al-bāṭin*), Independent (*al-ghaniyy*), First (*al-awwal*), Last (*al-ākhir*), Majesty (*al-jalāl*), and One (*al-wāḥid*).[25]

In this respect, the names Unique (*al-aḥad*) and One (*al-wāḥid*) are worth mentioning as an example. According to William Chittick, even though theologians have been discussing for a long time whether these two names mean the same thing or different things, Ibn al-ʿArabī uses these names to indicate God's oneness from different angles. For Chittick, Ibn al-ʿArabī uses the name Unique (*al-aḥad*) to point out the oneness of God in respect of His incomparability (*tanzīh*) while he uses the other name One (*al-wāḥid*) for the oneness of God in respect of His similarity (*tashbīh*). It

---

[23] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:230, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 62.
[24] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:588.
[25] Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Kitāb inshā' al-dawā'ir.* Ed. Asim Ibrahim al-Kayyali, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2005), 152.

means that God with His name Unique (*al-aḥad*) does not have a relationship with the cosmos, but this is not the same for the name One (*al-wāḥid*).[26] Also, according to Mohamed Yousef, by the name One is meant that He is only One, not two, three, or more. This is, "There is no god, but God." On the other hand, by the name Unique is meant that He is not divisible into entities.[27] Furthermore, to understand this special position of the name Unique (*al-aḥad*) it is helpful that Ibn al-ʿArabī says that God discloses Himself neither in the name of the Unique nor in the name of God (*Allāh*), but in all the other names God manifest Himself.[28]

As for the name God (*Allāh*), it has an importance that the other names do not have according to Ibn al-ʿArabī. The name God (*Allāh*) itself contains all the distinctive features of the other names of God. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, even though all the names of God may have some features of the other names within their essences, none of them has the capability of including all features together. Rather, for him, the name God collects together even the opposite divine names.[29] All the names other than the name God, while they point out the Real somehow, contain either a meaning of negation (*salb*) or affirmation (*ithbāt*). In contrast, the name God is beyond this kind of categorization.[30] For example, God is both the Forgiver (*al-ghafūr*) and at the same time He is the Avenger (*al-muntaqim*) and He is the Life-giver (*al-muḥyī*) and the Bringer of death (*al-mumīt*).

---

[26] Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 168. See, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī "Kitāb al-alif (kitāb al-aḥadiyya), " in Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Rasā'il,* 38.

[27] Mohamed Haj Yousef, *Ibn ʿArabī: Time and Cosmology* (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2008), 125. See Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:293.

[28] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:180.

[29] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:157.

[30] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:197, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 66.

This is to say that since the Real with His name God (*allāh*) encompasses everything, He is both manifest and non-manifest.[31] Thus, despite the acknowledgment of the separation between the Essence of God which is beyond all definitions, names, attributes, and numbers, and His Divinity which is in relation with the created things, Ibn al-ʿArabī talks about the Real through the divine names. It proves the impossibility of stripping off all the divine names and attributes from the Essence.

When Ibn al-ʿArabī talks about the Real, he approaches Him in two respects: the Essence and the Divinity. Even if the Essence is independent of the cosmos theoretically the Divinity has a very strong connection with the cosmos. However, it does not mean that the Essence had no attribute before the cosmos has acquired its physical form. Since the cosmos before its physical form was dwelling in the mind of God, there is a necessary interaction between God's knowledge (i.e., His name the Knowing) and the Essence of God. The divine knowledge is prior to creation of the cosmos and, in consequence, to the appearance of some of the names of God. Therefore, it is not possible to detach all the divine names and attributes from the Essence without exception. Otherwise, it would be impossible to qualify God with knowledge.

4.2.3. The Knowledge of God (*ʿilm*)

Since the intimate relation of the divine knowledge to the Essence of God is evident, I prefer to examine the subject of knowledge right after the

---

[31] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 68.

subject of the Essence of God. For Ibn al-ʿArabī the knowledge of God is eternal (*qadīm*) while the knowledge of man is originated (*muḥdath*).[32] It is one of the fundamental differences between the Creator and creatures. It is clear that ascribing knowledge to God and human beings does not mean that knowing is the same for God and human beings.[33] Hence, Ibn al-ʿArabī by referring to the verse, "God has encompassed all things in knowledge" (Q, 65:12), affirms that God knows everything in the past, present, and future.[34] In comparison to the divine knowledge, as stated in the previous chapters, the knowledge of human beings is insufficient and deficient.

The source of all the divine names and the things, which exist both in the cosmos and in the pre-cosmos stations, is the Essence of God because, if the Essence did not know Itself, It would not be the Knower. Definitely, the well-known doctrine of the oneness of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) underlies this understanding that everything exists in the knowledge of God. Although the doctrine is a cornerstone in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching, he never uses this term *waḥdat al-wujūd*, according to Chittick.[35] Rather, this is just a well-known formulation of an aspect of his teaching. Therefore, it is helpful to note briefly what the conception of the oneness of existence means. In this conception, the most essential term is *wujūd* which means being, finding, and existence.[36] This term is used by Ibn al-ʿArabī to indicate God Himself because for him, existence (*wujūd*) is not other than

---

[32] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 52.
[33] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:217.
[34] Ibn al-ʿArabī, "Kitāb al-jalāl wa-l jamāl," in Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Rasā'il,* 30.
[35] Chittick, *SPK*, 79.
[36] Chittick, *SPK*, 80.

God, but it is the same with God.[37] Ibn al-ʿArabī identifies God with the term existence (*wujūd*) rather than existent (*mawjūd*). This is an important point in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching to defend his view against those who blame him for being a pantheist (the idea that all is God).[38] While "all" is existent, God is existence.

However, it should be noted that even though Ibn al-ʿArabī occasionally applies the term *wujūd* to mean all existent things (*mawjūdāt*),[39] for him, in fact, the existence belongs to God only. So, all existent beings take their existence from God.[40] Apart from this kind of cosmological explanation of the conception of the oneness of existence, Peter Coates points out a possible mystical meaning of this term referring to its meaning of 'finding.' In this case, the term *wujūd*, as a synonym of witnessing (*shuhūd*), would imply a realization of the oneness of God and creatures.[41] This kind of oneness occurs not only on the existential level but also on the level of the knowledge of God. It means that God's knowledge of Himself is the same as His knowledge of the existent things because both of them comprise the eternal and divine knowledge.[42]

In this regard, the status of the fixed entities (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*) is important since they are an aspect of the divine knowledge. Ibn al-ʿArabī does not separate the knowledge of these entities, which exist in the

---

37 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:328; 3:566.
38 For this discussion, see Rustom, "Is Ibn al-ʿArabī's Ontology Pantheistic?," 53-97; Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought*, 73; and Chittick, *SPK*, 79.
39 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:384. See Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 12.
40 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:90; 3:299.
41 Coates, *Ibn ʿArabī and Modern Thought*, 3.
42 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:90, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 84.

knowledge of God, even if they do not exist in the cosmos yet, from their presence in the cosmos. On the level of existence Ibn al-ʿArabī considers them to be existent things in both cases. The only difference is that these fixed things, when they are in the knowledge of God before coming into existence in the cosmos, are non-existent in comparison to their cosmological existence. But, indeed, they are existent in the knowledge of God in comparison to absolute nonexistence.[43] As Ibn al-ʿArabī says, knowledge follows the thing known; the thing known does not follow knowledge (*al-ʿilm tābiʿ li-l maʿlūm mā huwa al-maʿlūm li-lʿilm*).[44] It means they are always existent since they are located in the eternal knowledge of God.

This approach leads us to the proposition that God did not bring the things into existence because they already exist in God's mind. He knows them because they exist. Since it is not possible to think of something which is out of God's knowledge, we have to accept that these things are God's knowledge itself. In consequence, it is not possible to distinguish God, His knowledge, and the objects that exist in His knowledge from each other. Rather, Ibn al-ʿArabī criticizes some scholars who restrict the existent things to the actual things which are seen in the cosmos only. These scholars do not have any evidence for this matter according to Ibn al-ʿArabī

---

[43] Chittick, *SPK*, 11-12.
[44] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:16. Also, Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 96.

who refers to the verse, "He has encompassed whatever is with them and has enumerated all things in number" (Q, 72:28).[45]

Ibn al-ʿArabī suggests many solutions and explanations for various controversial theological problems in the light of this understanding. For example, he explains the verse, "He is with you wherever you are," (Q, 57:4) as God's knowledge of us wherever we are. But, it is not certain at first whether Ibn al-ʿArabī on this matter means ontological with-ness (*maʿiyya*) or a with-ness just through knowledge because even if his idea appears to be indicating with-ness through knowledge, it can be discussed that his idea of the divine knowledge has somehow an ontological togetherness. This is also an example of the dual perspective and expression of Ibn al-ʿArabī. Nevertheless, since Ibn al-ʿArabī considers there to be a fundamental difference between the Creator and creatures in one respect, he says that God said "He is with you," but He did not say "you are with Him." Ibn al-ʿArabī connects this difference to the different natures and capacities of the knowledge of God and the knowledge of human beings. Thus, he continues that God is with the existent things regardless of whether they are called existent or non-existent while the cosmos is not with Him at all.[46] It is evident from these ideas of Ibn al-ʿArabī that God's being with us is related to His knowledge which encompasses everything.

It may be noted that when the fixed entities are in question, even if some of Ibn al-ʿArabī's statements are susceptible to various interpretations

---

[45] Ibn al-ʿArabī, "Kitāb al-jalāl wa-l jamāl," in Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Rasā'il,* 30.
[46] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:582; 2:56, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 364.

such as that everything in God's knowledge has necessarily an ontological togetherness with God in a pantheistic sense, when God's being with us is in question with regard to the knowledge of God, it is not possible to state any kind of togetherness or equal relationship with God in any case. In other words, even though consideration of some of Ibn al-ʿArabī's statements such as that there is nothing in existence but God[47] may lead us to think of a certain togetherness among God and the creatures, which are the objects of God's knowledge, consideration of the knowledge of God and the knowledge of human beings proves that Ibn al-ʿArabī accepts an undeniable distinction between God and the existent things.[48]

As a note, there is a very strong relation between the knowledge of God and the act of creation or bringing things into existence in the cosmos. Since whatever exists in the cosmos is a manifestation of God, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, there is nothing other than the forms of His manifestation in fact.[49] This matter will be completed in the part on creation of this section because it can be said that the departure point of creation is the knowledge of God in which all cosmological and pre-cosmological things exist.

Eventually, it may be right to say that Knowing, as the divine name, is one of the most significant names of God since God knows Himself through this name and this name is the source of every existent thing. Therefore, as Chittick also expresses, God's knowledge is identical with His

---

47 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:272; 2:148.
48 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:204. See Chittick, *SPK*, 206.
49 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:682.

Essence.[50] It means that even if Ibn al-ʿArabī considers the Essence to be behind all names and attributes in one respect, he affirms that the Essence is Knowing (*al-ʿālim*) in another respect.

4.2.4. The Will of God (*irāda*)

Because of the relationship between the divine will and knowledge, it will be helpful to discuss the subject of God's will after the subject of God's knowledge. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the will of God is not independent. Rather, it is dependent on the knowledge of God. The will of God (*irāda*) plays a role when the things placed in the knowledge of God come into existence in the cosmos. Since knowledge does not have an effect on the object of knowledge, and since the things located in the knowledge of God need something through which they move toward their cosmological status, the divine will is a necessary attribute in order to complete the whole process of creation.[51] God's will is dependent on what is known by God. He can make or command in accordance with what He knows. It means that God has knowledge of everything including existent and non-existent things in addition to the knowledge of what these things possess in their nature and self.

Ibn al-ʿArabī connects the divine will to the conceptions of decree (*qaḍā'*) and destiny (*qadar*). He clarifies these conceptions as follows. Decree is God's unchangeable and limited order on the things i.e., the divine will is limited to His knowledge of these things. As for destiny, it is a

---

[50] Chittick, *SPK*, 38. And, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:44.
[51] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 82.

determination in respect of time in which what these things convey within their essences without addition or extension comes into existence by God's will which complies with the essence of the object.[52] In other words, in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching, the divine will is relevant to decree and destiny which are also relevant to the unchangeable knowledge of God.

Although there are many aspects of the divine will, I should mention the ontological will (*al-amr al-takwīnī*) and the religious will (*al-amr al-taklīfī*) since like Ibn al-ʿArabī, Ibn Taymiyya as well will examine these aspects of the divine will. Everything that exists in the cosmos happens through God's will only. It is either under the ontological will or the religious will. The former is not related to the bliss (*saʿāda*) of human beings, but it is related to creation while the latter is related to the bliss to which God calls people through the religious law and the messenger according to Ibn al-ʿArabī.[53]

Ibn al-ʿArabī, with these two kinds of the divine wills, touches on some terminological points first, and then he says that these wills are different from each other. While the religious will of God may be disobeyed by people, it is not possible to disobey the ontological will at all.[54] Moreover, he says that even disobedience to the religious will is, in fact, obedience to the divine will in terms of the ontological will.[55]

---

[52] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 131, trans. in Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 165.
[53] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:593. See Chittick, *SPK*, 291-3.
[54] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:430. Also, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 165.
[55] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:510, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 293.

It is possible to see many examples of this kind of understanding in Ibn al-ʿArabī's works. For instance, in *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, in the chapter of Aaron, when he mentions the story of Moses and Aaron about their people's worshipping the statue of the calf, he explains why Moses is angry with Aaron. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, Moses knew very well that whatever they worship is, in fact, God because God's judgement on this matter is determined with the verse, "And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him" (Q, 17:23). However, Aaron was not aware of this fact. That is the reason why Moses was angry with Aaron. Thus, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the gnostic (*ʿārif*) is one who sees the Real in everything.[56] Moreover, in this matter, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that the learned scholars (*al-ʿulamā' al-rusūm*) use the word decree (*qaḍā'*) in the meaning of commandment (*amr*) while we use it in the meaning of the decision of God (*ḥukm*).[57] So, Ibn al-ʿArabī distinguishes this kind of the divine will from a religious commandment such as prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and avoiding prohibited acts.

Eventually, in the subject of the divine will, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that God's will is compatible with what the thing conveys in its self.[58] Indeed, God's will is dependent on what He knows because it is not acceptable for God who acts without knowing. Also, it can be said that the divine will is a kind of intermediary situation between the knowledge of God and the creation because whatever God has in His mind that comes to the cosmos is

---

[56] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 192.
[57] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:117. Also, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:92.
[58] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:356.

triggered by the divine will since it is not acceptable for a god who acts without willing. In fact, this is what Ibn al-ʿArabī calls the divine wisdom (*ḥikma*). God does not act without wisdom just as He does not will without knowledge. In this respect, he says that the name Wise (*al-ḥakīm*) has two faces: one of them is toward the name Knowing; the other is toward the Director (*al-mudabbir*).[59] Finally, the Essence must have will in order to bring the things which are fixed in the mind of God into existence in the cosmos.

4.2.5. The Relationship between the Essence and the Divine Names

The distinction between the Essence of God (*dhāt*) and the Divinity of God (*al-ulūhiyya*) is one of the most important points in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching. The real existence of the names, their relationships with the Essence, and whether this distinction is just verbal or ontological are some of the debateable points. Each of these questions is related to the understanding of the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*). In Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching the understanding of the oneness of God, according to Stephen Hirtenstein, is a matter of spiritual insight and experience.[60] It is a kind of transformation of vision from the physical world to what is beyond the physical world. This is a mystical explanation.

Indeed, Ibn al-ʿArabī has something more to say about the oneness of God concerning its centrality in his whole theology. According to him, the oneness of God may be examined through two different kinds of

---

[59] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:389, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 174.
[60] Hirtenstein, *Unlimited Mercifier*, 19.

oneness. In fact, both of them indicate the real oneness. The first kind of oneness is related to the Essence which is independent of everything. The second kind of the oneness is related to the Divinity which is in relationship with the cosmos and unites all the divine names.[61]

As stated before, even though Ibn al-ʿArabī distinguishes the Essence from the divine names, he identifies some names as belonging to the Essence of God. In total, God has three aspects in His oneness, which are the Essence, the attributes, and the acts. These three aspects constitute the Divine Presence (*al-ḥaḍra al-ilāhiyya*).[62] Therefore, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the Divine Presence as a name refers not only to the Essence but also to the divine names and actions at the same time.[63] On the other hand, each divine name indicates another divine name and the Essence Itself.[64] When these statements are taken into consideration as a whole, it is possible to see a unity and an indispensable connection among the conceptions of the Divine Presence, the Essence of God, the Divinity of God, the divine names, attributes, and actions. This is a framework of what Ibn al-ʿArabī understands from the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*).

However, even though each one of the aspects proves the oneness of God, it does not mean that the distinction is redundant. On the contrary, it is possible to say that the distinction rather than the unity plays a more important role in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching because everything in existence is a result of the distinction between the Essence and the Divinity of God in

---

61 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 105.
62 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:114.
63 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:196, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 58.
64 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 79.

one respect. According to him, although the Essence of God is independent of the world, the Divinity is dependent on the things.[65] Moreover, saying that God is independent of the things (*al-ghaniyy*) means that He is independent of the physical things that exist in the cosmos, but it does not mean that He is independent of the fixed entities placed in the mind of God.[66] This case is very much related to the point mentioned above under the title of knowledge because the divine name Knowing is closer to His Essence more than His Divinity. At the end, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that according to what God informed about Himself, He has two dimensions. One of them is the relationship with the cosmos through His names. The other one is the independence of the Essence such that He is beyond names, attributes, and relationships.[67]

It should be kept in mind that the distinction between the Essence and the Divinity of God should not lead us to think of God as composite. As Ibn al-ʿArabī states clearly, there is no part in Him at all, but there are the names whereby He becomes manifest.[68] In fact, the multiplicity of the divine names may urge us to think of many different realities. So, it is possible to consider God as a composition consisting of an essence and many names as if they have reality along with the reality of the Essence. But, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, all the names express the One without composition.[69] As Chittick says on this matter, one person may have some names and

---

65 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 119.
66 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:306, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 86.
67 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:533; 4:319.
68 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 84.
69 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:397.

attributes at the same time such as father, son, husband, and brother. But it does not mean that there are many people; on the contrary, it is known that each of these attributes expresses the same person.[70]

For Ibn al-ʿArabī even if the reality of the divine names and attributes has been discussed among the rational thinkers (*ahl al-naẓar*) such as the Kalām theologians, it is not a problem because there is no ontological reality of the divine names at all. They are relationships only. Thus, the divine names are not ontological beings alongside the Essence, but they are, in fact, just rational (*maʿqūl*) things.[71] These relationships take place between God's divinity and the cosmological things. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about the divine names in respect of their absolute existence or absolute non-existence.[72]

Briefly, concerning the relationship between the Essence and the Divinity of God, it is clear that for Ibn al-ʿArabī there is only One God without any composition, parts, and associations with Him. On the other hand, He has many different names through which He is known. The existence of the names of God does not mean necessarily that either we mention more than one God or they are His parts. These divine names are just relationships toward the Essence of God. As Ibn al-ʿArabī says, God is

---

70 Chittick, *SPK*,10.

71 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:294.

72 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:684; 2:516. As a note, according to Cağfer Karadaş, a Turkish professor of Islamic theology, on the matter of the existential situation of the divine names and attributes and their relative existence Ibn al-ʿArabī benefited from Abū Ḥāshim al-Jubbaī's (d. 933) theory of states (*aḥwāl*) even though Karadaş does not have evidence other than pointing out some similarities between the ideas of Ibn al-ʿArabī and al-Jubbaī. Nevertheless, Karadaş, to make the point clear, gives a place for a definition of state (*ḥāl*): it is the name of the middle position or tool between the existent (*mawjūd*) and non-existent (*maʿdūm*). Cağfer Karadaş, "Muhyiddin İbn Arabī'nin İtikādı," *Tasavvuf Ilmî ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 9 21 (2008): 67-94 (73).

one only; there is no number for Him; but He is called the Knowing, Self-subsisting (*al-qayyūm*), Almighty (*al-ʿazīz*), Tremendous (*al-mutakabbir*), Irresistible (*al-jabbār*), and the ninety-nine names for the one God with various attributes (*aḥkām mukhtalifa*).[73] Also, he by referring to the Qur'ānic verses, "Say, He is God, [who is] One, God (*allāh*), the Eternal Refuge, He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent" (Q, 112:1-4), says that God qualified Himself with the One at first, but then we know His names and attributes with the multiplicity that His divinity has.[74]

4.2.6. The Relationship between the Divine Names and the Cosmological Beings

According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, everything other than God is a sign of the divine reality. He says that by the cosmos (*ʿālam*) we know (*naʿlama*) God because it is His sign (*ʿalāma*).[75] Hence, everything other than God is just a name of His.[76] Thus, just as the divine names do not have an ontological existence, the things, each of which signifies a divine name, do not have a real existence (*wujūd*) apart from God's existence. As it is in the conception of the oneness of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), the things in the cosmos are only the physical forms of the objects of God's knowledge. For instance, concerning the verse cited above, "And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him" (Q, 17:23), the main purpose of Ibn al-ʿArabī is to draw our attention to the fact that there is nothing other than God's

[73] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:395.
[74] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 105.
[75] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:473, trans. in Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 3.
[76] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:122.

existence. It means that everything necessarily points out the Real (*al-ḥaqq*).[77] Moreover, he criticizes Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī because of his idea that God can be known without looking at the cosmos. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, even if God's existence in respect of the Essence is known without observing the cosmological signs, His Divinity cannot be known without looking at creatures which are His names indeed.[78]

There is a connection between each thing in the cosmos and the divine names. This connection is a kind of relationship according to Ibn al-ʿArabī. It means, for example, that a living being is related to the name Living, and a thing known is related to the Knowing.[79] In this way all cosmological things keep their relationships alive with the divine names. A thing sometimes may have more than one relationship to the divine names such as the Living, the Knowing, and the Merciful at the same time. Therefore, it should be taken into consideration that whole system regarding the Essence, the Divinity, and the cosmological beings in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching is based on the divine names. There is nothing explained without a reference to a divine name. For example, while the divine name Majesty (*al-jalāl*) has a relationship with the Essence, the name Beauty (*al-jamāl*) has relationship with the cosmos.[80]

It should be noted that each divine name has a different function since each of them has different relationships with the things.[81] The nature

---

77 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 72.
78 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 81.
79 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 52.
80 Ibn al-ʿArabī, "Kitāb al-jalāl wa-l jamāl," in Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Rasā'il,* 25.
81 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 64.

of these relationships is determined according to what the thing conveys in its self or nature. This is related to the divine will mentioned before. The nature of the relationship should be compatible with the nature of the thing. Besides this, certain divine names may be more effective on things than other names. For example, on the improvement of the cosmos, even though all the names have some effects on this process, the names Director (*al-mudabbir*) and Differentiator (*al-mufaṣṣil*) have much more effect according to Ibn al-ʿArabī.[82]

Moreover, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, since all the divine names have different influences on different things in the cosmos, these things can be distinguished from each other easily. For instance, the object of knowledge (*maʿlūm*) has a relationship with the name Knowing while the object of power (*maqdūr*) has a relationship with the name Powerful. Thereby, these objects are separated from each other because their relationships with the divine names are different as well.[83] Also, since each thing in the cosmos has a relationship with a divine name, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that the vassal (*marbūb*) said, "O Lord (*al-rabb*);" and the Lord said to him, "Here I am [for you] (*labbayk*);" the created thing (*makhlūq*) said, "O Creator (*al-khāliq*);" and then the Creator said to him, "Here I am;" the one who is given sustenance (*marzūq*) said, "O Provider (*al-razzāq*);" and the Provider

[82] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:100.
[83] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:665.

said, “Here I am;” and the weak one said, “O Strong (*al-qawiyy*);” and then the Strong said to him, “I respond to you.”[84]

However, it should be remembered that even though each divine name shares some characteristics of the other divine names, it does not mean that they are the same. On the contrary, since their relationships with the things are different and since the things are different as well, the divine names also are different.[85] Only the name God encompasses all the divine names completely.

