

A MAMLŪK THEOLOGIAN'S  
COMMENTARY ON AVICENNA'S  
*RISĀLA AḌḤAWIYYA*

BEING A TRANSLATION OF A PART  
OF THE *DAR' AL-TA'ĀRUD* OF IBN  
TAYMIYYA, WITH INTRODUCTION,  
ANNOTATION, AND APPENDICES

PART I

YAHYA J. MICHOT

*Faculty of Theology, Oxford University*

Avicenna's *Epistle on the Ma'ād for the Feast of the Sacrifice* (*al-Risālat al-AḌḤawiyya fī amr al-ma'ād*)<sup>1</sup> is probably his most important work on eschatology. It starts with a definition of *ma'ād* as the place or state reached by humans when they die. It surveys and refutes what the philosopher calls 'false ideas' about the hereafter. It then demonstrates the purely immaterial nature of the human self and, consequently, its necessary permanence after death. Finally, it distinguishes various categories of humans and their respective future destinies, and examines the question of bodily resurrection. Because of its sometimes very daring views, the work has been judged by various modern scholars as

<sup>1</sup> See G. C. Anawati, *Essai de bibliographie avicennienne—Mu'allafāt Ibn Sīnā* (Cairo: Al-Maaref, Millénaire d'Avicenne, 1950), 256–7, no. 200; Y. Maḥdavi, *Bibliographie d'Ibn Sīnā—Fihrist-e nuskhathā-ye muṣannafāt-e Ibn-i Sīnā* (Tehran: Tehran University, 1333/1954), 39–41, no. 30. Editions by S. Duniyā, *Ibn Sīnā, al-Risālat al-AḌḤawiyya fī l-ma'ād* (Cairo: Dār al-fikr al-'Arabī, 1328/1949); F. Lucchetta, *Avicenna, al-Risālat al-AḌḤawiyya fī l-ma'ād—Epistola sulla Vita Futura* (Padova: Antenore, 1969), 5–227; H. 'Āṣī, *al-AḌḤawiyya fī l-ma'ād li-Ibn Sīnā* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasat al-jāmi'iyya li-l-dirāsāt wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzī', 1404/1984), 85–158. Translations into Italian by F. Lucchetta, *Epistola*, 4–226; Persian in H. Khadiw-i Djam, *al-AḌḤawiyya by Ibn Sīnā* (Tehran: Ertelaat Publications, 1364/1985), 31–85. I use F. Lucchetta's edition (hereafter L), which is the one most commonly referred to in Western scholarship.

particularly 'esoteric', reserved for the circle of Avicenna's closest disciples and friends, and—even—justifying Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī's accusations of heresy against him!<sup>2</sup> As for the dating of the *Aḍḥawiyya*, these scholars have generally taken the view that such a work could have been written only when Avicenna's thought had fully matured, during the last years of his life, 'nelle ultime tappe del suo burrascoso peregrinare'.<sup>3</sup>

I have contested the usefulness of the concept of 'esotericism' as an approach not only to the *Aḍḥawiyya* but to Avicenna's writings in general, and I have argued that this epistle is an early work.<sup>4</sup> In my opinion, it must be identified with the *Book on the Return* (*Kitāb al-Ma'ād*) mentioned in Avicenna's long bibliography, and therefore was written during his stay in Rayy in 405/1014–15. According to al-Bayhaqī (d. 565/1169),<sup>5</sup> it was dedicated to the vizier Abū Sa'd al-Hamadhānī. This statement can be accepted and helps to understand the circumstances in which the epistle was composed: it was not directed to any circle of close disciples or friends but to a potential patron, in a period when Avicenna, a young Bukhāran immigrant newly arrived in one of the most brilliant Būyid courts, was facing social and professional difficulties.<sup>6</sup> In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) is completely right when, referring to its introduction, he writes that the philosopher composed the *Aḍḥawiyya* 'for some of the statesmen (*ra'īs*) whom he was seeking to get closer to so that they would give him what he sought from them: a position (*jāb*) and money. He stated that openly at the beginning of this epistle'.<sup>7</sup>

As established by F. Lucchetta,<sup>8</sup> the *Aḍḥawiyya* almost certainly remained unknown to the medieval European philosophers. It was translated for the first time into Latin at the beginning of the sixteenth

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. G. C. Anawati, 'Un cas typique de l'ésotérisme avicennien: Sa doctrine de la résurrection des corps', in *La Revue du Caire*, 141, special number: *Millénaire d'Avicenne (Abou Ali Ibn Sina)* (Cairo, June 1951), 68–94; 90–4; F. Lucchetta, *Epistola*, xiv–xvi; 'La cosiddetta "teoria della doppia verità" nella *Risāla aḍḥawiyya* di Avicenna e la sua trasmissione all'Occidente', in *Oriente e Occidente nel Medioevo: Filosofia e scienze* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1971), 97–116.

<sup>3</sup> See F. Lucchetta, *Epistola*, xvii; *Teoria*.

<sup>4</sup> See Y. Michot, *Ibn Sīnā, Lettre au vizir Abū Sa'd* (Paris: Albouraq, 1421/2000), 28\*.

<sup>5</sup> See al-Bayhaqī's text translated in Y. Michot, *Vizir*, 27\*.

<sup>6</sup> On this important aspect of Avicenna's career, see Y. Michot, *Vizir*, 31\*–51\*.

<sup>7</sup> See p. 10. (References in bold are to the pages of the Arabic text of Ibn Taymiyya's commentary translated below, where they are given in square brackets).

<sup>8</sup> F. Lucchetta, *Teoria*, 108–9.

century, by Andrea Alpago of Belluno (c.1450–1522).<sup>9</sup> From about 1487 to, it seems, 1517, the Italian served as physician to the Venetian consulate in Damascus. Apart from medicine and philosophy, he also became interested in the political developments of that time in Syria (the last Mamlūks and the Ottoman menace), the economic situation of that region, and Arabo-Islamic culture, for which he shows sympathy and admiration in various writings. It is, however, for his Latin translations of Avicenna that he is most famous: he not only revised Gerard of Cremona's translation of the *Canon of Medicine* (twelfth century)<sup>10</sup> but produced the first translation of a group of minor writings often concerning psychology, among others the *Adḥawiyya*. Alpago died too soon after his return from the Middle East to see his translations in print. However, his nephew Paolo, who had accompanied him in Syria, ensured they were eventually published. The *Canon* came out in 1544; the *Libellus Avicennae de Almahad* in 1546, in Venice, *apud Iuntas*.

Alpago had been able to acquire his impressive knowledge of Arabic, medicine, and philosophy because, as his nephew reports, he 'had sought out, in his old age, the hiding places of the Arabic language and trustworthy manuscripts (*fides codicum*) in Cyprus, Syria, Egypt, and virtually the whole Orient'.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, during his long stay

<sup>9</sup> A. Alpago, *De mahad .i. de dispositione, seu loco, ad quem revertitur homo, vel anima eius post mortem*, in *Avicennae philosophi praeclarissimi ac medicorum principis Compendium de anima, De mahad [...], Aphorismi de anima, De diffinitionibus & quæsitis, De divisione scientiarum [...]* ex arabico in latinum versa cum expositionibus eiusdem Andreae collectis ab auctoribus arabicis, omnia nunc primum in lucem edita (Venice: Apud Iuntas, 1546). Offset reprint (Westmead, Farnborough: Gregg International, 1969), fos. 40–102. On A. Alpago, see the pioneering studies of M.-T. d'Alverny reprinted in her *Avicenne en Occident* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1993), §§xii–xv; G. Levi della Vida, 'Alpago, Andrea', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, ii (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1960), 524–7; the authoritative monograph by F. Lucchetta, *Il medico e filosofo bellunese Andrea Alpago (+ 1520), traduttore di Avicenna; Profilo biografico* (Padova: Antenore, 1964); G. Vercellin, *Il Canone di Avicenna fra Europa e Oriente nel primo Cinquecento: L'Interpretatio Arabicorum nominum di Andrea Alpago* (Turin: UTET, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> On the historical and scientific importance of Alpago's version of the *Canon*, see N. G. Siraisi, *Avicenna in Renaissance Italy: The Canon and Medical Teaching in Italian Universities after 1500* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

<sup>11</sup> Paolo Alpago quoted in C. Burnett, 'The Second Revelation of Arabic Philosophy and Science: 1492–1562', in C. Burnett and A. Contadini (eds.), *Islam and the Italian Renaissance* (London: Warburg Institute, 1999), 185–98; 191.

in Damascus, he had enjoyed the friendship and teaching of someone he himself calls 'Rays Ebenmechi, praeceptor meus' and 'Ebenmechi, physicus inter omnes Arabes primarius',<sup>12</sup> i.e. Muḥammad Shams al-Dīn Ibn al-Makkī (d. 938/1532), the famous 'shaykh of the physicians in Damascus and, even, elsewhere', according to Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī (d. 1061/1651), who also knew and taught 'cosmography, geometry, astronomy', 'physics', and 'the science of divinity'.<sup>13</sup> The Bellunese's interest in the *Adḥawiyya* and other Avicennan writings previously unknown in Europe can almost certainly be traced back to his relationship with this important Syrian scholar.

Once translated and published in Latin, the *Adḥawiyya* was, in Alpago's mind, sure to be of great help in promoting in Europe a spiritualist and personalist conception of man and the hereafter, against Averroes' materialist and unitarist psychology, or Pomponazzi's eschatological agnosticism.<sup>14</sup> As for the influence this epistle had on Islamic thought during the five centuries separating Avicenna from Alpago, it has not yet been investigated. Avicenna's modern bibliographers do not mention any commentary on, or refutation of, the epistle. Interestingly, it is among the Avicennan texts collected in the philosophico-eschatological *majmū'a* copied in the Madrasa Mujāhidīyya of Marāgha in 596–7/1200, which probably preserved the textbooks then taught in a school attended at some point in their careers by, among others, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210).<sup>15</sup> In any case, one is

<sup>12</sup> Quotations in F. Lucchetta, *Medico*, 34.

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix I, pp. 195–8.

<sup>14</sup> See Alpago's declaration quoted by F. Lucchetta, *Medico*, 75–6; *Teoria*, 110–3. According to M.-T. d'Alverny ('Andrea Alpago, interprete et commentateur d'Avicenne', in *Aristotelismo Padovano*. Atti del xii Congresso Internazionale di Filosofia (Florence, 1960), 1–6; reprinted in her *Avicenne*, §xiv; 2), the fact is however that the *Libellus Avicennae de Almahad* became 'a rare book' that would be read only by a few people. It was also 'coming too late, as the great battles [between humanists and Averroists] had quietened down by the time it was published' (M.-T. d'Alverny, 'Survivance et renaissance d'Avicenne à Venise et Padoue', in *Venezia e l'Oriente fra Tardo Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Florence, 1966), 75–102; reprinted in her *Avicenne*, §xv; 102). For references on these battles, see M. Cruz Hernández, *Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Rušd (Averroes); Vida, Obra, Pensamiento, Influencia* (Cordoba: Cajasar Publicaciones, 1997), 489–93.

<sup>15</sup> See N. Pourjavady, *Majmū'ah-ye falsafī-e Marāghah: A Philosophical Anthology from Marāghah*, Containing Works by Abū Ḥamid Ghazzālī, 'Ayn al-Qudāt Hamadānī, Ibn Sīnā, 'Umar Ibn Sahlān Sāvī, Majduddīn Jilī, and others; facsimile ed. with introductions in Persian and English (Tehran: Iran University Press, 2002), iii–iv and 365–402.

entitled to think that the *Aḏḥawiyya* was read by some of the most important thinkers of medieval Islam.

In an earlier publication, I indicated a few textual parallels between the last pages of the epistle and parts of one of the versions of the *Kitāb al-Maḏnūn bi-hi 'alā ghayr ahli-hi* widely attributed to Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111).<sup>16</sup>

In the *Tamhīdāt*, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhānī (d. 525/1131) explicitly refers to the *Aḏḥawiyya*. However, the passage from it he claims

<sup>16</sup> See Y. Michot, 'Avicenne et le *Kitāb al-Maḏnūn* d'al-Ghazālī', in *Bulletin de Philosophie médiévale*, 18 (Louvain: SIEPM, 1976), 51–9. The parallels relate to the Cairo edition of the *Maḏnūn* (al-Ghazālī, *al-Maḏnūn bi-hi 'alā ghayr ahli-hi*, ed. M. M. Abū l-'Alā', *al-Quṣūr al-'awālī min rasā'il al-imām al-Ghazālī*, II (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jandī, 1390/1970), 124–69; 147–8, 152–3). This edition differs from the text of the *Maḏnūn* preserved in the Marāgha MS (see N. Pourjavady, *Majmū'ah*, 1–62). More or less dissimilar versions of some pages of the Cairo edition of the *Maḏnūn* can be recognized in parts of Ghazālī's *al-Masā'il al-ukhrawiyya* also preserved in the Marāgha MS (N. Pourjavady, *Majmū'ah*, 191–224), giving the impression of two students' reports of the same oral teachings. These parts of *al-Masā'il* unfortunately do not seem to include any correspondence to the passages of the Cairo edition of the *Maḏnūn* containing parallels with the *Aḏḥawiyya*.

On the question of Ghazālī's authorship of the *Maḏnūn* and its various versions, see M. Bouyges, *Essai de chronologie des œuvres de al-Ghazali (Algazel)*, edited and updated by M. Allard (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1959), 51–3, no. 39; N. Pourjavady, 'Athār-e *al-Maḏnūn-e Ghazzālī* dar majmū'ah-ye falsafī-e Marāghah', in *Ma'ārif*, vol. viii, 2 (Mordād-Ābān 1380/Nov. 2001), 3–28, (reprinted in his *Two Renewers of Faith: Studies on Muhammad-i Ghazzālī and Fakhruddin-i Rāzi*. Preface by H. Landolt (Tehran: Iran University Press, 2002), 291–316); Dū sanad-e dīgar darbāreh-ye *Kitāb al-Maḏnūn-e Ghazzālī*, in *Renewers*, 317–23; *Majmū'ah*, pp. iv–v. Ibn Taymiyya believed the work to be authentic. Further study will, however, be necessary to verify which text of the *Maḏnūn* he knew, the Cairo-edition text, that of the Marāgha MS, or yet another text. 'Those took the way of the philosophers which Abū Ḥamid [al-Ghazālī] refers to in *The Balance of Action (Mizān al-'amal)*, and which consists in saying that somebody eminent has three creeds: one creed with the commonalty, according to which he lives in this world, like *fiqh* e.g.; one creed with students, which he teaches them, like *Kalām* theology; and a third one about which he informs nobody but the elite. This is why he composed *The Books to be preserved from those who are not worthy of them (al-Kutub al-maḏnūn bi-hā 'alā ghayr ahli-hā)*. Their [content] is pure philosophy, for which he took Avicenna's way' (Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-Nubuwwāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), 81–2). 'As for *The Book to be preserved from those who are not worthy of it*, a . . . group of scholars deny its authenticity. The specialists of [al-Ghazālī] and of his life however know that all this is said by him as they know the subjects he speaks about and their similarity one to another. He and his like, as said earlier, were confused (*muḏṭarīb*) and did not stick to any firm saying' (Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' al-fatāwā*, ed. 'A. R. b. M. Ibn Qāsim, 37 vols. (Rabat: Maktabat al-ma'ārif, 1401/1981), iv. 65; hereafter F).

to quote is part of a different writing, *The Guidance (al-Irshād)*, whose attribution to Avicenna is itself questionable.<sup>17</sup>

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī is far more serious when, in his *Commentary on Avicenna's The Sources of Wisdom (Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma)*,<sup>18</sup> he explains what follows:

The Shaykh [i.e. Avicenna] mentioned, concerning the practical sciences, that their principles and their ultimate developments (*ghāya*) are acquired from the authors of the [religious] Laws (*arbāb al-sharā'i*). Concerning these theoretical sciences, he mentioned that their principles are also acquired from the authors of the [religious] Laws; as for their perfections and their ultimate developments, they are made clear (*mubayyan*) by the rational faculty, through argumentation (*'alā sabil al-ḥujja*). Now, the difference between the two matters is what [Avicenna] mentioned in his epistle which he called *al-Adḥawiyya*. The Lawgiver, he said, is under the obligation to invite [people] to confess the existence of God—exalted is He—, His being exempted from deficiencies and vices, and His being qualified by the epithets of perfection and the marks of majesty. As for stating openly that [God]—praised is He—is not occupying space (*mutaḥayyiz*),<sup>19</sup> nor effectively existing (*hāṣil*) in location (*makān*) and position<sup>20</sup> (*jiba*), these are among things that [the Lawgiver] is under no obligation to state openly. Similar topics of research are indeed among the things at which the wits of most of the creatures do not arrive. Were he to invite people to that, it would deter them from accepting his missionary call (*da'wa*). Certainly, [the Lawgiver] was under the obligation to be content with such a summary (*mujmal*) call. As for the subtle details [of these matters], he was under the obligation not to state them openly [but] to entrust them to the intellects of smart people.

Now that you know that, we will say that the meaning of [Avicenna's] words 'The principles of these parts of theoretical philosophy are acquired from the authors of the divine religion (*milla*) through [some] awakening (*tanbīh*)' is what

<sup>17</sup> See 'A. Q. al-Hamadhānī, *Tambīdāt*, ed. A. Osseiran (Tehran: Intishārāt-e Minūtcihri, 1377/1999), 349; C. Tortel, *Ayn al-Quzāt Hamadānī: Les Tentations métaphysiques (Tambīdāt)* (Paris: Les Deux Océans, 1992), 306; Y. Michot, *Vizir*, 61\*. See also H. Dabashi's opinion that the *Adḥawiyya* 'appears prominently and approvingly in 'Ayn al-Qudāt's *Tambīdāt*' (*Truth and Narrative: The Untimely Thoughts of 'Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamadhānī* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999), 274).

<sup>18</sup> See F. D. al-Rāzī, *Sharḥ 'Uyūn al-ḥikma*, ed. A. H. A. al-Saqqā, 3 vols. (Cairo: Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, 1400/1986), 19–21. I am grateful to Ayman Shihadeh for this reference.

<sup>19</sup> On the meaning of *taḥayyuz* as 'ubication' and *mutaḥayyiz* as 'occupying space', see R. Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes: The Teaching of the Basrian School of the Mu'tazila in the Classical Period* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978), 39, 56. For the Mu'tazilī Abū Ḥāshim al-Jubbā'i, 'the essential characteristic of the atom—its essential attribute—is that it occupy space (*ḥayyiz*) and to occupy space entails being in one particular position or location and not in another' (ibid. 96).

<sup>20</sup> On the meaning of *jiba* as 'position', not 'direction', see ibid. 114–15.

we have mentioned, i.e. that the Lawgiver is under the obligation to guide the creatures towards confessing [God's] absolute exemption [from deficiencies] (*tanzih*) and towards confessing His being qualified by all perfection and majesty. As for his words 'And left free to obtain them perfectly by the rational faculty, through argumentation', their meaning is what we have mentioned, i.e. that these subtle subjects of study, [the Lawgiver] is under the obligation to entrust the knowing of them to the intellects of smart creatures.

In this important passage, al-Rāzī is not paying attention to the ideas developed in the *Adhawīyya* concerning psychology or eschatology but, rather, to Avicenna's understanding of the purpose and limits of any prophetic mission, as expressed in the third section of the epistle.<sup>21</sup> Avicenna's philosophy of prophethood is not idealist but pragmatic and ethically oriented.<sup>22</sup> The Messengers are sent to guide humans on the right path and establish law, justice, and order in their jungle, not to teach them theology or any other science. To lead people to Paradise, revelations must be obeyed by them literally rather than interpreted as images or symbols of some intellectual or esoteric truth that must necessarily be learnt by all. What the Qur'ān tells the masses about God is in fact limited to a few general but ethically useful statements. As for the very subtle doctrines of scholastic theodicy elaborated by the *Mutakallimūn*, God never intended to teach them to the populace, and the theologians cannot claim to have any explicit scriptural basis. For Avicenna, the problem is not only that the *Kalām* theologians make such illegitimate claims, but that they are incoherent: whereas they do not mind elaborating about God's nature, attributes, and actions, at considerable remove from the most obvious meaning of the revealed texts, they become strict and narrow-minded literalists in eschatological matters and speak of bodily resurrection in physical and materialistic terms. As for himself, the philosopher argues in the *Adhawīyya* that there is no more reason to rely on scriptural statements to build a doctrine of the hereafter than to develop a theodicy: 'Haec igitur omnia

<sup>21</sup> Avicenna, *Adhawīyya*, 42–62; trans. Alpago, *De mahad*, fos. 43<sup>v</sup>–45<sup>v</sup>; trans. Lucchetta, *Epistola*, 43–63; see below, p. 10–8. The hermeneutical pages of the *Adhawīyya* are well analysed by F. Lucchetta in *Teoria*.

<sup>22</sup> See Y. Michot, *La Destinée de l'homme selon Avicenne: Le retour à Dieu* (ma'ād) *et l'imagination* (Louvain: Peeters, 1986), 30–43. The main ideas of Avicenna's political philosophy of the prophetic mission and its strategy for success are also present in his *al-Shifā'*, *Al-Ilābiyyāt* (2) (*La Métaphysique*), ed. M. Y. Moussa, S. Dunya, and S. Zayed (Cairo: OIG, 1960), X.ii. 441–3; Avicenna Latinus, *Liber de Philosophia Prima sive Scientia Divina*, *Livres V–X*, ed. S. Van Riet (Louvain: Peeters; and Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 531–5. However, in this work, they develop neither into an hermeneutic of the Scriptures nor into a deconstruction of *Kalām* theology, as is the case in the *Adhawīyya*.

supradicta sunt sermones, ad docendum homines scientia excellentes, non vulgares, quod sensus exterior legis, ut verba sonant, est non necessarium, neque utilis ad concludendum aliquid in his capitulis'.<sup>23</sup> The essential purpose of the Qur'ānic descriptions of Paradise and Hell is to inspire fear, hope, and other feelings of great ethical benefit, not to found any eschatological science.

Al-Rāzī does not share this Avicennan prophetology and reads the passage of the *Aḥḥawīyya* to which he is referring in a sense that has very little to do with the philosopher's intentions in that section of his epistle. Whereas Avicenna develops his hermeneutic of the revealed texts in order to criticize *Kalām*, al-Rāzī misuses it in order to legitimize the kind of rationalist theology for which he himself is famous!

Is it al-Rāzī's suspect interpretation of an important part of the *Aḥḥawīyya* which, a bit more than one century later, led the Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya to devote his attention to the same text? In the present state of Taymiyyan studies, it is impossible to give a definite answer to this question. One thing, however, is certain—the great interest of the theologian in the Shaykh al-Ra'īs' works,<sup>24</sup> among them the *Aḥḥawīyya*. According to his disciple Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350), he indeed wrote some 'Rules (*qawā'id*) concerning the Establishment of the Return (*ma'ād*) and Refutation of Avicenna in his Risāla Aḥḥawīyya. About one volume'.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, he comments on the hermeneutical pages of the epistle in his long *Averting the Conflict between Reason and [religious] Tradition* (*Dar' ta'āruḍ al-'aql wa-l-naql*), also known under the title *The Agreement between what is soundly transmitted* [in religious matters] *and what is clearly intellected*

<sup>23</sup> Avicenna, *Aḥḥawīyya*, trans. Alpagó, *De mahad*, fo. 45<sup>v</sup>; see below, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> Ibn Taymiyya's Avicennism, be it positive or negative, is indubitable in many respects. It is what originally aroused my interest in him and, in the publications I have since devoted to him, I have situated him *vis-à-vis* the Shaykh al-Ra'īs in places too numerous to mention here. This essential aspect of Ibn Taymiyya's thought, however, remains to be studied systematically. For some of his general opinions on the philosopher, see the texts translated by Y. Michot, *Musique et danse selon Ibn Taymiyya: Le Livre du Samā' et de la danse* (*Kitāb al-samā' wa-l-raḡḡ*) *compilé par le Shaykh Muḥammad al-Manbijī* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1991), 77–9; by W. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 63–6; and by D. Gutas, 'The Heritage of Avicenna: The Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy, 1000–c.1350', in J. Janssens and D. De Smet (eds.), *Avicenna and his Heritage* (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 2002), 85.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Asmā' mu'allafāt Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*, ed. S.D. al-Munajjid (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-jadīd, 1403/1983), 20, no. 2. A 'Refutation of Avicenna in his Risāla Aḥḥawīyya. Almost one volume' is also mentioned by Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī (d. 744/1343), *al-'Uqūd al-durriyya min manāqib Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad bin Taymiyya*, ed. M.H. al-Fiqī (Cairo:



(*Muwāfaqa ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl wa-ṣarīḥ al-ma'qūl*).<sup>26</sup> The Rules mentioned by Ibn Qayyim do not seem to have survived. As for the commentary in the *Dar'*, it is the object of the following translation.

The *Dar'* is a long refutation of the 'rationalist objection' (*al-mu'āriḍ al-'aqlī*) in religious matters, that is, the claim that precedence should always be given to so-called rational evidence in cases of supposed conflicts between Reason and Scripture. Ibn Taymiyya traces back such an advocacy of the priority of rational 'certainties' (*'aql*) over the religious tradition (*naql*) to al-Rāzī and his like, and, before them, to al-Ghazālī.<sup>27</sup> In order to refute it, he develops his attacks from no fewer than forty-four viewpoints (*wajh*).<sup>28</sup> He comments on Avicenna's

Maṭba'a Hijāzī, 1357/1938), 53. An 'Establishment of the return [of the bodies] and refutation of Avicenna' is mentioned by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl al-Ṣafādī (d. 764/1362) in *Kitāb al-wafī bi-l-wafayāt: Das Biographische Lexikon*, vol. vii, ed. I. Abbas (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1969), 25, and by Muḥammad b. Shākīr al-Kutubī (d. 764/1362) in *Fawāṭ al-wafayāt wa-l-dhayl 'alay-hā*, ed. I. 'Abbās, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādīr, 1973), i. 76. Zayn al-Dīn Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1393) does not mention these titles in his *al-Dhayl 'alā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, ed. A. H. U. bin Hasan and A. Z. H. 'A. Bahjat, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1417/1997), ii. 332–3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar' ta'arud al-'aql wa-l-naql aw muwāfaqa ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl li-ṣarīḥ al-ma'qūl*, ed. M. R. Sālim, 11 vols. (Riyād: Dār al-kunūz al-adabiyya, 1399/1979). On the *Dar'*, see Y. Michot, 'Vanités intellectuelles ... L'impasse des rationalismes selon *Le Rejet de la contradiction* d'Ibn Taymiyya', in *Oriente Moderno*, 19/80 NS (Rome, 2000), 597–617; esp. 598–600; N. Heer, 'The Priority of Reason in the Interpretation of Scripture: Ibn Taymiyyah and the *Mutakallimūn*', in M. Mir (ed., in collab. with J. E. Fossum), *Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of J. A. Bellamy* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1993), 181–95; 188–92. The first part of the *Dar'*, corresponding to vols. i–iv of the Sālim edition, was published in 1321/1903 under its second title: Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān muwāfaqa ṣarīḥ al-ma'qūl li-ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl*, marginalia of Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-sunmat al-nabawīyya fi naqd kalām al-Shī'a wa-l-Qadariyya*, 4 vols. (Bulaq: al-Maṭba'at al-kubrā l-amīriyya, 1321/1903; offset reprint, Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1400/1980).

<sup>27</sup> As correctly noted by M. R. Sālim, editor of the *Dar'* (see his introduction, i. 14), Ibn Taymiyya has probably in view the kind of statement one finds e.g. in al-Ghazālī's *The Rule of Exegesis (Qānūn al-ta'wīl)*: 'Fundamentally, the demonstration [provided by] the Reason (*burhān al-'aql*) does not lie. Reason indeed does not lie. If Reason were lying, it would perhaps lie when it establishes [the truth of] the religious Law (*fi ithbāt al-shar'*)' (al-Ghazālī, *Qānūn al-ta'wīl*, ed. with *Ma'ārij al-quds* by M. M. Abū l-'Alā' (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jandī, n.d.), 232–46; 240). For other Ghazālīan and Rāzīan texts and, more generally, this conflict between Reason and Scripture, see N. Heer, *Priority*.

<sup>28</sup> Viewpoint IX is translated in Y. Michot, *Vanités*, 603–17. In *Ibn Taymiyya: Lettre à Abū l-Fidā'* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1994), mainly 18–38, I translated various passages of *Muwāfaqa* corresponding mainly to *Dar'*, i. 6–20. Other passages of *Dar'* are translated by N. Heer, *Priority*.

*Adḥawiyya* in the first part of the twentieth of these,<sup>29</sup> which he introduces as follows:

Viewpoint XX. It is that we will say that [the path] on which those deniers of the [divine] attributes trod—that is, opposing the divine texts by means of their [own] views—is in itself what the eternalist (*dabrī*) heretics used as argument against them in order to reject the things that God had told His servants concerning the Last Day. [They went] as far as considering that no knowledge can be derived from what the prophets have told about God and about the Last Day. Then, they transferred this [judgement] to the actions<sup>30</sup> they had been commanded [to perform], like the five prayers, almsgiving, fasting, the pilgrimage, and they considered them as prescribed upon the commonalty, not the elite. Therefore, they eventually got to the point where they became heretics about the three fundamentals on which the religions (*milla*) are agreed, just as He has said, exalted is He: ‘Those who have faith, those who are Jews, the Nazarenes, and the Sabaeans—whoever has faith in God and the Last Day and acts virtuously—will have their recompense with their Lord. No fear shall be on them, neither shall they grieve’ (Q. 2. 62). [4] The matter led those who were treading on the path of these unto heresy, concerning faith in God and the Last Day as well as virtuous action. This even spread among many of those who delve into the true realities (*ḥaqā’iq*)—the adepts of speculation (*nazar*) and devotion (*ta’allah*) among the *Kalām* theologians and the Sufis.<sup>31</sup>

In the *Adḥawiyya*, it is Avicenna’s hermeneutic of the revealed texts that interests Ibn Taymiyya, as it did al-Rāzī, not his psychological and eschatological views. This is already clear when, at the very beginning of the *Dar’*, he briefly mentions Avicenna’s epistle for the first time:

Avicenna and his like based on this principle the rule (*qānūn*) they [follow when reading the revealed texts], as [is the case with] the rule he mentions in his *Epistle for the Feast of the Sacrifice* (*al-Risālat al-Adḥawiyya*). By these terms, those people say, the prophets meant their outward meanings. They wanted the crowd to understand, by them, these outward meanings, even if these outward meanings, as far as the matter itself is concerned, are a lie, something vain, opposed to the truth. They wanted to make the crowd understand by means of lies and vain things, in their [own better] interest (*maṣlaḥa*).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The *Viewpoint XX* is in *Dar’*, v. 3–203. The commentary on the *Adḥawiyya* extends from p. 10 to p. 87 (hereafter S).

<sup>30</sup> i.e. by a process of transfer, they also started to think that, from the teachings of the prophets, no knowledge could be derived concerning the actions . . .

<sup>31</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar’*, v. 3–4.

<sup>32</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar’*, i. 9. For the context, see my translation of the corresponding pages of *Muwāfaqa* in *Lettre*, 21–7. So far as I can judge after searching the CD-ROMs *Majmū’ fatāwā Ibn Taymiyya*, version 1.0 (Cairo: Harf Information Technology, 1999) and *Mu’allafāt al-shaykh wa-tilmidhi-hi*, version 1.0 (Ammān: al-Turāth, 1420/1999), Ibn Taymiyya does not seem to mention the

Ibn Taymiyya obviously rejects Avicenna's understanding of the purpose of prophethood as a guidance relying on an imaged discourse capable of mobilizing imaginations and estimative faculties, to be followed by the crowd in its literality, independently of the question of its truth or falsehood but unacceptable as a source of knowledge for any kind of theological or eschatological research. The Shaykh al-Islām is nevertheless greatly interested in Avicenna's arguments against the *Kalām* doctrine of God as he considers them legitimate and to the point. According to him, the Shaykh al-Ra'īs is indeed completely right when he criticizes the discontinuity between the literality of the Qur'ān and the subtle lucubrations of theologians like the Mu'tazilīs and their like concerning *divinalia*. That being so—Ibn Taymiyya seems to relish adding—Avicenna should realize that he will himself be carried off by the attack he launches against the *Mutakallimūn*, as his own philosophical ideas about God, the hereafter, etc. are as diametrically opposed to the immediate meaning of revealed texts as scholastic theology is ...<sup>33</sup>

Ibn Taymiyya's treatment of the *Adḥawiyya* could be called a 'flowing commentary'. Its beginning is clearly marked with an extended excerpt from the Avicennan text but its end is not indicated in any formal

*Adḥawiyya* explicitly anywhere other than in the passages of the *Dar'* translated here. See also R. Y. al-Shāmī, 'Ibn Taymiyya: Maṣādiru-hu wa-manhaju-hu fī taḥlīli-hā', in *Journal of the Institute of Arabic Manuscripts*, 38 (Cairo: Aleco, 1415/1994), 183–269; 235.

The last sentences of this passage can be compared with various Ghazālian texts, e.g. *Qānūn*, 226: 'They accused the prophets, prayer and peace be upon them, of lying in the [public's] interest (*li-ajl al-maṣlaḥa*) ... They say that the Prophet mentioned only what he mentioned, in opposition to what he knew, in the [public's] interest (*li-l-maṣlaḥa*).' *Al-Iqtisād fī l-i'tiqād* (Cairo: al-Bābī l-Ḥalabī, 1385/1966), 120: 'those who accept as true the Artisan and prophethood. They accept the Prophet as true but believe in things that are opposed to the texts of the religious Law. They say, however, that the Prophet knew the truth (*muḥiqq*) and that he had no other purpose (*qaṣd*), by [mentioning] what he mentioned, than the interest (*ṣalāḥ*) of the creatures. He however was not able to state the truth openly because the wits of the creatures were too dull to grasp it. These are the philosophers.' *Fayṣal al-tafriqa*, ed. M. M. Abū l-'Alā' in *al-Quṣūr al-'awālī min rasā'il al-imām al-Ghazālī*, I (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jandī, 1390/1970), 123–59; 142: 'The interest (*ṣalāḥ*) of the creatures, they said, consisted in their believing in the reassembling of the organisms, as their intellects were too deficient to understand the intellectual return [of the souls in the hereafter]. Their interest also consisted in their believing that the exalted God knows what happens to them and watches them, so that this would produce desire and fear in their hearts. It was thus permitted to the Messenger, peace be upon him, to make them understand that [by any means]. Now, somebody who acts in the interest of others is not a liar.'

<sup>33</sup> See p. 24.

manner. On a statement in the *Adḥawiyya* where he thinks the philosopher speaks of God in too abstract a way, the theologian simply turns to quotation from and commentary on the *Ishārāt*, re-examining once more a metaphysical question he is quite keen on—the non-existence of universals outside of the mind. As to ‘structure’ in his commentary on the *Epistle on the Ma‘ād for the Feast of the Sacrifice*, the most one might venture to claim is that it unfolds in three main parts.

In the first part, Ibn Taymiyya analyses Avicenna’s hermeneutics and uses the latter’s attacks against the Mu‘tazilis to invalidate all negationist theology. Such a recourse to Avicenna’s ideas is paradoxical in that Ibn Taymiyya then denounces the perverse consequences of the philosopher’s political prophetology.<sup>34</sup> The theologian’s situation, in doing so, is however less uncomfortable than Avicenna’s in that he is able to point out how the latter’s philosophical theology can itself become a legitimate target of his own anti-Mu‘tazilī attacks. Comments on three particular hermeneutical statements of the *Adḥawiyya* conclude this section.

A second part of Ibn Taymiyya’s commentary is purely theological—in the narrow sense of the word—and addresses the problem of the essence, the knowledge, and the other attributes of God. The point is to refute Avicenna’s negationist philosophical theology. In relation to specific passages of the *Adḥawiyya*, Ibn Taymiyya is led not only to clarify various scholastic notions and doctrinal facts but also to enter a

<sup>34</sup> One could accuse Ibn Taymiyya of naïveté, or of playing with fire, when he praises Avicenna’s denunciation of the non-scripturality of Mu‘tazilī theology, as this denunciation is developed by the Shaykh al-Ra’īs within a philosophy of religion that is obviously unacceptable to the theologian: an exclusively socio-political conception of the purpose of prophethood and an hermeneutic denying to the Qur’ān any kind of immediate usefulness in matters of theology or eschatology. As soon as he acknowledges Avicenna’s merits, Ibn Taymiyya is indeed compelled to underline and condemn the seriously perverse consequences of his ideas: since the prophets do not really teach any clear truth, many will be those—‘saints’, ‘imāms’, ‘gnostics’, etc.—eager to supply the lack with their own teachings and then claim to be equal or superior to the prophets, not only in theology or eschatology but, even, in Legal matters. The socio-political usefulness of prophethood is an idea that Ibn Taymiyya himself accepts only as long as it is properly understood, i.e. not in the Avicennan perspective of a guidance having nothing to do with knowledge of the truth. On the other hand, the analysis and rejection of the perverse consequences of Avicenna’s Qur’ānic hermeneutics somehow fit in with the general project of refuting the ‘rationalist objection’ pursued in *Dar’*. Negationist theologians, philosophers, gnostics, and other ‘holy’ or sectarian esotericists all share a similar contempt for the outward meaning of the Scripture, and the will to substitute their own ideas for the Prophetic message. That said, there remains the peculiarity of the great Mamlūk theologian’s love-hate relationship with the ideas of the Shaykh al-Ra’īs.

relatively long excursus. As a case study, he examines some passages of the late Mu'tazilī theologian Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 436/1044), with extensive textual quotations, commentaries on specific statements, and insertion of a text by yet another author, the Ḥanbalī Abū l-Ḥasan al-Tamīmī (d. 371/982). Just like Russian dolls or *1001 Nights* stories, a commentary is fitted within another, within another... Comments on three particular theological statements of the *Aḏḥawiyya* conclude this section.

In the last part, Ibn Taymiyya goes back to hermeneutics, in relation to various specific passages of the *Aḏḥawiyya*. The core questions are, again, the scope and limits of the scriptural and prophetic teachings and, correlatively, the nature and validity of theological research. The approach is now multi-confessional, as Avicenna's text refers to not only the Qur'ān but the Bible. Ibn Taymiyya's anger becomes noticeable concerning what he regards as Avicenna's contemptuous opinion of the Prophet's Companions and early Muslims, as well as of Moses' Hebrews.

Ibn Taymiyya alludes to or examines at some length many unexpected topics during the course of his commentary, either because he wants to delve deeper into a question or because he cannot resist a digression. By way of example, suffice it to mention here the links he establishes between Avicennan hermeneutics and esotericism or anomialism (pp. 22–3), or between negationist theology and associationism (p. 52) or charlatanry (pp. 62–3), his exposure of pseudepigraphic literature in Islam (pp. 26–8), his radical detraction of the philosophers' achievements in politics (p. 65) and his critique of their assimilationism (pp. 81–3).

