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Part 2. Theologico-Philosophical Thought

Chapter 41: Ibn Taimiyyah

A. Life and Works

After having seen the rise and development of theological and philosophical movement in Islam and the contributions made by the theologians and philosophers before the sack of Baghdad, we have now come to a point which may be called the pre-renaissance period in the history of Islam. By ibn Taimiyyah's time theology, philosophy, and jurisprudence had made remarkable progress and given rise to different schools of thought. But, unfortunately, political dissensions and doctrinal differences sapped the unity of the Muslims and made their countries easy prey to Mongol invasions in the seventh/13th century. It was at this critical juncture that Imam ibn Taimiyyah appeared as a *mujtahid* (one qualified to form an independent opinion in Muslim Law) and called upon the people to go back to the original teachings of Islam as they are found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

He had little respect for theology (*Kalam*) or philosophy and he could not be called a theologian or a philosopher in the truest sense of the terms, though he himself acted as a great theologian and a great philosopher. The excellence of Imam ibn Taimiyyah as an original thinker and a critic has been widely accepted, and he is generally considered to be the forerunner of Wahhabism, Sanusism, and similar other reform movements in the Muslim world.

Taqi al-Din Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halim, commonly known as ibn Taimiyyah, was born in Harran,[1] a city near Damascus, on Monday, the 10th of Rabi' I 861/22nd January 1263.

During the year 667/1269 when ibn Taimiyyah approached the age of seven, the Mongols ravaged the city of Harran, and his father 'Abd al-Halim went to Damascus with all the members of his family and settled there. Here ibn Taimiyyah received an excellent education under his father who was a great scholar of the Hanbalite School. He also studied under 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-Qawi and mastered the Arabic

grammar of Sibawaihi. He studied Hadith with more than 200 Sheikhs.[2] It is noteworthy that among the teachers, whom ibn Taimiyyah mentions in his Arba'un, were four ladies.[3]

It is difficult to say whether ibn Taimiyyah was influenced by any of his predecessors in his extra-ordinary enthusiasm for introducing social and religious reforms in the Muslim community and for his unsympathetic attitude towards the theologians, the philosophers, and the Sufis. A close examination of his works suggests that he followed none but the early pious Muslims (*salaf al-salihun*) in formulating his scheme of reform. This is why his movement is often called the *Salafi* movement. His motto was, "Go back to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet." He protested vehemently against all sorts of innovations (*bid'ah*). He believed that Islam was corrupted by Sufism, pantheism, theology (*Kalam*), philosophy, and by all sorts of superstitious beliefs. He aimed at purging the Muslim society of practices resulting in undue homage to the tombs of prophets and saints. During his stay in Syria from 692/1292 to 705/1305, ibn Taimiyyah, therefore, wrote books and treatises against the Sufis, the Mutakallimun, and the Aristotelian philosophers.

It was during the early part of this period that he personally took part in the war against the tartars and the Nusairis. In 702/1302, he participated in the battle of Shaqhab (a place near Damascus) where he met Caliph al-Malik al-Nasir, Mohammad ibn Qalawun,the Mamluk Sultan and other notables, and urged them all to join the holy war. Towards the end of 704/1304, he led an army against the people of Jabal Khusruwan in Syria and inflicted a crushing defeat on them. Hence, ibn Taimiyyah can also be called a *mujahid* (fighter for the cause of Islam). In 705/1305, ibn Taimiyyah faced the criticism of his antagonists in open meetings in the presence of the Deputy of Mamluk Sultan, al-Malik al-Nasir, and defeated them by his clear and cogent arguments. In this very year he proceeded to Cairo and faced a *munazarah* (legal debate) in which an Indian scholar named Sheikh Safi al-Din al-Hindi played an important part.

It was on the suggestion of this Sheikh that ibn Taimiyyah was ordered to be imprisoned in the dungeon of the mountain citadel with his two brothers for a year and a half.[4] He also suffered imprisonment at different places for his *fatwas* (legal decisions) and *rasa'il* (treatises) against certain social and religious practices; these excited the indignation of the scholars of his time, until at last he was interned in the citadel of Damascus on Sha'ban 726/July 1326. Here his brother Zain al-Din was permitted to stay with him, while ibn Taimiyyah's student ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah was retained in the same prison for his support. In this prison, ibn Taimiyyah wrote books and pamphlets defending his own view, and it is said that here he prepared a commentary on the Holy Qur'an in 40 volumes called *al-Bahr al-Muhit*. Some of these books fell into the hands of his enemies and he was most ruthlessly deprived of his books, and pen and ink, after which he wrote with charcoal. Having been left alone in prison, he passed his time in devotion to God until his death on Monday, the 20th of Dhu'l Qa'dah 728/ 27 September 1328.[5]

Ibn Taimiyyah was a prolific writer. Nobody could give a definite number of his works though al-Kutubi tried to enumerate them under different heads.[6] He left innumerable books, religious decisions, letters,

and notes, most of which he composed while he was in prison. Al-Dhahabi gives the number to be approximately 500.

In his *Rihlah*, ibn Battutah says that he himself happened to be in Damascus at the time of the last imprisonment of ibn Taimiyyah, and that the Sultan al-Malik al-Nasir released ibn Taimiyyah after the completion of *al-Bahr al-Muhit*, but on a Friday, while he was delivering the *Jum'ah* sermon on the pulpit of the city mosque, he uttered the following words, "Verily, Allah comes down to the sky over our heads in the same fashion as I make this descent," and he stepped down one step of the pulpit. This was vehemently opposed by a *faqih* (jurist), but ibn Taimiyyah had his supporters who attacked the *fiqih* and beat him severely with fists and shoes, causing his turban to fall down to the ground and making his silken *shashia* (cap) visible on his head.

People objected to his wearing the silken cap and brought him to the house of the Hanbalite Qadi 'Izz al-Din ibn Muslim, who ordered him to be imprisoned and put to torture. But the Maliki and the Shaf'i doctors disapproved of this judgment, and brought the case to the notice of Saif al-Din Tankiz, one of the best and most pious nobles of Damascus, who forwarded the matter to al-Malik al-Nasir along with some other charges against ibn Taimiyyah, such as his decision (*fatwa*) that a woman divorced by triple repudiation in one utterance will receive one *talaq* only and that one taking the journey to the tomb of the Prophet should not shorten his prayers. The Sultan, convinced of these charges, disapproved of ibn Taimiyyah's standpoint and ordered him to be thrown into the dungeon again.[7] This report of ibn Battutah is not chronologically sound. It will be discussed again in connection with the charge of anthropomorphism against ibn Taimiyyah.

Though ibn Taimiyyah was not successful in his mission during his lifetime, it became clear at his funeral that he exercised a great influence upon the public. It is said that more than two lacs of men and women attended his funeral ceremony. Except three persons who were afraid of being stoned to death for their hostility towards him, all attended his funeral and the military had to be called in to guard the crowd.[8]

B. Attitude towards Theology and the Theologians

Ibn Taimiyyah has left us a number of books and treatises on theology, but in none of them is he systematic in his treatment of the subject. Problems of theology and philosophy are scattered throughout his writings, and, according to al-Kutubi's enumeration, many of them have not yet seen the light of day.[9] A number of manuscripts left by ibn Taimiyyah on theology are also available in England and Germany among which are his *Mas'alat al-'Uluw, al-Kalam, 'ala Haqiqat al-Islam, Su'al li ibn Taimiyyah*,[10] etc., etc.

