CHAPTER 2

Ibn Taymiyya: Life, Times, and Intellectual Profile

The Life and Times of Ibn Taymiyya (661–728/1263–1328)

The previous chapter provided an overview of the development of the Islamic intellectual tradition over the course of the seven centuries preceding Ibn Taymiyya, with special emphasis on those aspects most relevant to our main concern—the relationship between reason and revelation—as we can piece them together from various Muslim theological, historical, and heresiographical works, as well as the secondary source materials that are based on and that analyze these works. The current section complements this background with a brief overview of the political and social circumstances of Ibn Taymiyya’s tumultuous life, followed by his biography, intellectual profile, reception by his contemporaries, and an overview of his major works that bear relevance to the Darʾ taʿāruḍ.

The chaotic intellectual climate into which Ibn Taymiyya was born was matched by the political uncertainty and fragmentation of his times.1 Born in the city of Harran (located in current-day southeastern Turkey near the Syrian border) in the year 661/1263,2 Ibn Taymiyya’s family fled southwest to Damascus

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1 For general studies on the political background of Ibn Taymiyya’s times, see Irwin, Middle East in the Middle Ages and Northrup, “Baḥri Mamlūk Sultanate.” On the Mongol incursion into Syria in the year 700/1300 (in the resistance to which Ibn Taymiyya played a pivotal role), see Amitai, “The Mongol Occupation of Damascus in 1300.” On the cultural and social backdrop of the period, see Berkey, “Culture and Society during the Late Middle Ages.” Concerning the religious life of the period, see Little, “Religion under the Mamluks” and Pouzet, Damas au VIe/VIIe siècle, 20–105.

2 The most complete and authoritative single source for the life of Ibn Taymiyya is Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī’s (d. 744/1344) al-ʿUqūd al-durriyya. Other important sources for the biography of Ibn Taymiyya include al-Dhahabi’s (d. 748/1348) Kitāb Tadhkirat al-huffāẓ and his al-Ilām bi-wafayāt al-aʿlām, Ibn Kathir’s (d. 774/1373) al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya, Ibn al-Dawādārī’s (fl. 708–735/1309–1335) Kanz al-durar, Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī’s (d. 795/1393) al-Dhayl ʿalā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila, and al-Kutubī’s (d. 764/1362) Fawāt al-wafayāt, which is a supplement to Ibn Khalikān’s (d. 681/1282) famous Wafayāt al-aʿyān. Later works include Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī’s (d. 852/1448) al-Durar al-kāmina, al-Ulūmī’s (d. 928/1521) al-Manhaj al-ahmad, al-Karmī’s (d. 1033/1624) al-Kawākib al-durriyya, al-Shawkānī’s (d. 1250/1834) al-Badr al-tālīʿ, and al-Ālūsī’s (d. 1295/1899) Jalāʾ al-ʿaynayn. For a detailed discussion of the classical Arabic sources for the biography of Ibn Taymiyya, see Little, “Historical and Historiographical Significance,” 313–318 and passim. For an excellent contemporary study in Arabic, see Abū Zahra, Ibn Taymiyya; also Al-Azmeh, Ibn Taymiyya. The most extensive treatment of Ibn Taymiyya’s
in 667/1269 before the westward advance of the Mongols, who had reached the gates of northern Syria when Ibn Taymiyya was only six years old. Greater Syria had fallen under the influence of petty amirs who, in their infighting and general ineptitude, proved incapable of mounting any credible resistance to the advancing Mongol armies while Egypt—generally safe from the menace of a direct Mongol onslaught—was under the rule of the Bahri Mamluk dynasty.

After fleeing Harran,3 the Taymiyya family settled in the Hanbali quarter of Damascus, where Ibn Taymiyya's father served as the director of the Sukkariyya Hanbali madrasa, located in the shadows of the Hanbali gate outside the walls of Old Damascus. It was in this madrasa that Ibn Taymiyya received his principal education, following in the footsteps of his uncle, Fakhr al-Din b. Taymiyya (d. 622/1225), and his paternal grandfather, Majd al-Din b. Taymiyya (d. 653/1255), both of whom had distinguished themselves as important authorities of the contemporary Hanbali school.4 Though Ibn Taymiyya studied with a large number of scholars (including a number of women)5 over the course of his education, his strength and independence of mind were such that none of his various mentors exercised a sufficient influence on his thinking for Ibn Taymiyya to be considered his (or her) disciple.6 Ibn Taymiyya eventually succeeded his father as director of the Sukkariyya madrasa and gave his first public lesson there at just twenty-one years of age. One year later, he began teaching Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir) at the famous Umayyad Mosque in Damascus and, a decade later, took up teaching at the Hanbaliyya madrasa in Damascus after the

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3 The following account of Ibn Taymiyya's life paraphrases, in the main, Laoust, “Ibn Taymiyya,” EI², 3:951–955, supplemented by numerous more recent studies as indicated throughout the notes. For a more detailed account of these events, see Laoust, “La biographie,” 115–162; Laoust, Essai, 110–150; and Murad, “Ibn Taymiyyah.”

4 For a detailed presentation of Ibn Taymiyya's education and intellectual training, see Laoust, Essai, 71–109.

5 Al-Matroudi (Hanbali School, 16) mentions that Ibn Taymiyya had a large number of teachers, with some sources claiming up to two hundred. He further reports on a mashyakha (list of teachers) of Ibn Taymiyya's, related by al-Dhahabi, that includes forty-one male teachers and four female teachers (shaykhat). Al-Matroudi, 290, n. 124.

6 Laoust, Essai, 71–72. For an extensive discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's scholarly genealogy, see Adem, “Intellectual Genealogy,” 454–467.
death of one of his teachers there. At around the same time, he was offered the
prestigious and much coveted position of chief justice (qāḍī al-quḍāh), which,
however, he turned down.\(^7\) In addition to a strong grounding in Ḥanbali law and
jurisprudence, Ibn Taymiyya is also said to have gained such an expert knowl-
dge of the other schools of law—and from each school's authoritative primary
sources—that he never discussed legal matters with a scholar from one of these
other schools without his interlocutor having learned, by the end of the discus-
sion, something of value about his own school from Ibn Taymiyya.\(^8\) In addition
to his impressive training in law, Ibn Taymiyya was particularly well grounded
in hadīth and tafsīr and read avidly in the fields of philosophy and theology, as
well as the existing Muslim heresiographical literature.\(^9\) Indeed, through the
vast and varied corpus of his writings, Ibn Taymiyya exhibits an almost aston-
ing familiarity with all the major schools of thought, as well as the particular
writings, of most of the philosophers and theologians before his time. This is
what led Yahya Michot, as noted in the introduction (p. 9 above), to characterize
Ibn Taymiyya as "the most important reader of the falāsifah after Faḫr al-Dīn
al-Rāzī in the Sunnī world."\(^10\) Ibn Taymiyya was a bold and formidable debater
as well, which, coupled with the enormous range and depth of his erudition,
guaranteed that he rarely, if ever, lost a debate.\(^11\)

Ibn Taymiyya was a public intellectual par excellence whose feet were firmly
planted in the social and political realities of his day. Indeed, the external polit-
tical turbulence of his times closely resembled the many vicissitudes of his
own personal and professional life. Ibn Taymiyya's boldness in defending and
proclaiming his views, coupled with his undisputed reputation for great per-
sonal uprightness and high moral integrity, won him many admirers among
the common folk and the political and intellectual elite alike. Nevertheless,
the idiosyncratic and often controversial nature of some of his views, doubt-
less exacerbated by his often condescending and vituperative tone and his
self-admitted inclination towards irascibility, earned him numerous powerful
opponents as well. All told, over the course of his sixty-five years of life, Ibn
Taymiyya was summoned to trial nine times, exiled twice (from Damascus to

\(^7\) Umaruddin, “Ibn Taimiyya,” 718.

\(^8\) Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, ʿUqūd, 10. On Ibn Taymiyya’s “intellectual anatomy,” see Adem, “Intellec-
tual Genealogy,” 467–489.

\(^9\) Such as al-Ashʿarī’s Kitāb Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn or al-Shahrastānī’s Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-
nihāḥ.

\(^10\) “le plus important lecteur des falāsifah après Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī dans le monde sunnīte.”
Michot, “Vanités intellectuelles,” 599.

\(^11\) See Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, ʿUqūd, 10.
Ibn Taymiyya’s first foray into political life took place in the year 693/1294, when a Christian by the name of ‘Assāf (“‘Assāf al-Naṣrānī”) was alleged to have publicly insulted the Prophet Muḥammad, a punishable offense under Islamic law. Ibn Taymiyya and another shaykh brought the matter to the attention of the viceroy (nāʾib al-salṭana), who summoned ‘Assāf to a hearing. A public disturbance ensued, whereupon the viceroy had the two shaykhs flogged and briefly detained. Ibn Taymiyya’s opponents from among the mutakallimūn accused him of anthropomorphism on account of this creed, whereupon he was summoned to questioning at the home of the Shāfiʿī qāḍī Jalāl al-Dīn [also known as Imām al-Dīn] b. ‘Umar al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338). After a close review of the text of the Ḥamawiyya and Ibn Taymiyya’s detailed explication of it during this session, he was acquitted of all charges and permitted to continue his teaching and writing.

The events of the following few years called upon Ibn Taymiyya to take an active political, and even military, role on a number of occasions. During the Mongol invasion of Damascus in 699/1300, Ibn Taymiyya was one of the spokesmen of the resistance party in Damascus sent to negotiate with the Īlkhān Ghāzān, leader of the invading forces. Thanks to his forceful pleading, Ibn Taymiyya was able to negotiate the release of many prisoners as well as to obtain a declaration of peace for the city’s inhabitants. Later that year, he took part in an expedition under Mamluk command against the Shīʿa of Kasrawān, who were accused of collaborating with both the Mongols and the crusaders. Shortly thereafter, in the face of a second Mongol threat, Ibn Taymiyya was bidden to exhort the populace to mount a defense, and he traveled all the way to Cairo to beseech the Mamluk sultan, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (r. 709–741/1310–1341), to dispatch an army to Syria. Ibn Taymiyya also fought at the

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12 Little, “Historical and Historiographical Significance,” 313.
13 Ibn Kathīr, Bidāya, 17:665–666. On this incident, see also Hoover, “Ibn Taymiyya,” 853–854.
14 Laoust speaks of the “insolent mépris avec lequel Ibn Taymiyya s’en prenait à la légitimité de la théologie spéculative” (the insolent contempt with which Ibn Taymiyya went after the legitimacy of speculative theology). Laoust, “L’influence,” 15. See the detailed analysis and discussion of al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya in Adem, “Intellectual Genealogy,” 483–533.
15 Umaruddin, “Ibn Taimiyya,” 718.
battle of Shaqhab in 702/1303, which resulted in a victory against a third Mongol invasion, and in 704/1305, he participated in a renewed campaign against the Shi’a of Kasrawân.

After these political engagements, Ibn Taymiyya returned to his scholarly writing and debates. On one occasion during this period, he is reported to have led a party of stonemasons to smash a sacred rock that was being venerated in the mosque of Naranj. He also sent a letter to the shaykh Naṣr al-Manbijî (d. 719/1319), a leading member of the Damascene disciples of the Andalusian Sufi Ibn ‘Arabî (d. 638/1240), in which he politely but roundly condemned this latter’s increasingly popular, yet highly controversial, mystical monism.16 Around the same time, Ibn Taymiyya’s opponents raised a second round of doubts surrounding the orthodoxy of his belief, this time on the basis of a second statement of creed, known as al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsīṭiyya.17 Two councils18 were held back to back in 705/1306 at the residence of the governor of Damascus; during the second, a pupil of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, that master of late Ash’arī philosophical kalām, judged Ibn Taymiyya’s Wāsītiyya to be “in conformity with the Qur’ān and Sunna.” Nevertheless, a Shāfi’ī judge, Najm al-Dīn b. Ṣaṣrā (d. 723/1322),19 immediately reopened the case against the Wāsītiyya, and a third council was held by order of the sultan. This time, too, the council refrained from condemning the treatise, whereupon Ibn Ṣaṣrā resigned and, along with Ibn Taymiyya, was banished to Cairo several months later. Immediately upon his arrival in Cairo, Ibn Taymiyya was summoned before yet another council, this one composed of high-ranking Mamluk officials and the four

16 For the text of this letter, see Ibn Taymiyya, “Kitāb Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya ilā al-ʿārif bi-l-Lāh al-Shaykh al-Naṣr al-Manbijî,” in Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil wa-l-masāʾil, 1:161–183. It also appears in Majmūʿat fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad b. Ṣaṣrâ [hereafter MF], 2:452–479.

17 There is some question whether it was al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsīṭiyya that landed Ibn Taymiyya before the Damascus tribunal or whether his troubles were a result of his activities and theological positions in general and he simply used the Wāsītiyya as evidence to expound his creed in detail before his jurors. On this question, see Jackson, “Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial,” 49–51 (esp. at 49, n. 53). For a translation of the Wāsītiyya with an introduction and notes, see Swartz, “A Seventh-Century (A.H.) Sunnī Creed,” 91–131 and, before him, Laoust, La profession de foi d’ Ibn Taymiyya. For the specific charges brought against the Wāsītiyya, see Swartz, “Seventh-Century (A.H.) Sunnī Creed,” 101–102.

18 For a detailed study of the Damascus trials, including a presentation of all the actors involved as well as a translation and discussion of Ibn Taymiyya’s own first-person account of their proceedings, see Jackson, “Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial.” See also Little, “Historical and Historiographical Significance.”

19 On the correct pronunciation of this name as “Ibn Ṣaṣrā,” as opposed to “Ibn Ṣaṣarî” or other variant pronunciations often given in Western sources, see Jackson, “Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial,” 46, n. 20 (following W.M. Brinner’s conclusions in “The Banū Ṣaṣrā”).
chief qāḍīs of Egypt. The council convicted him of propagating anthropomorphic views and sentenced him to prison in the citadel of Cairo. After eighteen months of internment, Ibn Taymiyya was freed but was not permitted to return to Syria.

In Cairo, Ibn Taymiyya continued to denounce various beliefs and practices that he considered bidʿa (reprehensible innovation). This earned him the opposition, in the year 707/1308, of the influential Sufi shaykh of the Shādhilī order Ibn ‘Atāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309) and another prominent Sufi, Karīm al-Dīn al-Āmulī (d. 710/1310 or 1311). At issue was Ibn Taymiyya’s vocal opposition to the practice, widely accepted by both Sufis and the majority of legal scholars, of tawassul (or istighātha), a form of supplication for divine assistance through the intermediary of the Prophet Muḥammad or another person of high spiritual rank, known as a wālī (pl. awliyāʾ). Ibn Taymiyya declared tawassul prohibited, as he saw in it a subtle form of shirk (idolatry). He feared that this practice (sometimes referred to as “maraboutism,” or the “cult of saints”), if taken to an extreme, could shift a believer’s primary spiritual focus from God to created beings, however pious the latter may have been. In the wake of a popular demonstration against him, Ibn Taymiyya was called before a Shāfiʿī judge in Cairo and asked to clarify his views on tawassul. The judge apparently acquitted him, as he was officially granted permission to return to Syria; nevertheless, he was held in prison in Cairo for several additional months.

One year later, in 708/1309, Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Jāshnikīr (d. 709/1310), a disciple of the aforementioned shaykh Naṣr al-Manbijī, was proclaimed sultan. The new sultan’s alignment with the Sufi forces that Ibn Taymiyya had directly opposed led to a new round of recriminations against him. Ibn Taymiyya was arrested and exiled to Alexandria, where he was imprisoned for seven months in the tower of the sultan’s palace. During this period, he wrote several important works, most notably his Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqīyyīn (Refutation of the logicians)—a work that Wael Hallaq has described as “one of the most devastating attacks ever leveled against the logical system upheld by the early Greeks, the later commentators, and their Muslim followers” and whose theme is central to Ibn Taymiyya’s critique of the philosophical and

20 His rule, however, lasted a mere ten months and twenty-four days and ended with his arrest and execution at the order of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, under whose second reign (699–708/1299–1309) Baybars had served as vice-sultan of Egypt. See Fernandes, “Baybars II, al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Jāshnikīr,” EI3 (2012-4), 34.

21 See Hallaq, Greek Logicians for an introduction to this work and a translation of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī’s abridgement of it (called Jahd al-qariḥa fi tajrīd al-Naṣīḥa).

22 Hallaq, Greek Logicians, xi.
theological methods he blames for engendering the famous “contradiction” between reason and revelation that he sets out to refute in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*.

The following year, Ibn Taymiyya was released from captivity in Alexandria and returned to Cairo, where he taught privately and continued writing for three years until 712/1313, when a new Mongol threat occasioned his return to Damascus. Around the same time, a new governor of Damascus was appointed and Ibn Taymiyya was promoted to the rank of professor. By this time, his supporters esteemed him an independent *mujtahid*, and it was during this period that he began training his most talented and influential pupil, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), who did much to synthesize, organize, and popularize his master’s teachings. It is also likely during this period that Ibn Taymiyya wrote the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*. Relations between Ḥanbalis and Ashʿarīs in Damascus remained troubled, however, and in 716/1316, open rivalry broke out between them, once more pitting the two schools against each other over questions of creed.

By the year 718/1318, trouble flared up once again, this time in conjunction with Ibn Taymiyya’s ruling—against the consensus opinion (**ijmāʿ**) of the four legal schools, including his own Ḥanbali *madhhab*—that a triple divorce formula uttered in one sitting counted only as a single repudiation and, hence, was insufficient to bring about an irrevocable divorce (**ṭalāq**) if the man uttering it had not intended such. The sultan ordered Ibn Taymiyya to stop issuing *fatwās* on divorce that did not conform to the doctrine of the Ḥanbali school, and two councils were held, one in 718/1318 and the other in 719/1319, to investigate the matter further. Ibn Taymiyya was acquitted after these two hearings, but a third council, held in 720/1320, charged him with insubordination for disobeying the sultan’s order to refrain from giving *fatwās*. At the close of this third hearing, Ibn Taymiyya was arrested and imprisoned for five months in the citadel of Damascus. For six years following his release from prison in 721/1321, he continued teaching and writing and is also reported to have become involved numerous times in the politics and public religious life of both Syria and Egypt.

