

The Trajectory of the Development of Islamic Thought—A Comparison Between Two Earlier and Two Later Scholars

INTRODUCTION

Islam's Golden Age began roughly around the time *al-Khilāfah al-'Abbāsiyah* (the Abbasid Caliphate) assumed the mantle authority from *al-Khilāfah al-'Umayyiyah* (the Umayyad Caliphate) in 750 CE. It lasted until the beginning of the Crusades, culminating with the sack of Baghdad in 1258 CE by Genghis Khan's grandson, Hulagu, and the Mongols. During Islam's Golden Age, Muslim scholars wrote on numerous issues and considered many different ideas. Greek philosophy, especially the ideas of Aristotle and Plato, were of central importance in the writings of earlier Islamic scholars such as Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā [Avicenna], Ibn Rushd [Averroes] Abu Bakr al-Rāzī, Ibn Bājja [Avempace], and Al-Kindī.

The trajectory of these Golden Age scholars' writings was especially broad. Not only did they engage in political philosophy, but they also were deeply interested in metaphysics, ethics, biology, and medicine. Charles Butterworth published an article in 1996 actually titled, "*Averroës, Precursor of the Enlightenment?*" The early Islamic philosophers even were concerned about things that only very recently have been seriously explored by contemporary scholars such as pollution and waste disposal. They offered diverse opinions and arguments that some would consider heretical. These scholars' focus was much less on ritualistic purity and orthopraxy.

I hypothesize that historical conditions, both at the micro- and macro-levels, played a major role in determining the trajectory of Islamic thought. During the good times, scholarly writings tended to be more philosophical in the traditional sense of the word and less doctrinaire. Such writings were deeply curious about the intellectual continuities between the Islam and the ancient Greeks. Writers who wrote after the decline of the Islamic Golden Age tended to be more doctrinaire and concerned with ritualistic purity. I also contend that writers during the Islam's Golden Age were more interested in political philosophy than the later scholars due to necessity. As the Islamic world entered its decline, there was not as much interest in politics, since Islam's core religious practices were perceived as being in a state of disarray. As a result, Islamic scholars tended to focus on Islam's theological and orthopraxic aspects more than anything else.

To further illustrate this point, this chapter will compare Al-Fārābī and Ibn Rushd—both whom lived during the Islamic Golden Age, to Ibn Taymiyyah and Mohammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb—both of whom lived following the sack of Baghdad in 1258 CE. I decided to focus on these particular four scholars because they are all the representatives of the *Sunni* tradition who were interested in the issues that could be considered both philosophical and theological in nature. The line between philosophy and theology is often blurred in Islamic scholarship. According to Oliver Leaman:

One of the notable features of Islamic philosophy is the close relationship which exists between philosophy and theology. Although some of those philosophers who were very much influenced by Aristotle came to be rather dismissive of much of what comes under the label of theology or *kalam*, there was a persistent tendency for philosophers to use philosophy to help make sense of some of the main controversies in theology, and vice versa. (1996: 1)

The specific scholars looked at in this section all had a deep interest in the social relevance of Islam in their own times and addressed these concerns in their own unique ways. These are also four of the more famous scholars within the Islamic intellectual discourse; these were not just scholars popular among their own tribe only. Their thinking and writings have permeated the entire Muslim world, have been translated into numerous languages, and have also made their way into Western thought.

It is important to make the point here that this chapter is not trying to provide the reader with a deep critical exegesis of the more esoteric aspects of the ideas of the scholars discussed—there already exists an enormous body of literature that does this far better than I could in this one chapter. Doing this would also go well beyond the scope of this project. This particular chapter will provide the reader with a general understanding of the philosophical dispositions of each scholar investigated, and it will provide some insight into the life circumstances of each scholar discussed.

The purpose of this chapter is to support the overall conclusion is that, in general, Islamic political and philosophical trends are deeply impacted by historical realities and intellectual trends of the time. Understanding historical circumstances is important, especially when considering a new model for Islamic governance. This is to suggest that certain preconditions may need to be met before any serious efforts at reform can actually happen. To borrow from Karl Marx's lexicon, a certain level of *consciousness* is needed before any legitimate and lasting "revolution" could be seriously considered. Previously unthinkable uprisings in some of the world's most repressive authoritarian regimes is a signal that perhaps we are at the right historical moment for such theorizing to actually have legitimate real-time importance. Islamic political culture is capable of being transparent, just, and efficient. This should be the goal for any contemporary Islamic governed state.

PERIPATETICISM WITHIN THE EARLY ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE

The early period of Islamic philosophy dated from roughly the early ninth-century CE to approximately the twelfth-century CE has come to be widely known as the *Peripatetic Arabic School*. A few of the more famous thinkers commonly identified with this particular discourse included Al-Kindī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, and Ibn Rushd. According to Leaman:

Peripateticism or *mashsha'i* philosophy is very much based on Greek thought and in particular neo-Platonism. This started around the time of al-Kindi and is said to have come to an end with Ibn Rushd who represented the height of peripatetic thought in Andalus, the Islamic Empire in the Iberian Peninsula. (2015: xi)

Peripateticism dates back to Aristotle. “Peripatetic” is the transliteration of the ancient Greek word περιπατητικός (*peripatêtikos*), which roughly means “of walking” or “given to walking about” (Liddell et al. 1996). This approach to philosophy was informal and people working within this tradition freely inquired on various philosophical and scientific topics. The Peripatetic approach to scholarship was radically different from how philosophy is generally practiced today in academic institutions. The various sub-fields and categories that were later created by academics were of little interest to the early scholars who viewed the universe in a much more holistic way.¹ Most of the writers of the Islamic Peripatetic period were deeply interested in Islamic mysticism and saw it as being compatible with what contemporary scholars would consider the “hard sciences”. Baghdad was the center of the Muslim world in regard to education and learning during this time. Muslim scholars from all over the world came to Baghdad to study logic, science, philosophy and theology.

Many of the Peripatetic Islamic scholars viewed the universe as a single, enormous divine procession. According to Ibn Sīnā:

The origination of the universe is described as an eternal procession, or emanation. It is impossible that any change, whether it be an act of willing, intention, or capacity, should supervene upon it without prejudice to its immutability and perfection; and even a new relationship to an entity previously nonexistent, much as the creation of the world at a given moment, would involve change in its essence. (1960: 380)

This philosophical position implies that at the center of all that exists is an entity from which the universe proceeds. The Peripatetics were not Cartesian dualists by any means. For the Islamic Peripatetics, the physical and spiritual worlds were not looked at as separate and distinct entities as they are often conceived of as today by most people in the West. They viewed the physical and spiritual all as part of a larger process. In Western parlance, this would mimic the “Great Chain of Being” argument that has been around since the time of Plato.

The great chain of being idea was reevaluated by Arthur Lovejoy in the first half of the twentieth century. According to his classic work, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*;

Everything except God has in it some measure of privation, There are in the first place, in its generic nature or potentialities, which in a given state

of its existence, are not realized; and there are superior levels of being by virtue of specific degree of privation characteristic of it, it is constitutionally incapable of attaining. (1964: 59)

Lovejoy argued that the chain originates with God, and then keeps going on and on. This conceptualization of the universe was considered axiomatic up until the eighteenth century. He contended that from early in the Middle Ages up until around the late eighteenth century, many philosophers and scientists accepted a conception of the universe as a “Great Chain of Being.” Each entity on the chain has a maximum potentiality which is then trumped by another entity and so on. Following God, are angels, demons, and other spiritual beings. Spirit is unchanging and permanent. At the bottom of the chain, as articulated by Lovejoy, are stones, clay, and other things that only possess the quality of physical existence. Such a worldview holds that everything is ultimately connected at some level. The categories that would later be introduced by Kant in his, *Critique of Pure Reason*, would be viewed as unnecessary by medieval thinkers.

Ethics were deeply imbued within the Islamic peripatetic discourse much like they also were for the Greeks. “The vain philosopher is not virtuous; he is ruled by his appetites and inclinations. Through time, he loses what he had learned and recedes into ignorance” (Azadpur 2011: 41). Philosophy is not something that can simply be learned via repetition. It must reach the depths of the soul. The vain philosopher, or *sophist*, “is not yet aware of the purposes for which philosophy is pursued” (Azadpur 2011: 41). For the peripatetic scholars, to pursue philosophy for anything other than knowledge and Allah’s pleasure was ignoble. The *sophist* philosophizes for fame, fortune, and glory, whereas the *philosopher* philosophizes for the sake of philosophy alone.

A BRIEF LOOK AT SOME OF THE MAJOR SCHOOLS *KALĀM* WITHIN THE *SUNNI* DISCOURSE

Many different approaches to understanding the *Qur’ān* and the world, in general, emerged shortly after Islam’s emergence. *‘Ilm al-kalām* or “the science of discourse” is the Islamic philosophy of seeking theological principles through dialectic. It is often also called Islamic scholastic theology. Problems dealt with via *kalām*, such as the issues of the divine decree and predestination (*al-qadā’ wa al-qadr*), free will (*ikhtiyār*), and

divine justice (*al-ʿadl al-Ilāhī*), were the issues of primary importance among Muslims during the first half of the second century following the *Hijrah*. Among the most prominent approaches to *kalām* within the *Sunni* tradition were the *Muʿtazilah*, *Ashʿarī*, and *Māturīdī*. The *Atharīyyah* and the followers of Ahmed ibn Ḥanbal rejected *kalām* altogether (Table 2.1).