In his *Minhaj*[11] as well as other books, ibn Taimiyyah boldly declares that theology and philosophy have no place in Islam, and that theologians like al-Juwaini,[12] al-Ghazzali, and al-Shahrastani[13] who devoted their lives to these sciences, ultimately understood their defects and returned to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Shahrastani, he adds, confessed that it was folly to discuss theology, al-Razi, in his

opinion, contradicts himself in matters of theology and admitted his perplexity.
In the *Minhaj*[14] as well as in his *Majmu'at al-Tafsir*,[15] ibn Taimiyyah cites the opinion of Imam Ahmad and Abu Yusuf who said that he who would seek knowledge by the help of scholastic theology (*Kalam*) would turn into an atheist. He also mentions the opinion of Imam Shafi'i that theologians should be beaten with shoes and palm-branches, and paraded through the city so that people may know the consequence of the study of theology.

In his *Tafsir Surat al-Ikhlas*,[16] he tells us that the early leaders (*aslaf*) tabooed theology since it was vanity, falsehood and saying unfitting things about God.

Among the later thinkers Imam Ash'ari (d. 330/941) defended theology in his *Risalah fi Istihsan al-Khaud fi al-Kalam*. In it, he supported the theories of *harakah* (motion), *sukun* (rest), *jism* (body), *'ard* (accident), *ijtima'* (union), *iftiraq* (separation), etc., by the help of the Qur'an. In his opinion, all religious orders, be they relating to action or belief, have been based on rational arguments and, thus, it is not unlawful to enter into discussion with them.[17] But ibn Taimiyyah considered the above theories to be Hellenistic and against the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

About the Jahmites,[18] ibn Taimiyyah quotes the views of Imam Ahmad who said that they told lies about God when they denied attributes to Him, and spoke about Him through ignorance. Abu al-'Abbas ibn Suraij, he adds, disapproved of the theories of atoms and accidents. Once, in answer to a questions raised in *Kalam*, he said, "The doctrine of the unity of God to the vain of the people is to enter into discussion of atoms and accidents (*jawahir wa a'rad*)." These terms did not exist in Islam during the time of the Prophet. It was the Jahmites and the Mu'tazilites who first invented them; Ja'd ibn Dirham[19] was mainly responsible for this invention. This Ja'd was executed by ibn 'Abd Allah ibn al-Qasri[20] at Wasit on account of *Kalam* (theology). The story goes that before executing Ja'd, ibn 'Abd Allah stood on a pulpit (*minbar*) and addressed the people saying, "Oh men, offer your sacrifice to God. Surely I am offering my victim in the person of Ja'd who says that God did not take Abraham as His friend, nor did He speak to Moses. God is far above what Ja'd attributes to Him." He then got down from the pulpit and cut off Ja'd's head.[21]

Ibn Taimiyyah refutes the view of al-Imam Hilli who expressed in his *Minhjaj al-Karamah*[22] that Hadrat 'Ali was the originator of theology. Ibn Taimiyyah opposes this theory as 'Ali could not go against the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and none among the Companions (*Sahabah*) or their followers (*Tabi'un*) ever discussed the phenomenal nature of the world as derived from the origination of bodies (*huduth al-ajsam*). He repeats that theology came into existence at the end of the first/seventh century. It was Ja'd ibn Dirham and Jahm ibn Safwan who introduced it, and eventually the students of 'Amr ibn 'Ubaid like Abu al-Hudhail al-'Allaf and others carried it on. The object of 'Amr and Wasil in propagating the above theory was to introduce into Islam the idea that God's power is not unlimited and that sinners will abide in hell forever.[23]

From the foregoing statements, it is evident that ibn Taimiyyah generally uses *Kalam* in its pre-Ash'arite

sense of Mu‘tazilite theology, though later he does not spare the Ash‘rite views either.

Let us now discuss the divine attributes with reference to ibn Taimiyyah's refutation of the Jahmite and the Mu‘tazilite views.

According to ibn Taimiyyah, it was Ja‘d ibn Dirham, a Jahmite, who first professed that "God is not seated on His Throne, "and that *istiwa'* means *istaula*," that is, God is the master of His Throne and not that "He is settled on it." This idea was then taken up by Jahm ibn Safwan (d. 128/745). Consequently, a new system of scriptural interpretation became popular at the close of the second/eighth century at the hand of Bishr ibn Ghiyath al-Marisi (d. 218 or 219/833 or 834) and his followers.[24] The Mu‘tazilite doctrine of divine attributes was publicly preached during the last part of the third/ninth century[25] and then the Shi‘ite doctors, Mufid,[26] Musawi,[27] and Tusi[28]adopted it.

The beliefs that God is eternal and that "He exists without His attributes" are dogmas of the Jahmites and the Mu'tazilites. In regard to God's knowledge, power, seeing, hearing, etc. the older ultra-Imami sect was downright anthropomorphist, while subsequent generations went further and denied the existence of all divine attributes.[29] The Karramites,[30] in his opinion, were anthropomorphises. The Sunnites were unanimous in declaring that God was totally unlike men in His essence, qualities, and actions. The traditionists, the hermeneutists, the Sufis, the four jurists and their followers, never believed in anthropomorphism. The accusation that has been levelled at jurists like Malik, Shafi‘i, Ahmad and their followers, is based on sheer misunderstanding. These jurists in affirming the divine attributes never maintained that these attributes resembled bodily forms.[31]

Ibn Taimiyyah further maintains that the word *qadim* (eternal) relating to God, on which the Jahmites and their followers base their arguments, has not received a place among His *asma' al-husna* (beautiful names) though the word *awwal* (first) is one of them. *Awwal* does not signify that God alone exists without His attributes from eternity and pre-existence. The attributes that are always associated with God's eternity needs some additional eternal essence. The statement that the divine attributes are additional to His essence (*dhat*) is to be taken in the sense that they are additional to the concept of the essence held by the *nufat* (deniers of God's qualities) and not in the sense that there is in God an essence denuded of attributes and the attributes are separate from and additional to the essence.[32] For example, whenever an attribute is attached to a locus (*mahall*), its relation is established with the object itself and not with anything else.

When a thing is associated with blackness and whiteness, is set in motion, it is sure to move with those qualities alone and not with anything else. God, to who are attributed speech, volition, love, anger, and pleasure, must actually be associated with all of them without any additional qualities that have not been ascribed to Him. One who is speechless, motionless or inactive cannot be called speaker (*mutakallim*), mover (*mutaharrik*), or doer (*fa‘il*). So to attribute life, power, knowledge, etc., to God without associating them with His essence, as the Jahmites and their followers do, indicates that God lives without life, is powerful without power, and knows without knowledge, while the Qur'an and the Sunna abound with

proofs that God is associated with His attributes.[33]

Ibn Taimiyyah's Anthropomorphism

From the above discussions and the similar contents of his *al-'Aqidat al-Mamawiyyat al-Kubra*,[34] people misunderstood ibn Taimiyyah and suspected him to be an anthropomorphist. They thought that he taught, according to the literal meaning of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, that God has hands, feet, face, etc., and that He is settled on His Throne. The objection of the theologians was that if God possessed limbs and sat on the Throne, then He must be possessed of spatial character (*tahayyuz*) and subject to division (*inqisam*). Ibn Taimiyyah refused to admit that "spatial character" and "divisibility" are the essence of bodies (*ajsam*). Ibn Battutah's statement that in Damascus he heard ibn Taimiyyah addressing the people saying, "Verily, God descends to the sky over our world (from heaven) in the same way as I make this descent," while he stepped down one step of the pulpit, is nothing but a canard.

