

INTRODUCTION

I. Ibn Taymiyya's Opponents and his Refutation of the Logicians

I

IN 709/1309, Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya spent eight months in a Mamlūk prison in Alexandria.¹ There he apparently received some visitors whose identity we do not know but who had strong leanings towards philosophy.² Though his interest up till that time lay in confuting the metaphysical doctrines of the philosophers, he there made up his mind to write a refutation of logic, which he thought to be the ultimate source of the erroneous metaphysical doctrines espoused by the philosophers.³ His critique culminated in a substantial tome, *al-Radd 'alā al-Manṭiqiyyīn*, one of the most devastating attacks ever levelled against the logic upheld by the early Greeks, the later commentators, and their Muslim followers.

The richly documented biographical and bio-bibliographical accounts of Ibn Taymiyya by contemporary and later biographers and historians enable us to understand both his declared and latent

¹ Karmī, *al-Kawākib al-Durriyya*, 180–1. Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Halīm b. al-'Imād b. Muḥammad Ibn Taymiyya al-Ḥanbalī was born at Ḥarrān in Syria in 661/1263, and from 667/1269 lived in Damascus, having fled Ḥarrān as a consequence of the Mongol invasion. Most of his life was spent in Damascus and Cairo, the chief cities of the Mamlūk state. He spent a total of over six years of his life in prison as the result of his campaign against contemporary ulama, particularly the Ṣūfīs and their prominent spiritual leaders. Ibn Taymiyya's career was documented in relative detail. Some of the important primary works giving biographical accounts of Ibn Taymiyya are: Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wal-Nihāya*, xiv. 134–40; Kutubī, *Fawāt al-Wafayāt*, i. 44–58; Karmī, *al-Kawākib al-Durriyya*, 138–231; Bukhārī, *al-Qawl al-Jalī*, 100–35; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*, vi. 80–6; Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz*, iv. 1496–8; Ālūsī, *Jalāl al-'Aynayn*, 57 ff. and *passim*; Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-Tālī*, i. 63–72. Secondary sources include the following: Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, suppl. ii. 119–26; Laoust, 'La Biographie', 115–62; idem, *Essai*, 634–40, for a list of biographical references; idem, 'L'Influence', 15 ff.; idem, 'Le Réformisme', 27–47; Little, 'Detention of Ibn Taymiyya', 312 ff.; Haque, 'Ibn Taymiyya', 796–819; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², iii. 951–5, s.v. 'Ibn Taymiyya' (by H. Laoust); Abū Zahra, *Ibn Taymiyya*. For a psychological profile see Little, 'Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?', 93–111.

² Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, 3; idem, *Jahd*, 82 (Translation, par. 3, below). On the numerous visitors he received in the Alexandrian prison, see Shawkānī, *al-Badr al-Tālī*, i. 69.

³ See his *al-Radd*, 3, and *Jahd*, 82 (Translation, par. 3, below).

motives in writing against the logicians. It is not difficult to see the reasons behind his biting attacks against that logic which he deemed the sole agent leading to the philosophical doctrines of the eternity of the world, the nature and attributes of God, the hierarchy and mediatory role of the Intelligences, prophethood, the creation of the Quran, etc. All these teachings, as espoused by the philosophers, stood in stark contrast to what he perceived to be the Sunnī *Weltanschauung* that was dictated by the letter of the Quran and the Sunna of the Prophet. But markedly less obvious in his attacks on logic are undercurrents of resentment against what he viewed in a good number of other treatises as the most dangerous of all threats which lay in the heart of Islam,⁴ namely, speculative mysticism propounded by such influential figures as Ibn Sab'īn (d. 669/1270), Qūnawī (d. 673/1274), Tīlīmānī (d. 690/1291), and above all Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240). We must emphasize, however, that it was only pantheistic mysticism which he opposed, for he himself was a member of the traditional, non-Ittīhādī Ṣūfī orders, particularly that of 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlī.⁵