In the direction of these relationships, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the essences of the existent things before their cosmological existence desire to be brought into existence in the cosmos.[86] The divine names as well in accordance to their essences desire to be manifest in the cosmological things. This interactive desire may be considered to be a reason of creation.

In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī, who writes his works by means of inspiration (*ilhām- kashf*), gives some mystical information about the dialogue of the divine names. This dialogue proves the interaction between the divine names and created things. It is as follows that, he says, when the divine names such as the Creator (*al-khāliq*) who is Ordainer (*al-muqaddir*), Knowing (*al-ʿālim*), Director (*al-mudabbir*), Differentiator (*al-mufaṣṣil*), Maker (*al-bārī*), Form-giver (*al-muṣawwir*), Provider (*al-razzāq*), Life-giver (*al-muḥyī*), Bringer of death (*al-mumīt*), Heir (*al-wārith*), and Grateful (*al-shakūr*) gathered and looked at their meanings and realities. When they

---

84 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:360, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 61.
85 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:101.
86 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 177.

desired to be manifest in accordance to their essences, they realized that there was nothing that was created, needed to be organized, nor a sign that needed to be explained, nor someone who needed a judgement or sustenance to be provided. Then, they asked what they could do as long as there was nothing making them manifest? Firstly, they, namely the divine names, went to the name the Maker (*al-bārī*), but because of the different functions and operations of the divine names, they then went to the names the Powerful (*al-qādir*), Desiring (*al-murīd*), Knowing (*al-ʿālim*), and God (*allāh*) respectively to submit their demand. After God forwarded the demands of the divine names to the Essence (*al-dhāt*), the Essence told God to let them [the names] have relationships with the possible things in accordance to their realities.

Thereupon, the name God (*allāh*) by taking the name Speaker (*al-mutakallim*) who translates (*tarjama*), notified what the Essence told to the divine names, so that, the relationships between the possible things and the divine names began. In the rest of this dialogue, to preserve these established relationships, the names want to have a leader (*imām*). Thus, they have recourse to the name Director (*al-mudabbir*), and then they together go to the name Lord (*al-rabb*). Thereupon, the Lord assigns the two names, Director and Differentiator to be deputies to Himself. Thereby, all the limits and responsibilities of the divine names are regulated and controlled by the divine name Lord according to Ibn al-ʿArabī.[87] Certainly, this dialogue with its more extensive details in *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya* has

[87] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:323. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 129. For alternative translation, see Elmore, "Four Texts of Ibn al-ʿArabī," 31-38.

various aspects indicating different points of the matter of the divine names. It explains the ranking of the divine names on the one hand. But, on the other hand, it proves that each divine name has a different place of effect and has a different responsibility and relationship in respect of the cosmological things.

Fulfilling their individual responsibilities in accordance with their essences enables their manifestations. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, as stated above, the divine names are dependent on the things in the cosmos, so that it can be said that if there were no sinner in the world, the name Forgiver (*al-ghaffār*) would not be manifest at all.[88] Thus, God in order to manifest His names in the things needs an object of mercy (*raḥma*), generosity (*karam*), and munificence (*jūd*).[89]

At this point, the name Lord (*rabb*), through which God regulates and controls the cosmos in a system, has much more importance.[90] Lordship (*rubūbiyya*) is one of the essential names of God. It sets up the connection to the cosmos because according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, God's divinity and the things that exist in the cosmos nourish each other.[91] It means that each of them is the pre-condition of the existence of the other. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, God can know His divinity only through what is created, so that even

---

88 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:96.
89 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:289, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 65.
90 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:442.
91 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 187.

though His Essence is beyond all the relationships, definitions, names, and attributes, His divinity becomes apparent in this way.[92]

Some scholars agree on this matter that the things in the cosmos are a requirement of God's divinity. For example, according to Hirtenstein, to describe God as the Lord, there must be a thing upon which He is Lord.[93] R. W. J. Austin, in the same direction with Hirtenstein, says that the Lordship has a meaning only within the context of the relationship with the servants.[94] Furthermore, in addition to them, Toshihiko Izutsu and Chittick as well think the same on this matter. While for the former, God's divinity requires an "other" as an externalized form on which He might see His divinity, for the latter, without creation, God would not be a god even though His Essence is independent of creation.[95] All these thoughts are derived from Ibn al-ʿArabī's own statements. He says that God's Lordship without a doubt needs the servants (*yaṭlubu al-marbūb bilā shakk*).[96] Eventually, through the name Lord, the essences of the things are looked at, and then by this name, their times, places, and positions are determined to bring them into existence from their previous non-existence status.[97] In this kind of regulation, the things, which exist in the mind or in the knowledge of God as the fixed entities (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*), become manifest in the cosmos with the physical forms. This is the progress of creation.

---

92 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 81.
93 Hirtenstein, *Unlimited Mercifier*, 21.
94 Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 104-5.
95 Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 220; Chittick, *SPK*, 275.
96 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:364. Also see 2:244, 437.
97 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:199, trans. in Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 128.

4.2.7. Creation (*khalq*)

Ibn al-ʿArabī divides the conception of being into eternal and non-eternal beings even though both of them belong to God. The former is related to God's Essence, and the latter is related to the cosmos which reflects God's Divinity.[98] Since there is nothing other than God, it can be said that the non-eternality of the non-eternal beings is not absolute. It means, as Hirtenstein says, in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching creation is to make visible the things which are invisible.[99] In other words, the non-eternality belongs to the cosmological existence of things. Before their cosmological existence, they are invisible in their pre-cosmological status.[100] Certainly, Ibn al-ʿArabī benefits from some conceptions such as the Breath of all-Merciful (*nafas al-raḥmān*) and the cloud to explain his teaching of creation.[101] But, since my purpose in this section is to approach the subject from the aspect of the divine names, I will continue focusing directly on the names.

---

98 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 204.

99 Hirtenstein, *Unlimited Mercifier*, 26.

100 For another aspect of the creation, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that the creation has two meanings. One of them is determination and the other is to give existence. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:430; 4:210. In this respect, Chittick makes an explanation that while the fixed entities are created in the sense of determination, the existent things in the cosmos are created in the sense of both determination and giving existence. Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 49. Definitely, it indicates two dimensions of the creation: creation of the fixed entities and creation of the cosmological entities. Even though this approach gives a full authority to God on the creative act, a question of how the fixed entities are created or determined while they are eternal with the knowledge of God may be asked.

101 In this regard, Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "God says, "Our only speech to a thing, when We desire it" –here "Our speech" refers to the fact that He is a speaker (*mutakallim*) – "is to say to it Be!" (Q, 16:40) Be! is exactly what He speaks. Through it that to which He says Be! becomes manifest… Thereby the entities become manifest within the Breath of the All-merciful (*nafas al-raḥmān*), just as letters become manifest within the human breath. The thing that comes to be is a specific form, like a form painted upon wood." Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:401, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 128. For detailed information, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:331; 394-6 and Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 24; 53.

As said before, creation is the effect of the relationship between the divine names and the possible things, so that these things become manifest. This is called divine manifestation (*tajallī*) or epiphany. For Osman Yahya, the divine manifestation (*tajallī*) happens through three levels: the Essence, the names and attributes, and the acts. Especially by the acts, He manifests the cosmos.[102] These three aspects of the divine manifestation constitute the oneness of God at the same time. In this respect, according to Chittick, creation of the cosmos in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching depends mainly on four divine names: the Powerful, Desiring, Knowing, and Existence (*wujūd*).[103] Creation is actualized when these names come together. It proves the relationship between the cosmos and the divine names in Ibn al-ʿArabī's mind.

For Ibn al-ʿArabī there are two dimensions of the act of creation. One of these dimensions faces toward the Creator (*al-khāliq*). It consists of three aspects: the Essence (*dhāt*), the will (*irāda*), and the Speech (the divine command, be!). The other dimension faces toward creatures (*makhlūq*). It consists of three aspects as well: the thingness (*shay'iyya*), hearing (*samāʿ*) of the divine command, and accepting (*imtithāl*) the divine command to come into existence. Thus, creation or coming into existence is based on something of a trinity in which the three aspects of the Creator meet the three aspects of creatures.[104]

---

[102] Osman Yahya, "Theophanies and Lights in the Thought of Ibn ʿArabi," *The Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi Society* 10 (1991): 35-44.
[103] Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 126.
[104] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 155; Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:276. "*huwiyyatuhū wa tawajjuhuhū wa qawluhū.*" Also, see Yousef, *Ibn ʿArabī: Time and Cosmology*, 128.

According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, on the ground of creation there is the divine name Speaker (*mutakallim*) as God says in the Qur'ān, "Indeed, Our word to a thing when We intend it is but that We say to it, 'Be,' and it is" (Q, 16:40).[105] With a reference to this verse Ibn al-ʿArabī connects creation to the divine name Speaker. The things which come into existence in the form of the divine command, that is Be!, are words of God (*kalimāt*). His word is the same with His knowledge and His knowledge is the same with His Essence. So, God created the cosmos in His form.[106] Hence, everything in the cosmos is a word of God which is infinite as mentioned in the Qur'ān (Q, 18:109; 31:27).[107]

Furthermore, since the divine names are infinite, creation, in other words, the divine manifestation is infinite as well.[108] In this case, Ibn al-ʿArabī grounds his idea on the Qur'ānic verses. For him, creation is without beginning because the things are always in need for God. He is always creating as said in His Book, "Every day He is bringing about a matter" (Q, 55:29).[109] Therefore, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that the Real (*al-ḥaqq*) never stops being active (*faʿʿāl*).[110] Moreover, there is another important verse of the Qur'ān frequently referred by Ibn al-ʿArabī to explain continuity of creation. It is the verse, "But they are in confusion over a new creation

---

[105] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:401; 2:366, 352.
[106] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:403, trans. in Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 27.
[107] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:166. Say, "If the sea were ink for [writing] the words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as a supplement." (Q, 18:109)
[108] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:69, 667; 3:452.
[109] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:208.
[110] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:320.

(*khalq jadīd*)" (Q, 50:15).[111] Through these verses Ibn al-ʿArabī defends both the eternal activeness of God and continuity of creation. In addition, he sets a connection between the divine names First (*al-awwal*) and Last (*al-ākhir*) and the continuous creation. For him, all beginnings and endings stem from these names, so that they indicate the continuous creation as everlasting divine activity.[112]

Briefly, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, God is continuously active in the act of creation. But, it does not mean that the cosmos is eternal (*qadīm*) as philosophers claim.[113] Even though Henry Corbin puts forward that there is no place in Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine of the manifestation (*tajallī*) for the conception of creation *ex nihilo,* which is held by some Muslims in order to explain creation, it is obvious that Ibn al-ʿArabī's purpose is to make clear the relationship between the cosmos and the divine names more than focus philosophically on whether the cosmos is eternal.[114]

On the other hand, he has some objections to the claims of philosophers concerning the creation of the cosmos even if he has common ideas with theologians and philosophers. For example, for him, the Ashʿarīs believe that the cosmos is composed of substances (*jawhar*). It is the same as what Ibn al-ʿArabī says; the entity (*al-ʿayn*) is one. Then, the Ashʿarīs

---

[111] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:79, 735; 2:372, 451; 3:105, 288; 4:320, 397.
[112] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:675, trans. in Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 202.
[113] Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rushd, *Tahāfut al-tahāfut.* Sulaymān Dunyā, (Cairo: Dār al-maʿārif, 1964), 55-210.
[114] Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, 185. In this point, Chittick says, "Ibn al-ʿArabī takes a middle position between those philosophers who maintain that the cosmos is eternal (*qadīm*) and the theologians who maintain that it is temporally originated (*ḥādith*)… He holds that the cosmos is created from nonexistence, but that here "nonexistence" cannot mean absolute nothingness." Chittick, *SPK*, 84-85.

say that these substances become different from each other through accidents (*aʿrāḍ*). It is similar to what Ibn al-ʿArabī says; the one entity has various forms (*ṣūra*) and relationships (*nisba*) in order to be distinguished from each other. But, the difference is that while the Ashʿarīs consider the substance to be something other than the Real (*al-ḥaqq*), Ibn al-ʿArabī considers the substance to be the same as the Real.[115]

Concerning the criticism of Ibn al-ʿArabī against the philosophers' ideas on creation, unlike philosophers who set a connection of cause (*ʿilla*) and effect (*maʿlūl*) between the Creator and creatures, Ibn al-ʿArabī sets a connection of condition (*sharṭ*) and conditioned (*mashrūṭ*) between the Creator and creatures. It is because while a cause necessarily requires an effect, a condition does not necessarily require something conditioned.[116] It should be noted that since Ibn al-ʿArabī considers coming into existence and being in the cosmos to be the same, rejection of the eternity of the existential status of the possible things in/with the cosmos does not mean that they had an absolute nonexistence as was expressed above. Therefore, in order to keep God exalted from creatures, at least concerning existence (*wujūd*), Ibn al-ʿArabī says that at first God did not create; then He did. He distinguishes the Creator and creatures clearly while he emphasizes the impossibility of eternity of the cosmos.[117]

After all these explanations, it can be said briefly that for Ibn al-ʿArabī, between the Creator and creatures there is a relation of body and

---

[115] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 188.
[116] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:261.
[117] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:254, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 101.

soul set up through the divine names.[118] By this soul, called the director soul (*rūḥ mudabbir*), the physical forms of the possible things in the cosmos have been governed.[119] However, these forms do not keep their same positions. On the contrary, there is an endless renewal of the forms. As Ibn al-ʿArabī highlights, everything other than God is in need of God in order to take its existence and to supply its maintenance in different forms.[120]

4.2.8. Oneness and Multiplicity

Another aspect of the relationship between the divine names and the cosmological things definitely is the matter of the multiplicity of the possible things and the oneness of God. As it has been explained up to this point, there is one existence only which belongs to the Real, but He has many forms through His manifestations. Even if this problem seems solved within Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching, it may be discussed whether this kind of approach damages the correct understanding of the oneness of God.

According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, God is both manifest and non-manifest at the same time. Through His name Non-manifest (*al-bāṭin*) He is hidden from all creatures and beyond all definitions. Through His name Manifest (*al-ẓāhir*) He becomes known and realized by His creatures and visible to them via creatures themselves. In this respect, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that while creation is the manifestation of the Real, the Real is the non-manifestation

---

[118] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 69.
[119] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:499, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 40.
[120] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:454.

of creation.[121] Between God and the possible things there is an interactive relationship. Even though God's Essence is independent of the possible things in the absolute sense, His divinity is dependent on the cosmos as stated before.

It should be kept in mind that in this interactive relationship between God and the possible things, two parties of the relationship do not have the same significance. There is one entity in reality as well as its multiple and various manifestations. But, they are not equal in terms of existence (*wujūd*). It means that the One is the base of the multiplicity of the things because all multiplicities contain the one. If the One, God, did not exist, multiplicity would not exist either, while the oneness is not dependent on the multiplicity at all.[122]

We know God by means of various names and attributes since the number of the manifestation places is infinite. God's manifestation has been without beginning (*al-azal*).[123] Therefore, each thing in the cosmos refers to certain divine names; each divine name has a relationship with a thing in the cosmos. All these relationships make God known. In this regard, Ibn al-ʿArabī by referring to the verse, "Nothing is like Him" (Q, 42:11), declares the impossibility of qualifying God with multiplicity.[124] It should be emphasized again that in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching the distinction between God and the things is clearly declared in one respect. For him, the eternal

---

[121] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:246; 3:484, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 89; Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 206.
[122] Ibn al-ʿArabī, "Kitāb al-alif," in Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Rasā'il,* 39.
[123] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:122. Also, see 4:36; 1:48.
[124] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:589. See Chittick, *SPK*, 104.

being is God while everything other than God is a temporally originated being.[125]

On the other hand, he says that if someone says that I see nothing, he is right. If someone says that I see nothing other than God, he is right. And if someone says that I see the cosmos only, he is right as well.[126] Thus, it is not possible to qualify the cosmos with absolute non-existence or absolute existence. But, it is in a middle position.[127] The cosmos is conceived in relative terms. It is not other than God; it is not the same with God either.

Indeed, there are various statements and analogies in his works supporting his idea on this matter. For example, he mentions the relationship of water and ice. Water is no other than a kind of form of ice. But at the same time, it is known that they are not identical with each other as well.[128] Also, he uses the analogy of a mirror. He suggests that the view of a man in a mirror is none other than the man. But, it is not the same as the man as well. If someone says that he saw himself in the mirror, he is neither a liar nor is he right.[129] This is also a good example of both the duality of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought and expression and his attempt to explain everything by referring to the divine names and attributes.

---

[125] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:438; 3:78, 443, 506. See Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 238.
[126] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:438; 3:255, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 102.
[127] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:151.
[128] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:130, trans. in Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 36.
[129] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:304, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 118.

4.2.9. Incomparability (*tanzīh*) and Similarity (*tashbīh*) of God

God's incomparability and similarity play a significant role in Ibn al-ʿArabī's theology. It is one of the most essential doctrines of Ibn al-ʿArabī because it is the only way of conceiving God truly. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, if you do not accept both incomparability and similarity together, you restrict Him into one of them. All the names and attributes of God such as greatness (*ʿizza*), high (*aʿlā*), glorified (*kibriyāʾ*), forgetting (*nisyān*), deception (*makr*), and with-ness (*maʿiyya*), which constitute the names of incomparability and similarity, are requirements of God's perfection. But, something restricted cannot be perfect.[130]

As a definition of the incomparability of God (*tanzīh*), Ibn al-ʿArabī by referring to the verse, "Exalted is your Lord, the Lord of might, above what they describe" (Q, 37:180), says that it is to consider the Real beyond all definitions, names, attributes, and similarities with creatures. According to this definition, it is not possible to set a connection between the Real and the originated things.[131]

He classifies the divine names into the names relevant to incomparability and the names relevant to similarity. The names of incomparability belong to the Essence Itself. They are the names of the Essence mentioned before. These names, such as Independent (*al-ghaniyy*), One (*al-aḥad*), Great (*al-kabīr*), High (*al-aʿlā*), and Majesty (*al-jalāl*), do not have any relationship with the originated things. On the contrary, the

---

[130] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:483. Also, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 69-70.
[131] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:672; 2:580; 3:148.

other names, the names of similarity belong to God's Divinity. These names, such as Compassionate (*al-raḥīm*), Forgiver (*al-ghafūr*), Self-Great (*al-mutakabbir*), Self-High (*al-mutaʿālā*), and Beauty (*al-jamāl*), have relationships with the originated things.[132] In accordance with the nature and meaning of the names of similarity, these names remind us of a similarity between God and His creatures.

As explained before, since the precondition of the divine names is the relationship between God and the things, the idea of similarity should be necessary to some extent. It is difficult to ignore a connection, relationship, or a similarity between God and the things. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, even if the human intellect is not sufficient to qualify God and creatures with the same names and attributes, the similarity of God with creatures is a reality confirmed by the divine bestowal of knowledge.[133] Even though God declares that nothing is like Him, and He is the Hearing and the Seeing, (Q, 42:11) rational thinkers, because of their imperfect intellect-based method, can comprehend God's incomparability only.[134] However, it is a fact that God frequently qualifies Himself and His creatures with the same names and attributes.[135]

Furthermore, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the verse, "There is nothing like Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing," (Q, 42:11) per se is sufficient to explain the cooperation of God's incomparability and similarity.[136] For

---

[132] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:57; 1:691; 2:110.
[133] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:3, 7.
[134] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:299; 2:404, trans. in Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 95.
[135] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:41; 2:307.
[136] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 182; 153. See Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:290; 3:161.

Chittick, in Islamic history most of theologians and philosophers focused on the incomparability of God by ignoring His similarity in order to protect His supremacy over creatures. However, Ibn al-ʿArabī was not content with this kind of approach to the divine names because it leads rational thinkers to interpret (*ta'wīl*) the names and attributes such as speech, laughing, foot, eye, and hand.[137] According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the verse, "We believe in some and disbelieve in others" (Q, 4:150), points out those who affirm the incomparability of God without affirming His similarity. They are not believers in fact.[138] Insomuch as the matter of incomparability and similarity is very important for Ibn al-ʿArabī, he considers Noah's failure to combine incomparability and similarity in his calling people to God as the reason why people were disobedient to Noah.[139]

Eventually, since there is no essential property shared between God and creatures, it is not possible to mention certain sameness between God and creatures even though the latter have many attributes by which God also is qualified. Affirmation of the similarity of God does not damage His incomparability at all. In addition, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, qualifying two things with the same attributes does not make them necessarily same. In this respect, he says not to deceive yourself by thinking that God qualifies you like He qualifies Himself with knowing or willing or likewise.[140] He means clearly that a certain attribute is used in one sense when it is used for a creature; it is used in another sense when it is used for the Creator because

---

[137] Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 98.
[138] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:375.
[139] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 70.
[140] Ibn al-ʿArabī, "Kitāb al-jalāl wa-l jamāl," in Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Rasā'il,* 27.

they do not share the essential property. Already, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, those who are knowledgeable through God know that God exists, is powerful, speaks, wills, lives, abides, hears, and sees. Then, they know that whatever is attributed to God cannot be attributed to the originated things (*al-muḥdathāt*).[141]

To sum up, it is possible to say that Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching nearly as a whole is based on the names and attributes of God. In every particular topic of his works, more or less, the traces of the divine names can be seen because everything other than the Essence is a manifestation of God (*tajallī*). He has mystical explanations of the divine names and attributes bestowed by God by means of inspiration. As a result of this method, he has his own ideas about the issue. While his main concentration is the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*), he explains it through some aspects such as the fixed entities, the perfection of God, the oneness of existence and the multiplicity of existent things, and the incomparability and similarity of God. Since anything other than God is His name according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, he sets a connection between the divine names and every conception including God, the Essence, the Divinity, and creatures.