This story, as we have noticed,[35] has been so skilfully concocted that it appears to be a real occurrence. But when we examine this report, we cannot believe that such a thing could have happened during the visit of ibn Battutah to Damascus. Ibn Buttutah, as we understand from his own description, entered Damascus on the 19th of Ramadan 726/23 August 1326, whereas ibn Taimiyyah had been imprisoned more than a month earlier (on the 26th of Sha'ban of the same year) without being allowed to come out before his death in 726/1328.[36] In his *al-Aqidat al-Tadmuriyyah*,[37] ibn Taimiyyah clearly states, "Whoever considers God to be similar to the body of men or an originated thing to be similar to Him, is telling a lie about God. He who maintains that God is not a body and means by it that no originated thing is similar to Him is right, though the word body (*jism*) is applied here is an innovation (*bid'ah*)."

He further says that we should say of God what He has said of Himself or what the Prophet has said about Him, and declares that the early Muslims ascribed to God attributes "without asking how" (*bila kaif*), and without drawing analogy (*tamthil*), or making alterations (*tahrif*), or divesting Him of His attributes (*ta'til*).[38] Ibn Taimiyyah believes in "God's settling Himself on His Throne, as it befits Him, without any resemblance to human action. He quotes the opinion of the early Muslims who stood between *ta'til* and *tamthil*.[39]

The above evidence clearly shows that in his interpretation of the divine attributes, ibn Taimiyyah attempted rather to guard himself against the charge of anthropomorphism. While refuting the Jahmite and the Mu'tazilite conception of the divine attributes, he vehemently opposed their views which divested God of the Qur'anic expressions of face, hands, etc, as understood by the Arabs and attempted to substitute the usual meanings of these expressions by metaphorical interpretations. In his opinion, it would be absurd to suppose that the later generations should have a deeper insight into a better understanding of the divine attributes than the Prophet and his Companions who never attempted to explain them in terms of philosophy. It is for this reason that he attacked the theologians who attached the highest value to human reason as a criterion for understanding the divine attributes. Unlike other

European scholars, H. Laoust is also of the opinion that the charge of anthropomorphism against ibn Taimiyyah is incompatible with his methodology and with "the positive content of his theodicy."[40]

Al-Qur'an Kalam Allah Ghair Makhluq

Al-Qur'an Kalam Allah Ghair Makhluq (The Holy Qur'an is the Uncreated Word of God)

With regard to this problem, ibn Taimiyyah not only accuses a section of people of maintaining that the Qur'an is created, but goes a step further and interprets words *ghair mukhluq* (uncreated) as eternal (*qadim*). He considers this an innovation (*bid'ah*) which resulted from their controversies with the Mu'tazilites and Kullabites in defining the uncreatedness of the Qur'an. Such a theory was unknown to the early Muslims. It was Ja'd ibn Dirham along with Jahm ibn Safwan who first introduced the heretical theory that the Qur'an is created, whereas it is the Word of God, and so uncreated.[41]

Wahi (Revelation)

Ibn Taimiyyah admits the commonly accepted view as to the three forms of revelation received by the Prophet: received (1) in waking state as well as in dreams, (2) from behind a viel, and (3) through an angel.[42] But to these he adds a fourth, namely, revelation common to all (*al-wahi al-mushiarak*), prophets and others. This he derives from a saying of 'Ubadah ibn Samit and from the verses in the Qur'an which speak of revelation to people other than prophets;[43] for example, God speaks with His servants in their dreams. It is this common revelation which the philosophers like ibn Sina and others are said to have gained.

But he emphatically denies that Aristotle had any share in prophecy. His contemporaries were worshippers of planets and were unaware of the prophets like Abraham or Moses. Unlike Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato who believe at least in the origination (*huduth*) of the celestial spheres, Aristotle professed "the doctrine of the eternity of the heavens," which, according to ibn Taimiyyah, clearly shows that he had no share of *wahi al-mushtarak*, mentioned above.[44]

C. Attitude towards Philosophy

In his refutation of Aristotelian metaphysics and logic, ibn Taimiyyah left the following independent books in addition to what he wrote against them in many other writings:

1. *Kitab al-Radd 'ala al-Montiqiyyin*, edited by 'Abd al-Samad Sharaf al-Din al-Kutubi, Bombay, 1949.

2. *Bayan Muwafiqat Sarih al-Ma'qul li Sahih al-Manqul* on the margin of *Minhaj al-Sunnah*, four volumes, Cairo, 1321/1903.

3. *Naqd al-Montiz*, edited by Sheikh Mohammad Hamid al-Faqqi, Cairo, 1370/1951.[45]

4. *Al-Radd 'ala Falsulafat-i ibn Rushd* published at the end of *Fasl al-Makal* and *al-Kashf* of ibn Rashd, Cairo, n.d.

5. *Kitab al-'Agl w-al-Naql* on the margin of his *Minhaj al-Sunnah*, Cairo, 1321 – 23/1903 – 05.

His *Tafsir Surat al-Ikhlas* (Cairo, 1323/1905) also sheds sufficient light on his views on philosophy and theology.

Ibn Taimiyyah is not the first man to speak against the unsoundness of Aristotelian philosophy. In his *Kitab 'ala al-Montiqiyyin*, ibn Taimiyyah mentions that Hassan ibn Musa al-Naubakhti, under whom Thabit ibn Qurrah and others translated Greek sciences, had written his *Kitab al-Ara' w-al-Diyanah* pointing out the fallacies of Aristotle. Moreover, Hibat Allah ibn 'Ali Abu Barakat, a courtier of Mustanjid bi Allah, left a book on the refutation of Aristotle's philosophy.[46] The famous Muslim physician and philosopher Abu Zakariyah al-Razi (d.c. 313/925) was a great opponent of Aristotle's philosophy and supported Pythagoras. In his opinion, Aristotle "had not only ruined philosophy but had also perverted its very principles." Ibn Hazm of Andalus (d. 456/1063) and the Mu'tazilite al-Nazzam (d. 231/845) were also against the philosophy of Aristotle. Abu 'Ali al-Jubbai'i (d.303/915) left a book in refutation of Aristotle's book *De generatione et de corruptione*.[47]

In his *Kitab al-'Aql w-al-Naql*, ibn Taimiyyah says, "Look at the followers of Aristotle! They are following him blindly, while many of them know full well that their master's theories are wrong. Still it is their pious belief which prevents them from refuting them in spite of the fact that many wise men have proved that there are undeniable and indubitable errors in his logical system, and they support them only for the reason that they are associated with his name. In metaphysics also Aristotle and his followers have committed blunders."[48]

In his *Kitab al-Radd 'ala al-Mantiqiyyin*,[49] ibn Taimiyyah says that, according to Aristotelian logic, knowledge is of two kinds, namely, based on concept (*tasawwar*) and that on judgment (*tasdiq*), both of which are either immediate (*badihi*) or mediate (*nazari*). It is evident that all kinds of knowledge cannot be immediate or self-evident. Similarly, all kinds of knowledge cannot be mediate or acquired as in that case, to gain the knowledge of a mediate concept; one would have to depend on another *mediate* concept leading to a circle (*daur*) or endless chain (*tasalsul*) both of which are logically impossible. Logicians further hold that the concepts and judgments which are mediate (*nazari*) require some means to reach them, and, therefore, the way through which concepts are reached, is called *hadd* (definition), and the way through which judgments are arrived at is called *qiyas* (syllogism). Hence *hadd* and *qiyas* are the two fundamental bases on which the whole structure of Aristotelian logic stands. In order to refute the Aristotelian logic, ibn Taimiyyah endeavoured to demolish the fundamental bases at four points which serve as the four main chapters of his *Kitab al-Radd 'ala al-Mantiqiyyin*:

1. The desired concept cannot be obtained except by means of definition (*hadd*).

2. Definition gives the knowledge of concepts.

3. The desired judgment cannot be obtained except by means of syllogism.

4. Syllogism or ratiocination gives the knowledge of judgment.

It may be noted here that of the above propositions the first and the third are negative, while the second and the fourth are affirmative. The main targets of ibn Taimiyyah's refutation were the "definition" and "syllogism" of Aristotelian logic.