The *Muʿtazilah* approach to Islamic theology emerged in Basra and Baghdad during the eighth–tenth-centuries CE. The early *ʿAbbāsids* were deeply influenced by Muʿtazilite thought. The *ʿAbbāsids* stressed the value of knowledge. The *ʿAbbāsīd* Caliph, Al-Maʿmūn, who reigned from 813–833 CE, was sympathetic towards the Muʿtazilism. He was also highly critical of the traditionists whom he saw as potentially usurping power. At one time, the traditionists, who would later come to dominate the discourse, were actually viewed as the troublemakers by the ruling elites. “The traditionists were a threat. Al-Maʿmūn saw them as sowing seeds of destruction, menacing for who they were, for what they had come to be within the social fabric, and for the kinds of activities they were carrying out” (Nawas 1996: 705). In response to the traditionist threat, Al-Maʿmūn organized the *Mihnah*—a policy of religious persecution against those who opposed the Muʿtazilite doctrine that the *Qurʾān* was created. This policy, that in many ways mirrored the later European medieval inquisitions, lasted for a period 15 years between 833 and 848 CE. Victims of the *Mihnah* often were traditionists who were powerful and had influence. As a part of the *Mihnah*, those suspected of engaging in sedition were required to pledge absolute loyalty oath (*bayʿah*) to Al-Maʿmūn.

The Muʿtazilites argued that the *Qurʾān* was created by God and could not be eternal because only God himself is eternal. They also privileged the role of reason to the extent that some critics claimed the Muʿtazilites were actually skirting around the essential role of revelation. The Muʿtazilites also believed in complete human free will. This stood in opposition to their contemporaries, the Jabarites who believed firmly that all human agencies derived from God alone. One of the leading proponents of this fatalistic position was the much reviled Jahm ibn Ṣafwān who “maintained that there is no difference between things that happen in the world in general and the actions of human beings; they are all continuously and directly created by God” (Mohamed referenced in Leaman (Eds.) 2006: 204). A couple centuries later, the Ashʿarites would take an intermediate position on this particular issue.

Table 2.1 Synopsis of *Mu'tazilah*, *Ash'arī/Māturīdī*, and *Hanbali/Atharī* approaches to Islamic theology

	<i>Mu'tazilah</i>	<i>Ash'arī & Māturīdī</i>	<i>Hanbali/Atharī</i>
Founded	Eighth century C.E in Iraq	Eighth-Tenth century	Ninth century
Nature of Quran	<i>Qur'ān</i> is created	<i>Qur'ān</i> is uncreated	<i>Qur'ān</i> is uncreated
Free will vs. determinism	Total free will	Partial determinism	Partial determinism
Reason versus revelation	Privilege of reason; recognizes Aristotelian logic and metaphysics as valid	Privilege of revelation; did/does not recognize Aristotelian logic and metaphysics as valid	Privilege of revelation; did/does not recognize Aristotelian logic and metaphysics as valid
Emphasis on ' <i>Aḥādīth</i> '	Less than other schools	Strong	Strongest
Disposition towards outside ideas	More open	Conservative	Very conservative
Notable figures	Ahmad ibn Abi Du'ad, Abu Al-Hasan al-Asharī (early), Abu al-Hudhayl al-'Alaf, Ibrahim an-Nazzam, Abd al-Jabbar ibn Ahmad	Abu Al-Hasan al-Asharī (late), Al-Ghazali, Ibn Khaldun, al-Nawawi, al-Qurtubi, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani	Ibn Hanbal, Khwaja 'Abdullah al-Ansari, Ibn Taymiyyah, Mohammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, Salih al-Fawzan

The Muʿtazilites respected *ʾaḥādīth*, but were also deeply concerned with the possibility of inauthentic *ʾaḥādīth* sullyng the discourse. According to Woodward and Martin, “The *Muʿtazilia* also accepted the authority of the two sacred texts, but made human reason (ʿaql) the warrant for determining what the text of the Qurʾan and Hadith meant in particular circumstances” (1997: 15). For the *Muʿtazilah*, what is obligatory in terms of faith is due to reason; if something is unreasonable, then it does not have to be followed simply due to historical precedent (Arabi 2001; Woodward et al. 1997). The debate over the role of reason and revelation continue to be hotly debated among the *ʿUlamāʾ* (religious scholars and authority figures) even today.

The theological counterparts to the *Muʿtazilah* were the Ashʿarites. The Ashʿarites (*al-Ashʿariyya*) believed that the *Qurʾān* is eternal and is uncreated. Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (873–935 CE) was the founder of what would become known as the *Ashʿarī* school of theology. Ashʿarī was at first a Muʿtazilite but then he joined the traditionalist camp. “He brings along with him his rationalist weapons and places them in the service of traditionalism” (Makdisi 1962: 39). Ashʿarī refuted the Muʿtazilite doctrine that the *Qurʾān* was created. He also disagreed with the Muʿtazilite views that the eyes of human beings will never see God in the afterlife, and that we are the sole authors of our actions.

The Ashʿarites rejected the Muʿtazilite position that God is somehow constrained by any objective notion of justice and fairness.

The Ashʿarites were subjectivists, in the sense that they emphasised the dependence of everything, even the meaning of ethical statements, on the will and decision of God. Their opponents, the Muʿtazilites, argued on the contrary that God is constrained in his actions by objective standards of justice. (Leaman 1996: 1)

The Muʿtazilite position is actually similar to the *Shīʿah* position on this matter that argues God cannot be unjust because his nature is to be just. According to Syed Hossein Nasr; “For Him [Allah] to be unjust would violate His own Nature, which is impossible. Intelligence can judge the justness or unjustness of an act and this judgment is not completely suspended in favor of a pure voluntarism on the part of God” (Nasr, in Tabatabaeʾi 1975: 13). Simply put, for Muʿtazilites, God is constrained by the rules of logic and traditional notions of justice within the *Muʿtazilah* school of thought, while God is not constrained

by the rules of logic and traditional notions of justice within the *Ashʿarī* conceptualization of the universe. For the Ashʿarites, the notion of justice is not fixed. This is to suggest God can deem an action just at one time and deem it unjust at another if he so chose to. Nasr goes on to argue that;

We might say that in the exoteric formulation of Sunni theology, especially as contained in Ashʿarism, there is an emphasis upon the will of God. Whatever God wills is just, precisely because it is willed by God; and intelligence (ʿaql) is in a sense subordinated to this will and to the “voluntarism” which characterizes this form of theology. (1975: 12)

Despite these metaphysical differences on what God could do if he wanted to, both schools firmly believed that the *Qurʾān* was God’s final decree to mankind, and that its law and resolutions were immutable.

Another key difference between the Ashʿarites and the Muʿtazilites were their respective positions on human agency and free will. As mentioned above, the Ashʿarites took an intermediate position between the Muʿtazilites (total free will) and the Jabarites (no free will). The Ashʿarites “sought a middle position by claiming that humans act autonomously (by their own will) but they acquire (*kasb*) the power to act from God at the moment the act occurs, thus preserving God’s omnipotence” (Woodward et al. 1997: 25). This is very important, not only for metaphysical clarity, but for jurisprudential reasons as well. The Ashʿarite position on human agency preserved God’s omnipotence, but at the same time, made humans accountable for their actions. One could not commit a sin and then claim that it was God’s will, and that they were not responsible for their actions.

The Ashʿarite position on free will is very common in the Muslim world today. A very common utterance Muslims use whenever making a statement about something they intend on doing in the future is “*ʿInshāʾallāh*” which translates to “God willing”. For example, if one is saying goodbye to a friend, they will commonly say something like, “I will see you again soon, *ʿInshāʾallāh*.” This statement attests to the individual Muslim’s recognition that regardless of their personal intent, ultimately it is Allah who will allow or disallow their action. Its origins lie within the *Qurʾān* itself, hence within the Ashʿarite worldview, giving their position even more credence and legitimacy; “And say not of anything: Lo! I shall do that tomorrow, except if Allah will. And remember

thy Lord when thou forgettest, and say: It may be that my Lord guideth me unto a nearer way of truth than this" (*Qur'ān* 18: 23–24).² Some scholars have even gone as far as stating that this utterance is obligatory (*farḍ*) on all Muslims.³

What has come to be known as the *Māturīdī* approach to Islamic theology was founded by Muhammad Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī (853–944 CE) around the same time the *Ash'arī* school came into prominence. Both approaches hold many similar beliefs. "Al Maturidi, followed in Abu Hanifa's footsteps, and presented the notion that God was the creator of man's acts, although man possessed his own capacity and will to act" (Shah 2006: 640). Like the Ash'arites, early Māturīdīs believed in partial determinism. Both are the representatives of the occasionalist approach to causation—a philosophical approach to causality which rejects the idea that created substances can be the efficient causes of events; rather, all events are caused directly by God. They also believed that the *Qur'ān* is eternal. They do differ on some minor points. For example, they have differing positions on both the nature of belief and the place of human reason.

The Māturīdīs believed that one's faith (*īmān*) remained the same throughout their lifetime—it did not increase nor decrease. Only one's piety (*taqwā*) fluctuated. The Ash'arites claimed that belief does, in fact, increase and decrease. Māturīdīs also believe that humans have the capacity to come to certain ethical conclusions about what is right and wrong on their own without revelation, while Ash'arites do not think unaided reason can come to these conclusions. Their main difference, however, was in regard to the some of the attributes of Allah (Lucas 2006). For example, Māturīdīs believe that Allah's voice cannot be heard in the same way humans hear other sounds. Ash'arites do believe Allah's voice can be heard and often point to the example of the Prophet Moses' conversation with the God on Mount Sinai. Each school made efforts to base their arguments on references to *Qur'ān* and *'ahādīth*. Despite these and a few other minor differences in some of the more esoteric elements of Islamic creed (*'aqīdah*), for practical purposes, the Ash'arites and Māturīdīs are very similar. For the sake of this discussion, I placed the Māturīdīs in the same category as the Ash'arites in my brief taxonomy of theological schools listed above.