Ibn Taymiyya could hardly avoid criticizing the logical foundations of speculative mysticism since he categorically rejected the doctrine of the Unity of Existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), its logical underpinnings, and its relationship to Platonic philosophy. His continuous struggle against the Ittīhādī Ṣūfīs had begun much earlier and earned him a number of stays in Mamlūk prisons from 705/1305 onwards.⁶ In fact, his aforementioned imprisonment in Alexandria four years later was the unhappy result of a demonstration by more than five hundred apparently Ittīhādī Ṣūfīs who complained to the Sultan about Ibn Taymiyya's belligerent preachings against their spiritual leaders.⁷ In an attempt to appreciate the full force of his critique, one can hardly overstress the importance of what he perceived to be the cancerous threat of Ittīhādī Ṣūfism, which he thought to be more calamitous than the invasion of the Mongols.⁸

Even if we were to reduce the objects of Ibn Taymiyya's attacks to the writings of Ibn Sīnā and Ibn 'Arabī, and set aside his scathing

⁴ See n. 8 below.

⁵ See Makdisi, 'The Hanbali School and Sufism', 115–26, esp. 121 ff.

⁶ Karmī, *al-Kawākib al-Durriyya*, 177 ff.; Laoust, *Essai*, 125 ff., 132 ff.

⁷ Karmī, *al-Kawākib al-Durriyya*, 180; Little, 'Detention of Ibn Taymiyya', 312.

⁸ *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 132, and Ālūsī, *Jalā' al-'Aynayn*, 88, for his letter to al-Shaykh al-Manbijī.

and massive criticism of countless other philosophical, mystical, theological, and sectarian doctrines, we would still come to the realization that what Ibn Taymiyya was fighting against amounted to everything that directly or indirectly derived from what was termed 'the ancient sciences' (*ʿulūm al-awā'il*).⁹ Ibn Sīnā's cosmology had for its foundation Aristotelian–Ptolemaic doctrines with a Neoplatonic structure in which the emanationist philosophy of being was thoroughly incorporated. His logic was manifestly Aristotelian but not without Stoic and Neoplatonic influences. Likewise, Ibn 'Arabī made use of the Platonic Ideas, and his cosmology integrated not only the pseudo-Empedoclean doctrines of Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931) but above all Alexandrian elements as found in the doctrines of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'. Admittedly, the latter were indebted to the teachings of Pythagoras and Nichomachus, particularly in their treatment of the metaphysics of number. They were no less indebted to Jābir b. Ḥayyān (d. 160/776), who was in turn influenced by Plato, Pythagoras, and Apollonius as well as by Indian and Hermetic sources.¹⁰

More significantly, however, later Ṣūfism, particularly that of Ibn 'Arabī, shows affinity with the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā,¹¹ especially with regard to *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the doctrine that generated the fiercest attacks by Ibn Taymiyya. Ibn Sīnā's cosmogony stresses the relation of contingent beings to the Necessary, Absolute Being, and the effusion of the former from the latter. While the effused universe is distinguished from this Being, the generated universe none the less maintains a unitary relationship with the source of its own existence. Thus it is argued that, although the rays of the sun are not the sun itself, they are not other than the sun.¹² Ibn 'Arabī, like many speculative Ṣūfīs, upheld this doctrine and argued the impossibility of two independent orders of reality. And in anticipation of Ibn 'Arabī, Ibn Sīnā, departing from this unitary emanative scheme, seems to have held that the gnostic is capable of attaining a complete union with God.¹³ We shall later return to the crucial ramifications of such mystical and philosophic positions, at least as Ibn Taymiyya

⁹ See e.g. his *Jahd*, 176 (Translation, par. 167, below), where he speaks of the influence the philosophers had over the Ṣūfīs and others. See also *al-Radd*, 186–7.

¹⁰ See Nasr, *Cosmological Doctrines*, 37–8.

¹¹ Cf. Morewedge, 'Emanationism and Ṣūfism', 17; Anawati, 'Philosophy, Theology, and Mysticism', 374–8.

¹² Nasr, *Cosmological Doctrines*, 202–3.