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23 See Muḥammad Rashād Sālim’s discussion in his introduction to the *Darʾ*, 1:7–10, as well as Hoover’s summary and comments in *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy*, 11, n. 23.
24 On the question of Ibn Taymiyya and the triple **ṭalāq**, see Rapoport, “Ibn Taymiyya on Divorce Oaths,” as well as Laoust, *Essai*, 422–434. See also Al-Matroudi, Ḥanbali School, chap. 6, where the author argues that a careful study of the evidence reveals that Ibn Taymiyya’s stance on **ṭalāq** in fact agrees with that of some scholars in other schools of law, but that he was indeed the first Hanbali (though not the last) to hold this position.
In 726/1326, Ibn Taymiyya was again arrested, deprived of the right to issue fatwās, and thrown back into the citadel in Damascus, where he remained for two full years. At issue this time was his treatise *al-Risāla fī ziyārat al-qubūr wa-l-istinjād bi-l-maqbūr* (Treatise on the visitation of graves and seeking aid from the buried), in which he attacked the practice of visiting the graves of righteous people (*awliyāʾ*) for the purpose of making *tawassul* through them. This time, Ibn Taymiyya faced the opposition of two more influential figures, the Mālikī chief judge Taqī al-Dīn al-Ikhnāʾī (d. 750/1349) and the Shāfiʿī chief judge ‘Alāʾ al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 729/1329), a follower of Ibn ʿArabī—a combined opposition that perhaps explains the length of his sentence. Ibn Taymiyya continued to write from the Damascus citadel, producing, among other works, a treatise in which he leveled a personal attack against al-Ikhnāʾī and expounded his views on visiting and supplicating at the graves of the *awliyāʾ*. A complaint from al-Ikhnāʾī prompted the sultan to order that Ibn Taymiyya be deprived of all paper, ink, and pens.

Five months after this final edict from the sultan, on 20 Dhū al-Qaʿda 728/26 September 1328, Ibn Taymiyya, as if overwhelmed by chagrin at being denied the means to write, passed away in his cell at the citadel. Despite such strong and persistent opposition from certain quarters, Ibn Taymiyya had endeared himself to the majority of the population of Damascus, who saw in him a scholar of great personal integrity, religious scrupulousness, and fearless valiance in confronting the greatest social and political dangers of his day, all the way to the battlefield when necessary. Indeed, it is reported that from the time of his death until his burial, “the normal life of Damascus came to a virtual standstill.” After his funeral, which was attended by a large number of the city’s inhabitants, including an unusually large number of women, Ibn Taymiyya was laid to rest in the Sufi cemetery at Damascus, where his tomb—for all his disapproval of visiting the graves of the pious—is still honored to this day.

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25 For a discussion, see Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous*, esp. 168–194.
26 Swartz, “Seventh-Century (A.H.) Sunnī Creed,” 99 (referencing Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, 2:405–407).
27 For an insightful treatment of Ibn Taymiyya’s emotional and psychological profile—and specifically his relationship to women, his relationship with his mother, the fact of his lifelong celibacy, and related issues—see Michot, “Un célibataire endurci et sa maman.” For a description of Ibn Taymiyya’s funeral, underscoring “l’importance de la participation féminine à ses obsèques” (the large number of women who took part in his funeral) and citing, on the authority of Ibn Kathīr, the figure of fifteen thousand women in attendance, see Michot, 165 ff. Michot also cites (p. 167, from Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī’s *ʿUqūd*) a certain ʿAbd Allāh.
Ibn Taymiyya is born in the city of Harran, in current-day southeastern Turkey.

Taymiyya family flees Mongol invasions and takes refuge in the Ḥanbali quarter of Damascus.

Ibn Taymiyya succeeds his father as director of the Sukkariyya Ḥanbalī madrasa, located in Damascus.

Begins teaching Qurʾānic exegesis at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.

Begins teaching at the Ḥanbaliyya madrasa in Damascus subsequent to the death of one of his teachers.

The incident of ʿAssāf al-Naṣrānī occasions Ibn Taymiyya's first foray into political life and his first stint in prison.

Ibn Taymiyya writes one of his most famous statements of creed, al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya.

Mongols attack Damascus. Ibn Taymiyya negotiates release of prisoners. Takes part in expedition against the Shīʿa of Kasrawān.

Travels to Cairo to implore Mamluk sultan, al-Nāṣir b. Qalāwūn, to dispatch an army to Syria.

Ibn Taymiyya fights at Shaqḥab, participating in the victory against a third Mongol invasion.

Takes part in a renewed campaign against the Shiʿa of Kasrawān. Sends a letter to the Sufi shaykh Naṣr al-Manbijī condemning Ibn ʿArabī's mystical monism.

Two councils are held on the orthodoxy of Ibn Taymiyya's belief as expounded in his al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya. Banished to Cairo after a third council. Convicted by a further council of propagating anthropomorphic views and sentenced to prison in the citadel of Cairo.

Set free after eighteen months of imprisonment, but not permitted to return to Syria.

Questioned by Shāfiʿī judge in Cairo concerning his views on tawassul. Acquitted and officially granted permission to return to Syria, but held in prison in Cairo for several additional months.

Ibn Taymiyya is arrested, exiled to Alexandria, and held for seven months in the tower of the sultan's palace. Writes several important works, most notably his Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā al-manṭiqiyyīn (Refutation of the logicians).

Released from captivity in Alexandria. Returns to Cairo to teach privately and continue writing.

Returns to Damascus on account of a new Mongol threat from the north. Promoted to the rank of professor by the new governor of Damascus.

al-Harīrī al-Mutayym (d. 731/1331), who speaks of hundreds of thousands (miʾīna ulūfan) of weeping attendees and "multitude upon multitude" (fawja baʿda fawja) of believing women. See Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, ʿUqūd, 370, lines 6 and 8.
| Year | Event |
|------|-------|
| 713–717/1313–1317 | Period during which Ibn Taymiyya (most likely) composed the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*. |
| 718/1318 | Ordered by the sultan to stop issuing *fatwās* on divorce that do not conform to the doctrine of the Hanbali school. First council held on Ibn Taymiyya’s divorce *fatwā*. |
| 719/1319 | Second council held on Ibn Taymiyya’s divorce *fatwā*. |
| 720/1320 | A third council charges Ibn Taymiyya with insubordination for refusing to obey the sultan’s order to stop issuing *fatwās*. Arrested and imprisoned in the citadel of Damascus for five months. |
| 721/1321 | Released from prison. Continues teaching and writing for the next six years. Becomes involved in the political and public religious life of both Syria and Egypt on numerous occasions. |
| 726/1326 | Arrested for the sixth time, confined once more to the citadel of Damascus, and denied the right to issue any *fatwā* whatsoever. |
| 738/1328 | Ibn Taymiyya is deprived of paper, ink, and pens. Passes away several months later, on 20 Dhū al-Qaʿda / 26 September, in his cell at the Damascus citadel. |

## 2 Intellectual Profile

We have mentioned the extraordinary breadth and depth of Ibn Taymiyya’s erudition not only in the text-based sciences—law, *ḥadīth*, Qurʾān, and the biographical literature of the Prophet, Companions, and early generations—but also in the rational sciences of *kalām* and philosophy, with both of which his writings exhibit an astonishingly deep familiarity. Ibn Taymiyya also read widely in the works of the Sufi tradition, including those of such luminaries as Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. ca. 297/910), Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1073), al-Ghazālī, and Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), not to mention two Ḥanbali

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28 For an in-depth study on the versatility, originality, and synthetic quality of Ibn Taymiyya’s thought and methodology, specifically with regard to the question of the “Satanic verses” incident (*al-gharānīq*), see Shahab Ahmed’s rich discussion in S. Ahmed, “Ibn Taymiyyah and the Satanic Verses.”

29 Whose famous work, *Qūt al-qulūb* (Nourishment of the hearts), was one of Ibn Taymiyya’s favorite books. Laoust, “L’influence,” 19.

30 His full name is Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, not to be confused with Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardi al-Maqtūl, the Ishrāqī mystic put to death in Aleppo in 587/1191. See p. 72 above.
Sufis, the aforementioned ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī and the famous ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (d. 561/1166). While Ibn Taymiyya expressed great admiration for such figures, repeatedly referring to them by laudatory epithets such as “our shaykh,” he nevertheless denounced unflinchingly and unconditionally the speculative mystical system of Ibn ʿArabī and his followers, such as Ibn ʿArabī’s foremost disciple, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), as well as ʿAbd al-Haqq b. Sabḥīn (d. 669/1271), Afīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291), and other Sufis, such as the hadīth scholar and master poet ʿUmar b. ʿAlī b. al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), who adopted a similar metaphysical outlook.

Despite his intellectual independence, Ibn Taymiyya maintained his affiliation with the Ḥanbali school throughout his life, an affiliation that implied as much a theological outlook as an approach to law and legal theory. In terms of law, Ibn Taymiyya followed closely the principles of legal derivation exemplified by the school’s eponym, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, whose methodology he believed, in comparison to those of the other schools of law, to have remained most closely in tune with the legal practices and spirit of the authoritative early community (that is, the generations of the Salaf). Ḥanbalī jurisprudence is characterized by a particularly strong emphasis on adherence to the revealed texts (Qurʾān and Sunna) and to the authority of the early community, and it takes a comparatively more cautious attitude towards the use of

31 On whose Futūḥ al-ghayb (Revelations of the unseen) he even saw fit to write a partial commentary. See Michel, “Ibn Taymiyya’s Sharḥ.” For a discussion of Ibn Taymiyya’s personal affiliation with the Qādiri Sufi order, see Makdisi, “Ibn Taimiya: A Şûfi of the Qâdiriya Order.” However, as noted by Caterina Bori (“Ibn Taymiyya wa-Jamāʿatu-hu,” 46, n. 17), Makdisi’s conclusions must now be qualified by subsequent studies, including Michel, “Ibn Taymiyya’s Sharḥ”; Meier, “Das Sauberste über die Vorherbestimmung” (published in an English translation as “The Cleanest about Predestination”); and Knysh, Ibn ʿArabī, 314, n. 5.

32 Ibn Taymiyya’s reputation for being implacably anti-Sufi is inaccurate and misleading when indiscriminately generalized, but it is not entirely without foundation as he was indeed staunchly—and very vocally—opposed to discrete ideas and practices that were widely associated with Sufism in his day. For Ibn Taymiyya’s critiques of such aspects of contemporary Sufism, critiques that are responsible not only for the stereotype we have inherited of him today but also for a considerable amount of the opposition and tribulations he faced in his own day, see the following studies: Homerin, “Sufis and their Detractors,” esp. 231–235; Knysh, Ibn ʿArabī, 87–112; Michel, Muslim Theologian’s Response, 5–14, 24–39; and Memon, Ibn Taimiya’s Struggle against Popular Religion. See further Wael Hallaq’s incisive comments in Greek Logicians, esp. xi–xiv.

33 Laoust, Essai, 76. Ibn Taymiyya is reported to have written a full volume on the preferability (tafḍīl) of the Ḥanbali madhhab and its merits. See Ibn Rushayyiq, Asmāʾ muʿallaftāt Ibn Taymiyya [hereafter Asmāʾ muʿallaftāt], 27.
analogy (*qiyās*) in legal derivation. At the same time, however, Ibn Taymiyya opposed what he saw as the exaggerated weight accorded to the principle of moral scrupulousness (*wara’*) used by many Ḥanbali scholars in deriving the law.

Overall, Ibn Taymiyya’s thought evidences a strong preference for the methodology of *ahl al-ḥadīth* over that of *ahl al-ra’y*, commending the way of Mālik in the Hijaz over that of contemporary Iraqi scholars and maintaining that it was Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal who had ultimately perfected Mālik’s *ḥadīth*-based methodology. In places, he praises the Ḥanbali school for its strict adherence to the Qur’ān and Sunna and to the opinions of the Salaf. He also lauds the school for its relative unity, describing its scholars as having fewer points of disagreement (*ikhtilāf*) among themselves than the adherents of the other legal schools. As prefigured in our “Taymiyyan pyramid,” Ibn Taymiyya posits a strong correlation between truth and unanimity and identifies the amount of internal disagreement among the members of a given school—be it of law, theology, or any other discipline—as a tell-tale sign of that school’s relative distance from the unitary, normative truth. This attitude towards the unicity of truth is reflected in Ibn Taymiyya’s adherence, with regard to the difference of opinion (*ikhtilāf*) among legal scholars, to the maxim that “the truth is...”

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34 Al-Matroudi, *Hanbali School*, 32–35. Under “analogy” we may also class related principles of *iythād*, such as *istiḥsān* (juristic preference), *istiṣḥāb* (presumption of continuity), and *maslaha mursala* (textually unattested benefits). For more on these principles, see Hallaq, *History*, 107–115. For a treatment of the details of Ibn Taymiyya’s legal methodology, see Laoust, *Contribution*, which includes an annotated translation, preceded by an extensive introductory analysis, of two of Ibn Taymiyya’s most important works on legal methodology, “Ma’ārij al-wuṣūl” and “al-Qiyās fī al-sharʿ al-Islāmī” (commonly known as “Risāla fī al-qiyās”).

35 For Ibn Taymiyya’s views on precaution (*iḥtiyāt*) and pious restraint (*wara’*) in legal rulings and his critique of the overapplication of these principles on the part of some legal scholars, see Al-Matroudi, *Hanbali School*, 103–107. Interestingly, just one generation after Ibn Taymiyya, the famous Andalusian jurist Abū Iḥṣāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388), likely in response to the perceived over-scrupulousness of Sufis (not Ḥanbalis), advocated a similar moderating of *wara’* when applied to questions of legal derivation.

36 Al-Matroudi, *Hanbali School*, 44. Ibn Taymiyya wrote a 100-page treatise on the correctness of the principles of the Mālikī school (“Ṣiḥḥat uṣūl madhhab ahl al-Madīna,” at *MF*, 20294–396). Ibn Rushayyiq also notes that Ibn Taymiyya wrote a separate treatise on the merits (*fada‘il*) of the Four Imams (Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, al-Shāfi‘ī, and Ibn Ḥanbal) and the virtues of each. See Ibn Rushayyiq, *Asmā’ mu’allafāt*, 27.

37 Al-Matroudi, *Hanbali School*, 41.

38 Ibid.

39 See introduction, p. 7 above.
found] in one [opinion]" (al-ḥaqq fī wāḥid), that is, while each mujtahid scholar may well be rewarded for his sincere effort to identify a legal ruling, only one of several conflicting solutions is actually correct in the objective sense of being the right answer from the perspective of God.\textsuperscript{40} This contrasts with the more catholic—but epistemologically also more relativistic—position of the majority, predicated on the maxim that “each mujtahid is correct” (kullu mujtahid muṣīb); in other words, not merely is each of the mujtahids who disagree on a point of law rewarded for his effort, but all their divers opinions are positively correct, even when they contradict one another.\textsuperscript{41} We will see these various tendencies in Ibn Taymiyya’s legal thought replicated in his approach to Qur’ānic hermeneutics and, ultimately, his approach to questions of theology and philosophy as well. Another central tenet of Ibn Taymiyya’s legal thought likewise reflected in his theology is the notion that an authentic text of revelation can never conflict with a valid legal analogy (qiyās) based on a correct instance of ījtihād. In other words, there can be no conflict between revelation and reason on the plane of legal rulings just as there can be no such conflict in the realm of theology. Any apparent contradiction between reason and revelation in the legal domain is necessarily due to an unsound analogy, the use of an inauthentic text, or the misinterpretation or misapplication of an authentic one.\textsuperscript{42}

Though Ibn Taymiyya was a faithful adherent of the methodology exemplified by Aḥmad b. Hanbal, he nevertheless believed that the Ḥanbali school,

\textsuperscript{40} In this regard (as in others), Ibn Taymiyya manifests a distinct affinity with the thought of Ibn Ḥazm. On the question of the unicity of truth, for instance, and whether each mujtahid can be considered positively correct in his ījtihād, see El-Tobgui, “Epistemology of Qiyas and Ta’līl,” 352–353 (and pp. 340–351 for an analysis of Ibn Ḥazm’s epistemology more generally).

\textsuperscript{41} Ibn Taymiyya is listed as having penned a separate treatise on this issue as well. See Ibn Rushayyiq, Asmā’ mu’allaṭā, 28.

\textsuperscript{42} Al-Matroudi, Hanbali School, 27–30. The existence of a conflict between reason and revelation had been taken for granted in earlier jurisprudential treatises, such as the al-Mustaṣfā min ʿilm al-usūl of al-Ghazālī (a Shāfiʿī), the al-Iḥkām fī ʿusūl al-ğhām of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āimidī (d. 631/1233) (a Ḥanbalī turned Shāfiʿī), and even the Rawdat al-nāẓir wa-junnat al-munāẓir of Muwaffaq al-Dīn b. Qudāma (d. 620/1223) (an avowed Ḥanbali and anti-Ashʿarī). See Laoust, Contribution, 11. In his treatise “Risāla fī al-qiyās,” Ibn Taymiyya argues against the possibility of a real contradiction between a revealed text and a valid legal analogy or, for that matter, between a revealed text and the product of other tools of legal rationalism, such as īstīḥsān (juristic preference) or maṣlaḥa (utility, public interest). For an overall treatment of Ibn Taymiyya’s legal methodology, especially as it relates to and overlaps with his approach to theology and reason more generally, see Rapoport, “Ibn Taymiyya’s Radical Legal Thought,” esp. 193–199.
over the course of its subsequent development, had arrived at incorrect positions on certain issues. Consequently, he sought to revise such rulings on the basis of a direct engagement with the primary sources of the Sharīʿa—Qurʾān, Sunna, consensus, and analogy—and in light of the statements and general principles of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. Ibn Taymiyya’s intellectual independence and willingness to challenge even widely or universally held opinions within his own school—if he judged them incorrect in light of the primary sources and the principles of the school’s imam—led other Ḥanbalī authorities to criticize sharply a number of his fatwās. As an example, we may cite the aforementioned triple divorce formula, in which Ibn Taymiyya seems to be the first Ḥanbalī (though not the first Muslim jurist altogether) to hold the position that the triple formula uttered in a single instance does not result in an irrevocable “triple” divorce. Ibn Taymiyya’s stature as a scholar, however, ensured that his opinions were taken seriously, and it is of note that since his time, Ḥanbalī legal works have taken note of Ibn Taymiyya’s stance on the issue of ṭalāq and cited the existence of ikhtilāf in the Ḥanbalī school over the question of the triple divorce. Several later scholars even adopted Ibn Taymiyya’s conclusions on the matter.