[141] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Inshā' al-dawā'ir,* 153.

4.3. Ibn Taymiyya and the Names and Attributes of God

Ibn Taymiyya, like Ibn al-ʿArabī, reserves a very significant place for the divine names and attributes in his theology. In this section, Ibn Taymiyya's approach to the names and attributes of God concerning various aspects of the matter, such as the relation between God and the attributes, the oneness of God (*tawḥīd)*, creation (*khalq)*, the balance between incomparability (*tanzīh*) and reductionism (*taʿṭīl*), will (*irāda),* and the speech of God (*kalām*), will be examined.

4.3.1. God and the Divine Attributes

In order to see the whole picture it is helpful to state briefly the general approach of Ibn Taymiyya to the divine names and attributes and his objections to various opinions about the subject. First and foremost, Ibn Taymiyya affirms the divine names and attributes such as the Living, Knowing, Wise, Hearing, Seeing, Speaking, and Creator found in the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths of the Prophet.[1] According to him, not only from the scriptural perspective but also rationally the names and attributes are a necessity of God's perfection. Whatever is relevant to perfection in the world should exist in God's Essence because He deserves more than everything else the perfection that belongs to created beings and deserves as

[1] Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtiḍā',* 466.

well to be exonerated from every imperfection from which at least some created beings are exonerated.[2]

All attributes expressed in the Qur'ān and the ḥadīths must be accepted by the sincere believers. Although some people denied the attributes in order to preserve God's oneness, which will be discussed below, Ibn Taymiyya considers all the attributes of perfection to be necessary concomitants of His Essence. He says that we do not say that these attributes are unnecessary for God, but they are necessary (*wājib*) for His Essence because He is the object of worship (*maʿbūd*); He deserves (*mustaḥaqq*) all these attributes.[3] In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya emphasizes several points in order to prove the necessity of the divine attributes. For example, he mentions a Qur'ānic dialogue between the Prophet Abraham and his father by referring to the verse, "O my father, why do you worship that which does not hear and does not see and will not benefit you at all?" (Q, 19:42). And then, he says that the verse proves that the attributes such as hearing, seeing, and benefitting someone are among the attributes of perfection. So, the object of worship must have all of them.[4] Hence, it is to say that these attributes, which are based on the Qur'ān, are used by God Himself to prove His perfection while refuting all idols.

Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya argues that if God was not living, knowing, hearing, seeing, and speaking, He would be dead, ignorant, deaf,

---

[2] Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Sharḥ al-ʿaqīda al-Iṣfahāniyya.* Ḥasanayn Muḥammad Makhlūf, (Cairo: Dār al-kutub al-islāmiyya, n.d.), 49; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 12:347, trans. in Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 59.

[3] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:357.

[4] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:82.

blind, and speechless. God is far from all these imperfection.[5] However, it may be asked why Ibn Taymiyya does not separate the attributes of imperfection for humans and the divine while he separates the attributes of perfection by claiming that God's seeing is not the seeing of a man.[6] I mean that if God's seeing, hearing, and knowing are different from the seeing, hearing, and knowing of human beings, when someone claims that God is not seeing, it cannot be said that God would be blind because it is necessarily that God's unseeing should be different from man's failing to see.

Apart from this question, another argument for God's attributes provided by Ibn Taymiyya pertains to the relation between God's Essence and the attributes. The existence of an essence without an attribute is impossible in reality, but it is possible in the mind only. Therefore, seeing that God is real, He must have these attributes because there is no essence in reality stripped of all its attributes.[7] Actually, the Arabic term essence (*dhāt*) itself means being the possessor of something.[8] In this sense, Ibn Taymiyya gives the following examples: one who has knowledge (*dhāt ʿilm*), one who has power (*dhāt qudra*), and one who has speech (*dhāt kalām*).[9] Everything must have some attributes and every attribute must have a thing through which the attributes are known.[10] In this case, it is

---

5 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 8:21, trans. in Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 64.
6 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:198.
7 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 3:420-421. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 17:161.
8 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:39.
9 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 17:161; *MF* 6:98.
10 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:99.

obvious that for Ibn Taymiyya the Essence of God cannot be thought without the attributes.

The discussion of the divine attributes intensifies with the attributes that are relevant to the relation between creatures and God, unlike with the attributes which clearly exonerate God. In general, the attributes of God are examined under two titles: negative (*salbī-tanzīhi*) and positive (*thubūtī*) attributes. While the former, which exonerate God clearly, are not the subject of serious debate among theologians, the latter which is relevant to God and creatures, occupies the centre of the theological debates. The schools of thought and the scholars in Islam provide different opinions. Ibn Taymiyya exhibits these different opinions in order both to refute many of them and to display various aspects of the subject.

For instance, some of them, according to Ibn Taymiyya, reject the attributes of God; some of them interpret these attributes metaphorically; some groups claim that the attributes are eternal with the essence; and another group says that the attributes are contingent.[11] So, it is clear that there is no one approach to the attributes among theologians. For example, while Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 746) rejects all the names and attributes of God, the Muʿtazila only reject the attributes according to Ibn Taymiyya.[12] As another example showing controversy over the attributes, Ibn Taymiyya

---

[11] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:197. As a note, for Ibn Taymiyya among the Muslims the first who reinterpreted the revealed attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-khabariyya*) of God was Abū al-Maʿālī al-Juwaynī (d. 1085). Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 2:18.

[12] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 2:604.

notes the voluntary attributes.[13] They are His speech, hearing, seeing, will, love, mercy, wrath, creating, descending, and sitting about which the Jahmīs[14] and the Kullābīs[15] discuss. For the former, these attributes do not subsist in the Essence of God (*taqūmu bi-dhātihī*) while for the latter these attributes subsist in God but without His will (*mashī'a*) and power (*qudra*).[16]

The discussion on the divine attributes among theologians is not limited to these ideas. For example, the question of whether the attributes are eternal (*qadīm*) or accidental (*aʿrāḍ*) is important as well. In this regard, Ibn Taymiyya mentions three groups who affirm the attributes of God but disagree with each other on whether the attributes are accidental. According to al-Ashʿarī and some followers of Imām Aḥmad, the attributes are not accident. For Ḥishām ibn Ḥakam (d. 805) and Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad

---

[13] Jon Hoover says, "Ibn Taymiyya defines the 'voluntary attributes'(*al-ṣifāt al-ikhtiyāriyya*)... as those attributes of God 'linked to will,' that is, those attributes that God manifests via an act of His will. The shaykh links the voluntary attributes to both God's will and God's power and maintains that these attributes subsist in God's essence." Jon Hoover, "God Acts by His Will and Power: Ibn Taymiyya's Theology of a Personal God in his Treatise on the Voluntary Attributes," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 55-77, (57).

[14] Jahmīya is a theological sect founded by Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān who has an opposite position to corporealist and anthropomorphist theological ideas. With a significant influence of philosophy Jahm and his followers, who are called Jahmīs, denies the attributes of God. Also, they claim that tradition may contradict the human intellect. In those cases, tradition should be re-interpreted (ta'wīl) by means of the intellect. For example, they interpret the sitting of God (istiwā') on the Throne as "sovereignty" of God over the world. Şerafettin Gölcük, "Cehmiyye," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 7 (İstanbul: 1993), 234-236.

[15] The Kullābīya is a theological sect founded by Muḥammad Ibn Kullāb al-Qaṭṭān al-Baṣrī (d. 855) who is among al-Ashʿarī's forerunners. Ibn Kullāb is known with his rational objections to the Muʿtazila. The nature of the Qur'ān, the speech of God, and His other attributes are some of his main interests. According to J. R. T. M. Peters, Ibn Kullāb was influenced by Shiʿī theologian Hishām Ibn al-Ḥakam. Nevertheless, Ibn Kullāb's views became norms within the Ashʿarīya. J. R. T. M. Peters, *God's Created Speech: A Study in the Speculative Theology of the Muʿtazilī Qāḍī al-Quḍāt Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Jabbār Ibn Aḥmad al-Hamaḍānī* (Belgium: E. J. Brill, 1976), 21-22.

[16] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:217, trans. in Hoover, "Voluntary Attributes," 57.

ibn Karrām (d. 896), the attributes are accident. And for the correct view, it is neither to affirm nor reject that the attributes are accident.[17]

As for what Ibn Taymiyya thinks of the attributes, as stated in the previous chapter, the opinions of the Salaf (righteous ancestors) play a very important role on Ibn Taymiyya's method of acquiring true knowledge and having the sound faith. Therefore, as in many issues, in this problem Ibn Taymiyya claims to follow their opinions. According to him, like the Essence, God's attributes are eternal (*qadīm*).[18] As mentioned above, since it is impossible for an essence to exist without attributes, His attributes must be eternal because the Essence of God is eternal. In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya objects to those who say that whoever affirms an eternal attribute is an anthropomorphist (*mushabbiha*).[19]

For Ibn Taymiyya affirmation of the divine attributes is a creedal issue since to affirm the attributes is not only to affirm a quality (*kayfiyya*) but also to affirm the existence of God.[20] Also, on the reality of the attributes of God there is a consensus among those who affirm that God is really Living, really Knowing, really Powerful, really Hearing, really Seeing, really Willing and really Speaking.[21] This issue will become clearer below through examining some specific attributes.

---

17 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:102.
18 Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:46; 3:420-423.
19 Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 2:608.
20 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:355.
21 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:196.

4.3.2. Oneness of God (*tawḥīd*)

Before focusing on the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) in Ibn Taymiyya it may be useful to touch briefly on the problem of the name (*ism*) and the object named (*musammā*) since it is a point relevant to the issue of the divine names and attributes concerning the oneness. According to theologians among people of the Sunna (*ahl al-sunna*) such as al-Juwaynī (d. 1085), names and things named are the same while for Jahmīs and Muʿtazilīs like Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār (d. 1025) names and things named are different things from each other. For the former, to consider the names and the named to be different from each other damages the belief in the oneness of God because all the divine names indicate His one essence. If the names and the named beings were different, all the names of God would indicate different essences. As for the opinions of the latter, if it is true that the names and the named beings were the same, it would follow necessarily that when someone says something impure (*najīs*), his mouth should be impure.[22] ʿUthmān Ibn Saʿīd al-Dārimī (d. 893) gives an answer to this kind of idea by saying that the relationship of the names and the named is different for God and for humans because you can give a name *Ḥakīm* (wise) for someone who, in fact, is an ignorant (*jāhil*) but it is not possible to call God by this kind of a name.[23] As for Ibn Taymiyya's approach to this issue, he has a different idea. For him, the correct way is to not say the

---

[22] Imām al-Ḥaramayn Al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-irshād ilā qawāṭiʿ al-adillati fī uṣūl al-iʿtiqād.* Ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsā, (Egypt: Maṭbaʿa al-saʿāda, 1950), 141. Aḥmad, *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa,* 542.

[23] ʿUthmān Ibn Saʿīd Al-Dārimī, *Radd al-Imām al-Dārimī ʿUthmān Ibn Saʿīd ʿalā Bishr al-Miraysī al-ʿanīd.* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1940), 9.

names and the object named are the same or are they different. He emphasizes the word 'belonging to' because for him, various verse in the Qur'ān clearly proves that all the beautiful names belong to God.[24] After this information, I will not go into more detail on the discussion of the relation between the names and the named because it is not on the centre of the topic. However, a brief explanation was necessary because it is an aspect of the subject of the divine names and the attributes concerning their existential status along with the Essence of God.

As for what Ibn Taymiyya thinks of the oneness of God, it may be explained with several aspects like the oneness of Divinity (*tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*), oneness of Lordship (*tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*), and incomparability of God (*tanzīh*). Firstly, Ibn Taymiyya mentions the oneness of God in general. The oneness of God is divided into three categories: the oneness of the Essence of God which means His essence is alone; the oneness of His attributes, which means there is nothing like Him; and the oneness of His acts, which means He is the only agent.[25]

Concerning the oneness of God, theologians and philosophers have different ideas. One of the most important ideas is whether the attributes make God a composite being (*murakkab*). The departure point of this kind of approach, in fact, is the assumption that the attributes are separated from the essence. According to philosophers and theologians, who deny the attributes of God, affirming the attributes along with the essence makes God

---

[24] "Say, 'Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Merciful. Whichever [name] you call - to Him belong the best names'" (*The Qur'ān,* 17:110; 20:8; 59:24). Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:185; 207; 12:169.

[25] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:98.

a composite being, namely a body (*jism*). If something is qualified with an attribute, it would be a body, and all bodies are divisible, so a divisible thing cannot be one.[26] Moreover, if something is composite, it needs someone who composes the parts, and it is dependent on its parts.[27] Another argument of those who deny the attributes of God is that if the attributes of perfection make God perfect, God would be imperfect before acquiring these attributes or in the absence of the attributes. As an objection to these ideas of philosophers and theologians, Ibn Taymiyya says that definitely one who has these attributes of perfection is superior to one who does not have them. We know necessarily that one who is living, knowing, hearing, seeing and speaking is superior to one who is not living, knowing, powerful, hearing, seeing, and speaking.[28] However, since it is impossible to think of God without these attributes, this kind of reasoning is already meaningless. These discussions are important in order to understand the objections provided by Ibn Taymiyya to theologians and philosophers.

In Ibn Taymiyya's teaching the oneness of Divinity and the oneness of Lordship play very important roles. It may be said that these conceptions constitute the centre of conception of the oneness for Ibn Taymiyya. He bases the religion as a whole on the proclamation of the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*). By referring to the verse, "To dedicate the religion wholly to God" (Q, 39:2), he criticizes some Muslims who, by ignoring the oneness of

---

[26] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 7:114. Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtiḍā',* 459, trans. in Memon, *Against Popular Religion*, 326.
[27] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:141.
[28] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:95.

Divinity of God, affirm the oneness of Lordship of God alone as Arab polytheists affirmed.[29]

It is clear that for Ibn Taymiyya the oneness is possible with the affirmation of the two aspects of the oneness: the oneness of Lordship and the oneness of Divinity.[30] This way only can lead people to the true faith of the oneness of God. Ibn Taymiyya highlights to the verse, "You alone we worship, and You alone do we ask for help" (Q, 1:5), since this verse summarizes the correct belief grounded on the oneness of God. For Ibn Taymiyya, the belief in God as the object of worship is as important as the belief in God as the Creator, which is related to His Lordship, because these two dimensions of the oneness require affirming the other.[31] On this matter Ibn Taymiyya has objections to some Muslims among theologians, philosophers, and mystics. He claims that many Muslims share the same incorrect belief with the pre-Islamic Arab polytheists who also believe in God as the Lord of everything.[32] This incorrect belief of the polytheists will not save them from the punishment unless they affirm that there is no god but God who is alone to be worshiped and served.[33] Thus, he accuses many Muslims among the people of the Sunna of being imitators of the polytheists.[34]

---

[29] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:264. Also, see Michot, *Against Extremism*, 156.
[30] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:459.
[31] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 14:13; 1:89. For details see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 26-30.
[32] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 14:377.
[33] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:105. For translation, see Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 169.
[34] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:101.

Moreover, he explains the mistake of those who do not balance between two dimensions of the oneness. They seek for help from God, trust in God, and accept that all power belongs to God rather than themselves. But, at the same time, they do not intend to worship God by obeying His command and by avoiding what He prohibited. And they do not pay attention to the fact that God loves piety and obedience, and is angry with disbelievers and hypocrites.[35] Therefore, only one whom God guides will understand the reality of the verse (Q, 1:5). So, Ibn Taymiyya explains the correct meaning of the name God (*ilāh*). It is the One who alone deserves to be worshiped, obeyed, and served.[36]

Briefly, on the subject of the oneness of Divinity and Lordship, Ibn Taymiyya's whole effort is to keep a balance because one of them without the other does not complete the belief in God sufficiently.

At this point, I focus on another important aspect of the oneness of God. This is the relation between incomparability (*tanzīh*) and reductionism (*taʿṭīl*) rather than the balance between incomparability and similarity (*tashbīh*) on which, as remembered from the previous section, Ibn al-ʿArabī focuses. For Ibn Taymiyya, the vital mistake is not to identify similar attributes between God and creatures, but it is to qualify creatures with the attributes which belong to God only (*khaṣā'iṣuhū*).[37] At the level of the

---

[35] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 17:65.
[36] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:101.
[37] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:22. Ibn Taymiyya by referring to the verse, "There is nothing like Him" says that it is not permissible to make an analogy between God and creatures as made by philosophers. Even if it is an attempt to refute the philosophers' method of analogy (*qiyās*), it can work in this context as well in order to refute any assumption regarding essential similarity between God and creatures. Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-

verbal expression (*lafẓī*), there may be similarities between God and creatures, but they should be understood differently depending on what they imply. If an attribute qualifies God, it has a different meaning. In the same way, if the attribute is used to qualify creatures, it has a different meaning as well. According to Ibn Taymiyya, the same words may point out different things. This kind of approach should not lead people necessarily to anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*). Sometimes words, attributes, and concepts may refer to some particulars with a general names but it does not mean that they are the same things. He uses the word colour in order to make the point clear. He says, for example, that the word "colour" may be applied to black, white, and red although they are completely different from each other. In the same way, the word "attribute" may be applied to knowledge, power, life, taste, colour, and smell although they are different from each other.[38]

Also, he says that the word animal may be applied to both human beings and cattle although they have different realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*). This case is the same for the term existence (*wujūd*) as well.[39] In this respect, he says,

> Existence, for example, should be better predicated, they say, of the Necessary Being than the possible, just as whiteness should be better predicated of snow than ivory. The same is true of the other attributes and names of God. He deserves them in a sense no creature does, even though they have something in common with Him.[40]

Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Muwāfaqat ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl li ṣarīḥ al-maʿqūl.* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1985), 45.

38 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 20:445.

39 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 20:446.

40 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:201, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 134.

The main point here is that, for example, the term existence may be used for existence of a tree, cat, and stone in one sense but it is different from the sense in which God is qualified with existence. In addition, Ibn Taymiyya refers to some verses of the Qur'ān to prove his idea. It is realized that the word knowledge in these verses is sometimes used for the knowledge of creatures (Q, 3:18) and sometimes used for God's knowledge (Q, 2:255 and 4:166).[41] It is clearly known that the word knowledge (*ʿilm*) in these verses refers to God and creatures separately.

Ibn Taymiyya defends that the attributes of God and the attributes of creatures are not the same things even though they are expressed with the same words. Thus, he criticizes theologians who attempt to interpret these attributes rationally. The mistake of those who deny the attributes of God is that they cannot distinguish the meaning of the attributes when they are applied to God and to creatures. Therefore, those who deny the attributes conceive the attributes of God on the level of creation first, and then they think that God and creatures cannot be same. Eventually, they deny the attributes of God.[42] However, Ibn Taymiyya says that it is not permissible to affirm God's knowledge, power, hearing, and seeing as the knowledge and power of creatures.[43] Also, for him it is necessarily known about the religion of Islam that God has deserved the beautiful names even though He calls the servants by some of these names such as hearing, seeing, living, knowing, wise, gracious, merciful, owner, precious, protector, and

---

41 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:200.
42 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:27.
43 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:28.

generous. It is known by everyone that the mutuality is in the names only. So, it does not require likeness between the Creator and creatures.[44]

In this regard, it should be noted that for Ibn Taymiyya, rejection of similarity between God and created beings is not sufficient to talk about God correctly because people may reject everything related to God out of concern to reject similarity. This kind of approach to God's names and attributes qualifies God with nothingness or qualifies Him with deficiencies such as blind, deaf, and dead.[45] According to Ibn Taymiyya, rejection of one attribute does not necessarily require rejecting another attribute because each of them has a different meaning. It means that if God does not have a stomach, it does not necessarily require denying His hands. While having hands is a sign of perfection because it is an organ of acting and doing something, the stomach is an organ indicating needs for food and nutrition. Qualifying God with hands does not damage His perfection; on the contrary, qualifying Him with having stomach damages His perfection because He is not in need of anything.[46] Ibn Taymiyya offers a warning at this point by saying that an impostor (*muftarī*) may say that God eats, but it is not like His servants do; He drinks, but it is not like they do; and He laughs, but it is not like they do.[47] Therefore, rejection or affirmation of the names and attributes must be inspected carefully. Otherwise, it is possible to qualify God with many deficient words.

---

[44] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:202; 5:208.
[45] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:38.
[46] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:86.
[47] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:82.