The third main *Sunni* Islamic theological approach to emerge during the Peripatetic era was the *Atharī/Hanbalī* approach. While it is

important to note that “Hanbalism” technically is a *madhhab* and that it is possible for one who follows the *Hanbalī madhhab* to also be an Ash‘arite or *Māturīdī* in ‘*aqīdah*, very rarely will one who follows the *Hanbalī* legalistic approach identify as anything other than *Atharī* in ‘*aqīdah*. Those who follow the *Atharī* approach to ‘*aqīdah* reject *kalām* altogether. The word “*athar*” in Arabic literally translates to “remnants”. In the Islamic context, it is used to describe what is narrated from the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions.

Those who identify as *Atharī* in ‘*aqīdah* seek to emulate the earliest Muslims as closely as possible. *Atharī*’s reject *bāṭin* or hidden/esoteric (*Sūfī*) interpretations of the *Qur’ān* and God’s divine attributes. Instead they understand the *Qur’ān* in a *ẓāhir* or literal/apparent manner. *Atharis* are vehemently opposed to engaging in *ta’wīl* or allegorical interpretations of the *Qur’ān* and anthropomorphic understandings of God’s divine attributes.⁴ The *Atharī* position on God’s divine attributes perhaps is most aptly summed up by Ibn Ḥanbal’s famous commentary on the matter. Ibn Qudamah reported that Ibn Ḥanbal commented; “His Attributes proceed from Him and are His own, we do not go beyond the *Qur’ān* or the traditions from the Prophet and his Companions; nor do we know the how of these, save by the acknowledgement of the Apostle and the confirmation of the *Qur’ān*”⁵ (Ibn Ḥanbal, cited in Ibn Qudamah 1962: 9). They believe that the ‘*aḥādīth* should have the ultimate authority in matters of belief and law, and they forbid the rational disputation of religious principles even if it verifies the truth of their own beliefs. Ibn Taymiyyah would later declare *kalām* and logic as unlawful. He tried to dissuade Muslims from the heretical beliefs of the Sufis, philosophers, speculative theologians, the *Shī‘ah*, and other similar “deviant” groups (Hallaq 1993).

The *Hanbalī* approach to Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) is recognized as being more conservative than other Sunni legalistic schools. *Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Ḥanbal Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Shaybānī* (780–855 CE), or as he is more commonly referred to as today, Ibn Ḥanbal, was a well-educated scholar who sought to encourage moderation and piety among his followers. Unlike other founders of schools of Islamic jurisprudence, he was not technically a jurist. He took a similar position as the Ash‘arites in regard to the question surrounding free will and determinism. Like his later followers, Ibn Ḥanbal’s opposition to the Caliph’s position on the creation or uncreation of the *Qur’ān* resulted in severe physical punishment and torture. He was imprisoned and was flogged mercilessly until

he was unconscious by the Caliph Al-Muʿtaṣim (Al-Maʿmūn's successor) for his belief that the *Qurʾān* was uncreated.

Ibn Ḥanbal's admirers followed his activities closely, even observing his eating habits as an example of his overall disposition. "He ate inexpensive yet filling food and did not resort to long voluntary fasts. His efforts to find a middle path that is situated between hedonism and self-mortification led him to a third behavioral pattern" (Hurvitz 2000: 53). The *Ḥanbālī* existential position was one of reflective contemplation. According to Hurvitz; "There are a number of indications that piety and mild asceticism had a powerful hold over the Hanbali moral imagination" (2000: 54). The followers of Ibn Ḥanbal, and what would later become the *Ḥanbālī* School of Islamic jurisprudence, followed what Hurvitz called a, "mildly ascetic lifestyle."

Despite Ibn Ḥanbal's conservatism, he was most certainly not of the *Khawārij*. As a matter of fact, he was very critical of this group that sought to label sinners as disbelievers. People who emulate this practice today are commonly referred to as "takfirīs." Ibn Ḥanbal held the position that "even a Muslim guilty of a grave sin may not be excluded from the community except on the authority of a hadith account, which must be interpreted with restrictive literalism" (Abou Rauf 2007: 204). Things such as the non-observance of prayer, consumption of fermented alcohol, and the spreading of falsehoods against Islam were the only things that could *possibly* account for the accusation of *kufṛ*, or disbelief. As the Middle Ages went on, Perapatetism in the Muslim world was eventually abandoned for a more textually centered discourse. The punishments the early traditionists were subjected to by sympathizers of the Muʿtazilites also helped galvanize opposition to *Muʿtazilāh* doctrine by the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

The Muʿtazilites, Ashʿarites/Māturīdīs, and Atharīs/Ḥanbalīs continued to grapple for acceptance throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In the end, the Muʿtazilite position was defeated, and the *Ashʿarī/Māturīdī* and even more conservative *Atharī/Ḥanbalī* positions won out. George Makdisi argued that the Ashʿarites "march on as the dominant, largest, school of theology, carrying the banner of orthodoxy, straight through the centuries and down to modern times [1960's CE]" (1962: 39–40). However, over the past few decades, the *Ḥanbalī /Atharī* approach has grown in influence across the Muslim world. Its growth has been supported via large charitable endowments from the wealthy Gulf States that have included projects such as *masjīds*, libraries, and other similar institutions in developing countries such as

Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. These same actors have also engaged in similar activities in western Europe and the USA.

It is important to note that despite the fact that the Muʿtazilite position has significantly less support than the other theological approaches in the Muslim world today, there still are those who consider themselves to be situated within the Muʿtazilite intellectual tradition even if they do not accept all of its doctrines. During the twentieth century, some scholars have tried to bring Muʿtazilism back into the contemporary mainstream Islamic discourse. One such example was that of the twentieth-century Indonesian scholar and self-described “neo-Mutazilite”, Harun Nasution who argued that; “The doctrines of dynamism, human freedom and accountability, rationalism and naturalism taught by the Muʿtazila contributed significantly to the development of philosophy and the religious and secular sciences during the Classical Period of Islamic civilization” (1997: 192). Nasution was opposed to occasionalism; he believed that occasionalism’s denial of the existence of secondary, or created, causes hindered scientific enquiry and contributed to the decline of Islamic scientific advances and ultimately Islamic civilization in general.

AL-FĀRĀBĪ: THE SECOND TEACHER

Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Fārābī, commonly known as Al-Fārābī (872–950 CE), was among the earliest Peripatetic Islamic scholars. He remains one of the most influential figures of this era. He is widely known as “the second teacher” (after Aristotle, who is considered the first teacher) and is described by Majid Fakhry (2002) as the founder of Islamic Neo-Platonism. Al-Fārābī’s understanding of political life was deeply connected with philosophy and what later would be called sociology. His method did not rely solely on divine revelation in order to grasp the rules of discourse. He sought to use empirical evidence coupled with a basic understanding of the human psyche to guide his philosophy. He had no reservations about looking towards the Ancients for guidance and understanding.

Al-Fārābī’s *Book of Religion* describes a supreme ruler that emulates the Prophet Mohammed (ﷺ) in terms of leadership. This view is more clearly articulated in *The Political Regime*;

The supreme ruler without qualification is he who does not need anyone to rule him in anything whatever, but has actually acquired the sciences and every kind of knowledge, and has no need of a man to guide

him in anything. He is able to comprehend well each one of the particular things that he ought to do. He is able to guide well all other to everything in which he instructs them, to employ all those who do any of the acts for which they are equipped, and to determine, define, and direct these acts towards happiness. (Al-Fārābī's cited in Lerner and Madhi (Eds.), 2011: 36)

Such a leader's soul is in union with the active intellect; he both rules and inspires at the same time. Through his rule, he moves people from sadness to happiness: from the darkness into the light.

Al-Fārābī goes on to argue that religion is dependent on philosophy and not the other way around.

Therefore, all virtuous laws are subordinate to the universals of practical philosophy. The theoretical opinions that are in religion have their demonstrative proofs in theoretical philosophy and are taken in religion without demonstrative proofs. Therefore, the two parts of which religion consists [the theoretical and the practical] are subordinate to philosophy. (2001a: 97)

He believed that truth is most commonly ascertained by the individual via primary knowledge and demonstration. He also argued that the theoretical part of religion is that which the individual is not able to physically do when he understands it, such as divine grace and the process of creation, whereas the practical part of religion is that what the individual is physically capable of doing when he understands it, such as prayer and almsgiving. According to Butterworth:

It [*Book of Religion*] begins with a description of a supreme ruler whose goals are similar to those of the Prophet and an analysis of his prescriptions. The reasons for everything done by this supreme ruler are traced back to philosophy so incessantly that religion appears to depend on philosophy, theoretical as well as practical. (1992: 31)

Like Plato, Al-Fārābī was of the opinion that an ideal government should be ruled by a philosopher king, except that for Al-Fārābī, the ruler must also be competent in understanding both the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah*. "In addition to Plato's qualifications, the first ruler (ra'is) possesses the Islamic qualifications of eloquence and soundness of bodily organs, which the jurists traditionally ascribed to the Caliph" (Fakhry 2002: 152).

Also like Plato, Al-Fārābī firmly believed that the philosopher and the intellectual were meant to be public figures; the true philosopher for Plato and Al-Fārābī could not remain a private individual. It was incumbent upon the true philosopher to assume public responsibilities (Watt 1995). Al-Fārābī's picture of political leadership had two key elements.