Regarding matters of creed, Ibn Taymiyya also looked to the first three generations (those of the Salaf) as the sole standard by which to judge correct belief, both in terms of the Salaf’s substantive doctrine and in terms of their specific methods of approaching the texts and of using reason to gain a proper understanding of them. Ibn Taymiyya did not condemn kalām—in the sense of disciplined reasoning about theological matters—outright; rather, he distinguished between a “kalām sunnī” and a “kalām bidʿī,” that is, between an orthodox and a heterodox way of reasoning about religious truths. A primary motivating factor in his opposition to kalām was his view that it was divisive and schismatic: schools often differed bitterly over points of doctrine owing to their differing notions of what reason was presumed to entail and, just as commonly, on account of variant starting assumptions and founding axioms determined by the overall philosophical premises of the school in question. Ibn Taymiyya’s life project was, in a sense, to transcend school divisions by reuniting the Muslim religious community on a reintegrated theological platform that was based directly on the understanding and approach of the Salaf, whom

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43 Al-Matroudi, Ḥanbalī School, 56–57, 189–193, and passim. Also Laoust, Essai, 77–78.
44 On opposition to Ibn Taymiyya from his Ḥanbalī peers, see Bori, “Ibn Taymiyya wa-jamāʿatu-hu,” 33–36 and Bori, 37–41 for opposition to him from traditionalist (that is, non-Ashʿarī) Shāfiʿīs as well.
45 Laoust, “L’influence,” 18.
he held to be, of necessity, both more correct than later theologians and, as a corollary to this, characterized by a comparatively higher degree of consensus, if not outright uniformity, in their apprehension of theological truth.

In addition to his study of theology, Ibn Taymiyya also closely scrutinized the doctrines of the philosophers—primarily with the view to refute them, but also to understand their origins. He wrote his scathing critique of Aristotelian logic, *al-Radd ‘alā al-mantiqiyīn*, while imprisoned in the tower at Alexandria. He also forcefully advocated the old-style analogical reasoning (*qiyyās*) of the jurists over the Aristotelian syllogism, which had become part and parcel of the “new” *kalām* through the work of al-Ghazālī. Ibn Taymiyya likewise advocated for the jurists’ method of definition by description (*wasf*) over the philosophical method of definition by genus and specific difference (known as *hadd*). Finally, Ibn Taymiyya was a (moderate) nominalist, refusing to accord any independent ontological reality to abstract concepts or notions outside the mind.47 These and similar matters will occupy our attention in chapter 5.

Ibn Taymiyya’s own positive theology has been given the name “Qurʾānic rational theology.”48 Considering the rise and spread of a rationalistic theology that was increasingly influenced by philosophical terms and categories, Ibn Taymiyya set himself the task—reminiscent of al-Ashʿarī—of defending traditional doctrines by reformulating them within an alternative rationalist framework.49 Deeply immersed in the intellectual legacy of Islamic civilization and intimately familiar with its sundry movements and discourses, Ibn Taymiyya, it has been noted, seems to have been “influenced by al-Ashʿarī’s critique of the Muʿtazilites, al-Ghazālī’s of the philosophers, and Ibn Rushd’s of the Ashʿarites.”50 Ibn Taymiyya was keenly aware, and highly mistrustful, of the “Avicennian turn”51 that had occurred in later Ashʿarī *kalām* as of al-Juwaynī and, especially, al-Ghazālī one generation later. He therefore sought to articulate an alternative theology based more squarely on the revealed texts while nevertheless fully engaging the philosophical tradition. In this respect, his approach differed substantially from past traditionalist scholars, who had clung to a strong theological textualism while deliberately eschewing any engagement with the philosophical tradition whatsoever.

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46 This was true in some respects, but he was also a moderate realist in others, as argued by Anke von Kügelgen, “Poison of Philosophy,” 306 ff.
47 Laoust, “L’influence,” 19.
48 Özervarlı, “Qurʾānic Rational Theology,” 78.
49 Ibid., 79.
50 Ibid.
51 See Wisnovsky, “One Aspect.”
At the same time, Ibn Taymiyya was a strong proponent of the notion that revelation—in the form of the Qurʾān and the Sunna—provides comprehensive knowledge of not only the principles (uṣūl) but also the details (furūʿ) of the theological postulates upon which religion rests. Furthermore, it does so by explicitly indicating not only the premises but also the rational methods—backed up by the most conclusive and certain rational arguments and proofs—on the basis of which further details are to be worked out. Indeed, perhaps the most salient and ingenious feature of Ibn Taymiyya’s thought and methodology is the fact that he did not banish reason in favor of an entirely non-speculative traditionalism; rather, he rehabilitated reason, all the while preserving the obvious meaning of the revealed texts by demonstrating that sound reason and authentic revelation never come into actual conflict. This is so because revelation, “all-inclusive and faultless, contains within itself perfect and complete rational foundations.”

On the basis of this insight, Ibn Taymiyya put forth a “philosophical interpretation and defense of tradition,” thereby developing his own unique brand of what has appositely been termed a “philosophical traditionalism.”

3 Character and Contemporary Reception

Ibn Taymiyya was a controversial figure in his own times and has remained one up to the current day. On the one hand, he was universally recognized by his contemporaries—friend and foe alike—for his extraordinary personal integrity and moral character, to say nothing of his virtually unparalleled mastery of a vast range of religious and intellectual disciplines coupled with his reputation for fastidious adherence to the teachings and practices of Islam. Indeed, while many found fault with Ibn Taymiyya’s ideas, hardly anyone criticized him for his character. Ibn Taymiyya was particularly admired by classical historians and biographers, so much so that without exception, all of the historians, no matter what their position, training, and specialization, show a distinctly favorable attitude towards Ibn Taymiyya’s words and deeds. So far as has been determined, only al-Dḥahabī, Ibn Rajab, and Ibn Ḥajar record anything at all that might be

52 See Rapoport and Ahmed, “Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,” 8.
53 Hoover, “Perpetual Creativity,” 194.
54 Rapoport and Ahmed, “Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,” 12.
55 See Little, “Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?,” 94.
construed as an uncomplimentary interpretation of Ibn Taymiyya’s character and activities, and the instances of this are rare even with these three authors.56

And while it is true that nearly all the Syrian scholar-historians happened to be followers or supporters of Ibn Taymiyya—drawn from the ranks of fellow Ḥanbalis like Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī (d. 744/1344) and Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1393) or of traditionalist-oriented Shāfiʿīs like al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) and Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373)—even his worst enemies conceded the overall excellence of his character and the exemplary quality of his pious and God-fearing life. For example, the Mālikī chief qāḍī Zayn al-Dīn b. Makhlūf (d. 718/1318), who had been behind many of Ibn Taymiyya’s troubles after his arrival in Egypt, ultimately conceded that “there is no one more righteous than Ibn Taymiyya; we ought to abandon our struggle against him.”57 Furthermore, Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), who was, on the whole, highly critical of Ibn Taymiyya’s ideas and who wrote several tracts attacking his doctrines, made the following almost gushing statement to al-Dhahabī:

As for what you [al-Dhahabī] say in regard to al-Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn [Ibn Taymiyya], I am convinced of the great scope, the ocean-like fullness and vastness of his knowledge of the transmitted and intellectual sciences, his extreme intelligence, his exertions and his attainments, all of which surpass description. I have always held this opinion. Personally, my admiration is even greater for the asceticism, piety, and religiosity with which God has endowed him, for his selfless championship of the truth, his adherence to the path of our forebears, his pursuit of perfection, and the wonder of his example, unrivalled in our time and in times past.58

In addition to such an adulatory character assessment from even his sworn opponents, Ibn Taymiyya was also highly reputed for his constant concern for others (particularly society’s less fortunate), his self-sacrifice, his clemency, his courage in the face of existential danger (such as the invasion of the Mongols), and his magnanimity—even when in a position to exact reprisals—towards all who had ever occasioned him harm or borne him malice.

Notwithstanding this overall laudatory appraisal, it appears to be a matter of consensus—even among those who were generally supportive of Ibn

56 Little, “Historical and Historiographical Significance,” 399.
57 Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, Ḫuṭbā, 221. (Trans. Little, “Screw Loose?,” 99.)
58 Ibn Ḥajar, Durar, 1:186. (Trans. Little, “Screw Loose?,” 100.)
Taymiyya, such as al-Dhahabī—that he had an irascible temper and an abrasive personality, that he could be overweening, and that he was often condescending towards his fellow scholars, tactless, sanctimoniously convinced of the truth of his own views, and dismissive of those who differed with him. A number of sources suggest that it was primarily Ibn Taymiyya's cantankerousness, penchant for criticism, and perpetual tendency to raise a public ruckus that guaranteed the unyielding, and often vicious, opposition of his detractors. Certainly, some of Ibn Taymiyya's positions—idiosyncratic and sometimes directly opposed to broadly-held views on certain theological or legal questions—would have sufficed on their own to ensure no shortage of animated and contentious exchanges between him and others. However, his gratifying and obstreperous manner seems to have made it that much easier for Ibn Taymiyya's antagonists to go after him with such ferocity.

Furthermore, while Ibn Taymiyya was beloved among the populace and certainly enjoyed the respect and admiration of some contemporary scholars and important statesmen and other public officials, he was by no means welcomed with open arms even by many of his fellow Ḥanbalīs. Some fellow traditionalists took exception to the important role he accorded to reason in understanding and interpreting revealed truths, while many objected to his idiosyncratic legal opinions, in which he broke ranks, both methodologically and substantively, with accepted Ḥanbalī doctrine and practice. His close disciples numbered only around twelve and are conspicuous for including members of different legal schools (including a number of Shāfiʿīs and at least one Mālikī). This fact demonstrates how Ibn Taymiyya, and those who were

59 The following—admittedly humorous—anecdote, related from al-Dhahabī, makes this point especially clear: “When Ibn Taymiyya was a little boy, studying with the Banū Munajjā, they supported something that he denied, whereupon they produced the text. When he had read it, he threw it down in fury. They said, ‘How bold you are to cast from your hand a volume that contains knowledge!’ He quickly replied, ‘Who is better, Moses or I?’ ‘Moses,’ they said. ‘And which is better, this book or the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed?’ ‘The tablets,’ they replied. Ibn Taymiyya said, in words to this effect, ‘Well, when Moses became angry, he threw down the tablets!’” Al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt, 7:12. (Trans. Little, “Screw Loose?,” 106.)

60 Al-Dhahabī, an anti-Ashʿarī Shāfiʿī who was largely committed to a traditionalist, non-speculative approach to the revealed texts, commented that Ibn Taymiyya “repeatedly swallowed the poison of the philosophers and their works; the body becomes addicted to the frequent use of poison so that it is secreted, by God, in the very bones.” Little, “Screw Loose?,” 101. Laoust, however, cast doubt on the authenticity of this quotation. See Laoust, Essai, 484.

61 For a detailed discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's “inner circle,” see Bori, “Ibn Taymiyya wa-Jamāʿatu-hu.”
attracted to him, saw his methodology as transcending that of the established schools of law and theology and harking back to what they deemed to be the idyllically unified understanding of the pristine early community, that of the Salaf. Ibn Taymiyya's approach is built on the interrelated premises that such a unified and unequivocal understanding (1) had existed among the Salaf, (2) was identifiable, and thus (3) could be retrieved and objectively established as a true representation of the Salaf’s positions. This could be done by following the methods that Ibn Taymiyya held were alone capable of identifying and laying these positions bare (methods that we examine in detail in chapters 4 and 5).

A corollary of Ibn Taymiyya’s approach—unsettling to many of his contemporaries—was that the existing legal and theological schools did not necessarily, either individually or collectively, coincide with the verifiably authentic views of the Salaf and, by extension, of the Prophet himself. Indeed, as we have noted, Ibn Taymiyya favored the Ḥanbalī school, both in legal and theological terms, because he believed that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal had remained truest to the early ways of the Salaf. But as we have also seen, Ibn Taymiyya was not shy to critique later positions of the Ḥanbalī school when he judged that they had deviated from Aḥmad’s (and therefore the Salaf’s) original understanding and method. Yet by Ibn Taymiyya’s time, the older, more open rivalry among the various legal schools was in abeyance, and the more catholic tendency by which each school recognized the validity of the others had gained general acceptance. This tendency was perhaps aided, in the particular social and political context of the late seventh-/thirteenth- and early eighth-/fourteenth-century Mamluk state, by the political decision to recognize all four legal schools as equally valid and to appoint four chief judges in Cairo, one from each school.\footnote{On the various factors motivating this move on the part of Egypt’s Mamluk authorities, see Rapoport, “Legal Diversity in the Age of Taqlīd.”}

In light of this move towards a mutual recognition of different, officially sanctioned doctrines associated with the different legal schools, Ibn Taymiyya’s supporters at the Damascus trials of 705/1306 urged him to agree to define the theological stance expounded in his al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭiyya as the “Ḥanbalī” position, a position that could then exist in harmony with and mutual recognition of the predominantly Ashʿarī theology of his opponents. Ibn Taymiyya, however, flatly refused to countenance such a move. On the contrary, he insisted that “his was the view not of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, but of the Prophet himself,” which “left his adversaries with only two choices: convert to his doctrine or destroy him.”\footnote{Jackson, “Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial,” 56.}
The foregoing considerations, coupled with the fact that Ibn Taymiyya’s close disciples were drawn from various schools of law, reinforce the view that what was primarily at stake was a struggle between new-style Ashʿarī kalām and old-school theological traditionalism. This struggle took place not only across madhhab lines but within the various legal schools as well—particularly the Shāfiʿī school, from whose ranks most contemporary Ashʿarīs hailed but which nevertheless retained a significant number of scholars who continued to resist Ashʿarī kalām in favor of an old-style, non-speculative theological traditionalism. We have also seen that certain high-profile Ḥanbalīs—such as Ibn ʿAqīl (d. 513/1119), Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201), and Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 716/1316)—were likewise partial to rationalist kalām theology of the Ashʿarī type, but these figures were much more of an exception in the midst of a Ḥanbalī school whose members, in their vast majority, had long maintained a staunch allegiance to a thoroughly textualist, non-speculative theology. It is important to remember, however, that Ibn Taymiyya was opposed not only by contemporary rationalistically inclined Ashʿarīs, on account of their belief that his “literalist” theology directly entailed anthropomorphism, but also, and certainly no less significantly, by a number of traditionalists themselves. Such traditionalists faulted him precisely for what they judged to be his over-reliance on reason and philosophical method in establishing theological truths. They also faulted him, more generally, for what they considered his blurring of the lines—dare one say à la Ashʿarī?—between the boundaries and methods of the revelation-based (naqš) and the rational (ʿaql) sciences. Indeed, this combination of traditionalism and rationalism has been identified as “perhaps the most distinctive trait of Ibn Taymiyya’s religious thought.”

4 Ibn Taymiyya’s Works

An eighth-/fourteenth-century work entitled Asmāʾ muʾallafāt Ibn Taymiyya, written by Ibn Taymiyya’s personal scribe, Ibn Rushayyiq (d. 749/1349), reveals that Ibn Taymiyya was an extremely prolific writer who penned several hundred works spanning hundreds of volumes. Ibn Taymiyya’s student, Ibn ʿAbd

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64 Ibid., 48 (also citing George Makdisi to the same effect).
65 Özervarlı, “Qurʾānic Rational Theology,” 80.
66 Rapoport and Ahmed, “Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,” 8.
67 Several printed versions of Asmāʾ muʾallafāt incorrectly ascribe the work to Ibn Taymiyya’s famous disciple, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. The actual compiler, however, was Ibn Taymiyya’s scribe (kātib), Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Rushayyiq. Ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī reports in
al-Hādī, reported that his teacher had a gift for composing quickly and that he often wrote from memory without needing to cite from written materials—a major reason he was able to remain so productive even while in prison. Ibn Taymiyya, according to Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī, could write a short volume (mujallad latif) in a single day and up to forty folios (or eighty pages) in a single sitting. On at least one occasion, he is reported to have composed an answer to an exceedingly difficult question (min ashkal al-mashākil) in eight quires (128 pages), likewise in a single session.\(^6^8\) The ninth-/fifteenth-century chronicler Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī (d. 842/1438) reported Ibn Taymiyya’s contemporary Abū al-Muẓaffār al-Surramarri (d. 776/1374) as saying, “Among the wonders of our time is the memory (hifẓ) of Ibn Taymiyya: he used to read a book once and it would be etched in his memory such that he would quote it verbatim in his own writings [from memory, it is implied].”\(^7^0\)

In terms of style, Ibn Taymiyya’s prose is clear, precise, and easy to read; he was by no means given to the use of highly ornate or stylized language. Like his personality, his theology, and his lifestyle, Ibn Taymiyya’s writing is down to earth, pragmatic, and to the point. Though he often deals with themes of extraordinary complexity (particularly in a work as philosophically involved as the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*), it is nevertheless clear that his intention was to write in a manner accessible to the average man and not just the scholarly elite. The only occasions on which he incorporates slight embellishments of style into his writing are his intermittent use of *sajʿ* (rhymed prose) to mark the transition from one topic to another or as a means of emphasis. Notwithstanding the limpidity of his language, Ibn Taymiyya’s works are nonetheless characterized by a high degree of repetition, excursiveness, and a penchant for tangents. Some digressions in the *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, for instance, go on for tens of pages, while others run on for more than a hundred. Some modern scholars have described Ibn Taymiyya’s writing style as a “characteristically digressive, disjointed style that bears the marks of brilliant insights hastily jotted down.”\(^7^1\) Other scholars have blamed the relative dearth of serious studies of Ibn Taymiyya’s sophisticated philosophical and theological thought on

\(^{68}\) A quire (kurras[a], pl. karāris) was most often formed of four folded sheets of paper, yielding eight leaves/folios (woraqāt)—or sixteen total sides (wujūh), or pages.