After this point it will be useful to mention briefly some conceptions such as God's sitting on the Throne (*istawā*), His presence (*maʿiyya*) and nearness (*qurb*), and God's hands which are important in the matter of incomparability. These matters are controversial problems for opponents of Ibn Taymiyya. He has been blamed for being an anthropomorphist by his opponents.[48] Concerning the subject, he mentions three views of theologians. The first, God's sitting is like the sitting of created beings. The second, God's sitting has no reality, in fact, it is just a metaphor. The third, God's sitting is real; He sits by a sense which belongs to Him only.[49] Ibn Taymiyya says that whoever claims that God's sitting on the Throne is like the sitting of created beings is ignorant and an innovator because they completely denote different meanings for God and creatures. In this matter as well, he follows the way of the Salaf. For them, God is above the Throne and He sits on the Throne but it is not like the sitting of created beings.[50] Eventually, Ibn Taymiyya does not consider them to be any difference between the sitting of God on the Throne and the other attributes of God. They must not be understood in the same sense as with creatures.[51]

As for God's presence and nearness, it is another problematic issue based on some verses such as, "Indeed, I am near (to you)" (Q, 2:186), "We are closer to him than [his] jugular vein" (Q, 50:16), "He is with you wherever you are" (Q, 57:4), "Indeed, God is with those who fear Him and

---

48 Henry Laoust, "Ibn Taymiyya." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Ed. P. Bearman. Brill Online, 2015.
49 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 33:177-8.
50 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:50-51; 5:262.
51 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:194.

those who are doers of good"[52] (Q, 16:128). These verses constitute the centre of the discussion of nearness (*qurb*) and presence (*maʿiyya*). About these verses, there are various opinions according to Ibn Taymiyya who summarizes them with four groups. For example, Jahmīs, who deny the attributes, are in the middle between the affirmation and negation of nearness. For mystics, common people, and some of the Jahmīs, God is already one with created beings through the one existence. The third group affirms that God is everywhere. According to the last group, the Salaf, God is with creatures with His knowledge and He is with His prophets and friends with His help.[53]

Ibn Taymiyya, in this regard, says that God's presence should be understood in accordance with the context because it may mean different things. For example, in the verse, "…He knows what penetrates into the earth and what emerges from it and what descends from the heaven and what ascends therein; and He is with you wherever you are. And God, of what you do, is seeing" (Q, 57:4), God's being with creatures means that He is with us with His knowledge.[54] For the verse, "Do not grieve; indeed God is with us" (Q, 9:40), he says that God's being with us obviously means His help and support.[55] Furthermore, for the verse, "Muhammad is the Messenger of God; those with him are forceful against the disbelievers,

---

[52] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:227.
[53] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:227-231, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 142-143.
[54] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:103.
[55] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:104.

merciful among themselves" (Q, 48:29), Ibn Taymiyya claims that being together in that context means that they are together in belief (*īmān*).[56]

The hands of God are another controversial issue among theologians. Primarily, Ibn Taymiyya mentions the verses of the Qur'ān in which God qualifies Himself with hands. For example, God mentions His hands in the verse, "[God] said, 'O Iblis, what prevented you from prostrating to that which I created with My hands?' (Q, 38:75).[57] According to Ibn Taymiyya, when God mentions His hands, no one can say that He does not have hands. However, if someone says that God does not have hands like the hands of creatures, he is correct. But, if someone says that God does not have hands at all, he is incorrect.[58] In addition, Ibn Taymiyya objects to those who interpret hands in these verses metaphorically as God's grace and power. For him, these people change the real meaning of the texts.[59]

To sum up, Ibn Taymiyya on the subject of God's incomparability says that the best way of talking about God is to follow what God said about Himself in the Qur'ān, what the Prophet said about Him, and what the Salaf, who do not exceed the limits of the Qur'ān and the Sunna, said about Him. For Ibn Taymiyya, the Salaf qualified God as He qualified Himself and the Prophet qualified God without stripping off (*taʿṭīl*) the attributes and without changing (*taḥrīf*) their meaning, and without investigating their

---

[56] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:231.
[57] For other verses where the hands of God are expressed, see *The Qur'ān,* 3:26; 5:64 36:71; 39:67; 48:10; 67:1
[58] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:363.
[59] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:363-373. In these pages, Ibn Taymiyya provides his opinions about the hands of God step by step.

modality (*takyīf*) and likening (*tamthīl*) God to creatures.[60] God is unlike anything in His essence and in His acts. God's essence is real, He has real acts, and He has real attributes. There is nothing like Him in His essence, attributes, and acts. He is completely exonerated from what implies deficiency or contingency, and He deserves all perfections.[61]

This kind of approach to God is called the best creed by Ibn Taymiyya[62] because if you deny the attributes, you make God and the Prophet liars, or if you liken God to creatures, it is wrong because there is nothing like Him.[63] As happens in many cases, on the matter of the names and attributes people of the Sunna follow the middle position between reductionism (*taʿṭīl*) and assimilationism (*tamthīl*) according to Ibn Taymiyya.[64] Even if there are verbal similarities between the attributes of God and the attributes of created beings, it does not require assuming that God and creatures are the same. If you liken God to creatures, it is mistake. But if you use these terms to express God's Highness and unlikeness from creatures, it is true according to Ibn Taymiyya.[65]

4.3.3. Creation (*khalq*)

The Creator (*khāliq*) is one of the most significant names of God because it is directly relevant to creatures. Ibn Taymiyya puts forward his arguments on the one hand, and he objects to theologians and philosophers

---

60 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:3. Also, see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 49.
61 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:26.
62 Ibn Taymiyya, *Iqtiḍā',* 452, trans. in Memon, *Against Popular Religion*, 322.
63 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:425.
64 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:373, trans. in Michot, *Against Extremism*, 7.
65 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:42.

on the other hand concerning the subject. To talking about creation, as will be examined, he has his own formula which connects creation to God's perfection, but excludes both the idea of the eternity of the world and ascribing a beginning to the world.

According to Ibn Taymiyya, God acts with His will (*irāda-mashī'a*) and power (*qudra*).[66] He sets a connection between God's perfection and His acts which are necessary concomitants of His perfection.[67] In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya refers to the verse, "Then is He who creates like one who does not create? So will you not be reminded?"[68] (Q, 16:17). Eventually, in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching God's creation is eternal because He is perfect from eternity, and for God inactivity in a period of time is absurd.

God's creation from eternity may cause confusion. It may be said that if God creates from eternity, created objects must be simultaneous with God's creation. In this case, there may be some existent beings called eternal besides God. As mentioned before, the eternity of the world is claimed already by philosophers. However, since God creates from eternity, it is not possible to think of some beings eternal other than God.[69] In fact, when God is affirmed as the first and the active agent from eternity, it follows necessarily that everything other than God comes after Him.[70] In this regard, Ibn Taymiyya emphasizes God's eternity, eternity of His act,

---

[66] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:219; 230. For translations, see Hoover, "Voluntary Attributes," 58; Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 120.
[67] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:371-2, trans. in Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 87.
[68] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:372; *MF*, 6:79.
[69] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 3:124. Also, see Özervarlı, *Kelâmcılara Eleştirisi*, 123.
[70] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:172.

and eternity of His will, whereby he can prove God's perfection as well as His uniqueness from the eternal act of creation.[71]

As an important note, for Jon Hoover, Ibn Taymiyya's idea of eternal creativity of God is an alternative way to explain the emergence of created things because neither the theologians' idea of the eternal will nor the philosophers' theory of cause and effect are sufficient to explain the emergence of created things. Nonetheless, Ibn Taymiyya tries to solve the problem by stating God's eternal activity which is connected to His eternal will.[72]

Moreover, according to Ibn Taymiyya, it is a mistake not to divide God's creation into acts and created objects. For him, in most Muslims' minds generally, creation (*khalq*) and created objects (*makhlūq*) are different from each other because creation (*fiʿl*) is the act of God and created objects (*mafʿūl*) are the effect of the act.[73] While God's act of creation exists in God's eternal essence, the objects upon which the act appeared are separated from God's essence. In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya says that God was the Creator before the creation of the world, and He is the Creator at the time of the creation of the world, and He is the Creator after the creation of the world as well.[74] It indicates that God does not need a created object to be the Creator and despite all these controversies, it is

---

[71] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:147, trans. in Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 81. Also, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:359.

[72] Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 87.

[73] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:229; 6:298. As an exception, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī claims that creation is the same with the created objects, may be counted according to Ibn Taymiyya. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:231.

[74] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:230.

agreed by Muslims that there is nothing eternal other than God according to Ibn Taymiyya.[75] As mentioned above, the act of creation and created objects are different and the former precedes the latter. This is named by Hoover as the "sequence principle." For Hoover, Ibn Taymiyya's arguments and Qur'ānic evidences may be seen in the attributes of will, love (*maḥabba*), good pleasure (*riḍā*), anger (*sukhṭ*), hearing (*samʿ*), seeing (*baṣar*), and looking (*naẓar*) as well.[76]

After these explanations, it is helpful to explain briefly Ibn Taymiyya's objections to the arguments for creation of the world provided by theologians and philosophers. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ibn Taymiyya already criticizes philosophers who rely on the human intellect alone and theologians who use non-Qur'ānic terminology and non-prophetic methods.[77] According to him, the weakness of the arguments of those who defend the eternity of the world and those who defend a specific time of creation of the world is evident because none of them can refute the other's arguments.[78] However, for theologians, especially the Ashʿarīs, the beginning of creation is necessary in order to separate the eternal God (*qadīm*) from the originated beings (*muḥdath*). Even though this approach seems to be a good defence against the claim of the eternity of the world offered by philosophers, Ibn Taymiyya says that in this case before the creation of the world God was inactive. That is an imperfection because, as expressed above, everlasting activity is a necessity of God's perfection.

---

[75] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:298.
[76] Hoover, "Voluntary Attributes," 59-62. Also, Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:222-229.
[77] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 16:272; *Dar',* 2:188.
[78] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 1:39.

Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya does not accept the idea of a beginning time for the creation of the world.[79]

On the other hand, philosophers claim the eternity of the world because of some reasons. According to Ibn Taymiyya, the cause and effect relation between God and the world leads philosophers, who consider God to be the cause of the world, to affirm the eternity of the world because the cause of temporally created things cannot be eternal; so they claim the eternity of the world.[80] On the contrary, for Ibn Taymiyya, it is not correct to delimit God with a cause and effect relation because such a claim makes God the inactive and involuntary source of the world. But, God creates by His will and power according to Ibn Taymiyya. Also, the claim of the philosophers about the emanation of the world from the One to prove the eternity of the world is rejected by Ibn Taymiyya due to its contradiction with the Qur'ān and rational realities.[81] In fact, for him, the philosophers do not look for a lord or a divinity for the world, but their whole struggle is to find a cause or a source for the existence of the world.[82] Hence, they do not take account of God's perpetual will on creation. For Ibn Taymiyya, even if philosophers do not take account of God's perpetual will in creation, what they provide to establish the eternity of the world proves, in fact, the eternal act of God connected to the perpetual will from eternity.[83]

---

79 Ajhar, "Forgotten Rational Thinking," 147.
80 Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:148. See, Özervarlı, *Kelâmcılara Eleştirisi*, 126-131; Zarkasyi, "Ibn Taymiyyah's Critique of Aristotelian Metaphysics," 167-190.
81 Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:323; 402; and *MF,* 6:298.
82 Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 3:285. See Özervarlı, *Kelâmcılara Eleştirisi*, 130.
83 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:300.

Another aspect of God's eternal act in creation, apart from the discussion of whether the world is eternal or has a beginning in time, is the question of God's freedom. According to the Muʿtazila, God must be free to create something or not to create it. If God creates from eternity, it is impossible to claim freedom for Him. If God is powerful and a free agent, whenever He wills He creates; whenever He wills He stops to create.[84] In contrast, as mentioned above, for Ibn Taymiyya God's eternal activity is the requirement of His perfection. Another sign of His perfection as well is to create everything by His will. Otherwise, God becomes a passive cause of the world. Ibn Taymiyya, in this respect, focuses on the perfection of God by highlighting the fact that the powerful and freely choosing agent (*mukhtār*) is more perfect than one who does not have power and will to create anything.[85]

Clearly, when Ibn Taymiyya addresses philosophers to refute their claim of the eternity of the world, he manages the debate by emphasizing the free will of God in order to deny that God is a passive cause of the world. But, when he addresses theologians, especially the Muʿtazilīs, to refute their claim that if God creates from eternity, He would not be free, Ibn Taymiyya manages the debate by emphasizing the perfection of God which requires acting with will from eternity. It may be said that when Ibn Taymiyya refutes the Muʿtazilīs' claim, he assumes that the eternal activity is one of the most essential conditions of God's perfection. But this has a

---

[84] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:162.
[85] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:372, trans. in Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 87. Also, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj*, 1:163.

reality in principle only, not in actuality because Ibn Taymiyya theoretically considers two possible gods. One of them creates, i.e., acts, and the other does not create. In this case, definitely the former is more perfect. But, it is not a sufficient argument to prove the role of the divine will in the eternal creation.

4.3.4. The Will of God (*irāda*)

The will of God, which is among the attributes of perfection, is one of the most essential attributes of God. According to Ibn Taymiyya, the theologians tend to give precedence to a particular divine attribute such as knowledge, power, or will in order to explain the relationship between the Creator and creatures in the best way.[86] In this respect, Özervarlı says that for Ibn Taymiyya the divine will is the most important attribute after the attribute of living because the will is the precondition of all His acts.[87]

Moreover, among theologians, who affirm the attributes of God, there are three main ideas about the will of God according to Ibn Taymiyya. The first idea the will of God is eternal belongs to Ibn Kullāb, al-Ashʿarī, and their followers. The second idea belongs to the Muʿtazilīs who say that the will of God is contingent. And the last idea belongs to the people of the ḥadīth, Karrāmīs,[88] Sufis, and imams like Ibn Aḥmad, who say that the will of God is both eternal and contingent.[89]

---

[86] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 16:356.
[87] Özervarlı, *Kelâmcılara Eleştirisi*, 139.
[88] Karrāmīya, as a Sunni theological sect, was founded by Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Karrām (d. 896). According to C. E. Bosworth, the sect is considered to be a Sunni sect, the sect is known through its strict literalism and rather corporealist interpretations of the

The subject is discussed from a slightly different angle by Ibn Taymiyya as well. The question of whether the will of God is one or multiple is concerned as well. In this point, Ibn Taymiyya explains the opinions of the Kalām theologians first. Then, he puts forward his own idea. He puts in order the opinions concerning whether the will of God is one or multiple. According to the first group who are Ibn Kullāb, al-Ashʿarī, and their followers, the will of God is one and eternal. The will of God has the relation to all created objects.[90] For the second group, who are Karrāmīs, God's will is one and eternal. However, for each created object there is a new will in God's essence by the eternal will (*al-mashī'a al-qadīma*).[91] As for the third group, who are Jahmīs and the Muʿtazilīs, they reject the divine will subsisting in Him. And then, they hold either the rejection of the will or the interpretation of it, or like the Baṣrian Muʿtazilīs, they hold the will of God without locus.[92] As for the last opinion, which belongs to Ibn Taymiyya, all these three opinions are unreasonable because God wills perpetually from eternity by His sequential wills (*irādāt mutaʿāqiba*). It means that even though God's will as a genus is eternal, for each specific thing (*al-shay' al-muʿayyin*) there is a will in its time.[93]

Qur'ānic verses. Also, the sect opposes the Muʿtazila generally. This sect affirms God to be the Creator eternally. C. E. Bosworth. "Karrāmiyya." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by P. Bearman. Brill Online, 2015.

89 Aḥmad Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya, *Jāmiʿ al-rasā'il li-Ibn Taymiyya.* Ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-madanī, 1969), 1:182.

90 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 16:301.

91 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 16:302.

92 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 16:303; Ibn Taymiyya, *Jāmiʿ al-rasā'il,* 1:182.

93 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 16:303, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 103-104.

Apart from these different ideas, Ibn Taymiyya, like Ibn al-ʿArabī, mentions two types of the will of God. These two types of the will of God are called the religious will (*irāda dīniyya*) and the ontological will (*irāda kawniyya*).[94] Some Qur'ānic verses indicate the legal rules while others indicate the ontological decisions of God.[95]

Certainly, the functions of these wills are different. Although God does not will disobedience, unbelief, crimes, immorality, and all bad things, they happen through God's ontological will. However, they are not commanded by God's religious will.[96] Therefore, it may be said that God's religious will is directed to commands, advice, and guidance while His ontological will is the creation of whatever happens in nature within the habit of God (*sunna al-allāh*). In addition to the term will (*irāda*), Ibn Taymiyya mentions some Qur'ānic terms such as command (*amr*), words (*kalimāt*), judgement (*ḥukm*), decision (*qaḍā*), pre-writing (*kitāb*), rising up

---

[94] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:266.

[95] "The month of Ramaḍan [is that] in which was revealed the Qur'ān, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion. So whoever sights [the new moon of] the month, let him fast it; and whoever is ill or on a journey - then an equal number of other days. Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship and [wants] for you to complete the period and to glorify Allah for that [to] which He has guided you; and perhaps you will be grateful" (*The Qur'ān,* 2:185); "O you who have believed, when you rise to [perform] prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles. And if you are in a state of *janāba*, then purify yourselves. But if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women and do not find water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and hands with it. Allah does not intend to make difficulty for you, but He intends to purify you and complete His favour upon you that you may be grateful" (*The Qur'ān,* 5:6); "And I did not create the genius and mankind except to worship Me" (*The Qur'ān,* 51:56). Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 18:132. For a translation of the passage where Ibn Taymiyya explains in detail these two conceptions, see Michot, *Against Extremism*, 89-93. Also, see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 125-129.

[96] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 18:131.

(*baʿth*), and sending (*irsāl*) which are used in the sense of the ontological will as well as in the sense of the religious will.[97]

It should be noted that there is another word *mashī'a* (volition) used by Ibn Taymiyya frequently together with *irāda* (will). Even if they can be used in place of the other in some contexts, it does mean that they are the same. While Joseph Bell considers these two terms synonyms, which are used for both the ontological will and the religious will,[98] for Hoover, they are not synonymous. According to Hoover, in Ibn Taymiyya's works while the ontological will of God is linked to the term *mashī'a* (will), the religious will is linked to God's love and pleasure. *Mashī'a* is used by Ibn Taymiyya only for creation while *irāda* (will) may be used in the ontological and in the religious sense depending on the context.[99]

Briefly, it is obvious that according to Ibn Taymiyya, the will of God is at the centre of the attributes and names of God because as Ibn Taymiyya emphasizes frequently, God is a free agent (*fāʿil*) from eternity by His will. The most essential function of the will of God is to distinguish the active agent God from Aristotle's prime mover or Neo-platonic One which refer to a nearly passive source of the world in Ibn Taymiyya's

---

[97] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 18:132-133. See, *Majmūʿ*, 11:265-270 for some definitions of these terms. Also see Michot, *Against Extremism*, 91.

[98] Joseph Norment Bell, *Love Theory in Later Hanbalite Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), 65.

[99] Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 127. See Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 8:159 and *Minhāj,* 3:233. The translation of the term, *mashī'a* is not clear and certain. For example, Yahya Michot, in *Against Extremism* p. 91, translates *mashī'a- ishā'a* as 'volition' while in page 108, he translates it as *irāda* (will). Also, Joseph Bell translates *mashī'a* as 'volition.' Bell, *Love Theory*, p. 65. However, Hoover prefers to translate both of them, namely *mashī'a* and *irāda* as 'will' because of some language difficulties.

mind.[100] God's wisdom, justice, speech, and power have a very powerful connection with God's perpetual will from eternity. As said above, after the attribute "living" the divine will is the most significant attribute because all of the acts of God depend on the will.

4.3.5. The Speech of God (*kalām*)

The speech of God is another significant divine attribute. It is helpful to begin with Ibn Taymiyya's various definitions of the conceptions *kalām*, *taklīm*, *mukallīm*, and *mutakallim* before discussion of the speech of God. For Ibn Taymiyya, *kalām* (speech) is not the same as *taklīm* (speech to someone). And every *mutakallim* (one who speaks) is not *mukallim* (one who speaks to someone). Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya says that primarily it should be proven that God is *mutakallim,* and then He is *mukallim*.[101] If this distinction is not put forward clearly, God would need someone other than Himself to speak to. In this case, we would have to choose either that there are some eternal beings besides God or that God's speech is not eternal.

Ibn Taymiyya explains briefly the opinions of the schools of thought on the speech of God. According to the Muʿtazilīs, God's speech is not eternal and it does not subsist in God's essence so that God speaks through His will. For Kullābīs, God's speech is eternal and it subsists in God's essence. But there is not a connection with God's will and power because it is already in His essence. As for Ibn Taymiyya's opinion, God speaks

---

[100] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 3:125. Netton, *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology*, 163. Ian Richard Netton, "The Origins of Islamic Philosophy," in *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought*, ed. Ian Richard Netton, 4 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1:87.

[101] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 10:200.

through His will and power and the eternal speech subsists in His essence.[102] For Ibn Taymiyya, speech is among the attributes of perfection. It is absurd to qualify a created being with the attribute of speech while the Creator is not qualified with it.[103] Thus, he refutes the idea that the speech is not in God's essence.

As with creation from eternity, the same objection may be directed against Ibn Taymiyya's claim of God's speaking from eternity. If God speaks from eternity, it is just a claim in principle that God speaks by His will. Definitely, one who can speak is superior to the other who cannot speak.[104] But, it does not necessarily mean that one who does not speak sometimes is inferior to the other who speaks perpetually.

Nevertheless, Ibn Taymiyya has some Qur'ānic proofs to support his own idea. He uses the verse, "Say, 'If the sea were ink for [writing] the words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as a supplement'"[105] (Q, 18:109). For him, this verse means that God's words are endless and eternal. Saying that God's words are endless and eternal does not mean that letters of the scriptures are eternal either. In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya says that for the Salaf, the Qur'ān is the word of God, it is revealed by God, and it is not created. They say that God speaks from eternity whenever He wills.[106] Also, they make clear that God's word is eternal as a class.

---

[102] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:219.
[103] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:357; 12:347.
[104] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:95.
[105] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:232.
[106] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:215.

Otherwise, none of them said that a word is eternal and none of them said that the Qur'ān is eternal.[107] Therefore, God's speech is not a created being.[108]

As for the eternity of the Qur'ān particularly, according to Ibn Taymiyya, there are some different ideas. The first belongs to philosophers like Avicenna, some Sufis like Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Sabʿīn, and theologians who say that God's word does not have an existence outside of the self (*nafs*) of the servants. Rather, the word Moses heard does not exist out of his self (*nafs*). The second belongs to the Muʿtazilīs who say that God's word is created by God in some bodies.[109] The third is that the word of God is a meaning subsisting in His essence. It is expressed through Arabic in the Qur'ān, through Hebrew in the Torah, and through Syriac in the Gospel. This view is put forward by Ibn Kullāb, al-Ashʿarī, and others.[110] The fourth is that word of God with letters and sounds is eternal and their meanings subsist in the essence of the Speaker (*mutakallim*). They are not separable from the listener (*mustamiʿ*). This view belongs to a group of theologians and some people of the ḥadīth.[111] The fifth, the opinion of the Karrāmīya and the Hishāmīya,[112] is that the word of God is contingent and

---

[107] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 12:54, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 127.
[108] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:229; 5:553.
[109] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 12:163.
[110] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 12:165.
[111] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 12:166.
[112] Hishāmīya, or Hashawiyya, was founded by Abū Muḥammad Hishām al-Ḥakam (d. 805-815) who is a Shiʿī theologian. According to this sect, verses of the Qur'ān should be interpreted literally even if they sound anthropomorphism. Thus, they defend that God is body. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 22-23.

subsisting in His essence.[113] The sixth is that God speaks eternally when He wills. And He speaks with a sound that it is in the divine books. God speaks through His will and power. This view is held by most of Muslims (*jumhūr*), people of the ḥadīth, and the imams according to Ibn Taymiyya.[114] Eventually, for Ibn Taymiyya, the underlying reason of controversies about whether the Qur'ān is a created being (*makhlūq*) is the rejection or misunderstanding of the attributes.[115]

As seen, the Qur'ān as a book (*al-muṣḥaf*) including its letters and ink in addition to the sounds of its reciters has been a matter of concern for the Kalām theologians. Although the Qur'ān is uncreated according to Ibn Taymiyya, there is a consensus that whoever says that the ink and sounds in the Qur'ān are eternal is mistaken and opposed to the Book and the Sunna. Ibn Taymiyya says, this view is held by most of scholars of Islam.[116] At the same time, it does not necessarily mean that if the ink in the Book is not eternal, whatever is in the Book is not the word of God. The correct view is to say that the Qur'ān is in the Book (*al-muṣḥaf*)[117] because whatever is in the book – whether it is contingent or eternal– is an ambiguous matter. The Salaf just agree that the Qur'ān is an uncreated speech of God.[118] In the same way, the sound of the one belongs to the reciter who recites the Qur'ān and is not uncreated. For Ibn Taymiyya, the sound and the speech

---

[113] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 12:172.
[114] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 12:173, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 267-272.
[115] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 2:256.
[116] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 12:237; 12:37.
[117] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 12:240.
[118] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 12:241.

must be separated from each other because the former belongs to the reciter while the latter belongs to God.[119]

Eventually, after all these explanations by Ibn Taymiyya about speech of God, it can be said that God speaks from eternity through His will and power. The Qur'ān like other revelations is uncreated in terms of being the speech of God. But, as a book including its ink and letters, it is not eternal.