The following outline of the content of his commentary should give a clearer idea of its design:

Quoted pages of the *Aḏḥawiyya* (pp. 10–18)

Commentary (pp. 18–86)

I. Avicenna's hermeneutics (pp. 18–33)

A. Refutation of Avicenna's ideas (pp. 18–30)

1. The validity of Avicenna's attacks against the negationist theologians (pp. 18–23)
  - (a) The deniers' *tawḥīd* (pp. 19–20); Ibn Tūmart, Ibn Sab'īn (p. 20); (b) Avicenna's hermeneutical attack against the deniers' *tawḥīd* (p. 21); (c) Perverse consequence of Avicenna's hermeneutics: philosophers, saints, and imāms can claim to be superior to the prophets (p. 22); Examples of al-Suhrawardī, Ibn Sab'īn, Ibn 'Arabī, and Ismā'īlīs (pp. 22–3)

2. The vain nature of Avicenna's ideas: his argument can be used against himself (pp. 24–30)
    - (a) The explicit and clear message of the Messengers (pp. 24–8); The Messengers' 'esotericism' and the lies told about the Prophet, 'Alī, and others (pp. 26–8); (b) Nobody can dispense with being guided by the Prophet (p. 29); (c) Avicenna's attack against the deniers' *tawhīd* is correct and whoever agrees with them is ignorant, including himself (p. 30)
  - B. Commentary on Avicenna's hermeneutical particular statements (pp. 30–3)
    1. The aim of revelation (pp. 30–1)
    2. Where is the pure *tawhīd* in the Qur'ān? (p. 31)
    3. Where are the subtleties of *tawhīd* theology in the Qur'ān? For Ibn Taymiyya, the Qur'ān has a very comprehensive and clear theology (pp. 32–3)
- II. The problem of the essence, the knowledge, and the other attributes of God (pp. 33–59)
- A. Refutation of Avicenna's negationist views (pp. 33–4)
  - B. Theological precisions and verbal disputes (pp. 34–6)
    1. Definition of *essence* (*dhāt*) (pp. 34–5)
    2. *Attributes* and *states* (p. 35)
    3. The sectarian divisions between attributists and Mu'tazilīs (p. 36)
  - C. A case study: Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (pp. 36–50)
    1. Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's quotation (pp. 36–8)
    2. Commentary on Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's statements (pp. 38–50)
      - (a) Essence, attributes, pre-eternity, significates, and states (pp. 38–42); (b) The Kullābīs and the Nazarenes (p. 43); (c) Two arguments of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī against the attributists (p. 43); (d) Significates, states, and attributes (pp. 44–6); (e) The deniers defame the attributists about the multiplicity of pre-eternity and alterity of the attributes (pp. 46–50); Abū l-Ḥasan al-Tamīmī about pre-eternity of God and His attributes (pp. 47–9); Quotation of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Tamīmī (pp. 47–8); Three views on the alterity of the attributes (Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Ash'arī, al-Bāqillānī) (pp. 49–50)
  - D. Commentary on Avicenna's statements concerning the essence and the attributes (pp. 50–9)
    1. Avicenna's tactic against the deniers can be used against him by the attributists. The revelation is clearly attributist (pp. 50–1)

2. The oneness of God. Ultra-negationist theology and associationism (pp. 52–5)
  - (a) Negationist theology and negation of the Prophet's prophethood (pp. 53–4); (b) The mental existence of an essence without attribute (pp. 54–5)
3. God, space, and position (pp. 55–6)
  - (a) The notion of space (*ḥayyiz*) (pp. 56–8); Rationality of the revelation, questionability of the *Kalām* theses (p. 57); (b) The notion of position (*jiha*) (pp. 58–9)

### III. Commentary on Avicenna's hermeneutical particular statements (pp. 59–86)

- A. Is theological research necessary? (p. 59)
- B. Is the true *tawḥīd* clearly taught in the revelation? (pp. 59–60)
- C. Were the Hebrews and the Arabs forced to theologize? (pp. 60–3)
  1. The missionary methodology of negationist theologians (p. 61)
  2. Pristine natures (*fiṭra*) favour attributism as they are predisposed to grasp the true essence of things (pp. 61–2)
  3. Negationist theology and charlatanry tricks (pp. 62–3)
- D. Avicenna's contempt for the Hebrews and the Arabs (pp. 63–73)
  1. Superiority of the people around the prophets Muḥammad and Moses (pp. 63–4)
  2. Ignorance of Avicenna, his like, and his predecessors: Aristotle, etc. (pp. 64–9)
    - (a) Stupidity of the followers of the Ismā'īlis (p. 64); (b) The fiasco of philosophers in politics (p. 65); (c) Scientific cleverness and lack of religion (p. 65); (d) Jews and Nazarenes are superior to the philosophers, and less of a corruption than the commonalty of Ismā'īlis, Tatars, etc. (pp. 66–7); (e) Ignorance of the astrologers, sorcerers, etc. (pp. 67–8); (f) Aristotle was an associationist wizard and the vizier of Alexander (pp. 68–9); Alexander and Dhū l-Qarnayn (p. 69)
  3. Perfection of the intellects of the followers of the prophets (pp. 69–73)
    - (a) Superiority of the Companions of the Prophet, ignorance of their critics (pp. 69–70); (b) There is no smarter community than the Arabs (p. 71); (c) Perfection of the Arabic language, and then Hebrew (p. 71); Al-Ghazālī's opinion (p. 71); (d) How could Avicenna despise the perfect intelligence of Islam's great names, and their submission to the Companions? (p. 72); Al-Shāfi'ī's opinion (p. 73)
- E. Avicenna's idea that God does not want to teach the truth to the crowd (pp. 73–6)

1. It is true that it is not proper for everybody to know all sciences. Scriptural proofs of that point (pp. 73–6); God’s revelation follows a method (p. 76)
  2. Negationist theology is rejected by intelligent people as well as by the crowd (p. 76)
- F. Avicenna’s remark that the whole of the Jewish Bible is assimilationism (pp. 77–81)
1. This is an important argument for the attributists against the negationists (pp. 77–8); The Prophet and Moses confirm each other (p. 78)
  2. Avicenna is right to say that it would be impossible to falsify the Bible entirely (pp. 78–81); The Prophet did not criticize the anthropomorphisms of the Jewish Bible (pp. 79–81)
- G. Avicenna’s remark that the whole of the Jewish Bible is assimilationism (*bis*) (pp. 81–5)
1. Some assimilationism is inevitable and acceptable (p. 81)
  2. Examples of philosophical assimilationism (pp. 81–3)
  3. The People of the Book’s assimilationism is better than any philosophical one (p. 83)
  4. Association in characteristics and difference, in the case of God and others (pp. 83–5)
- H. Avicenna’s statement that the revelation must hide the truth (pp. 85–6)
1. The science of secrets and Islam (pp. 85–6)
  2. The agreement between true inner reality and true outer reality (p. 86)

Transition: commentary on Avicenna’s negationist *tawhīd* (p. 87)

One may reasonably assume that the *Aḏḥawiyya* continued to be read in Iran after Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī (d. 1050/1640), for example, refers to it explicitly in the *Asfār*,<sup>35</sup> concerning the difference between imaginal forms and forms perceived by the senses. However, this Eastern destiny of Avicenna’s work has yet to be investigated systematically. In addition to its rich content, one of the main interests of Ibn Taymiyya’s commentary on the *Aḏḥawiyya* is to demonstrate that this most controversial writing of the Shaykh al-Ra’īs was also studied and its authority recognized in Mamlūk Syria as early as the beginning of the eighth/fourteenth century, long before Andrea

<sup>35</sup> See M. Ṣ. al-Shīrāzī, *al-Ḥikmat al-muta’āliya fī l-asfār al-‘aqliyyat al-arba’a*, ed. M. R. al-Muzaffar, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār iḥyā’ al-turāth al-‘Arabī, 1423/2002), ix. 130. I have already mentioned the existence of an ancient anonymous translation of Avicenna’s epistle into Persian (see H. Khadiw-i Djam, *Aḏḥawiyya*).



Alpago would discover it there. The Damascene theologian's commentary therefore not only provides a useful milestone to trace the historical itinerary followed by the text from Iran to Venice but also contributes to a better understanding of the fate and metamorphoses of *falsafa* in the Sunnī Near East during the later Middle Ages.

The work done by F. Lucchetta on Alpago and the *Adḥawiyya* deserves the greatest consideration. The Italian scholar is nevertheless mistaken when she writes, in relation to this epistle of Avicenna, that 'nell'Islam sunnita le opere del filosofo erano state proibite'.<sup>36</sup> Around 1500, the *Adḥawiyya* and other philosophical texts of the Shaykh al-Ra'īs circulated in Damascus in the intellectual milieu of the most important Syrian professor of medicine of the time. Moreover, some two centuries earlier, a Ḥanbalī theologian had not hesitated to use some of its most daring ideas to oppose *Kalām* of the Mu'tazilī type and boost his own literalist rationalism in Qur'ānic hermeneutics.

About philosophical matters as well as in medicine, the ideas of the great philosopher thus were far from having lost their seductive power on the western side of the Euphrates as well. And, as I have explained elsewhere,<sup>37</sup> it is not because there were no more *falāsifa* as such that *falsafa* would have become extinct. In Mamlūk Syria around 700/1300, it was now practised, not by a few professional philosophers for an elite of emirs, viziers, or other private patrons, but by various *mutafalsif* scholars philosophizing in one way or another, often negatively, as anti-philosophers, but—in the best cases—at an unprecedented level of sophistication and in deeper connection with other disciplines (notably medicine) in the collective centres of religious and intellectual activity: the mosques, the *madrasas*, and the *khānqāhs*, the observatories and, as would most probably happen later on with Alpago, the hospitals or medical circles.<sup>38</sup> In order to question the importance of such a socio-cultural evolution of philosophical practice in the Sunnī Near East, it could be argued that Ibn Taymiyya was an exceptional character who, as Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) is purported to have said,

<sup>36</sup> F. Lucchetta, *Teoria*, 110.

<sup>37</sup> Y. Michot, *Vanités*, 602; see also D. Gutas, *Heritage*, 92–3. Al-Suhrawardī's tragic condemnation by Saladin in Aleppo (587/1191) offers a good illustration of the change of social and professional environment that led to the extinction of the *falāsifa*; see J. Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients: Suhrawardī and the Heritage of the Greeks* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).

<sup>38</sup> On intellectual life in Damascus during the 7th/13th century, see L. Pouzet, *Damas au VII<sup>e</sup>/XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles: Vie et structures religieuses dans une métropole islamique* (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1988), 199–205. On the teaching

had become poisoned by philosophy.<sup>39</sup> Can it however have been for mere unthinking *taqlīd*, *vis-à-vis* his master, that Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya—although he undoubtedly had a less philosophically oriented mind—does himself not renounce quoting the whole of the hermeneutical pages of the *Adḥawiyya* in his *Book of the Thunderbolts sent against the Jahmīs and the Reductionists*?<sup>40</sup> In fact, positive and/or

of philosophy in relation to medicine in Damascus during the 7th/13th century and earlier, see A. M. Eddé, 'Les Médecins dans la société syrienne du VII<sup>e</sup>/XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', in *Annales islamologiques* 29 (Cairo: IFAO, 1995), 91–109; 96–7; G. Leiser, 'Medical Education in Islamic Lands from the Seventh to the Fourteenth Century', in *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 38 (Bethesda, Md., 1983), 48–75; 64. On the Damascene *madrasas* and hospitals where medicine was taught at the end of the Mamlūk sultanate, see A. Ḥ. al-'Ulābī, *Dimashq bayna 'aṣr al-Mamālīk wa-l-'Uthmāniyyīn* (Damascus: al-Sharikat al-muttaḥida li-l-ṭibā'a wa-l-nashr, 1402/1982), 176–7, and the critical remarks of G. Leiser, *Education*, 57–9. According to D. Behrens-Abouseif (*Faṭḥ Allāh and Abū Zakariyya: Physicians under the Mamluks* (Cairo: IFAO, 1987), 9), the teaching of medicine during the Mamlūk period was carried on mainly in the teacher's house rather than in *madrasas*, mosques, or hospitals, as these were inaccessible to non-Muslims, who were numerous in the medical profession. Various types of professional combinations were possible and a physician could also be a poet, a musician, etc. Under the Ayyūbids, some physicians had also been philosophers (see A. M. Eddé, *Médecins*, 98–9). On the contrary, during the Mamlūk period, 'the one combination that is not mentioned ... is that of the philosopher and physician' (D. Behrens-Abouseif, *Faṭḥ Allāh*, 10). Such a socio-cultural evolution is not surprising as *faylasūf*, 'philosopher', was no longer a patronized, respected, and attractive profession. *Tafalsuf*, however, continued to be practised under various guises.

<sup>39</sup> See the text quoted in Y. Michot, *Vanités*, 600. '[Some] groups, among the imāms of the traditionists, those of them who knew the Qur'ān by heart and their jurists, loved the shaykh and considered him great. They however did not love his deep involvement (*tawaghghul*) with the *Kalām* theologians and the philosophers, just as it had been the way of the earlier imāms of the traditionists like al-Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal], Ishāq [b. Rāhwayh], Abū 'Ubayd [al-Qāsim b. Sallām] and their like. Likewise, many scholars, among the jurists, the traditionists and the virtuous, hated his dedication (*tafarrud*) to some odd questions which the Ancients (*salaf*) had disapproved (Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl*, ii. 326).

<sup>40</sup> See Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Ṣawā'iq al-mursala 'alā l-Jahmiyya wa-l-Mu'aṭṭila*, ed. 'A. b. M. al-Dakhīl Allāh, 4 vols. (Riyāḍ: Dār al-'āṣima, 1418/1998), iii. 1097–105 (hereafter Q). Ibn Qayyim's purpose in his *Ṣawā'iq* is to address the following question of his shaykh: 'The offspring of the philosophizers, the followers of the Indians and of the Greeks, the heirs of the Magi and of the associators, the erring Sabaeans, their like and their peers, how would they be more knowledgeable about God than the heirs of the prophets, the people of the Qur'ān and of faith?' (*Ṣawā'iq*, i. 170; see Ibn Taymiyya, *MF*, v. 12). His long demonstration of this impossibility is divided into 24 chapters. The last chapter is itself divided into 4 parts, the second of which is a refutation, from 241

negative *tafalsuf* under the Mamlūks is still an almost unexplored continent in the history of intellectual Islamic thought. Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim's use of the *Adḥawiyya* suggest that its topography

viewpoints, of the people saying: 'When Reason and the texts of the revelation conflict with each other, we adhere to Reason and do not turn to the revelation' (*Ṣawā'iq*, i. 174; see also iii. 796). Ibn Qayyim explicitly recognizes that he bases this refutation on Ibn Taymiyya's 'great book', i.e. the *Dar*' (*Ṣawā'iq*, iii. 797). It is in his 'Viewpoint XCIII', corresponding to the *Dar*'s 'Viewpoint XX', that he cites the hermeneutical pages of the *Adḥawiyya* quoted in the *Dar*'. It is worth translating the few lines with which he introduces this quotation. Once compared with Ibn Taymiyya's text (see above, 158, for the beginning, and below, 173, for the last part, 1096–7), they indeed provide an excellent illustration of the way the disciple reworks one of his shaykh's writings. As they are sometimes clearer than the latter, they even help one to understand better Ibn Taymiyya's introduction to the *Dar*'s 'Viewpoint XX':

'Viewpoint XCIII. The way on which trod the deniers of the attributes, highness, and speech [of God]—i.e. opposing the divine texts by means of their [own] views and of what they call 'intelligible'—is itself the way on which trod their brothers among the heretics in order to oppose the texts concerning the return [of the body in the hereafter] by means of their [own] views, of their intellects, and of their premisses. Then they transferred these in themselves to the actions they had been commanded [to perform], like the five prayers, almsgiving, the pilgrimage, fasting, and they considered them as prescribed upon the commonalty, not the elite. They therefore eventually got to the point where they became heretics about the three fundamentals on which all the religions (*milla*) are agreed and with which all the Messengers came, i.e. faith in God, in the Last Day, and virtuous actions. God has said, exalted is He: 'Those who have faith, those who are Jews, the Nazarenes, and the Sabaeans—whoever has faith in God and the Last Day and acts virtuously—will have their recompense with their Lord. No fear shall be on them, neither shall they grieve' (Q. 2. 62). [1097] These heretics use as arguments against the deniers of the [divine] attributes things on which they agree with them, [notably] to turn away from the texts of the revelation and denying the [divine] attributes. Avicenna indeed mentioned it in the *Epistle for the Feast of the Sacrifice* (*al-Risālat al-Adḥawiyya*). He spoke [about that topic] when he mentioned the argument of those who affirm the return of the body [in the hereafter] and [said] that what prompted them to do so was [precisely] that which the Law (*shar'*) states of the resurrection of the dead' (*Ṣawā'iq*, iii. 1096–7).

Directly after having quoted the hermeneutical pages of the *Adḥawiyya*, Ibn Qayyim writes, 'Meditate on the words of this heretic, the head, even, of the heretics of this religious community (*milla*), and his entry into heresy from the gate of the denying of [God's] attributes, his gaining the supremacy, in his heresy, over the reductionist [attribute] deniers by means of things, [related to] denying [the attributes], in which they agree with him, and his compelling them to accept that the [scriptural] discourse on the return [in the hereafter] is destined to the crowd (*jumbūri*), or metaphorical, or figurative, just as they say [it is the case] in the [scriptural] texts [concerning] the attributes which he and they are associates in calling 'assimilationism' (*tashbīb*) and 'corporealization' (*tajsīm*), although they are more specific, of a more obvious meaning, and of a clearer evidential quality than the texts [concerning] the return' (ibid. 1105).

could have been far more complex and richer than imagined by many...<sup>41</sup>

Near the end of his commentary, Ibn Taymiyya refers to an interpretation of 'Alī's famous saying 'Speak to people about things they know ...' proposed by Averroes (d. 595/1198). The text of the Andalusian philosopher he has in mind is almost surely the one found in the first pages of his *Uncovering the Ways [to be followed] by Proofs (al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla)*.<sup>42</sup> In his opinion, Averroes shares the

<sup>41</sup> On the great usefulness of Ibn Taymiyya's *Dar* to explore this continent, see Y. Michot, *Vanités*. For a primary survey of post-classical 'falāsifa', see D. Gutas, *Heritage* (I personally would rather have spoken of *tafalsuf* or *mutafalsifs*). D. Behrens-Abouseif offers very valuable suggestions on the evolution of Mamlūk *tafalsuf* in *Fath Allāh* and 'The Image of the Physician in Arab Biographies of the Post-Classical Age', in *Der Islam*, 66 (1989), 331–43. Particularly interesting is her idea that 'Sufism in the fifteenth century became the official religious ideology' and that the role then 'played by the Sufis, especially the extremists among them, was similar to that formerly played by philosophers and scholars of Hellenistic and heterogeneous backgrounds in confrontation with orthodoxy' (*Image*, 343). Ibn Taymiyya contributed to the denunciation of philosophical or rationalist excesses but was unable to bar the way to extremist Sufis.

At the beginning of the 10th/16th century, Ibn Ṭūlūn (see pp. 195–8) offers an excellent account of the deep disrepute into which *falsafa* had then fallen: 'Know that science can also be ... forbidden (*ḥarām*). It is [the case with] the science of philosophy (*falsafa*), prestidigitation (*shā'badha*), astrology (*tanjīm*), geomancy (*raml*) and ... magic. Logic is included in philosophy ... Indeed, someone occupying himself with it most often leans towards philosophy. Its prohibition is thus of a preventive nature. Apart from that, logic is not something contrary to the clear Law and the firm religion' (Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Kitāb al-Lu'lu' al-manzūm fī-mā ishtaghala min al-'ulūm mu'allifu-hu Ibn Ṭūlūn min gharā'ib al-funūn*, MS British Museum, Add. 7528, fos. 57–104; fo. 57<sup>r</sup>). For F. Rosenthal ('The Physician in Medieval Muslim Society', in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 52 (Baltimore, 1978), 475–91; 490–1), 'during the first two centuries of 'Abbāsīd rule, "philosophy" was the slogan of the elite, and the intellectual alliance of medicine with philosophy generally added to the reputation of its practitioners. The alliance was always shaky: soon, it became a constantly growing danger to the physician's societal standing. The word "philosophy"—that is, Greek philosophy—was anathema to the masses and their leaders.' Yet, at the end of the 9th/15th century, it was most probably through his acquaintance with a shaykh of the Syrian physicians that Andrea Alpago discovered Avicenna's *Adhawīyya*.

<sup>42</sup> See below, p. 86. Ibn Taymiyya refers explicitly to Averroes' *Kashf* in different works, e.g. in *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya fī ta'sīs bidā'i-him al-kalāmiyya, aw naqḍ ta'sīs al-Jahmiyya*, ed. M. b. 'A. R. bin Qāsim, 2 vols. (n. p.: Mu'assasa Qurṭuba, 1392/1972), i. 239, and *Dar*, vi. 212. He also quotes it at length and comments on it on various occasions; see e.g. the quotation of *Kashf* (ed. M. 'A. J. 'Umrān in *Falsafat Ibn Rushd* (Cairo: al-Maktabat al-Mahmūdiyyat al-tijāriyya, 1388/1968), 40–158), 93, l. 18–108, l. 1; trans. I. Y.

hermeneutics and philosophy of prophetic predication of the 'esotericist [attributes-]denying philosophers'. In other words, he is somehow on the same wavelength as Avicenna in the *Aḏḥawiyya* concerning the necessity of a philosophical science of divinity and the invalidity of theologizing popular religion. Ibn Taymiyya does not explicitly link Averroes' ideas to those of the *Aḏḥawiyya*, but the context in which he refers to the Cordoban philosopher suggests that he considers there is a relation between them.<sup>43</sup> His doing so makes one wonder whether Averroes really had access to the Avicennan text. The temptation is indeed great to recognize echos—distant but clear—of the *Aḏḥawiyya*'s hermeneutical pages in various propositions of the *Decisive Treatise* (*Faṣl al-maqāl*). For example, whereas Avicenna writes that 'what is wanted (*yurāmu*) by the Law (*sharʿ*) and religion (*milla*) which have come [to us] through the tongue of any of the prophets is to address (*khiṭāb*) all the crowd (*al-jumbūr kāffa*)',<sup>44</sup> Averroes defines the primary purpose (*maqṣūd*) of the Law as being 'simply to teach everyone (*taʿlīm al-jamīʿ*)' and 'to take care of the majority (*al-ʿināya*

Najjar, *Faith and Reason in Islam: Averroes' Exposition of Religious Arguments* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), 62–77) in *Dar'*, vi. 212, l. 10–237, l. 7, with comments in 237, l. 8–249, l. 20. These comments are different from those included by M. 'Umrān, *Falsafa*, in the footnotes of his edition of the *Kashf*. I intend to return to Ibn Taymiyya's various comments on the *Kashf* in a separate article. Averroes also quotes this *ḥadīth* in the second chapter of his *Faṣl al-maqāl fi-mā bayna l-ḥikma wa-l-sharī'a min al-ittiṣāl* (ed. M. 'A. J. 'Umrān in *Falsafa*, 9–39), 17–8; trans. G. F. Hourani, *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (London: Luzac, 1976), 52. Although Ibn Taymiyya seems not to have had the *Faṣl* at his disposal, he knew of its content through the *Kashf* (see *Bayān*, i. 239; *Dar'*, vi. 226, §2). From this point of view, A. de Libera is mistaken when affirming that the *Faṣl* did not have 'any immediate influence' in the Muslim world (see his introduction to M. Geoffroy, *Averroès: Le Livre du discours décisif* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), 75). As far as Ibn Taymiyya is concerned, D. Gutas's more general comment (*Heritage*, 91) that Averroes 'failed to impress Arabic philosophy after his death' also should be reassessed.

<sup>43</sup> This somehow becomes confirmed when, in commenting on the *Kashf*, Ibn Taymiyya likens Averroes to Avicenna. For him, Averroes not only 'agrees with Avicenna concerning the denying of the [divine] attributes' (*Dar'*, vi. 238) but 'what this Averroes says about the [teachings] of the religious Law (*al-sharā'i'*) is of the sort of that which is said by Avicenna and his like among the heretics, i.e. that they are likenesses (*amthāl*) invented in order to make the commonalty understand things that they will imagine, with regard to faith in God and the Last Day, and that the clear truth (*al-ḥaqq al-ṣarīḥ*) which is right for the people of Science only consists in the things said by these philosophers' (ibid. 242). See also the passage of *Dar'* translated in Y. Michot, *Lettre*, 24.

<sup>44</sup> Avicenna, *Aḏḥawiyya*, 43; trans. Alpagò, *De mahad*, fo. 43<sup>v</sup>, trans. Lucchetta, *Epistola*, 42; see below, p. 11.

*bi-l-akthar*) (without neglecting to arouse the elite).<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, exactly as Avicenna states that God could in no way have charged any of the Messengers to communicate ‘the true meanings (*ḥaqā’iq*) of [theological] matters to the crowd (*al-jumbūr*)’ because of ‘the commonalty’s thick nature (*al-‘āmmat al-ghalīza ṭibā‘u-hum*)’,<sup>46</sup> Averroes insists that ‘allegorical interpretations (*al-ta’wīlāt*) ought not to be expressed to the crowd (*al-jumbūr*)’ because these are ‘abstruse matters, which there is no way for the crowd to understand’.<sup>47</sup>

I am inclined to believe that Averroes did not have the text of the *Adḥawiyya* and that it is mainly through al-Ghazālī—the latter almost certainly a reader of the epistle—that he became involved in the debate on the respective aims and limitations of prophecy, theology, and philosophy so ground-breakingly set up by Avicenna. The question deserves a thorough study that cannot be undertaken here. Moreover, at this point, the most important thing is just to be aware of the link existing between the *Adḥawiyya*’s hermeneutics and the *Faṣl al-maqāl* or *Kashf*. Strangely enough, various modern analysts of the two Averroist treatises do not seem to be aware of the connection.<sup>48</sup>

As for Ibn Taymiyya, not only did he have the right approach to the subject, but he can be said to have himself shared some of the ideas common to Avicenna and Averroes. Indeed, he strongly criticizes Muḥammad Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130) and the Mu‘tazilīs for imposing their theological creeds on all adult Muslims, although ‘the imāms are agreed that what is compulsory for the Muslims is what God and His

<sup>45</sup> See Averroes, *Faṣl*, 29; trans. Hourani, 64.

<sup>46</sup> Avicenna, *Adḥawiyya*, 57; trans. Alpayo, *De mahad*, fo. 45<sup>r</sup>, trans. Lucchetta, *Epistola*, 56; see below, p. 16.

<sup>47</sup> See Averroes, *Faṣl*, 31; trans. Hourani, 66.

<sup>48</sup> This is the case in e.g. G. F. Hourani, *Averroes*; M. Fakhry in his introduction to I. Y. Najjar, *Faith*; A. de Libera in his introductions to M. Geoffroy, *Livre and Averroès: L’Islam et la Raison* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000); and M. ‘A. al-Jābirī in *Faṣl al-maqāl fī taqrīr mā bayna l-sharī‘a wa-l-ḥikma min al-ittiṣāl, aw wujūb al-naẓar al-‘aqlī wa-hudūd al-ta’wīl (al-dīm wa-l-mujtama’)* (Beirut: Markaz dirāsāt al-waḥdat al-‘Arabiyya, 1997), and *al-Kashf ‘an manāḥij al-adilla fī ‘aqā’id al-milla, aw naqd ‘ilm al-kalām didd<sup>an</sup> ‘alā l-tarsim al-īdiyūlūjī li-l-‘aqida wa-difā<sup>an</sup> ‘an al-‘ilm wa-hurriyyat al-ikhtiyār fī l-fikr wa-l-fi’l* (Beirut: Markaz dirāsāt al-waḥdat al-‘Arabiyya, 1998). Exceptions are F. Lucchetta, ‘Avicenna (*al-Risālat al-Adḥawiyya*) e Averroè (*Faṣl al-maqāl*) di fronte alle scritture’, in *Recueil d’articles offerts à M. Borrmans par ses collègues et amis* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d’Islamistica, 1996), 149–53; and M. Campanini, *Averroè. Il trattato decisivo sull’accordo della religione con la filosofia* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1994), 26, 146. More generally, concerning the limitations of the prophetic mission, hermeneutics, relations

Messenger have made compulsory, nobody having the right to make compulsory for the Muslims something that neither God nor His Messenger have made compulsory.<sup>49</sup> More generally, the Shaykh al-Islām and the two philosophers show the same contempt for any intrusion in popular belief by *Kalām* theology of the Mu'tazilī, Ghazālī, or Rāzī types. They are therefore able to cover some distance together even if they pursue different courses. In the case of the two philosophers, this is to establish exclusive rights to rational legitimacy for their philosophical discourses on God; in Ibn Taymiyya's case, it is to reaffirm—against the claims of philosophers as well as of *Kalām* theologians—the self-sufficiency of the religious rationality manifested in scriptural literality and common faith, and its validity for all, the elite as well as the crowd. Avicenna and Averroes are right to encourage the populace to believe in the outward meaning of the revelation. For Ibn Taymiyya, both should however have motives for doing so other than exclusively socio-political reasons of public interest. Moreover, they should themselves also have faith in the

between Scripture and Reason, and validity of theology, it is now obvious that Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, Averroes, al-Rāzī, and Ibn Taymiyya should all be studied in relation to each other. And as Ibn Taymiyya compares Avicenna's *Adhawiyya* to *The Keys of Sovereignty* of the Ismā'īlī philosopher Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī (d. c.390/1000; see below, p. 18), the latter could also be included in the list. In this respect, A. de Libera's understanding of Averroes' *Faṣl* in relation to the political philosophies of al-Fārābī, Ibn Bājjā, and Ibn Tufayl appears reductionist and identifies too readily with certain obsolete Orientalist preferences (see his introduction to M. Geoffroy, *Livre*, 69–75). Interestingly, in his *Early Philosophical Shiism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 125–6, P. E. Walker points to a similarity between Ismā'īlī hermeneutics and Averroes' *Faṣl*. Unfortunately, he does not investigate the possibility and channels of influence from, and gives no attention to, Avicenna's *Adhawiyya* or al-Ghazālī's *Qānūn* and *Iqtisād*. As for D. Gutas's statement that issues like the ones addressed by Averroes in *Faṣl* 'belong, from the point of view of the nature of their contents, to Islamic law and not to Arabic philosophy' ('The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy', in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 29 (2002), 5–25; 14), it unfortunately simplifies a debate whose Avicennan aspects, interdisciplinarity, and complexity were better perceived by Ibn Taymiyya.

<sup>49</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Fatwā fī l-Murshida*, ed. H. Laoust, 'Une fetwā d'Ibn Taymiyya sur Ibn Tūmart', in *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*, vol. lix (Cairo: IFAO, 1960), 158–84; 167 (trans. H. Laoust, *ibid.* 180; see also 171–2). See also Ibn Tūmart, *Murshida II*, trans. H. Massé, 'La Profession de foi (*aqīda*) et les guides spirituels (*morchida*) du mahdi Ibn Toumart', in *Mémorial Henri Basset*, 2 vols. (Paris, P. Geuthner, 1928), ii. 105–21; 119.

manifest meaning of the Scripture.<sup>50</sup> The saying of ‘Alī to which the theologian refers in the closing passages of his commentary on the *Adḥawiyya* is often misunderstood. Of course, revelation does not mean total disclosure—areas of secrecy and mystery are maintained by the religion. This is, however, no reason to disdain the outward teachings of the Scripture as ‘popular’ and to indulge in an elitist esotericism that conflicts with them. For the faithful, the ‘true inner reality’ is indeed ‘in agreement with the true outer reality’.<sup>51</sup> Ibn Taymiyya is far removed from the Avicennizing concern of Averroes to secure both ‘the possibility of fideism for the masses and of rationalism for the elite’.<sup>52</sup> Compared to this dichotomic, disdainful, and unrealistic agenda of the Andalusian philosopher, which soon proved the failure it could logically have been expected to be, the Shaykh al-Islām’s hermeneutically economic and socially more egalitarian, humble, and balanced call for an informed and critical reconciliation of Religion and Reason appears both more humane and closer to what may be considered the true spirit of Islam.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> It could be said to Ibn Taymiyya that Avicenna’s faith in the outward meaning of the revelation is affirmed both by the convergence of his philosophical doctrine of divinity with certain fundamental statements of the Qur’ān and by his willingness and ability to discover in the latter—although the essential finality of revelation is not to teach them—images and symbols of a number of philosophical ideas, in eschatology or in other matters, which he develops. Further, he would have drawn his critic’s attention to the fact that—unlike e.g. al-Fārābī—he endeavours to theorize an imaginal form of the resurrection and of the hereafter that defends the revealed message against all allegations of lying and failure (see Y. Michot, *Destinée*, 39–49). Although Avicenna’s prophetology is far from devoid of merits in the eyes of the Shaykh al-Islām, there is no doubt that such explanations would have been unacceptable to him.

<sup>51</sup> See p. 86.

<sup>52</sup> A. de Libera, introduction to M. Geoffroy, *Livre*, 74.

<sup>53</sup> In his comments on the *Kashf*, Ibn Taymiyya nevertheless considers that ‘people who mix with the Sunnīs and the *ḥadīth* scholars, like Averroes and Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī’, develop a ‘discourse (*kalām*)’ which is ‘closer to what is clearly intellectuated (*ṣarīḥ al-ma’qūl*) and what is soundly transmitted [in religious matters] (*ṣaḥīḥ al-manqūl*) than Avicenna’s’ (*Dar*, vi. 248).



## TRANSLATION

## [THE EPISTLE FOR THE FEAST OF THE SACRIFICE]

What is aimed at here is [to explain] that these heretics (*mulḥid*), [i.e. Avicenna and his like,] use as arguments against the deniers [of the divine attributes] things on which they agree with them, [notably] denying the[se] attributes and turning away from the evidential quality (*dalāla*) of the [Qur'ānic] verses. Avicenna indeed mentioned that in the *Epistle for the Feast of the Sacrifice* (*al-Risālat al-AḌḤAWIYYA*), which he composed about the return (*ma'ād*) [of the soul in the hereafter] for some of the statesmen (*ra'īs*) whom he was seeking to get closer to so that they would give him what he sought from them: a position (*jāh*) and money. He stated that openly at the beginning of this epistle.<sup>54</sup> He spoke about [that topic] when he mentioned the argument of those who affirm the return of the body [in the hereafter] and [said] that what prompted them to do so was [precisely] that which the Law (*shar'*) states of the resurrection of the dead.

• Concerning the Law, he said,<sup>55</sup> one ought to know one single rule (*qānūn*), that is, that [11] what is wanted by the Law and religion (*milla*) that have come [to us] through the tongue of any of the prophets is to address all the crowd (*al-jumbūr kāffa*). Moreover, it is known and it is obvious that it is unacceptable (*mumtani'*) to communicate to the crowd the true doctrine (*taḥqīq*) to which one ought to refer concerning the true *tawḥīd*<sup>56</sup>—[namely] confessing [the existence of] the Artisan, understood as One (*muwahḥad*) and sanctified (*muqaddas*) [far above] the *how many* and the *how*, the *where* and the *when*, position and change, so that the belief concerning Him may become that He is one essence for which it is not possible to have an associate in species, nor to have an existential (*wujūdī*) part—quantity-related or meaning-related—, which cannot possibly be external to the world nor internal to it, and which is not such that it could correctly be pointed to as being here or there. If this were communicated in this form to the Arab nomads or the uncivilized Hebrews, they would rush to oppose it and they would agree that the faith they are called to is having faith in something fundamentally nonexistent.<sup>57</sup> This is why what is in the Torah is all stated in an assimilationist manner (*tashbīh*).

<sup>54</sup> See Avicenna, *AḌḤAWIYYA*, 7–13; trans. Lucchetta, *Epistola*, 6–12; trans. Michot, in *Vizir*, 33\*–4\*.

<sup>55</sup> Avicenna, *AḌḤAWIYYA*, 43, l. 3–53, l. 6; trans. Lucchetta, *Epistola*, 42–52.

<sup>56</sup> The divine oneness, its proclamation, and the way to understand it theologically.

<sup>57</sup> bi-ma'dūm LS: lā wujūd la-hu + Q nonexistent, having no existence.

Furthermore, in the *Furqān*,<sup>58</sup> nothing is stated that might point to [12] this most important matter and no detailed explanation provided [to us] with an explicit<sup>59</sup> [statement] of what one needs to know concerning *tawhīd*. Instead, some things have come<sup>60</sup> [to us] by way of assimilationism, through the outer meaning (*zāhir*) [of the text], while others arrived in an absolutely exemptionistic (*tanzīh*) and very general [formulation], supporting neither particularization (*takhsīs*) nor commentary (*tafsīr*). As for the assimilationistic [traditional] reports (*khabar*),<sup>61</sup> they are too many to be counted; people are however allowed not to accept them. Such being the matter concerning *tawhīd*, how [a fortiori will things be] concerning the matters of belief coming after that?

Some people might say that the Arabs have a way of speaking loosely (*tawassu'*) and metaphorically (*majāz*), and that, although assimilationistic terms like 'the hand', 'the face',<sup>62</sup> 'coming in the shadows of the clouds', 'arriving', 'going', 'laughing', 'modesty', and 'anger'<sup>63</sup> are true, the way they are used and the direction [followed by] the textual expression (*jihat al-'ibāra*)<sup>64</sup> indicate that they are used figuratively (*musta'ār*) and<sup>65</sup> metaphorically.

• That [these terms] are used non-metaphorically and non-figuratively but, rather, [13] in their real sense (*muḥaqqaq*), [Avicenna also] says,<sup>66</sup> is indicated by the fact that<sup>67</sup> the passages which [these people] put forward as an argument [showing] that the Arabs use these meanings in a figurative and metaphorical way, different from the [corresponding] outer meanings, are passages in the like of which it is right to have [these terms] used in a manner other than this [figurative and metaphorical one], without any disguise (*talbīs*) or forgery (*tadlīs*) occurring in them.

<sup>58</sup> i.e. the Qur'ān.

<sup>59</sup> atā bi-ṣarīḥ LQ: ilā ṣarīḥ S

<sup>60</sup> atā S acr. LQ: ilā S

<sup>61</sup> i.e. the sayings attributed to the Prophet and popular stories.

<sup>62</sup> al-yad wa-l-wajh SL: al-wajh wa-l-yad Q

<sup>63</sup> On the various anthropomorphisms of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth and their interpretations in Islamic theology, see the authoritative study of D. Gimaret, *Dieu à l'image de l'homme: Les Anthropomorphismes de la Sunna et leur interprétation par les théologiens* (Paris: Cerf, 1997).

<sup>64</sup> i.e. the context.

<sup>65</sup> naḥw ... musta'āra SL: hiya musta'mala isti'ārat<sup>an</sup> wa Q true, they are used figuratively and

<sup>66</sup> qāla SQ: — L

<sup>67</sup> anna SQ: wa L. The sequencing of the last two sentences, as proposed in S and seemingly understood by Ibn Taymiyya, could be corrupted. In L, because of the two textual differences just reported, these sentences are formulated in the following way: 'and the direction [followed by] the textual expression indicate when [these terms] are used figuratively and metaphorically, and indicate when they are used non-metaphorically and non-figuratively but, rather, in their real sense. Now, the passages which' (see Lucchetta's translation, *Epistola*, 48).