\(^{69}\) Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī, *Uqūd*, 72.

\(^{70}\) Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn, *al-Radd al-wāfir*, 218.

\(^{71}\) Rapoport and Ahmed, “Ibn Taymiyya and His Times,” 4.
his “disorganized writing style, length, verbosity, and propensity for digression and repetition”\textsuperscript{72}—all features that are prominent in the \textit{Dar’} and that go a long way towards accounting for the difficulty and unwieldiness of the text.

Here we mention briefly those of Ibn Taymiyya’s works that are most relevant to the topic of reason and revelation. Pertinent writings on exegesis and its principles include the following: \textit{Muqaddima fi \textit{uṣūl al-tafsīr} (Introduction to the Principles of Tafsīr)};\textsuperscript{73} a full-volume commentary on the phrase “and none knows its \textit{ta’wil} save God”;\textsuperscript{74} a treatise on the phrase “in it [the \textit{Qur’ān}] are \textit{muḥkam} verses”;\textsuperscript{75} a treatise on the phrase “a Book whose verses have been made firm (\textit{uḥkimat})”;\textsuperscript{76} and a fifty-leaf treatise on the all-important verse “There is none like unto Him.”\textsuperscript{77} Also important for Ibn Taymiyya’s understanding of language and interpretation is an eighty-leaf treatise on the terms “literal” (\textit{ḥaqīqa}) and “figurative” (\textit{majāz}).\textsuperscript{78}

Regarding works on theological topics (\textit{uṣūl al-dīn}), \textit{Asmā’ mu’allafāt} lists 165 separate writings of various lengths and genres, the most famous of which are \textit{Kitāb al-Īmān} (Book of Faith); \textit{Dar’ ta’āruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql}; \textit{Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya fi ta’sis bidaʿihim al-kalāmiyya} (Elucidating the deceit of the Jahmiyya

\textsuperscript{72} Özervarli, “\textit{Qur’ānic Rational Theology},” 96. In a complementary vein, Birgit Krawietz remarks that “[Ibn Taymiyya] selbst verwandte jedoch keine Sorgfalt auf die Vorstrukturierung seines Nachruhms durch systematische Präsentation, gefällige Aufbereitung oder sorgfältige Sichtung seiner bereits abgefaßten Schriften” ([Ibn Taymiyya] himself, however, took no care to structure his posthumous reputation in advance through systematic presentation, appealing preparation, or the careful sifting of his already drafted writings). Krawietz, “Ibn Taymiyya,” 55.

\textsuperscript{73} Available with commentary by Muhammad b. Šāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn, translated into English as \textit{An Explanation of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah’s Introduction to the Principles of Tafsīr}. For a detailed study of this work, including its implications for and effect upon the larger \textit{tafsīr} tradition, see Saleh, “Ibn Taymiyya and the Rise of Radical Hermeneutics.” A collation of the various works Ibn Taymiyya wrote on \textit{tafsīr} reveals that, all in all, he composed the equivalent of about seventy quires (1,120 pages) of \textit{tafsīr}. Al-Hujaylī, \textit{Manhaj}. Ibn Taymiyya’s writings in \textit{tafsīr} are now available as a single multi-volume collection, published in al-Qaysī, \textit{Tafsīr Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya} (7 vols). The introduction to this work states that these seven volumes contain all Ibn Taymiyya’s known writings on \textit{tafsīr}, going substantially beyond what is found in \textit{MF}. See al-Qaysī, \textit{Tafsīr Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya}, 15 ff.

\textsuperscript{74} Q. \textit{Āl ʿImrān} 37. \textit{MF}, 13:270–315. (Also discussed at \textit{MF}, 5:477–482.)

\textsuperscript{75} Q. \textit{Āl ʿImrān} 37. Discussed at \textit{MF}, 13:143–148.

\textsuperscript{76} Q. \textit{Hūd} 11. \textit{MF}, 15:106–108.

\textsuperscript{77} Q. \textit{al-Shūrā} 42:11. \textit{MF}, 6:533–529.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibn Taymiyya, \textit{al-Ḥaqīqa wa-l-majāz} (also at \textit{MF}, 20400–497). The separate treatise \textit{al-Risāla al-Madaniyya} (which also appears at \textit{MF}, 6:351–373) is also relevant.
in laying the bases of their theological innovations); *Kitāb Minhāj al-sunna* (The way of the Sunna), in refutation of Shi‘ism; the seven-volume *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīh li-man baddala din al-Masih* (The correct response to those who altered the religion of the Messiah), in refutation of Christian trinitarian theology;\(^7^9\) and the work *Iqtiḍāʾ al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm li-mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jaḥīm*\(^8^0\) (On the various excesses of popular religion against which Ibn Taymiyya regularly inveighed. Other comprehensive theological works include a full volume explicating the first part of Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī’s famous theological work *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-muta‘akkhīrīn* and a two-volume commentary on certain questions treated in al-Rāzī’s *al-Arbaʿīn fī usūl al-dīn*\(^8^2\) Shorter theological treatises of a general nature include the aforementioned *al-ʿAqīda al-Wāsiṭyya*\(^8^3\) and *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya*, as well as *al-Risāla al-Tadmuriyya*,\(^8^4\) *al-Qāʿida al-Murrākushiyya* (on the question of the divine attributes), and a fifty-leaf treatise on the creed of the Ashʿarīs, the Māturīdīs, and the non-Māturīdī Hanafis.\(^8^5\)

Works dealing with the all-important question of God’s names and attributes include, in addition to the abovementioned *Murrākushiyya*, the following tracts: a treatise on the Most Beautiful Names of God (*asmāʾ Allāh al-ḥusnā*), as well as a treatise on the affirmation (*ithbāt*) of God’s names and attributes;\(^8^6\) a fifty-leaf *fatwā* on the issue of God’s being above (*ʿuluww*);\(^8^7\) a treatise known as the *Irbīliyya* on the question of God’s settling (*istiwāʾ*) and descending (*nuzūl*) and whether these are meant to be taken literally

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\(^7^9\) For a study on and partial translation of *Jawāb*, see Michel, *Muslim Theologian’s Response*. This work has also been taken up in Roberts, “Reopening of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue.” See also Hoover, “Ibn Taymiyya,” 834–844, which provides a detailed discussion of the content and significance of *Jawāb*, as well as an exhaustive list of all extant manuscripts, editions and translations, and scholarly studies.

\(^8^0\) For a description and full bibliography, see Hoover, “Ibn Taymiyya,” 865–873.

\(^8^1\) Literally, “On the requirement of the Straight Path [i.e., Islam] to remain distinct from the people of the fire.” Trans. Memon, *Ibn Taimiyya’s Struggle against Popular Religion*.

\(^8^2\) Neither of which is known to be extant.

\(^8^3\) Trans. Swartz, “Seventh-Century (A.H.) Sunnī Creed.”

\(^8^4\) Also at *MF*, 3:1–128. This treatise has formed the object of a lengthy refutation by the contemporary Palestinian-Jordanian scholar Sa‘īd Fūda, entitled *Naqḍ al-Risāla al-Tadmuriyya*.

\(^8^5\) Treatise not identified.

\(^8^6\) Material related to the Most Beautiful Names and to the affirmation of the divine names and attributes can be found at *MF*, 5:153–193 and in *al-Risāla al-Madanīyya*.

\(^8^7\) In *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil wa-l-masāʾil*, 185–216.
(ḥaqīqatan); a further, twenty-page treatise on istiwā’ and a refutation of its interpretation as “dominion” or “overpowering” (istīlā’); and a forty-leaf treatise on God’s distinction and separateness (mubāyana) from creation.

Other treatises touch upon questions of epistemology or rational methods of argumentation. These include the following: a 100-leaf qāʿida (treatise) on the notion that every rational argument adduced by an innovator (mubtadi’) proves the invalidity of his position; a full-volume work on knowledge that is firmly established (al-ʿilm al-muhkam); a three-volume work refuting the position that definitive (scriptural) indicants (adilla qaṭʿiyya) do not yield certainty (yaqīn); a treatise on the superiority of the knowledge of the early community (the salaf) over those who succeeded them (the khalaf); and a treatise on the perceived contradiction between the texts of revelation and consensus (ijmā’).

Works on purely philosophical themes include the following: a refutation of Ibn Sīnā’s al-Aḍḥawiyya fi al-maʿād, which denies physical resurrection after death (one of many extensive philosophical discursions found throughout the Dar’); a thin volume on the “tawḥīd” of the philosophers following in the way of Ibn Sīnā; a work entitled al-Radd ‘alā falsafat Ibn Rushd; a short volume on universals; a “large volume” refuting the philosophers’ assertion of the eternity of the world; and, finally, the aforementioned all-out attack on Greek logic, Kitāb al-Radd ‘alā al-manṭiqiyyīn.

Finally, we must mention several important compendia of Ibn Taymiyya’s writings. The largest and most significant of these are Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil al-kubrā (2 vols.), Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil wa-l-masāʾil (5 vols.), the 37-volume Majmūʿ fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Ahmad b. Taymiyya, and, now, the seven-volume Tafsīr Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya. These works bring together a number of shorter

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88 Perhaps MF, 5:194–225 (though I have not been able to find any discrete treatise by this name). For this theme in general, see MF, vol. 5 (“al-Asmāʾ wa-l-ṣifāt ʿalā”), passim.
89 Al-Bazzār reports that Ibn Taymiyya composed the equivalent of thirty-five quires (560 pages) on the question of istiwā’ (al-Ḥujaylī, Manhaj). (Treatise not identified.)
90 MF, 5:310–320.
91 Possibly MF, 4:46–97.
92 Listed in al-Ḥujaylī, Manhaj, on the authority of al-Ṣafadī and Ibn Shākir (d. 764/1363). (Treatise not identified.)
93 Ibn Taymiyya, “Risāla fi al-qiyās.” For a useful summary and analysis of this work, as well as a comparison of Ibn Taymiyya’s application of the principle of non-contradiction between reason and revelation in both the legal and the theological domains, see Rapoport, “Ibn Taymiyya’s Radical Legal Thought,” 192–199.
94 At Ibn Taymiyya, Dar’, 5:10–87. For a detailed study and a translation of Ibn Taymiyya’s treatment of the Adḥawiyya in the Dar’ taʻārub, see Michot, “Mamlūk Theologian’s Commentary.”
works—and some lengthier ones—on various topics; as such, they form an indispensable resource for the researcher interested in exploring Ibn Taymiyya’s rich thought and his voluminous writings.

5 The Historiography of the Darʾ taʿāruḍ: Ibn Taymiyya’s Assessment of the Intellectual Legacy He Inherited

In chapter 1, we considered the various currents and crosscurrents of the Islamic intellectual tradition, with special emphasis on the question of the relationship between reason and revelation as it developed in various disciplines up to the time of Ibn Taymiyya in the mid-seventh/thirteenth century. The preceding section of this chapter complemented that survey by providing an aperçu of Ibn Taymiyya’s immediate political and social circumstances, the fundamental elements of his biography, and the main outlines of his intellectual profile and scholarly output. Yet, we must take one final step in order to understand with precision what motivated Ibn Taymiyya in the Darʾ taʿāruḍ, in what context he perceived the momentous struggle of reason and revelation, and what precisely he hoped to achieve through his monumental magnum opus. This step involves reconstructing, from various statements scattered throughout the Darʾ, Ibn Taymiyya’s assessment of the development of the intellectual tradition he inherited and with which he brought himself into such urgent and strident conversation. Once we have understood Ibn Taymiyya’s perspective on the fundamental issues at stake, as can be gleaned from his own words, we can then delve into the Darʾ in the next chapter and begin to unravel the project to which its author has dedicated it.

We recall the fundamental issue of the divine attributes and the question of how best to understand scriptural statements that affirm the completely unique, other, and incomparable nature of God while simultaneously describing Him in terms evocative of qualities and attributes partaken of by human beings. The necessity of affirming God’s radical dissimilarity (tanzih) to anything created had to be counterbalanced by the imperative to uphold and affirm (ithbāt) the language of scripture and the reality of the descriptions God gives of Himself therein. We have seen that, over the course of Islamic history, different schools of thought adopted varying positions on how best to effect

95 Such as Kitāb al-Īmān, which occupies all of MF, vol. 7 (comprising a total of 686 pages). For a discussion of this work, see Belhaj, Questions théologiques, 89–98.
this reconciliation, with some stressing the reality of the attributes to the point of falling into a crude and primitive assimilationism (tashbīh), while others insisted upon divine transcendence with such single-mindedness as to deny the attributes any reality whatsoever, nullifying them altogether (taʿṭīl) and reducing the word “God” to an empty signifier denoting an abstract entity entirely inconceivable to the human mind (and, hence, unapproachable to the human heart as well).

We begin our mapping of Ibn Taymiyya’s mindset by considering his understanding of the positions pertaining to the divine attributes upheld by the early community of the Salaf (roughly, the learned men and women of the first three generations of Muslims), whom Ibn Taymiyya takes to be uniquely authoritative in their understanding and practice of the religion. The goal of this section is not to offer an independent assessment of Ibn Taymiyya’s depiction of the issues at hand but only to present his understanding of them in order to allow us, in the remainder of this study, to appreciate his response to the intellectual situation he encountered in the late seventh/thirteenth and early eighth/fourteenth centuries.

We begin with the earliest period, that of the Salaf. With respect to this early authoritative community, Ibn Taymiyya contends the following: (1) that the Salaf were unanimous in their affirmation of all the attributes predicated of God in revelation in a manner consistent with a straightforward, plain-sense understanding of the revealed texts, that is, without making taʾwīl or tafwīḍ of any of the divine attributes (in other words, he maintains that the Salaf were full-fledged affirmationists [muthbitūn] with no indications from them of any form of negationism [nafy] or figurative reinterpretation [taʾwīl]—which amounts to negationism for Ibn Taymiyya);96 (2) that they were also unanimous in denouncing negationist positions once these started to arise with or around the time of Jahm b. Ṣafwān and his teacher, al-Jaʿd b. Dirham, in the late first/seventh and early second/eighth centuries; and, critically for Ibn Taymiyya’s project, (3) that they actively defended and promoted affirmationist stances, and denounced negationist ones, by means of rational argumentation (in additional to citing purely scriptural evidence). This last point is key, for even the negationist admits, as a rule, that the obvious sense of the texts seems to imply affirmationism; hence his effort to reinterpret (that is, to make taʾwil of) the text according to the demands of reason or, at the very least, to point out that the obvious meaning cannot have been intended based on the presence of a rational objection (muʿāriḍ ʿaqli). In the face of such a stance, merely

96 See, for instance, Ibn Taymiyya, Darʾ, 4:23, line 16 to 4:24, line 7.
citing scripture is of no avail, for both the negationist and the affirmationist are, in fact, in agreement about what the obvious sense of the texts implies. The negationist’s “rational objection” to the apparent sense of revelation can thus be adequately met only by rational arguments refuting this objection and demonstrating the reasonability of the plain sense of the text in question. Ibn Taymiyya is keen to establish that the Salaf, whose positions and methods he takes as uniquely normative, were in possession both of a sound (indeed, the soundest) understanding of the revealed texts and of robust and evincive (indeed, the most robust and evincive) methods of rational argumentation in defense of this understanding. They thus stood at the very top of the Taymiyyan pyramid, in perfect and harmonious conformity with both authentic revelation and sound reason.

But how, according to Ibn Taymiyya, did we get from this situation to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s articulation of the universal rule six centuries later? Much like modern historians of Islamic intellectual history, Ibn Taymiyya, relying largely on al-Shahrastānī’s Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-nihal as well as al-Ashʿarī’s Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn, dates the spread of negationist (jahmī) positions to the period “after the first century [of the hijra], towards the end of the generation of the Successors.” This is the period when the proto-Muʿtazila took the position that neither accidents (aʿrāḍ) nor temporally originating events (ḥawādith) could supervene in God (taḥullu bihi). By this, Ibn Taymiyya reports, they meant that there could not subsist in God (taqūmu bihi) any attribute (ṣifa), such as “knowledge” or “power,” or any action (fiʿl) or state (ḥāl), such as “creating” or “settling” (istiwāʾ, i.e., upon the throne). Prior to this period, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, there are no statements or positions of negationism regarding the

\[97\] See p. 7 above.

\[98\] Ibn Taymiyya seems to have stressed the early community’s expertise in and regular recourse to rational argumentation in defense of the rational plausibility of scriptural dicta as a response to later thinkers (such as al-Rāzī and others), who contended that the Salaf were too preoccupied with establishing and expanding the frontiers of the Islamic lands and setting up its basic institutions to concern themselves with a careful reflection upon, and a rationally mature understanding of, the texts of revelation.

\[99\] See Darʿ, 7:72, line 21 to 7:73, line 1, where Ibn Taymiyya speaks of the foreign origins of negationism (tajahhum) and how it was adopted from past atheist nations (malāḥidat al-umam al-munkirīna lil-Ṣāniʿ), whom Ibn Taymiyya brands “the most ignorant of sects and the least endowed with intellect.” It is not clear whether by “past atheist nations” Ibn Taymiyya is referring to the Greeks or, more likely, to the “materialists” (dahriyya) or the (possibly Buddhist) Sumāniyya of Tirmidh and Samarqand briefly encountered in the previous chapter (see above, p. 32).

\[100\] Darʿ, 4:24, lines 9–10.

\[101\] Such as al-Jāʿd b. Dirham, Jahm b. Ṣafwān, and others (on whom see above, p. 35 ff.).
divine attributes that are recorded or known of anyone among the Muslim community, nor are there any statements denying that acts or states contingent upon God’s will inhere in the divine essence. Once such a position arose and was championed by the Mu’tazila, however, the authoritative scholars of the early community (a’immat al-salaf) promptly denounced it, “as is known and reported of them in a mutawātir fashion.” This initial denial of the divine attributes and actions led the Mu’tazila to adopt the position of the createdness of the Qur’ān, on the grounds that if the Qur’ān were held to subsist in God’s essence (law qāma bi-dhātihi), then this would entail that there could, in fact, subsist in Him actions and attributes, a position that had been denied at the outset. Ibn Taymiyya reports that the Salaf and early authorities (al-salaf wa-l-a’imma) were likewise unanimous in denouncing this position too.