4.3.6. The Wisdom of God (*ḥikma*)

The wisdom (*ḥikma*) of God has a very significant place in Ibn Taymiyya's thought because for him, whatever God does depends on His wise purpose. This is also another attribute of perfection because it is not acceptable to qualify God with aimlessness. Moreover, according to Ibn Taymiyya, the will, that is to choose one thing or act instead of another, should be based on a purpose (wisdom) which precedes the will. If God creates everything through His power and His will, there must be a purpose behind this act.[120] However, on the matter of the wisdom of God there is no agreement among the theologians.

At the outset, a question asked to Ibn Taymiyya summarizes the issue of the purpose on creation:

> Concerning the goodness [*ḥusn*] of the will [*irāda*] of God —Exalted is He- in creating creatures and bringing forth the human race. Does He create for a cause (*ʿilla*) or for other than a cause? If it is said, 'not

[119] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 12:74.
[120] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 18:134, trans. in Michot, *Against Extremism*, 93.

> for a cause', He is aimless— Exalted is God above that. If it is said, 'for a cause,' and if you say that it is pre-eternal, it follows necessarily that the effect is pre-eternal (*lam yazal*). And if you say that it is originated (*muḥdatha*), it follows necessarily that it has a cause, but an endless chain is absurd.[121]

This is the framework of the problem. Then, Ibn Taymiyya mentions three views on the purpose of God's acts. The first view is that God does whatever He wills without a purpose (*ḥikma*) because the purpose indicates a want (*ḥājat*) from which God is far. Even though this view is held firstly by Jahm ibn Ṣafwān, it is also accepted by al-Ashʿarī, al-Qāḍī Abū Yaʿlā (d. 1065), and others.[122] The second view of theologians especially the Muʿtazilīs is that God creates and commands with a purpose to benefit His servants.[123] As for the third view, God creates people to worship and glorify Him.[124]

According to Ibn Taymiyya, God creates everything with a purpose, and He is the free agent with His wisdom (*ḥikma*). There are two aspects of wisdom. One of them is toward Himself with good pleasure (*riḍā*) and love. The other is for the servants with favour (*niʿma*) by which they rejoice.[125] Ibn Taymiyya refers to various verses from the Qur'ān to support his approach to the wisdom of God. For example, he cites, "Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to

---

[121] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 8:81, trans. in Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 76. Also, see Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM,* 5:285. For more details on this problem, see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 70-102.
[122] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 8:37.
[123] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 8:38; 8:45.
[124] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 8:39, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 112-113.
[125] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 8:35-6.

the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], 'Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly…'" (Q, 3:191), and "And We did not create the heaven and the earth and that between them aimlessly. That is the assumption of those who disbelieve…"[126] (Q, 38:27).

Moreover, Ibn Taymiyya criticizes those who by ignoring His wisdom claim that God creates just because He has power. This idea is incorrect according to Ibn Taymiyya because if God creates one of two or more things rather than the others, it proves that there is a will which arises out of a purpose.[127] Ibn Taymiyya's classification of these attributes is clear. For him, God has wisdom through His eternal and endless knowledge. God wills something through His wisdom, and then it happens through His power. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya does not accept a separation of the attributes because, as clearly seen, each of them is intertwined. Furthermore, for him, it is more appropriate to say that God does whatever He wills through His knowledge and wisdom.[128] Thus, even though the struggle of the Ashʿarīs is to prove the independence of God from creatures by ignoring the wisdom of God, it is not acceptable because acting through a purpose does not mean that God is dependent on creatures.

Finally, it can be said that God and all His attributes and names are the One (*aḥad*) in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching. Just as the attributes of living, knowing, seeing, hearing, and willing are necessary concomitants of God's perfection, wisdom also is another divine attribute related to His perfection.

---

[126] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 8:35-36; 17:95.
[127] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 16:305.
[128] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:130.

As explained in this section, Ibn Taymiyya's whole effort is to emphasize God's perfection through affirmation of the divine names and attributes. He explains the relationship between God and creation in the light of the divine names and attributes. He does not separate the attributes from God's essence because for him the attributes are necessary for the perfection of God.

4.4. Comparison

This section, which aims to exhibit comparatively the ideas shared and expressed by Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya concerning the divine names and attributes, is a kind of summary of what has been said in the previous two sections of this chapter. While in the previous sections of the chapter detailed explanations of the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya were treated, in this section the issues such as the existence, the essence and the divine names and attributes, the incomparability and similarity of God, creation, and the will of God, which constitute the backbone of the subject, are going to be compared.

4.4.1. The Essence of God and the Divine Names

The base of the controversy between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya concerning the divine names and attributes is their different approaches to the objects of God's knowledge and God Himself. At first, it should be made clear that for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the possible things found in the mind of God cannot be qualified with absolute existence (*wujūd*) nor absolute non-existence (*ʿadam*) because their existential status is relative.[1] For Ibn Taymiyya, there is nothing which is qualified neither with existence nor non-existence.[2] This conflict emerges from different approaches to the knowledge of God and the conception of the thing. According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the objects of God's knowledge cannot be distinguished from God

[1] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:151.
[2] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 3:347.

because God's knowledge is identical with God Himself.[3] Since God encompasses everything with His knowledge and there is nothing other than Him, these things cannot be seen as nothing.[4]

For Ibn Taymiyya, we should distinguish the mental existence (*al-wujūd al-ʿilmī*) from the external existence (*al-wujūd al-ʿaynī*).[5] Therefore, it may be said that even if Ibn Taymiyya accepts that the term thing is applied to what there is in the mind as well as to what exists in the external world, he considers what there is in the mind to be an idea which does not have an ontological reality.[6]

As for the divine names and attributes, the most distinctive difference between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya is definitely the distinction stated by Ibn al-ʿArabī between the Essence of God and His Divinity. In many passages of Ibn al-ʿArabī's works, it may be seen frequently that he separates the Essence from the Divinity.[7] By doing so, he links the Divinity to the names and attributes. Through this kind of approach Ibn al-ʿArabī aims to explain the ontological status of the divine names, the relationship between the oneness of God and multiplicity of the things. Also, by separating the Divinity he frequently emphasizes that the

---

3 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:44.

4 Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, "Kitāb al-jalāl wa-l jamāl," in Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Rasā'il Ibn ʿArabī* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2001), 30.

5 Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 1:175. For translation, see Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 183.

6 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 8:9.

7 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:597; 2:257, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 59-61.

Essence of God is beyond all the names and attributes, definitions, and imaginations.[8]

On the other hand, even though he defends the non-qualified Essence of God, he identifies some special names and attributes for God's Essence such as the Independent, One, Knowing, and Majesty.[9] Certainly, one of the most important names among them is the Independent because for Ibn al-ʿArabī God's Essence is completely independent of us while His Divinity is dependent on creatures.[10] According to him, in order to be the Possessor (*al-mālik*), there must be something possessed, to be the Creator (*al-khāliq*), there must be something created, to be the Desiring (*al-murīd*), there must be something desired.[11]

As for Ibn Taymiyya's thought, there cannot be such a distinction between God's Essence and His Divinity. For him, it is not possible to think of an essence which is stripped off all qualifications.[12] God creates because He is the Creator, He wills because He is the Willing, and He is the Possessor without a need of something possessed. This point is significant because according to Ibn Taymiyya, if the Essence of God is accepted without any attribute, it is not possible to know such an essence, which leads us to obscurity. Another reason why Ibn Taymiyya does not accept such an understanding of the Essence is that if the Essence of God does not

---

8 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:69; 2:230.
9 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Inshā' al-dawā'ir,* 152.
10 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:588; 2:226, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 64.
11 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:364.
12 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 17:161.

have names and attributes, God would be qualified with imperfection.[13] Above all, according to him, the word "essence" (*dhāt*) linguistically means the possessor of something (*dhū*).[14] How can the essence (*dhāt*) which means possessor be qualified with possessing nothing? As it is seen, Ibn Taymiyya qualifies God's Essence with the names and attributes.

Although these explanations seem very different from each other, it should be noted that sometimes Ibn al-ʿArabī says that God's attribute is His Essence.[15] This kind of statement proves that Ibn al-ʿArabī does not make an absolute distinction between the Essence and the Divinity even though he emphasizes such a distinction frequently. Moreover, as mentioned in the previous sections, Ibn al-ʿArabī places some divine names in the category of the names of the Essence (*asmā' al-dhāt*) although he always emphasizes that the Essence of God is beyond all the definitions, names and attributes.[16] Also, it is known that even though for Ibn al-ʿArabī, God is beyond all the names and attributes in respect of His Essence, He should have some attributes such as knowledge, will, power, wisdom, and speaking in order to make manifest Himself through transferring the fixed entities (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*) to their cosmological status. It can be said that the purpose of Ibn al-ʿArabī is to exalt God above all the possible things so as to emphasize explicitly His Independence of creatures.

Therefore, he makes a distinction first, and then he connects all the divine names and attributes to the Divinity of God, so that he could keep

---

[13] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:357.
[14] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:39. Also, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:98.
[15] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:167. See, Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 188.
[16] Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Kitāb inshā' al-dawā'ir*, 152.

God away from a possible need for creatures. On the contrary, since Ibn Taymiyya considers a certain hierarchy between God and creatures, and since he does not accept an existential mutuality between things and God, he focuses directly on the perfection of God without fearing that God needs creatures. At this point, it should be highlighted that the duality of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought and expression is evident here. His opinions on the Essence and Divinity are very different from Ibn Taymiyya's opinions in one respect. But, in another respect, both of them affirm names belong to God Himself, and both of them affirm the independence of God from creatures even though Ibn al-ʿArabī recognizes a dependence of the Divinity of God in another respect. As has been seen, what Ibn Taymiyya provides is compatible sometimes with the Essence of God and sometimes with the Divinity of God found in Ibn al-ʿArabī's mind.

Another aspect of the subject of the divine names and attributes is their natures. According to Ibn Taymiyya, some groups like ʿIsmāʿīlīya consider the divine names to be just relationships; they do not accept their absolute existence.[17] He is correct in this claim to some extent. For example, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the divine names and attributes are just intelligible realities and relationships. Thus, they do not have an existence in a certain sense.[18] However, Ibn al-ʿArabī is very different from those who deny all the divine names and attributes. It is correct that Ibn al-ʿArabī does not affirm an existence not only for the divine names but also for anything to be independent from God's existence because everything takes its

[17] Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 1:174.
[18] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:516, 684; 3:362; 4:294, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 36.

existence necessarily from the existence of God.[19] But, in this case, Ibn al-ʿArabī's purpose is not to deny the realities of the divine names, but to emphasize the existence which belongs to God alone and the fact that there is nothing besides God's existence. The reason for this distinction may be the different approaches of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya to the conceptions of existence, existent, and essence. It is no more than a verbal discussion, in one respect, because while Ibn Taymiyya accepts the divine names and attributes to be inseparable qualifications of God, Ibn al-ʿArabī accepts them to be inseparable qualifications of the Divinity of God instead of the Essence of God. Also, as mentioned above, he qualifies the Essence with the names and attributes.

Furthermore, Ibn al-ʿArabī, like Ibn Taymiyya, emphasizes the necessary affirmation of the divine names and attributes without interpreting them metaphorically (*ta'wīl*).[20] For Ibn al-ʿArabī, for example, it is not correct to understand the names and attributes in a real sense for creatures but then interpret them metaphorically when qualified of God. On this point, he says that we should describe God as compatible with how He describes Himself and how His messenger describes Him.[21] As for Ibn Taymiyya, he agrees with Ibn al-ʿArabī on this matter. For him also, the divine names and attributes should not be interpreted metaphorically at all because they belong to God as God declares openly in His Book. For correct understanding of the divine names and attributes Ibn Taymiyya

---

[19] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:454, trans. in Yousef, *Ibn ʿArabī: Time and Cosmology*, 138.
[20] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:116. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:3.
[21] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:538, trans. in Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 28.

points to the Qur'ān, the Sunna of the Prophet, and the opinions of the Salaf by saying that we should qualify God with attributes by which He describes Himself and by which His messenger and the Salaf describe Him.[22]

Another significant aspect of the subject is the eternity (*qidam*) of the divine names and attributes. Ibn al-ʿArabī, on the one hand, by affirming a kind of mutual need between the divine names and the originated things, namely the name Lord's need for vassals (*marbūb*), the Possessor's need for a thing possessed (*mulk*), and the Forgiver's need for a sinner, connects the divine names and attributes to the cosmological-originated things which are not eternal.[23] On the other hand, he connects some of the divine names and attributes such as Knowing (*al-ʿālim*), Desiring (*al-murīd*), Powerful (*al-qādir*), and Speaker (*al-mutakallim*) directly to the Essence of God which is purely eternal (*qadīm*).[24] Since Ibn al-ʿArabī does not separate these divine names Knowing, Desiring, Powerful, and Speaker from the eternal Essence of God, and since all other divine names and creatures stem from these names by means of the divine manifestation, it may be correct to say that the divine names and attributes basically can be seen as eternal for Ibn al-ʿArabī.

As for Ibn Taymiyya's approach, he says that His attributes are eternal like His Essence.[25] In this respect, it is possible to say that Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya are very close to each other because both of them

---

[22] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:3; 5:26, 196; 6:360, trans. in Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 49.
[23] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:437; Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 119.
[24] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Inshā' al-dawā'ir,* 152.
[25] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:46; 3:402, 420-21.

—although Ibn al-ʿArabī frequently declares that the Essence of God cannot be qualified with an attribute or name— accept that the eternal Essence of God has at least some divine names and attributes such as Knowing, Desiring, Powerful, and Speaker. It should be noted that Ibn Taymiyya insists on the relationship between the objects (*mawṣūf*), which are qualified, and the qualification (*ṣifa*), which qualifies the objects. Since they cannot be isolated from the other in the absolute sense, he defends that an affirmation of the divine attributes is not only an affirmation of some qualities but also is the affirmation of the existence of God.[26] In Ibn Taymiyya's mind since God's existence is eternal, His attributes must be eternal.

The relationship between the Essence of God and the divine names and attributes is a concern not only of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya but also the Kalām theologians. Even though the reasons provided by Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya are different, they occasionally share similar positions on the opposite side of the Kalām theologians. For example, unlike the Kalām theologians, especially the Ashʾarīs, Ibn al-ʿArabī says that all the names such as Knowing, Living, Powerful, Subduer (*al-qāhir*), and Aware (*al-khabīr*) are from His Self; they are not additional to His Essence.[27] Ibn al-ʿArabī rejects additional attributes to the Essence of God because of two reasons. One of them is that the divine names and attributes

---

[26] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:355.
[27] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:284. Also, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt (Yahya's edition),* 4:294.

do not have an existence already apart from the existence of God.[28] In this respect, it is not possible to mention an addition. The other one is that if you accept an additional attribute to the Essence of God, it may cause God to be thought to be imperfect at some point in time. In this case, God would be qualified with deficiency (*naqṣ*) or imperfection.[29]

As for Ibn Taymiyya, he is also against the idea of the Kalām theologians that the attributes are additional (*zā'id*) to the Essence of God. As in Ibn al-ʿArabī's defence, for Ibn Taymiyya, seeing the attributes of perfection to be additional to the Essence leads to qualifying God with imperfection in a time when the attributes have not been added to the Essence yet.[30] For him, between the Essence and the attributes there is the relationship requiring interaction —it is *lāzim* and *mulāzim*— so that the Essence and the attributes cannot be thought of separately.[31] In this regard, it may be said that while Ibn al-ʿArabī focuses on the existence, namely the existence of God and the existence of the originated things, in order to preserve the existence (*wujūd*) for God only, Ibn Taymiyya focuses on the perfection of God mostly by considering the names and attributes to be necessary concomitants of His Essence. It means that Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya are closer to each other than to the Kalām theologians with respect to whether the attributes are additional to the Essence.

Another aspect of the subject of the divine names and attributes is the matter of the composition of God (*tarkīb*). Ibn al-ʿArabī pays attention

---

[28] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:300.
[29] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:284.
[30] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 3:20-21; 3:420-421; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 8:21; 17:162.
[31] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 3:292; 393-5.

to the oneness of existence; therefore, he does not accept composition in respect of God by declaring that there is nothing other than God. In this case, already it is impossible to mention any kind of composition.[32] As for Ibn Taymiyya, he pays attention to God's perfection and His independence of any compositor; therefore, he does not accept such an idea of composition (*tarkīb*) when the divine names and attributes are in question.[33] Also for him, since it is not possible to think of God without His attributes of the perfection, reasoning on whether He is a composite is a meaningless act.[34] As seen, even if they provide different reasons and they approach the subject through different concentrations, Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya share similar positions. Briefly, for both of them, it is correct to say that qualifying God with different names and attributes does not make Him multiple nor a composite being.

Eventually, the relationship between the Essence of God and His names and attributes is related to the understanding of the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*). Concerning all differences and similarities between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya on this matter, it can be said that the former understands the oneness as the oneness of the existence which belongs to God while the latter understands the oneness as the oneness of God's Divinity (*ulūhiyya*) and Lordship (*rubūbiyya*). While Ibn Taymiyya sees the divine names and attributes as indispensable realities of God's Essence, Ibn al-ʿArabī sees them as relationships through which God is qualified and indispensable

---

[32] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:397.
[33] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:102-103, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 89.
[34] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:96.

realities of the Divinity of God. In this respect, it may be said that even if their methods and concentrations to explain the problem seem different, basically they are not so far from each other on that issue. With different explanations and conceptions they consider the names and attributes to be necessary concomitants of God.

4.4.2. The Incomparability (*tanzīh*) and Similarity of God (*tashbīh*)

According to both Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya, rejection of the names and attributes of God is absolutely a mistake. God is obviously qualified with the names and attributes by which He and His prophet qualify Him. It is a fact that creatures as well may be qualified with similar names and attributes. Even though on the matter of the incomparability of God Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya think mostly in the same way, the former emphasizes the similarity of God with creatures to some extent by highlighting an existential relationship between God and creatures who take their existence from God.[35] The latter, by warning those who attempt to protect themselves from a danger of similarity, lest God be stripped of (*taʿṭīl*) all the names and attributes emphasizes that God and creatures can be named with the same names without harming His perfection.[36]

Qualifying God and creatures with the same names and attributes is not a problem for Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. For Ibn Taymiyya, the real problem is to qualify creatures with the names and attributes which are

---

[35] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 54; 69.
[36] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:3-4.

special (*khaṣā'iṣ*) to God or vice versa.[37] For him, it is normal to qualify different things with the same attributes. For example, the term animal is applied to both human beings and beasts (*bahīma*), but at the same time their realities are different from each other.[38] Also, other attributes such as colour, taste, and smell can qualify many different things at the same time. But, it does not prove that they are the same things. Moreover, as the Qur'ānic evidence proves, Ibn Taymiyya says that God sometimes use the term knowledge for Himself, and sometimes He uses the same term for creatures.[39] Therefore, this kind of qualification of God and creatures with the same names and attributes does not make them the same at all.

In fact, through these explanations Ibn Taymiyya emphasizes the significance of the affirmation of the divine names and attributes. In this point similarity between Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-ʿArabī is clear. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, the case is nearly the same. He also says that the term animal can be applied to both human beings and beasts (*bahīma*) at the same time, but it does not mean that they are the same. Since there is no essential attribute (*ṣifā al-nafs*) shared between God and creatures, qualifying both of them with the same names and attributes does not make them the same being at all. It should be noted that God sees, hears, and wills; an animal sees, hears, wills as well. How can it be claimed that they are the same?[40] Therefore, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, there is a very important difference between

---

[37] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:22.
[38] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 20:446, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 70.
[39] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:27-28; 5:197-202, 208.
[40] Ibn al-ʿArabī, "Kitāb al-jalāl wa-l jamāl," in Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Rasā'il,* 27.

using an attribute to qualify God and using the same attribute to qualify creatures. As seen in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching, Ibn al-ʿArabī also mentions the difference between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of human beings.[41] Thus, even if God and creatures are qualified with the same names and attributes verbally (*lafẓan*), it is not possible to understand them with the same meaning.

As for the perfection of God, it has a very significant place in Ibn Taymiyya's teaching. He considers the names and attributes to be requirements of God's perfection. Also, he says that we should know that all the beautiful names belong to God since He is exalted above any attribute which may imply a deficiency.[42] The conception of the perfection of God is a useful point in order to distinguish God and creatures concerning the hierarchy among them.[43] On the other hand, Ibn al-ʿArabī also accepts some attributes of God as the attributes of perfection. For example, when he explains God's Highness (*al-ʿuluw*), he says that since God only exists in reality, His Highness is not understood relative to creatures. It means that God is the High through His Essence.[44] On this point, even though he underscores that the existence belongs to God only in one respect, he emphasizes the perfection of God's Essence by indicating His uniqueness in another respect. As a similar stance, Ibn Taymiyya connects God's Highness to His perfection by affirming that He is above all deficiencies and He has all the names of perfection. However, in a

---

41 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:217; 2:499, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 69; 73.
42 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 12:347, trans. in Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 59.
43 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:262.
44 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 76.

difference between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya, the former by referring to a ḥadīth report ascribes the word "below" to God because for him, God only exists in reality.[45] On the contrary, Ibn Taymiyya refrains carefully from such statements which may imply deficiency.