The first element was that the ruler had familiarity with what he called the universal rules. This can be understood as familiarity with the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*. The second element of political leadership involved the ruler regularly engaging in virtuous actions and behaviors even outside political life. Al-Fārābī saw no separation between the public and the private life of an ideal leader—the political leader for Al-Fārābī is always at some level a public figure, even in his private life. The model of political leadership offered in the forthcoming chapters echoes Al-Fārābī's concern on this particular issue. The ideal ruler is driven by duty and justice, not personal gain or power. True rulers are quite skeptical of power, for in their wisdom they recognize the corrupting ability inherent within power itself.

At the beginning of Chap. 5 in the *Enumeration of the Sciences*, Al-Fārābī artfully used the metaphor of the good physician to understand the qualities that the good leader possesses;

Indeed, a physician becomes a perfect healer only by means of two faculties. One is the faculty for the universals and the rules he acquires from medical books. The other is the faculty he attains by lengthy involvement in practicing medicine on the sick and by skill in it from long experience with, and observation of, individual bodies. (2001b: 77)

His main point is that understanding the book or the universals is not enough. The great political leader, like the great physician, must have intimate experience “practicing” his craft. It is through the repeated interactions with various “patients,” all with unique conditions and ailments, that the doctor becomes an expert. We also see the difference spelled out between the *great leader* and the *great Imam* in this example—the great Imam does not require the same political training or worldly experience that the political leader does. This means that being a great religious scholar or pious person alone is not enough to automatically qualify one for a position of political leadership.

Al-Fārābī also wrote extensively on metaphysical topics. He held the Muʿtazilite position that the *Qur'ān* was created. He would later be

severely castigated by Ashʿarite scholars for holding this view. In spite of his critics, Al-Fārābī is credited with making the first attempt at offering a coherent explanation of the how the world works within an Islamic philosophical discourse (Fakhry 2002). He was also deeply interested in logic. According to Nicholas Rescher;

More important, I believe, is that al-Farabi does not view logic as a matter of books and documents but as a *living oral tradition* of logical specialization and expertise. From this standpoint of logic viewed as a living discipline of specialized expertise channeled through a continuous oral tradition transmitted from a master to the scholars who “read” the canonical texts under his guidance, it is quite possible that al-Farabi answers the question of “How Greek logic reached the Arabs?” not only correctly, but comprehensively as well. (1963: 131)

In his works on logic, Al-Fārābī rigorously explored some of the basic constructs of grammar that would later be studied by linguists. He believed that the grammarian’s aim was to determine the relationship between terms according to the rules of composition, whereas the logician’s aim was to determine the relation of concepts according to the rules of prediction (Fakhry 1983). He readily acknowledged the significance of the contributions from the ancient Greeks on grammar and logic. Ancient Greek thought heavily influenced all aspects of Al-Fārābī’s thinking—not just his political and ethical works.

Al-Fārābī lived during what has been considered by most scholars as the Islamic Golden Age. During this era, philosophers from all over the world regularly gathered in prosperous and elegant cities like Baghdad to engage in the most intellectually advanced discussions of their time. According to Muhsin Mahdi; “Al-Farabi was well versed in the Neo-Platonic philosophical tradition and the Christian Neo-Platonic theological tradition” (2001: 2). Relatively little is known about the personal biographical life details of Al-Fārābī. Majid Fakhry argued that he had a playful and eccentric personality;

His personal character and demeanor are hinted at in anecdotes about his association with the Hamdani prince Saif ul-Daula [...] He is said to have had a great regard for al-Farabi, but was exasperated on occasion by his outlandish attire and boorish manners, as well as by the fact that, despite his asceticism and modesty, he frequently indulged in a certain degree of showmanship in the presence of his patron. (1983: 108)

Al-Fārābī wrote in an era and place where intellectual thought flourished. Ideas were openly debated, even among scholars of different religions. He was even interested in the fine arts. He had such a deep interest in music that he even wrote on its technical aspects. His best-known work on music known in English as the *Great Book of Music* (*Kitāb al-mūsīqā al-kabīr*), still survives today along with a few of his shorter treatises on melody. Al-Fārābī did not only write on music; he even played it. According to the renowned *Shāfiʿī* biographer, Ibn Khallikan, Al-Fārābī's music actually moved his audience to tears. The social environment within which Al-Fārābī was situated greatly impacted the way his discourse progressed. His ability to have the opportunity to play music and engage with Christian and Platonic ideas in a free and open manner is emblematic of the general proclivity towards new ideas and critical thought during his time. From a historical perspective, Al-Fārābī's writings occurred at the height of the Islamic Golden Age. The 'Abbāsīd Dynasty was in its glory during his lifetime time.

IBN RUSHD: THE SYMBIOSIS OF REASON AND FAITH

'*Abū l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn 'Aḥmad Ibn Rushd* (1126–1198 CE), commonly known as Ibn Rushd, and commonly referred to as Averroes in the West, is among the most well known of all medieval Islamic scholars. He was born into a powerful family of scholars and jurists in Córdoba and lived a life of privilege. Along with the Islamic sciences and philosophy, he was also trained in medicine. He followed in his grandfather's footsteps, becoming chief judge (*qāḍī*) of Córdoba under the Almoravid Dynasty (*Al-Murābiṭūn*) that stretched across the western Maghreb and Al-Andalus during the eleventh century. Ibn Rushd succeeded the renowned Islamic philosopher Ibn Tufayl as personal physician to the caliphs Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf in 1182 and his son Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb in 1184.

His thinking and scholarly contributions remain very relevant today. Ibn Rushd goes even further in making connections between philosophy and religion than did Al-Fārābī. Both peripatetic scholars appropriated the works of Aristotle and Plato differently in their writings; Ibn Rushd was critical of Al-Fārābī's efforts to synthesize the ideas of Plato and Aristotle. Ibn Rushd saw the thinkers as being too different to combine into one coherent doctrine. Ibn Rushd's ontology was also far more Aristotelian than Al-Fārābī's—Ibn Rushd believed essence and existence

were essentially one. This overall view is significantly different from Plato's theory of ideas. Plato's theory of ideas posited that ideas precede particulars and that particulars are completely separate from essences which exist in their own abstract state, independent of minds. Aristotle's theory argues that particulars come first and that essences are "arrived at by a process of abstraction" (Fakhry 2001: 8).

While Al-Fārābī's work was more heavily steeped in political philosophy, Ibn Rushd was the medieval scholar who most specifically connected religion and philosophy. "Ibn Rushd is the only Muslim philosopher to dedicate a whole treatise to the connection between philosophy (science) and religion, which is the pressing issue in Arab-Muslim world in facing the challenge of the modern age" (Najjar 2004: 206). He strongly believed that no conflict existed between religion and philosophy—they should be understood as different ways of reaching the same truth. Along with believing that the universe was eternal and he also believed that the human soul is divided into two parts: one individual part and one divine part. Each individual soul is mortal, but all humans share one and the same divine soul. For Ibn Rushd, the *knowledge of truth* is derived from either religion or philosophy. The knowledge of truths derived from religion is based on faith and cannot be empirically tested—or to borrow from the lexicon of Karl Popper (1959), are *unfalsifiable*. This type of knowledge was seen as generally innate, and required little or no real training to understand. The type of second knowledge comes from philosophy. This type of knowledge, especially during the time in which Ibn Rushd lived, was generally inaccessible to the masses and was reserved for an elite few who had the intellectual capacity and financial resources to undertake its study.

Ibn Rushd's philosophy still shapes social and political ideas today. "His philosophy is thought to be indispensable for the revival of Islamic intellectual civilization, and social and political development within the context of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries" (Najjar 2004: 202). Similar to Al-Fārābī, and unlike later Islamic scholars, Ibn Rushd saw no incompatibilities between Greek thought and Islam. "For Averroes the Aristotelian rationalism through which he understood the world was discordant neither with Islam nor with his understanding of the nature of religious belief" (Taylor 2009: 234). He appropriated Plato's political philosophy with some Aristotelian modifications under his own terms and believed that Greek ideas also had relevance for an Islamic governed state as well. Following the ideas of Plato, Ibn Rushd was convinced

that if the philosopher cannot rule, at the least, he must try to influence policy in the direction of the ideal state. During his own lifetime, he utilized Platonic ideas in his analysis of the shortcomings of the Almoravid state (Clancy-Smith 2001). His general line of argumentation was very similar to what Ibn Khaldun would argue two centuries later. He claimed that the sedentary lifestyle of the Almoravid dynasty lead to decadence and weakness, thus facilitating in the empire's downfall.

Ibn Rushd believed that philosophy was something to be taken quite seriously. He sincerely believed that Aristotle's work could not be improved in any significant manner. Unlike most contemporary students of Aristotle, Ibn Rushd "was persuaded that Truth had been almost entirely discovered by Aristotle in the past and that only minor adjustments and improvements could be made" (Genequand 1986: 2). His view on the centrality of logic put him in a far different position than later scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah who rejected syllogistic logic altogether. According to Richard C. Taylor;

Consequently, in the case of religious law, Averroes asserts that, where there is difference between its apparent sense and the conclusion of a demonstrative syllogism, religious law must be interpreted to be in accord with the necessary truth achieved in demonstration. (2009: 230)

Ibn Rushd believed that religious laws and doctrines ultimately were subservient to Aristotelian logic. Since Islam was the ultimate truth for Ibn Rushd, demonstrative truths could never actually be in conflict with scripture—there could only be apparent conflict. In cases of apparent conflict between demonstrative truths and scripture, Ibn Rushd believed that scripture in these cases ought to be understood allegorically rather than literally. For Ibn Rushd, the ideal mode for understanding God was through logic and reason.