[God]'s words 'in the shadows of the clouds'<sup>68</sup> and 'Are they waiting for nothing less than that the angels come to them, or your Lord come, or some of the signs of your Lord come?' (Q. 6. 158) are of the type [just] mentioned. Now, estimative [faculties] (*wahm*)<sup>69</sup> do not at all believe, about analogous [passages], that [the] way they are expressed (*'ibāra*) is figurative or metaphorical. Therefore, if [making the crowd understand] such a [figurative or metaphorical character] about these [passages] was wanted implicitly (*iḍmār<sup>an</sup>*), [God] will have agreed to the occurrence of error, of uncertainty,<sup>70</sup> and of a creed distorted by [the crowd's] explicit faith in their outer [meaning].

As for His words 'the hand of God is *above* their hands' (Q. 48. 10) and His words 'that [14] I was unmindful *towards* God' (Q. 39. 56), these are passages [in which there is] figurativeness, metaphor, and speaking in a loose way. Not two among the Arabs speaking pure Arabic would have any doubt about that, and it is not dubious for anyone knowledgeable about their language, as is the case with those [first] examples. [Of] these [last] examples, there is no uncertainty that they are figurative<sup>71</sup> and metaphorical. Likewise, about those [first] ones, there is no uncertainty that they are not figurative and that nothing else is meant by them than [their] outer [meaning].

Moreover, let us admit that all these [passages] are to be taken<sup>72</sup> figuratively. Where [then, however,] are the *tawhīd* and the textual expression openly pointing to the pure *tawhīd* to which, [in its] true essence (*ḥaqīqa*), this valuable<sup>73</sup> religion—whose sublimity is acknowledged through the tongues of all the sages of the world—calls?

[On Islam's superiority, Avicenna] also<sup>74</sup> said, in the course of what he was talking about:<sup>75</sup>

• The Law that has come through the tongue of our Prophet [15] Muḥammad, God bless him and grant him peace,<sup>76</sup> has come up with the

<sup>68</sup> See Q. 2. 210: 'Are they waiting for nothing less than that God should come unto them in the shadows of the clouds, and the angels?'

<sup>69</sup> On the nature and functions of the estimative faculty according to Avicenna, see Y. Michot, *Destinée*, 148–52. In animals, the estimative faculty is the equivalent of the intellect for man. It remains the 'supreme judge' in the psyche of the great number of humans who do not reach the level of intellectuality.

<sup>70</sup> al-shubha SL: al-tashbih Q

<sup>71</sup> musta'āra S: isti'āriyya L isti'āra Q

<sup>72</sup> ma'khūdhā L: mawjūda SQ

<sup>73</sup> al-qayyim SL: — Q *this religion*

<sup>74</sup> wa-qaḍ S: thumma Q *thereafter*

<sup>75</sup> Avicenna, *Adḥawiyya*, 85, ll. 3–5; trans. Lucchetta, *Epistola*, 84. This apologetic statement by Avicenna is one of the reasons why Ibn Taymiyya considers him far superior to Aristotle and is often referred to by the theologian. See notably MF, trans. Y. Michot, 'Ibn Taymiyya on Astrology: Annotated Translation of Three Fatwas', in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 11/2 (Oxford, May 2000), 147–208; 182–3.

<sup>76</sup> Muḥammad ... sallama SL: — Q *Prophet has*

most eminent<sup>77</sup> and the most perfect [things] that Laws could possibly come up with. It was therefore right for it to be the Seal of the Laws and the last of the religions (*milla*).

• And where is there, he said,<sup>78</sup> a text pointing (*ishāra*) to the subtle (*daqīq*) ideas pointing to<sup>79</sup> the science of *tauhīd*? For example the [idea] that [God] is knowing by essence or knowing by a knowledge, powerful by essence or powerful by a power, one in essence despite the multiplicity of [His] attributes or subject to multiplicity—exalted is He far above that from all points of view—occupying space (*mutahayyiz*) in essence or exempted from positions.<sup>80</sup> Inevitable indeed is [this alternative]: either it is necessary to acquire a true understanding (*tahaqquq*) of these ideas and to master the true doctrine concerning them, or it is permissible to turn away from them and to neglect investigating [them] and reflecting about them.

If[, however,] investigating these [ideas] is something one can dispense with, and if an erroneous creed occurring about them is something one is not to be censured for, most of the doctrine of these people who speak of this whole thing is something they burden themselves with and of which one is in no need. If[, on the other hand, such an investigation] is a firm obligation, it should necessarily be something openly stated in the Law, not something stated in a cryptic or dubious manner, or about which [God] would have limited Himself to [16] [some] allusion and indication, but [rather] something stated in an exhaustive declaration, to which attention would have been drawn [by the revelation] and which would have fulfilled the conditions for being clear and making [things] obvious, as well as for making [people] understand<sup>81</sup> and know its significations. Now, the outstanding people who spend their days, their nights, and the hours of their lives in exercising their minds, sharpening<sup>82</sup> their wits, and raising<sup>83</sup> their souls to grasp abstruse ideas quickly are in need, in order to understand these [theological] ideas, of [some] extra elucidation<sup>84</sup> and explanation of textual expressions. How, [a fortiori, will things be] for the jabbering Hebrews and the nomads among the Arabs?

By my life! if God charged one of the Messengers with communicating the true meanings (*ḥaqā'iq*) of such matters to the crowd—the commonalty of thick nature and whose estimative [faculties] are attached to things that are perceptible purely through the senses—then imposed upon him to obtain from them faith and adherence, without negligence on his part in this matter, then<sup>85</sup> imposed upon him to undertake the training of the souls of all the people so that they

<sup>77</sup> bi-afdāl L: afdāl SQ

<sup>78</sup> Avicenna, *Adḥawīyya*, 53, l. 6–61, l. 3; trans. Lucchetta, *Epistola*, 52–60.

<sup>79</sup> al-mushīra SQ: al-mustanida L *ideas founded on the*

<sup>80</sup> Allusion to the doctrinal divergences opposing Mu'tazilī and Ash'arī theologies.

<sup>81</sup> wa-l-tafhīm SL: — Q [people] know

<sup>82</sup> tadhkiya SL: tazkiya Q purifying

<sup>83</sup> tarshīh SL: tarsikh Q deeply rooting

<sup>84</sup> idāh SL: bayān Q evidence

<sup>85</sup> thumma SL: wa Q and

become ready to grasp these [true meanings], He would be charging him with an excessive burden and forcing him to do something which is not in the power of humans. My God! [this would be the situation] unless [some] divine property seizes them,<sup>86</sup> [some] superior power and [some] heavenly inspiration; [17] in which case the mediation of the Messenger could be dispensed with and there would be no need for his delivery of [the divine message].

Moreover, let us admit that the precious Book came<sup>87</sup> according to the language of the Arabs and their linguistic habit<sup>88</sup> of [practising] figurativeness and metaphor. What are they<sup>89</sup> then going to say about the Hebrew Book which is entirely, from its beginning to its end, pure assimilationism? One will not be able to say that that Book is entirely falsified. Indeed, how would one falsify the entirety of a book that is propagated in innumerable communities whose countries are far away<sup>90</sup> from each other, whose estimative [faculties] are distinct from each other, and among whom there are Jews and Nazarenes, who are two communities hostile towards each other?

It appears from all this that the Laws come to address the crowd about things that they understand, bringing things that they do not understand closer to their estimative [faculties] by striking likenesses (*tamthīl*) and similitudes (*tashbīh*). If matters were otherwise, the Laws would be of no use at all.

• How then, [Avicenna] said,<sup>91</sup> will the outer meaning of the Laws be an argument in this matter?—he means: concerning the return. If we were supposing the hereafter matters to be spiritual, not made corporeal, [and] their true essence to be [18] far from being perceived a priori by the minds (*badā'ih al-adhbhān*), the way [followed by] the Laws to call [people] to [accept] these [spiritual matters] and to warn about them would not consist in drawing their attention by furnishing evidence about them but, rather,<sup>92</sup> by expressing them through various likenesses (*tamthīl*) that would bring [them] closer to the[ir] wits (*fahm*). How then will the existence of one thing<sup>93</sup> be an argument in favour of the existence of another thing<sup>94</sup> when, if this other thing was not as it is supposed to be,<sup>95</sup> the first thing would [still] be as it is?

All this is said to make known, to somebody wanting to be [a member of] the elite (*kbāṣṣ*) of humans, not of the commonalty (*'āmm*), that the outer meaning of the Laws cannot be used as an argument in matters like these.

<sup>86</sup> tudrika-hum S: yudrika-hu L tudrika-hu Q *him*

<sup>87</sup> al-'azīz jā'iy<sup>an</sup> S: al-'arabī jā'iy<sup>an</sup> L al-'arabī jā'a Q *the Arabic Book came*

<sup>88</sup> 'āda SL: 'ibāra Q *and the way they linguistically express themselves, figuratively and metaphorically.*

<sup>89</sup> i.e. the anti-literalist theologians.

<sup>90</sup> mutanā'iyya SL: mutabāyina Q *distinct*

<sup>91</sup> Avicenna, *AḌḤAWIYYA*, 61, l. 4–63, l. 4; trans. Lucchetta, *Epistola*, 60–2.

<sup>92</sup> munabbih<sup>an</sup> ... bal SL: illā Q *them would consist in nothing else than expressing*

<sup>93</sup> i.e. the literality of the Qur'ānic statements concerning the hereafter.

<sup>94</sup> i.e. a corporeal hereafter.

<sup>95</sup> i.e. spiritual rather than corporeal.

## [I. AVICENNA'S HERMENEUTICS]

I<sup>96</sup> say: these are the words of Avicenna. These words and similar ones are [also] the words of his like—the Qarmaṭīs,<sup>97</sup> the esotericists<sup>98</sup> (*bāṭiniyya*), for example the author of *The Keys of Sovereignty*<sup>99</sup> (*al-Aqālīd al-malakūtiyya*) and his like among the heretics. The refutation of this will be of two types. One will consist in making clear that what he concludes to be necessarily binding is indeed so for the deniers of the [divine] attributes<sup>100</sup>—the Jahmīs,<sup>101</sup> the Muʿtazilīs, and others—who call their denial [of the attributes] *ʿtawḥīd*. [19] The second will consist in making clear the vain nature of his words and of theirs, in which they agree with him.<sup>102</sup>

*First [refutation]*

These [theologians] agree with [Avicenna] on the denial of the [divine] attributes and on [saying] that the true *tawḥīd* is the one of the Jahmīs which implies what [follows]. God has no knowledge and no power, no speech and no mercy. He is not seen in the hereafter. He is not above the world. There is no God above the Throne and no Lord in the heavens. Muḥammad was not raised to his Lord. For the Qurʾān, according to them, the best condition is to be created, [God] having created it in [something] else than Him—unless it is a flux (*ḥayḍ*) flowing (*fāḍa*) on the soul of the Messenger!<sup>103</sup> Hands do not rise to Him, praised is He, during

<sup>96</sup> i.e. Ibn Taymiyya.

<sup>97</sup> One of the Ismāʿīlī sects; see W. Madelung, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Qarmaṭī'.

<sup>98</sup> To Ibn Taymiyya, all those who, Shiʿīs, Sufīs or philosophers, reject the manifest meaning of the Scripture in favour of an esoteric meaning (*bāṭin*); see M. G. S. Hodgson, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Bāṭiniyya'.

<sup>99</sup> Abū Yaʿqūb Ishāq b. Aḥmad al-Sijistānī (or al-Sijzī; d. c.390/1000); see Appendix II, pp. 199–203.

<sup>100</sup> i.e. that their negationist theology has no scriptural basis.

<sup>101</sup> The followers of the theological doctrines of Jahm b. Ṣafwān, Abū Muḥriz (d. 128/746); see W. Montgomery Watt, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Djahm b. Ṣafwān', 'Djahmiyya'. Ibn Taymiyya makes Jahm a disciple of Jaʿd b. Dirham (d. 124/742) and a precursor of the Muʿtazilīs; see Y. Michot, 'Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya, XV: La Réalité de l'amour (*maḥabba*) de Dieu et de l'homme', in *Le Musulman*, 28 (Paris: AEIF, Nov. 1996), 24–7, 26–7.

<sup>102</sup> wāfaqū-hu: wāfaqū-hum S. Another possible correction would be 'wāfaqa-hum' in which he agrees with them. It is, however, less likely due to the sentence that follows.

<sup>103</sup> Allusion to the kind of explanation of the process of revelation proposed by Avicenna; see Ibn Taymiyya, *MF*, trans. Michot, *Musique*, 193, and Y. Michot, *Destinée*, 127–8. According to Ibn Kathīr (*al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, 14 vols. (Beirut: Maktabat al-maʿārif, 1977), xiii. 261), Ibn Sabʿīn believed that prophethood could be acquired and 'was a flux flowing on the intellect when it becomes pure'.

invocations. Nothing goes up to Him and nothing is sent down from Him, neither an angel nor anything else. Nobody is brought closer to Him and nothing approaches Him. Himself does not get closer to anybody and He does not manifest Himself (*tajallā*) to anything. There is no veil between Him and His creatures. He does not love and He does not detest. He is not content and He is not angry. He is neither inside nor outside the world. He is neither distinct from the world nor inhering in it. None of the creatures has the privilege of being near Him; rather, the whole creation is near Him, [which is] opposed to His saying, exalted is He: 'To Him belong those who are in the heavens and on the earth, and those who are near Him' (Q. 21. 19). When He is given the names 'living', 'knowing', 'powerful', 'hearing', 'seeing', He is living without a life, knowing without a knowledge, powerful without a power, hearing (*sami'*) without a hearing (*sam'*), seeing without a sight... and other similar things whose denial the Jahmīs call '*tawhīd*'. They give to themselves the title of 'adepts of *tawhīd*' as the Jahmīs—the Mu'tazilīs and others—give it to themselves and as Ibn [20] Tūmart<sup>104</sup> gave it to his companions.<sup>105</sup>

What [Ibn Tūmart] was saying about *tawhīd* was indeed what the deniers of the attributes—Jahm, Avicenna, and their like—are saying. It is said that he learned that from somebody in whose words there is sometimes an agreement with the philosophers and, other times, an opposition to them.<sup>106</sup> So, I have seen a writing (*kitāb*) on *tawhīd* by Ibn

<sup>104</sup> The founder and *mahdī* of the Almohad movement (d. 524/1130); see J. Hopkins, *El<sup>2</sup>*, s.v. 'Ibn Tūmart'. Ibn Taymiyya wrote against him a fatwa which is edited and translated by H. Laoust, *Fetwā*. See also p. 183 n. 115.

<sup>105</sup> The Almohads, *al-muwahhīdūn*, 'the proclaimers of the divine oneness'. Ibn Taymiyya rejects all particularization of this appellation as, for him, 'the whole community of Muḥammad, God bless him and grant him peace, are proclaimers of the divine oneness' (Ibn Taymiyya, *Murshida*, 168; trans. Laoust, *Fetwā*, 180).

<sup>106</sup> Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī. On the debated question of Ibn Tūmart's contacts with al-Ghazālī, see I. Goldziher, *Le Livre de Mohammed ibn Toumert, mahdī des Almohades* (Algiers: Imprimerie orientale Pierre Fontana, 1903), 1–102; M. Asin Palacios, 'La Logique d'Ibn Tūmlūs d'Alcira', in *Obras escogidas II y III* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1948), 155–62; 161–2; H. Laoust, *Fetwā*, 170, n. 1; M. Fletcher, 'Ibn Tūmart's Teachers: the Relationship with al-Ghazālī', in *Al-Qantara: Revista de Estudios Arabes*, 18 ii (Madrid, 1997), 305–30; D. Urvoy, *Averroès: Les Ambitions d'un intellectuel musulman* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), 48–52. For some of Ibn Taymiyya's opinions on al-Ghazālī, see the texts translated in Y. Michot, *Musique*, 191–2, and W. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 111–2; see also Ibn Taymiyya, *Nubuwwāt*, 81–2; *Bughyat al-murtād fī l-radd 'alā l-mutafalsifa wa-l-Qarāmiṭa wa-l-Bāṭiniyya, abl al-ilhād min al-qā'ilīn bi-l-hulūl wa-l-itihād*, ed. M. b. S. al-Duwaysh (n. p.: Maktabat al-'ulūm wa-l-ḥikam, 1408/1988), 444.

Tūmart, in which he openly denies the attributes.<sup>107</sup> This is why, in his *Guide (al-Murshida)*, he does not mention anything concerning the affirmation of the attributes, he does not affirm the vision [of God in the hereafter], he does not say that the Qur'ān is the uncreated speech of God and [he avoids] this type of questions which those who affirm the attributes are used to mentioning in their condensed creeds.<sup>108</sup> So, what he was really saying was agreeing with what is said by Ibn Sab'īn<sup>109</sup> and those who, like him, speak of absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), in agreement with Avicenna and his like among the adepts of

<sup>107</sup> A negationist *tawhīd* is developed in various texts attributed to Ibn Tūmart and it is not possible to know precisely which one Ibn Taymiyya has in mind here. See e.g. Ibn Tūmart, *al-Tawhīd*, ed. Goldziher, *Livre*, 271–80; ed. 'A. G. Abū l-'Azam, *A'azzu mā yuṭlabu* (Rabat: Mu'assasat al-Ghanī li-l-nashr, 1997), 313–25; and 'Aqīda, ed. Goldziher, *Livre*, 229–39; ed. Abū l-'Azam, *A'azzu*, 212–22; French trans. by H. Massé, *Profession*, 105–17.

<sup>108</sup> Two texts entitled *Murshida* are attributed to Ibn Tūmart, the second of which exists in a shorter and in a longer versions (*Murshida I*, ed. Goldziher, *Livre*, 240–1; ed. Abū l-'Azam, *A'azzu*, p. 223; *Murshida II*, ed. Goldziher, 'Die Bekenntnisformeln der Almohaden', in *ZDMG*, xlv (Leipzig, 1890), 168–71; 168–70; *Livre*, 241–2; ed. M. J. de Goeje, 'Goldziher's *Le livre de Mohammed ibn Toumert*', in *ZDMG*, lviii (Leipzig, 1904), 463–84; 482–3; ed. Abū l-'Azam, *A'azzu*, 224). As already noted by H. Laoust (*Fetwā*, 161–2), it is not easy to determine exactly which text Ibn Taymiyya is referring to when he speaks of Ibn Tūmart's *Murshida*, which is the case here just as in the text studied in *Fetwā*. It could be the *Murshida I* (trans. Massé, *Profession*, 118–19) or the shorter version of the *Murshida II* (trans. Massé, *Profession*, 119–20). Both texts are indeed silent concerning the affirmation of the attributes, the future vision of God, the createdness of the Qur'ān, etc. The longer version of the *Murshida II* (trans. Massé, *Profession*, 120–1) and 'Aqīda (trans. Massé, *Profession*, 105–7) expound a somehow less negationist theology. The present attacks of Ibn Taymiyya against Ibn Tūmart can usefully be compared with his views in the fatwa studied by H. Laoust (*Fetwā*).

<sup>109</sup> Quṭb al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Ibn Sab'īn, philosopher and Sufī (Murcia, 613/1217–Makka, 668/1269); see A. Faure, *EF*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Ibn Sab'īn'. According to Ibn Sab'īn, 'God is the existence of all things, really' (*Rasā'il*, ed. 'A. R. Badawī (Cairo: al-Mu'assasat al-Miṣriyyat al-'amma li-l-ta'lif wa-l-anbā' wa-l-nashr, 1965), 89). "The identity ('ayn) of what you see is an essence which is not seen. An essence which is not seen is the identity of what you see." These are words of Ibn Sab'īn. He is among the greatest heretics—the adepts of associationism, magic, and unification (*ittihād*). He was among their preeminent men, among the cleverest of them, and the most expert among them concerning philosophy and the Sufism of those who philosophize' (Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'at al-rasā'il wa-l-masā'il*, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1403/1983), new version of the M. Rashīd Riḍā ed., i. 91).



heresy.<sup>110</sup> It is said, in this respect, that Ibn Tūmart mentioned it<sup>111</sup> in his *Oriental Useful Notes (al-Fawā'id al-mashriqiyya)*: 'Existence is shared (*mushtarak*) between the Creator and the created. The existence of the Creator is stripped (*mujarrad*) [from characterizations], whereas the existence of the created is bound (*muqayyad*).'<sup>112</sup> [21]

What is aimed at here is [to say] what [follows]. These [people] gave, to such a denial [of the divine attributes], the name of '*tawhīd*'. It is

<sup>110</sup> In his hyper-negationist *Murshida I* (trans. Massé, *Profession*, 118), Ibn Tūmart reduces God to pure, necessary, unlimited existence, 'outside of which nothing exists, neither earth nor heaven, neither water nor air', etc. Ibn Taymiyya is right to link such a theology to Avicenna's conception of God as the Necessary of existence (*wājib al-wujūd*), Whose essence is to exist, and to Ibn Sab'īn's onto-theological monism. On absolute existence, see below, p. 55.

<sup>111</sup> i.e. absolute existence. In *Dar'*, iii. 438, which offers another, almost identical, version of this paragraph, this sentence is formulated with more clarity: 'Ibn Tūmart mentioned in his *Oriental Useful Notes (al-Fawā'id al-mashriqiyya)* that existence is shared ...' *Al-Fawā'id al-mashriqiyya* is not mentioned by Brockelmann (*GAL*, i. 506). It perhaps corresponds to the text he entitles *al-Kalām fī l-'umūm wa-l-khuṣūṣ wa-l-muṭlaq wa-l-muqayyad wa-l-mujmal wa-l-mufassar wa-l-nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh wa-l-ḥaqīqa wa-l-majāz ...* with which it seems to have some partial similarity of content.

<sup>112</sup> In *Dar'*, iii. 439–40, this passage continues as follows: 'In the *Book of Proof and Knowledge*, Ibn Tūmart said: "Objects of knowledge are of two types: nonexistent and existent. What exists (*al-mawjūd*) is of two types: absolute (*muṭlaq*) and bound (*muqayyad*). That which is bound is that which is characterized (*mukbaṣṣa*). Characterization (*ikhtīṣāṣ*) is of three types. [The first is] characterization by a time with the exclusion of another time. The second is characterization by a position with the exclusion of another position. The third is characterization by a characteristic (*khāṣṣa*) with the exclusion of another characteristic. The absolute existent is that which is neither bound nor characterized. It is thus neither characterized by a time with the exclusion of another, nor by a position with the exclusion of another, nor by a characteristic with the exclusion of another. If it was characterized by anything, it would be of its genre. So, as characteristics are denied from it absolutely, absolute existence is necessary for it." "The absolute existent", he said, "is the pre-eternal, the eternal, for whom bonds (*qayd*) and characteristics are impossible, which is characterised by absolute existence, without binding (*taqyīd*) nor characterization." He mentioned many things in order to deny [God's] characterization. He even said: "As finite [entities] are equal in being characterized by a determined position, characterization is impossible for [His essence] on the part of them and on the part of something characterizing of their genre. And, as characterization on the part of their genre is vain, characterization on the part of all characterizing [things] is vain, absolutely." He moreover said, afterwards: "He stands alone in knowledge and perfection, sovereignty (*ḥukm*) and choice (*ikhtiyār*). He stands alone in triumph (*qahr*) and power (*iqtidār*). He stands alone in creativity (*khalq*) and inventivity (*ikhtirā'*)." He also said: "With all these characterizing [things], perfection would be impossible for [His essence], even if its attributes were mutually complementing in perfection." These views are then refuted by Ibn Taymiyya (440–1).

[however] an appellation which the Jahmī deniers had innovated and about which the Book<sup>113</sup> did not talk, nor the [Prophetic] Tradition (*sunna*), nor any of the Ancients (*salaf*) and of the imāms. The adepts of the affirmation [of the divine attributes] have, on the contrary, made clear that *tawḥīd* cannot be achieved but by affirming the attributes and worshipping God alone, Him having no associate, as the exalted God has reminded [us] in the chapter<sup>114</sup> *The Devotion* (Q. 112) and in the verses of the Qurʾān generally.

As these Jahmīs—the Muʿtazilīs and the others—were agreed with [Avicenna] on denying the attributes and [saying] that this is the true *tawḥīd*, he used as an argument against them the dialectic premiss saying this: the Messengers have not made clear (*bayyana*) what the truth is in itself, as far as knowing [how] to proclaim the oneness (*tawḥīd*) of the exalted God and knowing the Last Day are concerned; they have not mentioned what it is that is right or necessary, for the elite of the sons of Adam and for those among them who have wits, to understand, to comprehend, and to know of this matter; the Book, the Tradition, and the consensus will not be used as arguments concerning faith in God and in the Last Day, nor about the creation and the resurrection, nor about the origin and the return; the divine Books provide only an imaginal representation (*takhyīl*) from which the commonalty benefits, not a true realization (*taḥqīq*) that would provide science and knowledge. The greatest of the sciences, the most sublime and the noblest, which consists in knowing God, the Messengers have fundamentally not made it clear (*bayyana*), they have not talked about it, and they have not guided the creatures towards it. On the contrary, what they have made clear, it is not the knowledge of God, nor the knowledge of the return, nor something which would be the truth as far as faith in God is concerned, nor something that would be the truth so far as faith in the Last Day is concerned; even, according to these [people], in the words of God and of His Messenger concerning this matter, there is no science from which those who have wits would benefit; in these [words] there are only imaginal (*takhyīl*) and estimative representations (*ihām*) from which the ignorant ones of the commonalty benefit.<sup>115</sup>

This being what the Qarmaṭī and esotericist (*bāṭiniyya*) heretics really say, they began to consider one of their leaders as equivalent to

<sup>113</sup> i.e. the Qurʾān.

<sup>114</sup> *sūra*: *sūratay S in the two chapters*

<sup>115</sup> On *takhyīl* and *ihām*, see W. Heinrichs, *EL*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Takhyīl'. For Ibn Taymiyya (*ME*, xxxv. 142–3), 'the philosophizers interpret what the Messengers told concerning faith in God and the Last Day, by [processes of] denying (*nafy*)

the Messenger, or as more important than the Messenger, and they allowed him to abrogate [22] the Law of Muḥammad, God bless him and grant him peace; so did they maintain that Muḥammad,<sup>116</sup> son of Ismā'īl, son of Ja'far, had abrogated his Law. Each of these people also began to claim to be a prophet and a Messenger, or, had there been no [threat of punishment by the] sword, would have wanted to declare it openly as al-Suhrawardī<sup>117</sup>—the one who was killed—did. He did indeed use to say: 'I will not die until it is said to me: "Rise, and

and reductionism (*ta'ṭīl*) that are in agreement with their doctrine. As for the practical Legal obligations, they do not deny them as the Qarmaṭīs deny them. On the contrary, they make them compulsory for the commonalty and make some of them compulsory for the elite, or do not make that compulsory. They say that the Messengers, in what they told and commanded, did not come up with the real truths of matters but came up with something in which there is a benefit (*ṣalāb*) for the commonalty even if, in reality, it is a lie. This is why each prattler (*mubṭīl*) chose to come up with uncommon deeds (*makhbāriq*) [supposedly] destined to benefit the commonalty. So did Ibn Tūmart, nicknamed 'the well-guided' (*mahdī*). His doctrine concerning the attributes was the doctrine of the philosophers as he was, in general, similar to them. He [however] was not an hypocrite accusing the Messengers of lying nor reducing the Legal obligations [to nothing]. Nor did he give the practical Law an inward [meaning] in opposition to the outward one. Rather, there was in him some of the views of the Jahmīs that are in agreement with the views of the philosophers, and some of the views of the Khārijīs who are prone to use the sword and condemn one as infidel for a sin'.

<sup>116</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl b. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (c.120/738–after 179/795), the seventh imām of the Ismā'īlīs, considered to have gone into concealment as the Mahdī and expected, when returning, to inaugurate an age of 'pure spiritual knowledge' and 'rule in justice before the physical world is consummated'; see F. Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismailis: Traditions of a Muslim Community* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 35–6, 53–4. According to 'some of the dissident Qarmatian Ismailīs active at the end of the 3rd/9th century ... if he had already appeared as the Messiah, then ... the outward law of Islam was no longer valid' (P. E. Walker, *Early philosophical Shiism: The Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 131; *Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī: Intellectual Missionary* (London: I. B. Tauris and Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1996), 74). Ample evidence shows that Islamic Laws and rituals had often ceased to be observed in their community.

<sup>117</sup> Shihāb al-Dīn Yaḥyā l-Suhrawardī, theosophist and mystic (b. Suhraward, 549/1154; d. Aleppo, 587/1191); see H. Ziai, *EP<sup>2</sup>*, s.v. 'al-Suhrawardī'. 'Al-Suhrawardī—the one who was killed—wanted to become a prophet. He combined speculation (*naẓar*) and devotion (*ta'allub*). He somehow took the path of the esotericists (*bāṭiniyya*) and joined together the philosophy of the Persians and of the Greeks. He gave great importance to the topic of the Lights and came close to the religion of the ancient Magi. [His ideas] were a copy (*nuskha*) of the Ismā'īlī esotericism. He was versed in magic (*sihr*) and phantasmagory (*sīmiyā'*). The Muslims killed him for free-thinking (*zandaqa*) in the time of Ṣalāh al-Dīn' (Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj al-sunnat al-nabawiyya fi*

warn!”<sup>118</sup> As for Ibn Sab‘in, he used to say: ‘The son of Amīna was insolent (*zarraba*) when he said: “[There will be] no prophet after me!” It is said that he used to stay in the cave of Ḥirā’<sup>119</sup> so that revelation would come down upon him there. Ibn ‘Arabī<sup>120</sup> claimed [for himself] something that, according to him, was even more important than prophethood, that is, the sealing of sainthood (*walāya*).<sup>121</sup> [23] According to him, the seal of the saints (*khātām al-awliyā’*) is more eminent than the Seal of the prophets as far as knowing God is concerned. He used to say that all the prophets and the Messengers benefit from the Niche of this seal claiming to know God, [a knowledge] whose reality is [in fact] the unicity of existence, which means the reduction (*ta‘tīl*) of the Artisan, praised is He, [to nothing], and which is the secret meaning of what Pharaoh said.<sup>122</sup> The imāms

*naqḍ kalām al-Shī‘at al-qadariyya*, ed. M. R. Sālim, 9 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyya, 1409/1989), viii. 249–50). On al-Suhrawardī’s questioning of the Muḥammadan sealing of prophecy, his own claims to prophethood, their partly political character and the role they played in his condemnation to death by Saladin, see J. Walbridge, *Leaven*, 201–10.

<sup>118</sup> See Q. 74. 2.

<sup>119</sup> The ‘Mountain of Light’ (*jabal al-nūr*), to the north-east of Makka. The Prophet received his first revelation while staying in a cave on Ḥirā’, where he used to go for spiritual retreats; see T. Weir and W. Montgomery Watt, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘Ḥirā’’. Ibn Sab‘in came from the Maghreb to Makka. He wanted to become a prophet and he repeatedly went to the cave of Ḥirā’ in which, at the beginning, the revelation had come down upon the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace. It is related about him that he used to say: “The son of Amīna was canny (*dhariba*) when he said: “[There will be] no prophet after me!” He was brilliant (*bārī*) in philosophy, in the Sufism of the philosophizers, and in what is related to that’ (Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj*, viii. 250). On Ibn Sab‘in’s stay in Makka (from c.652/1254 till his death in 668/1269), see A. W. al-Taftāzānī, *Ibn Sab‘in wa-falsafatu-hu l-ṣūfiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1973), 51–60. Ibn Kathīr (*Bidāya*, xiii. 261) reports a similar story, whose authenticity is refused by A. W. al-Taftāzānī.

<sup>120</sup> Muḥyī l-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn al-‘Arabī, theosophist and Sufi (b. Murcia, 560/1165; d. Damascus, 638/1240); see A. Ateş, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘Ibn al-‘Arabī’.

<sup>121</sup> See M. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ‘Arabī* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993). On Ibn Taymiyya’s critique of Ibn ‘Arabī, see A. Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabī in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 87–111.

<sup>122</sup> For Ibn Taymiyya, the adepts of the ‘unicity of existence’ are ‘phar-aonists’ (*fir‘awnī*) in this sense that, affirming the absence of any difference, in their existence itself, between the creatures and the Creator, they claim to be divine just as Pharaoh does when he proclaims: ‘Nobles, I did not know, for you, a god other than me’ (Q. 28. 38).

of the Qarmaṭīs and of the Ismā'īlīs, like Ibn al-Ṣabbāh,<sup>123</sup> learned the pillars of [their] missionary propaganda (*da'wa*) from al-Mustanṣir<sup>124</sup>—the one of their caliphs who reigned the longest and in whose time al-Basāsīrī's sedition (*fitna*) took place<sup>125</sup>—and his like. They, Sinān,<sup>126</sup> and his like among the heretics, supported each other in order to make infidelity appear among their companions. 'We permit to you', they said, 'everything you desire—sex, meat, drink—and we abrogate the acts of worship (*'ibādāt*). You do not have to fast, nor to pray, nor to go on pilgrimage, nor to give alms.'<sup>127</sup> [24]

[*Second refutation*]

This argument, which those heretics use against the deniers [of the divine attributes] in order to establish their heresy, is among the arguments [that can be used] against them by the adepts of the affirmation [of these attributes] in order to establish their faith.<sup>128</sup>

God, praised is He, has told [us] that 'He sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of the Real, to cause it to prevail over all

<sup>123</sup> Hasan-i Ṣabbāh, Ismā'īlī propagandist and first Nizārī master of Alamūt (d. 518/1124). Trained in Fāṭimid Egypt under al-Mustanṣir, he took the fortress of Alamūt from the Saljūqs in 483/1090 and remained loyal to Nizār b. al-Mustanṣir when he was supplanted by his younger brother al-Musta'li in 487/1094; see M. Hodgson, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Hasan-i Ṣabbāh'.

<sup>124</sup> Al-Mustanṣir bi-Llāh, Abū Tamīm Ma'add b. 'Alī al-Zāhir, the eighth Fāṭimid caliph, who reigned from 427/1036 till his death in 487/1094, after the longest rule by a Muslim sovereign; see H. Gibb and P. Kraus, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'al-Mustanṣir'.

<sup>125</sup> Abū l-Ḥārith Arslan al-Basāsīrī (d. 451/1060), Turkish emir of the Būyids who defected to the Fāṭimids when the Saljūq Toghrul seized the Iraqī capital in 447/1055. Taking advantage of Toghrul's return to Iran, he entered Baghdad in 450/1058, making the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Qā'im flee, and was able to impose al-Mustanṣir's sovereignty over the city and southern Iraq for about a year; see M. Canard, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'al-Basāsīrī'.

<sup>126</sup> Rashīd al-Dīn Sinān b. Salmān b. Muḥammad Abū l-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, the 'Old Man of the Mountain' of the Crusaders' chronicles, the most important Nizārī Ismā'īlī leader in medieval Syria (d. 589/1193); see F. Daftary, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Rashīd al-Dīn Sinān'.

<sup>127</sup> Allusion to the resurrection (*qiyāma*) and abolition of the Law (*sharī'a*) proclaimed in 559/1164 by Ḥassan II (d. 561/1166), master of the Nizārī Ismā'īlī sect of Alamūt and, some time later, by Sinān in Syria; see M. Hodgson, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Alamūt'.

<sup>128</sup> I understand this paragraph in the following way: although it is correct, Avicenna's assertion against the deniers of divine attributes that there is nothing in the canonical texts of Islam that supports their understanding of *tawḥīd* is an argument that can also be turned against him as it can be said to prove that his own theodicy, which is quite similar to that of the deniers of attributes, is also devoid of canonical textual basis and is therefore vain and false. Ibn Taymiyya will explain this more clearly a few pages later (see p. 30).

religion' (Q. 9. 33). He also said, exalted is He: 'A Book which We have sent down to you that you may make mankind come out from the darkness unto the light, by the permission of their Lord' (Q. 14. 1). He also said, exalted is He: 'From God have come to you a light and a manifest Book whereby God guides whomever seeks His agreement on the paths of peace, makes them come out from the darkness unto the light by His permission, and guides them to a straight way' (Q. 5. 15-6). He also said, exalted is He: 'And so have We revealed to you a spirit [participating] of Our command. You did not know what the Book was, nor what the faith. But We made it a light whereby We guide whom We will of Our servants. You verily do guide to a straight way; the way of God, to Whom belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth' (Q. 42. 52-3). He also said, exalted is He: 'Alif. Lām. Mīm. This is the Book, whereof there is no doubt, a guidance for those who fear [God]' (Q. 2. 1-2). He also said, exalted is He: 'We have sent down the Book to you, as a [way] to make everything clear' (Q. 16. 89). He also said, exalted is He: 'but a confirmation of the previous [Scriptures] and a detailed explanation of everything' (Q. 12. 111). He also said, exalted is He: 'A proof from your Lord has come to you and We have sent down to you a light that makes [everything] clear' (Q. 4. 174). He also said, exalted is He: 'Those who have faith in him, and honour him, and help him, and follow the light which was sent down with him, these are the successful ones' (Q. 7. 157). [25] He also said, exalted is He: 'The Messenger is only to convey [the message] that makes [everything] clear' (Q. 29. 18). He also said, exalted is He: 'And We have sent down to you the Remembrance, that you may make clear to mankind that which had been sent down to them' (Q. 16. 44). He also said, exalted is He: 'This day, I have perfected for you your religion' (Q. 5. 3). He also said, exalted is He: 'God would not lead a folk astray after He had guided them until He had made clear to them what they should fear' (Q. 9. 115).

Similar texts make clear that the Messenger guided the creatures, was explicit (*bayyana*) with them, and made them come out from the darkness unto the light, not that he disguised [things] (*labbasā*) in regard to them and used imaginal representations (*khayyala*), concealed the truth, did not make it clear (*bayyana*), and did not guide towards it, neither as far as the elite is concerned, nor as far as the commonalty is concerned. It is indeed known that the Messenger, God bless him and grant him peace, did not speak with anybody about things contradicting that which he was making apparent to people. The elite of his Companions were not believing about him the contrary of that which he was making apparent to people. Rather, each [person] who had a more special relationship to him and was more knowledgeable about his

circumstances was more in agreement with him and assenting more to him about that which he was making apparent and was making clear. If the truth, inwardly (*bāṭin*), was the opposite of that which he made apparent, this would necessarily follow: either he was ignorant of it<sup>129</sup> or he was concealing it from the elite and the commonalty and making its opposite apparent to the elite and the commonalty.<sup>130</sup>

Now, each [person] who is knowledgeable about the [Prophet's] *Sunna* and his biography knows that what is related at variance with this is a fabrication and a lie. [It is the case,] for example, with that which some Rāfiḏīs<sup>131</sup> mention about 'Alī,<sup>132</sup> that is, that he had with him a special, esoteric science that was at variance with these outward [teachings of the Prophet]. [26] Now it is established in the authentic traditions, whose authenticity knowledgeable people do not dispute, that when it was said to 'Alī, may God be pleased with him, 'Have you received a book from the Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace?', he said: 'No! by Him Who made the grain split and created the soul, the Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, did not tell us as a secret anything that he would have concealed from others, except [some] understanding which God gives to the servant concerning His Book and that which is in this document, that is, the regulations of bloodmoney, the release of the captives, and

<sup>129</sup> Earlier in the *Dar*, Ibn Taymiyya attributes such an affirmation to a sub-subgroup of the followers of what he calls the hermeneutical 'way of replacement' (*tabdīl*) of the outward meaning of the Scripture: those who not only claim that the revelation offers to the estimative faculties (*wahm*) of people imaginal representations (*takhyīl*) having no relation, or even opposed, to the reality, but add that the Prophet ignored the reality. Al-Fārābī, Mubashshir b. Fātik, Ibn 'Arabī, and other thinkers judging philosophers superior to prophets are, for him, representative of this trend; see the text translated in Y. Michot, *Lettre*, 21–3.