Another example of their different approach but similar opinions may be the matter of God's direction (*jiha*). Through his stress on the oneness of existence Ibn al-ʿArabī declares that God cannot be in a direction since He encompasses all directions.[46] He also says that since God does not have a body, and since He is completely different from creatures in one respect, a physical movement or direction, which is related to physical bodies, cannot be ascribed to God.[47] Therefore, ascribing to God some words like "above," "below," "descending," and "getting closer" do not mean that God comes from a direction or that He is placed in a direction. Similarly, according to Ibn Taymiyya, since God does not have a physical body or a direction, any physical movement, which belongs to creatures, cannot be ascribed to God.[48] Thus, it cannot be said that God has a direction.[49] Like Ibn al-ʿArabī, Ibn Taymiyya explains the conceptions of above, below, higher, and lower as relations; they do not indicate a direction.[50]

---

[45] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 171. Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 213. For detailed information of Ibn al-ʿArabī's attitude toward the names ascribed to God, Chittick has very useful translations of some passages from *al-Futūḥāt*. See Chittick, *SPK*, 41-44.

[46] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:408. Chittick, *SPK*, 51.

[47] Ibn al-ʿArabī, "Kitāb al-jalāl wa-l jamāl," in Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Rasā'il Ibn ʿArabī*, 24.

[48] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 33:176-177.

[49] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 5:262.

[50] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 33:184, trans. in Ansarī, *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam*, 33.

As seen through all these explanations, it is a fact that Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya apparently differ. But, in looking at the subject from a different angle it is possible to see shared ideas on many subjects which are represented with different conceptions.

4.4.3. Creation (*khalq*)

Creation is one of the most important subjects in the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. According to Ibn Taymiyya, since according to Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers, true understanding of the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) is to affirm nothing but God, there is no place in reality for the Creator in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching.[51] It is because Ibn al-ʿArabī does not distinguish the fixed entities (*al-ʿayān al-thābita*), which are placed in God's mind in the pre-cosmological status, from the things which are seen in the cosmos with their material bodies.[52] However, as mentioned in the first section of this chapter, Ibn al-ʿArabī accepts that God absolutely is the Creator. In this case, saying that what Ibn al-ʿArabī understands from the act of creation is different than what Ibn Taymiyya does would be more accurate than saying that there is no creator in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching.

A simple explanation of the act of creation in Ibn al-ʿArabī is that creation is to bring the things, which are already placed in the knowledge of God as the objects of His knowledge, into the cosmos as a manifestation of

---

[51] Ibn Taymiyya, *MRM*, 1:178-180.

[52] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:61, trans. in Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 49. As remembered, Stephen Hirtenstein also describes creation in Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought as "making visible things, which are invisible." Hirtenstein, *Unlimited Mercifier*, 26.

God.[53] Hence, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the act of creation is just to give existence to the things determined already in God's knowledge.[54] It is worth noting that this kind of attitude does not make Ibn al-ʿArabī the same with philosophers, who defend emanation of the world from God or the One through a compulsory flowing without will, because Ibn al-ʿArabī affirms God as the free agent.[55] On the contrary, for Ibn Taymiyya, the act of creation is to produce or make things which did not have an existence before.[56] Definitely, this kind of understanding does not make Ibn Taymiyya the same with the Kalām theologians, who defend the beginning of creation of the world.[57]

As explained in the previous sections, both Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya oppose the idea of the Kalām theologians that God created the world at a particular time. Also, both of them oppose the idea of the philosophers that the world is eternal. The Kalām theologians, in order to emphasize the independence of God and that He is a free agent, ascribe a

---

53 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:130.

54 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:210, trans. in Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 50.

55 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:320. Also, see A. M. Goichon, "Ibn Sīnā." *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Ed. P. Bearman, Brill Online, 2015. Therese-Anne Druart, "Al-Fārābī, Emanation, and Metaphysics," in *Islamic Philosophy and Theology:Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought,* ed. Ian Richard Netton, 4 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 2:71-87. Netton, *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology*, 114-135; 162-174.

56 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:230. As a note, according to A. Hakim Ajhar, for Ibn Taymiyya there is not a nonexistence preceding existent things. This claim also is similar to what Ibn al-ʿArabī thinks of the matter. In this regard, Ajhar says, "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 conditions from which it results. The state of nonexistence which precedes the existent is for Ibn Taymiyya nothing but a state of latency." A. Hakim Ajhar, *Ibn Taymiyya wa-sti'nāf al-qawl al-falsafī fī al-Islām* (Casablanca: Al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2004), 213, trans. in Tamer, "The Curse of Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya as a Philosopher in Contemporary Islamic Thought," 359.

57 For details of the objections of Ibn Taymiyya to the Kalām theologians, see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 70-102.

beginning time for the act of creation. On the other hand, philosophers, since they consider God to be the complete cause of everything, follow the idea of the eternal world.[58] However, for Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya, it is not right to mention the eternity of creatures or a particular time for the beginning of creation.[59] This is another significant similarity between these two thinkers even if their reasons and focuses are different.

Moreover, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the perfection of God's Divinity requires the divine names and attributes. The divine names and attributes are relationships to the possible things in their cosmological presence as expressed before.[60] The things in the cosmos are the manifestations of God in various forms. Hence, affirmation of a particular time for the creation of the world is to affirm a particular time when God was not perfect because at that time He was not manifesting Himself. If He did not manifest Himself, the divine names and attributes, which are requirements of the perfection of the Divinity, would not exist. Certainly, such an idea is not acceptable for Ibn al-ʿArabī. Thus, it is accepted that creation, that is, manifestation

---

[58] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:148.

[59] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 3:124-125; 1:172. According to William Chittick, Ibn al-ʿArabī takes a middle position on the matter of the eternity and temporality of the world. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:666, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 84-85. All things other than God is neither existent nor non-existent. Their status is relative. Even if Ibn al-ʿArabī affirms the eternity for something, it may be for the fixed entities, not for the material form of the cosmological things.

[60] It should be noted that because of his duality on thought and expression Ibn al-ʿArabī mentions two kinds of perfections, the perfection of the Essence and that of the Divinity. They should not be mixed with each other. In one respect, he says, "For in actuality, the divine perfection is found in the penetration of power into the objects of power, desire into the objects of desire, and the manifestation of the properties of the divine names. The essential perfection possessed by the Essence is absolute independence from all this… God says, "Nothing is like Him" because of the perfection of the Essence, and "He is the Hearing, the Seeing" (Q, 42:11) because of the perfection of the Divinity, which demands both the heard and the seen." Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:588, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 367. Also, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:734.

(*tajallī*) of God is everlasting and creatures are in relationships to the endless divine names and attributes.[61]

As for Ibn Taymiyya's idea of the act of creation, he also claims the beginningless and endless act of creation. By referring to the verse, "Then is He who creates like one who does not create? So will you not be reminded?" (Q, 16:17), he underscores the eternal act of God as the requirement of His perfection like Ibn al-ʿArabī does. Again, it does not mean that he is in agreement with philosophers' idea of eternity of the world. On the contrary, he focuses on God's eternal act primarily. Hence, it would be correct to say that for Ibn Taymiyya, since God, because of His perfection, acts from eternity, and since the act of creation is one of His eternal acts, God creates from eternity.[62] Similarly, Ibn al-ʿArabī defends the eternal creation by saying that "creation never ceases" (*al-khalq lā yazāl*).[63] While Ibn Taymiyya links creation to the perfection of God, Ibn al-ʿArabī links creation to the perfection of the Divinity of God. Nevertheless, for both of them, eternal creation is a requirement of the perfection of God.

In addition, on the matter of the cosmological things, Ibn Taymiyya takes them into account as a sign of God. When we look at the things, according to Ibn Taymiyya, we see necessarily the traces of God's knowledge, will, power, wisdom, and mercy.[64] Thereby, Ibn Taymiyya

---

61 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:69; 2:303. Also, see Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 65, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 42 and 93.

62 Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:147, 272, 372. Also, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:79. Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 70-102. Hoover, "Perpetual Creativity in the Perfection of God: Ibn Taymiyya's Hadith Commentary on God's Creation of This World," .

63 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:677, trans. in Chittick, *SPK*, 97.

64 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 1:48; 2:400; 9:189.

clearly sets an intellectual connection between God and the world. In the same way, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the things in the cosmos are signs of God through which we know Him. Hence, in each possible thing we realize the divine names and attributes even though in some of them the divine names are seen overwhelmingly while in others the divine names are seen lightly. Nevertheless, through these things we know God because they are the signs.[65] It is clearly seen that there are similar explanations and ideas between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya on this issue as well.

4.4.4. The Will of God (*irāda*)

In Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching, there is a connection between God's will and His knowledge. According to him, God's will is dependent on the knowledge of God as stated in the previous sections of the chapter when the conceptions of decree (*qaḍā'*) and destiny (*qadar*) are examined. In other words, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the possible things contain some characteristics within their selves or natures, so that what God wills must be compatible with these characteristics.[66] It means that God does not want something which is not appropriate for the nature of the things. And since these things are placed in the knowledge of God, the will of God must follow His knowledge.

As for the teaching of Ibn Taymiyya, he emphasizes frequently God's freedom on His acts. Moreover, because of this kind of sensitivity Ibn Taymiyya criticizes philosophers who by the idea of eternity of the

---

[65] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:473.
[66] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ*, 131, trans. in Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 165.

world make God passive in creation. Also, he criticizes theologians, who in order to affirm the absolute freedom of God on His acts ascribe a beginning time for the world, not because of their emphasis on the freedom of God but because their claim makes God imperfect in respect of the non-eternal act of creation.[67] Even though it seems that there is a contradiction between Ibn al-ʿArabī, who claims that God's will is dependent on God's knowledge, and Ibn Taymiyya, who emphasizes God's freedom, it is remembered that Ibn Taymiyya pays great attention to the wisdom of God (*ḥikma*). According to him, God does not act without wisdom. Certainly, it should not be understood as if there is a boundary to God's knowledge. But, it means that what God wills is appropriate for His perfect knowledge because wisdom cannot be thought separately from knowledge.[68] Eventually, while Ibn al-ʿArabī explains God's will through the relationship between the divine knowledge and the nature of the things, Ibn Taymiyya explains God's will by touching on the conception of wisdom and then the knowledge of God. In this case, it is possible to find similarities between what Ibn al-ʿArabī says that God's will is dependent on the knowledge of God and what Ibn Taymiyya says that God wills through the wisdom.[69]

Moreover, when Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya examine the will of God, they approach the subject with two conceptions: the ontological will (*al-amr al-takwīnī*) and the religious will (*al-amr al-taklīfī*). For both of

---

[67] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:162.
[68] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:130.
[69] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:130. And Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 82, trans. in Austin, *Bezels of Wisdom*, 93.

them, whatever is in the world is in relationship with one of these wills.[70] Also, for both of them, the ontological will cannot be disobeyed by people while the religious will can be disobeyed. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, even those who disobey the religious will, in fact, obey the ontological will of God.[71] Therefore, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, even those who worship objects other than God, in fact, worship God because in everything God must be seen by the gnostic (*ʿārif*).[72]

While Ibn Taymiyya accepts this kind of classification of the divine will into the ontological and the religious, he, in general, understands the ontological will to be out of human behaviours.[73] It means that worshipping some objects other than God should be considered to be opposition to the religious will rather than obedience to the ontological will.[74] Since Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya focus on different aspects of the same issue, their explanations and their understanding become different. Ibn Taymiyya to emphasize the divinity of God (*ulūhiyya*) focuses on the importance of the religious will. On the other hand, Ibn al-ʿArabī to emphasize the oneness of existence focuses on the comprehensiveness of the ontological will. Moreover, this kind of difference can be seen very well in the explanation of the verse, "And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him" (Q, 17:23). While Ibn al-ʿArabī identifies this verse with the ontological will, Ibn Taymiyya identifies with the religious will. For Ibn al-ʿArabī,

---

[70] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 18:132. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:593.
[71] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:510.
[72] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ,* 165, 72 and 192. Also, see *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:92, 593; 3:510.
[73] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 11:266.
[74] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 18:131.

because of this divine command it is not possible to worship something other than God. In Ibn al-ʿArabī's mind, all acts of servants must be included in the ontological will. On the contrary, for Ibn Taymiyya, because of this divine command servants must worship God alone. It is clear that Ibn Taymiyya's view is different from Ibn al-ʿArabī's one.[75] That is, the borders of these two kinds of will are recognized differently by Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya.

To sum up, in this section of the chapter, it is clearly seen that although Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya have different explanations and interpretations for the same issues, they have mutual points in their theological approaches to the subject of the divine names and attributes much more than expected. Even though Ibn al-ʿArabī frequently benefits from linguistic flexibilities, and since he follows a mystical language, he may have more complex and dual perspective explanations. On the contrary, Ibn Taymiyya uses more conventional language, which is familiar in theology, when he explains the names and attributes of God.

---

[75] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:263. Also, see Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy*, 125 and Ajhar, *Su'āl al-ʿālam: Al-Shaykhān Ibn ʿArabī wa Ibn Taymiyya min fikr al-waḥda ilā fikr al-ikhtilāf*, 177.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the views of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya on the divine names and attributes were examined respectively. And then, attention was drawn to similar points and approaches in their views. The purpose of this chapter was to show that similarities between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya may be found not only in their epistemological stances as in earlier chapters but also in their theological ones.

Ibn al-ʿArabī highlights the conception of the oneness of existence when he explains his ideas concerning God, His names and attributes, creation, and the relationship between the Creator and creatures; Ibn Taymiyya attempts to explain his ideas on these issues by emphasizing the perfection of God. One of the most significant indications in this theological comparison is that both of these figures affirm the divine names and attributes without metaphorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*) and both of them consider the divine names and attributes to be requirements of God's perfection.

Even though they follow different ways to express their ideas, and even though they have different wording styles and different motivations, it is possible to find important similarities between their teachings on this subject. In addition, it is understood from this chapter that Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought and expression may be seen to be compatible sometimes with some of Ibn Taymiyya's ideas. Thus, this chapter's indications may be an inspiration for further comparative studies on this subject.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to examine comparatively epistemological and theological similarities found in the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. The first two main chapters, Chapter Two and Three, which pertain to the epistemological tools used by Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya are Ibn al-ʿArabī and His Epistemology and Ibn Taymiyya and His Epistemology. Each one of these two chapters contains three sections: revelation, the human intellect, and inspiration whereby the epistemological positions of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya have been elaborated.

As for Chapter Four, it focused on a theological subject, the divine names and attributes, from the perspectives of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. In this chapter, through three sections the thought of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya was explained separately before indicating similarities of these two figures together in the last section. The purpose of this chapter was not to study theologies of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya by linking to their epistemologies. Instead, the purpose was to indicate that similarities may be found not only in their epistemological stances but also in their theological approaches.

As for the epistemological tools used by Ibn al-ʿArabī, they are revelation (*waḥy*), unveiling (*kashf*) or inspiration (*ilhām*), and the human intellect (*ʿaql*). As it was seen in Chapter two, Ibn al-ʿArabī affirms the validity of these three tools for acquiring knowledge of the religion while he classifies them according to their reliability and certainty. If it is possible to imagine a hierarchy of epistemology of Ibn al-ʿArabī, at the highest level there is revelation, the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, as

the word of God, encompasses everything. For him, there is nothing that is not found in the Qur'ān. Therefore, whoever desires to have the true knowledge must appeal to the Qur'ān because it is the most reliable and soundest source of knowledge. Moreover, Ibn al-ʿArabī affirms the authority and guidance of the Prophet Muhammad on attaining the revelational knowledge. The Prophet, for Ibn al-ʿArabī, must be followed because he was given the Qur'ān, which encompasses everything, and because he is the perfect man to which God manifests Himself best.

As for the second highest level of his epistemological hierarchy, it is occupied by the mystical way of knowledge called unveiling (*kashf*) and inspiration (*ilhām*). This way enables its possessors, who are generally friends of God, to attain certain, reliable, and true knowledge, which is found in the Qur'ān. Moreover, unveiling is the method of the friends of God for the acquisition of knowledge because through this method it is possible to communicate directly with God, the prophets, and the Prophet Muhammad in order. While Ibn al-ʿArabī considers the Prophet Muhammad and his ḥadīths to be necessary for attaining the true meaning of the Qur'ān, unveiling also helps its possessors to access the ḥadīths of the Prophet through direct communication. As mentioned in chapter two, Ibn al-ʿArabī checks the soundness of a ḥadīth report by asking the Prophet directly by means of unveiling. After the heart of believers is prepared by various

means of spiritual training, it receives the divine unveiling which is free from doubt and falseness.[1]

After unveiling the human intellect comes when acquisition of knowledge is in question. Even though Ibn al-ʿArabī gives credit to the intellect occasionally, the intellect is the least reliable and sound source of knowledge for him. Especially on the matter of knowledge about God, the intellect is not trusted because it is limited and uncertain. Exceptionally, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the human intellect is capable of perceiving the existence and oneness of God (*tawḥīd*).[2] Furthermore, while he affirms the scope of the intellect, which is the physical world; but it does not mean that the intellect can reach true meaning of the Qur'ān. Therefore, Ibn al-ʿArabī criticizes philosophers and the Kalām theologians who attempt to understand the Qur'ān by means of the human intellect.

It should be noted that Ibn al-ʿArabī's objections do not stem from using the intellect in general but using the intellect particularly on religious matters such as understanding revelation, the divine names and attributes, and creation. In this respect, he also criticizes the method of interpretation (*ta'wīl*). He prefers the term allusion (*ishāra*) and commentary (*tafsīr*) as his method of understanding the Qur'ān that is free from rational argumentations, but it bases on unveiling. Moreover, he says that the prophets and friends of God are protected from the knowledge of God

---

1 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 4:3, 7.
2 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:291.

which is based on the intellect.[3] Eventually, Ibn al-ʿArabī repeatedly says that revelational and inspirational knowledge are beyond the scope of the human intellect.

As for Ibn Taymiyya's epistemological hierarchy, the Qur'ān as the word of God and as the most reliable source of true knowledge places it at the highest level. Revelation, the Qur'ān, does not contain any mistake and doubt. It encompasses all knowledge even what the other revealed books contained as mentioned in Chapter three. Whoever desires to have true knowledge must appeal to the Qur'ān first. Ibn Taymiyya spends his energy to find out ways of understanding the Qur'ān correctly. In this respect, he defends that the Qur'ān can be understood with the Qur'ān itself, the ḥadīths of the Prophet, and opinions of the Salaf. This is the best way of attaining true meaning of the Qur'ān. Ibn Taymiyya rejects the method of interpretation (*ta'wīl*), but accepts the method of commentary (*tafsīr*) basically because while the former is based on the intellect, the latter is based on the Qur'ān, the ḥadīths, and the opinions of the Salaf which are sounder than our opinions.

At the second level of his epistemological hierarchy there is the human intellect which is a requirement of understanding the divine message. Why I put the intellect at the second level is because Ibn Taymiyya tests the accuracy of rational knowledge with revelation. He does not reject using of the intellect even on religious matters. But he criticizes the philosophers and the Kalām theologians because of their unshaken

---

[3] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 3:116.

reliance on the intellect and because they consider the intellect a unique tool of true knowledge. For him, if the intellect is not contaminated, it does not oppose what revelation propounds. Since the intellect is limited and insufficient to grasp all knowledge, it should be dependent on revelation concerning religious matters especially on the afterlife and the divine names and attributes.[4] It should be noted that Ibn Taymiyya does not defend irrational understanding of the Qur'ān; on the contrary, he defends that since the Qur'ān contains rational proofs, rational knowledge is compatible with the Qur'ān so long as the intellect is used correctly.

As for inspiration (*ilhām*) as another way of knowledge, it is affirmed by Ibn Taymiyya as supernatural events (*khawāriq*). For him, some people may perform supernatural events which may appear as an effect (*ta'thīr*) and knowledge (*ʿilm*) which is inspiration (*ilhām*). Ibn Taymiyya does not discuss the existence or reality of inspirational knowledge, but discusses its reliability and accuracy. In this respect, he stipulates some conditions. For example, inspirational knowledge is accepted as true only if it is not rejected by revelational and rational knowledge. Also, according to Ibn Taymiyya, inspirational knowledge may be preferred instead of weak rational analogies, weak literal arguments, and weak ḥadīth reports.[5] Inspirational knowledge comes to the heart of human beings as divine (*raḥmānī*) knowledge and devilish (*shayṭānī*) knowledge. After purifying the heart by means of religious and spiritual training, divine inspirational knowledge comes to the heart of believers. Since Ibn

---

4 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 3:115.
5 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 10:473.

Taymiyya makes accuracy and reliability of inspirational knowledge dependent on the condition that it be compatible with revelational and rational knowledge, it can be said that inspiration as an epistemological method comes after revelation and the human intellect in Ibn Taymiyya's epistemological hierarchy.

Briefly, it is obvious that Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya accept revelation, the human intellect, and inspiration as ways of knowledge. While the former accepts revelation, inspiration, and the human intellect respectively concerning their reliability, certainty, sufficiency, the latter accepts revelation, the human intellect, and inspiration respectively. This is an important similarity between the epistemological positions of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. They benefit from the same sources, but through a different order. It should be emphasized that since both of them put revelation, the Qur'ān including the ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad which are essential for acquisition of true knowledge, at the highest level of their epistemological hierarchy, it is possible to see many similar points on their theological views even though they have, of course, significant differences. Moreover, since both of them reject rational interpretations of the Qur'ān (*ta'wīl*), they generally oppose the Kalām theologians concerning theological issues such as God and His names and attributes.

In addition, it can be said that their epistemological similarities are based on the fact that both of them affirm the Qur'ān as the most reliable and soundest source of true knowledge, the human intellect as capable of knowing to some extent but which must be subjected to revelation in order to test its reliability, and through inspiration human beings can attain

knowledge. As for their epistemological differences, while for Ibn al-ʿArabī, inspiration gives sounder and more reliable knowledge than what the human intellect gives, for Ibn Taymiyya, inspiration has not such a reliability and soundness on the matter of knowledge. As a result of this difference, Ibn al-ʿArabī suggests that the Qur'ān can be understood best by means of inspiration; Ibn Taymiyya by denying such an overwhelming authority of inspiration suggests that there is an agreement between the Qur'ān and the uncorrupted human intellect.[6] Consequently, Ibn al-ʿArabī, as mentioned in Chapter two, says that whatever he wrote in his works is based on inspiration. This different point of view of Ibn al-ʿArabī causes one to see mystical expressions abundantly on his theological statements. However, it does not mean that the intellect is rejected as a whole in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching.

As for the theological subject of the thesis, that is Chapter Four which is about the subject of the divine names and attributes. This part aimed to explore the approaches of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya to God and His names and attributes. This chapter should be assessed to be both that which displays theological similarities between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya and that which reflects epistemological similarities of these two figures on their theological stances. In other words, Chapter four is both a theological comparison of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya; and as a reflection of their epistemologies comparison made in Chapter two and three.

---

[6] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:72-73.