1. The first basic proposition of the logicians that concepts cannot be obtained except by means of definition has been refuted by ibn Taimiyyah on the following grounds:[50]

A. It is a negative proposition for which the logicians have not advanced any proof (*dalil*). Such a negative proposition cannot be accepted as the basis of positive knowledge. Therefore, the very first proposition of Aristotelian logic is based on a wrong foundation. Hence, such logic cannot be treated as a science which, according to the logicians, only protects human understanding from committing mistakes.
B. When the definition is the word of the definer, the definer will understand the thing defined either with the help of a (previous) definition or without any definition. Now, if he understands the thing defined by a previous definition, then his words in the second definition will be as good as his words in the first definition which will necessarily lead to a circle (*daur*) or endless chain (*tasalsul*) in the reasoning process, both of which are impossible. If he understands the object defined without any definition, then the assertion in the proposition that "concepts cannot be obtained except with the help of definition" stands refuted.

C. People of different branches of learning and professions know their affairs well without taking recourse to definition.

D. No definition universally agreed upon has yet been found. For instance, nobody has so far been able to offer any definition of the two famous terms "man" and "sun" on which all could agree. In philosophy, theology, medicine, grammar, etc. many contradictory definitions have, thus, come down to us.

Now, the logicians maintain that concept is dependent on definition, but as no agreed definition of anything has yet been made, ibn Taimiyyah declares that no concept in the proper sense of the term has yet been formed. Similarly, the logicians believe that judgment is dependent on concept (*tasawwur*), but since concept has not yet been obtained (in the proper sense of the term), judgment also has not yet been arrived at. The result, in the opinion of ibn Taimiyyah, is the worst type of sophistication.[51]

E. Logicians say that the concept of quiddity (*mahiyyah*) can only be arrived at by definitions which are composed of genus (*jins*) and *differentia* (*fasl*). The logicians themselves have admitted that this sort of definition is either impossible or rarely found. But ibn Taimiyyah opines that the true significance of things may be achieved by men without definition and, therefore, concepts are not dependent on definitions.

F. To the logicians correct definitions are the combination of genus and differentia, but that which is simple and unitary, like each of the "intellects" (*'uqul*), has no definition; still they define it and hold it to be a concept. This shows that sometimes concepts do not need definition. If this is possible, then the species which are nearer to perception and are visible can be conceived in a way which is surer and better than the type of knowledge which is derived from the combination of genus and differentia.

G. The definition of a thing consists of several terms each of which indicates a definite meaning. Unless a man knows the terms and their meaning beforehand, it is not possible for him to understand the definition itself. For instance, a man who does not know what bread is cannot know it by its definition. Here ibn Taimiyyah makes a distinction between conception (*taswir*) and differentiation (*tamiz*) and sides with the Mutakallimun (scholastic theologians) who hold things are actually known by differentiation and not by definition.

H. When the definition is the word of the definer, the definer must have the knowledge of the object defined before defining it. It is, therefore, wrong to say that the conception of a thing depends on definition.

I. Concepts of existing things are derived either through external senses or through internal senses, none of which stands in need of any definition. Here ibn Taimiyyah observes that whatever cannot be known through the senses can be known through valid inference but not through definition.

J. Logicians say that a definition should be rejected by means of refutation and contradiction. Ibn Taimiyyah argues that refutation or contradiction is possible only when one has already formed a conception of the object defined. So it is proved that concepts may be formed without the help of definition.

K. Knowledge of a particular thing may be self-evident to some, but acquired by others. Similarly, things which are not self-evident to some may be self-evident to others who would, therefore, need no definition for their knowledge of them. Hence it is wrong to say that knowledge depends on definition.

2. The refutation of the second proposition of the logicians, that definition gives the knowledge of concept, forms the second chapter of ibn Taimiyyah's *Kitab al-Radd*.[52] In the opinion of ibn Taimiyyah, logicians and scholastic theologians gave different interpretations of definition. Greek logicians and their Muslim and non-Muslim followers claimed that definition contained the description of the object defined, while the prominent scientists held that definition served as a distinction between the object defined and the object not defined. Therefore, definition cannot give the knowledge of a concept. That definition offers true significance of the object defined and gives the knowledge of concept, has been refuted by ibn Taimiyyah on the following grounds.

A. Definition is a mere statement of the definer. For example, when man is defined as "rational animal," it is a statement that may be right or wrong. It is a mere assertion without any proof. The listener may understand it with or without its definition. In the former case, he knows it without proof which may or

may be correct, while in the latter case the definition serves no purpose.

B. Logicians say that definition neither rejects the proof nor needs it. Unlike syllogism (*qiyas*), definition can be rejected by refutation or contradiction. To this ibn Taimiyyah replies that when the definer fails to advance any proof in favour of the correctness of the definition, the listener cannot understand the object defined by a mere definition which may or may not be correct.

C. If the conception of the object defined is attained by the definition, then it is obtained before one has known the correctness of the definition, since the knowledge of the correctness of the definition is not attained except after one has known the object defined.

D. The knowledge of the object defined depends on the knowledge of the thing (named) and of its attributes which the logicians call essential attributes (*al-sifut al-dhatiyyah*) and names as "the parts of definition," "parts of quiddity," etc., etc. If the listener does not know that the object defined is attributed with those attributes, he cannot conceive it. If he knows that the thing is attributed with those qualities, he has known them without any definition.[53]

Ibn Taimiyyah then advances four similar arguments and proves that definitions do not offer true significance of the objects defined.[54]

3. The third proposition of the logicians, that judgments cannot be attained except by means of syllogism, has been refuted by our author on the following grounds:[55]

A. It is an uncertain claim and a negative proposition in favour of which they have not advanced any proof. According to ibn Taimiyyah, both the self-evident (*badihi*) and the acquired (*nazari*) forms of knowledge are relative. If some people failed to attain judgments without the help of syllogism, it does not mean that nobody from among the children of Adam knows the judgments without syllogism.

B. Knowledge of a thing does not depend on a *particular* syllogistic process of thinking. *Khabar al-mutawatir* (universally accepted traditions and experiences) gives the knowledge of judgments, while syllogism does not. To one a premise is perceptible, while to another it is not. Therefore, its conclusion (*natijah*) is undependable.[56] Ibn Taimiyyah admits that when the premises are correct, the conclusions are also correct, but then he does not admit that knowledge depends on syllogism.[57]

C. According to the logicians, the syllogistic process of gaining knowledge requires two premises, but ibn Taimiyyah says that such knowledge may be attained by one, two, three, or even more premises according to the needs and requirements of an argument. Some persons, he adds, may not require any premise at all, since they know the matter by some other source (e.g. intuition). The saying of the Prophet, "Every intoxicating thing is wine, and all kinds of wine are unlawful," does not, in any way, support the syllogistic process of thinking in Islam. The prophet never adopted such a process in gaining knowledge of a thing. Every Muslim knows that wine (*khamr*) is unlawful, and he does not stand in need of two premises to prove that all intoxicating drinks are unlawful.[58] The very first figure of syllogism,

therefore, says ibn Taimiyyah, does not require the roundabout way of inference for obtaining the conclusion.59

The logicians claim that ratiocination gives the benefit of perfect knowledge, and that it deals with the knowledge of "universals," the best of which are the ten intellects (*al-'uqul al-'ashrah*) which do not accept any change or alteration and through which the soul (*al-nafs*) attains perfection. The "universals" are attained by intellectual propositions which are necessary such as "All men are animals," and "Every existing thing is either necessary or possible," and the like which do not accept any change. Ibn Taimiyyah opposes this claim on the following grounds:60

A. According to the logicians, since ratiocination deals with intellectual matters having no connection with the physical world, it gives no knowledge of existing things. We may, therefore, consider it useless for all practical purposes.