¹³ Houben, 'Avicenna and Mysticism', 216 ff., esp. 219; Morewedge, 'Emanationism and Ṣūfism', 13–14.

perceived them, but for the moment shall merely assert that for all these teachings, however philosophically variegated they may be, Ibn Taymiyya held the logic of Aristotle and of those who followed him to be the ultimate culprit. His grievance against logic was not simply that it existed, but rather that it existed in and infested the core of the Islamic religious sciences. He certainly had serious doubts about logic as the organon of philosophy and metaphysics, but when logic penetrated the pale of Sunnī theology and produced such philosophical theologians as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209), Āmidī (d. 632/1234), and Urmawī (d. 682/1283), Ibn Taymiyya clearly felt an alarming threat that should be rebuffed. His, then, was the critique of a logic that brought under its wings not only Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Ibn Sīnā, and the rest of the Arabic philosophers,¹⁴ but also, and I think primarily, the pantheistic Ṣūfīs, the Shī'īs and the speculative theologians (*ahl al-kalām*).¹⁵

2

The reader of Ibn Taymiyya's works cannot but be struck by his extraordinary ability to define and isolate the crucial and fundamental principles upon which the most complex systems of thought are erected. He was never distracted by the multiplicity and variety of uses to which logic was put in Islamic religious discourse. Nor did he attempt, as more recent critics have done,¹⁶ to refute or argue against the many secondary, and sometimes marginal, suppositions and postulates of logical doctrines. Instead, he took up a few, but most central and fundamental, logical principles and by undermining them attempted to demolish the entire edifice of logic and, consequently, that of metaphysics as well. Ultimately, his concern rested with the theories of definition (*ḥadd*) and the categorical syllogism, for which he adopted the rarely used Arabic form *qiyās al-shumūl*.¹⁷

It is not difficult to understand why Ibn Taymiyya should have chosen to attack the entire system of logic through the theories of

¹⁴ 'Arabic' and not 'Arab' philosophers (or logicians) is used advisedly here to characterize all logicians who wrote in the Arabic language irrespective of their ethnic origin. On this matter, we go along with Rescher's views expressed in his article 'The Impact of Arabic Philosophy', 147–8.

¹⁵ Cf. the opinion of Laoust, 'Le Réformisme', 32 ff.

¹⁶ e.g. Kāshif al-Ghiṭā', *Naqd al-Ārā' al-Manṭiqiyya wa-Ḥall Mushkilātihā*.

¹⁷ In fact, he may have coined the term. To the best of my knowledge, none of the logical works employs this expression.

definition and syllogistics. Since the beginning of the fourth/tenth century, Arabic logicians had held that the acquisition of knowledge, as well as the principles governing the correct uses of the methods and processes by means of which knowledge is acquired, are the tasks of logic.¹⁸ As there must be some postulates presupposing the acquisition of new knowledge, logic was seen as the sole tool through which sound human knowledge can be derived and augmented. On this view, then, logic stood not merely as a set of tautologies, but equally served as an epistemic system, a theory of knowledge proper. In this theory, it was emphasized that, to avoid an infinite regress, the mind must be seen as proceeding from some *a priori* or pre-existent axiomatic knowledge to new concepts (*taṣawwūrāt*) by means of definitions. If we know, for instance, what 'rationality' and 'animality' are, we can form a concept in our minds of 'man', who is defined as 'a rational animal'. It is through definitions, then, that concepts are formed.¹⁹

Once such concepts are acquired, the mind can proceed to a more active level of knowledge by predicating one concept of another. If we have formed the concepts of 'man' and 'intelligent', we can formulate the judgement (*taṣdīq*), true or false, that 'man is intelligent'.²⁰ A still more developed stage of knowledge may be reached by constructing or ordering (*ta'līf*) judgements in such a manner that we may obtain an inference—be it syllogistic, inductive, analogical, or some other form of argument.²¹ However, following in the footsteps of Aristotle,²² Arabic logicians deemed the syllogism as the only argument capable of yielding apodictic knowledge, and thus they considered it the chief, indeed the only, tool which can bring about *taṣdīq* with certitude.²³

In order to achieve a complete definition (*ḥadd tāmm*), which is the ultimate pursuit of the logician,²⁴ there must be taken into account the species (*anwā'*), the genera (*ajnās*), and the differences

¹⁸ Ibn Sīnā, *Shifā'*: *Madkhal*, 17; Rāzī, *Tahrīr*, 24, and see Translation, par. 3, n. 4, below.