<sup>130</sup> This is the position of another sub-subgroup of the followers of the 'way of replacement': those who also speak of *wahm* and *takhyīl* about the Scripture but say that the Prophet knew the reality. Avicenna and his like, who consider prophets superior to philosophers, are representative of this trend; see the text translated in Y. Michot, *Lettre*, 21–3. Ibn Taymiyya could have included Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī in this category of thinkers.

<sup>131</sup> Pejorative appellation for the Shi'īs, who 'refuse' (*rafaḍa*) the three first caliphs; see Ibn Taymiyya, *MF*, trans. Y. Michot, 'Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya, XII: Mongols et Mamlūks: l'état du monde musulman vers 709/1310 (suite)', in *Le Musulman*, 25 (Paris: AEIF, Jan. 1995), 25–30; 30, and 'Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya, XIII: Mongols et Mamlūks: l'état du monde musulman vers 709/1310 (fin)', in *Le Musulman*, 26 (Paris: AEIF, Sept. 1995), 25–30; 25.

<sup>132</sup> 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, the fourth caliph (d. 40/660); see L. Vecchia Vaglieri, *El*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib'.

that no Muslim should be killed for an infidel'.<sup>133</sup> [One also finds] in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*,<sup>134</sup> in [another] formulation: 'Did the Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, entrust to you something which he has not entrusted to the people?'—'No,' he said, 'by Him Who made the grain split and created the soul ...' and [the rest of] the *ḥadīth*.

There is a consensus of the people possessing the knowledge of the [religious] tradition (*manqūl*) that what is narrated about 'Alī and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq,<sup>135</sup> among these things claimed by the esotericists (*bāṭiniyya*), are fabricated lies. The Shī'ī and Sufi heretics used to trace their heresy to 'Alī, who is [however] innocent of that. The followers of *The Card* (*ahl al-biṭāqa*),<sup>136</sup> among other adepts of heresy, attribute it to 'Alī, and so also do the esotericist (*bāṭiniyya*) Shī'īs—the Ismā'īlis and the Nuṣayrīs<sup>137</sup>. Likewise for Ja'far al-Ṣādiq: they have attributed to him

<sup>133</sup> This is in fact a composite quotation of two different traditions. For the first one, see al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 9 vols. (Bulaq: al-Maṭba'at al-kubrā l-amiriyya, 1311–1313/1893–1895), 'Ilm, i. 33 (*Mawsū'at al-Ḥadīth al-Sharīf* (CD-ROM), 1st edn. (Kuwait: Ṣakhr, 'Ālamiyya, 1995) 108); *Jihād*, iv. 69 ('Ālam. 2820); *Diyāt*, ix. 11, 12–13 ('Ālam. 6394, 6404); al-Tirmidhī, *al-Sunan*, ed. 'A. W. 'Abd al-Laṭīf, 'A. R. M. 'Uthmān, 5 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1403/1983), *Diyāt*, ii. 432, no. 1433 ('Ālam. 1332); Ibn Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, 6 vols. (Cairo: al-Bābī l-Ḥalabī, 1313/1896), i. 79 ('Ālam. 565). For the second, see Muslim, *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 8 vols. (Constantinople, 1334/1916), *Adāḥī*, vi. 84 ('Ālam. 3657–8); Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, i. 108 ('Ālam. 813, 816).

<sup>134</sup> See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Munāfiqīn*, viii. 122 ('Ālam. 4983–4).

<sup>135</sup> Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, 'the veracious' (Madīna, c.83/703–148/765), the sixth imām of the Twelver Shī'īs, said to have authored numerous works on occult sciences; see M. G. S. Hodgson, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Ja'far al-Ṣādiq'. On the lies told about 'Alī and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, see Ibn Taymiyya, *MF*, trans. Michot, *Astrology*, 175–80.

<sup>136</sup> Ibn Taymiyya says elsewhere that this unidentified work is attributed to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (*MF*, trans. Michot, *Astrology*, 176; the suggestion I make in n. 90 is incorrect). In *Minhāj*, viii. 28, Ibn Taymiyya refers to 'the pronouncements (*kalām*) of the adepts of *The Card* (*aṣḥāb al-biṭāqa*)' about a wrong doctrine of absolute existence. *Al-biṭāqa* could in fact be a copyist (or editor) mistake for *al-balāgh*, as the two words are graphically similar. It would then refer to *al-Balāgh al-akbar wa-l-nāmūs al-a'zam*, an important pseudo-Ismā'īlī treatise already known in the 4th/10th century (see W. Madelung, 'The Fāṭimids and the Qarmaṭīs of Baḥrayn', in F. Daftary (ed.), *Mediaeval Ismā'īlī History and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 21–73; 43–5, 66–8), which Ibn Taymiyya mentions in various works (see Y. Michot, 'Vizir "hérétique" mais philosophe d'entre les plus éminents: al-Tūsī vu par Ibn Taymiyya', in *Farhang* (Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2003), text B1 (forthcoming); Ibn Taymiyya, *Futūyā fī l-Nuṣayriyya*, trans. S. Guyard, 'Le Fetwa d'Ibn Taymiyyah sur les Nosairis', in *Journal Asiatique*, 6/18 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1871), 158–98; 191–2).

<sup>137</sup> Extremist Shī'ī sect named after Muḥammad b. Nuṣayr al-Fihri l-Numayrī, a disciple of the tenth or eleventh Twelver Shī'ī imām, still existing today ('Alawīs of Syria); see H. Halm, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Nuṣayriyya'. Ibn Taymiyya refutes them in a famous fatwa (*Nuṣayriyya*, trans. Guyard, *Fetwa*, 189).



words on the stars and on the quivering of the limbs,<sup>138</sup> falsified commentaries [on the Qur'ān], and various vain things from which God exculpates him. One of their leaders has even maintained that the *Epistles* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'<sup>139</sup> were his words, although they were only composed after the third century, when Cairo was built. [27] A group of philosophers composed them and mentioned in them events [relating] to Islam which happened after the second century—for example the entry of the Nazarenes into the countries of Islam,<sup>140</sup> etc.—and which make clear that they were composed about two hundred years after Ja'far. Of this sort is also that which others report about 'Umar<sup>141</sup>, may God be pleased with him, that is, that he said: 'The Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, and Abū Bakr<sup>142</sup> were speaking and I was like a negro between them.'<sup>143</sup> This [report] and similar ones are fabricated lies, according to the unanimous agreement of the knowledgeable people. The heretical ascetics and devotees, and those ignorant ones among them, narrate a variety of such things. For

<sup>138</sup> See Ibn Taymiyya, *MF*, trans. Michot, *Astrology*, 175. '*Ilm al-ikhtilāj* is palmomancy, the 'science of pulsations', whose purpose is 'to draw prognostications from the pulsations that spontaneously occur on all the parts of the human body'. The most famous Arabic treatise on palmomancy is attributed to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, who is said to have introduced this foreign science into Islam; see T. Fahd, *La Divination arabe* (Paris: Sindbad, 1987), 397–402.

<sup>139</sup> Gnostic philosophical society of the 4th/10th c., possibly 'involved in a secret underground movement subversive to the 'Abbāsid Caliphate' (A. Hamdani, 'Brethren of Purity, a Secret Society for the Establishment of the Fātimid Caliphate: New Evidence for the Early Dating of their Encyclopædia', in M. Barrucand (ed.), *L'Égypte fatimide, son art et son histoire* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999), 79); see Y. Marquet, *EI<sup>2</sup>*, s.v. 'Ikhwān al-Ṣafā''; Ibn Taymiyya, *MF*, trans. Michot, *Musique*, 78. Ibn Taymiyya expresses a similar opinion on the dating of the *Rasā'il* in *MF*, trans. Michot, *Astrology*, 176–7. On the unsolved question of the date of the composition of the *Rasā'il*, see A. Hamdani, *Brethren*, who argues for a dating as early as the period between 260/873 and 297/909. Ibn Taymiyya's opinion in favour of a date some 60 years later does not seem to have been taken into consideration in this debate.

<sup>140</sup> This is not an allusion to the Crusades but to the military successes of the Byzantine Nicephorus Phocas and John Tzimisce over the Ḥamdānids of Aleppo after 350/961. Cairo was built by the Fātimids in 358/969.

<sup>141</sup> 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the second caliph (d. 23/644); see G. Levi Della Vida, *EI<sup>2</sup>*, s.v. 'Omar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb'.

<sup>142</sup> The first caliph (d. 13/634); see W. Montgomery Watt, *EI<sup>2</sup>*, s.v. 'Abū Bakr'.

<sup>143</sup> On this story, see J. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 44.

example, they relate that the people of the bench (*ahl al-ṣuffa*)<sup>144</sup> fought the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, on the side of the infidels, when victory was not with him, in order to demonstrate thereby that the gnostic (*‘ārīf*) will be with the one who triumphs even if he is an infidel. They also relate that God, exalted is He, made known to the people of the bench the secret which He revealed to His Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, on the morning of [his] ascension (*mi‘rāj*), without informing the Messenger, and that God has a cream [of people] who arrive to him from another [road] than the way of the Messenger.

Those who invented these vain lies were not experts in lying. There was no bench but in Madīna, whereas the ascension took place in Makka, according to the Text and the consensus. Every scholar who knows the biography of the Prophet, [28] God bless him and grant him peace, necessarily knows that the people of the bench were like the rest of the believers with the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, that none of the Companions had any other way towards God but following His Messenger and that the most eminent of the Companions were the steadiest in following [him], like Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.

Abū Bakr was more eminent than ‘Umar, may God be pleased with them both, and he was the most eminent of the truthful ones. It is established in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs* that [the Prophet] said: ‘There were, in the communities before you, people who were spoken to. If there is one in my community, it is ‘Umar’.<sup>145</sup> Even if ‘Umar was spoken to, the truthful one who was learning from the Niche of Prophethood was more eminent than him and more perfect than him. That through which the coming of the Messenger gets confirmed is indeed protected [from fault] (*ma‘ṣūm*), no error penetrating into it, whereas, in that which is thrown to one spoken to, errors occur that need to be rectified by the light of prophethood. This is why Abū Bakr was rectifying ‘Umar. He rectified him, for example, on the day of al-Ḥudaybiyya, on the day of the Prophet’s death, God bless him and grant him peace, during the struggle against the adepts of apostasy,<sup>146</sup> and on other [occasions]. ‘Umar had views on things;

<sup>144</sup> Companions of the Prophet who, according to tradition, slept on a bench in Madīna’s mosque and became models for some Sufis; see W. Montgomery Watt, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘Ahl al-ṣuffa’. Ibn Taymiyya devotes an epistle to the stories circulating about them (see *MRM*, i. 32–74). On the stories mentioned here, see the text translated and annotated in Y. Michot, *Musique*, 58–60.

<sup>145</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Manāqib*, v. 12 (‘*Ālam*. 3413); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Fadā’il al-Ṣaḥāba*, vii. 115 (‘*Ālam*. 4411).

<sup>146</sup> On these three occasions when Abū Bakr corrected ‘Umar, see successively al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh al-rusul wa’l-mulūk*, trans. M. Fishbein, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, viii: *The Victory of Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press,

afterwards, the truth would manifest itself to him contrary to these [views], as happened to him in a number of places. [29]

This and similar [facts] are among the things that make clear that the most eminent of the creatures after the Messenger and the most perfect of them were in need of being guided by the Messenger, of learning from him, and of knowing the truth from that which he had come up with. How then, [a fortiori, will things be] for somebody<sup>147</sup> saying that, concerning the knowledge of God and of the Last Day, there are in the [Messenger's] words no science, no guidance, and no knowledge from which the possessors of wits, who are inferior to 'Umar and the like of 'Umar, would benefit?

God, exalted is He, has said: 'Mankind were one single community. God made the prophets rise as announcers and warners and with them He sent down the Book, with the truth, that it might judge between people concerning that wherein they differed' (Q. 2. 213). He also said, exalted is He: 'If you dispute about something, refer it to God and the Messenger' (Q. 4. 59). [However,] to judge between people about topics of divergence and controversy, how would it be done by a word and a discourse in which there is neither science nor guidance from which the possessors of wits would benefit, as maintained by those heretics—the later Peripatetic philosophers and their followers [who say] that the Laws are not to be used as arguments in matters like these?<sup>148</sup> That which will not be used as an argument, how would people use it as an argument concerning that wherein they differ? And which divergence is more important than their divergence about the most important matters, that is, knowledge of the exalted God and of the Last Day?<sup>149</sup> Especially as it is known that real divergence occurs only about scientific matters and information-related propositions, that are not susceptible of abrogation and change. As for practical [matters], that are susceptible of abrogation, these are of various species in one single Law; how[, a fortiori, will they be] in the case of the variety of Laws? [30] A divergence concerning that which is permitted to vary has [however] no reality. If two things are prescribed by Law at two [different] times, or by two Messengers, both are true. If the divergence consists in [identifying] which of the two is the one prescribed by Law, this will be known by the information drawn

1997), 85; trans. I. K. Poonawala, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, ix: *The Last Years of the Prophet* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 184–5, 187–8; and Y. Michot, *Textes XIII*, 29–30.

<sup>147</sup> Somebody like Avicenna, for example.

<sup>148</sup> Paraphrase of p. 18, ll. 6–7.

<sup>149</sup> On the divergences of the theologians and the philosophers according to Ibn Taymiyya, see the pages of *Dar*' translated in Y. Michot, *Vanités*.

from the revealed Book. The revealed Book per se indeed consists in command, prohibition, and information, and in it [can be found] the Legal prescriptions whose opposite are not Legal prescriptions.

At this point, that which Avicenna and his like mention, that is, that in the Qur'ān nothing is stated that would be pointing to the *tawhīd* [as understood by] these [negationist theologians],<sup>150</sup> this is correctly said and this is the proof that [such a theology] is vain, devoid of truth, and that whoever<sup>151</sup> agrees with them on it is an ignorant one and astray.

Avicenna also mentioned that there are passages [of the Qur'ān] wherein the formulation does not bear but one meaning [and, consequently], does not bear the figurativeness and metaphor that these [theologians] claim [are there]. The Exalted said: 'Are they waiting for nothing less than that God should come to them in the shadows of the clouds?' (Q. 2. 210). He also said, exalted is He: 'Are they waiting for nothing less than that the angels come to them, or your Lord come, or some of the signs of your Lord come?' (Q. 6. 158). These sayings of God, [Avicenna] noted,

- are of the type [just] mentioned. Now, estimative [faculties] (*wahm*) do not at all believe, about these [passages], that [the] way they are expressed ('*ibāra*) is figurative or metaphorical. Therefore, if [making the crowd understand] that [figurative or metaphorical character] about these [passages] was wanted implicitly (*idmār<sup>am</sup>*), [God] will have agreed to the occurrence of error and uncertainty . . .

This is an argument against those who, among the deniers of the [divine] attributes, deny the [literal] content of these [passages].<sup>152</sup> It is [however,] both together, an argument against him and against them,<sup>153</sup> and their [possible] agreement with him would not [31] be useful to him. This is indeed a dialectical argument, not a scientific one, as their conceding that to him would not oblige others than them to concede that

<sup>150</sup> Paraphrase of pp. 11, l. 11–12, l. 1.

<sup>151</sup> Notably Avicenna.

<sup>152</sup> As they could not accept the idea of God agreeing to the occurrence of error and uncertainty.

<sup>153</sup> The reason why it is an argument against them has been explained in the previous note. The reason why it becomes, on the other hand, an argument against Avicenna himself is explained by Ibn Taymiyya in the last sentence of the paragraph. It basically refers to the fact that the literal understanding of the quoted Qur'ānic verses which Avicenna relates to estimative faculties, and therefore considers as doctrinally useless, is regarded by Ibn Taymiyya as the product of sound intellect, in agreement with authentic religious texts.

to him.<sup>154</sup> As [nevertheless] by the limpid reason something is made explicit which agrees with the authentic religious tradition, that proves the corrupt nature of what he says and of what they say both together.

- Moreover, let us admit that all these [Qur'ānic passages] are to be taken<sup>155</sup> figuratively. Where [then, however], are the *tawḥīd* and the manifest exposition (*dalāla*) of the pure *tawḥīd* to which calls, [in its] true essence (*ḥaqīqa*), this valuable religion whose sublimity is acknowledged through the tongues of all the sages?<sup>156</sup>

To say so would be to speak correctly if what the deniers [of the attributes] say were true. Indeed, at that moment, according to what they say, the true *tawḥīd* would fundamentally not have been made clear, which is impossible. [Avicenna] is [however] more erring than them as he maintains that the Messengers also did not make *tawḥīd* clear but mentioned things contradicting *tawḥīd* so that the crowd would yield to them in mending their earthly life. We have made clear elsewhere the doctrine of divine oneness (*tawḥīd*) of Avicenna and his like. We have made clear that it is among the most corrupt things said [on the topic], whose corrupt nature is known by [any] limpid reason. We have spoken on that [subject] in particular. It is written elsewhere. [32]

- And where is there a text pointing (*ishāra*) to the subtle ideas pointing to<sup>157</sup> the science of *tawḥīd*? For example the [idea] that [God] is knowing by essence or knowing by a knowledge, powerful by essence or powerful by a power, etc.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>154</sup> i.e. conceding that making people stick to the literal meaning of these verses was the aim of God and that such revealed texts cannot, therefore, be taken into account for theological purposes. Other people, e.g. Ibn Taymiyya, would indeed accept the first proposition but refuse the second.

<sup>155</sup> ma'khūdhā L: mawjūda SQ

<sup>156</sup> Loose quotation of p. 14, ll. 5–9. This apologetical statement of the Shaykh al-Ra'īs is much appreciated by Ibn Taymiyya. A good sign of this is, earlier on, the way he interrupted his long quotation of the *Adḥawiyya* just after it (see earlier, pp. 14–5), in order to insert a few lines of another passage of the Avicennan epistle relating to the perfection and finality of Islam. It is notably because of this kind of defence of the religion that the theologian considers Avicenna far superior to Aristotle. He implicitly refers to him when, in his letter to the Crusader ex-king Johan of Giblet, he speaks of an unanimous justification of Islam by the philosophers; see Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Risālat al-Qubruṣiyya*, trans. Y. Michot, *Ibn Taymiyya: Lettre à un roi croisé* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia; Lyon: Tawhid, 1995), 189–90; see also MF, trans. Michot, *Astrology*, 182. Certainly, Avicenna is one of 'the followers of the heretics denying [the attributes]'; however, he is 'the most eminent (*afdāl*) of the latest of them' (Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar*, x. 44, 59).

<sup>157</sup> al-mushīra SQ: al-mustanida L *ideas founded on the*

<sup>158</sup> See p. 15, ll. 3–5.

What he says here is addressed to one who agrees with him in his erring and heresy, when he holds the opinion that reducing [God to nothing] (*ta'tīl*) is the way to proclaim His oneness (*tawhīd*), that the Creator (*bāri*), exalted is He, has neither knowledge, nor power, nor attributes. As for one who does not agree with him in his error, he knows that the Book has made clear, in the best manner, the subtle [aspects] of the true *tawhīd* wherewith the Messengers came up and wherewith the Books were sent down. The exalted God indeed informs [us] by innumerable verses about His attributes and His names, and He mentions His knowledge in various places. For example He says: 'They encompass nothing of His knowledge save what He wills' (Q. 2. 255). He also says, exalted is He: 'He sent it down with His knowledge' (Q. 4. 166). He also says, exalted is He: 'And no fruits burst forth from their sheaths, and no female carries or brings forth but with His knowledge' (Q. 41. 47). And other [similar verses]. [33] [Concerning His power,] He has said, exalted is He: 'God is the provider, Who has the power, the strong' (Q. 51. 58). He also said, exalted is He: 'The heaven, We built it with might' (Q. 51. 47), that is, with power. He also said, exalted is He: 'Do they not see that the God Who created them has more power than them?' (Q. 41. 15) [One finds] in an authentic tradition—the tradition concerning the petition for what is best (*istikhāra*): 'My God, I ask You what is best, by virtue of Your knowledge, and I ask You what Your decree is, by virtue of Your power ...'<sup>159</sup> What exposition of the knowledge of God and of His power would be clearer than this?

*(This article will conclude in the next issue of the Journal, 14/3.)*

<sup>159</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Jum'a*, ii. 56 (*Ālam*. 1096); see also Abū Dā'ūd, *al-Sunan*, ed. M. M. D. 'Abd al-Hamīd, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, n. d.), *Ṣalāt*, ii. 89–90, no. 1538 (*Ālam*. 1315); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, iii. 344 (*Ālam*. 14180). See also Ibn Taymiyya, *MF*, trans. Y. Michot, 'Contre l'astrologie (Pages spirituelles d'Ibn Taymiyya, xiii)', in *Action*, 41 (Port-Louis, Mauritius: SIM, Jan. 2001), 10–1, 26; 11. On Ibn Taymiyya's 'middle way' doctrine of the divine attributes, see his *MF*, trans. Y. Michot, 'La Religion du milieu (Pages spirituelles d'Ibn Taymiyya, ii)', in *Action*, 28 (Port-Louis: SIM, Dec. 1999), 22–3, 30; 30.

## APPENDIX I: RAYS EBENMECHI, PRAECEPTOR MEUS

Andrea Alpago's mentor in Damascus, 'Rays Ebenmechi', alias Muḥammad Ibn Makkī, is mentioned in various Arabic sources:

Muḥammad Ibn Makkī, the most learned shaykh, Shams al-Dīn, the Damascene, the Shāfi'ī, shaykh of the physicians in Damascus and, even, elsewhere. 'I studied one year under him, Ibn Ṭulūn said. Eminent people were his disciples. My eyes have not seen anyone more excellent than him in expounding this science [that is, medicine]. However, he had poor luck in treating [people].' He also said: 'He was accused of being a Shī'ī (*kāna yunsabu ilā l-rafd*) but I have not found that to be true in his case. He knew cosmography, geometry, astronomy but had little command of other [disciplines]. He passed away during the night of Wednesday 9 Jumādā II 938 [17 January 1532], at more than eighty. God have mercy upon him!'<sup>160</sup>

This notice by Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī (d. 1061/1651) is taken from what the Syrian historian Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī Ibn Ṭulūn (d. 953/1546) writes in *The Enjoyment of Minds*:

Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh, called Ḥasan b. Makkī, the Damascene, the shaykh Shams al-Dīn, shaykh of the physicians in Damascus. Eminent people were his disciples. No eye had seen anyone similar to him in his time in expounding this science [that is, medicine]. However he had such poor luck in treating [people] that it has been said that he had killed a group of scholars, among whom was al-Burhān b. 'Awn [d. 916/1510]. He was accused of being a Shī'ī (*kāna yunsabu ilā l-rafd*). He was teaching in cosmography, geometry,

<sup>160</sup> N. D. al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira fī a'yān al-mi'at al-'āshira*, quoted by A. 'Īsā, *Mu'jam al-aṭibbā' min sana 650 h. ilā yawmi-nā hādhā (Dhayl 'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā' li Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a)* (Cairo: Maṭba'a Faḥ Allāh Ilyās Nūrī & Sons, 1361/1942), 446. M.-T. d'Alverny ('Avicenne, son traducteur Andrea Alpago, et l'histoire des religions', in *Congrès des Orientalistes*, xxiii (1954), 362–3; reprinted in her *Avicenne*, §xii, 362; 'Avicenne et les médecins de Venise', in *Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Florence, 1955), 177–98; reprinted in her *Avicenne*, §xiii, 185, n. 22) and, after her, F. Lucchetta (*Medico*, 23; *Teoria*, 110) write that Ibn al-Makkī was a crypto-Shī'ī. This is a mistake resulting from an erroneous translation of Ibn Ṭulūn's words transliterated above and ignores the second part of his testimony. Ibn al-Makkī was perhaps accused of being a Shī'ī because of his interest in intellectual sciences, as would later be the case with the physician, and fervent disciple of Avicenna, Dāwūd b. 'Umar al-Antākī (d. 1008/1599–1600); see D. Behrens-Abouseif, *Image*, 338–9. M.-T. d'Alverny is also mistaken in dating Ibn al-Makkī's death to 1531.

and astronomy. He passed away during the night of the 9 Jumādā II 938 [17 January 1532].<sup>161</sup>

In his *curriculum vitae* entitled *The Freighted Ship, concerning the Biography of Muḥammad b. Ṭūlūn*,<sup>162</sup> Ibn Ṭūlūn does not mention Avicenna's *Aḍḥawīyya* among the books he studied but gives an interesting account of the medical, scientific, and philosophical disciplines Ibn al-Makkī was teaching and specifies the titles of the works he learned under him:

[I also studied] the science of medicine with a group [of professors], including the Head (*ra'īs*) of the physicians in the protected [city of] Damascus, al-Shams b. Makkī. With him, I had the privilege of reading the text of the *Generalia* (*al-Kullīyyāt*) by [Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Yūsuf] al-Īlāqī<sup>163</sup> [d. 485/1092? or later], then the *Commentary on the Generalia of [Avicenna's] Canon* by [Fakhr al-Dīn] al-Rāzī [d. 606/1209], then the *Epitome [of Avicenna's Canon] (al-Mūjiz)* by Ibn al-Nafīs [d. Cairo, 687/1288]. I also heard with him passages of the *Commentary on Hippocrates' Aphorisms* by Ibn al-Quff [d. Damascus, 685/1286], the *Commentary* of Mullā [Burhān al-Dīn] Nafīs [b. 'Awḍ al-Kirmānī; d. 841/1437] on the *Causes and Symptoms* by [Najīb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī] al-Samarqandī [d. 619/1222], and [Rhazes'] *Book for Maṣṣūr (al-Kitāb al-Manṣūrī)* ...

[I also studied] the science of cosmography (*'ilm al-hay'a*) with a group [of professors], including al-Shams b. Makkī. With him, I had the privilege of studying the *Summary (al-Mulakḥḥaṣ)* of [Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad] al-Jaghminī [d. 745/1344], then its *Commentary* by al-Sayyid al-Sharīf ['Alī al-Jurjānī; d. Shīrāz, 816/1413].

[I also studied] the science of geometry with a group [of professors], including al-Shams b. Makkī. With him, I had the privilege to study the *Fundamental Figures (Ashkāl al-ta'sīs)* by Shams [al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ashraf] al-Samarqandī [d. 702/1303], then its *Commentary* by al-Sayyid al-Sharīf ['Alī al-Jurjānī]

[I also studied] the science of physics (*'ilm al-ṭabī'ī*) with a group [of professors], including al-Shams b. Makkī. With him, I had the privilege of studying what he had written on the *Abridgement (al-Mukhtaṣar)* called *The Guidance (al-Hidāya)* by Athīr al-Dīn al-Abḥarī [d. 663/1265], then its *Commentary* by Mullā Zādeh [Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd al-Harawī l-Khizrabānī].<sup>164</sup>

[I also studied] the science of divinity (*'ilm al-ilāhī*) with a group [of professors], including al-Shams b. Makkī. With him, I had the privilege of

<sup>161</sup> Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mu'at al-adhbān min al-tamattu' bi-l-iqrān bayna tarājim al-shuyūkh wa-l-aqrān*, ed. Ṣ. D. K. al-Shaybānī l-Mawṣilī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādīr, 1999), ii, 661, no. 763.

<sup>162</sup> Ibn Ṭūlūn, *al-Fulk al-mashḥūn fī ahwāl Muḥammad bin Ṭūlūn* (Damascus: Maṭba'at al-taraqqī, 1348/1929–30), 15–17; hereafter Ṭ.

<sup>163</sup> al-Īlāqī: al-Īlātī Ṭ

<sup>164</sup> Or al-Kharziyānī; see C. Brockelmann, *GAL*, Supp., i, 840.



studying what he had written on the *Abridgement* (*al-Mukhtaṣar*) called *The Guidance* (*al-Hidāya*), then its *Commentary* mentioned above.

In his *The Amusement of Friends*,<sup>165</sup> Ibn Ṭulūn confirms Ibn al-Makkī's fame in the whole of Syria by reporting how, in Rabī' I 926 (February 1520), the 'Head of the medical profession (*rayyis al-ṭibb*) Shams al-Dīn b. Makkī' was asked to go to Aleppo, and given money to do so, in order to give medical treatment to its *qāḍī* Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn.

Ibn al-ʿImād (d. 1089/1679)<sup>166</sup> does not devote any notice to Ibn al-Makkī but indicates that it is with him that the Aleppine Ghars al-Dīn Tchelebī b. Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad, also known as Ibn al-Naqīb<sup>167</sup> (d. 971/1563), who would later on become an influential scholar in Istanbul, had studied medicine in Damascus.

Alpago's Damascene mentor was thus an important and multi-disciplinary scholar. At the end of the fifteenth century, 'Head of the physicians' was in Syria the official title awarded to one, two, or three physicians chosen for the service of the vice-sultan and responsible to him.<sup>168</sup> As for the four sciences which Ibn al-Makkī taught Ibn Ṭulūn in addition to medicine, none of the precisions which the latter, in his *al-Lu'lu' al-manẓūm* (*The Strung Pearl*),<sup>169</sup> gives about their definitions and subjects, their objectives and profits, links them to Hippocrates' art.

<sup>165</sup> Ibn Ṭulūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān* (*Ta'rikh Miṣr wa-l-Shām*), ed. M. Muṣṭafā, 2 vols. (Cairo: al-Mu'assasat al-Miṣriyyat al-ʿamma li-l-ta'lif wa-l-anbā' wa-l-nashr, 1384/1964), ii. 99–100.

<sup>166</sup> Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahaba*, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, n. d.), viii. 364.

<sup>167</sup> See E. İhsanoğlu (ed.), *Osmanlı Astronomi Literatürü Tarihi* (*History of Astronomy Literature during the Ottoman Period*), 2 vols. (Istanbul: İrcica, 1997), i. 145–9.

<sup>168</sup> On the nature and evolution of the position, see D. Behrens-Abouseif, *Fath Allāh*, 5–7.

<sup>169</sup> Ibn Ṭulūn's *al-Lu'lu' al-manẓūm* (*The Strung Pearl*) is a catalogue of 38 sciences with which he says he busied himself at some point of his career. In this work, he does not add anything about his professors or the books he studied. Concerning the four disciplines he learned under Ibn al-Makkī's supervision besides medicine, he is content with repeating what the famous Egyptian physician Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Akfānī (d. Cairo, 749/1348; see J. J. Witkam, *De Egyptische arts Ibn al-Akfānī* (*gest. 749/1348*) *en zijn indeling van de wetenschappen* (Leyde: Ter Lugt Pers, 1989)) wrote in his *Irshād al-qāṣid* (*The Guidance of the Seeker*). See Ibn Ṭulūn, *Lu'lu'*, XIV. Cosmography, fo. 71<sup>r-v</sup> // Ibn al-Akfānī, *Irshād*, ed. Witkam, XLV, 57 [408]; XV. Geometry, fos. 72<sup>v</sup>–73<sup>f</sup> // Ibn al-Akfānī, *Irshād*, ed. Witkam, XXXIV, 54 [411]; XXIV. Physics, fo. 90<sup>r-v</sup> // Ibn al-Akfānī, *Irshād*, ed. Witkam, XXIII, 45 [420]–46 [419]; XXV. Divinity, fo. 91<sup>r-v</sup> // Ibn al-Akfānī, *Irshād*, ed. Witkam, XIII, 29 [436]–30 [435]. J. J. Witkam does not mention this influence of Ibn al-Akfānī on Ibn Ṭulūn.

Belonging to the not strictly religious curriculum of *'ulūm al-ma'qūl*, they were in fact—like medicine—part of 'the repertoire of an erudite man of the time'.<sup>170</sup> They might however also be considered to relate in some way to medical science as it would have been conceived by post-classical Muslim physicians under the influence of Galen's treatise *Quod optimus medicus sit quoque philosophus*. Geometry, for example, was relevant to optics and therefore the treatment of visual disorders, while cosmography helped to understand the planets' influence on the development of diseases and their cure.<sup>171</sup> The sciences of physics and divinity were the disciplines through which *falsafa*, by now a suspect science in itself (see above, p. 168 n. 41), was studied. D. Behrens-Abouseif<sup>172</sup> distinguishes 'in the Mamlūk period two distinct orientations of medicine: theoretical medicine acquired as an aspect of erudition, hence its higher status, and practical professional medicine'. Ibn Ṭūlūn's report on his studies with Ibn al-Makkī and his poor opinion of the latter's therapeutic skills suggest that Alpagō's professor was more versed in theoretical medicine than in medical practice. It is worth noticing that four of the seven authors Ibn Ṭūlūn says he studied in medicine under Ibn al-Makkī are also mentioned by Alpagō: Ibn al-Nafis—Ebenefis, Ibn al-Quff—Ebencof, al-Samarqandī—Samarcandi, Rhazes—Rasis.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>170</sup> D. Behrens-Abouseif, *Image*, 334; *Faḥ Allāh*, 15. The titles of many of the books studied by Ibn Ṭūlūn, in these five sciences, under the supervision of Ibn al-Makkī, can also be found in the curriculum of the Persian *madrasas* described by S. H. Nasr in *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* (London: Kegan Paul, 1987), 165–82.

<sup>171</sup> See F. Michéau, 'Enseignement et contrôle de la pratique médicale', in É. Delpont (ed.), *À l'ombre d'Avicenne: La Médecine au temps des califes* (Paris: Institut du Monde Arabe, 1996), 239–41; 241; D. Behrens-Abouseif, *Faḥ Allāh*, 10; G. Leiser, *Education*, 64.

<sup>172</sup> D. Behrens-Abouseif, *Image*, 336; see also 334.

<sup>173</sup> See F. Lucchetta, *Medico*, 39–41; G. Vercellin, *Canone, passim*. On the evolution of medical textbooks in medieval Islam, see G. Leiser, *Education*, 62–4. On Ibn al-Makkī's works, the minimal information given by C. Brockelmann (*GAL*, Supp., ii. 1030, no. 36) should be supplemented with the references given by M.-T. d'Alverny in *Médecins*, 185, n. 22. This physician, his medical milieu, and—more generally—intellectual life in Damascus around 905/1500 still remain to be studied thoroughly. Useful but limited insights are provided about political events and realities, socio-economic conditions, religious life, and culture by A. al-'Ulābī, *Dimashq*. É. Geoffroy discusses spiritual life in his *Le soufisme en Égypte et en Syrie sous les derniers Mamelouks et les premiers Ottomans. Orientations spirituelles et enjeux culturels* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1995). D. Behrens-Abouseif's *Image* and *Faḥ Allāh* present very interesting material on the evolution of the medical profession and of the physicians' image under the Mamlūks.

## APPENDIX II: THE AUTHOR OF *THE KEYS OF SOVEREIGNTY*

Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq b. Aḥmad al-Sijistānī (or al-Sijzī; d. c.390/1000), whom Ibn Taymiyya, in his commentary on Avicenna's *AḌḤAWIYYA*,<sup>174</sup> calls 'the author of *The Keys of Sovereignty (al-Aqālīd al-malakūtiyya)*', is one of the major Ismā'īlī thinkers of the fourth/tenth century, deeply influenced by Neoplatonic philosophy.<sup>175</sup> The *Kitāb al-Maqālīd (Book of Keys)* is the largest and probably the most important among his extant works but is still unpublished.<sup>176</sup> The term *aqālīd* used by Ibn Taymiyya to designate al-Sijistānī's *Maqālīd* probably refers to the name *iqālīd*, pl. *aqālīd*, given to the seventy chapters of the book.

I have seen a book [written] by one of the imāms of the esotericists which he called *The Keys of Sovereignty* and in which he trod on such a path. He started debating with each faction by means of something analogous to this proof. They were agreed with him on interpreting the *ex auditu* data.<sup>177</sup> They were also agreed with him on denying what would be called 'assimilationism' in whatever way [might be]. To someone affirming any of the names and of the attributes—like the name 'the existing', 'the living', 'the knowing', 'the powerful', etc. he thus started saying: 'There is assimilationism there as the living is divisible into pre-eternal and originated and as the existing is divisible into pre-eternal and originated; now, that wherein the division occurs is something shared (*mushṭarak*) between the parts; composition thus necessarily follows, which is corporealization (*tajsīm*) and necessarily entails assimilationism. Indeed, when this is existing and this is existing, they are similar to one another and are associates (*ishtaraka*) in that which is named 'the existence'; which is an assimilation [of one to the other]. When one of two existents is necessary per se, it becomes associated to the other in that which is named 'the existence' and distinguished from it by the necessity. Now, that whereby there is being-distinguished is other than that whereby there is being-associated. The necessary per se is thus composed of that whereby [its] being-distinguished is and of that

<sup>174</sup> See p. 18.

<sup>175</sup> See P. E. Walker, *The Wellsprings of Wisdom: A Study of Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī's Kitāb al-Yanābī'* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994); *Shūism; Abū Ya'qūb*.

<sup>176</sup> For a description of the content of the *Book of Keys*, see I. K. Poonawala, 'Al-Sijistānī and his *Kitāb al-Maqālīd*', in D. P. Little (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Civilization* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 274–83; P. E. Walker, *Abū Ya'qūb*, 23–4, 112–5.