B. Ratiocination does not help us in understanding the Necessary Existent (*wajib al-wujud*), the ten intellects (*al-'uqul al-'ashrah*), the heavens (*al-aflak*), the elements (*'anasir arba'ah*), or the created things (*muwalladat*) in the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms.

C. The science of divinity to the logicians is not the knowledge of the Creator nor that of the created. They call it metaphysics (*'ilmu ma ba'd al-tabi'ah*), but some name it as "the science of divinity," the subject-matter of which is the "simple universals" which they divide into "necessary, possible, eternal, accidental, essence, accident," all of which have no existence in the physical world.61

Ibn Taimiyyah then traces the origin of logic to geometry. He, therefore, says that:

D. Logicians gave the geometrical forms of argumentation in their logic and called them "terms" (*hudud*) like those of Euclid's geometry in order to transfer this method from the physical object to the intellectual one. This is due to the bankruptcy of their intellect and their inability to derive knowledge through a direct process. But Allah has given the Muslims more knowledge and perspicuity of expression combined with good action and faith than to all classes of people.62

The logicians admit that divine knowledge is not objective. It follows that it has no existence either in the intellectual or in the physical world. It is a "universal knowledge" which does not exist except in the imagination. Therefore, there is nothing in this knowledge for the perfection of the soul.
E. Perfection of the soul depends on both knowledge of God and virtuous action (*'amal salih*), and not on philosophy. Knowledge alone cannot elevate the soul. Good action must be there, because the soul has two functions, one theoretical and the other practical. Service to God consists of knowledge of God and love for Him, and God sent the prophets to call people to worship Him. Similarly, faith (*iman*) in God does not mean knowledge of God only, as the Jahmites believe. It consists of both knowledge and practice.63

F. The fourth proposition of the logicians, that syllogism or ratiocination gives the knowledge of

judgments (*tasdiqat*), has been refuted by ibn Taimiyyah in the fourth section of his book where he discusses the topic elaborately in about 300 pages.64 In this section, the author seeks to prove the futility of syllogism in attaining knowledge, and often ridicules the renowned logicians by citing their alleged death-bed recantations.65 Here he repeats in a new way almost all that he has said in the previous chapters about definition and syllogism of Aristotelian logic and brings in many irrelevant topics in favour of his arguments. He considers that syllogistic process of thinking artificial and useless. In his opinion, God has endowed human beings with "necessary knowledge" to understand their Creator and His attributes. But men invented, from very early times, various sciences which the *Shari'ah* of Islam does not require for the guidance of mankind.66

Syllogism, as has been said before, does not give us the knowledge of existing things even when it is apparently correct. Sure knowledge or judgment may be attained even by a single premise without undergoing the syllogistic process. Here, ibn Taimiyyah blames the philosophers who, from differences in the movements of the stars, inferred that there are nine heavens and that the eighth and ninth heavens are the *kursi* (Chair) and *'arsh* (Throne) of God, respectively. He hates Aristotle and his followers for believing in the eternity of the world (*qidam al-'alam*), though most of the philosophers were against this view. They put forward further different theories regarding the life-span of this world based on the calculations of the movements of the heavens. Some said that the world would be destroyed after 12,000 years, while others held that it would last up to 36,000 years, and so on. To ibn Taimiyyah, these inferences were baseless and unfruitful.67

Ibn Taimiyyah considers Aristotle to be ignorant of the science of divinity, and accuses ibn Sina of having adulterated it with heretical views of the Batiniyyah who interpreted Islamic *Shari'ah* according to their whims and false ratiocination. Some of them, according to our author, said that the Prophet was the greatest philosopher, while others went so far as to say that the philosophers were greater than the prophets. Sufis like ibn 'Arabi, ibn Sab'in, al-Qunawi, Tilimsani, etc. followed these heretical views of the Batiniyyah and used Islamic terms in naming their theories. Some of these Sufis, namely, ibn Sab'in and his followers, did not distinguish between Islam and other religions like Christianity and Judaism. Followers of any religion could approach them and become their disciples without changing their faith.68 To ibn Taimiyyah, knowledge of the particular is surer than knowledge of the universal. Therefore, there is not much benefit in the study of inductive logic in which knowledge of the individuals leads to knowledge of the universal. Moreover, knowledge of the individual is derived more quickly than knowledge of the universal which is often gained (by common sense or intuition) without undergoing any syllogistic process.69

Ibn Taimiyyah opines that in syllogism (*qiyasw*) conclusion may be drawn out of one term only, and that it does not require *sughra* and *kubra* (minor and major) terms for drawing conclusions, because he who knows the universal quality is available in every individual.70 Ibn Taimiyyah further believes that the teachings of the prophets include all the scriptural and the rational proofs. In support of his view, he cites a number of Qur'anic verses, e.g.:

“Lo, those who wrangle concerning the revelation of Allah without a warrant having come unto them, there is naught else in their breasts but (the quest of) greatness, which they shall never attain to.”71

“And when their messengers brought them clear proofs (of Allah’s sovereignty), they exalted in the knowledge they (themselves) possessed and that which they were wont to mock befell them.”72

Keeping in view the real existence of concepts, ibn Taimiyyah adds that the philosophers divided knowledge of things into three classes: physical, mathematical, and philosophical. Of these, philosophical knowledge deals with some theoretical problems relating to the existence of simple universals.73 It has nothing to do with practical purposes and is, therefore, useless.

Ratiocination, in the opinion of our author, does not prove the existence of the Creator. The Universals, according to the logicians, have no independent external existence of a definite being distinguishable from the rest of existence.74 Moreover, in syllogism a complete conception of the middle term saves us from logical inference. Because a person, who knows that wine is forbidden and every intoxicating (drink) is wine, certainly knows already that every intoxicating (drink) is forbidden (without going through the syllogistic process of thinking).75

Such are the arguments of ibn Taimiyyah in proving his assertion that syllogism does not give us the benefit of a new judgment.

Now, let us see how ibn Taimiyyah refutes the views of the scholastic philosophers by tackling the theories of atom, body, similarity of bodies (*tamathul al-ajsam*) etc. and declares that all these are innovations in Islam, and that scholars have failed to come to any agreement about them.