Averroes clearly asserts the primacy of philosophical consideration (*i'tibār*) through intellectual syllogistic *qiyās 'aqlī* of a demonstrative sort (*burhānī*) as the proper type of reflection (*al-nazar*) for reaching the most perfect knowledge of God, the Artisan of all beings. (Taylor 2009: 231)

Ibn Rushd insinuated that those who were incapable of using philosophy and logic to understand God resorted to *taqlīd* (blind imitation) and literalist interpretations of the *Qur'ān*. For Ibn Rushd, philosophical inquiry was among the highest and most noble forms of worship.

Ibn Rushd's position on the excellence of philosophy can best be encapsulated in a fascinating passage that was discovered by Taylor that previously was missing in the Latin translation of Al-Fārābī's *Tafsīr mā ba'd aṭ-Tabī'at* that stated;

The sharī'ah specific to the philosophers (ash-sharī'ah alkhāṣṣah bi-l-ḥukamā') is the investigation of all beings, since the Creator is not worshipped by a worship more noble than the knowledge of those things that He produced which lead to the knowledge in truth of His essence—may He be exalted! That [investigation philosophers undertake] is the most noble of the works belonging to Him and the most favored of them that we do in God's presence. How great is it that one perform this service which is the most noble of services and one take it on with this compliant obedience which is the most sublime of obediences! (Al-Farabi, quoted in Taylor 2012: 283)

In both Al-Fārābī and Ibn Rushd's purview, philosophers are the ones who best glorify God since they do so via their own God given logic and rational faculties, rather than through *taqlīd*. "According to Averroes, the rationality of philosophy, and of metaphysics in particular, constitutes the fullest form of the apprehension of created beings and of the Creator without thereby diminishing in any way the value of religious law" (Taylor 2009: 233). This is not to suggest that Ibn Rushd believed that turning to the *Qur'ān* to understand God was invalid. Ibn Rushd took his own personal faith very seriously; he was quite sensitive to attacks on his religious views (Nasr 1996). Ibn Rushd was open to the idea that there were multiple ways to comprehend God's presence.

In the eleventh century, Al-Ghazālī published his iconic traditionist manifesto, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*), that was primarily written in condemnation of the ideas of Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, and in defense of the belief in a temporary, finite, and created earth along with the Ash'arite theory of causation that has come to be known as occasionalism. Al-Ghazālī did not parse words when describing how he felt about those Islamic scholars who embraced Greek metaphysics;

When I perceived this vein of folly throbbing within these dimwits, I took it upon myself to write this book in refutation of the ancient philosophers, to show the incoherence of their belief and the contradiction of their word in matters relating to metaphysics; to uncover the dangers of their doctrine and its shortcomings, which in truth ascertainable are objects of laughter for the rational and a less for the intelligent.... (2002: 3)

Ibn Rushd took it upon *himself* to offer the first major rebuttal of Al-Ghazālī. His *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* contained 16 different sections, called “discussions” refuting Al-Ghazālī’s metaphysical critiques, and four different “discussions” subsumed under the natural sciences. Near the very end of the first discussion (“concerning the eternity of the world”), Ibn Rushd articulates the reason for his refutation of Al-Ghazālī;

We have not committed ourselves to anything more than to upsetting their theories, and to showing the faults in the consequence of their proofs so as to demonstrate their incoherence. We do not seek to attack from any definite point of view, and we shall not transgress the aim of this book, nor give full proofs for the temporal production of the world, for our intention is merely to refute their alleged knowledge of its eternity. (1954: 68).

This was an especially bold move considering the popularity of Al-Ghazālī and the waning popularity of those who embraced Hellenistic thought. Following its publication, Ibn Rushd’s critique against Al-Ghazālī was not all that successful in the Muslim world (Ahmad 1994). In the fifteenth century at the behest of Fatih Sultan Mehmed II (Mehmed the Conqueror), the Turkic scholar, Mustafa Ibn Yusuf al-Bursawī, wrote a refutation of Ibn Rushd’s arguments in *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* and defended Al-Ghazālī’s views.⁶ However, the *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* was embraced by later European and Jewish Averroists throughout the Middle Ages and into the European Renaissance.

Despite his affinity for Greek philosophy and metaphysics, Ibn Rushd was the religious authority of his day in Córdoba. According to Nasr;

...ibn Rushd was the chief *qadi*, or judge of Cordova (Spanish Cordoba), which means that he was himself the embodiment of authority in Islamic law even if he were to be seen later by many in Europe as the arch rationalist and the very symbol of the rebellion of reason against faith. (1996: 26–27)

This is another example of the radically different historical circumstances surrounding earlier and later scholars. First, it is important to remember Córdoba, located on the Iberian Peninsula, had an entirely different intellectual temperament than Mesopotamia or the Arabia. Córdoba had a long tradition of Muslims, Christians, and Jews coexisting in relative peace and prosperity (Goodman 1999; Menocal 2002). A scholar/jurist openly embracing Greek logic and metaphysics during the eleventh

or twelfth centuries in the same places where Ibn Taymiyyah and Mohammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb were later dominant would never have been allowed to assume such a position of authority. Ibn Rushd’s liberalizing interpretations were even controversial among his own contemporaries (Glick 1979). At the end of Ibn Rushd’s life, as the Muslim world began its inward intellectual turn, many people began rejecting his writings because of perceived heresies. He was eventually exiled to Lucena, a primarily Jewish village outside of Córdoba, for a short period, and many of his writings were subsequently banned and his books burned. He died in Córdoba shortly after his brief 2-year period of exile.

ORTHODOXY AND THE INWARD TURN FOLLOWING 1258 CE

As the previous sections showed, the writings of Al-Fārābī and Ibn Rushd were deeply influenced by the Greeks. By the time, Ibn Rushd died at the end of the twelfth-century CE, the Muslim world was quickly transitioning into a declining phase.⁷ Even towards the end of Ibn Rushd’s lifetime, the Peripatetic approach of the earlier Islamic scholars already began quickly falling out of favor. Serious political inquiry was no longer of interest to most Islamic thinkers following the thirteenth century. Following the fall of Baghdad, such concerns did not re-emerge until the middle of the nineteenth century with the writings of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1837–1897). According to Butterworth;

Apart from Ibn Khaldun and perhaps Mulla Sadra, political reflection in the Arabic or Islamic tradition languished during the next six and a half centuries. Philosophical speculation was focused on metaphysical questions and issues of personal morality. When it did turn to politics, it usually took the form of particular advice to rulers and was directed to questions that would help them preserve their own reign. (1992: 33)

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the earlier philosophers who were once revered would soon be openly critiqued and castigated by Ibn Taymiyyah and Mohammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. Eventually, the most conservative Sunni *madhhab* would come to dominate the region that is now Saudi Arabia, and it has an undeniably strong influence on thinking throughout the Muslim world today even among those who do not fully accept its doctrines.

Following the sacking of Baghdad in 1258 CE, the Muslim world was a far different place than it had been only a few generations earlier. At one level, an institutionalization or “normalization” of Islamic beliefs began. For Richard Bulliet, “[t]he variegated forms of Islam that dotted the Middle East and North Africa prior to the twelfth-century [CE] have passed away, leaving little trace except in old manuscripts” (1994: 186). Bulliet notes that one of the reasons for the decline of pluralism was due to the emergence of a new universalizing type of scholarship that sought to encourage compliance with a broader, more general doctrine of what he calls “the Great Tradition.” This was often done at the expense of the smaller, local traditions, which became increasingly marginalized. Eventually, many of these local, non-literary traditions became disappeared altogether.

Second, during this period, many parts of the Muslim world were either at war or under the control of despotic governments.

During this period, [around 1300 CE] Iraq, Iran, and Khurasan continued to smolder under the despotic control of the Tatars, Baghdad was not restored to the Muslims until its Tatar ruler embraced Islam. The Abbasid Caliph of Egypt himself led an expedition against Iraq and Baibars too made several efforts to regain that country, but none of their efforts proved successful. Memluks, however, held the reins of government over Egypt, Sudan, Syria, and Hejaz. [...] In its structure [the Mamluk Sultanate] and organization, it was a military oligarchy without a constitution, a codified law or a consultative body. (Nadwi 2005: 11)

The people living in this increasingly fragmented Islamic world were now left confused and fearful. There was no real continuity of leadership to speak of, and the constant threat of invasion must have taken a tremendous psychological toll on the people living in these areas.

A third explanation for the decline of Islamic civilization is offered by Tunisian scholar Hichem Djait. According to Djait, Islam was at its strongest when it “was characterized by a high sense of religious and cultural homogeneity and historical consciousness” (Djait, quoted in Abu Rabi 1996: 33). Djait is not talking about cultural homogeneity in the way Bulliet is; in fact, he posits a radically different, “intellectually inclusive” understanding of cultural homogeneity. Djait contended that at its height, Islam was unified by the fact that all of its various movements were generally interested in all areas of scholarship. In the words of Djait,

Islam “pursued all the forms of learning with fierce vigor: history, geography, law, scholastic theology, philosophy, medicine, and mathematics” (1989: 119). However, he also notes that even prior to the European invasions, Islam began to move away from its broad scholastic interests and retreated into “a solitary existence or to an exclusive dialogue with the past” (Djait, quoted in Abu Rabi 1996: 34). This “exclusive dialogue with the past” was facilitated by certain prominent figures within the *Ash‘arī* and *Atharī/Hanbalī* movements who discouraged the study of foreign philosophy and ideas for guidance.