Now, explains Ibn Taymiyya, all those who opposed the Mu’tazila on this count initially upheld the subsistence in God of attributes and of actions and speech contingent upon His will until the time of Ibn Kullāb (d. ca. 241/855) and his followers, who introduced a distinction between God’s “essential attributes” and His “volitional attributes.” Essential attributes, such as life and knowledge, are intrinsic to the divine essence. Volitional attributes, on the other hand, are contingent upon God’s will and power. Consequently, volitional attributes cannot be said to “subsist” in God, as this would entail the supervening of a succession of temporally originating events (taʿāqub al-ḥawādith) within the divine being—an impossibility according to Ibn Kullāb’s doctrine. Ibn Kullāb was then succeeded by Muḥammad b. Karrām (d. 255/869). Ibn Taymiyya reports on the authority of al-Ashʿarī’s Maqālāt that Ibn Karrām, along with “the majority of Muslims (ahl al-qibla) before him—including various factions of mutakallimūn from the Shiʿa and the Murjiʿa, such as the Hishāmiyya, and the disciples of Abū Muʿādh al-Tūmanī and Zuhayr al-Athari
and others”\textsuperscript{106}—was opposed both to the Muʿtazila and to the followers of Ibn Kullāb. All such groups, Ibn Taymiyya affirms, held the position that temporally originating events could subsist in God,\textsuperscript{107} and some among them even held the explicit position that God could move and that He has been “speaking from eternity whenever He willed.”\textsuperscript{108}

The next generation saw the rise of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. 324/935 or 936), whom Ibn Taymiyya credits with having launched a major effort to shore up the early community’s normative understanding of the revealed texts concerning God’s attributes and actions. It is noteworthy that one is hard pressed to find a single critical, let alone pejorative, statement about al-Ashʿarī in ten volumes of text. Rather, Ibn Taymiyya lauds al-Ashʿarī generously and commends him for his efforts to defend the received doctrine of the early community in rational terms. He classifies al-Ashʿarī, for instance, as “one of the astute of the mutakallimūn” (\textit{min hudhdhāq ahl al-kalām}) for conceding that the argument for the creation of the world from the temporal origination of accidents (\textit{ḥudūth al-aʿrāḍ}) is not the method employed by revelation or by the early community and authoritative scholars (\textit{salaf al-umma wa-aʾimmatuhā}).\textsuperscript{109} He further praises al-Ashʿarī and his immediate followers (\textit{aṣḥābuhu}) for their affiliation with (the doctrine of) Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and “leading authorities of the Sunna like him.”\textsuperscript{110} Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya affirms, al-Ashʿarī was “closer to the doctrine (\textit{madḥhab}) of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and \textit{ahl al-sumna} than many of the later figures affiliated with Aḥmad [i.e., latter-day Ḥanbalis] who inclined to some [aspects] of Muʿtazili \textit{kalām}, [figures] such as Ibn ʿAqīl, Ṣadaqa b. al-Ḥusayn [d. 573/1177], Ibn al-Jawzī, and others like them.”\textsuperscript{111} Ibn Taymiyya also held the view that the doctrine of al-Ashʿarī and his immediate followers on the divine attributes in particular was closer to the (orthodox) position of \textit{ahl al-sumna} and the people of \textit{ḥadīth} than the doctrine of Ibn Ḥazm and the Zāhiriṣ was.\textsuperscript{112} Finally, Ibn Taymiyya cites approvingly the text of a letter by Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī (d. 458/1066) called \textit{Fī faḍāʾil al-Ashʿarī} (On the virtues of al-Ashʿarī), which al-Bayhaqī “wrote to one of the governors of

\textsuperscript{106} See \textit{Dar‘}, 4:25, lines 7–10.
\textsuperscript{107} “\textit{kānū yaqūlūna bi-qiyām al-ḥawādith bihi.”} \textit{Dar‘}, 4:25, line 11.
\textsuperscript{108} “\textit{lam yazal mutakallīman idhā shāʾ}” \textit{Dar‘}, 4:25, line 13. My translation of this expression follows Hoover, “God Acts by His Will and Power,” 58. For a detailed history and explication of the nuances of the term \textit{lam yazal} as used in Islamic theological discourse, see Frank, “‘Lam yazal’ as a Formal Term in Muslim Theological Discourse.”
\textsuperscript{109} See \textit{Dar‘}, 1:39, lines 6–9.
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Dar‘}, 1:270, lines 8–9.
\textsuperscript{111} \textit{Dar‘}, 1:270, lines 9–11.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Dar‘}, 5:250, lines 7–9.
Khurasan when people began cursing the innovators (ahl al-bida’) there and some wanted to include al-Ash’arî among them.”

Despite such generous commendation, Ibn Taymiyya nonetheless ascribes to al-Ash’arî two specific shortcomings that, while subtle and therefore easily overlooked in al-Ash’arî’s own doctrine, planted the seeds for an eventual excrescence of major problems in the centuries that followed. The first shortcoming concerns al-Ash’arî’s knowledge of the details of the Sunna. Although Ibn Taymiyya goes so far as to consider al-Ash’arî and “the likes of him,” such as Ibn Kullāb, to be among the “mutakallimat ahl al-ḥadīth” (ḥadīth folk specialized in kalām) and “the best among the various factions and closest to the Book and the Sunna,” he nevertheless maintains that while al-Ash’arî possessed detailed expertise in kalām, his knowledge of the particulars of the ḥadīth and Sunna (as is typical, he tells us, of those specialized primarily in rational theology) was much more general and, ultimately, insufficient for him always to know precisely what the early positions of the Salaf were that needed to be defended. Ibn Taymiyya speaks of how al-Ash’arî and his main (early) followers (a’immat atbā‘ihi), such as al-Bāqillānī and Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī, wanted to champion the well-known positions of the people of Sunna and ḥadīth (ahl al-sunna wa-l-ḥadīth) while at the same time concurring with the negationists (jahmiyya) on [certain] rational principles that they deemed to be valid, and [since] they did not have the detailed expertise in the Qur’ān and its meanings, as well as in ḥadīth and the positions of the Companions, that the leading scholars of Sunna and ḥadīth had, they formed a doctrine (madhhab) that was a composite of these two [approaches], with the result that both parties [i.e., the negationists and the people of ḥadīth] accused them of contradiction.

In another passage, Ibn Taymiyya remarks that the foremost authors (a’yān al-fuḍalā‘al-muṣannifīn) [i.e., on creed], such as al-Shahrastānī, Abū Bakr b. al-‘Arabī (d. 543/1148), al-Juwaynī, al-Qāḍī Abū Ya’lā (d. 458/1066), Ibn al-Zāghūnī (d. 527/1132), Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Asīrī, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥayṣam (d. 407[?] or 1016), and others

113 Dar‘, 7:98–99. See excerpt from al-Bayhaqī’s Risāla at Dar‘, 7:99, line 3 to 7:101, line 8.
114 Dar‘, 7:462, lines 5–6. See also Dar‘, 2:308, lines 8–10, where Ibn Taymiyya states that “since al-Ash’arî and those like him were closer to the Sunna than [other] factions of mutakallimūn, he is closer in affiliation (intisāb) to Ahmad [b. Ḥanbal] than are others, as is evident in his works.” (See index of Arabic passages.)
115 See Dar‘, 7:35–36.
116 Dar‘, 7:35, lines 14–19. (See index of Arabic passages.)
often mention many positions on an issue taken by various groups, yet they neither know nor cite the established position of the early community (salaf) and of authorities (aʾīmma) such as Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal], even though the generality of scholars affiliated with the Sunna/Sunnism (ʾāmmat al-muntasibīna ilā al-sunna) from all the various factions (ṭawāʾif) claim to follow the authoritative imams such as Mālik, al-Shāfiʿī, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Ibn al-Mubārak, Ḥammād b. Zayd, and others.117

Reminiscent of a comment made by Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī with respect to his teacher, al-Ghazālī,118 Ibn Taymiyya maintains that al-Ashʿarī spent so many years immersed in Muʿtazila thought that he was unable to extricate himself from it fully. As a result, he unwittingly retained in his own doctrine what Ibn Taymiyya calls “remnants of the principles of the Muʿtazila.”119 Such “remnants” include, for instance, al-Ashʿarī’s (and Ibn Kullāb’s) concession of the validity of the argument for the existence of God from accidents (ṭarīqat al-aʿrāḍ) and the argument from the composition of bodies (ṭarīqat al-tarkīb)120—topics that, Ibn Taymiyya concedes, are “difficult even for those with more knowledge of the hadīth and Sunna than al-Ashʿarī had.”121 In another passage, Ibn Taymiyya speaks of “remnants of iʿtīzāl” in al-Ashʿarī, al-Qalānisī, and “those like them.” This time, he mentions the argument from motion (ṭarīqat al-ḥarakāt), an argument that, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, al-Ashʿarī himself admits (in his Risāla ilā ahl al-thaghr) was an innovation in prophetic religion (ṭarīq mubtadaʿ fī dīn al-rusul) and prohibited in it (muḥarram ʿindahum [i.e., al-rusul]).122 “This principle,” Ibn Taymiyya concludes, “is what landed the Muʿtazila in the denial of [God’s] attributes and actions.”123

117 See Darʾ, 2:307, line 12 to 2:308, line 2. (See index of Arabic passages.)
118 See Darʾ, 1:5, lines 9–10, where Ibn Taymiyya quotes Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī as saying, “Our shaykh [al-Ghazālī] penetrated into the inner reaches of philosophy [lit. “inside the philosophers” (butūn al-falāsifa)] then wanted to come back out, but he was not able to.”
119 “baqāyā min usūl al-Muʿtazila.” Darʾ, 7:462, line 8. Synonymous expressions include “baqāyā min al-tajahhum wa-l-iʿtīzāl” (7:97, lines 14–15), “baqāyā al-tajahhum wa-l-iʿtīzāl” (7:306, lines 4–5), and “baqiyya min al-iʿtīzāl” (7:236, line 10).
120 Darʾ, 7:97, lines 14–18; also Darʾ, 7:306, line 5.
121 Ibn Taymiyya mentions al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī, Abū ʿAlī al-Ṣibghī (d. 328/940), and Abū Bakr b. Ishāq al-Ṣibghī (d. 342/953 or 954) as among those who possessed “more knowledge of hadīth and Sunna than al-Ashʿarī had” but still fell into a similar trap and eventually retracted their positions. See Darʾ, 7:97, line 18 to 7:98, line 2.
122 Darʾ, 2:99, lines 14–15.
123 Darʾ, 2:99, lines 12–13.
Notwithstanding these reservations, Ibn Taymiyya’s assessment of the early Ashʿarī school (that of the mutaqaddimūn) and its main authorities is overwhelmingly positive. In one particularly illuminating passage, he recounts the scholarly filiation of and the transmission of doctrines among figures such as al-Bāqillānī and his student Abū Dharr al-Anṣārī al-Harawī (d. 434/1043), as well as Abū Naṣr al-Sijzī (d. 444/1052) and Abū al-Qāsim al-Zinjānī (d. 471/1078)—both of whom took al-Bāqillānī’s doctrine from Abū Dharr al-Harawī—and “others like them among the top authorities in scholarship and religion,” including such luminaries as Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī and al-Juwaynī. After mentioning these early Ashʿarī masters, he says of them collectively:

There is not one among them who has not made praiseworthy efforts and performed meritorious actions for the sake of Islam and [who has not] engaged in refuting many of those [who call to] heresy and innovation and rallied to the defense of many [who uphold] the Sunna and [true] religion. This is not hidden to anyone who is familiar with their circumstances and who speaks of them with knowledge, truthfulness, justice, and impartiality.

He then goes on to explain, however, that since [the problematic nature of such-and-such] principle, taken from the Muʿtazila, was not clear to them (iltabasa ʿalayhim), they, being people of distinction and intelligence, realized the need to apply [the principle] consistently and to abide by its entailments (iḥtājū ilā ʿardhi wa-iltizām lawāzīmihī). For this reason, they were forced to take positions (lazimahum min al-aqwāl) that the scholars and people of religion found objectionable [and denounced]. Because of this, some people came to extol them for their merits and creditable traits, while others came to censure them on account of the innovations and falsehoods that had crept into their discourse. But the best path is the middle path.

With respect to al-Ashʿarī in particular, Ibn Taymiyya maintains that while the champion of early Sunnī theological rationalism did not himself adopt any overtly errant positions, the seeds of such were nonetheless implicit in some

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124 See Darʾ, 2:100–102.
125 Darʾ, 2:301, lines 14–15.
126 Darʾ, 2:302, lines 4–7. (See index of Arabic passages.)
127 Darʾ, 2:302, lines 7–12. (See index of Arabic passages.)
of his basic assumptions. When his later followers became aware of the full entailments (lawāzim) of the positions he did adopt, they desired to maintain consistency; they thus adhered to the consequences al-Ashʿarī’s initial doctrine and allowed their substantive positions to be modified accordingly. In this manner, Ashʿarī theologians in each new generation were pulled farther back towards Muʿtazilī-style negationism as they sought to apply al-Ashʿarī’s own doctrine consistently and to tease out systematically all the implications and entailments of their master’s initial positions. For a similar reason, while al-Ashʿarī and his immediate followers, according to Ibn Taymiyya, did not concede even the theoretical possibility of a contradiction between reason and revelation, later Ashʿarīs—such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233)—who “took from the Muʿtazila when they inclined towards negationist doctrines (tajahhum) and even towards philosophy,” conceded not only the formal possibility but also the actual occurrence of real contradictions between reason and revelation, ultimately leading to the formulation of the universal rule as a means of ironing out the supposed incongruities.

So it is, explains Ibn Taymiyya, that with each successive generation of Ashʿarīs, we find ever increasing misgivings about one after another of the attributes predicated of God in revelation. These misgivings arise from alleged rational objections that al-Ashʿarī himself (and perhaps al-Bāqillānī too, since Ibn Taymiyya also sees him as having remained quite close to the Sunna) did not catch but that later thinkers uncovered in increasing number as they sought to work out consistently the full implications of his initial doctrine. Such slippage can likewise occur, according to Ibn Taymiyya, as later followers think up ever more numerous and sophisticated rational arguments to support their founder’s initial doctrine—arguments that entail further negation and that had not occurred to the mind of the founder. Such a proliferation of increasingly negationist arguments can be found not only among major Muʿtazilī figures of the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries but among primary

128 See Darʾ, 7:237, lines 1–16. The specific concession al-Ashʿarī made here to the Muʿtazila, according to Ibn Taymiyya, is the validity of the argument for the existence of God from the temporal origination of accidents (ṭarīq al-aʿrāḍ). See Darʾ, 7:236, lines 3–4.
129 See Darʾ, 7:97, lines 5–7.
130 Darʾ, 7:97, lines 4–5.
131 On the influence of logic, both Aristotelian and Stoic, on eminent representatives of the later tradition, including figures such as al-Āmidī and Ibn al-Ḥājib (d. 646/1248), see Hallaq, “Logic, Formal Arguments and Formalization of Arguments,” 322–327.
132 See Darʾ, 5:247, line 19 to 5:248, line 2.
133 Here Ibn Taymiyya specifically mentions Abū ‘Ali al-Jubbāʾī (d. 303/915 or 916), his son Abū
Ashʿarī authorities as well. In this manner, says Ibn Taymiyya, al-Ashʿarī himself and his immediate successor, al-Bāqillānī, unambiguously affirmed the so-called revealed attributes (al-ṣifāt al-khabariyya), including those that had become a point of contention, such as God's face, hands, and His settling upon the throne. Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya avers, al-Ashʿarī is not known ever to have held more than one position on this issue, to the point that “those who transmitted his doctrine (madhhab) were not in dispute over [this].”¹³⁴ Not only did al-Ashʿarī affirm such attributes, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, but he also refuted the rational arguments of those, such as the Muʿtazila, who argued that such texts could not be understood “literally” but had to be reinterpreted figuratively (yutaʾawwal) in order to skirt a rational objection or a charge of tashbīh.¹³⁵ However, just two generations after al-Bāqillānī, Ibn Taymiyya bemoans, al-Juwaynī negates such attributes, “in agreement with [the doctrine of] the Muʿtazila and the Jahmiyya.”¹³⁶ Concurring that such attributes could not be affirmed at face value, al-Juwaynī first adopted the position of taʾwīl in his Kitāb al-Irshād. In his later work al-ʿAqīda al-Niẓāmiyya, however, he upheld tafwīḍ instead, stating that “the early community (salaf) unanimously held that taʾwīl was neither permissible (sāʾigh) nor obligatory (wājib).”¹³⁷ Ibn Taymiyya is alluding here to a passage in al-Juwaynī’s Niẓāmiyya in which he states:

The authorities of the early community (aʾimmat al-salaf) refrained from taʾwīl, leaving the outer wording of the texts to stand as is and consigning their true meaning (tafwīḍ maʿānihā) to the Lord most high. The opinion to which we [al-Juwaynī] consent and the rational stance we adopt in religious matters (alladhī nartaḍīhi raʾyan wa-nadīnu Allāh bihi ʿaqlan) is to follow the early community (ittibāʿ salaf al-umma), as it is preferable to follow [the early authorities] and to refrain from generating new doctrines [that conflict with theirs] (fa-l-awlā al-ittibāʿ wa-tark al-ibtidāʿ).¹³⁸

As we have seen, Ibn Taymiyya vehemently rejects the view that the authoritative early community practiced tafwīḍ in any form. Rather, he insists, they were all full-fledged affirmationists who affirmed not only the wording of the

¹³⁴ See *Darʿ*, 5:248, lines 11–12.
¹³⁵ See *Darʿ*, 5:248, lines 18–20.
¹³⁶ *Darʿ*, 5:249, line 1.
¹³⁷ *Darʿ*, 5:249, lines 1–5.
¹³⁸ Al-Juwaynī, *al-ʿAqīda al-Niẓāmiyya*, 32 (mentioned in passing at *Darʿ*, 5:249 and cited in full by the editor at 5:249, n. 2). (See index of Arabic passages.)
revealed texts but also the meanings most naturally understood from this wording in light of the known linguistic convention of the first, prophetic community. (The question of interpreting revelation in light of the linguistic convention of the early community will occupy us at length in chapter 4.)