Theory of the Atom

This theory was held by most of the scholastic theologians including the Jahmites, the Mu‘tazilites, and the Ash‘arites. Some of these atomists held that bodies were combinations of atoms existing by themselves, and that God does not destroy any of them. He destroys only the accidents (*a‘rad*), namely, their union (*ijtima‘*), their separation (*iftiraq*), their motion (*harakah*), and their rest (*sukun*). Others maintained that atoms are phenomenal: God created them *ex nihilo*, and once they come into existence they are never destroyed, though accidents may be destroyed. This view was held by most of the Jahmites, the Mu‘tazilites, and the Ash‘arites. Most of them, further, believed that it was supported even by *ijma‘* (consensus). Ibn Taimiyyah rejects this theory on the ground that it is an innovation and that early Muslims knew nothing about it. Further, the theologians are not unanimous; some of them totally deny the existence of atoms and the composition of bodies from them.76

Theory of the Body

Some opine that a thing which is definite or which has dimensions is called a body, while others say that it is a combination of two atoms, whereas some people maintain that it is a combination of four atoms or

make up to 32. Besides these, a class of philosophers holds that bodies are formed not of atoms but of matter and form, while many other scholastics and non-scholastics profess that bodies are neither a combination of atoms nor of matter and form. Even Imam al-Haramain al-Juwaini (d. 478/1085), the teacher of Imam al-Ghazzali, doubted the combination of matter and form, though it is reported that he himself transmitted this as a view accepted by *ijma'* (consensus).77

Theory of the Similarities of Bodies

This theory is popular among some Muslim philosophers. The upholders of this theory profess that bodies of all kinds are at bottom alike, because they are the combinations of atoms which are themselves like one another. The difference between one body and another is the difference of accidents (*a'rad*). Ibn Taimiyyah rejects this theory, first, on the ground that it has been refuted by Razi and Amidi along with many other philosophers. Secondly, because al-Ash'ari also rejects it in his *Kitab al-Ibanah* for being a theory of the Mu'tazilites. Thirdly, because the upholders of this theory, in accordance with the principles of the Jahmites and the Qadarites, maintains that each individual body God gives accidents (*a'rad*) peculiar to itself. According to them, the species (*ajnas*) cannot change from one into another. A body does neither turn into accidents nor one species of accidents into another.

If it is argued against them (the philosophers) that since all bodies are phenomenal and all phenomenal things turn from one to another, it necessarily proves the change of species, they would say in reply that matter (*maddah*) in all kinds of creation is the same. It is the qualities (*sifat*) that change due to union (*ijtima'*), separation (*iftiraq*), motion (*harakah*), and rest (*sukun*), while matter (*maddah*) remains unchanged at all stages of creation. To ibn Taimiyyah, this argument is a mere assumption of the philosophers who have observed only the phenomenal change in things without having any knowledge whatsoever of the essence which they claim remains unchanged. These philosophers, ibn Taimiyyah continues, further assert that all things are combinations of atoms preserved in matter, and then created afresh, while the other maintains that the parts of a body are separated but will again be united in the next world. Unfortunately, the latter have to answer a riddle.

If a man is eaten up by an animal (say a fish) and then the animal is eaten by another man, then how would he be raised on the Day of Resurrection? In reply, some of them say that in the human body there are certain parts that cannot be dissolved and in these parts there is nothing of that animal which has been eaten by the second man. Ibn Taimiyyah objects to this and points out that according to the scientists (*'uqala'*) there is nothing in the human body that cannot be dissolved and that, according to the *aslaf* (earlier writers), the *fuqaha* (jurists) and also the people in general, one body (*jism*) turns into another by losing its identity completely. On the basis of this the jurists discussed the problem whether an impure thing may become pure when it is changed into another. For example, they agreed that if a pig falls into a salt-mine and becomes salt, it will be lawful for a Muslim to eat that salt. Thus, ibn Taimiyyah comes to the conclusion that the arguments in favour of the theory of the similarity of bodies are not sustainable. He believes that bodies are dissimilar and inter-changeable.

Theory of Motion

Philosophers among the Jahmites and the Mu'tazilites have argued about the origination of bodies (*huduth al-ajsam*) from the story of Abraham, who refused to call the stars, the moon and the sun his lords (*rubub*).[78] They hold that Abraham did not worship these heavenly bodies simply on the ground of their motion and shift (*al-harakat w-al-intiqal*) as suggested by the word *uful* in the Qur'an.[79] In other words, they maintained that *motion* and *shift* are the distinctive signs origination of bodies.[80] Ibn Taimiyyah rejects the theory on the following grounds:

1. No such theory was maintained by the Muslim scholars nor is there any indication anywhere that Abraham's people ever thought of it. Why Abraham's people worshipped the heavenly bodies may be attributed to their superstitious beliefs that they would bring them good luck and save them from evil. That is why Abraham said, "Oh my people, I share not with you the guild of joining gods with God."[81]

2. To the Arabs the word *uful* means setting (of the sun, the moon, etc.) and being covered by veils. They did not mean by it "motion" and "shift" as understood by these philosophers.

3. "Motion" and "shift" in the heavenly bodies exist at all times. There was no reason for Abraham to ascribe "motion" and "shift" to the heavenly bodies only at the time of their disappearance. He could recognize them even before they disappeared from the sky. It was on account of such misinterpretations that ibn Sina arrived at the wrong conclusion that "disappearance is the possibility of existence and everything the existence of which is possible is liable to disappear."[82]

The theory of indestructible atoms held by the philosophers goes against the agreement of the learned people (*'uluma'*) that one thing may turn into another and that the atoms have no existence, just as the intellectual atoms (*al-Jawahir al-'aqliyyah*) of the Peripatetics is mere conjectures.[83]

The actual cause of the divergence of opinion among the *'ulama'*, as suggested by ibn Taimiyyah, was their invention of certain equivocal terms. For example, what is an indivisible atom? It is obvious that most intelligent people have failed to conceive it. Those who are supposed to have understood it could not prove it, and those who were said to have proved it had to take shelter under long and far-fetched interpretations.[84] None of the Companions of the Prophet nor their Successors nor anyone prior to them in natural religion (*din al-fitrah*) ever spoke about indivisible atoms. Naturally, therefore, it cannot be suggested that those people ever had in mind the term "body" and its being an assembly of atoms. No Arab could conceive of the sun, the moon, the sky, the hills, the air, the animals and the vegetables being combinations of atoms. Was it not impossible for them to conceive of an atom without any dimension? The traditionists, the mystics and the jurists never thought of such doctrines.[85]

Theory of the Necessary Cause (Mujib bi Dhat)

Ibn Taimiyyah refutes the philosophical interpretation of the necessary cause. He says that if by "necessary cause" the philosophers mean an existence which has no "will" and no "power," then such

an existence bears no meaning, nor has it any significance externally, much less can it be existing necessarily. Ibn Rushd and other philosophers contradict themselves in their discussion of this problem. They postulate at the outset "a final cause" or *'illat al-ghayah* and then other final causes to assist it in creation (*khalq*) which needs volition (*irudah*). And since they interpret the final cause as mere knowledge and "knowledge" as the "knower," it becomes totally absurd and contradictory, because we know necessarily that volition (*iradah*) is not identical with knowledge, or knowledge with the knower.