<sup>177</sup> i.e. the data heard in the religious tradition. On the importance of direct and personal transmission of knowledge, 'by audition', in Islam, see G. Schoeler, *Écrire et transmettre dans les débuts de l'islam* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002), 40–1.

whereby [its] being-associated is. Now, what is composed is originated or possible because it is in need of its part, its part being other than it[self], and that which is in need of other than it[self] will not be necessary per se! He thus led whoever had conceded him [his] corrupt principles to denying the necessary existence whose affirmedness (*thubūt*) is known in virtue of the necessity of the reason of all intelligent [being]. He then raised against himself [the following objection]: ‘You, when you say “He is neither existent, nor living, nor dead”, this is also an assimilation, [in this case] to the nonexistent!’ [To which] he answered: ‘I say neither this nor that’. He then raised against himself [this other objection]: ‘You, you have stipulated, in logic, that when two propositions differ by being negative and positive, from the veracity of one of them necessarily follows the lying nature of the other. So, if it is true that He is existing, that He is not existing is a lie. And if it is true that He is not existing, that He is existing is a lie. You must inevitably conclude so from one of the two!’ [To which] he answered: ‘Me, I say neither this nor that. I say neither “existing” nor “non-existing”, and neither “nonexistent” nor “non-nonexistent”. This is the most extreme point reached by the pronouncements (*kalām*) of the heretics. People have related similar things about al-Hallāj and his kin among the partisans of the [divine] inhering [in creatures] (*ḥulūl*) and of the unification [of the Creator and the created] (*ittihād*): they neither affirm nor deny, and they neither love nor detest. This will be said to this straying [person]: joining together two contraries is impossible; likewise, removing two contraries is also impossible. As it is impossible for Him to be existing [and] nonexistent, it is [also] impossible for him not to be existing nor nonexistent. You have thus fallen in something worse than what you were running away from! As for assimilationism, you were running away from an assimilation to [something] existing or nonexistent and then assimilated Him to [something] impossible which has no reality. That which is neither existing nor nonexistent has indeed fundamentally no reality, and it is worse than that about which it is said that it is existing or nonexistent.’<sup>178</sup>

In *Minhāj*, viii. 27, Ibn Taymiyya speaks of ‘Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sijistānī, the author of *The Keys of Sovereignty*’ as one of ‘the imāms of the esotericists’. He also knows of (and quotes) *The Boast (al-Iftikhār)*.<sup>179</sup> He would surely agree with P. E. Walker’s opinion<sup>180</sup> that al-Sijistānī’s ‘writing is of considerable interest for the history of Islamic philosophy’ as he himself compares Avicenna to the Ismā‘īlī thinker:

<sup>178</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar*, v. 323–4. On al-Sijistānī’s pursuit of maximal *tawḥīd* by a method of two-fold negation, see P. E. Walker, *Abū Ya‘qūb*, 84–103; *Shiism*, 78. See also al-Sijistānī, *Yanābī’*, trans. Walker, *Wellsprings*, 49–50; *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, trans. H. Corbin, *Abū Ya‘qūb Sejestānī: Le Dévoilement des choses cachées—Kashf al-maḥjūb* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1988), 33–45.

<sup>179</sup> See Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-Ṣafadiyya*, ed. M. R. Sālim, 2 vols. (Mansoura: Dār al-hady al-nabawī and Riyāḍ: Dār al-faḍīla, 1421/2000), i. 276, 301; ii. 3.

<sup>180</sup> P. E. Walker, *Wellsprings*, 17.

Among those [thinkers], there are some who followed the way of interpretation (*ta'wīl*). Some of the Qarmaṭīs did so, like al-Nu'mān,<sup>181</sup> their *qādi*, the author of the book *The Foundation of Interpretation (Asās al-ta'wīl)*, Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī, the author of *The Keys of Sovereignty* and of the book *The Boast*, and their like. These threw off the garment of diffidence, treated people haughtily, and staggered them to the point of claiming that the prayer consists in knowing their secrets or supporting their imāms, the fast in concealing their secrets, and the pilgrimage in visiting their shaykhs. This, they were divulging it when they were alone with their brothers. As for those who were residing among the Muslims, like al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and their like, it was not possible for them to say such things and they knew that they would be things whose vain nature would be obvious. They thus said that the Messengers address people only with what makes them imagine things from which they profit, when they believe them, as far as faith in God and the Last Day are concerned; even if what they believe of these things is vain and does not correspond to the reality in itself! The talks suggesting these things are in reality lies for them; a lie from which people benefit is however allowed! Those of them who abstain from judging that a lie consider it as being part of the arcana (*tawriya*) of intelligent people, who use arcana for the benefit of their followers.<sup>182</sup>

Ibn Taymiyya likens al-Sijistānī's and Avicenna's methodologies of debate in another important passage:

Avicenna only took on these ways on which he trod from the books of the Mu'tazilīs and their like among the *Kalām* theologians of Islām. He wanted to bring them closer to the path of his predecessors, the eternalist (*dabri*) philosophers, so that what he was saying about *divinalia* would be close to the kind of things said by the Muslim *Kalām* theologians. Furthermore, he took the subjects in which the *Kalām* theologians opposed the Law and Reason and drew from them conclusions with regard to those matters about which they were disputing with him [but] which were agreed with the religion of the Muslims. [He did] this just as his esotericist brothers were doing it, e.g. the author of the book *The Keys of Sovereignty* and his like. These were indeed turning to each one of the groups adhering to the Qibla, taking from them things on which they were agreed with them, like conceded premisses in which those were mistaken, and building upon them their necessary consequences that would make those come out of the religion of the Muslims. They had such debates with the Mu'tazilīs and their like. So did they say to the Mu'tazilīs: 'You, you have conceded to us [the validity of] denying assimilationism (*tashbīh*) and corporealization (*tajsīm*) and, on the basis of this, you have denied the attributes. Of the exalted God, you [however] have, then, affirmed the most beautiful names. Now, assimilationism

<sup>181</sup> Al-Nu'mān b. Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Maṣṣūr (d. 363/974), famous author of Qayrawānī origin, who became the highest judicial authority under the Fāṭimid caliph al-Mu'izz li-Dīn Allāh; see F. Dachraoui, *Et*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'al-Nu'mān'.

<sup>182</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Ṣafadiyya*, i. 276.

necessarily follows about the names just as it necessarily follows about the attributes. When you say that He is living, knowing, powerful, in this [affirmation] are necessarily entailed an assimilationism and a corporealization that are similar to the ones necessarily entailed in the affirmation of the life, the knowledge, and the power. You wanted to affirm names without attributes but this is impossible. As you have agreed on denying the attributes and as these necessarily follow the names, denying what necessarily follows (*lāzim*) necessarily implies denying [also] that which is necessarily followed (*malzūm*). You are therefore obliged to deny the names.<sup>183</sup>

Real convergences exist between al-Sijistānī's ideas and the *Aḍḥawiyya*'s prophetology and hermeneutic. For the latter, the purpose of the Prophet is 'to address all the crowd'. Now, if the Prophet was 'communicating the true meanings (*ḥaqā'iq*)' of things to the crowd, he would be asking too much, people 'would rush to oppose him' and the revealed Laws guaranteeing social order would not be obeyed. As for the theologians, they are wrong to base some of their doctrines on the literality of the Scripture as 'the outer meaning of the Laws' cannot be 'an argument' in such matters. For the Ismā'īlī thinker, 'the message of the Prophet must reach all persons'. Now, 'if the apostle had openly proclaimed the *ta'wīl*, his followers would have abandoned the *tanzīl*. The lawgiver was deliberately silent about this *ta'wīl* as a way of insuring that his people would truly and fully implement his law'.<sup>184</sup> As for 'theologians with dialectical inclinations' who probe the Law 'to confirm their own theories and interpretations', they 'prove nothing'.<sup>185</sup> Al-Sijistānī and Avicenna would also have agreed with each other on the Prophet himself knowing the true meanings (*ḥaqā'iq*) or *ta'wīl* that he was not teaching to the masses—which, according to Ibn Taymiyya, was not the case of all thinkers—,<sup>186</sup> on the invalidity and harmfulness of *Kalām* theology and on the possibility for some wise men of having various levels of access to the inner truth of revelations: for the Ismā'īlī, the imāms, and—in lesser degrees—subordinate People of Truth (*ahl al-ḥaqā'iq*) belonging to the *da'wa*; for the Shaykh al-Ra'īs, philosophers like himself. Finally, both thinkers acknowledged the exclusive superiority of the Prophet—in one case compared to the imāms, even 'Alī; in the other, compared to the philosophers—and the prohibition, for the People of Truth or the gnostics (*'arif*), to dispense with the Sharī'a observances.<sup>187</sup> Apart from their disagreement on the identity of the

<sup>183</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar*, viii. 131–2.

<sup>184</sup> P. E. Walker, *Shiism*, 122, 129; *Abū Ya'qūb*, 49, 55.

<sup>185</sup> Id., *Abū Ya'qūb*, 50.

<sup>186</sup> See above, p. 187, n. 129.

<sup>187</sup> See P. E. Walker, *Shiism*, 130–1; *Abū Ya'qūb*, 55, 76.

non-prophetic humans able to know the inner truth, an essential difference between the two thinkers is that Avicenna neither believes that the revelation encourages a popular search for the *bāṭin* nor shares what P. E. Walker calls 'al-Sijistānī's greatest fear':<sup>188</sup> 'that the majority of Muslims, whose understanding of Scripture is exclusively traditional (*taqlīdī*), will never comprehend even a portion of its spiritual and hence intellectual reality'. Avicenna is all the more accepting of such a situation in that, for him, it better ensures social order and, as he explains in his doctrine of an imaginal hereafter, it does not automatically lead to the damnation of ordinary believers in the other world—nor, accordingly, to having to accuse the eschatological promises and threats of the Qur'ān of being lies.<sup>189</sup> On the one hand, these few remarks suffice to show that a systematic comparison of al-Sijistānī's and Avicenna's thoughts would undoubtedly be of the greatest interest.<sup>190</sup> It could therefore be worth adding the Ismā'īlī on the list of thinkers having influenced the Shaykh al-Ra'īs, as e.g. drawn by D. Gutas.<sup>191</sup> On the other hand, these remarks indicate how far away Avicenna can also be from Ismā'īlism, as is the case concerning e.g. the independence of the philosophers and the minimal responsibility of the gnostics towards the masses. From this last point of view, he is a Plotinian pragmatist as much as al-Sijistānī is a Platonician idealist.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. 132.

<sup>189</sup> See Y. Michot, *Destinée*.

<sup>190</sup> See also P. E. Walker, *Wellsprings*, 13, 15; *Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī* (London: I. B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1999), 123; D. De Smet, 'La Doctrine avicennienne des deux faces de l'âme et ses racines ismaéliennes', in *Studia Islamica*, 93 (Paris, 2001), 77–89; 86. According to these authors, it is al-Sijistānī's works about which Avicenna probably heard his father and brother speak with Ismā'īlī propagandists, during his youth in Bukhārā.

<sup>191</sup> See D. Gutas, *Study*, 7; *Heritage*, 96–7.

A MAMLŪK THEOLOGIAN'S  
COMMENTARY ON AVICENNA'S  
*RISĀLA ADHAWIYYA*

BEING A TRANSLATION OF A PART  
OF THE *DAR' AL-TA'ĀRUD* OF IBN  
TAYMIYYA WITH INTRODUCTION,  
ANNOTATION, AND APPENDICES

PART II

YAHYA J. MICHOT  
*Faculty of Theology, Oxford University*

Concluded from *JIS* 14/2, pp. 149–203 (May issue, 2003)\*

[II. THE ESSENCE, THE KNOWLEDGE, AND  
THE OTHER ATTRIBUTES OF GOD]

[Avicenna] says here:

- [God] is knowing by essence or knowing by a knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

If he holds the opinion that, for the essence that is not but knowing and powerful, it is possible to exist stripped (*mujarrad*) of knowledge and power as the deniers [of the attributes] say it, this is erring and [self-] contradictory talk. To affirm a knower without knowledge, a powerful [one] without power, a living [one] without life, a hearing [one] (*samī'*) without hearing (*sam'*) and a seeing [one] without sight is indeed something whose corrupt nature is necessarily known rationally (*'aql<sup>an</sup>*) and *ex auditu* (*sam<sup>an</sup>*).<sup>2</sup> [34] This is the equivalent of a speaker without

\* Author's note: Complete bibliographical information on those references indicated by short title in the notes below can be found in the notes to Part I of this article.

<sup>1</sup> See Part I, p. 15, l. 4.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. in virtue of what is heard in the religious tradition.



speech, [somebody] willing without will, a mobile without movement, a lover without love, [somebody] praying without prayer, a faster without fasting, a pilgrim without pilgrimage, a white without whiteness, a black without blackness, [something] sweet without sweetness, [something] bitter without bitterness, [something] long without length, [something] short without shortness, and similar derived terms like the *nomen agentis*, the *nomen patientis*, and the attribute drawn from both of them. If this is not vain a priori for the intellects (*badā'ih al-'uqūl*), rationally and *ex auditu*, there will be no way for us to know the truth from the vain. And this is why those deniers eventually revert to sophistry (*safsāṭa*) about rational matters and qarmatizing (*qarmāṭa*) about *ex auditu* matters.

- Is He knowing by essence or by a knowledge?

If the meaning of saying this is that there is a detached essence that is existing without knowledge and to which knowledge is added, this is a corrupt representation. Stripped of the knowledge necessarily concomitant (*lāzim*) to it, the essence is only supposed in the minds; it has no reality in the concrete.

By the term 'essence' is meant the essence that is given the attribute of knowledge. At that moment, to say 'Is He knowing by essence or by a knowledge?' is one [same way of] speaking because the term 'essence', according to this exegesis, includes the knowledge. To say 'or by a knowledge?' is therefore not another clause.

By 'essence' is also meant the [essence that is] stripped of knowledge. This one has [however] no reality as the [divine] essence is not but knowing, just as, for something that is not but living, it is not possible to exist [35] disjoined from its being living, and, for something that is not but occupying space (*mutaḥayyiz*), it is not possible to exist disjoined from ubication (*taḥayyuz*). That for which it is not possible to exist but knowing and powerful, and for which it is impossible to exist non-knowing and [non-]powerful, how then would it be possible to suppose it non-knowing and non-powerful in the outside?

In themselves, [God's] knowledge and power are the fact itself that He is knowing and powerful, according to what is said by most (*jumbūr*) of those who deny that the states (*aḥwāl*)<sup>3</sup> are added in the outside to the attributes. Those who affirm the states being added to the attributes,

<sup>3</sup> On the concept of *ḥāl*, 'state', and its different meanings for Mu'tazilis and Ash'arīs, see R. M. Frank, *El<sup>2</sup>*, Supp., s.v. 'Ḥāl'. Unfortunately, Ibn Taymiyya is not used by R. M. Frank in his analyses.

like the *qāḍī* Abū Bakr [al-Bāqillānī],<sup>4</sup> Abū Ya'la<sup>5</sup> and Abū l-Ma'ālī [al-Juwaynī]<sup>6</sup> in the first of the two [things] the latter said, say that the affirmedness (*thubūt*) of the attributes implies as a necessary concomitant the affirmedness of the states and that the affirmation (*ithbāt*) of that which has a necessary concomitant requires the affirmedness of this necessary concomitant. What is right is nevertheless that the states are like the universals: they have an existence in the minds, not in the concrete.

Among the things that make this clear is the fact that a lot of the controversies concerning the exalted Lord's being knowing by essence or by a knowledge, or powerful by essence or by a power, are verbal controversies. Moreover, the commonalty of those who dispute about the subject, once they are made to speak accurately, no more controversy can be discerned between them. Controversy arises only between the affirmers of the states and their deniers. The adepts of affirmation are agreed on His knowledge and His power being among the necessary concomitants of His essence, [they are agreed] on the fact that it is not possible for Him to exist non-knowing and non-powerful, and they deny the existence of [36] an essence stripped of knowledge and power. When they say that they are added to the essence, they do not mean that they are added to the knowing and powerful essence but [that] they are added to the essence stripped of knowledge and power; save for those of them who say that He has an attribute, that is, knowledge, which makes his being knowing necessary. Those are the affirmers of the state[s]. Most of the attributists are [however] deniers of the states.

As for the deniers, they admit the affirmedness of the judgments, that is, that He is knowing and powerful, they dispute about the affirmedness of the attributes and they dispute among themselves about the affirmedness of the states. But then, by the judgments they affirm, it is not permitted to mean simply our judgment that He is knowing and powerful, our belief in that, and us telling that, that is, a qualification consisting in saying [it] (*al-waṣaf bi-l-qawl*). If such a qualification, such a judgment, is not conformed to its content, it is vain. Thus His being

<sup>4</sup> Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Bāqillānī, Ash'arī theologian (d. Baghdad, 403/1013); see R. J. McCarthy, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'al-Bāqillānī'.

<sup>5</sup> Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Farrā', better known as the *qāḍī* Abū Ya'la (d. 458/1066), Ḥanbalī theologian of Baghdad; see H. Laoust, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Ibn al-Farrā'.

<sup>6</sup> Abū l-Ma'ālī 'Abd al-Malik al-Juwaynī, Imām al-Ḥaramayn, Ash'arī theologian, master of al-Ghazālī (d. 478/1085); see L. Gardet, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'al-Djuwaynī'.

living, knowing, powerful, does not simply consist in [us] judging that, telling that, and qualifying Him by saying [it]; nor is it the essence itself that is the [one] knowing and powerful. The fact, for the essence, of being living, knowing, and powerful is thus not the essence itself. It then becomes visible that it is an attribute.

The imāms of the Mu'tazilīs acknowledge that. They nevertheless defame the attributists by [using] words in which they do not truly realize what these [attributists] say. Furthermore, they mention about them things owing to which [some] corrupt idea gets understood; either because they did not understand what these [attributists] were saying, or because they forced upon them things that, in their opinion, were necessary for them, or for some kind of caprice necessarily causing the sectarian disunion that God and His Messenger blamed.<sup>7</sup>

Consider this through that which Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī,<sup>8</sup> the most eminent of the latest Mu'tazilīs, has mentioned. In the book [called] *The Sources of the Proofs* ('*Uyūn al-adilla*),<sup>9</sup> he said:

◆ Chapter where it is said that God is pre-eternal.

[God's] definition, according to us, is that there is no pre-eternal [being] but Him. People have started to affirm [the existence of] more<sup>10</sup> than [37] one pre-eternal [being]. The Kullābīs<sup>11</sup> and the Ash'arīs<sup>12</sup> have so affirmed pre-

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Q. 3. 103.

<sup>8</sup> Abū l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Baṣrī (d. Baghdad, 436/1044), Mu'tazilī theologian of the Baṣran school, student of the *qāḍī* 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. Rayy, 415/1025), and Ḥanafī jurist. His largest *kalām* work, the *Kitāb taṣaffuḥ al-adilla* (*Critical Scrutinization of the Proofs [of the Mu'tazilī Scholars]*), and his other theological writings have not survived. His thought can, however, partially be reconstructed on the basis of later sources, especially the writings of his disciple Maḥmūd b. al-Malāḥimī. He was accused by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī of being in fact a philosopher disguised as a *Kalām* theologian. See W. Madelung, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, Supp., s.v. 'Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī'; D. Gimaret, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982–), s.v. 'Abu l-Ḥosayn Baṣrī' (a good summary of his theological views). In *Minhāj*, Ibn Taymiyya mentions him as an example of those whom he calls 'the intelligent ones among the [attributes] deniers' ('*uqalā' al-nufāt*, ii. 125) or 'the smart ones among the Mu'tazilīs' (*ḥudhūdḥāq al-mu'tazila*, ii. 486). He also calls him 'the smartest of the latest Mu'tazilīs' and refers to his *Kitāb taṣfiḥ al-adilla wa-l-ajwiba* (ii. 573).

<sup>9</sup> '*Uyūn al-adilla* is perhaps a misreading for *Ghurur al-adilla* (*The Best Proofs*), a title mentioned by Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt*, iii. 259.

<sup>10</sup> — S (p. 38, l. 12): qadīm S

<sup>11</sup> The disciples of 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān al-Baṣrī, a major theologian of the middle way at the time of the Mu'tazilī *miḥna* (d. 241/855?); see J. van Ess, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, Supp., s.v. 'Ibn Kullāb'.

<sup>12</sup> The disciples of Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Ash'arī, one of the major Sunnī theologians and heresiographers (d. Baghdad, 324/935); see W. Montgomery Watt, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'al-Aš'arī, Abū l-Ḥasan'.

eternal essences subsisting by the essence of the Creator, exalted is He; notably an essence making necessary that He be knowing and [such that], if it was not, He would not be knowing; an essence making necessary that He be powerful and [such that], if it was not, He would not be powerful; an essence making necessary that He be living and [such that], if it was not, He would not be living. . . And likewise for [what they] said about hearing, sight, and will. They also affirmed His speech to be pre-eternal.

'These significates (*ma'nā*),' [the Kullābīs and the Ash'arīs] said, 'are neither God, nor else than Him, nor some [part] of Him. Each of them is neither the other, nor else than it, nor some [part] of it.' They also said: 'If, in the existence, there was nothing but the essence of the exalted Creator alone, He would be neither powerful, nor knowing, nor living.' Now, according to us,<sup>13</sup> the exalted God is powerful, knowing, and living because of His essence (*li-dhāti-hi*), and we mean thereby that His essence is distinguished from the rest of the essences in such a way that, necessarily, He knows things, He is powerful over things that have no end, He lives, and He is in no need of a significate (*ma'nā*) by which He would be powerful, nor of a significate by which He would know, nor of a significate by which He would live: if, in the existence, there was nothing but the essence of the exalted God only, He would be, according to us, knowing, living, powerful, hearing, and seeing.

[Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī] also said:

◆ If [the Kullābīs and the Ash'arīs] say: 'God has a knowledge, a power, and a life', it will be said to them: 'If you thereby mean that He is powerful, knowing, living, yes! God [indeed] has a knowledge of everything, a power over everything, which is infinite, and a life, in the [following] sense: He is knowing, powerful, living. If, however, you mean by knowledge an essence by which He is knowing, [which is such that], if it was not, He would not be knowing, and which you call "knowledge"; if you mean by power an essence by which He is powerful and which you call "power"; if you mean by life an essence by which He is living and which you call "life", then God, exalted is He, is rich enough to dispense with that!'

He also said:

◆ The dualists started to affirm [the existence of] two pre-eternal [principles] of which none subsists by the essence of the other: light and darkness.<sup>14</sup> They traced all good to the light and they traced all evil to [38] the darkness. Both of them

<sup>13</sup> i.e. Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and his Mu'tazilī peers.

<sup>14</sup> On the refutation of dualists (Manichaeans, Mazdakīs, Magi, etc.) in Islam, particularly by the *qāḍī* 'Abd al-Jabbār and other Mu'tazilīs, see the texts translated and studied by G. Monnot, *Penseurs musulmans et religions iraniennes: 'Abd al-Jabbār et ses devanciers* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1974); *Islam et religions* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1986), 129–95.

had not ceased being distinct [but] thereupon mixed, and the world originated from their intermixing. All good, in the world, proceeds from the light. All evil in it proceeds from the darkness. Nobody ever spoke of affirming [the existence of] two wise pre-eternal [principles] similar [to each other]. We will show the corrupt nature of such [a doctrine] even if nobody ever held it. Some of the Magi<sup>15</sup> speak of the origination (*ḥudūth*) of Satan and of the pre-eternality of God, exalted is He. As for the Nazarenes, they say that God is one substance [and] three hypostases (*uqnūm*).<sup>16</sup> Their doctrine is thereby close to the doctrine of the Kullābīs. The symbol of their faith—this is to say: of the Nazarenes—proves that they affirm active essences.

◆ We will show, he said, the corrupt nature of all these doctrines, so that the doctrine that our shaykhs held—that is, that there is nothing pre-eternal but God—is proved correct.

These words, it will be said,<sup>17</sup> imply that there is no significant difference between [Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī] and the imāms of the Kullābīs, the Ash‘arīs, and the rest of the attributists.

As for his reporting from them that they affirmed [the existence of] more than one pre-eternal [being] and that they affirmed pre-eternal essences<sup>18</sup> subsisting by the essence of God, exalted is He,<sup>19</sup> this will be said to him: as for the Kullābīs and those of the traditionists and the jurists (*ahl al-ḥadīth wa-l-fiqh*) who trod on their path, like Abū l-Ḥasan

<sup>15</sup> i.e. the Zoroastrians; see M. Morony, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘Maḍjūs’.

<sup>16</sup> ‘The hypostases (*aqānīm*) which [the Christians] profess—besides the falsity of this notion from Reason and Law—are never mentioned in any [sacred] book among them, nor is this expression found in a single one of the books of the prophets which they possess, nor in the teaching of the apostles. Rather this is a term which they have invented, and it is said to be “Roman” (*rūmī*). It has been said that the meaning of *uqnūm* in their language is “fundament” (*aṣl*), and thus they are compelled to explain the *aqānīm* sometimes as “persons” (*shakhs*), sometimes “specifications” (*khāṣṣa*), “attributes” (*ṣifa*), or “substances” (*jawhar*). At other times they make the *uqnūm* a name for the essence and the attribute together, and this is the explanation given by their most intelligent scholars’ (Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*, ed. ‘A. b. Ḥ. bin Nāṣir, ‘A. ‘A. b. I. al-‘Askar, and Ḥ. b. M. al-Ḥamdān, 7 vols. (Riyād: Dār al-‘āṣima li-l-nashr wa-l-tawzī’, 1419/1999), iii. 200; trans. T. Michel (rev.), *A Muslim Theologian’s Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya’s Al-jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1984), 263–4). Cf. with the pages of the *qāḍi* ‘Abd al-Jabbār translated by G. Monnot, *Islam*, 248–9, and Ibn Taymiyya, *Qubrus*, trans. Michot, *Roi croisé*, 141–2.

<sup>17</sup> And is actually said by Ibn Taymiyya, who now embarks on a discussion of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī’s ideas.

<sup>18</sup> dhawāt S (p. 37, l. 1): dhāt S a pre-eternal essence

<sup>19</sup> Loose quotation of pp. 36, l. 20–37, l. 2.

al-Tamīmī,<sup>20</sup> Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī,<sup>21</sup> and others among the companions of the four imāms *et alii*, they do not say of the attributes only that they are pre-eternal. They do not say 'the knowledge is pre-eternal' but they say 'the Lord by/with (*bi-*) His knowledge is pre-eternal'. The one of them who speaks of the attributes as being pre-eternal does not say that the essence [39] and the attributes are both pre-eternal, and those who speak of pre-eternality about the attributes do not use for them the term 'essences'. Indeed, when 'essence' is used, it will be understood from that that it is the essence subsisting by itself and qualified by the attributes. This is why a difference is made between the essence and the attributes.

'Essence' (*dhāt*) is originally the feminine of *dhū* and its meaning is 'possessor' (*ṣāhib*), that is, the possessor of the attribute. Considering this, they do not call the attributes 'essences'; they only call them 'significates' (*ma'nā*). When some of them—like the *qāḍī* Abū Bakr [al-Bāqillānī], the *qāḍī* Abū Ya'lā [Ibn al-Farrā'], and others—say that the cause (*'illa*) is one of the essences, existing, it is not correct that [this] status<sup>22</sup> (*ḥukm*) is only necessary for an existing essence. What they mean thereby is that it is an existing thing, as they made clear by saying that it is not permitted for the cause to be nonexistent, nor for its status to be nonexistent. The deniers of the state (*ḥāl*) nevertheless dispute with them about that. What is aimed at [here] is [to say] that what they mean by this term is not that it is an essence subsisting by itself but, rather, one significate (*ma'nā*) among others.

As for [Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī's] reporting from the [Kullābīs, the Ash'arīs, and the rest of the attributists] that they affirm [the existence] of an *essence* which makes necessary that He be knowing and

♦ [which is such that], if it was not, He would not be knowing,<sup>23</sup>

this, firstly, is not what is said by their imāms, nor by most of them. Rather, this is what is said by those of them who affirm the state[s]. As for most of them, they hold that knowledge is the [fact] itself that He is knowing, they do not affirm [the existence] there of an essence that would make necessary that He be knowing. Now, yourself,<sup>24</sup> you have

<sup>20</sup> 'Abd al-'Azīz b. al-Ḥārith Abū l-Ḥasan al-Tamīmī (d. 371/982), jurist, disciple of the Ḥanbalī jurist 'Umar al-Khiraqī; see Ibn Abī Ya'lā (d. 526/1132), *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, ed. A. Ḥ. b. Ḥasan and A. Z. Bahjat, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1417/1997), ii, 121.

<sup>21</sup> Ḥamd b. Muḥammad Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī, traditionist of Shāfi'ī tendency and poet (d. 386/996?); see *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'al-Khaṭṭābī'.

<sup>22</sup> i.e. being a cause.

<sup>23</sup> Loose quotation of p. 37, l. 16.

<sup>24</sup> i.e. Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī; see p. 37, ll. 14–5.

acknowledged that He has a knowledge, a power, and a life, in the sense that He is knowing, powerful, [40] living, not in the sense that He has an essence by virtue of which He would be knowing. What you say is thus in agreement with what is said by most of them.

Furthermore, the affirmers of the state[s] say [that] by Him subsists a *significate* (*ma'nā*), that is, knowledge, which makes necessary that He be knowing.

You report from the [Kullābīs, the Ash'arīs, and the rest of the attributists] that they say:

◆ If, in the existence, there was nothing but the *essence* of the Creator alone, He would be neither powerful, nor knowing, nor living.<sup>25</sup>

The matter is [however] not as one would understand it from such a repugnant [statement]. They are indeed agreed that if there was no existent but God alone, He would be living, powerful, knowing. You have only reported what they say by [using] the term 'essence'. Now, the term 'essence' is equivocal (*mujmal*). If you mean that they say 'if there was nothing but the essence qualified by these attributes . . .', it is well known that, if there was nothing but the essence qualified by knowledge and power, it would be knowing [and] powerful. If [, on the other hand,] you mean that they say 'if there was nothing but the essence stripped (*mujarrad*) of the attributes . . .', according to you the existence of the essence of the Lord stripped of these attributes is impossible. [Things] are therefore as you yourself say—if the hypothesis was made that, in the existence, there is nothing but He with His being neither knowing nor powerful—, [it] being well known that when such an hypothesis is made [which is] impossible for His essence, an impossible status necessarily follows it!

You, it will also be said to [Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī], you have said that God, according to you,

- ◆ is powerful [and] living because of His essence (*li-dhāti-hi*).<sup>26</sup>
- ◆ 'We mean<sup>27</sup> thereby', you said, 'that His essence is distinguished from the rest of the essences in such a way that, necessarily, He knows all things and is powerful over things that have no end.'<sup>28</sup>

[This] will be said to [Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī]: you say that His essence is distinguished in such a way that, necessarily, He knows and has power; [then, the fact] that He knows and has power, is it itself the distinguished

<sup>25</sup> Quotation of p. 37, ll. 6–8.

<sup>26</sup> Loose quotation of p. 37, l. 8.

<sup>27</sup> na'nī S (p. 37, l. 8): ya'nī S

<sup>28</sup> Loose quotation of p. 37, ll. 8–10.

essence? Or, [the fact] that He knows because of [His] essence<sup>29</sup> and has power, is it not itself the essence itself? [41] If you say that the essence itself is [the fact] itself that He knows and has power, this is stubbornness [motivated] by necessity. The knowledge is indeed not the knowing [one] himself, nor the power the powerful [one] himself. That is also a thing agreed upon between the Mu'tazilīs and the adepts of the affirmation [of the attributes]. Moreover, what you really say would thus be that the essence is distinguished in such a way that the essence is necessary. Now, if you were saying [that] the essence makes the essence necessary, it would not be correct. So, a fortiori, how will [things be] if it is its being distinct which makes it necessary? [On the other hand,] if you say that this is not that,<sup>30</sup> this is what the attributists say. The knowledge which they affirm is indeed what you say: [the fact] that He knows.<sup>31</sup> 'That' (*an*) and the verb are equivalent to an interpretation (*ta'wil*) of the verbal noun (*maṣḍar*). For somebody, to say 'he knows with a [true] knowledge' (*'alima 'ilm<sup>an</sup>*) and 'he has knowledge' (*la-hu 'ilm*) is like saying: 'he is qualifiable by [the fact] that he knows'. When [the attributists] say that He is knowing by [His] knowledge, not by His essence, most of them do not mean thereby that knowledge has made necessary an attribute other than knowledge, which is His being knowing. On the contrary, His knowledge is itself His being knowing. They therefore say: knowing by an attribute [belonging] to Him which is knowledge, not by an essence stripped of knowledge, [it] being well known that His essence is that which makes necessary for Him to be knowing. They thus do not contest that He is knowing by essence, in the sense that His essence makes necessary for Him to be knowing, and that He is Himself rich enough to dispense with something that would make Him knowing. There is nothing else than Him that makes Him knowing.

As for your saying

◆ and He is in no need of a significate (*ma'nā*) by which He would be powerful, nor of a significate by which He would know,<sup>32</sup>

this term<sup>33</sup> is equivocal. This can validly be an argument only against the affirmers of the states who say [that] there is a significate (*ma'nā*), that is, knowledge, which makes necessary for Him to be knowing. To say this is like saying 'He is in no need of being knowing [and] powerful' and 'He does not need to know and to have power'. You [nevertheless] concede

<sup>29</sup> li-l-dhāt: al-dhāt S

<sup>30</sup> i.e. that the essence itself is not [the fact] itself that He knows and has power.

<sup>31</sup> ya'lamu: ta'lamu S

<sup>32</sup> Quotation of p. 37, l. 10.

<sup>33</sup> i.e. significate (*ma'nā*).



to them that He must inevitably know and have power. Now this is, according to them, the knowledge and the power.

For someone to say, after this, 'He needs this' or 'He does not need [it]' is [raising] [42] a question that has no pertinence for them nor for anybody. If, indeed, by the significate of need is [here] meant that, for [God], being qualified by the attributes of perfection does not imply as a necessary concomitant His being knowing [and] powerful, this is vain. If it is said that that<sup>34</sup> includes the need of an attribute, it will be like saying that that includes the need of His essence! He is, by Himself, rich enough to dispense with everything other than Himself. It will [however] not be said that He is rich enough to dispense with Himself! His sanctified self, qualified by the attribute of perfection [and] implying that as a necessary concomitant is the rich. So, when it would be said [that] He is rich enough to dispense with that, it would be like someone saying [that] He is rich enough to dispense with Himself, or rich enough to dispense with His richness, or rich enough to dispense with that which [is such that] He is not rich but by it. It would be like saying [that] the living [Being] for whom life is necessary is rich enough to dispense with His life, or that the Necessary of existence is rich enough to dispense with His existence, or that the Pre-eternal is rich enough to dispense with His pre-eternality, and so forth.

◆ [The attributists] say 'knowing by a knowledge' but do not say 'existing by an existence', nor 'permanent by a permanence', nor 'pre-eternal by a pre-eternality'.

If [Abū l-Husayn al-Baṣrī] says that, this will be said: there are some of them who say that and some who do not say it but differentiate insofar as, when the pre-eternal [and] permanent essence itself is presumed neither pre-eternal nor permanent, the difference in that [matter] does not refer to an affirmed (*thubūtī*) significate that would subsist by it. Permanence is continuity (*dawām*) and, as a permanent thing is presumed not to have changed, its state with permanence and without it is the same, in contradistinction to knowledge and power. As for the knowing [and] powerful essence, when it is presumed that it is not knowing nor powerful, one thereby knows that its state in itself differs. Which proves that knowledge and science are significates that subsist by it, through which it gets qualified and that [are such that] its state in itself differs with the presumption of their nonexistence. They are not abstract (*mujarrad*) correspondences (*nisba*) and relationships (*iḍāfa*) like permanence, etc.

<sup>34</sup> i.e. being qualified by the attributes of perfection.

In addition, in your joining together those attributists, the Magi, and the Nazarenes, there is a bias that does not remain unnoticed by any author. [43] About the Nazarenes, you say that they perhaps inclined

- ♦ to the doctrine of the Kullābīs.<sup>35</sup>

This will be said to you:<sup>36</sup> if, in what the Nazarenes say, there was nothing but the affirmation that God is living by a life [and] knowing by a knowledge, what they say, what you say, and what the Kullābīs say would be the same. Now, God has not pronounced the Nazarenes infidels because of this; God has pronounced them infidels only because of the things that He mentions about them in His Book and that none of the attributist Muslims say. As far as contradiction and confusion are concerned, in what the Nazarenes say there are things whose corrupt nature is clear for every intelligent [person]: they affirm the Son [to be] an attribute, an hypostasis, and, in spite of that, consider him as an active God; [moreover], in spite of [all] that, they consider God as one and say that that which unites with the Messiah is the Son, that is, the Word, beneath the Father. This is a doctrine that contradicts itself just as the philosophers contradict themselves.<sup>37</sup>

[So,] even the Mu'tazilīs contradict themselves about the denial of the attributes and their affirmation, as you see. And these are the words of the most eminent of the latest of them.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, [Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī] did not argue against the attributists but by two arguments.

One is that if [God] had a knowledge, His knowledge would be like (*mithla*) our knowledge. Now, of two [things] that are like [each other], one will not be originated (*muḥdath*) and the other pre-eternal.

The second [argument consists in the following]. His being knowing [and] powerful is necessary. Now, as the attribute is necessary, it can dispense, by its necessity, with a significate that would make it necessary. So [Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī] called that [significate] an 'attribute'. This argument only forces proof on the affirmers of the state[s], who say [that] the necessary is caused by the necessary.

As for the first [argument], its corrupt nature is very obvious; especially as Abū l-Ḥusayn [al-Baṣrī] does not concede to [the attributists] that one of us is knowing because of a significate. This is why he turned

<sup>35</sup> See p. 38, l. 6.

<sup>36</sup> la-ka: la-hu S to him

<sup>37</sup> For Ibn Taymiyya's refutation of Christian Trinitarian theology, see his *Jawāb*, trans. Michel, *Response*, 255–325; *Qubruṣ*, trans. Michot, *Roi croisé*. On the philosophers' contradictions, see his *Dar'*, trans. Michot, *Vanités*.

<sup>38</sup> i.e. Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī.

away from the two ways of his shaykhs that have been mentioned, concerning the denial of the attributes, in favour of a third way that is weaker than both of them.

◆ There is no way, he said, [leading] towards the affirmation of these significates. [44] Now, that towards which there is no way, it is not permitted to affirm it.

That which is implied by his words is the denial of a thing because of the absence (*intifāʿ*) of its proof (*dalīl*). Such a [statement] is [however] of an extremely corrupt nature. Indeed, the proof is not reversible. When the proof of something is absent, the absence of [this affair] in itself does not necessarily follow. Rather, the denier has got to prove the absence of that which he denies just as the affirmer has got to prove the affirmedness (*thubūṭ*) of that which he affirms. Upon someone who has no proof for denying and affirming, it is incumbent not to deny nor to affirm, and the most he can do is to suspend [his judgement] (*tawaqquf*) as far as denying that and affirming it is concerned.

What will make that clear is that [Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī] mentioned [what follows] about the argument of the adepts of affirmation [saying] that [each] one of us is knowing because of a significate [which is such that] he is not knowing but by it and that there must necessarily be something like (*mithla*) that for the Creator, praised and exalted is He!

He said:

◆ ANSWER. This will be said to [the adepts of affirmation]. Why is it necessary that the Creator's status be our status concerning that? Is [each] one of us not knowing by a heart and by an originated (*muḥdath*) knowledge, which is not the case for the Creator, praised and exalted is He? You have thus not condemned [the idea] that [each] one of us is knowing because of a significate whereas the Creator is knowing because of His essence—although [each] one of us is knowing not because of a significate[, which is what I, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, say] even if that is not the doctrine of the companions of Abū Hāshim [al-Jubbāʿī].<sup>39</sup> The companions of Abū Hāshim have indeed differentiated between [each] one of us and the exalted Creator concerning that. One of us, they said, knows with the possibility of not knowing. It is thus not possible for him to be knowing but because of a significate [45] by which his being knowing becomes preponderant over his being non-knowing. As for the exalted Creator, He knows the things and it is impossible for Him not to know them. He has thus no need of a significate by which His being knowing would be given preponderance over His being non-knowing.