The subject of the divine names and attributes is one of the most significant and controversial issue in Islamic theology as said before. The names and attributes play an essential role on explanation the relationship between God and creatures as well as on comprehension God Himself. Thus, both Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya pay close attention to the subject even though they approach from different directions. Nevertheless, whatever they provide on the subject of the divine names and attributes is in order for the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*), His perfection, and His relationship with creatures.

When Ibn al-ʿArabī talks about God Himself, he mostly refers to distinction between the Essence of God (*dhāt*) and the Divinity of God (*ulūhiyya*).[7] This distinction is a cornerstone of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought of the divine names and attributes. The Essence of God, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, is beyond all names and attributes while the names and attributes belong to His Divinity in one respect. He focuses on the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) by emphasizing the conception of existence (*wujūd*) which plays an important role in Ibn al-ʿArabī's teaching. He manages the issue through the conceptions of oneness of the Real and the multiplicity of creatures by taking the existence as the base of the issue. The oneness indicates the perfection of the Essence of God while the multiplicity indicates the manifestations of God through which the perfection of the Divinity of God is comprehended. When Ibn Taymiyya talks about God, he mostly refers to the conceptions of the Divinity of God (*ulūhiyya*) and the Lordship of God

---

[7] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:579.

(*rubūbiyya*).[8] Accurate comprehension of the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) is possible only through taking into consideration the Divinity and the Lordship together for Ibn Taymiyya. He considers creatures to be a result rather than a cause of the perfection of God. The reason for this distinction between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya is their attention to different aspects of God.

On the other hand, even if Ibn al-ʿArabī considers the Essence of God separately and as stripped from the names and attributes in one respect, he, as stated in Chapter four, affirms more than thirty names and attributes as the names of the Essence of God in another respect.[9] The latter affirmation of Ibn al-ʿArabī on this subject is not far away from Ibn Taymiyya. For Ibn Taymiyya, there is not a distinction between the Essence of God and His Divinity because it is impossible to imagine an essence without attribution and know an attribute without a thing attributed. Moreover, His Essence itself owns all the names and attributes of perfection because the term essence (*dhū*) literally means possessor.[10] In this case, it is not possible to say that the Essence of God does not possess any name and attribute. This is one significant similarity between the theological views of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya.

Furthermore, Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya explain the relationship between the Creator and creatures by means of the divine names and attributes. Ibn al-ʿArabī by emphasizing the oneness of the Real

---

[8] Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 2:459; 10:264.
[9] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Inshā' al-dawā'ir,* 152.
[10] Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 5:39; Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿ fatāwā,* 6:98.

and the multiplicity of creatures explains this relationship. For him, creatures, that indicate the divine names and attributes, are manifestations of God. As said in Chapter four, since in Ibn al-ʿArabī's mind God does not manifest Himself in the same form, there are endless manifestations of God. It means creation is endless for Ibn al-ʿArabī. Also, since creation indicates His names and attributes, and since His names and attributes are necessary concomitants of His perfection, creation and God's perfection are connected to each other. This kind of argumentation is similar to Ibn Taymiyya's view in which God's eternal creation is emphasized with reference to His perfection. For Ibn Taymiyya, the eternal creative act is a necessary concomitant of God's perfection because God who creates is superior to a god who does not create eternally.[11]

It is worth noting that it cannot be said that God becomes perfect by means of creation or the names and attributes which are related to creatures. In this respect, both Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya reject the Ashʿarī proposal that the attributes are additional to the Essence of God and philosophical proposal regarding a composition (*tarkīb*) for God.[12] This is another similarity between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya on the matter of the relationship among eternal act of creation, God's perfection, and His names and attributes.

Another similarity between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya is their approach to the will of God. For Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya, God wills

---

[11] Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj,* 1:371-372.
[12] Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 1:284; Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar',* 3:420-421.

from eternity; He is neither aimless nor unbounded on His actions. It should be underscored that it does not mean necessarily that God is limited. As explained in Chapter four, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the divine will comes out as compatible with the natures of things which were already determined in their pre-cosmological status. Thus, it is said that the creation is to bring the objects of the knowledge of God from their pre-cosmological status into their cosmological status. In this process, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, the divine will is evident and the divine will is dependent on the divine knowledge.

As for the point of view of Ibn Taymiyya, he also emphasizes the will of God concerning all His acts. For him, it is not correct to say that God acts aimlessly. God has a purpose on His all acts. This is called wisdom (*ḥikma*). For Ibn Taymiyya, the wisdom exists in the perfect and unlimited knowledge of God. Hence, the acts of God are dependent on the divine will, the will is dependent on the wisdom, and the wisdom is dependent on the divine knowledge. In other words, Ibn al-ʿArabī links between the divine actions, the divine will, the nature of the things, and the knowledge of God while Ibn Taymiyya links between the divine actions, the divine will, the wisdom, and the knowledge of God.[13] It is possible to say that what Ibn Taymiyya means by the divine wisdom is the same as what Ibn al-ʿArabī means by God's determination of things before their creation. In addition,

[13] Ibn al-ʿArabī also affirms the wisdom of God. It is to create everything according to the nature of the things. He says, "Here there is a divine mystery, which is that God is the absolutely Wise (*Ḥakīm*). It is He how puts the things in their places, and it is He who has given each thing its creation." (The Qurʾān, 20:55) Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt,* 2:267, trans. in Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, 97.

they affirm and emphasize the will of God on all His acts including creation; by rejecting the idea of emanation, in which God is considered as a passive cause of the cosmos, they affirm that it is God who is different from the One of Neoplatonism and the unmoved mover of Aristotle. This is another significant similarity between the two figures.

The matter of the incomparability (*tanzīh*) and similarity (*tashbīh*) of God it is also another important similar point of the thinkers on the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*). Just as the priority in the epistemologies of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya belongs to revelation, the Qur'ān, they suggest that all speech about God should be based on the Qur'ān. Believers should describe God how He described Himself in the Qur'ān. For Ibn al-ʿArabī, since philosophers and the Kalām theologians attempt to interpret (*ta'wīl*) the verses rationally, they do not conceive the similarity of God. But, true understanding of the oneness is based on the incomparability and similarity of God together. It should be noted that for Ibn al-ʿArabī, the similarity of God does not mean that God and creatures are the same.

For Ibn Taymiyya, since philosophers and the Kalām theologians attempt to interpret the names and attributes by means of their corrupted intellect and unsound rational methods, they change the meaning of the verses. God has attributes some of which are shared by creatures literally (*lafẓan*). But, it does not mean that God and creatures are the same. In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya suggests affirmation of the attributes of incomparability (*tanzīh*) of God and not stripping (*taʿṭīl*) the attributes such as hands and fingers of God even though they sound similarity between God

and creatures. For Ibn Taymiyya, it is clear that sharing the same attributions does not mean that God and creatures are the same.

Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya both reject negations and interpretations of the names and attributes of God provided by philosophers and the Kalām theologians. Also, they suggest understanding the names and attributes in different senses for God and for creatures distinctively. While Ibn al-ʿArabī focuses on affirmation of the incomparability (*tanzīh*) and the similarity (*tashbīh*) together, Ibn Taymiyya focuses on affirmation of the incomparability and avoidance of reductionism (*taʿṭīl*) together.

To sum up, as I said at the beginning of the thesis, it is a fact that Ibn Taymiyya has objections to Ibn al-ʿArabī's certain ideas. But, it does not prevent us from finding similarities between the teachings of these significant figures. At the beginning of this study the important point was to take into account duality of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought and expressions. The duality enables readers to look at the issues concerned by Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya from a different perspective. As a result of this perspective, it is possible to see, as I mentioned above, various important similarities between the epistemological and theological positions of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. They many times focus on the same issue with different directions and perspectives. Therefore, they may be seen very different from each other. But, when it is observed through another outlook, it can be said that they may not be different as much as assumed.

This kind of similarity as an important point between these eminent figures of Islamic history may have an impact on further studies in the field.

It is not necessarily a theological issue, but also it has social and political dimensions that I have not touched on in this work. Since Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya have a great influence on Muslim societies and their understandings of Islam in general, this new perspective that I have tried to establish here enables scholars to look at the distinctions between modern followers of the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya. Concerning some essential points, it can be suggested that being aware of the potential similarities between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya may help to reconcile different tendencies among Muslims to some extent, prevent them from criticizing each other harshly, and invalidate considering themselves only to be the unique representative of Islam. Therefore, such a comparative study between Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya, whose influences has been evident on Muslim societies, will open doors not only toward a theological area but also toward social and political ones.

Before interpreting the social structure and political situations grounded on the different tendencies of Muslims, taking into consideration the theological similarities which are reflections or partly results of the epistemological stances may also help scholars of this field to study Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn Taymiyya more academically rather than with an argumentative method found mostly in the Kalām theology. Finally, in order to be a departure point of the further comparative studies in this field, apart from the essential critiques and rejections provided by Ibn Taymiyya against Ibn al-ʿArabī, this thesis aimed to exhibit the fact that these significant figures of Islamic scholarship have similarities along with differences on their epistemological and theological positions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrahamov, Binyamin. "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Causality." *Studia Islamica* 67 (1988): 75-98.

Abrahamov, Binyamin. "The 'Bi-lā kayfa' Doctrine and Its Foundations in Islamic Theology." *Arabica* 42 3 (1995): 365-379.

Abrahamov, Binyamin. "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on God's Knowledge of the Particulars." *Oriens* 33 (1992): 133-155.

Abrahamov, Binyamin. *Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Sufīs.* Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2014.

Abrahamov, Binyamin. "Ibn Taymiyya on the Agreement of Reason with Tradition." *The Muslim World* 82 3-4 (1992): 256-273.

Abrahamov, Binyamin. *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.

Abrahamov, Binyamin. "Necessary Knowledge in Islamic Theology." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20 1 (1993): 20-32.

Adam, Hüdaverdi. "The Place Of Intellect, Contemplation And Unveiling In The Thought Of Ibn Al-ʿArabī." *Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi* 21 (2004): 149-162.

Addas, Claude. *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn ʿArabī.* Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993.

Affifi, Abul Ela. "Ibn ʿArabī." In *A History of Muslim Philosophy: With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands,* ed. Mian Mohammad Sharif, 1:398-420. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1963.

Affifi, Abul Ela. *Li Muḥyī al-dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī: wa-l taʿlīqāt ʿalayhi.* Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1946.

Affifi, Abul Ela. *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid Dīn-Ibnul ʿArabī.* Cambridge: University Press, 1964.

Aḥmad, Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār Ibn. *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-Khamsa.* Ed. ʿUthmān ʿAbd al-Karīm. Cairo: Wahba Library, 1996.

Ahmed, Shahab. "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Satanic Verses." *Studia Islamica* 87 (1998): 67-124.

Ajhar, A. Hakim. “The Forgotten Rational Thinking in the Ḥanbalite Thought With Special Reference to Ibn Taymiyya.” *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 14 (2014): 137-154.

Ajhar, A. Hakim. *Ibn Taymiyya wa-sti’nāf al-qawl al-falsafī fī al-Islām.* Casablanca: Al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2004.

Ajhar, A. Hakim. “The Metaphysics of The Idea of God in Ibn Taymiyya’s Thought.” Ph.D., McGill University, 2000.

Ajhar, A. Hakim. *Su’āl al-ʿālam: Al-Shaykhān Ibn ʿArabī wa Ibn Taymiyya min fikr al-waḥda ilā fikr al-ikhtilāf.* Dār al-Bayḍā’: Al-Markaz al-thaqāfī al-ʿarabī, 2011.

Akasoy, Anna. “Andalusi Exceptionalism: The Example of “Philosophical Sufism” and the Significance of 1212.” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 4 1 (2012): 113-117.

Akasoy, Anna and Wim Raven, ed. *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages: Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation, in Honour of Hans Daiber*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008.

Akkach, Samer. “The World of Imagination in Ibn ʿArabī’s Ontology.” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 24 1 (1997): 97-113.

al-Ansari, Moulana Muhammad Abu Bakr Gazipuri. *Was Ibn Taymiah from the Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaʿah.* Karachi: Zam Zam, 2010.

Al-Atawneh, Muhammad. “Wahhābī Legal Theory As Reflected in Modern Official Saudi Fatwās: Ijtihād, Taqlīd, Sources, and Methodology.” *Islamic Law and Society* 18 3-4 (2011): 327-355.

Al-Dārimī, ʿUthmān Ibn Saʿīd. *Radd al-Imām al-Dārimī ʿUthmān Ibn Saʿīd ʿalā Bishr al-Miraysī al-ʿanīd.* Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1940.

Al-Ghorab, Mahmoud. “Muhyiddin Ibn al-ʿArabī Amidst Religions (adyān) and Schools of Thought (madhāhib).” In *Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabī: A Commemorative Volume,* ed. Stephen Hirtenstein and Michael Tiernan, 199-227. Shaftesbury: Element, 1993.

Al-Juwaynī, Imām al-Ḥaramayn. *Kitāb al-irshād ilā qawāṭiʿ al-adillati fī uṣūl al-iʿtiqād.* Ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsā. Egypt: Maṭbaʿa al-saʿāda, 1950.

Al-Matroudi, Abdul Hakim I. *The Hanbali School of Law and Ibn Taymiyyah: Conflict or Conciliation.* London: Routledge, 2006.

Al-Tirmidhī, Al-Ḥakīm. *Kitāb Khatm al-awliyā'.* Ed. Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī Yaḥyā ʿUthmān. Beirut: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-kāthūlikiyya, 1965.

Almond, Ian. "Divine Needs, Divine Illusions: Preliminary Remarks Toward a Comparative Study of Meister Eckhart and Ibn ʿArabī." *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 10 2 (2001): 263-282.

Almond, Ian. "The Honesty of the Perplexed: Derrida and Ibn ʿArabī on 'Bewilderment'." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70 3 (2002): 515-537.

Almond, Ian. "The Shackles of Reason: Sufi/Deconstructive Opposition to Rational Thought." *Philosophy East and West* 53 1 (2003): 22-38.

Almond, Ian. *Sufism and Deconstruction: A Comparative Study of Derrida and Ibn ʿArabī.* London: Routledge, 2004.

Alpay, Selahaddin. *Saatlerin Hazinesi: Ilâhi Saatlerin Verdiği Haberler.* Turkey: n.p., 1973.

Anguita, Gracia López. "On the Inner Knowledge of Spirits Made of an Igneous Mixture: Chapter 9 of the Futūhāt al-Makkiyya." *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 44 (2008): 1-25.

Anjum, Ovamir. *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Ansarī, Muhammad ʿAbdul-Haqq. *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam: Selected Writings of Shaykh al-Islam Taqi ad-Din Ibn Taymiyyah on Islamic Faith, Life, and Society.* Riyāḍ: General Administration of Culture and Publication, 2000.

Arabi, Oussama. "Contract Stipulations (Shurūt) in Islamic Law: The Ottoman Majalla and Ibn Taymiyya." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30 1 (1998): 29-50.

Arberry, A. J. *Revelation and Reason in Islam.* London: Allen & Unwin, 1957.

Ateş, Süleyman. *İşari Tefsir Okulu.* Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1974.

Austin, R. W. J. *Sufis of Andalusia: The Rūḥ al-quds and the al-Durrat al-fākhirah.* London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971.

Awn, Peter J. "Sufism." In *Encyclopedia of Religion,* ed. Lindsay Jones, 13:8809-8825. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005.

Aydın, Hüseyin. "İbn Teymiye'de Allah Tasavvuru: Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım." *Kelam Araştırmaları* 4 2 (2006): 39-86.

Bardakcı, Sefa. "Ibn Arabī'ye Göre El-esmāü'l hüsnā'nın Sonsuzluğu Meselesinin Yorumu." *The Journal of International Social Research* 6 24 (2013): 51-67.

Bashier, Salman H. *Ibn al-ʿArabī's Barzakh: The Concept of the Limit and the Relationship between God and the World.* New York: State University of New York, 2004.

Bell, Joseph Norment. *Love Theory in Later Hanbalite Islam.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979.

Bori, Caterina. "Ibn Taymiyya wa-Jamāʿatuhū: Authority, Conflict and Consensus in Ibn Taymiyya's Circle." In *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,* ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, 23-52. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Burckhardt, Titus. *Introduction To Sufi Doctrine.* World Wisdom, 2008.

Burckhardt, Titus. *Mystical Astrology According to Ibn ʿArabi.* Aldsworth: Beshara, 1977.

Çağrıcı, Mustafa. "İbn Teymiyye'nin Bakışıyla Gazzâlî-İbn Rüşd Tartışması." *İslam Tetkikleri Dergisi* 9 (1995): 77-126.

Çakmaklıoğlu, M. Mustafa. *İbn Arabī'de Ma'rifetin İfadesi.* İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2007.

Çakmaklıoğlu, M. Mustafa. *İbn Arabi'ye Göre İbadetlerin Manevi Yorumları.* İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2011.

Çakmaklıoğlu, M. Mustafa. "İbnü'l-Arabī'nin Nübüvvet-Velayet Hakkındaki Görüşleri ve İbn Teymiyye'nin Bu Hususta Eleştirileri." *Tasavvuf Ilmî ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 21 (2008): 213-255.

Çelebi, İlyas "Klasik Bir Kelam Problemi Olarak İsim-Müsemmâ Meselesi." *İlam Araştırma Dergisi* 3 1 (1998): 103-116.

Cerrahoğlu, İsmail. *Tefsir Usûlü (ʿilm al-uṣūl al-tafsīr).* Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1971.

Chittick, William C. *Faith and Practice of Islam : Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.

Chittick, William C. "Ibn al-ʿArabī's Hermeneutics of Mercy." In *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture,* ed. Steven T. Katz, 135-169. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Chittick, William C. "Ibn ʿArabī on the Benefit of Knowledge." In *The Essential Sophia,* ed. Katherine O'Brien Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 126-143. Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2006.

Chittick, William C. *Ibn ʿArabī: Heir to the Prophets.* Oxford: Oneworld, 2005.

Chittick, William C. "Ibn ʿArabi's Own Summary of the Fusūs: The Imprint of the Bezels of the Wisdom." *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 1 (1982): 30-93.

Chittick, William C. *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-ʿArabī and the Problem of Religious Diversity.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Chittick, William C. *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012.

Chittick, William C. "Rūmī and waḥdat al-wujūd." In *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: The Heritage of Rūmī,* ed. Amin Banani, Richard Houannisian and Georges Sabagh, 70-111. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Chittick, William C. *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Cosmology.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Chittick, William C. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.

Chittick, William C. "Two Chapters from the Futūhāt al-Makkiyya." In *Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabī: A Commemorative Volume,* ed. Stephen Hirtenstein and Michael Tiernan, 90-123. Shaftesbury: Element, 1993.

Chodkiewicz, Michel. *An Ocean without Shore: Ibn ʿArabī, the Book, and the Law*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.

Chodkiewicz, Michel. *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ʿArabī.* Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993.

Cihan, Ahmet Kamil. "The Notion of Religion in the Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam of Ibn ʿArabī." *Afkār* 11 (2010): 107-128.

Coates, Peter. *Ibn ʿArabī and Modern Thought: The History of Taking Metaphysics Seriously*. Oxford: Anqa Publication, 2002.

Corbin, Henry. *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ʿArabī.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

Dağ, Mehmet. *Muhyiddin Ibnu'l-Arabī'nin Tasavvuf Felsefesi.* Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 1975.

Davidson, Herbert A. *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Dobie, R. J. *The Phenomenology of Wujūd in the Thought of Ibn al-ʿArabī.* Dordrecht: Springer, 2007.

Dobie, Robert J. *Logos & Revelation Ibn ʿArabī, Meister Eckhart, and Mystical Hermeneutics.* Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2010.

Druart, Therese-Anne. "Al-Fārābī, Emanation, and Metaphysics." In *Islamic Philosophy and Theology:Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought,* ed. Ian Richard Netton, 71-87. New York: Routledge, 2007.

El-Omari, Racha. "Ibn Taymiyya's 'Theology of the Sunna' and his Polemics with the Ashʿarites." In *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,* ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, 101-119. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010.

El-Tobgui, Carl Sharif. "Reason, Revelation and The Reconstitution of Rationality: Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya's Dar' Taʿāruḍ al-ʿAql wa-l-Naql." Ph. D, McGill University, 2013.

Elmore, Gerald. "Four Texts of Ibn al-ʿArabī on the Creative Self-Manifestation of the Divine Names." *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 29 (2001): 1-39.

Elmore, Gerald. “New Evidence on the Conversion of Ibṅ Al-ʿArabī to Ṣūfism.” *Arabica* 45 1 (1998): 50-72.

Elmore, Gerald. “Some Recent Editions of Books by Ibn Al-ʿArabī Published in the Arab World.” *Arabica* 51 3 (2004): 360-380.

Ertuğrul, İsmail Fenni. *Vahdet-i vücûd ve Ibn Arabi*. Translated by Mustafa Kara. İstanbul: Insan Yayınları, 1997.

Eschraghi, Armin. “‘I was a Hidden Treasure.’ Some Notes a Commentary Ascribed to Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī: Sharḥ ḥadīth: ‘Kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan…’.” In *Islamic Thought in the Middle Ages: Studies in Text, Transmission and Translation, in Honour of Hans Daiber,* ed. Anna Akasoy and Wim Raven, 91-99. Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Fouad, Hala. “The Symbolism of the Letter Alif in Ibn ʿArabī.” *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 12 (1992): 145-137.

Frank, Richard M. *Creation and the cosmic system : Al-Ghazâlî & Avicenna.* Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992.

Geoffroy, Eric. *Introduction to Sufism: The Inner Path of Islam.* Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2010.

Gibb, H. A. R. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325-1354.* Cambridge: The Hakluyt Society at the University Press, 1958.

Gleave, Robert. *Islam and Literalism: Literal Meaning and Interpretation in Islamic Legal Theory.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

Gleave, Robert. *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbārī Shiʿī School.* Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Goldziher, Ignaz. *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Goldziher, Ignaz. *The Ẓāhirīs: Their Doctrine and their History: A Contribution to the History of Islamic Theology.* Leiden: Brill, 2008.

Gril, Denis. “Hadith in the Work of Ibn ʿArabī.” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 50 (2011): http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/ibn-arabi-and-hadith.html.

Haddad, Gibril Fouad. *The Refutation of Him [Ibn Taymiyya] who Attributes Direction to Allāh [al-Raddu ʿalā man qāla bil-jiha]*. Birmingham: Aqsa Publications, 2008.

Hakim, Souad. "The Way of Walāya (Sainthood or Friendship of God)." *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 18 (1995): http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/wayofwalaya.html.

Hallaq, Wael B. *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

Hallaq, Wael B. "Ibn Taymiyya on the Existence of God." *Acta Orientalia* 52 (1991): 49-69.

Halligan, Fredrica R. "The Creative Imagination of the Sufi Mystic, Ibn ʿArabi." *Journal of Religion and Health* 40 2 (2001): 275-287.