Eventually, in the fifth/eleventh century, we come to al-Ghazālī, who, Ibn Taymiyya tells us, at times affirms the “rational attributes” (al-ṣifāt al-ʿaqliyya), in conformity with the standard Ashʿarī position, and at times either negates them altogether or reduces them to the single attribute of knowledge, in agreement with the doctrine of the philosophers.139 His final position on the issue, Ibn Taymiyya reports, was one of suspension of judgement (waqf), whereupon he clung to the Sunna as the safest path and died, allegedly, while engaged in studying the books of ḥadīth.140 Finally, by the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries, al-Rāzī and al-Āmidī, both major authorities of later Ashʿarī kalām, had become so agnostic with regard to the reality and the knowability of the divine attributes affirmed in scripture—coupled with their proportionately decreasing confidence that revelation could serve as the basis for any certain (yaqīn), objective knowledge whatsoever, even in strictly theological matters—that they ultimately claimed not to have any proof at all, rational or scriptural, for either the affirmation or the negation of the divine attributes.141 They thus ended up, essentially, in a draw over a major point of theology addressed extensively in revelation and sharply contested by the leading philosophical and theological minds of the preceding six centuries.142 Indeed, Ibn Taymiyya observes, al-Āmidī was not even able to establish in his books doctrines as basic as the oneness of God (tawḥīd), the temporal origination of the

139 In the following section (p. 118 ff.), we consider at greater length Ibn Taymiyya’s relationship to al-Ghazālī and the position he held with respect to his esteemed predecessor.
140 Darʾ, 5:249, lines 9–12. In another place, Ibn Taymiyya says more specifically that al-Ghazālī “died studying [a copy of] the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī.” See Darʾ, 1:162, line 11. Such reports of deathbed disavowals of wayward doctrine are a common trope and cannot be taken at face value without further corroboration. With respect to this claim regarding al-Ghazālī, see Griffel, Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology, 56–57.
141 See Darʾ, 5:249, lines 6–8.
142 See, for example, Darʾ, 5:333, esp. lines 10–12 for how, regarding the most basic and important aspects of religion, the major rationalists (nuẓẓār) are in “great confusion” (hayra ʿaẓīma). See also Darʾ, 7:283, lines 10–11, where they are said to be in “confusion, uncertainty, and doubt” (hayra wa-shubha wa-shakk). Similar indictments can be found in numerous places throughout the Darʾ. For a list of quotations by major thinkers who allegedly admitted that they had not gained any certain knowledge from their years of pursuing rational inquiry (naẓar) in the manner of the mutakallimūn, see Darʾ, 3:262, line 10 to 3:264, line 2. This list includes, among others, Afḍal al-Dīn al-Khūnajī (d. 646/1248), the top logician of his day.
world (ḥudūth al-ʿālam), or even the very existence of God\textsuperscript{143} and was reported by a “reliable authority” (thiqa) to have said, “I applied myself assiduously to the study of kalām but did not acquire anything [reliable] from it that differs from what the common people believe.”\textsuperscript{144}

The foregoing pertains to the mutakallimūn and Ibn Taymiyya’s depiction of the historical development of kalām. With regard to the philosophers, Ibn Taymiyya blames their extreme form of negationism for Ibn ʿArabī’s mystical notion of the “unity of being” (waḥdat al-wujūd). The Bāṭiniyya (esoterics, often with specific reference to the Ismāʿīlīs), however, exhibit the most extreme form of negationism, to the point that they refrain from predicing anything of God whatsoever. The result is a purely—and, Ibn Taymiyya argues, highly incoherent—negative theology in which, ostensibly to avoid falling into tashbih of any sort whatsoever, one may not even affirm that God exists (mawjūd) or that He does not exist (ghayr mawjūd), nor may one affirm that He is positively non-existent (maʿdūm) or that He is not non-existent (ghayr maʿdūm). Ibn Taymiyya also mentions that those whom he labels the “materialist (pseudo-)philosophers” (al-mutafalsifa al-dahriyya),\textsuperscript{145} such as Ibn Sinā and al-Fārābī, claim that reason rules out the possibility of a physical resurrection on the day of judgement, with the now familiar prescription that texts apparently affirming such a resurrection must be subjected to the (alleged) dictates of reason and reinterpreted accordingly. When those among the Muʿtazila who affirm bodily resurrection dispute with such philosophers over this matter, the philosophers reply with the same type of argument that the Muʿtazila employ against the affirmationists. The philosophers argue, essentially, that “our position on bodily resurrection is analogous to your position on the attributes,”\textsuperscript{146} that is, if you (the Muʿtazila) are truly consistent, then you should also deny bodily resurrection on the same grounds on which you have denied the divine attributes.

This, then, is the chronological progression, as Ibn Taymiyya sees it, from what he contends was the conscientious and unrestricted affirmationism of the Salaf, buttressed by probative rational arguments and therefore in full confor-

\textsuperscript{143} Darʾ, 3:263, lines 1–2.

\textsuperscript{144} “amʿantu al-naẓar fī al-kalām wa-mā istafadtu minhu shayʿan illā mā ʿalayhi al-ʿawāmm.” Darʾ, 8:262, lines 15–16.

\textsuperscript{145} The second form quadriliteral verb “tafalsafa” does not necessarily have the negative connotation of “pseudo-philosophizing” in all contexts and may, indeed, simply mean “to practice philosophy” in a neutral sense. (I thank Robert Wisnovsky for pointing this out to me.) Here, however, I deliberately translate it as “pseudo-philosophers” since that seems to be the connotation Ibn Taymiyya most likely wished to impart in this context.

\textsuperscript{146} Darʾ, 5:250, lines 13–14.
mity with pure reason (ʿaql ṣarīḥ), to the outright negation of all divine names, attributes, and actions that arose as an ill-conceived response to alleged rational objections. Ibn Taymiyya rejects this negationism as being not only opposed to any plausible reading of the texts of revelation but also, significantly, in flagrant violation of the most elementary and universal principles of reason itself.

Now, Ibn Taymiyya holds that while all these developments—and increasingly grave deviations—were occurring among those formally involved in theological and philosophical speculation, there always remained a group, including many scholars and the majority of the common folk, that persisted in upholding, and also in rationally defending, the understanding of the revealed texts bequeathed to the umma by its earliest—and, once again, uniquely authoritative—generations. According to Ibn Taymiyya, this group included the majority of hadīth scholars, a majority of legal scholars (fuqahāʾ, sing. faqīh) in the early centuries and a good number in his day, as well as the majority of early ascetics and Sufis. Some among this group were so repulsed by the very nature and contentiousness of the discussions raging among the theologians and philosophers that they refused even to engage in them and were content faithfully to uphold what they knew to be the understanding of the early community. Ibn Taymiyya is keen to point out, however, that others among this group did take it upon themselves to engage in theological debate in an attempt to provide an adequate rational defense of the received normative understanding of the Salaf. We may venture to affirm that Ibn Taymiyya would be happy to include al-Ashʿarī (though not, to be sure, the majority of later Ashʿarīs) among this group, albeit with the abovementioned caveat regarding the “remnant of iʿtizāl” that marred al-Ashʿarī’s initial doctrine and that later festered, at the hands of his most astute successors, into what Ibn Taymiyya saw as the pseudo-philosophical, quasi-Muʿtazilī approach of a sixth-/twelfth-century al-Rāzī or a seventh-/thirteenth-century al-Āmidī.

Most prominent among the rationally engaged traditionalists was Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), the revered eponym of the legal and theological school to which Ibn Taymiyya adhered and the scholar that he credits with having adduced, in the process of establishing the foundations of theology (uṣūl al-dīn), “a larger number of definitive proofs (adilla qaṭʿiyya), based in both revelation and reason, than all other major authorities.” Ibn Taymiyya further asserts that Ibn Ḥanbal “did not forbid appealing to a valid rational argument that leads to [knowledge of] what is meant to be proved (yunfḍi ilā al-maṭlūb)” and adds that, in his disputations with the Jahmiyya and other groups opposed

147 Darʾ, 7:354, lines 7–8.
to the normative, orthodox understanding of the early community, Ibn Ḥanbal employed rational arguments such as are “well known in his writings and among his followers.”

To substantiate this point, Ibn Taymiyya cites two specific examples of rational inferences (qiṣyāṣayn ʿaqlīyyayn) used by Ibn Ḥanbal to refute this or that doctrine of a negationist, closing with the statement that “Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal] draws inferences on the basis of rational arguments (yastādillu bi-l-adilla al-ʿaqliyya) in theological matters as long as they are valid” (emphasis mine). Ibn Taymiyya further highlights Ibn Ḥanbal’s broad authority among scholars and non-scholars alike as the heroic champion of orthodoxy against the official state imposition of Muʿtazili doctrines during the miḥna. In this vein, Ibn Taymiyya cites on several occasions in the Darʾ a lengthy quotation from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, which reads:

Praise be to God, who has appointed in every non-prophetic era (fi kulli zamān fatra min al-rusul) remnants of the people of knowledge (ahl al-ʿilm) who call those who have strayed [back] to right guidance and are forbearing in the face of what harm [they may receive from those they call], who bring back to life by the Book of God those who are dead [spiritually] and who grant vision, by God’s light, to those who are blind. How many dead victims of the devil have they brought to life! How many of those wandering in error have they guided aright! How comely, then, is the effect they have on people and how odious the effect of people on

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148 *Darʾ*, 7:353, line 19 to 7:354, line 1.
149 See *Darʾ*, 7:354, line 19 to 7:355, line 8.
150 *Darʾ*, 7:355, lines 9–13. See also *Darʾ*, 5:180, line 1ff.: “Given that this is known by reason, Aḥmad said ...” (wa-lammā kāna hādhā yuʿrafu bi-l-ʿaql qāla Aḥmad ...). For a study that addresses Ibn Ḥanbal’s use of reason and argument in theological matters, see Williams, “Aspects of the Creed of Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal.”
151 Ibn Taymiyya states that this passage appears in the work al-Radd ʿalā al-jahmiyya wa-l-zanādiqa (also “al-zanādiqa wa-l-jahmiyya”), attributed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and he cites it on several occasions in the *Darʾ* (see next note). The *Radd* is translated in Seale, *Muslim Theology*, 96–125 (the translation of the passage cited here, however, is mine). Jon Hoover points out (on the basis of al-Sarhan, “Early Muslim Traditionalism,” 29–54) that while earlier forms of this text may go back to Ibn Ḥanbal, the final version of it contains substantial rational argumentation against non-traditionalist doctrines and may thus be seen as a fifth-/eleventh-century text attributed retroactively to Ibn Ḥanbal to legitimize rational argumentation in theology among the Ḥanbalis (on the assumption that Ibn Ḥanbal would not have approved of or engaged in such himself). See Hoover, “Ḥanbalī Theology,” 627. Be that as it may, Ibn Taymiyya certainly took this text as authentically attributable to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, a position that matches his general portrayal of Ibn Ḥanbal as someone who not only approved of (valid forms of) rational argumentation but who also, indeed, exemplified these in his own polemical engagements with theological adversaries.
them! They exonerate the Book of God from the distortions of extremist sectarians (*al-ghālīn*), the misrepresentations of those who falsify religion (*intihāl al-mubṭilīn*), and the (unfounded) interpretations (*taʾwīl*) of the ignorant who have raised the banners of heretical innovation (*bidʿa*) and unloosed the reins of discord (*fitna*). They are those who oppose the Book and differ over it, united only in their abandoning of the Book. They discourse on God and the Book of God with no knowledge and speak in vague and ambiguous terms (*yatakallamūna bi-l-mutashābih min al-kalām*), fooling thereby the ignorant among men. We seek refuge, therefore, in God from the trials of those who lead [others] astray (*fitan al-muḍillīn*).  

Ibn Taymiyya certainly sees himself as following in the footsteps of his revered forebear and, along with all the rightly guided defenders of the early doctrine mentioned above, clearly aspires to take his place in the cortège of those “remnants of the people of knowledge who call those who have strayed [back] to right guidance” by providing, via his *Darʾ taʿāruḍ*, the definitive answer to the seemingly insoluble “conflict” between reason and revelation that had been building for so many centuries.

| TABLE 3 | Ibn Taymiyya’s account of the development of the conflict between reason and revelation |
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| **610–AH/11/632 CE** | Age of revelation in the form of the Qurʾān and the prophetic Sunna. Prophet conveys full and adequate understanding of the theological content of revelation to his Companions. |
| **11–220/632–835** | Period of the Salaf, comprising the first three generations of Muslims praised by the Prophet:  
– the Companions (ca. 11–100/632–718)  
– the Successors (ca. 100–170/718–786)  
– the Successors of the Successors (ca. 170–220/786–835)  
Salaf unanimously affirm all the divine attributes without interpreting them figuratively (*taʾwil*) or disavowing their literal sense while entrusting their true meaning to God (*tafwīḍ*). |
| early second/eighth c. | First negationist positions arise with al-Jaʿd b. Dirham and his student, Jahm b. Ṣafwān.  
Authoritative scholars of the Salaf unanimously condemn negationism (*nafy*) and defend affirmationism (*ithbāt*), partly through the use of rational argumentation. |

152 Cited three times, at *Darʾ*, 1:18, 1:221–222, and 2:301–302; Ibn Hanbal, *Radd*, 55. (See index of Arabic passages.)
| Time Period | Event |
|-------------|-------|
| Second half of second/eighth c. | Early Mu'tazila deny that accidents or temporally originating events supervene in God, implying negation of attributes such as knowledge, power, creating, or settling on the throne. Initial negationism with respect to the divine attributes eventually leads to the doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'an, which is unanimously denounced by the Salaf. Salaf continue unanimously to uphold the subsistence in God both of attributes and of actions and speech contingent upon His will. |
| Early third/ninth c. | Ibn Kullāb introduces a distinction between God's essential attributes, intrinsic to the divine essence, and His volitional attributes, which cannot be said to "subsist" in God. |
| Mid-third/ninth c. | Ahmad b. Ḥanbal emerges from the miḥna as a hero of Sunnī orthodoxy—the position of the majority of the common folk as well as the majority of ḥadith scholars, fuqahāʾ, and early ascetics and Sufis. Ibn Taymiyya credits Ibn Ḥanbal with the use of solid rational arguments in defense of orthodoxy where necessary. Ibn Karrām opposes Ibn Kullāb and upholds, along with the majority of Muslim factions, the subsistence of temporally originating events in God. |
| Late third/ninth to early fourth/tenth c. | Rise of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī. Defends orthodox doctrines through rational means but retains "remnants of iʿtizāl" that draw figures of the later Ash'arī school back towards Mu'tazili theses. Al-Ash'arī and his immediate followers affirm all the divine attributes—including God's face, hands, and settling on the throne—and refute, by way of rational proofs, Mu'tazili arguments that these attributes must be interpreted figuratively in order to avoid tashbih. Al-Ash'arī and his immediate followers do not concede even the possibility of a conflict between reason and (the plain sense of) revelation. |
| Late fourth/tenth to early fifth/eleventh c. | Prominent Ash'arī figures, such as al-Bāqillānī and al-Isfarāyīnī, continue championing orthodox doctrines while unwittingly conceding certain principles to the negationists. Flourishing of Ibn Sīnā, whom Ibn Taymiyya classifies, along with al-Fārābī a century earlier, as a "materialist (pseudo-)philosopher." He faults them for extreme negationism of the divine attributes, the denial of physical resurrection, and their view of revelation as an imaginative evocation rather than as literally true. |
| Early to late fifth/eleventh c. | Flourishing of numerous Ash'arī figures whom Ibn Taymiyya praises highly, including al-Bāqillānī and al-Juwaynī (and, in the first half of the next century, Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī). Given their acumen and desire for consistency, these figures draw out some of the entailments of al-Ash'arī's initial Mu'tazili-influenced assumptions and uphold their consequences. This trend increases in subsequent generations, leading to greater adoption of Mu'tazili-like theses. |
Despite general praise of al-Juwaynī, Ibn Taymiyya faults him for adopting *tafwīḍ* vis-à-vis attributes such as God’s hands and face (and for attributing this stance to the Salaf).

**late fifth/eleventh to early sixth/twelfth c.** Flourishing of al-Ghazālī, whom Ibn Taymiyya faults for being inconsistent on the reality of the attributes, sometimes affirming them, sometimes negating them or reducing them to the single attribute of knowledge, and eventually suspending judgement on them altogether.

**late sixth/twelfth to early seventh/thirteenth c.** Flourishing of al-Rāzī and al-Āmidī, whom Ibn Taymiyya faults for their agnosticism regarding the reality and knowability of the divine attributes and their corresponding skepticism of the power of reason to reach truth in fundamental matters of theology.

**early to mid-seventh/thirteenth c.** Death of Ibn ʿArabī, whom Ibn Taymiyya excoriates for an extreme form of “negationism” in the guise of his monistic mystical esoterism.

**661–728/1263–1328** Life and work of Ibn Taymiyya.

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6  **The Darʾ taʿāruḍ in Context: Ibn Taymiyya’s View of Previous Attempts to Solve the Conundrum of Reason and Revelation**

Ibn Taymiyya was not, of course, the first Muslim thinker to attempt, on a grand and conclusive scale, to put an end to the conflict between reason and revelation. Notwithstanding the several figures (mentioned at the end of the preceding section) whom Ibn Taymiyya credits with providing a rational defense of orthodox understandings regarding the divine attributes and other issues, there were several notable attempts by theologians and philosophers before him to provide a definitive solution to this most vexing of issues. The works of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī\(^\text{153}\) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī\(^\text{154}\) represent attempts to

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\(^{153}\) The main studies on al-Ghazālī relevant to the points discussed here are (in chronological order) Chelhot, “«al-Qistās al-Mustaqīm»”; Othman, *Concept of Man in Islam*, 33–70; Marmura, *Ghazali and Demonstrative Science*; Kleinknecht, *Al-Qistās al-Mustaqīm*; Fayyūmī, *al-Imām al-Ghazālī wa-ʿalāqat al-yaqīn bi-l-ʿaql*; Abrahamov, *Al-Ghazālī’s Supreme Way to Know God*; Aydin, *Al-Ghazālī on Metaphorical Interpretation*; Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology*, 111–122; Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī at His Most Rationalist*; and Griffel, “Theology Engages with Avicennan Philosophy.”