¹⁹ Lawkārī, *Bayān al-Ḥaqq*, i. 123–4; Rāzī, *Tahrīr*, 7–13; Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid*, 33–4.

²⁰ On *taṣawwūr* and *taṣdīq*, see Wolfson, 'The Terms *Taṣawwūr* and *Taṣdīq*', 114–19; Sabra, 'Avicenna', 757–61.

²¹ See Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, 43–4; idem, *Shifā'*: *Madkhal*, 16 ff.; Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid*, 35–6.

²² Bochenski, *Ancient Formal Logic*, 25.

²³ See e.g. Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, 43–4, in conjunction with 69, 97; Yahyā b. 'Adī, *Tabyīn*, 184, 183 (nos. 21, 22); Rāzī, *Tahrīr*, 24–5.

²⁴ Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid*, 34, acknowledges the essential *ḥadd* (definition) as the sole means to form a concept.

(*fuṣūl*) partaking in the composition of the definiendum. Failing that, a property (*khāṣṣa*) or a general accident (*'araḍ 'āmm*) may be employed in delimiting the definiendum, though such a delimitation would not be a definition proper but merely a description (*rasm*). Instead of the definition of man as 'a rational animal', a description would be 'a laughing animal', 'laughing' being an accidental attribute. In either case, however, it is through Porphyry's five predicables that a definition or a description may be obtained.

Complete or real definition, the highest objective of the definer, requires a statement of the definiendum's quiddity, represented in the essential attributes constituting the genus and the difference to the exclusion of the property and the general accident. But in making a statement of the quiddity, only the essence as essence must be understood to be constitutive (*muqawwim*) of the quiddity. The essence is that without which a thing having this essence can never be an object of our apprehension. Nor does a thing, to be characterized, require a cause other than its own essence. Blackness is in itself a colour, not due to another factor rendering it a colour; that which caused it to be blackness caused it first to be a colour.²⁵ More important, the essence cannot, by definition, be removed from a thing of which it is an essence without removing that thing from both mental and extramental existence: the essence as essence is both identical with, and the cause of, quiddity.²⁶

An essence in itself has no necessary connection with existence, for existence is *superadded to*, and is *not constitutive of*, quiddity. But existence may attach to the essence either in the mind or in the external world. Genus and difference constitute the means (*sabab*) that bring about the mental existence of the essence, while form and matter make up the cause of the external existence when individuation is realized.²⁷ Hence, essence considered as essence exists neither in the mind nor in the external world.²⁸

When quiddity attaches to existence, it also becomes attached to attributes that are accidental to it, but which are either separable (*mufāriq*) or inseparable from it (*ghayr mufāriq*). The latter are necessary to (*lāzim*), and constantly conjoined with, quiddity,

²⁵ Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, i. 200.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. i. 202–3; Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, 239 ff.

²⁸ Ibn Sīnā, *Shifā': Madkhal*, 15; Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, i. 202–3; Marmura, 'Avicenna's Chapter on Universals', 35, 36; cf. Rahman, 'Essence and Existence', 3 ff.

although they are neither constitutive nor a part of quiddity. In contrast with 'figure', which is the quiddity of a triangle, the attribute necessary to, but separable from, such a quiddity is the triangle's having angles equal to two right angles.²⁹ The triangle's angles amounting to two right angles represents a necessary quality of triangles but cannot be possible prior to the formation of the *figure* making up the quiddity of a triangle. A necessary, inseparable attribute must thus presuppose a quiddity; and it is in this sense that such an attribute is not constitutive.³⁰

In contrast to the necessary and inseparable attribute, the separable attribute, by definition, neither attaches to, nor is necessarily concomitant with, quiddity. The accidental nature of such a predicable allows it to be attached to, or separated from, a subject according to degrees. Youth, for instance, is a separable attribute that detaches itself from man at a pace slower than does the position of sitting down or standing up.³¹

Now, this philosophical doctrine of essence and accident was propagated by Ibn Sīnā, whose writings on the issue represent the culmination of a process that began at least as early as Aristotle, but still served, in its Avicennian form, as the basis of later philosophical discourse. The doctrine puts forth two postulates that emerge as salient features of the basic distinction between essence and accident. These postulates require a distinction to be drawn between quiddity and its existence, and also between essential and necessary, inseparable attributes. It is precisely these two distinctions, together with the more general but fundamental distinction between essence and accident, that formed the chief target of Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of the larger issue of real, complete definition.