Halverson, Jeffry R. *Theology and Creed in Sunni Islam: The Muslim Brotherhood, Ashʿarism, and Political Sunnism.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Haque, Serajul. "Ibn Taymiyya." In *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought,* ed. Ian Richard Netton, 97-121. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Hirtenstein, Stephen. "Ibn al-ʿArabi." In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, 4255-4260. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005.

Hirtenstein, Stephen. *The Unlimited Mercifier: The Spiritual Life and Thought of Ibn ʿArabī.* Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 1999.

Hirtenstein, Stephen. "Visions of Plurality in Unity: Said Nursi, Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi, and the Question of the Unity of Being." In *Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-i Nur,* ed. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabiʿ, 287-309. Albany: State University of New York, 2008.

Hirtenstein, Stephen and Martin Notcutt. *Divine Sayings: 101 Ḥadīth Qudsī, Mishkāt al-anwār of Ibn ʿArabī.* Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2004.

Hoffman, Valerie J. "Annihilation in the Messenger of God: The Development of a Sufi Practice." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31 3 (1999): 351-369.

Holtzman, Livnat. “Human Choice, Divine Guidance and the ‘Fiṭra’ Tradition: The Use of Hadith in Theological Treatises by Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.” In *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,* ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmad, 163-188. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Homerin, Th. Emeril. “Ibn Arabi in the People’s Assembly: Religion, Press, and Politics in Sadat’s Egypt.” *The Middle East Journal* 40 3 (1986): 462-477.

Homerin, Th. Emeril. “Ibn Taimīya’s al-Ṣūfīyah wa-al-Fuqarā.” *Arabica* 32 2 (1985): 219-244.

Hoover, Jon. “Against Islamic Universalism: ʿAlī al-Ḥarbī’s 1990 Attempt to Prove that Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya Affirm the Eternity of Hell-Fire.” In *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya,* ed. Birgit Krawietz and Tamer Georges, 377-399. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.

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 *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, 55-77. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Hoover, Jon. *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism.* Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Hoover, Jon. “Islamic Universalism: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s Salafī Deliberations on the Duration of Hell-Fire.” *The Muslim World* 99 1 (2009): 181-201.

Hoover, Jon. “The Justice of God and the Best of all the Possible Worlds: The Theodicy of Ibn Taymiyya.” *Theological Review* 27 2 (2006): 53-75.

Hoover, Jon. “Perpetual Creativity in the Perfection of God: Ibn Taymiyya’s Hadith Commentary on God’s Creation of This World.” *Journal Of Islamic Studies* 15 3 (2004): 287-329.

Husaini, S. A. Q. *The Pantheistic Monism of Ibn al-ʿArabī.* Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1970.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya.* 4 vols. Cairo: n.p., 1911.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya.* Ed. Osman Yahya. 11 vols. Cairo: Al-Hay'at al-Miṣriyya al-ʿÂmma li'l-Kitāb, 1972.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *The Bezels of Wisdom: Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam.* Translated by R. W. J. Austin. New York: Paulist Press, 1980.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *Dīwān.* Bulaq: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1963.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam.* Ed. Abul Ela Affifi. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1966.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *Kitāb inshā' al-dawā'ir.* Ed. Asim Ibrahim al-Kayyali. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2005.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *Lübb'ül Lübb: Özün Özü.* Translated by Ismail Hakkı Bursevi. İstanbul: Bahar Yayınları, 2005.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *The Meccan Revelations.* Translated by Michel Chodkiewicz, William C. Chittick, James Winston Morris, Cyrille Chodkiewicz and Denis Gril. New York: Pir Press, 2002-2004.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *Rasā'il Ibn al-ʿArabī.* Translated by Vahdettin İnce. Istanbul: Kitsan, 2000.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *Rasā'il Ibn al-ʿArabī.* Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2001.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *The Ringstones of Wisdom: Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam.* Translated by Caner K. Dagli. Chicago: Great Books of the Islamic World, 2004.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *The Tarjumān al-ashwāq: A Collection of Mystical Odes.* Translated by Reynold Alleyne Nicholson. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1911.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *The Wisdom of the Prophets: Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam.* Translated by Titus Burckhardt and Angela Culme-Seymour. Aldsworth: Beshara, 1975.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm. *Al-Furqān bayna awliyā' al-Rāḥmān wa-awlīyā' al-Shayṭān.* Ed. ʿAbd al-Karīm Yaḥyā. Riyāḍ: Dār al-Faḍīla, 1999.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm. *Al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ.* Ed. ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. Nāṣir, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b.

Ibrāhīm al-ʿAskar, Ḥamdān b. Muḥammad al-Ḥamdān. 7 vols. . Riyāḍ: Dār al-ʿāṣima li-l-nashr wa al-tawzīʿ, 1419/1999.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʻAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya fī taʾsīs bidaʿihim al-kalāmiyya.* Ed. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad Al-Hunaydī. vols. 10. Madina: Majmaʿ al-Malik Fahd li-tibāʿat al-muṣḥaf al-sharīf, 1426.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʻAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Jāmiʿ al-rasāʾil li-Ibn Taymiyya.* Ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim. Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-madanī, 1969.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʻAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Kitāb al-īmān: Book of Faith*. Translated by Salman Hassan Al-Ani; Shadia Ahmad Tel. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2009.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʻAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Kitāb iqtiḍāʾ aṣ-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm.* Ed. Ahmad Hamdi Imam. Jeddah: Dār al-madanī, 1986.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʻAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Majmūʿ fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya.* Ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim and Muḥammad ibnʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad. 37 vols. Madina: Mujammāʿ al-Malik Fahd, 2004.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʻAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Majmūʿat al-Rasāʾil wa al-Masāʾil.* Ed. Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā 5 vols. Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-manār, 1922-1930.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʻAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Muwāfaqat ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl li ṣarīḥ al-maʿqūl.* Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1985.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʻAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Qāʿida fī al-muʿjizāt wa al-karāmāt.* Jordan: Maktaba al-Manār, 1989.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʻAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Sharḥ al-Futūḥ al-Ghayb: Commentary on Revelations of the Unseen: Concerning the Discourses of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī*. Translated by Muhtar Holland. Fort Lauderdale: Al-Baz Publication, 2010.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa al-naql*. Ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim. 11 vols. Riyāḍ: Jamiʿat al-Imam Muhammad b. Saʿūd al-Islāmiyya, 1979-1983.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Kitāb al-Nubuwwāt.* Ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz bin Ṣāliḥ al-Ṭūyān. Riyāḍ: Aḍwāʾ al-Salaf, 2000.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Kitāb al-radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn.* Ed. ʿAbd al-Ṣamad Sharaf al-Dīn al-Kutubī. Beirut: Muassasa al-rayān, 2005.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya fī naqḍ kalām al-Shīʿa al-Qadariyya.* Ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim. 9 vols. Riyāḍ: Jāmiʿat al-Imām Muḥammad b. Suʿūd al-Islāmiyya, 1986.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr.* Ed. ʿAdnān Zarzūr Kuwait: Dār al-Qurʾān al-Karīm, 1971.

Ibn Taymiyya, Aḥmad Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm. *Ṣaḥiḥ madhhab ahl al-madīna: The Madinan Way: The Soundness of the Basic Premises of the School of the People of Madina*. Translated by Aisha Bewley. Norwich: Bookwork, 2000.

Izutsu, Toshihiko. *Creation and the Timeless Order of Things: Essays in Islamic Mystical Philosophy.* Ashland: White Cloud Press, 1994.

Izutsu, Toshihiko. *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Jackson, Sherman A. "Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial in Damascus." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 39 1 (1994): 41-85.

Jaffer, Tariq. "Muʿtazilite Aspects of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Thought." *Arabica* 59 (2012): 510-535.

Jeffery, Arthur. "Ibn al-ʿArabī's Shajarat al-Kawn." *Studia Islamica* 10 (1959): 43-77.

Jeffery, Arthur. "Ibn al-ʿArabī's Shajarat al-Kawn (Concluded)." *Studia Islamica* 11 (1959): 113-160.

Johansen, Baber. "A Perfect Law in an Imperfect Society: Ibn Taymiyya's Concept of Governance in the Name of the Sacred Law." In *The Law Applied: Contextualizing the Islamic Sharīʿa: A Volume in Honor of Frank E. Vogel*, ed. Wolfhart Heinrichs Peri Bearman, Bernard G. Weiss, 259-294. London: Tauris, 2008.

Johansen, Baber. “Signs as Evidence: The Doctrine of Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1351) on Proof.” *Islamic Law and Society* 9 2 (2002): 168-193.

Kakaie, Ghasem. “Know Yourself, According to the Qur’ān, and the Sunna: Ibn ʿArabī’s View.” *Philosophical -Theological Research* 9 1 (2006): 6-22.

Kara, Mustafa. “Ibn Teymiye’nin Ilk Sufilere ve Tasavvuf Klasiklerine Bakisi.” *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1 1 (1986): 63-67.

Kara, Mustafa. “İbn Teymiye’nin Tasavvuf Istılahlarına Bakışı.” *Uludağ Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 1 1 (1986): 53-61.

Khalil, Atif. “Ibn al-ʿArabī on the Three Conditions of Tawba.” *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 17 4 (2006): 403-416.

Khan, Qamaruddin. *The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyah.* New Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributors, 2009.

Knysh, Alexander D. *Ibn ‘Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999.

Knysh, Alexander D. “The Realms of Responsibility in Ibn ʿArabī’s al-Futuhat al-makkiya.” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 31 (2002): http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/knyshresponsibility.html.

Krawietz, Birgit and Georges Tamer, ed. *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.* Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.

Kügelgen, Anke von. “The Poison of Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya’s Struggle For and Against Reason.” In *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, ed. Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer, 253-328. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.

Landau, Rom. “The Philosophy of Ibn ʿArabī.” In *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought*, ed. Ian Richard Netton, 135-150. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Lawson, Todd. *Reason and Inspiration in Islam Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought: Essays in Honour of Hermann Landolt.* London: I.B. Tauris, 2005.

Little, Donald P. "The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4 (1973): 311-327.

Little, John T. "Al-Insān al-Kāmil: The Perfect Man According to Ibn al-ʻArabī." *Muslim World* 77 1 (1987): 43-54.

Madjid, Nurcholish. "Ibn Taymiyya on Kalam and Falsafa: A Problem of Reason and Revelation in Islam." Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1985.

Makari, Victor E. *Ibn Taymiyyah's Ethics: The Social Factor.* California: Scholars Press, 1983.

Makdisi, George. "Hanbalite Islam." In *Studies on Islam,* ed. Merlin L. Swartz, 216-274. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Makdisi, George. *Religion, Law, and Learning in Classical Islam.* Hampshire, Great Britain: Variorum, 1991.

McGinnis, Jon. *Avicenna.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Melchert, Christopher. "The Ḥanābila and the Early Sufis." *Arabica* 48 3 (2001): 352-367.

Memon, Muhammad Umar. *Ibn Taimīya's Struggle Against Popular Religion: With an Annotated Translation of his Kitāb iqtiḍāʾ aṣ-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm.* The Hague: Mouton, 1976.

Michel, Thomas F. *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ.* Delmar: Caravan Books, 1985.

Michot, Jean R. *Ibn Taymiyya: Lettre à Abū l-Fidā'.* Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, 1994.

Michot, Yahya. *Against Extremisms.* Beirut: Albouraq Editions, 2012.

Michot, Yahya. "Between Entertainment and Religion: Ibn Taymiyya's Views on Superstition." *The Muslim World* 99 1 (2009): 1-20.

Michot, Yahya. "From Al-Maʾmūn to Ibn Sabʿīn via Avicenna: Ibn Taymiyya's Historiography of Falsafa." In *Islamic Philosophy,*

Science, Culture, and Religion, ed. Felicitas Opwis and David Reisman, 453-475. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Michot, Yahya. "Ibn Taymiyya's Commentary on the Creed of al-Ḥallāj." In *Sufism and Theology*, ed. Ayman Shihadeh, 123-136. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

Michot, Yahya J. "Ibn Taymiyya on Astrology Annotated Translation of Three Fatwas " *Journal Of Islamic Studies* 11 2 (2000): 147-208.

Michot, Yahya J. "A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary on Avicenna's Risāla Aḍḥawiyya: Being a Translation of a Part of the Dar' al-Taʿāruḍ of Ibn Taymiyya with Introduction, Annotation, and Appendices. Part 1." *Journal Of Islamic Studies* 14 2 (2003): 149-203.

Michot, Yahya J. "A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary on Avicenna's Risāla Aḍḥawiyya: Being a Translation of a Part of the Dar' al-Taʿāruḍ of Ibn Taymiyya with Introduction, Annotation, and Appendices. Part 2." *Journal Of Islamic Studies* 14 3 (2003): 309-363.

Michot, Yahya M. "An Important Reader of al-Ghazālī: Ibn Taymiyya." *The Muslim World* 103 1 (2013): 131-160.

Morris, James Winston. "How to Study the Futūḥāt: Ibnʿ Arabī's Own Advice." In *Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabī: A Commemorative Volume*, ed. Stephen Hirtenstein and Michael Tiernan, 73-89. Shaftesbury: Element, 1993.

Morris, James Winston. "Ibn ʿArabi and His Interpreters Part II (Conclusion): Influences and Interpretations." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 1 (1987): 101-119.

Morris, James Winston. "Ibn ʿArabi's "Esotericism": The Problem of Spiritual Authority." *Studia Islamica* 71 (1990): 37-64.

Morris, James Winston. "Introducing Ibn 'Arabî's "Book of Spiritual Advice"." *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 28 (2000): 1-18.

Morris, James Winston. "The Spiritual Ascension: Ibn ʿArabī and the Miʿrāj Part I." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 4 (1987): 629-652.

Morris, James Winston "Ibn ʿArabi and His Interpreters Part I: Recent French Translations." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 3 (1986): 539-551.

Morris, James Winston "Ibn ʿArabi and His Interpreters Part II: Influences and Interpretations." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 4 (1986): 733-756.

Morris, James Winston "The Spiritual Ascension: Ibn ʿArabī and the Miʿrāj Part II." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108 1 (1988): 63-77.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition.* New York: HarperOne, 2007.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations.* New York: Crossroad, 1987.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna, Suhrawardi, Ibn ʿArabī.* Delmar: Caravan Books, 1976.

Nettler, Ronald L. *Sufi Metaphysics and Qur'ānic Prophets: Ibn ʿArabī's Thought and Method in the Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam.* Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2003.

Netton, Ian Richard. *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology.* London: Routledge, 1989.

Netton, Ian Richard, ed. *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought. 4 vols.* New York: Routledge, 2007.

Netton, Ian Richard. *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Ṣafā').* London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1982.

Netton, Ian Richard. "The Origins of Islamic Philosophy." In *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought,* ed. Ian Richard Netton, 79-99. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Netton, Ian Richard. *Seek Knowledge: Thought and Travel in the House of Islam.* Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996.

Nicholson, Reynold Alleyne. *The Mystics of Islam.* London: Routledge and Paul, 1963.

Nicholson, Reynold Alleyne. *Studies in Islamic Mysticism.* Cambridge: University Press, 1921.

Ögke, Ahmet. "Bir Tasavvuf Terimi Olarak Ricālü'l-Gayb: Ibn Arabī'nin Görüşleri." *İlmi ve Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 5 (2001): 161-201.

Opwis, Felicitas. "The Construction of Madhhab Authority: Ibn Taymiyya's Interpretation of Juristic Preference (Istiḥsān)." *Islamic Law and Society* 15 (2008): 219-249.

Özervarlı, M. Sait. "Divine Wisdom, Human Agency and the Fiṭra in Ibn Taymiyya's Thought." In *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya,* ed. Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer, 37-60. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.

Özervarlı, M. Sait. *İbn Teymiyye'nin Düşünce Metodolojisi ve Kelâmcılara Eleştirisi.* Istanbul: İsam Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2008.

Özervarlı, M. Sait. "The Qur'ānic Rational Theology of Ibn Taymiyya and his Criticism of the Mutakallimūn." In *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,* ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmad, 78-100. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Peters, J. R. T. M. *God's Created Speech: A Study in the Speculative Theology of the Muʿtazilī Qāḍī al-Quḍāt Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Jabbār Ibn Aḥmad al-Hamaḍānī.* Belgium: E. J. Brill, 1976.

Rahman, Fazlur. *Islam.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Rahman, Fazlur. *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism.* Oxford: Oneworld, 2000.

Rapoport, Yossef. "Ibn Taymiyya's Radical Legal Thought: Rationalism, Pluralism and the Primacy of Intention." In *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,* ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, 191-226. Karachi: Oxford Universtiy Press, 2010.

Rapoport, Yossef and Shahab Ahmed, ed. *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times.* Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Rayan, Sobhi. “Ibn Taymiyya’s Criticism of the Syllogism.” *Islam-Zeitschrift Fur Geschichte Und Kultur Des Islamischen Orients* 86 1 (2011): 93-121.

Rayan, Sobhi. “Translation and Interpretation in Ibn Taymiyya’s Logical Definition.” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19 6 (2011): 1047-1065.

Renard, John. *Knowledge of God in Classical Sufism: Foundations of Islamic Mystical Theology.* New York: Paulist Press, 2004.

Rosenthal, Franz. “Ibn ʿArabī between Philosophy and Mysticism: Sūfism and Philosophy are Neighbors and Visit Each Other.” *Oriens* 31 (1988): 1-35.

Rustom, Mohammed. “Ibn ʿArabī’s Letter to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: A Study and Translation.” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25 2 (2014): 113-137.

Rustom, Mohammed. “Is Ibn al-ʿArabī’s Ontology Pantheistic?” *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 2 (2006): 53-97.

Saleh, Walid A. “Ibn Taymiyya and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics: An Analysis of An Introduction to the Foundations of Qur’ānic Exegesis.” In *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, 123-162. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Sands, Kristin Zahra. *Ṣūfī Commentaries on the Qurʾān in Classical Islam.* London: Routledge, 2006.

Sarrio, Diego R. “Spiritual anti-elitism: Ibn Taymiyya’s Doctrine of Sainthood (walāya).” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22 3 (2011): 275-291.

Sells, Michael. “Ibn ʿArabī’s Polished Mirror: Perspective Shift and Meaning Event.” *Studia Islamica* 67 (1988): 121-149.

Shaddad, Kamal Hamid. “Ibn Taymiyya’s Critique of Aristotelian Logic.” Ph.D., University of London, 1972.

Sharif, Mian Mohammad, ed. *A History of Muslim Philosophy: With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands. 2 vols.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1963.

Singh, David Emmanuel. “The Possibility of Having Knowledge of al-wujūd al-mahd ‘sheer being’ according to Ibn ʿArabī’s Kitāb al-jalāl wa- al-jamāl.” *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 10 3 (1999): 295-306.

Smirnov, Andrey V. “Nicholas of Cusa and Ibn 'Arabī: Two Philosophies of Mysticism.” *Philosophy East and West* 43 1 (1993): 65-85.

Souad, Hakim. “Knowledge of God in Ibn ʿArabī.” In *Muḥyiddīn Ibn ʿArabī: A Commemorative Volume,* ed. Stephen Hirtenstein and Michael Tiernan, 264-290. Shaftesbury: Element, 1993.

Stelzer, Steffen “Decisive Meetings: Ibn Rushd, Ibn ʿArabī, and the Matter of Knowledge.” *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 16 (1996): 19-55.

Stephen Hirtenstein and Layla Shamash. “Kitâb al-fanā’ fī-l mushâhada, by Ibn ʿArabī.” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 9 (1991): http://www.ibnarabisociety.org.uk/articles/kitabalfana.html.

Swartz, Merlin L. “A Seventh-century (A.H) Sunni Creed: The ʿAqīda Wāsiṭīya of Ibn Taymiya.” In *Humaniora Islamica: An Annual Publication of Islamic Studies and the Humanities,* ed. Ronald L. Nettler Herbert W. Mason, Jacques Waardenburg, and Merlin L. Swartz, 91-131. Mouton: The Hague, 1974.

Swartz, Merlin L. *Studies on Islam.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Taji-Farouki, Suha. *Beshara and Ibn ʿArabī: A Movement of Sufi Spirituality in the Modern World.* Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2007.

Takeshita, Masataka. “An Analysis of Ibn ʿArabī’s inshāʾ al-dawā’ir with Particular Reference to the Doctrine of the “Third Entity”.” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 41 4 (1982): 243-260.

Tamer, Georges. “The Curse of Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya as a Philosopher in Contemporary Islamic Thought.” In *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya,* ed. Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer, 329-374. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.

Tritton, A. S. “Reason and Revelation.” In *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought*, ed. Ian Richard Netton, 5-15. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Uludağ, Süleyman. “Ibn Teymiye’de Mantik Meselesi.” *Islami Araştırmalar* 4 (1987): 40-51.

Uslu, Ferit. “İbn Teymiye’nin Kelamcıların Geleneksel İman Tanımına Eleştirisi.” *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 4 3 (2004): 17-31.

Uthaymin, Muhammad ibn Salih. *Explanation of a Summary of Al-ʿAqīda al-Ḥamawiyya of Ibn Taymiyya.* Dallas: Tarbiyyah Bookstore Publishing, 2004.

Vannatta, S. C. *Revelation and Reason: Ibn al-ʿArabī’s Sufism and GW Leibniz’s Idealism.* Dordrecht: Springer, 2010.

Walzer, Richard. “Islamic Philosophy.” In *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought*, ed. Ian Richard Netton, 108-133. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Walzer, Richard. “Platonism in Islamic Philosophy.” In *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: Critical Concepts in Islamic Thought*, ed. Ian Richard Netton, 160-174. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Wensinck, A. J. *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development.* New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965.

Winkel, Eric. “Ibn ʿArabi’s Fiqh: Three Cases from the Futūḥāt.” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 13 (1993): 54-74.

Winkel, Eric. *Islam and the Living Law: The Ibn al-ʿArabī Approach.* Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Yahya, Osman. “Theophanies and Lights in the Thought of Ibn ʿArabī.” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 10 (1991): 35-44.

Yasa, Metin. “Panenteizmin Tarihsel Ardalanı Üzerine.” *Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 18-19 (2005): 129-146.

Yousef, Mohamed Haj. *Ibn ʿArabī: Time and Cosmology.* Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2008.

Yunis Ali, Mohamed M. *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics: Sunni Legal Theorists’ Models of Textual Communication.* London: Routledge, 2000.

Zarkasyi, Hamid Fahmy. "Ibn Taymiyyah's Critique of Aristotelian Metaphysics." *Afkār: Journal of ʿAqīdah and Islamic Thought* 11 (2010): 167-190.