With these philosophers, says ibn Taimiyyah, heterogeneous expressions may have only one meaning, by knowledge they mean power or volition, by attribution they mean attributed, just as by knowledge they mean the knower, by power they mean the powerful, by volition the volent, and by love the lover. Granted that there is a being without "will" and "choice," it is impossible for such a being to create this universe, because such a necessary cause needs its own causes and they cannot be independent.86

Theories of Harakat al-Falak, Namus, and Mumkin

Ibn Sina and his followers, in trying to compromise between prophecy and philosophy, invented the theory of *harakat al-falak* or movement of the sky. They maintain that the heaven moves in obedience to the "First Cause" (*al-'Illat al-Ula*). To these people the word *ilah* (deity) means a leader in obedience to whom the sky moves, and their highest philosophy is to remain obedient to leader. The "Maqalat al-Lam," Book 1, in Aristotle's *Metaphisca* supplies us with such a description.87

The philosophers believed in *namus*. By *namus* they meant government of the world run by wise men for the attainment of good and avoidance of oppression. Those amongst them who acknowledged "prophecy" maintained that all religious were of the type of *namus* brought to the world for the common good. Ibn Sina was one of those who held this view. In accordance with their grades of practical philosophy, those people considered the acts of worship (*'ibaddah*), revealed laws (*Shari'ah*), and injunctions (*ahkam*) to be moral, domestic, and civil laws respectively. Ibn Taimiyyah strongly opposes the theories of both *harakat al-falak* and *namus*, and condemns the philosophers for their vain attempt. He pronounces them all to be far from the truth and stigmatizes Aristotle, their first teacher, as the most ignorant of men (*ajhal al-nas*), who knew nothing of God though he was well versed in physics.88

As for the theory of *mumkin*, the scholastics are of the opinion that every possible thing (*mumkin*) either occupies space (*mutahayyiz*) or exists in that which occupies space (*qa'im bi al-mutahayyiz*). Ibn Sina and his followers, al-Shahrastani, al-Razi, etc., in affirming an existing thing different from these, postulate humanity, animality, or such other generic concepts. To ibn Taimiyyah these generic concepts exist only in the mind. He observed that people objected to such theories when the philosopher wanted to prove a thing which was beyond imagination or which existed by itself imperceptibly. He further disapproved of the theory that all exiting things must be visible to the eyes or perceptible to the senses.89

How far is ibn Taimiyyah justified in declaring, against the philosophers, that God is above us in the

heaven? Can “direction” be applied to God?

According to Aristotle, upward and downward do not signify place, but the predicament “where,” just as “yesterday” and “today” do signify time, but the predicament “when.”[90] This does not contradict the dialectics of ibn Taimiyyah who protests against those who say that God cannot be in any direction, because it signifies a place, and one who is in a place must have been created (*hadith*). In his opinion, those who say that God exists in some direction, meaning thereby that He is in some existing place within the universe, are wrong, but if a “direction” they mean some non-existing thing above the universe (*‘alam*), then they are right, because above the universe there is nothing but God.[91] Then the question arises, what is the Throne of God and why do men raise their hands upwards at the time of prayer?

Ibn Taimiyyah says that this is because, according to the Qur’an, God is on His Throne and the angels bear it.[92] The early philosophers erroneously believed that the Throne meant the ninth heave (*al-falak al-tasi‘*), because the astronomers could not discover anything beyond it. They further maintained that this ninth heaven was the cause of the movements of the other eight heavens. The ninth heaven was also called by them spirit (*al-ruh*), soul (*al-nafs*), or the Preserved Table (*al-lauh al-mahfuz*) as also active intellect (*al-‘aql al-fa‘al*) and so on. They further compared this ninth heaven in its relation to the other heavens with the intellect in human beings in relation to their bodies and their activities.[93] All such theories are, in the opinion of ibn Taimiyyah, mere conjectures without any foundation.[94] He quotes a tradition in defence of his belief that the *‘arsh* is above all the heavens which are above the earth and is in the shape of a dome (*qubbah*).[95]

Granted that the *‘arsh* is round and it envelops the whole creation, he further argues, it must be on top of all existing things from all directions, and a man will naturally turn his face upwards when asking for God’s favour, and not downwards or in any other direction. If one who looks to any of the heavens in any direction other than upward must be counted as a fool, then what is to be said of a man who seeks God’s favour but looks in any direction other than upward when upward is nearer to him than any other direction, right, left, front or back? Supposing a man intended to climb the sky or anything that is upward, he must begin from the direction that is over his head; no sensible person will ever advise him to rend the earth and the go downward because that is also possible for him. Similarly, he will not run to his right or left, front or back and then climb, though that is also equally possible for him to do.[96]

By the time ibn Taimiyyah appeared with his polemics against all sciences and religious institutions whose origin could not be traced to early Islam, pantheism occupied the mind of a number of reputed Muslim scholars. Of these he mentions ibn ‘Arabi (d. 638/1240), ibn Sab‘in (d. 667/1269), ibn al-Farid (d. 577/1181), al-Hallaj (executed in 309/922), and a few others. Pantheism, according to ibn Taimiyyah, is based upon two wrong principles which are against Islam, Christianity, and Judaism and are contradictory to rational and scriptural arguments.[97]

Some pantheists who profess the doctrines of incarnation (*hulul*), unification (*ittihad*), or other closely

related doctrine like “Unity of Existence,” maintain that “existence” is one, though there are two degrees of it. It is (1) necessary in the Creator and (2) contingent in the creation. To this group of pantheists ibn Taimiyyah assigns ibn ‘Arabi, ibn Sab‘in, ibn al-Farid, Tilimsani, etc. Of these ibn ‘Arabi distinguishes between existence (*wujud*) and affirmation (*thubut*) saying that “substances” do exist in non-Being (*‘adam*) independent of God, and that the existence of God is the existence of the substance themselves: the Creator needs the substances in bringing them into existence, while the substances need Him for obtaining their existence which is the very existence of Himself.98 Al-Qunawi (d. 673/1274) and his followers made a distinction between “the general” and “the particular” (*al-itlaq w-al-ta‘yin*). They maintained that the necessary One is unconditionally identical with the existing things in general. To ibn Taimiyyah these are fantastic imaginings, because what is general in conception must be definite in individuals.99

Ibn Sab‘in and his followers hold that “the Necessary” and “the contingent” are like “matter” and “form.” Ibn Taimiyyah considers this view absurd and self-contradictory. In his opinion, it leads to the theories of incarnation and unity of existence. These people are the pantheists who failed to conceive of the divine attribute called *al-mubayanah li al-makhluqat*, different from originated things. They knew that God exists and thought that His Being is the same as His existence, just as a man looks to the ray of the sun and calls it the sun itself.100 Ibn Taimiyyah quotes a saying of Sheikh Junaid Baghdadi, “To believe in the Unity of God is to separate the quality of origination from that of eternity,” and emphasizes that there must be a distinction between the Creator and the created; they cannot be one and the same.101

According to ibn ‘Arabi, non-existence is a positive thing even in its state of non-being.102 He further maintains that the existence of such things is the existence of God Himself; they are distinguished by their essential characteristics which persist in the void, and are united with the existence of God, who knows them. Abu ‘Uthaman al-Shahham,103 the teacher of al-Jubai’i, was the first to speak about it in Islam. These people argued in favour of their theory that had there been nothing in the void, there would not have been any difference between (1) things known, and (2) things unknown. Distinction, in their opinion, can exist only between positive things. Such a theory is absurd according to ibn Taimiyyah. The Sunnite Mutakallimun called these people heretics.104 Ibn ‘Arabi’s theories generally revolve around this point. Regarding the above doctrine of ibn ‘Arabi, ibn Taimiyyah remarks that the Jews, the Christians, the Magians and even the heathens never maintained such a belief. He, therefore, calls it a Pharaonic theory which had also been held by the Qarmatians.105

According to ibn Taimiyyah, ibn ‘Arabi’s theory reveals two things when analyzed: (1) denial of the existence of God, and (2) denial of His creation of creatures.106 Besides, according to ibn Taimiyyah, ibn ‘Arabi maintains that sainthood (*wilayah*) is better than prophethood (*nubuwwah*) and that sainthood will never come to an end, whereas prophecy has already been terminated.107

Ibn Taimiyyah then gives various explanations of the pantheistic views of ‘Arabi, and declares them absurd. He compares ibn ‘Arabi to the deaf and dumb, and quotes the verse of the Holy Qur’an, ***“Deaf,***

dumb and blind, therefore, they shall not retrace their steps from error."[108] Similar attacks were made also by him against other Muslim philosophers.