<sup>39</sup> Abū Hāshim ʿAbd al-Salām b. al-Jubbāʿī (d. 321/933), Muʿtazilī theologian of the Baṣran school, famous for his doctrine of the *aḥwāl*, 'states'; see L. Gardet, *El<sup>2</sup>*, s.v. 'al-Djubbaʿī'.

[This] will be said to Abū l-Ḥusayn [al-Baṣrī]. If your doctrine and the doctrine of the deniers of the states is that one of us is knowing not because of a significate, and that the Creator is knowing not because of a significate, the argument of the attributists is correct and it becomes clear that affirming the attribute of one of the two knowers, to the exclusion of the other, is vain. As for that which you mentioned of what is said by Abū Hāshim [al-Jubbā'ī], this is what is said by the affirmers of the state[s]. Those among the attributists who affirm the state[s], like the *qāḍī* Abū Bakr [al-Bāqillānī], the *qāḍī* Abū Ya'la [Ibn al-Farrā'] and those who follow them, would then address [Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī] and say [the following]. The fact that [God] knows—with the necessity, for Him, to know—does not forbid that to imply as a necessary concomitant a knowledge by which He becomes knowing. On the contrary, the necessary state implies, as a necessary concomitant, a necessary cause, whereas the possible state implies, as a necessary concomitant, a possible cause. The difference between the two [types of knowledge]<sup>40</sup> is that [each] one of us knows with the possibility, for him, of not having a knowledge and of not being knowing whereas the Creator knows with the necessity, for Him, of having a knowledge and of being knowing. The difference between the two has to do with the necessity of the attribute and of the state, and with the possibility of the attribute and of the state. As for the affirmedness of the attribute and of the state in one of the two, and the affirmedness of the state, to the exclusion of the attribute, in the other, this is a difference of a corrupt nature, just like the difference [made by] the deniers between affirming the attribute of one of the two, to the exclusion of the other.

For somebody who knows and is equitable, these are all things that make clear that it is not possible, for Abū l-Ḥusayn [al-Baṣrī] and his like among the Mu'tazilīs, to indicate an intelligible difference between what they say and what is said by the imāms of the attributists.<sup>41</sup> And when it is presumed that they [actually] indicate [such] a difference, their argument in favour of [46] the denial [of the attributes] is of an extremely corrupt and self-contradictory nature! They necessarily contradict themselves in the[ir] doctrine itself or in their argumentation in favour of it. As falsification, speculation, and unjustifiable defamation,

<sup>40</sup> i.e. human and divine knowledges.

<sup>41</sup> 'Whoever considers the pronouncements (*kalām*) of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and of his like among the imāms of the Mu'tazilīs finds that the significates they affirm are [the same as] what the attributists say' (Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj*, ii. 231). 'Whoever considers the pronouncements of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī and of his like finds him compelled to affirm the attributes and [sees] that it is not possible for him to differentiate in any real way between what he says and what the affirmers [of the attributes] say' (ibid. 487).

there are, in what they report from those who dispute with them, things that become clear for those who meditate on them.

They for example defame the adepts of the affirmation [of the attributes] by [claiming] that the [latter] speak of a plurality of the Pre-eternal. Now, 'pre-eternal' (*qadīm*) is an equivocal term by which they make some people imagine (*awhama*) that they speak of a plurality of gods; especially as most of their shaykhs—like al-Jubbā'ī<sup>42</sup> and his predecessors—say that the most particular characteristic of the Lord is pre-eternality<sup>43</sup> and that [any] association in it (*ishtirāk*) necessarily entails a mutual likeness (*tamāthul*): if the attribute had [some] association, in pre-eternality, with the [God Who is] qualified [by it], it would be like Him.

Such an [idea] is of an extremely corrupt nature. The particularities of the Lord by which nothing else is qualified are indeed numerous. There is for example the fact that He is the Lord of the worlds, that He is knowing everything, that He is powerful over everything, that He is the living [one], the everlasting, the subsisting per se, the pre-eternal, the necessary of existence, the [one] Who makes everything else than Him subsist... and other particularities in which neither an attribute nor anything else has [any] association with Him. It will thus be said [that] the pre-eternality which is among His particularities is the pre-eternality of the [one] subsisting per se, and likewise for His necessity, which is the necessity of existence of the [one] subsisting per se, etc. As for the attributes that do not subsist but by Him, if one speaks of their pre-eternality or of their necessity, there is no doubt that they do not subsist per se, and, even, that they do not subsist but by [Him] Who is qualified [by them]. The truth of the matter is that the Pre-eternal, the Necessary per se, is the essence implying as necessary concomitants the attributes of perfection. As for an essence stripped of these attributes, or attributes stripped of it, they have no existence, to say nothing of their being necessary per se or pre-eternal!

Despite its corrupt nature, what they said [47] necessarily resulted in many people starting to be wary of applying the term 'pre-eternal' to an attribute, and likewise the term 'necessary per se'. Or they were wary of applying the term 'pre-eternal' to that which is qualified by the attribute and to the attribute both together, even if they were applying it to one

<sup>42</sup> Abū 'Alī Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Jubbā'ī (d. 303/915–16), Mu'tazilī theologian of the Baṣran school, master of his son Abū Hāshim and of al-Ash'arī; see L. Gardet, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'al-Djubbā'ī'.

<sup>43</sup> On pre-eternality as the most characteristic quality of God, see D. Gimaret, *Les Noms divins en Islam: Exégèse lexicographique et théologique* (Paris: Cerf, 1988), 164.

of the two individually. This was the way of Ibn Kullāb and of most of the imāms of the theologians among the attributists, and that course was taken by the theology (*kalām*) of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Tamīmī, [Abū Sulaymān] al-Khaṭṭābī, and others who trod on this path.

In his book *The Evocation (al-Ishāra)* about all the fundamentals, Abū l-Ḥasan [al-Tamīmī] says for example [the following]:

QUESTION. If some interrogator says: 'Will it be said that the attributes are pre-eternal?', this will be said to him: 'This is a weak question which someone knowing the truths of theology (*kalām*) does not raise. The Pre-eternal, the Everlasting, is indeed not pre-eternal without attribute. He is only pre-eternal with (*bi-*) His attributes, which are relating (*muḍāf*) to Him in Himself. To affirm the Pre-eternal as pre-eternal with (*bi-*) His attributes thus brings down the question concerning the pre-eternality of the attributes, because of the relationship of the attribute to that which is qualified by it. Every attribute belongs to the Pre-eternal in Himself: He has never ceased to have it. Do you not see that the entirety of the originated (*muḥdath*) [being] is originated? If therefore you ask about it [and, while doing so,] differentiate and distinguish parts, every element (*tā'ifa*) of it is originated<sup>44</sup> and, of it, everything is originated, as it is originated totally, completely. Do you not see that the human being is originated with (*bi-*) all his limbs and organs? It will thus be said [that] he is originated when the question is raised about him wholly and it will be said [that] his hand is originated when the question is raised about it in an explanatory way; it will [nevertheless] not be said that the human being and his hand are both originated [things], nor that the human being and his head are both originated [things]. Likewise, it will also be said [that] the Pre-eternal is pre-eternal with (*bi-*) all His attributes and [that], of the Pre-eternal, everything is pre-eternal, non-originated.' [48]

'The [God] qualified as pre-eternal', they say, 'and His pre-eternal attribute are both pre-eternal [things].' If someone says that, this will be said to him: 'This is wrong and cannot be said. For example, as the originated [being] is originated with all its attributes, I cannot answer someone asking me about it individually and about its attributes individually by<sup>45</sup> saying [that] it and its attribute are both originated [things]. It is indeed one, it and its attributes; so it is originated totally and they, in accordance with (*'alā*) their state, are originated.<sup>46</sup> Nor can I say [that] the two are both together two originated [things]. In saying [that] the two are both together two originated [things], there is indeed something corrupt as far as affirming the one[ness of the] originated [thing] is concerned and we let imagine (*ihām*) that it is two, not one. Similarly when I say about the First, the One, the Pre-eternal Who has attributes, that He is pre-eternal and [that] His attributes are pre-eternal. In saying [that] He and His attributes are both pre-eternal [things], there is an affirmation reducing [to nothing] (*ta'tīl*) His *tawḥīd*

<sup>44</sup> muḥdathat<sup>an</sup>: muḥditha-hu? S

<sup>45</sup> bi-an: an S

<sup>46</sup> muḥdathat<sup>un</sup>: muḥdathu-hu? S

and His pre-eternality, and I deem necessary that He is two, not one. It is therefore a corrupt [way of speaking] to say [that] He and His attribute are both pre-eternal [things], just as it is a corrupt [way of speaking] to say of the originated [thing that] it and its attribute are both originated [things]. What should necessarily have been said is that the Pre-eternal, the Everlasting has not ceased to be qualified. To someone asking about each attribute individually, it can thus be said [that] it is pre-eternal, an attribute [belonging] to a pre-eternal [God] Who has not ceased to have it and to Whom it has not ceased to belong. Just as the attribute of something originated will not be but originated,<sup>47</sup> that which applies to the Pre-eternal on the condition of pre-eternality befalls Him with (*bi-*) His attributes; it does not befall Him without His attributes. When somebody says [that] the qualified [God] is pre-eternal, he thus [thereby] says that His attributes are pre-eternal, just as, when he says [that] the qualified [thing] is originated, he [thereby] necessarily deems that its attributes are originated.' [49]

This is the way, I<sup>48</sup> say, on which those trod as they were saying about the essence that it is pre-eternal, and about the attributes that they are pre-eternal. They were not saying about the essence *and* the attributes that the two are both originated [things], because of the impression of heterogeneity (*taghāyur*) conveyed by the conjunction [*and*] and [because] they did not assert of the attributes that they are other than the essence.

Concerning the term 'alterity' (*mughāyara*), people [followed] three ways.

One of them is the way of the imāms, like Imām Aḥmad [b. Ḥanbal] and others. I am of the opinion that it is also that which is said by Ibn Kullāb and others. Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā'ī<sup>49</sup> has mentioned it. They do not say of the attribute that it is that which is qualified [by it]; nor do they say that it is other than the latter. They moreover do not say [that] it is neither that which is qualified [by it] nor other than it. The term 'other' is indeed equivocal. They thus do not deny it when they apply [it], nor affirm it.

The second way is the one related about al-Ash'arī himself, [according to which] he said this: 'I say, in differentiating, that the attribute is not it[self] that which is qualified [by it]. I also say that it is not other than that which is qualified [by it]. However, I do not join the two negations together so that I would say [that] it is neither that which is qualified [by it] nor other than it.' Similarly for Abū l-Ḥasan al-Tamīmī and those

<sup>47</sup> muḥdathat<sup>an</sup>: muḥditha-hu? S

<sup>48</sup> i.e. Ibn Taymiyya.

<sup>49</sup> Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Mihrijānī al-Isfarāyīnī (d. Nīshāpūr, 418/1027), Ash'arī theologian often close to Mu'tazilī views and Shāfi'ī jurist; see W. Madelung, *ET*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'al-Isfarāyīnī'.

who trod on this way: they say, about the knowledge and similar attributes, that it is not other than God and that the attributes are not heterogeneous. So they say that they are not them[selves] God. So they [also] say that that which is qualified [by the attribute] is pre-eternal and that the attribute is pre-eternal but they do not say, when joining [the two statements] together: 'two pre-eternal [things]'. Nor will it be said, when joining [statements] together: [the attribute] is neither it[self] that which is qualified [by it] nor other than it.

The third way is that which is said by those who join the two negations together. It is for example the way of Ibn al-Bāqillānī, the *qādī* Abū Ya'la [Ibn al-Farrā'], and others. These can speak freely of affirming two pre-eternal [entities], one being the attribute, the other that which is qualified [by it]. They also mention that in their books. When the Mu'tazilīs argued against them [by saying] that, were His attributes pre-eternal, it would be necessary to affirm two pre-eternal [entities], and that, [50] were His knowledge pre-eternal, it would be a God, they answered that the fact, for them both, of being two pre-eternal [entities] does not necessarily imply their mutual likeness (*tamāthul*). Blackness and whiteness, for example, are associates in their being both different from the substance; despite that, they are not necessarily like each other. Moreover, the meaning (*ma'nā*) of 'the pre-eternal' is not the meaning of 'the God'.<sup>50</sup> 'The pre-eternal' (*qadīm*) is that which [is such that] one goes to greatest lengths in qualifying it with antiquity (*taqaddum*). Whence [the expressions] 'a building dating back to pre-eternality (*qadīm*)' and 'a house dating back to pre-eternality (*qadīm*)', when one goes to greatest lengths in qualifying it with antiquity. The meaning of 'the God' is however not inferable from that. Furthermore, the Prophet is originated and his attributes are originated. When that which is qualified by the attributes is a prophet, these attributes do not necessarily have to be prophets because of their being originated. Likewise, when the attributes are pre-eternal and that which is qualified by them is pre-eternal, they do not necessarily have to be gods because of their being pre-eternal. To speak in a more elaborate way about that should [however] be done elsewhere.

\*\*\*

Avicenna also says:

- And is He one in essence despite the multiplicity of [His] attributes or subject to multiplicity—exalted is He far above it from all points of view!—?<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> On the theological discussions concerning the meaning of *qadīm*, see D. Gimaret, *Noms*, 164–70.

<sup>51</sup> Quotation of p. 15, ll. 5–6.



[This] will be said to him. The divine Book is full of affirmation[s] of the attributes of God, exalted is He, like knowledge, power, mercy, etc. and two intelligent [people] have not disputed about the texts not furnishing any evidence for the denial of the attributes. On the contrary, they only furnish evidence for what the adepts of affirmation say and the deniers [can], at the most, claim that their outer (*zāhir*) [meaning alone] furnishes evidence for that<sup>52</sup> and that it is possible to interpret it,<sup>53</sup> because of [some] contradicting evidence.

There is no doubt that what [Avicenna] mentions is necessarily binding the deniers of the attributes. Indeed, if what they say was true, that<sup>54</sup> would necessarily have had to be made clear [in the revelation]. And had it not been made clear, the least that should have been done [by the revelation] would have been to keep silent about [51] the truth and its opposite. As for mentioning things whose outer [meaning] would furnish evidence for the opposite of the truth without mentioning the truth, this would have been unacceptable (*mumtani'*) in the case of Him whose purpose is to guide the creatures, even if it is possible (*jā'iz*).

This is an argument of these heretics<sup>55</sup> against them<sup>56</sup> about the return (*ma'ād*) and also, moreover, about the Legal prescriptions. 'We necessarily know of the return of the bodies thanks to the things told by the Messenger. There is therefore no need for us to learn about it from anything else than<sup>57</sup> the terms of the *ex auditu* tradition, so that no offence is committed against the evidence-furnishing quality of this *ex auditu* tradition by interpreting [it].' If the heretics answer that about the return, it will in itself be an answer of the adepts of affirmation. The latter indeed say: 'We necessarily know that affirming the attributes is something about which the Messenger, God bless him and grant him peace, has told [us], and that he told the community that their Lord, Whom they worship, is above the world, that He is knowing, powerful, merciful and that to Him belong knowledge, power, mercy, and other similar attributes.'

To know of the affirmation of the attributes from what is said by God and His Messenger after pondering on the divine texts constitutes a necessary (*darūrī*) knowledge, about which there is no doubt. It is worth more than to know of [the right] of preemption (*shuḥḥa*), of the inheritance of the grandmother, of the interdiction for the woman to

<sup>52</sup> i.e. what the adepts of affirmation say.

<sup>53</sup> i.e. the outer meaning of the texts.

<sup>54</sup> i.e. a negative theology.

<sup>55</sup> i.e. Avicenna and his like.

<sup>56</sup> i.e. the theologians denying the attributes but affirming the resurrection of the bodies.

<sup>57</sup> ghayr +: min S

[be married] to her paternal and maternal uncles,<sup>58</sup> of the prostration for forgetfulness during the prayer,<sup>59</sup> and of similar rulings that are known to the elite, not to the commonalty. What [one finds] in the divine Books that affirms the highness of God, exalted is He, and affirms His attributes and His names, is part of the general knowledge that the elite and the commonalty possess. [It is] like their knowledge of the number of circumambulations of the House<sup>60</sup> and of [runs] between al-Şafā and al-Marwa<sup>61</sup>, and of other outward [and] plentifully certified (*mutawātir*) Legal prescriptions. You will not find any of the deniers of the attributes relying on the Law in that matter,<sup>62</sup> nor pretending that his belief in that comes originally from the Book and the Tradition, nor reporting what he says from any of the [Prophet's] Companions and of those who followed them in good-doing, nor from the imāms of the Muslims who are famous for [their] knowledge and their religion. [Each of them] only reports what he says concerning the denial [of the attributes] [52] from somebody who is known for blind imitation [of masters] (*taqlīd*), innovation, or heresy, his involvement in denying [the attributes] and his remoteness from affirming [them] being in proportion to his innovation and his heresy!

Avicenna's words

- or subject to multiplicity—exalted is He far above it<sup>63</sup>

are a make-believe (*mumawwih*) expression. If, indeed, he means a multiplicity of gods, without [really] meaning that, he knows that God, praised is He, has made clear in various passages [of the Qur'ān] that the Divinity is one unique God, the Qur'ān being full of denial[s] of the plurality of gods and of denial[s], by all [possible] way[s], of associationism. If [on the other hand] he means the multiplicity of His attributes, for which His names and His verses furnish evidence, his exalting the Lord far above these [attributes] is like the associators exalting Him far above being invoked and worshipped without an

<sup>58</sup> 'ammi-hā wa-khāli-hā: 'ammati-hā wa-khālāti-hā S

<sup>59</sup> On these four legal questions see Aḥmad b. Naqīb al-Miṣrī (d. 769/1368), *Umdat al-sālik wa-'uddat al-nāsik*, ed. and English trans. by N. H. M. Keller, *Reliance of the Traveller* (Evanston, Ill.: Sunna Books, 1994), 432–4, 491–2, 528, and 162–7, respectively.

<sup>60</sup> i.e. the Ka'ba, in Makka, around which pilgrims turn seven times.

<sup>61</sup> The two monticules close to the Ka'ba between which pilgrims run seven times.

<sup>62</sup> i.e. the denial of the divine attributes.

<sup>63</sup> Quotation of p. 15, ll. 5–6.

intermediary,<sup>64</sup> and exalting Him far above sending a Messenger [chosen] from among humans. His exempting (*tanzīh*) Him from His attributes is like the associators exempting Him from being one unique God and from having a Messenger [chosen] from among humans.

God, exalted is He, condemned the associators for their denial of the name 'the Merciful'. Thus said He, exalted is He: 'When it is said to them: "Prostrate yourselves to the Merciful!", they say: "And what is the Merciful? Shall we prostrate ourselves to whatever you command us?" And it increased them in aversion' (Q. 25. 60). He also said, exalted is He: 'Thus have We sent you in a nation before whom [other] nations have passed away, that you may recite to them what We have revealed to you, while they disbelieve in the Merciful' (Q. 13. 30). It is well known, nobody rejects a proper name ('*alam*). And if His names were proper names, there would be no difference between 'the Merciful' and 'the Almighty' (*jabbār*). How [indeed could that be right] as he has said, God bless him and grant him peace, in [53] the well-known *ḥadīth* [found] in *al-Sunan*: 'God says: "I am the Merciful (*rahmān*). I have created [the bonds of blood] kinship (*rahīm*) and I have derived them from My name. Whoever keeps attached to them, I keep attached to him. Whoever breaks them, I break with him."<sup>65</sup> As the [bonds of blood] kinship (*rahīm*) are derived from the name 'the Merciful' (*rahmān*), it is impossible for it to be a proper name in which there would be no meaning. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, [this *ḥadīth* is also reported] from him: '[The bonds of blood] kinship (*rahīm*) are derived from the Merciful (*rahmān*) [as a branch from a tree]'.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Which leads them towards the adoption of inferior deities and, thereby, polytheism. In Ibn Taymiyya's opinion—however paradoxical that may seem at first glance—polytheists thus have in common with the theologians denying the attributes an exaggerated transcendentalist theodicy. For the pagans, God is so high that He must be accompanied by subordinate divine mediators. For the negationist theologians, He is far above having attributes. The two groups moreover share, for the same reason, a rejection of prophethood. The pagans do not need prophets as they rely on the mediation of their inferior gods. The anti-attributist theologians cannot imagine that God would lower Himself to choosing a human Messenger and speaking to him.

<sup>65</sup> See al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan, Birr*, iii. 210–1, no. 1972 ('*Ālam*. 1830); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, i. 194 ('*Ālam*. 1589); see also W. A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam: A Reconsideration of the Sources, with Special Reference to the Divine Saying or Ḥadīth Qudṣī* (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), 134–5, no. 15.

<sup>66</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Adab*, viii. 6 ('*Ālam*. 5529); al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan, Birr*, iii. 217, no. 1989 ('*Ālam*. 1847); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, i. 190 ('*Ālam*. 1564); see also W. A. Graham, *Divine*, 135–6, no. 15a.

This being what [God], praised is He, says about those who reject 'the Merciful', what [should our] opinion be about those who reject all the meanings of His names and of His attributes?<sup>67</sup> The rage of this heretic and of his like [in denying] that He has attributes is a rage belonging to the Age of Ignorance, worse than the rage of those about whom God said: 'When those who disbelieve had set up in their hearts rage—the rage of the Age of Ignorance, then God sent down His tranquillity upon His Messenger and upon the believers' (Q. 48. 26). In the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it is established that when the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, and the associators made a truce, the year of al-Ḥudaybiyya, he ordered 'Alī to write at the beginning of the truce treaty: 'In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate'. Suhayl b. 'Amr, who then was still an associator, said: 'We do not recognize "the Merciful". Write, instead, as you were writing [before]: "In your name, my God"'. [The Prophet] gave an order to 'Alī and he wrote: 'In your name, my God'. Thereafter he said: 'Write: "This is what Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, has agreed to..."' They said: 'If we acknowledged [54] that you are the Messenger of God, we would not fight you. Write, instead: "Muḥammad, son of 'Abd Allāh"''.<sup>68</sup>

Those were taken by a rage belonging to the Age of Ignorance concerning the affirmation of the names of God and of the prophethood of Muḥammad. The heretics are in many respects their associates in that [matter]. They indeed deny the realities of the names of God and the reality of the messengership of His Messenger, God bless him and grant him peace. At the most do they believe in them in some respect and disbelieve in them in another, just like those who were saying: 'We believe in some and disbelieve in some' (Q. 4. 150).

It will be said to [Avicenna that] an essence which has no attribute has no existence but in the mind. Even, the term 'essence' (*dhāt*) is the feminine of *dhū* and is not used but with something genitively adjoined to it (*muḍāf*). The meaning of *dhāt* is 'possessor' (*ṣāḥiba*), as when He says, exalted is He: 'knowing that which possesses the breasts (*dhāt al-ṣudūr*)' (Q. 3. 119). He also says, exalted is He: 'So fear God and settle that which takes possession [of the space] between yourselves (*dhāt*'

<sup>67</sup> Which is the case of e.g. Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī. See Part I, Appendix II, pp. 199–202.

<sup>68</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Shurūḥ*, iii. 195 ('*Ālam*. 2529); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Jihād*, v. 174–5 ('*Ālam*. 3337); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, i. 86 ('*Ālam*. 621). The truce of al-Ḥudaybiyya took place in 6/628.

*baynī-kum*)!<sup>69</sup> (Q. 8. 1). Also, Khubayb<sup>70</sup> said: ‘This is [happening] for the sake (*fī dhāt*) of the Divinity’, that is, ‘on the path of the Divinity and in His direction’. Afterwards, the *Kalām* theologians used the [term] with the definite article and said: ‘*al-dhāt*’, ‘the essence’, that is, the ‘possessor’ (*al-sāhibā*), meaning: ‘the possessor of the attributes’. To presume that what implies a genitive adjunction (*idāfa*) as a necessary concomitant [exists] without this genitive adjunction is unacceptable. This [matter] is as Avicenna and his like among these heretics have established it when they considered [the divine essence] as absolute existence (*wujūd muṭlaq*), either on the condition of [55] denial (*bi-sharṭ al-nafy*), or on the condition of absoluteness (*bi-sharṭ al-iṭlāq*):<sup>71</sup> in their logic, they stipulated something about which none of the adherents of the religious confessions (*milla*) has disputed with them, [that is,] that the existence of the absolute on the condition of absoluteness is only in the minds, not in the concrete (*al-a’yān*). How [will therefore, a fortiori, things be] for the absolute conditioned by denial? It will even be farther from existing than the one conditioned by absoluteness! This is explained somewhere else.

[Avicenna]’s words

- occupying space (*mutaḥayyiz*) in essence or exempted from positions<sup>72</sup>

are also among their arguments<sup>73</sup> against the deniers of attributes. The divine Books have qualified [God] by highness and aboveness (*fawqiyya*).<sup>74</sup> They have not denied His being above the world as the deniers say. The divine texts make clear that He is the High,<sup>75</sup> the Highest,<sup>76</sup> ‘unto Whom excellent words go up, and virtuous actions He elevates them’ (Q. 35. 10), ‘unto Whom the Angels and the Spirit ascend’

<sup>69</sup> i.e. ‘the matter, the difference between yourselves’.

<sup>70</sup> Khubayb b. ‘Adī al-Aws al-Anṣārī, Companion killed in captivity by the Makkans after Badr; see Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghāba fī ma’rifat al-Ṣahāba*, 5 vols. (Cairo, 1280/1863), ii, 103–5; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣāba fī tamyiz al-Ṣahāba*, ed. ‘A. A. ‘Abd al-Mawjūd and ‘A. M. Mu‘awwad, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmiyya, 1415/1995), 225–7, no. 2227. Before being martyred, he said: *I do not care, when being killed as a Muslim, on what side my fall is in God. | This is happening for the sake (fī dhāt) of the Divinity and, if He wills, He will bless the limbs of a corpse torn apart.*

<sup>71</sup> On Ibn Taymiyya’s typology of absolute existence, see the Appendix, pp. 373–6.

<sup>72</sup> Quotation of p. 15, ll. 6–7.

<sup>73</sup> i.e. the arguments of Avicenna and his like.

<sup>74</sup> See Q. 6. 18, 61.

<sup>75</sup> See e.g. Q. 2. 255.

<sup>76</sup> See e.g. Q. 79. 24.

(Q. 70. 4), from Whom the Qur'ān came down<sup>77</sup> and from near Whom the Angels come down,<sup>78</sup> 'Who created the heavens and the earth in six days and, thereafter, sat on the Throne' (Q. 57. 4), and other similar texts making clear His difference from His creatures and His highness above them. So, which statements of what is aimed at could be clearer than that?

As for the terms 'ubication' (*tahayyuz*) and 'position' (*jiha*), they are both equivocal terms and what the deniers mean by them both is other than what they mean in the ordinary (*ma'rūf*) language. *Mutahayyiz*, 'occupying space', is a *nomen agentis* deriving from *tahayyaza*, *yatahayyazu*, 'to occupy space', so it is *mutahayyiz*, similarly to *ta'awwadha*, 'to take refuge', *takabbara*, 'to be haughty', *tajabbara*, 'to show oneself strong', etc. *Al-hayyiz*, 'space', is that which encloses (*ḥāza*) [56] the thing and encompasses it. What is understood thereby in the exoteric (*zāhir*) language is that there is an existing thing which encloses another.

Now, there is no doubt that the Creator is different from the creatures, high above them. The divine texts prove it and the Ancients (*salaf*) and the imāms agree on it. God, exalted is He, has made His creatures [know] that by their pristine nature (*faṭara*)<sup>79</sup> and rational proofs prove it. As this is so and as there is here no existent but the Creator and the created, beyond the creatures there is nothing existing that might be a space (*ḥayz*) for God, exalted is He. It cannot therefore be said [that] He is *mutahayyiz*, 'occupying space', from this point of view (*i'tibār*).

By 'space' (*ḥayz*), [theologians] sometimes also mean a nonexistential ('*adamī*') thing. They consequently call the world *mutahayyiz*, 'occupying space', even if it is not in [some] other existing thing, different from the world. This being so, the meaning of its being *mutahayyiz*, 'occupying space' from this point of view is that it is in a nonexistential space. Now, nonexistence is nothing. In [God's] being in that which is nothing, there is therefore nothing more than His being alone, nothing

<sup>77</sup> See e.g. Q. 2. 176.

<sup>78</sup> See e.g. Q. 16. 2.

<sup>79</sup> Ibn Taymiyya wrote an *Epistle on the fitra* (*Risāla fī l-kalām 'alā l-fitra*) which is translated by G. Gobillot, 'L'Épître du discours sur la *fitra* de Taqī l-Dīn Ahmad Ibn Taymīya', in *Annales islamologiques*, 20 (Cairo: IFAO, 1984), 29–53. For him, knowledge of God, love of God, and realization of His oneness (*tauhīd*) are pre-set in the pristine nature, or *ḥanīfiyya*, of humans. See also the texts translated in Y. Michot, 'Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya, XVI: La Réalité de l'amour (*maḥabba*) de Dieu et de l'homme (suite)', in *Le Musulman*, 29 (Paris: AEIF, Muharram 1418/May 1998), 20–25, and 'La Finalité du cœur (Pages spirituelles d'Ibn Taymiyya, IX)', in *Action*, 35 (Port-Louis: SIM, July 2000), 18–19, 26.

existing with Him. He is separate (*munḥāz*) from the creatures, distinct from them, different from them. His essence is not mixed with the essence of the created. So, if by *al-mutaḥayyiz* is meant that which is different from other [things], as the texts prove that God, exalted is He, is high above the creatures, different from them, not mixed with them, they also prove that matter (*ma'nā*). [In fact], the Qur'ān furnishes evidence for all the matters (*ma'nā*) about which [57] people have disputed—the subtle ones and the main ones. As al-Sha'ibī<sup>80</sup> has said, 'nobody innovates anything without [the truth being that] the [perfectly] clear explanation of the matter is in the Book of God'. Masrūq<sup>81</sup> said: 'We do not put any question to the Companions of Muḥammad without [the truth being that] its knowledge is in the Qur'ān; our knowledge however failed to grasp it!'

As there is equivocity (*ijmāl*) and vagueness (*ibhām*) in the term *al-mutaḥayyiz*, [various] groups of the adepts of affirmation refrained from pronouncing for the denial of it or the affirmation of it. There is also no doubt that neither the affirmation of it nor the denial of it are to be found in [the sayings of] any of the Ancients (*salaf*) and of the imāms. Just as nothing like that<sup>82</sup> is to be found in<sup>83</sup> [their sayings] concerning the term[s] 'body' (*jism*), 'substance' (*jawhar*), and so forth. This [is so] because [both] true and vain [things] are meant by equivocal terms and [because] the commonalty of those who used them while affirming or denying meant by them things that were vain, especially the deniers. All the deniers of the attributes indeed deny [of God] the body, the substance, that which occupies space (*al-mutaḥayyiz*), etc. and they include in that denial denying the attributes of God, the realities (*ḥaqīqa*) of His names, and His difference from His creatures. Moreover when, against them, the matter is really investigated, one finds [that] their denial includes a real denial of His essence, as the matter leads back to an absolute existence<sup>84</sup> which has no reality but in the mind and in the imagination, or to a stripped (*mujarrad*) essence which does not exist but in the mind and in the imagination, or to joining together two contradictory [positions] by affirming attributes and denying their necessary concomitants. [58] The commonalty of those who use such

<sup>80</sup> 'Āmir b. Sharāḥīl b. 'Abd al-Kūfī al-Sha'ibī, Abū 'Amr (d. between 103/721 and 110/728), Follower, influent jurist and *ḥadīth*-transmitter; see G. Juynboll, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'al-Sha'ibī'.

<sup>81</sup> Masrūq b. al-Ajda' b. Mālik al-Hamadhānī, Abū 'Ā'isha (d. Kūfa, 63/682–3), great Follower; see Ibn Hajar, *Iṣāba*, vi. 229–30, no. 8426.

<sup>82</sup> i.e. affirmation or denial.

<sup>83</sup> 'an-hum + S acr. : yūjadu S

<sup>84</sup> See the Appendix, p. 374.

[terms] contradict themselves in denying them and affirming them: they affirm the thing by [some] expression and deny it by another. Or they affirm it and deny that which is similar to it. Or they deny it [when] detailed and affirm it [when] equivocal, or the contrary. Or they speak of denying and affirming by expressions whose content will not be inferred and whose meaning will not be realized [by anyone]. This is often [the case] among the major [authors] and, a fortiori, the minor ones. Many of them do not understand what the greatest [ones] among them mean by these expressions, whereas the latter know that the commonalty of them do not understand what they mean: they only hold it as their opinion to give [them] importance and to praise [them], in an equivocal way.

The duty of the Muslims is to receive with assent the sayings whose provenance from the Messenger is established and to accept [them] absolutely, as far as affirmation and denial are concerned. As for the terms about which the theologians (*ahl al-kalām*) have disputed, they will be received neither with assent nor with belying until one knows what the [person] uttering them means. If it agrees with what the Messenger said, it is among the acceptable sayings; if it [does] not, it is to be rejected. That which agrees with something said by the Messenger will never be contrary to limpid Reason; just as that which is contrary to something said by him will never be supported by a demonstration of Reason. That has been made clear elsewhere.

Likewise, the term *jiba*, 'position', is an equivocal term. Those who, among the adepts of theology (*kalām*) and philosophy, use the term *jiba*, 'position', can mean by it an existential thing—either a body or an accident in a body. By the term *jiba*, 'position', they can also mean something which is nonexistent, like what is beyond (*warā'*) the existents. [59] Someone [might] say that the Real is in a position. If he thereby means something which is existent [and] different from Him, there is no existent different from Him but His creatures. Now, as He is different from His creatures, how would they be containing Him? If, on the other hand, he means by *jiba*, 'position', something above the world, there is no doubt that God is above the world and that there is nothing there but He alone. There is [nothing] above the creatures but their Creator, and He is the High, the Highest.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> —: faṣl S Section



### [III. COMMENTARY ON AVICENNA'S HERMENEUTICAL PARTICULAR STATEMENTS]

- Inevitable indeed, Avicenna also says, is [this alternative]: either it is necessary to acquire a true understanding (*tabaqquq*) of these ideas and to master the true doctrine concerning them, or it is permissible to turn away from them and to neglect investigating [them] and reflecting about them. If [however] investigating these [ideas] is something one can dispense with and if an erroneous creed occurring about them is something one is not to be censured for, most of the doctrine of these people who speak of this whole thing is something they burden themselves with and of which one is in no need. If [on the other hand such an investigation] is a firm obligation, it should necessarily be something openly stated in the Law.<sup>86</sup>

All this is an argument against his brothers the deniers of the attributes. They are the ones who are addressed by this passage. As for the adepts of affirmation, they say that all this is something openly stated in the Law.

Similarly for his words

- not something stated in a cryptic or dubious manner, or about which [God] would have limited Himself [60] to [some] allusion and indication, but something stated in an exhaustive declaration and which would have fulfilled the conditions for being clear and making [things] obvious, as well as for making [people] understand and know.<sup>87</sup>

All this is an argument against his brothers the Jahmī deniers of the attributes. As for the adepts of affirmation, they say that the true *tawhīd* was openly stated [in the revelation], in an exhaustive declaration and which fulfilled the conditions for being clear and making [things] obvious, as well as for making [people] understand and know. Such are [indeed] the texts of the Qur'ān, the *ḥadīths* whose provenance from the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, is established, and the sayings of the Companions, of the Followers, and of other Ancients (*salaf*). As far as clear statements in favour of affirmation are concerned, there are in these [sources] things that nobody but the Lord of the worlds would enumerate.

[Avicenna] also said:

- Now, the outstanding people who spend their days to grasp abstruse ideas quickly are in need, in order to understand these [theological] ideas, of [some]

<sup>86</sup> Quotation of p. 15, ll. 7–12.

<sup>87</sup> Quotation of pp. 15, ll. 12–16, l. 2.

extra elucidation, explanation, and interpretation. How, [a fortiori, will things be] for the jabbering Hebrews and the nomads among the Arabs?<sup>88</sup>

These words are an argument he [develops] against his Jahmī brothers among the Mu'tazilīs and their followers, the deniers of the attributes, who say that the true *tawhīd* is what is said by the negativists (*ahl al-salb*), the deniers of the attributes. Now, there is no doubt that to understand what they say involves abstruseness and subtlety, as it is contradictory and of a corrupt nature, more contradictory [even] than what the Nazarenes say, as has been made clear in [61] the [appropriate] place. Nobody understands it but the clever one who has exercised his mind to concede the premisses by which they will corrupt his mind, or to conceive [the content of] their contradictory sayings. If he is among those who follow them, they move him on from one degree to another just as the Qarmaṭīs do move on from one degree to another those who respond to their [missionary call].<sup>89</sup> Likewise, these Jahmī deniers cannot possibly tell the true meaning of what they say to somebody clever, nor to somebody stupid, if he has not previously, before that, conceded premisses that they have put down, which include equivocal terms, and by means of which they disguise at his expense the truth with the vain. The premisses that he has conceded to them, with the disguise and the vagueness they comprise, thus remain for them an argument against him concerning that about which he would dispute with them. [This goes on] until they bring him out, if they can, from [the realms of] Reason and Religion just as one brings out a hair from the dough. Among the degrees of their missionary enterprise (*da'wa*) are 'the detachment' (*khal'*), 'the pulling off' (*salkh*) and [actions referred to by] expressions similar to these.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Abridged quotation of p. 16, ll. 2–7.

<sup>89</sup> See Part I, Appendix II, p. 201–2, Ibn Taymiyya's detailed report on the way Abū Ya'qūb al-Sijistānī used to lead discussions. On the problem of the nature of the Ismā'īlī missionary propaganda and the degrees of initiation their recruits had to go through, see M. Canard, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Da'wa', 175; A. Halkin, *Moslem Schisms and Sects (Al-Farq bain al-Firaq)*, by Abu-Manṣūr 'Abd-al-Kāhir ibn Tāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 1037), part ii (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1978), 138–45, with references to al-Ghazālī and 'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355).

<sup>90</sup> According to 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d. 429/1037), *khal'* and *salkh* constitute the last of the nine degrees of Bāṭinī initiation (*al-Farq bayna l-firaq wa-bayān al-firqaq al-nājiya min-hum*, ed. M. Z. al-Kawtharī (Cairo: Maktab nashr al-thaqāfat al-islāmiyya, 1367/1948), 179; hereafter K). When 'the

I have seen their books. I have seen them use as arguments, against groups of Muslims among whom there was some innovation, innovated things on which they were agreed with them. Avicenna similarly uses as arguments, against the Mu'tazilīs and their like among the deniers of the attributes, some of these innovated sayings on which they agree with him. Sane pristine natures (*fiṭra*) nevertheless condemn what the deniers say. Pristine natures, rationality, and the *ex auditu* tradition are indeed agreed with each other in condemning it and this will only be opposed by [some] kind of subtle sophisms that are in reality among the vainest of the vain [things].