Despite the emphasis on religious orthopraxy during the *Ash‘arī* and *Atharī/Hanbalī* periods of prominence, science still flourished in the Muslim world. For example, Ibn al-Haytham and Abū Rayhān al-Bīrūnī were among the most important medieval scholars who used the scientific method in their approach to natural science, and they were both Ash‘arites. Nonetheless, in general, there was a deep-seeded sense of skepticism towards non-Islamic sources by both *Ash‘arī* and *Atharī* traditionists from the tenth century onward. Even up until today, Islam “has not been able to forge a coherent alliance between knowledge and action, or philosophy and movement” (Djait, quoted in Abu Rabi 1996: 35). If Islam wants to return to its glory days, theory and practice must come together. Contemporary Muslim scholars ought to familiarize themselves with Western philosophy and critical theory. Philosophizing without any real steps towards concrete political action is just empty talk.

All three explanations for the decline of Islamic civilization are worth considering. Each has some explanatory power, but none offer complete accounts on their own. Based on historical realities, at one level scholars did have to make a choice; Do they focus their energies and writings on topics related to Islamic ritual and orthopraxy, or do they take an even more dangerous route, potentially aligning themselves with a particular political movement or ideology that might, in the end, get them in trouble with the ruling authorities? As will be shown in the next sections, even scholars who stuck to a more conservative religious discourse were oppressed and jailed by the ruling authorities. On the other hand, as Djait noted, scholars began to move away from openness to scholarly inquiry and new approaches well before the actual Fall of Baghdad, which did not happen until the middle of the thirteenth century. By the time of Al-Ghazālī writings in the early twelfth century, the writing was on the wall for the way Islamic scholarship would develop over the next few centuries.

IBN TAYMIYYAH: THE CONSERVATIVE REFORMER OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

In the midst of all of the *fitnah* transpiring throughout the Islamic world, in 661 AH (1263 CE), *Taqī ad-Dīn Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah* was born. In his early years, the world he lived in was constantly under attack from invading forces. Ibn Taymiyyah's family fled Iraq when he was only 7 years old due to the omnipresent fear of Mongol and Tatar invasions. The family ultimately settled in Damascus, where Ibn Taymiyyah spent his formative years. According to the biography of Ibn Taymiyyah authored by the highly regarded Indian Islamic scholar, Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi, "[e]verywhere he saw people terror stricken and panicked, running for their lives in utter confusion and disorder" (2005: 8). Despite all this confusion, Ibn Taymiyyah remained deeply interested in Islam and was deeply unsettled by the growing sectarianism and heretical practices that were becoming increasingly common in a world that was spinning out of control. By his early twenties, Ibn Taymiyyah was already delivering lectures to prominent contemporary scholars much older and more powerful than himself. His first major address to the prominent scholars made a strong impression. His first speech to a scholarly audience "was a speech so impressive and forceful, sparkling and majestic that the historian Ibn Kathir lists it as 'an astonishing event' in the annals of the year 683 A.H" (Nadwi 2005: 24). It was through his speeches that Ibn Taymiyyah began to develop his own philosophical disposition and attitudes towards other movements within Islam.

In regard to the burning question surrounding the creation or uncreation of the *Qur'ān*, Ibn Taymiyyah's position was somewhat complex. Jon Hoover argues in his critically acclaimed work that Ibn Taymiyyah believed that "God in His perfection has been speaking from eternity by His will and power when He wills and that God's speech subsists in His essence" (2004: 296). God's concretized speech is not eternal, meaning that technically the *Qur'ān*, as a physical artifact, also is not eternal. However, the *Qur'ān* also was not something created in the typical sense one conceives of something that is created since something that is created is disjointed or disconnected from God. Based on this reasoning, Ibn Taymiyyah concluded that the *Salaf*, along with Ahmad bin Hanbal, believed that the *Qur'ān* was uncreated because it always existed somewhere within God's essence (Hoover 2004). God's revelation of the *Qur'ān* to the Prophet Mohammed (ﷺ) was a revelation of something

that had always existed within God's essence, in an *other-worldly* form, but during the period of revelation that occurred in the seventh-century CE, materialized in a corporeal, *worldly* form.

Ibn Taymiyyah was opposed to all sects created following the assassination of the fourth Sunni Caliph, Ali ibn Abi Talib. Ibn Taymiyyah openly labeled those *Khawārij*, *Shī'ah*, *Mu'tazilah*, *Murji'ah*, Jahmites, and even Ash'arites, a group with which he clearly had some philosophical similarities to, as heretics. Ibn Taymiyyah saw all of these movements as corrupting and misleading; they offered their own philosophical explanations of the world and existence in a way that Ibn Taymiyyah felt was contradictory to the *Qur'ān*. For Ibn Taymiyyah, *falāsifah* was unnecessary, and the only way to prevent error on the part of the believer was via unconditional submission to the authority of the earlier scholars and companions of the Prophet (ﷺ). Ibn Taymiyyah saw modernizing or reformist movements as efforts to undermine the original ideas of the *Qur'ān*.

Ibn Taymiyyah opposed the works and ideas of Aristotelian philosophers who believed that concepts that are not self-evident can be known only through definition. He went on to argue that real essences are ultimately arbitrary and are merely assertions of the speaker based on their own subjective experience. Wael Hallaq argues that;

Ibn Taymiyya's conception of the nominal sciences stood squarely in opposition to the philosophical doctrine of real essences and its metaphysical ramifications. The realism of this doctrine was bound to lead to a theory of universals that not only involved metaphysical assumptions unacceptable to such theologians as Ibn Taymiyya, but also resulted in conclusions about God and His existence that these theologians found even more objectionable. (1993: xx)

Ibn Taymiyyah's view on essences hints at a type of postmodern skepticism about the meanings of words, almost making Ibn Taymiyyah an Islamist Jacques Derrida. Like Derrida, Ibn Taymiyyah argued that meaning itself is not given; rather, it exists within a complex network of other things and concepts. "In literally dozens of treatises, Ibn Taymiyya untiringly asserts time and again that universals can never exist in the external world; they can only exist in the mind and nowhere else" (Hallaq 1993: xxii). Unlike Derrida, however, Ibn Taymiyyah most certainly believed that there is an ultimate foundational source (God's will) for an understanding of how history and logic unfold. However, this is

something that only Allah would fully know, and that humans could only understand through Islamic sources and no other system of logic. Ibn Taymiyyah sought to bring Islam back to what he felt were its essential principles. While he was interested in sociopolitical issues, the reality was that there was not much room for political dissent in the despotic world he lived in. As a result, he focused more heavily on deeply metaphysical and theological issues. As will be shown a little later, this too ultimately put Ibn Taymiyyah on the wrong side of the ruling elites.

During the period of Ibn Taymiyyah, Muslims began to engage in practices that are by most Islamic standards today considered *shirk*. In regard to some of the practices of his contemporary Muslims living in Damascus, an adult Ibn Taymiyyah comments that “So credulous and superstitious they are [...] that when the enemy advanced against Damascus, they gathered around the tombs of their saints whom they expected to beat off danger” (Ibn Taymiyyah, quoted in Nadwi 2005: 75). Also during this time, numerous shrines dedicated to saints were being erected. According to Nadwi;

...certain indiscreet schools of mysticism in Islam had, for intellectual as well as development reasons, absorbed the Neo-Platonic and Hindu doctrines of initiation into the Divine mysteries. These mystical-ascetic attitudes had become so mixed up with Islamic beliefs and doctrines that it was difficult to distinguish one from the other. (2005: 5)

Ibn Taymiyyah was not *ipso facto* opposed to all movements within Islam. He did reserve some respect for Sufism. Ibn Taymiyyah was not as concerned with *Šūfī* spiritual practices as much as he was with false *Šūfī* inspired doctrines that were becoming more widely accepted.

Some people accept everything of Sufism, it's right as well as wrong; others rejected it totally, both what is right and what is right, as some scholars of Kalām and fiqh do. The right attitude towards Sufism or any other thing is to accept what is in agreement with the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, and reject what does not agree. (Ibn Taymiyyah, quoted in Rafiabadi 2009: online)

The individual towards whom Ibn Taymiyyah was most critical was *Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj*. Al-Ḥallāj was an eccentric *Šūfī* scholar who had a rather unorthodox interpretation of Islam and monotheism in general. Al-Ḥallāj believed in a type of reincarnation in the vein of the way Christian viewed the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He also believed in

the Christian version of the crucifixion of Jesus, which is at odds with all standard Islamic interpretations of the events surrounding Christ's death. Ultimately, Al-Hallāj was executed rather gruesomely for heresy in 922 CE. For Ibn Taymiyyah, such heretical views were wholly unacceptable and needed to be removed from the Islamic discourse as quickly as possible.

Ibn Taymiyyah is often identified as a foundational figure in contemporary Islamic extremist movements. However, if one looks carefully at the ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah, it is highly questionable as to whether these extremists are appropriately using Ibn Taymiyyah's words. Many contemporary extremists quote both *Khawārij* and Ibn Taymiyyah to justify their own actions. It is important to remember that Ibn Taymiyyah also was vehemently opposed to the *Khawārij*. Johannes Jansen notes that "it is ironic that this ancient *Khawarij* Movement is the very object of wrath of Ibn Taymiyyah whom the modern extremists quote extensively" (1987: 392). The life of Ibn Taymiyyah was marked by numerous conflicts and tribulations both at personal and societal levels. In the world in which Ibn Taymiyyah lived in, as mentioned above, violence and war were the norms. Mongol invasions were common during his lifetime. As much as Ibn Taymiyyah hated the *Khawārij*, he reserved even more animosity towards the invading Mongols. Jansen goes on to argue that Ibn Taymiyyah "is in his explicit aim to convince his readers that the Mongols 'who invade Syria again and again' are even worse than these *Khawarij*" (1988: 393). For Ibn Taymiyyah, it was incumbent upon all good Muslims to fight the infidel invaders; the Mongols represented a direct challenge to the Islamic world.