\(^{154}\) For al-Rāzī’s views on reason and revelation as well as scriptural interpretation, see Jaffer, *Rāzī*, 68–117; Kafrawi, “Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Sources of Ta’wil”; and the sources listed below at p. 133, n. 5; p. 134, n. 7; and p. 184, n. 12.
reconcile reason and revelation from a kalām perspective, while those of Ibn Sinā\textsuperscript{155} and Ibn Rushd represent parallel attempts made by the philosophers.\textsuperscript{156} Before taking up the details of Ibn Taymiyya's solution to this question, we first briefly review how, in the Darʾ taʿāruḍ, he assesses his predecessors' attempts at a resolution and how he seeks to position his own efforts with respect to theirs. Below, we discuss Ibn Sinā and Ibn Rushd on the philosophers' side and al-Ghazālī on the side of the theologians. As for al-Rāzī, the Darʾ as a whole is, in a sense, a response to his articulation of the universal rule, Ibn Taymiyya's critique of which occupies the entirety of the following chapter.

We begin with the two philosophers, Ibn Sinā and Ibn Rushd, whom Ibn Taymiyya recognizes to have held very similar, if not identical, views regarding the purpose and scope of revealed religion as well as the nature of the relationship between reason and revelation.\textsuperscript{157} Following in the footsteps of al-Fārābī\textsuperscript{158}—and, indeed, characteristic of the Muslim philosophers as a whole—both Ibn Sinā and Ibn Rushd (1) consider the language of revelation

\textsuperscript{155} Pertinent studies on Ibn Sinā's approach to reason, epistemology, and the relationship between reason and revelation include Street, “An Outline of Avicenna's Syllogistic”; McGinnis, “Avicenna's Naturalized Epistemology”; Acar, “Talking about God: Avicenna's Way Out”; Acar, \textit{Talking about God and Talking about Creation}; Shihadeh, “Aspects of the Reception”; Alper, “Epistemological Value”; and, with particular relevance to Ibn Taymiyya in the \textit{Darʾ taʿāruḍ}, Michot, \textit{Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary}.

\textsuperscript{156} The main studies on Ibn Rushd relevant to the points discussed here are (in chronological order) Wolfson, “Double Faith Theory”; Hourani, “Ibn-Rushd’s Defence of Philosophy”; Hourani, \textit{Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy}; Mahdi, “Remarks on Averroes’ Decisive Treatise”; von Kügelgen, \textit{Averroes und die arabischen Moderne}; Butterworth, “Source that Nourishes”; Alain de Libera’s introduction to Averroès, \textit{Discours décisif}, 5–83, as well as his introductory essay in Averroès, \textit{L’Islam et la raison}, 9–76; and Ḥamāda, \textit{Ibn Rushd fi Kitāb Faṣl al-maṣqāl}.

\textsuperscript{157} See Michot, “Mamlūk Theologian’s Commentary,” 168–170 for examples of parallels, on the question of hermeneutics and the nature of revelation, between Ibn Sinā’s \textit{al-Adhawīyya fi al-maʿād}, on the one hand, and Ibn Rushd’s \textit{al-Kashf ‘an manāḥij al-adilla} [hereafter \textit{Manāḥij}] and \textit{Faṣl al-maṣqāl}, on the other. Ibn Taymiyya comments at length in the Darʾ taʿāruḍ on both \textit{Adhawīyya} (at Darʾ 518–86) and \textit{Manāḥij} (at Darʾ, 6:212–249). For a detailed study of Ibn Taymiyya’s engagement with Ibn Rushd in the Darʾ and, particularly, in his earlier treatise \textit{Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya}, see Hoover, “Ibn Taymiyya’s Use of Ibn Rushd.” In this study, Hoover demonstrates how “Ibn Taymiyya puts Ibn Rushd to work marginalizing his opponent Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī from his self-proclaimed position as a mainstream rationalist theologian and refuting his arguments” (Hoover, “Ibn Taymiyya’s Use of Ibn Rushd,” 475).

\textsuperscript{158} On al-Fārābī, see Mahdi, “Alfarabi on Philosophy and Religion”; O'Meara, “Religion als Abbild der Philosophie”; Schoeler, “Poetischer Syllogismus—bildliche Redeweise—Religion”; Germann, “Natural and Revealed Religion”; López-Farjeat, “Faith, Reason, and Religious Diversity”; and El-Rayes, “The \textit{Book of Religion}’s Political and Pedagogical Objectives.”
on metaphysical, theological, and eschatological topics to be almost entirely symbolic or allegorical rather than literal; (2) regard the purpose of revelation as primarily moral-ethical and legal-political rather than cognitional or epistemic; (3) distinguish sharply between the common folk (ʿāmma), whom the pictorial language of revelation is meant to motivate in the performance of good deeds, and the philosophical elite (khāṣṣa), who attain to metaphysical, theological, and eschatological truth by dint of rational inquiry; and (4) censure the mutakallimūn for confusing the common people by publicly reinterpreting certain Qur’ānic verses figuratively, and for doing so on the basis of what they decry as substandard argumentation and inconclusive reasoning.

With respect to Ibn Sinā’s views on reason and revelation, Ibn Taymiyya dedicates a substantial section at the beginning of Argument 20 (Dar’, vol. 5) to a treatment of his treatise al-Adḥawiyya fi al-maʿād, the third section of which contains Ibn Sinā’s hermeneutical prescription for dealing with revealed texts that are thought to conflict with reason. In the Adḥawiyya, which Yahya Michot labels the “most controversial writing of the Shaykh al-Raʾīs,” Ibn Sinā confirms that “the revelation ( sharʾ) and religion (milla) that come on the tongue of a prophet are meant to address the generality of the masses (al-jumhūr kāffatan).” Ibn Sinā defines the true doctrine of tawḥīd as the affirmation of the Maker (al-Ṣāniʿ) as one, transcendently beyond [or “sanctified above”: muqaddas ʿan] quantity, quality, place, time, position, and change, such that one come to believe that He is one essence (dhāt wāḥida), unique in kind, without any existential part ( juzʾ wujūdi), either quantitative or qualitative, and that it [His essence] can be neither inside nor outside the world, nor such that He can be pointed to [as being] here or there.

Indeed, Ibn Sinā maintains, “had it [the doctrine of tawḥīd] been presented in this manner to the native Arabs and the uncouth Hebrews, they would have

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159 For extensive background on and analysis of Ibn Sinā’s Adḥawiyya, followed by a translation of Ibn Taymiyya’s commentary on it in the first part of Argument 20 (at Dar’, 5:18–86), see Michot, “Mamlūk Theologian’s Commentary.”
160 Michot, “Mamlūk Theologian’s Commentary,” 164.
161 “al-sharʾ wa-l-milla al-ātiya’ alā lisān nabī min al-anbiyāʾ yurāmu bīhā khīṭāb al-jumhūr kāf- fatan.” Dar’, 5:31; Ibn Sinā, Adḥawiyya, 97.
162 Dar’, 5:11; Adḥawiyya, 97–98. (See index of Arabic passages.)
163 Referring not to the Jews of seventh-century Arabia or eleventh-century Persia but to the
rushed to deny it and would have concurred that the belief to which they were being called was belief in a non-existent (īmān bi-maʿdūm).”

Ibn Sīnā goes on to affirm that while certain Qurʾānic expressions, such as “God’s hand is over their hands” (Q. al-Fath 48:10), are clearly meant figuratively or metaphorically, in accord with the expansive norms of Arabic locution, other expressions, such as God’s “coming in the shadows of clouds” (see Q. al-Baqara 2:210), cannot plausibly be interpreted as figures of speech in light of Arabic rhetorical conventions. Indeed, he concludes, “[If we] suppose that all such expressions are to be taken as metaphors, then where is the tawḥīd? Where is the expression [in revelation] that explicitly indicates the pure tawḥīd to which the reality of this upright religion calls, the majesty of which is professed on the tongues of all the sages of the world?” Ibn Sīnā then strikes out at the mutakallimūn by asking rhetorically where revelation mentions any of the theological subtleties with which they concern themselves, such as whether God is knowledgeable by virtue of His essence (ʿālim bi-l-dhāt) or by virtue of an attribute of knowledge (ʿālim bi-ʿilm), whether He occupies space (mutaḥayyiz) or is spatially located (fiḥja), and so on. He concludes that it is apparent from all this that religious teachings (sharāʾiʿ) have come to address the masses according to what they can understand, bringing closer to their minds that which they cannot understand through the use of allegory (tamthīl) and similitude (tashbīh). Had it been otherwise, [these] teachings would have been of no avail whatsoever (la-mā aghnat al-sharāʾiʿ al-batta).

It follows from this, as Ibn Sīnā states explicitly, that “the apparent sense of revelation cannot serve as an argument in these matters [specifically, eschatology].” Knowledge of this truth, however, is intended for “those who aspire to be among the elite of the people and not the masses.” As for the masses, they should be left to have faith in the outward meaning of scripture and not...
be confused by the non-literally interpretations of the *mutakallimūn*, nor should they be made privy to the real knowledge of *tawḥīd* that the philosophers have discerned through the light of reason.

As for Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymiyya cites and discusses in the *Darʾ* numerous lengthy abstracts from the philosopher’s works, most notably his *al-Kashf ṣan manāḥij al-adilla fī ‘aqāʾid al-milla* [hereafter *Manāḥij*].\(^{171}\) Ibn Taymiyya cites Ibn Rushd at length, mainly for his concession, as a leading philosopher, that the revealed texts convey nothing but pure affirmationism with regard to the divine attributes and in no wise intimate, even remotely, the types of “negationist” *taʾwīl* given to them by the *mutakallimūn*.\(^{172}\) Ibn Rushd, in fact, goes so far as to say that “affirming spatial location [of God] (*ithbāt al-jiha*) is obligatory by virtue of both revelation and reason; this is what revelation has come with and is built upon. Nullifying this principle [or rule: *qāʿida*] amounts to a nullification of religious teachings (*sharāʾiʿ*),”\(^{173}\) as the masses (*al-jumhūr*) are incapable of conceiving anything that does not have a counterpart in sensory reality. For this reason, revelation prohibits (*yazjuru ʿan*) delving into such matters if there is no need. It is thus obligatory, Ibn Rushd tells us, to defer to the way in which revelation itself deals with such matters and to refrain from interpreting figuratively that which the texts do not explicitly treat as figurative.\(^{174}\) Deflecting the obvious sense of revelation in favor of non-apparent, figurative interpretations (*taʾwīlāt*) derived through reason only confuses the common people and undermines their confidence in the veracity and integrity of scripture.

In upholding the necessity of literal interpretation for the populace while strictly limiting the real truth of *tawḥīd* and other metaphysical realities to the philosophical elite, Ibn Rushd, like Ibn Sinā before him, launches a heavy attack against the *mutakallimūn*. Human beings, he tells us, fall into three cat-

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171 Among the most significant of these abstracts is a lengthy citation from *Manāḥij* (followed by Ibn Taymiyya’s commentary) at *Darʾ*, 6:212–249 (esp. 6:217–227). The other major work of Ibn Rushd directly relevant to the present theme is his *Faṣl al-maqāl* and its appendix (*Ḍamīma*), both of which are translated in Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* and in Butterworth, *Averroës: Decisive Treatise & Epistle Dedicatory*.

172 See Hoover, “Ibn Taymiyya’s Use of Ibn Rushd,” 474 and passim. Hoover speaks (p. 483) of Ibn Taymiyya’s “audacity and ingenuity in invoking Ibn Rushd to supplant Ibn Sinā and marginalize al-Rāzī” and notes that Ibn Taymiyya, despite his differences with Ibn Rushd, nonetheless invokes him at length to provide the strongest refutation of the *mutakallimūn*’s (public) practice of reinterpreting seemingly corporealist descriptions of God in revelation.

173 *Darʾ*, 6:216; Ibn Rushd, *Manāḥij*, 178. (See index of Arabic passages.)

174 “fa-yajibu an yumtathala fī hādhā kullihi fīl al-sharʿ wa-lā yutaʾawwala mā lam yuṣarriḥ al-sharʿ bi-taʾwilīhī” (*Manāḥij*: “wa-an la yutaʾawwala”). *Darʾ*, 6:217; *Manāḥij*, 179.
egories (or ranks, *rutab*; sing. *rutba*) with respect to the metaphysical matters addressed in revelation: 175 (1) the general masses (*al-jumhūr*) and the majority (*al-akthar*), who experience no doubt when the texts are understood according to their literal meaning; (2) the “scholars who are firmly grounded in knowledge,” 176 who know the reality of such matters (‘*arafū haqiqat hādhihi al-ashyā*’) and who constitute a minority among people; and (3) those who stand above the rank of the commoners but below that of the scholars and who are assailed by doubts regarding such matters that they are unable to resolve. It is this third group that experiences revelation as “ambiguous” or indeterminate in meaning (*mutashābih*), and it is they whom God has censured in the Qur’ān. 177 For the scholars and the general public, revelation contains no ambiguity or indeterminacy. Ibn Rushd likens these two groups to healthy people, whose bodies benefit when given the nourishment appropriate to them (namely, the literal meaning for the common people and the abstract rational truth for the “scholars,” that is, the philosophers). The third group, on the other hand, are like the sick, and they are the minority among people. Ibn Rushd specifies that these are “the people of disputation and discursive theology” (*ahl al-jadal wa-l-kalām*), 178 whose figurative interpretations (*tawilāt*) of scripture “are not based on firm proof (*burhān*), nor do they have the effect of the overt meaning in [bringing about] the masses’ acceptance of and knowledge about [such matters].” 179 As Ibn Rushd explains, “the primary objective of [religious] knowledge with respect to the masses is [righteous] action: whatever is more beneficial in [encouraging righteous] action is better. As for the objective of knowledge with respect to the scholars, it comprises both matters together, namely, knowledge and action.” 180

Ibn Taymiyya cites with much approval Ibn Rushd’s insistence that revelation only be interpreted publicly in a straightforward, literal manner. In this vein, he cites Ibn Rushd’s critique of al-Ghazālī—who, in Ibn Rushd’s words, “came and the torrent of the valley rose and choked up the meadow” 181—for

175 See Dar’, 6:217–218; Manāhij, 179.
176 “*al-ʿulamāʾ al-rāṣikhūna fī al-ʿilm*” (Dar’, 6:218; Manāhij, 179: “*al-ʿulamā*”), an allusion to Q. Āl ʿImrān 3:7, discussed at length at p. 184 ff. below.
177 “*wa-hādhā al-ṣinf hum alladhīna yūjadu fī ḥaqqihim al-tashābuh fī al-shar‘ wa-hum alladhīna dhammahum Allāh taʿālā*.” Dar’, 6:218; Manāhij, 179. God’s censure of this group for finding *tashābuh* in revelation is also a reference to Q. Āl ʿImrān 3:7.
178 Dar’, 6:219; Manāhij, 180.
179 “laysa yaqūmu ʿalayhā burhān wa-lā tafʿalu fī al-ṣāhir fī qabīl al-jumhūr laḥā wa-ʿilmihim ‘anḥā” (Manāhij: “wa-amalihim ‘anḥā”). Dar’, 219–220; Manāhij, 180.
180 Dar’, 6:220; Manāhij, 180. (See index of Arabic passages.)
181 “jāʾa [Abū Ḥāmid] fa-ṭamma al-wādī wa-ṣiḥāb al-jumhūr laḥā wa-ʿilmīhim ‘ānḥā” (Manāhij: “wa-ʿamalīhim ‘ānḥā”). Dar’, 6:222; Manāhij, 182. The standard
having shared with too many people what ought to have remained a private discussion among the qualified philosophical elite. Ibn Rushd censures al-Ghazālī for “divulging the entirety of philosophy and the views of the philosophers to the masses” and for venturing to make positive figurative interpretations of various verses, then revealing these interpretations to a dangerously wide section of the public. In fact, Ibn Taymiyya cites Ibn Rushd page after page with such apparent approbation that we begin to wonder if he fully grasped Ibn Rushd’s ultimate position on the (non-)status of revelation as a purveyor of knowledge—though in other passages, it is quite clear that Ibn Rushd’s true position was, of course, not lost on him. In fact, Ibn Taymiyya describes Ibn Rushd as inclining towards the esotericist philosophers (bāṭinīyat al-falāsif) who consider it obligatory to hold the masses to the outward [meaning of revelation], just like those among the theologians, jurists, and scholars of hadith who adopt their [i.e., such philosophers’] position. He [Ibn Rushd] does not belong to the esotericist Shī’a, like the Ismā’ilis and those of their ilk who openly declare [their] heresy and make a show of flouting the religious prescriptions of Islam. But in terms of negating the [divine] attributes, he is worse than the Mu’tazila and their likes, [reaching] the level of his brethren from among the esotericist philosophers.