Some of our companions told me that one of the eminent [thinkers] in whom there is a kind of [62] jahmization (*tajabhum*) was criticized by some of his companions for abstaining from coming to the aid of the theses of the deniers [of the attributes] when the thesis of the affirmation appeared in their country after having been hidden, and people responded to it [positively] after [a time during which] somebody speaking of it would have surely done, in their view, something unheard of. 'When people hear this', he said, 'they accept it, they agree wholeheartedly to it, and it appears to them that it is the truth with which the Messenger came up. As for us, if we took an individual, educated him, fed him, and cajoled him for thirty years, and thereafter wanted to make what we say go down his throat, it would not go down his throat but painfully.'

[Things] are indeed as he said. God, exalted is He, has set up proofs and signposts of the truth that separate the true and the light from the vain and the darkness. He made the pristine natures (*fiṭra*) of His servants prepared to apprehend the real essences [of things] (*ḥaqīqa*) and to know them. If, in the hearts, there was no such preparedness (*isti'dād*) to know the real essences [of things], there would be no examination (*naẓar*) and no demonstration (*istidlāl*), no discourse and no speaking. [He prepared them], praise to Him, just as He made the bodies prepared to be fed with nourishments and beverages: if there

imbecile' who accepted the views of the esotericists and 'entered the religion of the free-thinkers inwardly, using Islam as an outward cover', accepts their esoteric interpretations, 'they detach (*khala'a*)\* him and pull him off (*salakha*) from the religion of Islam and then say to him: "The outward is like the husk and the inward is like the kernel. The kernel is better than the husk"' (ibid. 182; \* *khala'ū-hu*: ḥalafū-hu K). A. Halkin's translation (*Schisms*, 138) of *al-khal' wa-l-salkh* by 'Ungodliness and Renunciation' is wrong. He is also mistaken (ibid. 145) not to correct *ḥalafū-hu* to *khala'ū-hu*, which is graphically similar and restores a doublet corresponding to *al-khal' wa-l-salkh*. His translation 'they administer an oath to him and strip him of the religion of Islam' must consequently be corrected as proposed above.

was no such [preparedness], it would not be possible to feed them and to make them grow. Just as, in the bodies, there is a faculty that separates between suitable and incompatible food, likewise, in the hearts, there is a faculty that separates even more between the true and the vain.

In a similar way,<sup>91</sup> the masters of magic, white magic (*nīranjīyyāt*),<sup>92</sup> alchemical operations,<sup>93</sup> and their like among people who get involved in vain, occult, and subtle [matters] need, [in order to do so,] great [63] operations and deep thoughts, various types of worship, asceticism, exercise, and parting with [their] passions and habits. What they nevertheless do, eventually, is to doubt about the Merciful and to worship the devil (*al-tāghūt*) and Satan, to make adulterated gold and to [spread] corruption on earth. Few are those among them who attain some of what they intended, which does not increase but their remoteness from God. As for the majority of them, they are deprived [of any success and] sinners wishing to be infidels, to be perverts and to disobey. They do not achieve anything but conveying lies and wishing to be oppressors. [They are] 'listeners to lies, devouring unlawful gain' (Q. 5. 42). Upon them the humiliation [destined to] the fabricators of lies, as God, exalted is He, has said: 'Those who took the calf [for worship], wrath will get them from their Lord, as well as humiliation in the earthly life. Thus do We recompense those who fabricate lies' (Q. 7. 152).

This is why you will find that, in most cases, the adepts of such difficult, intense, [and nevertheless] vain [actions], are either heretics belonging to the adepts of the denial [of the divine attributes] and of the belying [of prophethood], or are ignorant ones whom they have led astray with some of their sophisms.

As for [Avicenna's] words

- how, [a fortiori, will things be] for the jabbering Hebrews and the nomads among the Arabs?,<sup>94</sup>

the [following] will be said to him. We do not contest that, among the Hebrews and the Arabs, there are people whose minds are too deficient to [grasp] some subtle [elements] of knowledge. However, when you

<sup>91</sup> i.e. similarly to the efforts and tricks displayed by the negationist theologians to make people accept their ideas.

<sup>92</sup> On the *nīranjīyyāt*, see T. Fahd, *Et*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Nīrandj'.

<sup>93</sup> Ibn Taymiyya devotes to alchemy two interesting fatwas, which I intend to translate in the future: *MF*, xxix. 368–88, 389–91.

<sup>94</sup> Quotation of p. 16, ll. 6–7.

weigh those among the Arabs—the elite and the commonalty—who were with Muḥammad, God bless him and grant him peace, and also those who were with Moses, blessing and peace upon him, against whatever community you would assume, you will find them more perfect than the latter in all [64] the things by means of which the subtle [elements] of knowledge and the main ones are attained. If you have in mind some [supposedly] deficient [individuals] belonging to that generation,<sup>95</sup> compare them with your brothers the Qarmaṭīs, the esotericists, the commonalty of the eternalist (*dahri*) philosophers, and their like among the commonalty of the Nuṣayrīs, the Ismāʿīlīs, and their like: between the lowest of those [individuals] and the best of the latter you will find,<sup>96</sup> as far as intelligence and knowledge are concerned, a greater difference than between pre-eternality and [temporal] originatedness.<sup>97</sup> Aren't your companions the ones who responded to the missionary call (*da'wa*) of the 'Ubaydids,<sup>98</sup> whose cunning and ruse, as far as this world and Religion are concerned, got them so lost<sup>99</sup> that they believed about somebody who was among the most infidel and the most lying humans that he was an imām preserved [from error] (*ma'ṣūm*) and possessing the knowledge of the earliest and latest [scholars]? Despite their excessive ignorance and straying, the commonalty of Nazarenes are even smarter and cleverer than the commonalty of your companions who respond [positively] to such people and submit to them!

In the world, does a community exist which is more ignorant, more straying, and more remote from Reason and knowledge than a community whose leaders are philosophers? Your Greek imāms like Aristotle [65] and his like, weren't they associators worshipping the idols, giving associates to the Merciful, and offering various sacrifices to the progeny of Satan? Isn't magic among their most important sciences—[magic] whose finality is a man worshipping one of the Satans, fasting for him, praying [to him], and offering him sacrifices in order to attain, thereby, some worldly dignity<sup>100</sup> whose corrupt nature is more important than its goodness and whose sinful nature is greater

<sup>95</sup> i.e. the generation of the Prophet.

<sup>96</sup> tajid: najid S

<sup>97</sup> al-ḥadath: al-farq S

<sup>98</sup> i.e. the Fāṭimids, whose movement was founded by the Ismāʿīlī 'Ubayd Allāh al-Mahdī (d. 322/934); see M. Canard, *EL*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Fāṭimids'. Ibn Taymiyya alludes here to the interest shown, by some members of Avicenna's family, in Ismāʿīlī doctrines; see *MF*, trans. Michot, *Astrology*, 180.

<sup>99</sup> rāḥa: rāja S

<sup>100</sup> 'Dignity' (*'ird*) or 'goods' (*'ard*).

than its usefulness? The associationism which is the most straying in the world, does it not come from some of those philosophizers? Isn't each [person] who is closer to the religious Laws—if only by a minute!—closer to Reason and knowledge of the truth? Have you [ever] seen a philosopher who would have improved the wealth of one single village? not to speak of one single city?<sup>101</sup> And will his religion and his earthly life be good unless he belongs to the multitude of those who adhere to the religious Laws?

Furthermore, this will be said to [Avicenna]. You and your like are the imāms of your followers. These things that you say and that which is said by Aristotle and your like, the imāms of the philosophers, concerning the Necessary of existence, His attributes, and His actions, [all these things,] although you claim [they constitute] the final [degree of] *tawhīd*, realization of the truth (*taḥqīq*) and gnosis ('*irfān*), are things that are not said but by people who are among the most ignorant humans, the most straying of them and the most similar of them to animal cattle. The fact that one of you is smart in medicine or astrology (*nujūm*), agronomy (*ghbars*), or architecture (*binā'*), is due to the paucity of your knowledge of God, His names, His attributes, His actions, and His worship, and to the paucity of your share and lot in such a quest, which is the most sublime quest and constitutes the most elevated gift.<sup>102</sup> [66] You have taken in the lowest [thing] a compensation for the highest

<sup>101</sup> From Pythagoras to al-Suhrawardī, J. Walbridge explains, 'Platonists have repeatedly tried to put their principle of rule by philosopher-kings into practice. The results have never been encouraging' (*Leaven*, 208). Ibn Taymiyya would fully share his opinion. It is worth noting in this respect, it is the rule of Genghis Khan and not e.g. Plato's *Republic* that he presents as an illustration of a 'rational' political system, independent from all religion or Scripture; see Y. Michot, 'Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya, XIV: Raison, confession, Loi: Une typologie musulmane du religieux', in *Le Musulman*, 27 (Paris: AEIF, Jan. 1996), 24–9; 26–7.

<sup>102</sup> This statement opposing successful technical knowledge and religiosity illustrates the progressive depreciation under the Mamlūks of the image of the disciplines and crafts mentioned (see D. Behrens-Abouseif, *Faṭḥ Allāh*, 14–19). In the case of medicine, such a depreciation can partly be explained by its association with Greek philosophy and the increasing part played in it by occultism, astrological or otherwise. That being so, it is obvious that declarations like Ibn Taymiyya's and the promotion of the so-called 'Prophetic medicine' by Mamlūk '*ulamā'* in no way helped reverse the tendency. The theologian's valuation of technical or exact sciences is, however, not always negative and is a topic deserving thorough study. Elements of an answer can be found in the texts translated in Y. Michot, *Astrology*, 173; *Vanités*, 605–7; *Pages XIII*, 26, and below, pp. 359–60, nn. 129–30.

one, either by incapacity or by negligence. There is no doubt that the imāms of the Jews and of the Nazarenes, after having replaced the Book [by other things] and become involved in things they were forbidden to do, are [still] smarter and more knowledgeable of God than your imāms. The commonalty of the Jews and of the Nazarenes, who are going astray and are the object of [God's] wrath, have in this matter a more correct intelligence and perception, and [develop] a more pertinent discourse, than the commonalty of your companions. This is something about which somebody possessing Reason and fairmindedness has no doubt.

Consider that by [looking at] the commonalty of the Nuṣayrīs, the Ismā'īlīs, the Druzes, the street storytellers (*turuqī*),<sup>103</sup> [67] and the foreigners,<sup>104</sup> at the commonalty of the associationist Tatars whose associationist doctors are magicians—the *bakhsis*,<sup>105</sup> the *toyins*<sup>106</sup> and their like—and whose best doctors are the leaders of the heretics—for example al-Naṣīr al-Ṭūsī<sup>107</sup> and his like, and likewise at the commonalty

<sup>103</sup> Dozy (*Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1881), ii. 39) defines *turuqī* as a 'charlatan qui débite ses remèdes en place publique'. It can also designate the 'market wisdom circulating among the people in the streets' (J. Walbridge, *Leaven*, 268). According to al-Shahrazūri (d. 687/1288), al-Suhrawardī's opponents used the word to denigrate his thought (J. Walbridge, *Leaven*, 203). They are sometimes identified with the famous Banū Ṣaṣān of the medieval Islamic underworld; see S. Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 71, 81. In *Minhāj* (viii. 116), Ibn Taymiyya speaks of 'the lies told by the street storytellers (*turuqī*), who tell numerous lies like the histories (*sīra*) of 'Antara and al-Baṭṭāl. There exists [only] a short history of 'Antara and a brief one of al-Baṭṭāl, i.e. what happened to him under the dynasty of the Umayyads, during the expedition against the Byzantines (*ghazwat al-Rūm*). These great liars nevertheless develop them so much that they become volumes!'

<sup>104</sup> al-ghurabā' S acr. : al-'arbā' S. I was unable to identify this group.

<sup>105</sup> *Al-bakhshiyya*. Originally designating the Mongol shamans, *bakhsi* or *bakshi* was sometimes used for Buddhist holy men; see J.-P. Roux, *Histoire de l'empire mongol* (Paris: Fayard, 1993), 561; R. Amitai-Preiss, 'Sufis and Shamans: Some Remarks on the Islamization of the Mongols in the Ilkhanate', in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 42 (1999), 27–46; 41.

<sup>106</sup> *Al-ṭuyīniyya*. A *toyin* is a Buddhist monk; see J.-P. Roux, *Histoire*, 563.

<sup>107</sup> Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. Baghdad, 672/1274), mathematician, astronomer, philosopher, and Shī'ī theologian, adviser to the Mongol Hülāgū during the conquest of Baghdad (656/1258); see H. Daiber – F. J. Rageb, *El<sup>2</sup>*, s.v. 'al-Ṭūsī, Naṣīr al-Dīn'. '[Al-Ṭūsī] was the vizier of the [Qarmaṭīs] in Alamūt. Afterwards, he became astrologer to Hülāgū\*, the king of the infidels. He composed the *Commentary on Avicenna's Ishārāt* and it is he who urged the king of the infidels to kill the caliph. Among the Turkish

of the followers of Sinān, the leader of the heretics and his like. Consider the commonalty of them [all] in comparison with the commonalty of the Jews and of the Nazarenes: you will find that the commonalty of the Jews and of the Nazarenes, as far as this world and Religion are concerned, are less of a corruption than those, and you will find those more corrupt, intellectually and religiously.

Those of you [who are of an] intermediary [level of knowledge], like the astrologers, the sorcerers, and their ilk, there are in them—in matters of ignorance, straying, lying, and tricking—things that nobody but the One possessing Majesty would enumerate. [68] Al-Ṭūsī and his like, were they selling well among the associationist Tatars with anything else than astrologers' lies and tricksters' artifices that are [all] contrary to Reason and the Religion?

As for your outstanding imāms, like Aristotle and his folks, the [utmost] the latter reached was to be an associationist wizard and the vizier of an associationist king and wizard like Alexander, the son of Philip, and his like among the kings of the Greeks, who were adepts of associationism, worshipping idols. Some guidance and success started [to develop] among them only when Nazarenism was introduced among them, some three hundred and nineteen years, or more, after Aristotle.<sup>108</sup> It has been said that this happened during the time of the

infidels, he became the head of those whom they call "the scholars" (*dānishmand*)\*\*' (Ibn Taymiyya, *MF*, xxxv. 142). \* li-hūlāqū: li-ha'ulā'ī wa F; \*\* al-dānishmandiyya: al-dāsmīdiyya F. On this Persian word, see Y. Michot, *Textes XII*, 27, n. 23.

'This al-Ṭūsī and his like are the Jahmīs, the deniers [of the attributes], the philosophizers, and the heretics! As far as reductionism (*ta'tīl*) is concerned, he is worse than the Mu'tazilis and others... This al-Ṭūsī was among the helpers of the heretics who were in Alamūt. Afterwards, he became one of the helpers of the Turkish associators, when they conquered the countries [of Islam]' (Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar*, x. 59). 'Al-Naṣīr al-Ṭūsī and his like were with Hūlāgū, the king of the infidels. It is he who urged them to kill the caliph in Baghdad when they conquered it. He seized the books of the people, those that they owned and those bequeathed as religious endowments (*waqf*). He seized those that were related to his purpose[s] and had the rest of them destroyed. He built the observatory and put them in it. He gave endowments of the Muslims to the scholars of the associators—the *bakhsis* and the *toyins*. In his observatory, he gave to the philosopher, the astrologer, and the physician many times as much as he gave to the jurist (*faqīh*). He and his companions drank wine during the month of Ramaḍān and did not pray' (Ibn Taymiyya, *MF*, xiv. 166). Many other Taymiyyan texts on al-Ṭūsī are translated and studied in Y. Michot, *Vizir 'hérétiqne*'.

<sup>108</sup> Aristotle died in 322 BCE.



last of their kings, Ptolemy, the author of the *Almagest*.<sup>109</sup> Stay away from people who are such that [even] the Nazarenes are more intelligent than them, more knowledgeable, and more guided towards the rightest religion.

It is going astray to hold the opinion that<sup>110</sup> the Two-Horned one (*dhū l-qarnayn*) mentioned in the precious Qurʾān<sup>111</sup> is Alexander,<sup>112</sup> the son of Philip, whose vizier Aristotle is said to have been. This [69] is ignorance. Dhū l-Qarnayn lived in very ancient times (*qadīm*), and was a lot anterior to this one. He was a Muslim, a monotheist (*muwahhid*), a believer of the original Abrahamic type (*ḥanīf*). It has been said that his name was Alexander, son of Darius.<sup>113</sup> As for the Greek one, he was the son of Philip after whom the Byzantines (*al-rūm*) fix the dates.<sup>114</sup> He

<sup>109</sup> Ibn Taymiyya considers Claudius Ptolemy, the Greek astronomer, astrologer, and geographer of Alexandria (d. c.168) as the greatest of the astrologers, but generally confuses him with the last king of the Ptolemaic dynasty; see his *MF*, trans. Michot, *Pages XIII*, 11. He is aware of the importance of the *Almagest* as well as of its shortcomings; see his *Darʾ*, trans. Michot, *Vanités*, 606.

<sup>110</sup> yuzanna anna: man yazunnu S

<sup>111</sup> See Q. 18. 83–98.

<sup>112</sup> Alexander the Great (d. 323 BCE), son of Philip of Macedon (d. 336 BCE), whose private tutor Aristotle was from 343/2 to 340. In contradistinction to many Muslim authors but like e.g. al-Bīrūnī (d. c.442/1050) and al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), Ibn Taymiyya refuses to identify Dhū l-Qarnayn with him; see also his *Abū l-Fidāʾ*, trans. Michot, *Lettre*, 50–2.

<sup>113</sup> The legendary history of Persia, as told by e.g. al-Firdawsī, makes Alexander a son of the Achaemenid king Darius II (*Dārāb*, or *Dārā*) by the daughter of Philip of Macedon. As his mother had been repudiated before his birth, he was recognized by Philip as his own son. After the death of his half-brother Darius III (*Dārā*), Alexander became king of Persia; see B. Carra de Vaux and H. Massé, *ET*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘Dārā’. Ibn Taymiyya erroneously considers Alexander the son of Darius as different from Alexander the son of Philip, and is ready to identify the Persian one—not the Greek one—with the Qurʾānic Dhū l-Qarnayn. W. Hallaq’s translation of a parallel passage in *MF*, ix. 175, l. 18, must be corrected as follows: ‘Those who call him [i.e. Dhū l-Qarnayn] Alexander call him Alexander the son of Darius’ (*Ibn Taymiyya*, 104 §166).

<sup>114</sup> Allusion to the Seleucid era, sometimes called ‘era of Alexander’ by Muslim authors, which started in 311 BCE and was at particular times used by the Jews and various Christian communities; see Ibn Taymiyya, *Abū l-Fidāʾ*, trans. Michot, *Lettre*, 50, n. 3; E. G. Richards, *Mapping Time: The Calendar and its History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 107. W. Hallaq’s translation of parallel passages in *MF*, ix. 174, l. 14, and 195, ll. 17–18, must be corrected as follows: ‘the son of Philip the Macedonian after whom [bi-hi: la-hu F] the Byzantine era, which is known to the Jews and Christians, fixes the dates’ (*Ibn Taymiyya*, 103–4 §166); ‘the son of Philip after whom (*bi-hi*) the Byzantine era, which the Jews and Christians use, fixes the dates’ (*Ibn Taymiyya*, 122 §209).

lived some three hundred years before the Messiah, or approximately that [number of years].

These words and their like were only said [by me] in return for what the words of [Avicenna and his like] contain as contempt of the followers of the prophets. As for the imāms of the Arabs and the other followers of the prophets, blessing and peace be upon them, like the most eminent of the Companions—for example Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān<sup>115</sup> and 'Alī, Mu'adh b. Jabal,<sup>116</sup> Ubayy b. Ka'b,<sup>117</sup> 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd,<sup>118</sup> 'Abd Allāh b. Salām,<sup>119</sup> Salmān al-Fārisī,<sup>120</sup> Abū l-Dardā,<sup>121</sup> 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās<sup>122</sup>—and people whom nobody could enumerate but the exalted God, has one heard of people, among the earliest and the latest of those who came after the prophets, blessing and peace be upon them, who would have had more complete intellects and more perfect minds, a more correct knowledge and a better science than these? They indeed were as 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd said about them: 'Those of you who follow a path (*sunna*), may they follow the path of somebody dead. Someone alive is indeed not immune from trouble (*fitna*). Those are the Companions of Muḥammad, the [members] of this community with the most pious hearts, the deepest knowledge, the least affected behaviour (*takalluf*), people whom God chose to accompany His Prophet and to set up His religion. So, recognize them their right[s] and hold fast to their guidance. They indeed were following the straight guidance.'

The adepts of heresy have not defamed<sup>123</sup> these [people] but because of an ignorance [similar to that] of innovators like the Rāfiḍīs and the theologians—the Mu'tazilis and such. [70] Since Avicenna and his like—

<sup>115</sup> 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (d. 35/655), the third caliph; see G. Levi Della Vida and R. G. Khoury, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "Uthmān b. 'Affān".

<sup>116</sup> Mu'adh b. Jabal al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī (d. Damascus, 18/639), Companion and renowned Qur'ān reader; see Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd*, iv. 376–8.

<sup>117</sup> Ubayy b. Ka'b b. Qays al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī, Abū l-Mundhir (d. 19/640 or later), Companion, 'master of the Qur'ān reciters' (Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, i. 375); see Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd*, i. 49–51.

<sup>118</sup> 'Abd Allāh b. Ghāfil b. Ḥabīb. . . b. Hudhayl b. Mas'ūd (d. 32/652), Companion and renowned Qur'ān reader; see J.-C. Vadet, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Ibn Mas'ūd'.

<sup>119</sup> 'Abd Allāh b. Salām (d. 43/663–4), famous Madinan Companion of Jewish descent; see J. Horowitz, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Abd Allāh b. Salām'.

<sup>120</sup> Famous Companion of Persian descent (d. 35/655 or 36/656?); see G. Levi della Vida, *EI*<sup>1</sup>, s.v. 'Salmān al-Fārisī'.

<sup>121</sup> Abū l-Dardā' al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī (d. 32/652), Companion; see A. Jeffery, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Abū l-Dardā'.

<sup>122</sup> 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās (d. 68/686), great scholar of the first generation; see L. Veccia Vaglieri, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās'.

<sup>123</sup> ṭa'ana: ṭami'a S

the heretical philosophers—were talking, as far as the Muslims are concerned, only to people who were scientifically and religiously deficient—either Rāfiḍīs, or Mu‘tazilis, or others, they started speaking in this way about the best generations [of humans]. About the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, it is abundantly reported that he said: ‘The best of the generations is the generation in which I was sent out, then those who follow them, then those who follow them.’<sup>124</sup>

This will furthermore be said to this imbecile<sup>125</sup> (*aḥmaq*). There is no doubt that in each community there are [people who] [71], in relation to it, [are] smart and [others], stupid. Has he however seen, within the various kinds of communities, a smarter community than the Arabs?

Consider that by [looking at] the common [Arabic] language and its [ability] to express detailed meanings and to distinguish between the subtle ones and the main ones of them by special terms that enunciate the truth.<sup>126</sup> In perfection, it is followed by the Hebrew language. So, where [can one find] this in the case of the language of your barbaric companions, who carry on using long terms while what is meant is light?<sup>127</sup> People like you and your like are [luckily] among those whom some of the good fortune of the Muslims and of the Arabs has bathed. Intellectually and linguistically, part of the human perfection thus came [to be found] in you and you translated those books into Arabic, you improved them and you brought them closer to the intellects. Had it not been the case, there would be in them such prolixity and raving that they would make one become chary of his time. They indeed are just as Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī said about them: ‘They [waver] between truthful sciences in which there is no usefulness—and we take refuge with God

<sup>124</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Shahādāt*, iii. 171 (‘*Ālam*. 2458); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣaḥāba*, vii. 185 (‘*Ālam*. 4601); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, ii. 228 (‘*Ālam*. 6826).

<sup>125</sup> i.e. Avicenna.

<sup>126</sup> ‘Of all tongues, that of the Arabs is the richest and the most extensive in vocabulary’ (al-Shāfi‘ī, *al-Risāla fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, trans. M. Khadduri, *Al-Shāfi‘ī, Treatise on the Foundations of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1987), 88).

<sup>127</sup> ‘These [philosophers] considered the kinds of syllogisms as being five, with regard of their matter: apodictic, rhetoric, dialectical, poetic, and sophistic (*al-safsāta*). [The last word]’s origin is *Sophistic* (*sūfistīqā*). The rest of them and the rest of the kinds of logic[al sciences] have also, similarly, names in Greek. These are however long terms like *Categories* (*qāṭīghūriyās*), *Analytic* (*anūlūtīqā*), etc. The Arabic language is more concise and clearer. It is thus more perfect in clarity and more concise in formulation’ (Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-Radd ‘alā l-Manṭiqiyyīn* (*Refutation of the Logicians*), ed. ‘A.-Ṣ. S.-D. al-Kutubī, 2 vols. (Bombay: Qayyimah Press, 1368/1949), i. 438).

from a science that is not useful<sup>128</sup>—and fallacious opinions that should not be trusted—‘and some opinions are sins’<sup>129</sup> (Q. 49. 12). That for which a proof is furnished—mathematics and so forth—[requires] much labour and is of little benefit, [like] ‘the meat of a lean camel at the top of a pathless mountain: it is not easily ascended and there is no fat to degustate’.<sup>130</sup> As for that for which a proof is not furnished, it is [just] opinions and vain lies.

<sup>128</sup> See the Prophet’s invocations, as reported in e.g. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Dhikr*, viii. 81 (‘*Ālam*. 4899); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, ii. 340 (‘*Ālam*. 8132). See also al-Ghazālī, *Ayyu-hā l-walad*, ed. M. M. Abū l-‘Alā’, *al-Quṣūr al-‘awālī min rasā’il al-imām al-Ghazālī*, I (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jandī, 1390/1970), 160–80; 160.

<sup>129</sup> ‘To describe the sciences that have no relation to the Law (*shar‘ī*), Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī] and others say: “They [waver] between truthful sciences in which there is no usefulness—and we take refuge with God from a science that is not useful—and fallacious opinions that should not be trusted—and some opinions are sins (Q. 49. 12).” The first ones are like the science of the intricacies of cosmography, of the movements of the planets, and of other matters whose [knowledge comes] after much labour and whose benefit is nothing but a waste of time and a torment of one’s life. The second ones are like the science of astrological judgements, the majority of which are opinions that do not produce anything dispensing from the truth, in which there are more mistakes than right things and in which there is more lying than veracity’ (Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar‘*, vii. 329–30). In *MF*, xxv. 201 (trans. Michot, *Pages XIII*, 26), Ibn Taymiyya does not attribute this saying to al-Ghazālī and uses it both against the computing of the first instant of visibility of the new crescent and against astrological judgements. In *MF*, ix. 128 (trans. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 58), he refers this saying to ‘al-Ghazālī and others’ and gives ‘the mathematical sciences’ as an example of truthful but useless sciences, ‘what the [philosophers] say about *divinalia*, astrological judgements, etc.’ as an example of fallacious opinions that should not be trusted.

<sup>130</sup> This metaphor goes back to the *ḥadīth* of Umm Zar‘ reported by ‘Ā’isha; see Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣaḥāba*, vii. 139 (‘*Ālam*. 4481). ‘Eleven women, said ‘Ā’isha, sat together and promised, pledged to each other to conceal nothing about their spouses. The first one said: “My husband is [like] the meat of a lean camel at the top of a mountain: it is not easily ascended and there is no fat to take away (*fa-yuntaqāla*).”’ In his *Lisān al-‘Arab* (15 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1414/1994), s.v. ‘*wa‘r*’), Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311–2) quotes this saying with the ending *fa-yuntaqā*, ‘to degustate’. Ibn Taymiyya loves this image and quotes it in various works. See e.g. *MF*, ii. 22, or vii. 587, where he also finds mathematics and physics religiously useless but reserves this image for metaphysics: ‘What the [philosophizers] say about physics and mathematics is beneficial neither for the perfection of the soul, nor for its righteousness (*ṣalāḥ*), this being only brought about by the science of divinity (*al-‘ilm al-ilāhī*). Now, what they say about the latter is [like] the meat . . . and there is no fat to take away.’ In *Bayān* (i. 372), he is more positive about mathematics and physics but maintains his condemnation of Aristotelian metaphysics: ‘The intelligent people who are informed of what Aristotle and his folks say about the science of divinity all know that these are

This will moreover be said to him. Let us admit that, for those of 'the jabbering Hebrews and nomads among the Arabs' whom you mentioned, it is not possible to know subtle [matters]. Would it however be possible for you to say so about the smart [72] Arabs and Hebrews, as everybody knows that the intellects of the Companions, of the followers, and of their followers were the most perfect human intellects? Consider that by [looking at] their followers. If you entertain doubts about the smartness of, for example, Mālik [b. Anas],<sup>131</sup> al-Awzā'ī,<sup>132</sup> al-Layth b. Sa'd,<sup>133</sup> Abū Ḥanīfa,<sup>134</sup> Abū Yūsuf,<sup>135</sup> Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan,<sup>136</sup> Zufar b. al-Hudhayl,<sup>137</sup> al-Shāfi'ī,<sup>138</sup> Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal,<sup>139</sup> Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm,<sup>140</sup> Abū

among the people who have the least share of knowledge of the science of divinity and who are the most confused and erring. What [Aristotle] says and what his folks say about mathematics—computation, numbers, etc.—is like what the rest of people say, and mistakes in these matters are few and rare. What they say about physics is inferior to that: most of it is good (*jayyid*) [but] it also includes vain things (*bāṭil*). As for what they say about *divinalia*, it is, in spite of its paucity, extremely confused. It is [like] the meat . . . and there is no fat to take away.' For an echo of this *ḥadīth* in al-Ghazālī, see his *Qānūn*, 139.

<sup>131</sup> Theologian and jurist (d. Madīna, 179/796), eponym of one of the four schools of Sunnī law; see J. Schacht, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Mālik b. Anas'.

<sup>132</sup> 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Amr al-Awzā'ī, Abū 'Amr (d. Beirut, 157/774), early Syrian jurist; see J. Schacht, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'al-Awzā'ī'.

<sup>133</sup> Al-Layth b. Sa'd b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Fahmī, Abū l-Hārith (d. Miṣr, 175/791), early Egyptian traditionist and jurist; see A. Merad, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'al-Layth b. Sa'd'.

<sup>134</sup> Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu'mān b. Thābit (d. 150/767), theologian and jurist, eponym of one of the four schools of Sunnī law; see J. Schacht, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Abū Ḥanīfa'.

<sup>135</sup> Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb b. Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī al-Kūfī (d. Baghdad, 182/798), one of the founders of the Ḥanafī school of law; see J. Schacht, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb'.

<sup>136</sup> Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Farqad al-Shaybānī, Abū 'Abd Allāh (d. in Khurāsān, 189/805?), important early Hanafī jurist; see É. Chaumont, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'al-Shaybānī'.

<sup>137</sup> Zufar b. al-Hudhayl b. Qays al-'Anbarī (d. Baṣra, 158/775), important early Hanafī jurist; see K. al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām: Qāmūs tarājīm li-ashḥar al-rijāl wa-l-nisā' min al-'Arab wa-l-musta'rabīn wa-l-mustashriqīn*, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-'ilm li-l-malāyīn, 1990), iii, 45.

<sup>138</sup> Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī, Abū 'Abd Allāh (d. Cairo, 205/820), eponym of one of the four schools of Sunnī law; see É. Chaumont, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'al-Shāfi'ī'.

<sup>139</sup> Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. Baghdad, 241/855), theologian, jurist, and traditionist, eponym of one of the four schools of Sunnī law; see H. Laoust, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal'.

<sup>140</sup> Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Makhlad al-Ḥanzalī al-Tamīmī al-Marwazī, Abū Ya'qūb b. Rāhwayh (d. Nisābūr, 238/853), traditionist and jurist; see J. Schacht, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Ibn Rāhwayh'.

‘Ubayd,<sup>141</sup> Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī,<sup>142</sup> ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb al-Andalusī,<sup>143</sup> al-Bukhārī,<sup>144</sup> Muslim,<sup>145</sup> Abū Dā’ūd,<sup>146</sup> ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd al-Dārimī,<sup>147</sup> and—even, for example—Abū l-‘Abbās b. Surayj,<sup>148</sup> Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭaḥawī,<sup>149</sup> Abū l-Qāsim al-Kharqī,<sup>150</sup> Ismā‘īl b. Ishāq al-Qāḍī,<sup>151</sup> and other [scholars] like them . . . if you entertain doubts about that, you are of an excessive ignorance or presumptuous. Observe the submission of those to the Companions and [how] they had such a great respect for their intelligence and for their work that none of them dared to contradict any of the Companions, unless another Companion had [already] contradicted him. [73]

In *The Letter (al-Risāla)*, al-Shāfi‘ī said, God’s mercy be upon him: ‘They are above us as far as every reasoning and knowledge are concerned, as well as [divine] favour and means by which knowledge is reached or something correct apprehended. Their view of us is

<sup>141</sup> Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. Makka, 224/838), grammarian, Qur’ān exegete and jurist; see H. L. Gottschalk, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām’.

<sup>142</sup> Ibrāhīm b. Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Bishr al-Ḥarbī (d. 285/898), traditionist and jurist, disciple of Ibn Ḥanbal; see J.-C. Vadet, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘Ibrāhīm Ḥarbī’.

<sup>143</sup> ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb al-Sulamī, Abū Marwān (d. Cordoba, 238/853), important early Mālikī jurist in al-Andalus; see J.-C. Vadet, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘Ibn Ḥabīb’.

<sup>144</sup> Muḥammad b. Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī (d. Khartank, 256/870), author of the most important canonical *ḥadīth* collection; see J. Robson, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘al-Bukhārī’.

<sup>145</sup> Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj b. Muslim al-Qushayrī al-Naysābūrī, Abū l-Ḥusayn (d. 261/875), author of the second most important canonical *ḥadīth* collection; see G. H. A. Juynboll, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘Muslim b. al-Ḥadīdjādī’.

<sup>146</sup> Sulaymān b. al-Ash‘ath Abū Dā’ūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275/889), author of one of the six canonical *ḥadīth* collections; see J. Robson, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘Abū Dā’ūd al-Sijistānī’.

<sup>147</sup> ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd b. Khālid al-Dārimī al-Sijzī, Abū Sa‘īd (d. Herāt, 280/893), Ḥanbalī traditionist; see K. al-Ziriklī, *A‘lām*, iv. 205–6.

<sup>148</sup> Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. ‘Umar b. Surayj (d. Baghdad, 306/918), important Shāfi‘ī jurist and polemicist; see J. Schacht, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘Ibn Suraydjī’.

<sup>149</sup> Abū Ja‘far Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Salāma b. ‘Abd al-Malik al-Azdī al-Ḥajrī al-Ṭaḥawī (d. 321/933), Egyptian Ḥanafī jurist; see N. Calder, *EI*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. ‘al-Ṭaḥawī’.

<sup>150</sup> ‘Umar b. al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Khiraqī, Abū l-Qāsim (d. Damascus, 334/945), Ḥanbalī jurist, ‘author of the renowned *Compendium (al-Mukhtaṣar)*’ (Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar*, vii. 148); see C. Brockelmann, *GAL*, Supp., i. 193.

<sup>151</sup> Ismā‘īl b. Ishāq b. Ismā‘īl al-Azdī al-Qāḍī (d. 282/895), *qāḍī* of Baghdad, friend of Ruwaym the Sufi (Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Istiḡāma*, ed. M. R. Sālim, 2 vols. (Riyāḍ: Dār al-faḍīla li-l-nashr wa-l-tawzī‘ and Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm li-l-ṭibā‘a wa-l-nashr wa-l-tawzī‘, 1420/2000), ii. 91); see C. Brockelmann, *GAL*, Supp., i. 273.

better than our view of ourselves'.<sup>152</sup> Or so did he say, God's mercy be upon him!

- 'If God charged one of the Messengers with communicating the true meanings (*ḥaqā'iq*) of such matters to the crowd—the commonalty of thick nature and whose minds are attached to things that are perceptible purely through the senses' ...<sup>153</sup> to the last of his words.

As for these words of [Avicenna], this will be said [to him]. There is no doubt that among the things that escape observation, there are invisible things [of different kinds]. Of some, it is possible to make them known absolutely. Of some, it is not possible to make them known but after [meeting particular] conditions and a preparation. Of some, it is not possible to make them known in this earthly life but in an equivocal manner. Of some, it is in no situation [whatsoever] possible to make them known in this earthly life. Of some, it is not possible for a created being to know them.

This is why He said, exalted is He: 'No soul knows what is kept hidden for them of delights of the eyes' (Q. 32. 17). In the authentic *ḥadīth*, [it is also reported] about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, [that] he said: "I have prepared for my virtuous servants", the exalted God says, "things that neither eye has seen, nor ear has heard, nor has passed through the heart of [any] human".<sup>154</sup> Something that does not pass through the hearts, when you make it known you do not know it but when there is something similar to it. If it is not the case, it is not possible to make [it] known as it should be. [74]

[One also finds this] in the well-known invocation: 'My God! I ask you by every name belonging to You and by which You have named Yourself, or which You have sent down in Your Book, or which You have taught one of Your creatures, or the knowledge which You alone possess, [included] within the knowledge of the Unseen [that is] with You ...'<sup>155</sup> As, among His names, there are things whose knowledge He alone possesses and which nobody else than Him knows, this and that with which He especially endows some of His servants, nobody else than Him knows it.

<sup>152</sup> I found no similar statement in al-Shāfi'ī's *Risāla*. Ibn Taymiyya has perhaps in mind the passage in which al-Shāfi'ī writes: 'These men were closely connected with the Prophet in knowledge and position, and the Prophet's Companions occupied a position of prominence that is not denied by any learned man' (al-Shāfi'ī, *Risāla*, trans. Khadduri, *Treatise*, 256).

<sup>153</sup> Quotation of p. 16, ll. 7–9.

<sup>154</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Bid' al-khalq*, iv. 118 ('*Ālam*. 3005); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Janna*, viii. 143 ('*Ālam*. 5050); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, ii. 313 ('*Ālam*. 7796); see also W. A. Graham, *Divine*, 117–18, no. 2.

<sup>155</sup> See Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, i. 391 ('*Ālam*. 3528).

In the authentic *ḥadīth*, [it is reported] about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, [that] he was saying in his invocation: 'I will not enumerate Your lauds before You. You are, You, as You laud Yourself!'<sup>156</sup> In the *ḥadīth* on intercession, [it is also said]: 'Praises will unfold upon me by which I will praise Him and which, now, I do not count.'<sup>157</sup> [75] If the created being who is the most knowledgeable of God does not enumerate His lauds, how would [a fortiori] somebody else [be able to do it]? If, in the hereafter, praises unfold upon him which he did not know of in this earthly life, how will [a fortiori] be the state of somebody else?