At a personal level, Ibn Taymiyyah was also persecuted for his beliefs. He is known to have spent at least three different jail terms during his adult life. Donald Little (1975) explored the personal life of Ibn Taymiyyah and found that some of his contemporaries thought he was mentally unstable. A passage from Ibn Battuta's *Rihla* on Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned that "[a]mong the chief Hanbali *fugahā* in Damascus was Taqi al-Din ibn Taymiyyah who, although he enjoyed great prestige and could discourse on the scholarly disciplines, had a screw loose" (Ibn Battuta, quoted in Little 1975: 95). Some have speculated that Ibn Taymiyyah's "having a screw loose" referred to his short temper. However, when considering his difficult life circumstances, it is not inconceivable that he very well may have suffered severe psychological and emotional trauma. It also seems likely that his imprisonment only exacerbated his idiosyncrasies.

Ibn Taymiyyah was never married, which was somewhat uncommon (though not unheard of) at the time, especially in the case of very devout

Muslims. It is widely accepted that marriage is considered a major part of one's life purpose in Islam. One *Ṣaḥīḥ* rated *ḥadīth* from *Sunan an-Nasā'ī* reports; "the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Whoever among you can afford it, let him get married, for it is more effective in lowering the gaze and guarding chastity..." (*Sunan an-Nasā'ī*, #3209). Ibn Taymiyyah also spent numerous brief stints in prison for preaching ideas that the state did not sanction. During his last prison sentence, the local authorities in Damascus even confiscated his writing materials (Nadwi 2005; Little 1975). In desperation while in prison near the end of his life, Ibn Taymiyyah resorted to using pieces of charcoal to write notes on scraps of paper.

During the twentieth century and even today, especially during times of great suffering and repression, it should not be surprising that Ibn Taymiyyah is so popular. "Ibn Taymiyyah is frequently ranked among those jurists of the highest caliber (*mujtahid*) for his sparkling intellect and inclusive writings, while he is religiously oriented social and political activism have inspired modern Muslims recognition of Ibn Taymiyyah as a revivalist of his age (*mujaddid*)" (Hassan 2010: 350–351). Throughout his extended period of persecution, Ibn Taymiyyah still was very well respected by Islamic scholars and theologians who ultimately had no power to stop the state from doing as it pleased with him. Ibn Taymiyyah died in prison at the age of 67. During his prison stay, he radically transformed the culture within the prison. He shifted his intellectual focus to direct Qur'anic exegesis, and his writings shifted their focus to ritualistic orthodoxy concerning practices like prayer and ritual worship; perhaps this was the focus of his interest because he realized it was the only thing he really had control of that the state could not take away.

MOHAMMAD IBN 'ABD AL-WAHHĀB:
AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CONSERVATIVE *HANBALĪ*
RESPONSE TO *BID'AH* IN THE ISLAMIC DISCOURSE

The movement founded by *Mohammad ibn 'Abd al-Waḥḥāb* derived in many ways from the earlier works of fellow *Hanbalī* inspired scholar Ibn Taymiyyah (Fakhry 1983; Al-Fahad 2004; Delong-Bas 2004).

In addition to their literalist adherence to the text of the Qur'an and the Traditions, the Wahhābis have in common with Ibn Taymiyyah the emphasis on ritual observance and the condemnation of the cult of the saints and similar excesses common with the *Sufi* orders. (Fakhry 1983: 318)

Mohammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was born into a family that was well connected to the ruling princes in central Arabia (Voll 1975). His intellectual abilities have been hotly debated among contemporary scholars. According to Khaled Abou El Fadl (2007), he was not considered overly brilliant by his contemporary teachers; he was noted as being defiant, combative, and even arrogant. However, Natalia Delong-Bas (2004) argues that he was both a well-trained jurist and a prolific scholar, and that misguided *fatwās* attributed to his scholarship have sullied his reputation. While there will probably always be a debate about his true intentions and intellectual capacity, the reality is that he was influential during his own lifetime and remains very influential today.

Early in his intellectual development, Mohammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was fully aware that the *Qur’ān* was a blueprint for legal decisions, and not an all-encompassing book of legal codes. According to Delong-Bas on the relation between the *Qur’ān* and formal law;

The Qur’an as God’s word is a statement of God’s will for all of humanity. Although it contains some legal prescriptions, it is not a law book. Rather, the Qur’an provides moral and ethical guidance and values that human beings are supposed to apply to their personal and public life. (2004: 10)

Periodically scholars well versed in the *Qur’ān* would need to contribute new laws as the times change. Mohammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb sought to tighten in the ropes of the religion that was slowly losing its original direction.

At a very early age, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was taught by his teacher, the respected *‘aḥādīth* scholar Muhammed Hayyat al-Sindhi, to reject heretical practices such as tomb worship. During his own lifetime, many Sufi’s would build shrines and monuments to those whom they considered to be saints. This was completely unacceptable to ‘Abd al-Wahhāb who viewed the practice as *shirke-al-akbar* (major disbelief). “To worship the righteous and their tombs is a breach of faith. Since *tawḥīd* is to practice what one holds to be true, one cannot, at the same time, believe in the absolute power of God and venerate any other power” (Haj 2002: 356). The elimination of the practice of the veneration of saints was one of the fundamental principles that defined Mohammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s legacy. Incorporating religious rituals and beliefs from other religions was one of the major signs of the deterioration of Islam for reformers living during the eighteenth century. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and his followers set

out to re-establish what they felt were the basic fundamental principles of Islam.

Ibn Taymiyyah gave equal treatment to both Islamic law and theology. He insisted that proper beliefs were the cause of correct behaviors. His work focused primarily on theology and law. His legal and theological positions were based strictly on the *Qur'ān* and the *'aḥādīth*. The *Ḥanbalī* legal school gives greater prominence to the *'aḥādīth* as a legal source than do the other three Sunni *madāhib* (Ali 2002). 'Abd al-Wahhāb emphasized *'aḥādīth* study. Christopher Melchert argued that Ahmed ibn Ḥanbal, “never depreciates the Qur'an, but clearly relies mainly on the hadith” (2004: 27). He felt that the content of the *ḥadīth* itself was as important as the chain of translation of the *ḥadīth* and encouraged those studying *'aḥādīth* to evaluate carefully whether a particular *ḥadīth* was in conflict with something stated directly in the *Qur'ān*. If there was a conflict between a particular *ḥadīth* and verse of the *Qur'ān*, then obviously, the *Qur'ān* must take preference.

As previously mentioned, the *Ḥanbalī madhhab* is also considered the most conservative of the four Sunni *madāhib*. One of the major misconceptions about what is commonly referred to as “Wahhabism” is that it is situated within the *Ḥanbalī* legal school. This is not technically correct; contemporary Wahhabism is not simply a radicalized version of *Ḥanbalī* legal jurisprudence. Contemporary *Wahhābī* jurisprudence actually deviates from the traditional *Ḥanbalī* legal discourse. According to Muhammed al-Atawneh:

Moreover, Wahhābī jurisprudence breaks from the classical Ḥanbalī legal epistemology of Ibn Taymiyya and his disciples. This is manifested especially in: (1) limiting the practice of *ijtihād* to qualified scholars; (2) endorsing *taqlīd* for those unqualified to investigate the sacred texts; and (3) identifying public interest (*maṣlaḥa*) in accordance with the five objectives (*maqāṣid*) of the Sharī'a. (2011: 329)

The contemporary Saudi legal system incorporates elements of all four Sunni *madāhib* in its legal framework, although *Ḥanbalī* jurisprudence is most widely utilized. “Saudi support for inter-*madhhab* interpretation appears as early as the establishment of the modern Saudi legal system” (al-Atawneh 2011: 339). Ultimately, Saudi jurists recognized that regardless of one's *madhhab*, they still were adhering to the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*, and therefore were valid.

As mentioned above, despite similarities between the thought of Ibn Taymiyyah and Mohammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, there are also important critical differences. For example, Ibn Taymiyyah and the traditional *Ḥanbalī* legal approach allowed for the practice *ijtihād*, or independent reasoning. *Ijtihād* remained popular until around the tenth-century CE when the ‘*Ulamā*’ decided that *ijtihād* should no longer be practiced; all future legal decisions were to be based solely on previously rendered decisions by the 4 main *madāhib*. While the tenth century began to see the move away from *ijtihād*, it wasn’t until the sack of Baghdad in 1258 CE that the Iraqi ‘*Ulamā*’ formally closed the doors on *ijtihād* (Ramadan 2006). Hisham Ramadan compares the decision-making process in regard to *fiqh* to how precedent works in the American legal system, albeit, in a most extreme sense. According to Ramadan;

The rough equivalent of this phenomenon in American law would be the promulgation of a statute that restricted all judges to render decision solely via *stare decisis*, that is, adherence to decided cases, under a system of government where the legislative body is defunct and therefore incapable of issuing a new law in response to current needs. (2006: 21–22)

Ramadan goes on to argue that the abandonment of *ijtihād* in favor of *taqlīd* has had a very detrimental impact on Islamic civilization. Mohammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb did not endorse *ijtihād* because of its potential hazards and misuses. Despite the ruling on *ijtihād*, Mohammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb did not endorse blind *taqlīd* because “blind *taqlīd* may lead to heresy (*kufṛ*), sinfulness (*fisq*) or polytheism (*shirk*)” (al-Atawneh 2011: 338). Despite the acceptance of the other mainstream Sunni *madāhib*, the *Ḥanbalī* legal approach remains the most favored by contemporary Wahhābis.