As for al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyya likewise discusses his works and opinions on numerous occasions in the Darʾ taʿāruḍ. Although al-Ghazālī was much more of a theologian than a philosopher and, in fact, dedicated one of his most famous works, Tahāfut al-falāsifa, to refuting just the type of philosophy triumphed by the likes of Ibn Sinā and Ibn Rushd, Ibn Taymiyya is cool, at best, towards

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182 “ṣarraḥa bi-l-ḥikma kullihā lil-jumhūr wa-bi-ārāʾ al-ḥukamāʾ.” Darʾ 222–223; Manāḥij, 182.
183 See Darʾ, 6:222–237 for Ibn Taymiyya’s citation of an extensive passage from Manāḥij in which Ibn Rushd criticizes al-Ghazālī. (Corresponds to Manāḥij, 182–191.)
184 Ibn Taymiyya also wrote a separate treatise in refutation of Ibn Rushd. See Ibn Taymiyya, al-Radd ʿalā falsafat Ibn Rushd.
185 Darʾ, 6:237, line 10 to 6:238, line 2. (See index of Arabic passages.) See also Hoover, “Ibn Taymiyya’s Use of Ibn Rushd,” 485–487 for the translation of a lengthy passage from Bayān talbīs al-Jahmīya in which Ibn Taymiyya criticizes Ibn Rushd harshly.
186 Al-Ghazālī was, of course, responding to the philosophers primarily in the person of Ibn Sinā, whose impure and admixed Aristotelianism was the subject of considerable critique on the part of Ibn Rushd himself. But see Janssens, “Al-Ghazzālī’s Tahāfut,” as well as Frank,
al-Ghazālī throughout the Darʾ. He is respectful of al-Ghazālī’s immense erudition and spiritual accomplishment—paying homage to “his tremendous intelligence and piety (taʿalluh), his knowledge of discursive theology (kalām) and philosophy, and his traveling the path of abstemiousness, disciplining of the soul, and taṣawwuf”—and he is ready, as usual, to recognize well-intentioned efforts in the service of truth and the defense of Islam where due. Notwithstanding, he observes that while al-Ghazālī may have refuted many of the false doctrines of the philosophers, he capitulated to many of them as well, becoming thereby a sort of “interstice (barzakh) between them [the philosophers] and the Muslims”—so much so that even the likes of the Andalusian mystical philosopher Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 581/1185), whom Ibn Taymiyya labels one of the “mystically inclined of the heretics” (ṣūfiyyat al-malāḥida), could find affinity with (yastaʾnisu bi) some of al-Ghazālī’s doctrines.

With specific reference to the issue of reason and revelation, Ibn Taymiyya faults al-Ghazālī for launching a purely destructive attack against the philosophers and for contenting himself (as al-Ghazālī himself states in the introduction to the Tahāfut) with using any argument he could lay his hands on to expose the philosophers’ incoherence (their “tahāfut”), regardless of whether the argument was valid in and of itself. In this manner, al-Ghazālī was satisfied, as Ibn Taymiyya puts it, to “confront falsehood with falsehood” and, despairing ultimately of the ability of reason to reach any reliable conclusions in such matters, resorted to spiritual unveiling (kashf) and subjective experience (dhawq) as the surest means of arriving at truth and a proper understanding of revelation. Here, Ibn Taymiyya paraphrases a passage from the Iḥyāʾ ‘ulūm al-dīn in which al-Ghazālī states:

—Al-Ghazālī’s Use of Avicenna’s Philosophy.” On the relationship between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd, see Griffel, “Relationship between Averroes and al-Ghazālī.”

187 For Ibn Taymiyya’s reception of and attitude towards al-Ghazālī, see Michot, “An Important Reader of al-Ghazālī: Ibn Taymiyya.”

188 Darʾ, 1:162, lines 8–9.

189 See first block quotation on p. 109 above.

190 Darʾ, 6:57, line 3.

191 Darʾ, 6:56, line 14 to 6:57, line 1.

192 See Ibn Taymiyya’s citation of al-Ghazālī’s Tahāfut at Darʾ, 7:364, lines 3–10. See also Darʾ, 6:223, lines 6–8, where he cites (via Ibn Rushd’s Manāhij) al-Ghazālī, in his work Jawāhir al-Qurʾān, as admitting that the arguments used in the Tahāfut amounted to “(merely) dialectical arguments” (aqāwīl jadaliyya) and that the truth of the matter lay in the doctrine he expounded in the esoteric work al-Madnūn bihi ʿalā ghayr ahlīhi.

193 See Darʾ, 5:339, line 13 to 5:340, line 2.
The moderate path (ḥadd al-iqtisād) between the wantonness (inḥilāl) of excessive taʾwīl and the rigidity (jumūd) of the Ḥanbalis is a fine and subtle [point] comprehensible only to those who have been granted success [and] who perceive things by a divine light, not by means of receiving transmitted knowledge (samāʿ). Then, when the hidden aspects of things are made manifest to them as they truly are (idhā inkashafat lahum asrār al-umūr ʿalā mā hiya ʿalayhi), they consider (naẓarū ilā) the transmitted texts [of revelation] and the wording thereof; [then,] whatever agrees with what they have witnessed (mā shāhadūhu) by the light of certainty they affirm (qarrarūhu), and whatever disagrees [with this] they interpret figuratively [through taʾwīl] (awwalūhu).\textsuperscript{194}

The contrasting views\textsuperscript{195} that these men—Ibn Sinā and Ibn Rushd, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyya—held regarding the nature of knowledge and the most reliable means of gaining it are striking indeed and bring us back to the central concern of our study. For the philosophers Ibn Sinā and Ibn Rushd, reason is the ultimate guide to what is true and not true, real and not real, about the world. Objective human reason is (simplistically stated) what Aristotle took it to be; knowledge of truth and reality can be discovered most reliably through the rigorous and disciplined process of formal syllogistic demonstration bequeathed to the world by the First Teacher, that most distinguished sage from Stagira. The purpose—and, indeed, the genius—of revelation is not to enunciate forthrightly the greatest metaphysical and ontological, let alone eschatological, truths of the universe, for the subtlety of these truths is well beyond the ken of the vast majority of ordinary men. Rather, certain knowledge is what the philosophers, specifically the Peripatetics, have discovered through rational demonstration (burhān). This certain knowledge is a prize jewel that is accessible only to the gifted few; therefore, it must be tightly held within the circles of the intellectual elect and carefully guarded from falling into the hands of men who, not being blessed with philosophical minds, would only become

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\item[\textsuperscript{194}] Al-Ghazālī, Ḥiyā’, 122. The full passage from al-Ghazālī, as translated here, is cited by the editor of the Dar’ at 5:339, n. 2 and 5:340, n. 2. (See index of Arabic passages.)
\item[\textsuperscript{195}] Useful comparative studies include (in chronological order) Wolfson, Avicenna, Algazali, and Averroes; Qumayr, Ibn Rushd wa-l-Ghazālī; Ṣālim, Muqārana bayna al-Ghazālī wa-Ibn Taymiyya; Bello, Medieval Islamic Controversy; Sa’d, Mawqif Ibn Taymiyya min falsafat Ibn Rushd; Naqqār, al-Manhajīyya al-usūliyya wa-l-mantiq al-Yūnānī; Puig Montada, “Ibn Rushd versus al-Ghazālī”; Sharqawi, al-Ṣāfiyya wa-l-aʿqāl; Griffel, “Relationship between Averroes and al-Ghazālī”; Wohlman, Al-Ghazali, Averroës and the Interpretation of the Qur’ān; and von Kügelgen, “Muslimische Theologen und Philosophen.” See also Michot’s remarks in “Mamlūk Theologian’s Commentary,” 170–172.
\end{itemize}
confused by it or possibly led astray. Thus, for the philosophers, the ingenuity of revelation lies not in that it conveys to mankind precious and objectively true knowledge of things as they are but rather in the preeminent adroitness with which it symbolizes transcendent realities through evocative images. Although these images do not correspond to reality in any objective sense, they nevertheless accomplish the lofty moral objective of encouraging men to perform good deeds and to live their lives piously in such a manner as to ensure their ultimate success in the hereafter.

Ibn Taymiyya, for his part, concurs with al-Ghazālī’s—and, arguably, al-Rāzī’s\(^\text{196}\)—skepticism regarding the Greek model of rationality that was adopted with such enthusiasm by so many of the intellectual elite among his Muslim coreligionists. Indeed, the mission of the *Darʾ* is to deconstruct this (to his mind) very particular and parochial, not to say ultimately incoherent, configuration of rationality and to do so in an even more radical manner than al-Ghazālī himself had attempted to do. Yet Ibn Taymiyya takes al-Ghazālī to task for his ultimate loss of faith in any notion of a publicly shared, reliable reason and for his attempt, instead, to establish moral and cognitive certainty on the ultimately subjective basis of private spiritual experience.

In contrast to al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyya shares with Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd—and, by extension, with the philosophers more generally—their optimistic assessment of reason and its ability to reach objective, true, and certain conclusions regarding many of the most fundamental truths about God, man, and the world. Nevertheless, he stands at the opposite end of the philosophers’ conception of the language of revelation as merely evocative and pictorial rather than denotative and factual. For Ibn Taymiyya, it is the obvious sense of revelation, available and comprehensible to the elite and the commoner alike, that tells the real story by providing a factual, face-value account of all the themes addressed therein (even if the ultimate ontic reality of such transcendent matters as they are in and of themselves remains, of necessity, beyond the reach of our contingent and perforce limited human faculties). On the other hand, the ostensibly rational deductions of the philosophers and theologians are little more than a figment of their own imaginations—mental constructs that not only contradict revelation but also (as al-Ghazālī himself had so astutely demonstrated in the *Tahāfut*) fall apart on strictly rational grounds as well once rational investigation of them is truly pushed to the limit. In addition, Ibn Taymiyya censures the philosophers specifically for, as he sees it, demoting the value of revelation to one of a strictly pragmatic moral-ethical phenomenon.

\(^{196}\) See p. 145, n. 34 below.
that is essentially unrelated to the (higher) epistemic function of conveying to man objective knowledge about the reality of his existence and the various realms that God has created—the empirical/seen (shāhid) and the transcendent/unseen (ghāʾib), the present world (dunyā) and the life of the hereafter (ākhira). It is not, to be sure, that the philosophers prize knowledge less than action. In fact, quite the opposite is true, only that they do not look to revelation as a source of objective knowledge but limit the utility of the revealed texts to their pragmatic dimension alone. Ibn Taymiyya, of course, recognizes and assigns great value to the practical moral guidance afforded by revelation, yet he is nonetheless adamant in declaring that the most noble, lofty, and ultimately beneficial aspect of revelation is, precisely, the knowledge it provides human beings about God, themselves, and the ultimate significance of their worldly lives as a sowing ground for the abode of eternity that lies beyond.

For the philosophers, then, we can come to know truth only through reason, and reason proper is what Aristotle conceived it to be: the demonstrative faculty operating deductively in terms of Aristotelian syllogistics. For al-Ghazālī, reason may well be what Aristotle conceived it to be, but, that being the case, it is ultimately of little use in reaching true knowledge of the most important matters. For Ibn Taymiyya, reason can enable us to reach definitive conclusions on the most important of matters, but precisely because it is not what Aristotle, and all who followed in his wake, conceived it to be. Al-Ghazālī’s project, at least with regard to reason, would seem to be a primarily deconstructive one: he systematically dismantles the pretensions of philosophical mental acrobatics, but then, as if reason could not be anything other than what the philosophers esteemed it to be, he discards it altogether as a means for ascertaining the

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197 See Darʾ, 5:359, lines 1–7 and 5:359, line 13 to 5:360, line 5 for the related point that what the philosophers’ position here actually implies—if knowledge indeed be nobler than action—is that those who teach knowledge (namely, the philosophers) are, by implication, nobler and more beneficial to mankind than those who taught men only action (namely, the prophets).

198 In fact, one of Ibn Taymiyya’s main motivations for attempting to be rid of negationism once and for all is that the philosophers’ highly abstract notion of a remote deity makes it nearly impossible for one to relate to God personally or to cultivate the religiously vital senses of love and awe of God necessary for one to worship Him in a meaningful way and to keep His commandments. For a full treatment of this crucial aspect of Ibn Taymiyya’s theology and larger religious reform project, see Hoover, Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy, chap. 1, chap. 3, and passim.

199 See Darʾ, 5:358, lines 1–3, where Ibn Taymiyya states that what the Qurʾān addresses in terms of knowledge is quantitatively greater and qualitatively more noble than what it addresses in terms of works (al-khīṭāb al-ʿilmī fi al-Qurʾān ashraf min al-khīṭāb al-ʿamalī qadrān wa-ṣifātān).
truth. Ibn Taymiyya conceives of his own project as going well beyond that of al-Ghazālī: he attempts to “counter what is unsound with what is sound” (yuqābilu al-fāsid bi-l-ṣāliḥ)\textsuperscript{200} and to settle the issue of the vexed relationship between reason and revelation definitively by demonstrating that true, pure reason (ʿaql ṣarīḥ) positively agrees with and corroborates revelation and can, moreover, be plausibly demonstrated to do so. Insofar as al-Ghazālī conceived of his work in the Tahāfut in purely deconstructive and negative terms—laying the philosophers’ heretical doctrines to waste but without erecting in their stead a solid rational structure capable of demonstrating the inherent rational plausibility and consistency of revelation—then the Darʾ taʿāruḍ, at least in terms of the ambition Ibn Taymiyya harbors for it, goes significantly beyond al-Ghazālī’s more circumscribed enterprise. Like the philosophers, Ibn Taymiyya seeks nothing less than a full resolution to the intractable standoff between reason and revelation—albeit on terms radically opposed to those proposed by his Peripatetic predecessors.

In the remainder of this study, we examine in detail just how Ibn Taymiyya accomplishes his projected tour de force. An affirmative verdict on the viability of Ibn Taymiyya’s project would be of major significance, not only in terms of the ideas themselves but also in terms of current scholarly inquiry. Rather than stopping at al-Ghazālī’s (negative) project of demolishing the philosophers’ system, we would henceforth be obliged to include Ibn Taymiyya’s Darʾ taʿāruḍ as another major episode in the conflict between reason and revelation in Islamic thought. Not only does Ibn Taymiyya’s undertaking, as I have intimated, purport to be more fundamentally eradicative than al-Ghazālī’s (since Ibn Taymiyya rejects even more of the inherited philosophical system than al-Ghazālī did, including the very logic on which the entire philosophical edifice was built), but it also—significantly—represents a conscientiously constructive, or rather re-constructive, project with two overriding aims. These aims are (1) to demonstrate that pure sound reason (ʿaql ṣarīḥ) does exist and to establish, in positive terms, precisely what it is and (2) to show that this pure reason demonstrates not only that the philosophers’ doctrines are false, incoherent, and positively irrational but also that what revelation reveals is, in diametric opposition to this, not just true (of course) but fully coherent and

\textsuperscript{200} See Darʾ, 1:376, lines 10–12, where Ibn Taymiyya explains that “light and guidance are only achieved by countering the corrupt with the sound, the false with the true, religious innovation with the Sunna, waywardness with guidance, and falsehood with truth.” He then says, in conclusion, that “by this means, it becomes clear that valid indicants (al-adilla al-ṣaḥīha) are not subject to objection under any circumstances and that pure reason is in full conformity with authentic revelation.” (See index of Arabic passages.)
demonstrably rational as well. As we have seen, Ibn Taymiyya insists that merely “refuting falsehood with falsehood” may be instructive insofar as it demonstrates how the philosophers and theologians refute one another’s arguments, but this proves only that all these groups are in error. It is decidedly not sufficient, Ibn Taymiyya insists, for establishing in rational terms what is actually true and correct. This can only be done by “countering the corrupt with the sound and the false with the true,” which conforms to both authentic revelation (al-manqūl al-ṣaḥīḥ) and pure reason (al-maʿqūl al-ṣarīḥ). 201

The terms on which Ibn Taymiyya bids to resolve the conflict between reason and revelation in Islam are enormously ambitious. While previous attempts to defuse this tension generally demanded that revelation yield to the deliverances of a rationality largely conceived along Greek lines and constructed, ultimately, on the backbone of Aristotelian logic (a conception of rationality that had been taken for granted for centuries before him—even by the more textually conservative of theologians—as constitutive of reason per se), Ibn Taymiyya takes a distinctly different route. For him, simply reinterpreting or suspending revelation is not merely too facile a solution to the problem; it is also a largely disingenuous one, for the basic consequence of the universal rule, as he sees it, is that ultimately reason alone is granted the right to arbitrate, even on matters that fall outside its proper domain. With each new instance of figurative interpretation (taʾwīl) or suspension of meaning (tafwīḍ), the integrity of revelation as a source of knowledge is further eroded until its epistemic function as a purveyor of truth is largely, if not entirely, eclipsed by a “reason” whose own deep-set incongruities conspire to preclude it, too, from yielding any bona fide knowledge, particularly of God and related matters theological. Sunk to the bottom of the Taymiyyan pyramid, 202 caught between a debilitated revelation shorn of its prerogative to convey truth and a dilapidated reason scattered in the winds of incessant schismatics and hobbled by incurable misgivings, the Muslim intellectual landscape of the early eighth/fourteenth century, to Ibn Taymiyya’s mind, cried for a resolution. Yet our author’s prescription does not consist in simply turning the tables on reason and bidding it to silence wherever and whenever revelation has spoken. For Ibn Taymiyya, not only would the intellectual inadequacy of such a “solution” render it perpetually unstable, but it would also violate the very imperative of revelation itself, with its recurrent appeal to “reflect,” “consider,” “reason,” and “ponder,” to say nothing of its own deployment of rational argumentation in

201 See ibid.
202 See introduction, p. 7 above.
recommending the plausibility of its doctrine to an originally skeptical audience. Ibn Taymiyya seeks the solution elsewhere: namely, in the elaboration of a (re)integrated epistemology in which conflict between reason and revelation is not merely staved off by the terms of a truce in which each antagonist enjoys supremacy in a separate domain of exclusive magisterium, nor yet in which the historical tension between the two is artificially defused by subjugating one to what is deemed to be the terms of the other, nor even one in which the two (merely) coexist side by side in blissful harmony. Rather, Ibn Taymiyya's goal is nothing less than the full (re)integration of reason and revelation into a coherent epistemology in which a rehabilitated intuitive reason and an unaffected, straightforward reading of scripture are, as if flowing from a common font, fully corroborative and mutually reinforcing.

A mighty tall order indeed. Precisely how Ibn Taymiyya attempts this feat will command our attention for the remainder of this study.

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203 Consider Stephen Jay Gould's notion of “non-overlapping magisteria” between science and religion. See Gould, "Nonoverlapping Magisteria" and Gould, Rocks of Ages.