We have seen ibn Taimiyyah's attitude towards theology, logic, and philosophy. He quotes Imam Shafi'i that theologians should be beaten with shoes and palm branches but while replying to theological as well as philosophical questions, he cannot help adopting theological and philosophical argumentation. From his method of discussion it is evident that in theology and philosophy he is able to put forward an argument by referring everything to the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah declaring the rest to be innovations.

As for his views about Aristotelian logic, he exhibits his power of argumentation in an extra-ordinary way. He is, no doubt, an independent thinker and is free from the fetters of blind following (*taqlid*) in every matter. He may be called the precursor of the modern trend of anti-Aristotelianism.

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1. A place famous for its Hanbalite School. Here lived the Sabeans and the philosophers who worshipped the heavenly bodies and images after their names. Prophet Moses was sent to these people for their guidance. See MRK, vol. 1, pp. 425

et sq.

2. Fawat, vol. 1, p. 35.

3. Arba'un, pp. 34 – 36.

4. Subki, Tabaqat, vol. 5, p. 240, s.v. Mohammad 'Abd al-Rahim ibn Mohammad al-Sheikh Safi al-Din al-Hindi, born in India in 644/1246 and died in Damascus in 715/1315, ten years after the mundzarah held in Cairo.

5. Fawat, vol. 1, p. 141; Rihlah, vol. 1, p. 216; Majallah, vol. 37, part 3, p. 196.

6. Fawat, vol. 1, pp. 42 et sqq.

7. Rihlah, vol. 1, p. 217.

8. Majallah, vol., 27, Part 2, p. 193; Fawat, vol. 1, p. 41

9. Al-Kutubi, Fawat, loc. cit.

10. This treatise has been edited by Scrajul Haque in JASP, vol. 2, 1957.

11. M. Sunnah, Vol. 3, pp. 68 et sqq,

12. Imam al-Haramain Abu al-Ma'ali 'Abd al-Malik ibn Yusuf (d. 478/1085), the greatest theologian of the fifth/11th century.

13. Abu al-Fath Mohammad ibn 'Abd al-Karim (d. 469/1076).

14. M. Sunnah, vol. 1, p. 181.

15. M. Tafsir, p. 387 et sq.

16. Ibid., p. 62 et sq.

17. Ash'ari, Istihsan al-Khaud, Hyderabad, 1323/1905

18. The leader of this group Jahm ibn Safwan, was put to death at Merv in 128/745 for his heretical doctrines. Baghdadi, Farq, p. 19; Shahrastani, vol. 1, p. 60; Bukhari in the last book of his Sahih refutes the Jahmite views.

19. Mizan, vol. 1, p. 185, No. 1443; ibn Hajar, Lisan, vol. 2, p.105 no. 427

20. Khallid ibn 'Abd Allah (66 – 126/685 – 743).

21. Ikhlas, p. 63; ba'labakkiyah, p. 392.

22. Fol. 58/B. IOL. Loth. 471

23. M. Sunnah, vol. 4 p. 144 et sqq.

24. MRK, vol. 1, p. 425 et sq.

25. M. Sunnah, vol. 1, p. 172.

26. Mohammad ibn Mohammad ibn al-Nu'man al-Mufid (336 – 413/947 – 1022), teacher of al-Tusi.

27. Sharif al-Ridha' al-Musawi, Yaqut, vol. 5, p. 174

28. Mohammad ibn Hassan ibn 'Ali al-Tusi (d. 460/1067)

29. M. Sunna, vol. 1, pp. 172 – 74.

30. Followers of Abu 'Abd Allah Mohammad ibn Karram (d. 255/868)

31. M. Sunnah, vol. 1, pp 172 – 74.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., p. 178

34. See MRK, vol. 1

35. Supra, p. 798

36. See the article by Bahjat al-Baitar in Majallah Majma' al-'Ilm al-'Arabi, Damascus, vol. 27, part 3, p. 411.

37. MS. Berl. No. 1995, fol. 54(b).

38. Ibid., fol. 2(a); MRK, vol. 1, p. 428.

39. MRKvol. q1, pp. 428 – 29.

40. H. Laoust, Quelques opinions sur la theodicee d'Ibn Taimiya, Memoires publies,m Cairo, 1937, vol. 43, pp. 431 – 33.

41. Jawab, pp. 74 – 87.

42. Qur'an 42:50.

43. Ibid., 5:3, 38:6.

44. See Serajul Haque, "A Letter of ibn Taimiyya toAbu al-Fida" in Dokumenta Islamica Inedita, Akademic Verlag, Berlin, 1952, pp. 155 et sqq.

45. This is perhaps identical with No. 1.

46. Cf. Sayyid Sulaiman Nadawi, “Muslims and Greek Schools of Philosophy,” Islamic Culture, Hyderabad Deccan, vol. 1, p. 87.
47. Ibid., p. 86.
48. Ibid., p. 89.
49. Al-Radd, p. 4.
50. Ibid., pp. 7 – 14, 180.
51. Ibid., p. 8.
52. Ibid, pp. 14 – 87.
53. Ibid, p. 39.
54. Ibid. p. 32 – 39.
55. Ibid pp. 88, 240.
56. Ibid. pp. 92, 298.
57. Ibid. p. 298.
58. Ibid. pp. 168 et. sq.
59. Ibid. p. 200.
60. Ibid. pp., 122 – 26.
61. Ibid. p. 126.
62. Ibid. pp. 137 et sq.
63. Ibid. pp. 138, 144 et sq.
64. Ibid. pp. 246 – 545.
65. Ibid. pp. 248, 321
66. Ibid. pp. 256 et sq.
67. Ibid. pp. 267 et sq.
68. Ibid. pp. 278 – 83.
69. Ibid. p. 316
70. Ibid. pp. 337 – 40.
71. Qur’an 40:56
72. Ibid. 40:83
73. Al-Radd, pp. 324 et sqq.
74. Ibid. p. 344.
75. ibid. pp. 351 et sq.
76. Ikhlas, p. 16
77. ibid. p. 50
78. For the full story see the Qur’an 6:76 et sqq
79. Ibid. 6:77 – 79
80. M. Sunnah, vol. 1, pp. 197 et sqq.; Al-Radd, pp. 304 – 05.
81. M. Sunnah, vol. 1, p. 197.
82. Cf. M. Sunnah, al-aful hu w-al-imkun wa kullu mumkin afil.
83. Ibid. vol. 1, p. 182.
84. Ikhlas, pp. 52 et sq.
85. Ibid. p. 53
86. M. Sunnah, vol. 1, p. 111.
87. Ikhlas, p. 57.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid., pp. 65 et sqq.
90. Aristotle, Organon, London, 1877p. 18.
91. M. Sunnah, vol. 1, p. 250.
92. Qur’an, 40:7

93. MRM, vol. 4, pp. 106 – 08.
94. Ibid., p. 116.
95. On the authority of Abu Dawud, narrated by Jubair ibn Mut'im. Here ibn Taimiyyah appears to have quoted a tradition of doubtful authenticity, because this tradition has not been accepted by all authorities. See annotation by Rashid Rida in MRM, vol. 4, pp. 114 et sqq.
96. MRM, vol. 4, pp. 124 – 26
97. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 66.
98. Ibid., p. 67.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid., p. 102
102. Ibid., p. vo. 4, p. 6
103. Known as Abu Ya'qub al-Shahham, see al-Farq, p. 163.
104. MRM, vo. 4, p. 6
105. Ibid., p. 17.
106. Ibid
107. Ibid., p. 58.
108. The Qur'an, 2:18

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