We could also tell, in this concern, the story of Moses and al-Khaḍir, peace be upon both of them, and of the sparrow dipping its beak in the sea.<sup>158</sup> Moreover, as mentioned by al-Bukhārī, 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, God be pleased with him, said: 'Speak to people about things they know and leave off things they will reject. Would you like them to pronounce God and His Messenger as liars?''<sup>159</sup>

'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd, God be pleased with him, said: 'Nobody speaks to people about things that their wits have no access to without becoming a cause of trouble (*fitna*) for some of them.' [76]

[It is reported] about Ibn 'Abbās, God be pleased with both of them, that, as a man was asking him about the interpretation of a [Qur'ānic] verse, he said: 'What assurance have you that, if I was informing you of it, you would not disbelieve in it, your disbelief in it being tantamount to pronouncing it a lie?'

<sup>156</sup> See Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Ṣalāt*, ii. 51 ('*Ālam.* 751); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, i. 96 ('*Ālam.* 712); see also W. A. Graham, *Divine*, 117–18, no. 2.

<sup>157</sup> *aḥsubu-hā S. acr.: aḥsunu-hā? S.* See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Tafsīr*, vi. 85 ('*Ālam.* 4343); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Īmān*, i. 128 ('*Ālam.* 287); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, ii. 436 ('*Ālam.* 9250).

<sup>158</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Īlm*, i. 35 ('*Ālam.* 119); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Fadā'il*, vii. 103–4 ('*Ālam.* 4385); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, v. 117–18 ('*Ālam.* 20197): 'A boat passed by them and they requested the crew of the boat to take them on board... Then a sparrow came and stood on the edge of the boat and dipped its beak once or twice in the sea. Al-Khaḍir said: "O Moses! My knowledge and your knowledge have not decreased God's knowledge except as much as this sparrow has decreased the water of the sea with its beak." On Moses and al-Khaḍir, see also Ibn Taymiyya, *MF*, trans. Michot, *Musique*, 137–9; 'Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya, III: La Servitude (*'ubūdiyya*): De l'asservissement à l'adoration de Dieu', in *Le Musulman*, 14 (Paris: AEIF, March–June 1991), 8–11; 9–10; 'Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya, VIII: L'Unité de la communauté (*umma*), dans la tolérance et la rigueur', in *Le Musulman*, 21 (Paris: AEIF, Dec. 1992–March 1993), 10–15; 14.

<sup>159</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Īlm*, i. 37 ('*Ālam.* 124).



It is thus clear that it is not proper for everybody to know all sciences. This is why He said, exalted is He: ‘He sends down water from the sky, wadis flow in proportion to their capacity . . .’ to His words: ‘Thus does God set forth parables.’<sup>160</sup> This is a parable that God sets forth and in which he assimilates to the rain the things—knowledge and faith—that He sends down from the sky and assimilates the hearts to the wadis. Now, there are small and great wadis, and each wadi flows in proportion to its capacity.

This, and what is like it, is true. On the contrary, what those heretics claim to be true meanings (*ḥaqāʾiq*) of matters is in reality [the result of a process of] denying (*nafy*) and reduction (*taʿtīl*) that knowledgeable and smart hearts reject [even] more than the hearts of the commonalty reject them. The stronger someone’s intelligence and knowledge are, the more his knowledge of the corrupt nature of these [significates] increases. This is why nobody responds [positively] to these [heretics] but in proportion to the deficiency of his intelligence and his religion.

[Avicenna] also said:

- ‘Let us admit that the precious Book came according to the language of the Arabs, as far as figurativeness and metaphor are concerned. What are they then going to say about the Hebrew Book which is, from its beginning to its end, pure assimilationism? . . .’<sup>161</sup> to the last of his words.

This will be said [to him]. This is among the most important arguments of the adepts of affirmation against the deniers of the [divine] attributes [77] and among the most important arguments proving the truthfulness of the two great Messengers and the veracity of the two noble Books, that [are such that] no Book came from near God yielding better guidance than these two.

He said, exalted is He: ‘We gave the Book unto Moses after We had destroyed the earlier generations . . .’<sup>162</sup> to ‘they said: “Why is

<sup>160</sup> Q. 13. 17. The passage omitted by Ibn Taymiyya is: ‘and the flow carries away a swelling foam. Out of the things that they melt in the fire in order to obtain ornaments or utensils, comes a similar foam—thus does God show forth the true and the vain. As for the foam, it passes away uselessly, while what is useful for mankind remains on the earth.’

<sup>161</sup> Quotation of p. 17, ll. 1–4.

<sup>162</sup> Q. 28. 43. The passage omitted by Ibn Taymiyya is: ‘as means of insight for men, and as a guidance and a mercy, that perhaps they might remember. And you [Muḥammad] were not on the western side [of the Mount] when We decreed to Moses the commandment, and you were not among those witnessing [that]. But We brought forth generations, and their lives dragged on for them. And you were not a dweller among the people of Madyan reciting unto them Our verses, but We were sending [Messengers to men]. And you were not beside the Mount

[Muḥammad] not given the like of what was given unto Moses?" But did they not disbelieve in that which was previously given unto Moses? They said: "Two magics that support each other . . ." <sup>163</sup> to 'Say [unto them, O Muḥammad]: "Then bring a Book from near God that yields better guidance than these two! I would follow it, if you are truthful"' (Q. 28. 49) and [the rest of] these verses.

Speaking on behalf of the jinn, [God] said, exalted is He: 'They said: "O our people! We have heard a Book which has been sent down after Moses, confirming what came before it, and which guides to the truth and to a straight way"' (Q. 46. 30). He also said, exalted is He: 'They have no right valuation of God when they say: "God has sent down nothing upon a human being!" Say: "Who sent down the Book that Moses came up with as a light and guidance for mankind, which you make into rolls that you show while concealing much [thereof]? And [this, although it is thereby that] you were taught that which you knew not, neither you nor your fathers!" Say: "God". Then leave them to their insistency, playing! This is a Book which We have sent down, blessed, confirming that which preceded it, so that you might warn the Mother of Cities and those around her' (Q. 6. 91–2). He also said, exalted is He: 'Moreover, We gave Moses the Book as something complete for him who acts excellently, as a detailed explanation of everything, as a guidance and as a mercy, that perhaps they might believe in the meeting with their Lord. This [78] is a Book which We have sent down, blessed. So, follow it and have fear, that perhaps you might receive mercy' (Q. 6. 154–5).

God, exalted is He, has thus put a link between both Books, the Arabic one and the Hebrew one, in more than one passage. It is known that Moses lived before Muḥammad, God's blessings and His peace be upon them both, and that [the latter] did not get anything from him. Anybody knowing the situation of Muḥammad, God bless him and grant him peace, knows that he did not get anything from the people of the Book. So when, on behalf of one single sender, this [messenger] tells something similar to what is told by that [messenger], without connivance or contact between them both, about something upon which it would usually be impossible [for people] to be agreed without connivance between them, this is such as to prove the truthfulness of each of the two

when We called out [to Moses]; but [you know of it] as a mercy from your Lord, to warn a folk unto whom no warner came before you, that perhaps they might remember. Otherwise, if disaster befalls them because of that which their own hands have wrought, they might say: "Our Lord! if only You had sent a Messenger unto us, we would have followed Your verses and been of the believers!" But when the truth came from near Us unto them'.

<sup>163</sup> Q. 28. 48. The passage omitted by Ibn Taymiyya is: 'and they said: "Lo! in both we are disbelievers . . ."'

messengers, as far as the source of the[ir] message is concerned. [It is also such as to prove] the truthfulness of what each of the[se] two Messengers tells, as far as what he tells about the attributes of his Lord is concerned, since each of them tells something similar to what is told by the other. Let us admit that a falsifier might falsify some of the terms of one of the two Books: the other Book, confirming it, will establish the vanity of such a falsification and clearly show that the[ir] purpose is one.

What [Avicenna] mentioned<sup>164</sup> of the impossibility of falsifying the Hebrew Book entirely is true, just as he said. This is clearly shown by the fact that the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, exposed what God wanted him [to expose] of the falsification[s] of the people of the Book, and criticized them for the defective characteristics which they attributed to God, exalted is He, when, for example, they said that God is indigent,<sup>165</sup> that God is mean,<sup>166</sup> and that He got tired when He created [79] the heavens and the earth, so that He took a rest. He said, exalted is He: 'Nor did<sup>167</sup> any weariness touch Us' (Q. 50. 38).

If the affirmation[s] of the [divine] attributes that are in the Torah were among the [passages] which the [people of the Book] have replaced and forged,<sup>168</sup> to reject such [affirmations] would have been one of the most important obligations and the Messenger would have denounced them on the basis of that which the deniers [of those divine attributes] reject: assimilationism (*tashbīh*), corporealization (*tajsīm*), and [other approaches defined by] similar expressions. Now, as the Arab Messenger confirmed that which relates to the attributes in the Torah and told something similar to what is in the Torah, this is among the greatest proofs that what relates in the Torah to the attributes about which the Arab Messenger also told [us] is not something that the people of the Book considered as lies.

[This is narrated] in the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*<sup>169</sup> on the authority of 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd: when a rabbi from the Jews informed the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, that, on the Day of Resurrection, God will hold the heavens on a finger, the two earths on a finger, the mountains on a finger, the trees and the soil on a finger and the rest of the creatures on a

<sup>164</sup> See p. 17, ll. 4–5.

<sup>165</sup> See Q. 3. 181: 'God has heard the saying of those who say: "Surely God is poor, and we are rich"'.  
<sup>166</sup> See Q. 5. 64: 'The Jews say: "God's hand is fettered"'.  
<sup>167</sup> —: namā? S  
<sup>168</sup> On the falsification of the Bible and Gospel according to the Qur'ān and Muslim theologians, see H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *EL*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Taḥrīf'.  
<sup>169</sup> See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Tafsīr*, vi. 126 ('Ālam. 4437); *Tawḥīd*, ix. 123, 148 ('Ālam. 6864, 6959); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣifāt al-Qiyāma*, viii. 125–6 ('Ālam. 4992–3).

finger, then shake them and say: 'I am the King! I am the King!', the Messenger of God, God bless him and grant him peace, laughed out of amazement and approval at what the rabbi was saying, then recited His words, exalted is He: 'They have no right valuation of God, as the whole earth is His handful on the Day of Resurrection, the heavens being rolled up in His right hand' (Q. 39. 67).<sup>170</sup> This *ḥadīth* was narrated by someone who was among the most knowledgeable Companions and [among] the most dedicated of them [80] to the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace—'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd—and it was narrated from him and from his companions by people who were among the followers and the followers of the followers of the most venerable worth. It was also narrated by 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās,<sup>171</sup> who was the most knowledgeable of the Companions in his time. As for the companions of Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās, they were among the followers having the greatest knowledge and worth in the eyes of the community. In the two *Ṣaḥīḥs*, there are yet [other traditions] that correspond to this *ḥadīth*: some *ḥadīth* of Abū Hurayra<sup>172</sup> about the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, and, also, some *ḥadīth* of Ibn 'Umar<sup>173</sup> concerning the interpretation of this verse: 'They have no right valuation of God.' [81] They are in agreement with what the adepts of the affirmation [of the attributes] say and clearly show that the Prophet, God bless him and grant him peace, did not rebuke the people of the Book for what they were telling of the attributes—[these things] that the deniers call corporealization (*tajsīm*) and assimilationism (*tashbīh*)—but only rebuked them for the deficiencies and defects that they attributed to God, exalted is He. This is why it is not reported, about any of the Companions, any of those who followed them in good-doing, and any of the imāms of the Muslims, that they criticized the people of the Book for that which the deniers of the attributes criticize them for. Nor do they mention the term 'corporealization' (*tajsīm*) and its like among the neologisms of the Moderns, neither with praise nor critically. They do

<sup>170</sup> On the various interpretations of this tradition, see D. Gimaret, *Dieu*, 214–19.

<sup>171</sup> See al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, *Tafsīr*, v. 49–50, no. 3293 ('*Ālam*. 3163); Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, i. 251 ('*Ālam*. 2154).

<sup>172</sup> Abū Hurayra al-Dawsī al-Yamānī (d. 58/678?), Companion; see J. Robson, *IEP*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Abū Hurayra'. See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Tawḥīd*, ix. 116 ('*Ālam*. 6834); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣīfat al-Qiyāma*, viii. 126 ('*Ālam*. 4994).

<sup>173</sup> 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar (d. 73/693), Companion, son of the second caliph; see L. Veccia Vaglieri, *IEP*<sup>2</sup>, s.v. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar'. See al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Tawḥīd*, ix. 123 ('*Ālam*. 6863); Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣīfat al-Qiyāma*, viii. 126–7 ('*Ālam*. 4995–6).

not say what the deniers say, [that is,] that there is assimilationism in the Torah, just as Avicenna said it:

- The Hebrew Book is entirely, from its beginning to its end, pure assimilationism.<sup>174</sup>

[Concerning this point], it will be said to [Avicenna]: what do you mean when you say that the [Hebrew book] is ‘assimilationism’? Do you mean that it contains a statement that the attributes of the Lord are like (*mithla*) the attributes of the servants, or that it contains the affirmation of attributes [that are such that] the creatures receive as attributes things that are with regard to them like (*ka-*) those attributes with regard to God? If you mean the first [interpretation], this is a lie against the Torah. It is indeed not told therein that the attributes of God are like (*ka-*) the attributes of His servants. On the contrary, therein, [the validity of] striking likenesses (*tamthīl*) for God<sup>175</sup> is denied.<sup>176</sup> If you mean the second [interpretation], this is an affair which is inevitable, for you and for anybody. You and your like indeed say that God is existing (*mawjūd*) and, simultaneously, you say that the existent is divided into necessary and possible. You say that He is intellect, intellecting and intelligible and, simultaneously, you say that the name ‘intellect’ applies to the ten [celestial] intellects. You say that He is cause of the world and, simultaneously, [82] you say that the cause is divided into necessary and possible, as well as into pre-eternal (*qadīm*) and originated (*muḥdath*). You say that He takes care (*ināya*) although the term ‘care’ is said of the attributes of the servants. You say that He is a principle (*mabdaʿ*), an initiator (*mubdiʿ*), and [use about Him] similar expressions by which you [also] name other [things] than Him. You indeed apply the name ‘principles’ (*mabādiʿ*) to the intellects. You also apply ‘initiation’ (*ibdāʿ*) to the intellects and you say that each intellect initiated what is beneath it and that the tenth intellect initiated what is under the sphere of the moon. You say that He is necessitating by essence although the term ‘necessitation’ (*ijāb*) is [also] applied to other [things] than Him.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>174</sup> See p. 17, ll. 3–4.

<sup>175</sup> li-Llāh: bi-Llāh S

<sup>176</sup> See *Exodus* 20: 4: ‘Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.’

<sup>177</sup> On these well-known elements of Avicennan metaphysics, see e.g. Avicenna, *Ilāhiyyāt* (Avicenna Latinus, *Philosophia*) and *Kitāb al-Hidāya*, ed. M. ‘Abduh (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhirat al-ḥadītha, 1974), 232–308; trans. O. Lizzini, ‘La Metafisica del *Libro della Guida*: Presentazione e traduzione della terza parte (*bāb*) del *Kitāb al-Hidāya* di Avicenna’, in *Le Muséon*, cviii (Louvain-la-Neuve, 1995), 367–424.

You say<sup>178</sup> that He is loving (*‘āshiq*), loved (*ma‘shūq*), and love (*ishq*) although there are, in the term ‘love’, an assimilationism and a potentiality of deficiency that are not concealed to any intelligent [person].<sup>179</sup> In the divine Books, one does not [find] Him named ‘intellect’ (*‘aql*), nor ‘loving’, and neither ‘intelligible’ (*ma‘qūl*), nor ‘loved’.<sup>180</sup>

You also say<sup>181</sup> that He finds pleasure (*iltadhhdha*) and joy (*ibtahaja*). In the term ‘pleasure’ (*ladhdha*), there are however an assimilationism and a potentiality of deficiency that are not concealed to any intelligent [person]. You say<sup>182</sup> that He is perceptible (*mudrak*) and that pleasure is the most excellent perception of the most excellent perceptible object. You therefore call<sup>183</sup> Him ‘perceiving’ (*mudrik*) and ‘perceived’ (*mudrak*).<sup>184</sup>

Furthermore, and more amazing than all this is the fact that you say [that] philosophy is assimilation (*tashabbuh*) to the divinity in proportion to [one’s] capability.<sup>185</sup> From this [gate] people came in who

<sup>178</sup> taqūlūna: yaqūlūna S

<sup>179</sup> On Ibn Taymiyya’s critique of *‘ishq*, see his *MF*, trans. Michot, ‘Amour et santé du cœur (Pages spirituelles d’Ibn Taymiyya VIII), in *Action*, 34 (Port-Louis: June 2000), 17, 26–27.

<sup>180</sup> See e.g. Avicenna, *Ilāhiyyāt*, X, 7, 369; Avicenna Latinus, *Philosophia*, 431–2: ‘Necesse Esse, quod... intelligit seipsum... cum perfectione intelligendi et cum intelligentia intelligentis (*‘āqil*) et intellecti (*ma‘qūl*)... ideo ipse sui ipsius est maximus amator (*‘āshiq*) et amatum (*ma‘shūq*), et magis delectans (*lādhdh*) et delectatum (*multadhhdh*).’ Also *Hidāya*, 263–4; trans. Lizzini, *Metafisica*, 405: ‘Egli è dunque intelligente (*‘āqil*) per sé... ed Egli è intelletto (*ma‘qūl*) per sé... ed Egli è intelligenza (*‘aql*).... Dunque Egli è amante (*‘āshiq*) della Sua essenza, e amato (*ma‘shūq*) della Sua essenza’; *Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt – Le Livre des Théorèmes et des Avertissements*, ed. J. Forget (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1892), 197: ‘The First is loving (*‘āshiq*) His essence and is loved (*ma‘shūq*) by His essence’.

<sup>181</sup> taqūlūna: yaqūlūna S

<sup>182</sup> taqūlūna: yaqūlūna S

<sup>183</sup> tusammūna-hu: yusammūna-hu S

<sup>184</sup> See e.g. Avicenna, *Ilāhiyyāt*, X, 7, 369; Avicenna Latinus, *Philosophia*, 432: ‘Iam ergo Primus est excellentior apprehensor (*mudrik*) cum excellentiore apprehensione (*idrāk*) excellentioris apprehensi (*mudrak*), et ideo est excellentior delectator (*lādhdh*) cum excellentiore delectatione in excellentiore delectato (*multadhhdh*).’ Also *Hidāya*, 265; trans. Lizzini, *Metafisica*, 405: ‘Egli è piacevole (*ladhdh*) per sé’; *Ishārāt*, 197: ‘He who finds the greatest joy (*mubtahij*) in something is the First [finding joy] in His essence, as He is the thing having the most intense perception (*idrāk*) of the most intensely perfect thing.’

<sup>185</sup> This definition of philosophy goes back to Plato’s *Theaetetus* 176 B: ‘*homoiōsis Theō kata to dunaton anthrōpō*’. It was widely used among Hellenistic as well as Muslim and Jewish medieval authors, e.g. Philo of Alexandria, Plotinus, al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Abū Zakariyā al-Rāzī, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā’, al-Baṭalyawsī, Ibn ‘Arabī, Ibn Sab‘in and Isaac Israeli. See A. Altmann and S. M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli, A Neoplatonic Philosopher of the Early Tenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 197–202; A. L. Ivry, *Al-Kindī’s Metaphysics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), 117. See also Y. Michot, *Destinée*, 96–101.

were agreed with you on affirming the resemblance of the servant to the Lord as far as the essence, the attributes, and the actions are concerned: the author of *The Books to be preserved from those who are not worthy of them*<sup>186</sup> (*al-kutub al-maḍnūn bi-hā 'alā ghayr ahli-hā*) and those who walked behind him among those speaking of absolute unicity [83] and unification.<sup>187</sup> They said that man is the likeness (*mithl*) of God and that the meaning of His words 'Nothing is as His likeness (*ka-mithli-hi*)' (Q. 42. 11) is that nothing is like man, who is the likeness of God.<sup>188</sup> You also say<sup>189</sup> that the sphere moves by assimilating (*tashabbuh*) to what is above it and you consider<sup>190</sup> the servant as having the power to assimilate to God. [You say] that the sphere assimilates to God or assimilates to the intellect resembling<sup>191</sup> God.<sup>192</sup>

'We will create a human according to Our form, who will resemble Us...'<sup>193</sup> If this is in the Torah, or something like this, [it means] at the utmost that God is creating somebody who resembles Him in some respect. Now, you also, you have considered the servant as having the power to assimilate to God in some respect. If assimilating to God is vain in every respect and if it is not possible for the existent to resemble Him in any respect, your assimilationism is thus to be rejected more than the assimilationism of the people of the Book. You indeed consider the servant as having the power to assimilate to the Lord whereas those told about the Lord that He has the power to create something resembling Him. In what you say, there is an affirmation of assimilation and putting

<sup>186</sup> i.e. al-Ghazālī. See Part I, p. 153, and his *Masā'il*, in *Qusūr II*, 181–2.

<sup>187</sup> Ibn 'Arabī and his school. The Shaykh al-Akbar does not understand *tashabbuh* as 'becoming similar': 'No one is similar to anyone; rather, the attribute is found in both, just as it is found in others' (quote in W. C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 75–6; see also 326).

<sup>188</sup> i.e. the thinkers alluded to do not follow the usual exegesis of *ka-mithli-hi* as meaning 'like Him', but understand it as 'like His likeness'—His *likeness* being man. It is the case with Ibn 'Arabī; see W. C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabi's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 305.

<sup>189</sup> taqūlūna : yaqūlūna S

<sup>190</sup> fa-taj'alūna : fa-yaj'alūna S

<sup>191</sup> al-mushbih : al-mushabbah S

<sup>192</sup> On the important concept of 'assimilation' (*tashabbuh*) in Avicenna's philosophy, see Y. Michot, 'Dés-altération et épiphanie: Une lecture avicennienne de la danse mevlevie', in *Selçuk Üniversitesi, 6. Millî Mevlânâ Kongresi, Tebliğler, 24–25 mayıs 1992, Konya* (Konya: Selçuk Üniversitesi Rektörlüğü, 1993), 25–33; 30, with trans. from his *Notes (Ta'liqāt)* and *On Love (Fi l-'Ishq)*.

<sup>193</sup> See *Genesis* i: 26: 'And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness'.

it in the power of the servant whereas those, although they affirm the assimilation, only put it in the power of the Lord! Which one of the two groups is therefore deserving more criticism and blame? You or the people of the Book? Whether such an assimilationism is a reprehensible way of speaking and untruth, or it is not a reprehensible way of speaking and untruth, the people of the Book are more right than you. Indeed, they followed the terms of the divine texts that affirmed what they affirmed as in the power of the Lord of the creatures whereas you, you innovated what you innovated without authority [to do so received] from God!

It will also be said that two existents do not [exist] but [with], between them, a value (*qadr*) in which they are associates (*mushtarak*) and a distinctive value. They indeed inevitably must be associates in the fact that they are both existent, both stable (*thābit*) [beings], both effective (*ḥāṣil*) [things], and that [84] each of them both has a reality (*ḥaqīqa*) which is its essence, its self (*nafs*), and its quiddity (*māhiyya*). If, furthermore, the two existents were differing patently, like whiteness and blackness, they would inevitably have to be associates in that which is named the 'existence', the 'reality', etc. and—even—in things that are more peculiar than that, for example the fact that each of them is a colour, an accident, subsisting by something else, and so forth. Despite that, both would be different. As, between each pair of existents, there is something gathering and something separating, it is well known that God, exalted is He, nothing is like Him (*ka-mithli-hi*) neither as far as His essence is concerned, nor as for His attributes, nor as for His actions. It is thus neither permitted to affirm of Him any of the peculiarities of the created [things], nor to make Him be in their likeness, nor to affirm of anything among the existents [anything] like any of His attributes, nor any resemblance [to Him] in any of His peculiarities, praised is He and greatly exalted far above what the unjust ones say!

As the 'like' (*mithl*) is that which corresponds to something else in what is necessary, permitted, and impossible, nothing is His associate (*shāraka-hu*), praised is He, in that which is necessary for Him, impossible for Him, and permitted to Him. And when one takes the absolute value in which the Creator and the created are in agreement, for example that which is named 'existence' and 'reality', 'the knowing', 'the powerful', and so forth, these [things] are not but in the minds, not in the concrete. A creature is no associate of [another] creature in any of its attributes. How [a fortiori] would the Creator have an associate therein? A creature might however have somebody who is like it in its attributes, whereas God, exalted is He, there is fundamentally nothing like Him.

The absolute value in which there can be an association (*mushtarak*), like the existence, the knowledge, the reality, and so forth, necessarily



entails as concomitants none of the attributes of deficiency that are impossible in the case of God, exalted is He. In that which is necessary for the absolute value in which there can be an association, there is neither deficiency nor defect. In that which is denied of it, there is no perfection. That which is permitted for it, there is nothing one should beware of in its permissibility. [85] As for the deficiencies and harms far above which the Lord, exalted is He, is sanctified and from which He is exempted, they are fundamentally not among the necessary concomitants of that which is peculiar to Him, nor among the necessary concomitants of the universal, absolute, value in which there can be an association (*mushtarak*). They are rather among the peculiarities of the deficient creatures, whereas God, exalted is He, is exempted from all deficiency and defect. These noble ideas have been expounded elsewhere.<sup>194</sup>

What those mention concerning the importance to be given to the sciences of secrets, the command to keep them hidden from the crowd, and the incapability of the crowd to grasp their realities, these are equivocal words said by [both] the truthful [person] and the free-thinker (*zindīq*). [Islam's] opponents, that is, the deniers of the information-related attributes or the deniers of the Legal commands—people philosophizing and those who engage [in this] with them among the Sufi-minded deniers and their like, allude to that and construe in that sense whatever tradition (*athar*) is narrated, the authentic and the invalid [ones].

[Such is for example the case of] the tradition narrated [by people saying]: 'There is some knowledge which is after the fashion of something hidden: it is not known but by people possessing the knowledge of God and, when they refer to it, nobody rejects it but people beguiled from God, exalted is He.' Although it has no authentic chain of transmitters, this *ḥadīth* is mentioned by the Shaykh al-Islām Abū Ismā'īl al-Harawī,<sup>195</sup> Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī<sup>196</sup> and others.<sup>197</sup> [86] The Shaykh al-Islām however mentions on the authority of his shaykh Yahyā b.

<sup>194</sup> On Ibn Taymiyya's conception of evil, see the important doctoral dissertation of J. Hoover, *An Islamic Theodicy: Ibn Taymiyya on the Wise Purpose of God, Human Agency, and Problems of Evil and Justice*, University of Birmingham, Department of Theology, Mar. 2002, 222–69.

<sup>195</sup> 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Anṣārī al-Harawī, Abū Ismā'īl (d. Herat, 481/1089), major Sufi and Ḥanbalī doctor; see S. de Beaurecueil, *El<sup>2</sup>*, s.v. 'al-Anṣārī al-Harawī'.

<sup>196</sup> See e.g. al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, 4 vols. (Cairo: 'Īsā I-Bābī I-Ḥalabī, 1377/1957), i. 21, 99.

<sup>197</sup> See e.g. al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990?), *al-Ta'arruf li-madhbhab ahl taṣawwuf*, ed. M. A. al-Nawāwī (Cairo: Maktabat al-kulliyāt al-Azhariyya, 1400/1980), chap. xxxi., p. 105; trans. A. J. Arberry, *The Doctrine of the Sufis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 76.

‘Ammār<sup>198</sup> that the *ḥadīths* concerning the attributes, that are in agreement with what the adepts of affirmation say, are of that [kind].<sup>199</sup> As for Abū Ḥāmid [al-Ghazālī], when he philosophizes, he may interpret this [tradition] as something in agreement with what the [attributes-]denying philosophers say.

Likewise for that which is [reported] in al-Bukhārī about ‘Alī: ‘Speak to people about things they know and leave off things they will reject. Would you like them to pronounce God and His Messenger as liars?’<sup>200</sup> Averroes, the grandson, construed this in the sense of what the esotericist [attributes-]denying philosophers say.<sup>201</sup> It is [indeed] well-known that what the deniers say is not found in the words of God and His Messenger, that which is found in the words of God and His Messenger being what the adepts of affirmation say. So, when a speaker speaks of these [things] to people whose intellect does not bear them, he leads [them] to pronounce God and His Messenger as liars.

<sup>198</sup> Yahyā b. ‘Ammār al-Shaybānī al-Sijistānī, Abū Zakariyā (d. Herāt, 422/1031), exegete and traditionist; see Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt*, iii. 226.

<sup>199</sup> ‘This is how Yahyā b. ‘Ammār and his companion, the Shaykh al-Islām Abū Ismā‘īl al-Anṣārī, interpreted the report [saying]: “There is some knowledge... from God”. They interpreted this as relating to [the traditions] that came to us concerning the affirmation [of the attributes]. This is indeed established to come from the Messenger, God bless him and grant him peace, the Precursors and those who followed them in good-doing, unlike the denying [of the attributes] which is not found to come from them and cannot be traced back to him’ (Ibn Taymiyya, *MF*, v. 169). ““There is some knowledge... from God”. This tradition was reported by the Shaykh al-Islām Abū Ismā‘īl al-Anṣārī in his book which he called *The Differentiating between the [Attribute-] Affirmers and the Reductionists (al-Fārūq bayna l-Muthbita wa-l-Mu’aṭṭila)*, wherein he mentioned the *ḥadīths* [concerning] the attributes, the authentic ones and the strange ones, those with complete chains of transmitters (*musnad*), those with incomplete chains (*mursal*), and those with discontinued chains (*mawqūf*). It was also reported by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī in his books. The latter gives of it a commentary that is in conformity with his sayings in which he leans towards things resembling what the deniers of the attributes say—the philosophers and their like. The Shaykh al-Islām [al-Anṣārī] related about his shaykh—Yahyā b. ‘Ammār—that he used to say: “What is meant by that [kind of hidden knowledge] is the *ḥadīths* [concerning] the attributes”. He commented on that with things said by the adepts of the affirmation [of the divine attributes] contradicting what Abū Ḥāmid says. The chain of transmitters of this *ḥadīth* is not [soundly] established—the people of knowledge are agreed on that—and it is not reported in the principal and reliable books of *Ḥadīth*’ (Ibn Taymiyya, *MF*, xiii. 259–60).

<sup>200</sup> See above, p. 363, n. 159.

<sup>201</sup> See Averroes, *Kashf*, 40; trans. Najjar, *Faith*, 17. Ibn Taymiyya also comments on Averroes’ use of this saying of ‘Alī in his *Bayān*, i. 239 ff.

In esoteric matters there is equivocity (*ijmāl*). Heretics have esoteric claims in conflict with the outward [teachings of the religion]. As for the people of faith, the true inner reality, in their eyes, is in agreement with the true outer reality. That which is in their inner selves—the cognitions, the states, a true realization of *tawḥīd* and the stations of the people of gnosis—is in agreement with what the Book and the Messenger came up with. Those who have these experiences increase in faith by [hearing] what the prophets tell, in contradistinction to the heretics: every time one of them examines it closely, he moves farther away from God and His Messenger. [87]

### [AVICENNA'S NEGATIONIST TAWḤĪD]

What Avicenna says is:

- 'Confessing [the existence of] the Artisan, understood as sanctified (*muqaddas*) [far above] the *how many* and the *how*, the *where* and *when*, position and change, so that the belief might become that He is one essence and cannot possibly have an associate in species, nor have an existential (*wujūdī*) part—quantity-related or meaning-related...<sup>202</sup> to the end of this [passage].

The ignorant one imagines (*tawabḥama*) that these words of [Avicenna] proclaim the greatness of God, exalted is He, whereas their meaning is that God has no knowledge, no power, no will, no speech, no love, that He will not be seen and that He is not distinct from the creatures!

## APPENDIX

### IBN TAYMIYYA'S TYPOLOGY OF ABSOLUTE EXISTENCE

Ibn Taymiyya's typology of absolute existence can be clearly defined from various texts and includes the following divisions:

- (a) 'Absolute devoid of condition (*lā bi-shart*)',<sup>203</sup> or 'the absolute existence devoid of the condition of absoluteness' (*lā bi-shart al-iṭlāq*), i.e. the one called 'the natural universal' (*al-kullī al-ṭabīʿī*). 'It is not in the outside but concretized (*muʿayyan*)'.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>202</sup> See p. 11, ll. 3–6.

<sup>203</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Minḥāj*, viii. 27.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.* 40.

When it is said that it is existing in the outside, that which exists bound, concretized in the outside is absolute in the mind, bound in the outside.<sup>205</sup>

(b) 'Absolute on [some] condition (*bi-sharṭ*)', which can itself be of two types:

(b)1. 'Absolute on the condition of absoluteness (*bi-sharṭ al-iṭlāq*)':

It is the existence bound (*muqayyad*) by the negation (*salb*) of all affirmative and negative things, just as a man exists stripped (*muḥarrad*) of all bond (*qayd*). If you say 'existing' or 'nonexistent', or 'one' or 'many', or 'in the mind' or 'in the outside', this is a bond added to the reality [which is] absolute on the condition of absoluteness. Similarly, for the existence: you take it stripped of all affirmative and negative bond, and give it neither the negative attributes nor the affirmative [ones].<sup>206</sup>

(b)2. 'Absolute on the condition of denial (*bi-sharṭ al-nafy*)', or absolute 'on the condition of the negation of the affirmative things'<sup>207</sup> only, without negation of the negative ones, or 'bound by the negation of the affirmative things, not the negative [ones]'.<sup>208</sup>

Different conceptions of the Necessary of existence, i.e. God, accompany these doctrines of absolute existence. The philosophers

stipulated that the highest science and the first philosophy is the science studying existence and its consequents (*lawāḥiq*). So they made absolute existence the subject of this science. This was however the absolute which is divisible into necessary and possible, cause and caused, pre-eternal and originated. Now, that wherein the division occurs is something shared between the parts. It was thus not possible for those [philosophers] to make this existence [which is] divisible into necessary and possible be the necessary existence. They therefore made the necessary existence be the existence absolute on the condition of absoluteness [b1], which has no other reality than absolute existence, or on the condition of the negation of the affirmative things [b2], and they expressed that by [saying] that His existence is not an accident for some of the quiddities and the realities.<sup>209</sup>

(a) For Ibn Taymiyya, conceiving God as absolute existence devoid of condition seems to be a late doctrinal development:

As for the heretics of the Sufis, like Ibn 'Arabī al-Ṭā'ī, his companion Ṣadr [al-Dīn] al-Qūnawī, Ibn Sab'īn, Ibn al-Fāriḍ, and their like, they say [that] He is the absolute existence devoid of the condition of absoluteness. Al-Qūnawī said

<sup>205</sup> Ibid. 27.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid. 27.

<sup>207</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar*, i. 288.

<sup>208</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj*, viii. 28.

<sup>209</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar*, i. 287.

so and made Him the existence inasmuch as it is it, regardless of its being necessary and possible, and one and many. This is also the meaning of what is said by Ibn Sabʿīn and his like who speak of the encompassment (*iḥāṭa*) [of everything by existence].<sup>210</sup>

(b)1. Existence absolute on the condition of absoluteness

is the Necessary of existence for the imāms of the esotericists, like Abū Yaʿqūb al-Sijistānī, the author of *The Keys of Sovereignty*, and his like.<sup>211</sup>

(b)2. Existence absolute on the condition of denial is Avicenna's choice:

Avicenna's doctrine is that the existence necessary per se is the existence bound by the negation of all the affirmative things, not [the existence conceived] by making it bound either by the negation of the two contraries, [e.g. 'existing' or 'nonexistent', or 'one' or 'many', or 'in the mind' or 'in the outside'], or by abstaining from [affirming] the two contraries, as was done by al-Sijistānī and his like among the Qarmaṭīs and others. Avicenna expressed what they were saying in this way: [necessary existence] is the existence bound by the fact that it occurs as an accident to none of the realities (*ḥaqīqa*) or to none of the quiddities. They indeed believed that existence occurs as an accident to the possibles, whereas [he] himself was saying [that] the existence of the Necessary is His quiddity itself. The majority of the people of the Sunna also say that. The difference between them and [Avicenna] is however this: for the latter, He is existence absolute on the condition of the negation of the quiddities from Him; He has thus no other quiddity than the existence bound by the negation. As for the prophets, their followers, and the masses of intelligent people, they know that God has a reality which He alone possesses, is not similar to any of the realities, and is existing.<sup>212</sup>

None of the three types of absolute existence distinguished by Ibn Taymiyya is in the outside:

The existence absolute on the condition of absoluteness [b1], or on the condition of the negation of the affirmative things [b2], or devoid of condition [a], is something whose inexistence (*intifāʿ*) in the outside is known by limpid Reason; it only exists in the mind. This is something they have stipulated in their Greek logic.<sup>213</sup>

(a) It is well known, the absolute devoid of condition, like the absolute man devoid of condition, holds true of this man and of this man, of the mental [one] and of the external [one]. So, the absolute existence devoid of condition holds true of the necessary and of the possible, of the one and of the many, of the mental and of the external. This absolute existence is then undoubtedly not existing absolute in the outside. Someone saying that the natural universal is

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. 290.

<sup>211</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj*, viii. 27.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid. 37.

<sup>213</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʿ*, i. 286.

existing in the outside thereby means something true and something vain. If he thereby means that what is universal in the mind is existing concretized in the outside, i.e. [that] that mental form corresponds to the concrete existing in the outside, just as a name corresponds to what is named by it, and a mental signficante to what exists externally, this is correct. If he thereby means that what exists externally is itself universal when it exists in the outside, this is vain, contrary to sense perception and Reason. The universal is that whose conception (*taṣawwur*) does not prohibit association occurring in it.<sup>214</sup>

(b)1. When [the absolute existence] is bound by the negation of the affirmative and nonexistential (*'adamī*) things both together, it is closer to existence than when being distinguished by the negation of existence [only], not of nonexistence. If such [an existence, i.e. *b1*] is impossible, the latter [i.e. *b2*] is also [—a fortiori—] impossible, and it is closer to nonexistence. What they are consequently necessarily forced to admit is that the necessary existence which does not accept nonexistence is [something] impossible whose existence one does not conceive in the outside and of which the mind only makes an hypothesis, just as one makes the hypothesis of a thing being existing [and] nonexistent, or neither existing nor nonexistent. They are consequently necessarily forced to join together two contraries and to get rid of two contraries; which is among the most serious impossibilities—intelligent people are agreed on that.<sup>215</sup>

(b)2. Avicenna and his followers say [that] the necessary existence is the existence bound by the negation of the affirmative things, not the negative [ones]. This is farther from the existence in the outside than the [one] bound by the negation of the existence and the nonexistence'.<sup>216</sup> 'When [the absolute existence] is bound by the negation of the affirmative things [*b2*], not the nonexistential [ones], this is a worse situation than for the [absolute existence] bound by the negation of [both] the affirmative and nonexistential things [*b1*]. The latter indeed is the associate of other [things] as far as what is named "the existence" is concerned and distinguishes itself from them by existential things; whereas the [former] distinguishes itself from them by nonexistential things, each one of the existents being more perfect than him.<sup>217</sup>

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. 290–1.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid. 289.

<sup>216</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj*, viii. 28.

<sup>217</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar'*, i. 289.