Note that for contemporary Wahhābīs, the *Ḥanbalī madhhab* is generally favored as a method of argumentation, especially in cases of legal disagreement, because the *Ḥanbalīs*, perhaps more than the other three Sunni *madhhab*s, remain closest to the original sources: the Qur’ān, the Sunna and the traditions agreed upon by the Companions of the Prophet. (al-Atawneh 2011: 342)

Most of the work and life of Mohammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was dedicated to rescuing Islam from heretical deviation. Like Ibn Taymiyyah,

‘Abd al-Wahhāb wrote in a time when Islam was going through turmoil. Unlike Ibn Taymiyyah’s era, much of the turmoil facing Islam came from internal rather than external sources. According to Abdul-Aziz Al-Fahad, during the eighteenth century;

Arabian politics at the time were chaotic and bloody, and violence and conflict were endemic. Among the sedentary populations, or *Hadar*, neither tribal organization nor central authority existed. Almost every town and village was ruled independently by local chiefs, and even within such small locales independent and warring neighborhoods often could be found. (2004: 489)

Infidel invasions, while still a threat, did not possess the same salience that they did during the Crusades; rather the threat facing Islam in the eighteenth century is the Arabian Peninsula was from local tribal conflicts, distorted views, and heretical teachings that were regularly being transmitted on an even wider scale than during Ibn Taymiyyah’s time.

The conflict between the declining Ottoman state [*Osmanlı Devleti*] and the followers of Mohammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb would continue into nineteenth century. Despite the fact that the Ottoman Empire was undeniably Muslim, its members were still viewed as foreigners and potentially dangerous by the local Arab populations that inhabited what today is contemporary Saudi Arabia (Al-Fahad 2004). For centuries, the Ottoman state had persecuted the Arab populations living in the Arabian Peninsula who never fully accepted Ottoman authority over their lands. In 1805, Wahhābi supporters briefly controlled the holy city of Mecca until the Ottomans finally reclaimed the city. The end result for the Sa’udi Imam and leader of the Wahhābi Movement was not pretty. “The Egyptians launched their campaigns to destroy the Wahhābis in 1811; by 1818, the Wahhābi capital, Dir’iyyah, was in ruins and the Sa’udi Imam was taken to Istanbul where he was executed” (Al-Fahad 2004: 496). Regional conflicts between various local power brokers would continue into the twentieth century before ‘Abd al ‘Aziz ibn ‘Abd al-Rahman (later King ‘Abd al ‘Aziz) would finally establish Saudi Arabia as a state.

Although during his own life Mohammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb helped legitimize the authority of the people who would eventually make up the Saudi monarchy, it would be wrong to insinuate that at a deep philosophical level ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was simply a royalist with no interest in the mass public. According to Delong-Bas;

Most prominently, Ibn Abd' al Wahhab emphasized the legal principle of public welfare or interest (*maslahah*) as a guiding factor in the interpretation of Islamic law because this principle established the right and responsibility of the Muslim leadership to consider the welfare of the people as being of greater importance than strict and literal adherence to ritual. (2004: 284)

Based on all the evidence, 'Abd al-Wahhāb and the Saudi royalty worked together to consolidate each other's power; however, he was more concerned with maintaining veracity of Islam than he was with political orders or governance in any worldly sense.

CONCLUSION

This chapter showed that the style of scholarship produced in the Muslim world hinged on some key factors. During periods of persecution, the openness to analytic and political Greek or European thought generally declined; Islamic scholars turned inward and focused solely upon Islamic sources for guidance. However, one can still look at both early and later writings and see the possibilities for a new and uniquely Islamic form of governance. I would like to suggest that, as Sheikh al-'Uthaymīn said before, Islam is experiencing a genuine intellectual and philosophical resurgence. According to Richard Bulliet; "We are living in a crucial period of Islamic history, arguably the most intellectually and spiritually vigorous of the last thousand years" (1994: 4). Bulliet's observations were made nearly a decade before the Arab uprisings in 2011.

This chapter also showed that the geopolitical circumstances on the ground ultimately shift the discourse. Perhaps now, in an era in where Islamic oriented groups are finally beginning to have real access to political systems, there will emerge more scholars who operate within the general Islamic discourse interested in exploring the connections between Islam and politics like Al-Fārābī and Ibn Rushd. Muslim scholars did not really begin to dissect and theorize the modern "Islamic state" until the twentieth century due to the simple fact that institutions as they are conceived today, were not developed in any meaningful way prior to

the twentieth century in the Muslim world, nor was the Muslim world organized in accordance to the Westphalian nation-state model.

The time is ripe for political philosophers and theorists to offer new approaches to governance for states that for so long were weakened by colonialism or were run by dictators. The latter, more conservative scholars, focused primarily on ritualistic purity and orthopraxy; rich discussions on topics such as the qualities required of the just leader or administrative procedures and organization were largely absent from the writings of later scholars. Serious discussions on such topics are long overdue. There is not much writing by the later more theologically oriented scholars on modes of political leadership or political discourse in general. Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyyah's hostility towards ancient thought had more to do with its system of logic/metaphysics and its ultimate influence on Islamic religious doctrines, than with any other aspect of Greek thinking. I have *not* uncovered anything in my readings of Ibn Taymiyyah that suggests he was opposed to the creation of political institutions that may have borrowed elements from other philosophical traditions.

Ibn Rushd argued in his *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* that Al-Ghazālī's real problem with Hellenistic philosophy was its pagan metaphysics rather than its approaches to mathematics, the natural sciences, or politics. More recent scholars have even argued that Al-Ghazālī's real goal in his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* was to simply to defend the possibility of divine intervention against *Mu'tazilites* and *Shi'ite* thinkers that he felt elevated Greek theories of causality to the level of divine infallibility (Griffel 2007). There have also been recent movements within Islam that have sought a return to the rationalism of the past. One such example is what has been called Neo-Modernist Islamic Movement represented by people like Harun Nasution, Mohammed Arkoun, and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd. These thinkers have made efforts to revitalize the rationalism embodied in earlier *Mu'tazilism* even if they did not all identify as *Mu'tazilites*.

The next chapter will argue that even some of the much more conservative scholars, such as Ayatollah Khomeini, had no reservations towards and even deep admiration of, Neo-Platonic and Aristotelian

models of statecraft. This shows that even within the most theologically conservative worldviews, at least in regard to political and economic issues, there is room for considering different strands of thought from different civilizations.

NOTES

1. The analytic disjunction between the physical sciences and philosophy during the Enlightenment era is credited to the thinking of Immanuel Kant in his, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Adorno 2001). It was not until the mid-twentieth century that critical theorists, most specifically Theodor Adorno, recognized the flaws inherent in such rigid positivist categorizations and instead sought to reconnect the two discourses via dialectical constellations. In the words of Frankfurt School scholar, Martin Jay, a constellation can be thought of as, “a juxtaposed rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle” (1984: 14–15).
2. All Quran references in this manuscript are quoted from, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*, translated by Mohammed Pickthall, (New York: Alavi Foundation, 2001), unless otherwise noted. All citations referring directly a verse in the *Qur'an* will be labeled (*Qur'an*: *sūrah* #: *āyah*#).
3. It is noted that the Prophet Mohammed's (ﷺ) paternal cousin declared the utterance of “*Inshā'allāh*” to be obligatory when making a statement on intention. According to Ahmad, “Ibn-e-Abbaas (RA) reported that a man said, “O Messenger of Allaah, whatever Allaah and you will.” He (PBUH) said, “Are you making me equal to Allaah?” [Say instead:] “What Allaah alone wills” (*Musnad Ahmad Bin Hanbal* 2012: 1: 283).
4. *Bilā kayfā wa lā tashbīh* is a concept associated with al-Ash'arī and Ibn Ḥanbal that means “without asking how or making comparison.” *Bilā kayfā wa lā tashbīh* is a way articulate how God is beyond human comprehension and that all we can do is accept what the *Qur'an* says and not further speculate upon its meanings, especially in a way that seeks to anthropomorphize them. Doing so diminishes the majesty and power of God. This concept is often invoked in conversations about God's divine attributes and the idea of “God's Throne” or “God's hands.”
5. Abu Hanifa on the attributes of Allah commented similarly that “All His qualities are different from those of creatures. He knoweth, but not in the way of our knowledge; He is mighty, but not in the way of our power; He seeth, but not in the way of our seeing; He speaketh, but not in the way of our speaking; He heareth, but not in the way of our hearing. We speak by means of organs and letters, Allah speaks without instruments and letters.

Letters are created by the speech of Allah is uncreated” (Abu Hanifa, cited in Shah 2012: 573).

6. Often scholars refer to al-Bursawi’s refutation of Ibn Rushd’s work as the *Tabāfut al-Tabāfut al-Tabāfut*.
7. For a more detailed discussion on the trajectory of the rise and decline of empires, Ibn Khaldun’s *Muqaddimah* (1377) is an invaluable Islamic source that has experienced a recent resurgence in popularity in the last few decades, especially in the West.

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