Against the foregoing distinction between essence and accident, Ibn Taymiyya forcefully argues that there is nothing intrinsically inherent and objective in such a distinction. That one attribute is considered essential while another accidental is no more than a convention (*wadʿ*) according to which matters in the natural world are viewed in a certain manner: and convention is nothing but the result of what a group of people invents (*takhtariʿ*) and agrees to use or accepts as a norm. Just as a person can speak of man as a rational animal, another can speak of man as a laughing animal. A person

²⁹ Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, i. 199, 205–7; Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, i. 201, 206–7.

³⁰ Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, i. 206–7.

³¹ Ibn Sīnā, *Ishārāt*, i. 213.

may, in agreement with Greek and Arabic logicians, deem colour an essential attribute of redness and still refuse to take animality to be an essential attribute of man.³² For Ibn Taymiyya, the attributes of a thing are those attached to it in extramental existence, nothing more or less, and they are all of the same kind.³³ Attempts at designating a particular quality as essential while another as accidental are entirely arbitrary. Besides, such a distinction presumably allows one to conceive an essence abstracted from its necessary attributes, or more concretely, it makes it possible to conceive a crow without including in our apprehension that it is black.³⁴ The distinction between essential and accidental attributes is simply not found in the objective world of things.³⁵

Such a distinction is thus man's own creation and is relative to the particular individual and his own perception of things in the world. More specifically, the distinction is determined by one's own intention (*maqṣad*) as well as the language (*lafẓ*) that one uses to classify and categorize these things.³⁶ Here, Ibn Taymiyya clearly anticipates the more recent criticism voiced, among others, by Locke. According to this criticism,³⁷ attributes are neither essential nor accidental in themselves, but can be so categorized according to our particular view of, and subjective interest in, them. We define tables, for instance, mainly on the basis of our interest in them and the function they have in our lives, without any regard to their colours. If we change the colour of a table from black to green, the change will be considered accidental and thus will not effect a change in our real definition of it. But if our interest in tables lies in their colour, then the same objective reality would be categorized rather differently, and this difference is strictly a function of the language and words that we use to label things existing in the objective world. Imagine a language that does not have the universal term 'table' but instead employs the term 'teeble' for green tables, and 'towble' for brown tables, etc., since the interest of this language and those who speak it lies in the colours of tables. Thus if a teeble is painted brown, it will

³² Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, 68 (ll. 18–21).

³³ Ibid. 68–9.

³⁴ Ibid. 69.

³⁵ Ibid. 68, 70, 402, and *passim*.

³⁶ Ibid. 68 (ll. 22–3): 'wa-hādhā amr yatba' qaṣd al-mutakallim wa-ghāyatah wa-mā dalla 'alayhi bi-lafẓihi, lā yatba' al-ḥaqā'iq al-mawjūda fī nafsihā.'

³⁷ An interesting analysis of this criticism may be found in Copi, 'Essence and Accident', 153 ff.

be *essentially* changed into a towble.³⁸ A less hypothetical example is afforded by the Arabic language. The fruits growing on palm trees and commonly known in the English language as dates, regardless of whether they are ripe or not, are called in Arabic by several specialized terms, each coined to characterize a particular stage of maturity. Accordingly, *busr* (unripe dates) will cease to be *busr* once they become somewhat ripe, when they will acquire the name *ruṭab*. A more advanced stage of maturity will render them *tamr*. In this case, the real essence changes in accordance with the alteration of the quality of ripeness, a quality not reflected in the English usage. What is essential in Arabic is not necessarily so in English.

The conventions of language also involve another use of nominal essences relative to the special circumstances of individuals using words or referring to things. Real essences require the use of a language that precisely describes, and corresponds to, the quiddity of a thing. Ibn Taymiyya avers that this is not always possible since a person may think of an essence in terms that are wider but inclusive (*taḍammun*) of the essence, or through words that imply or explicitly entail (*iltizām*) that essence.³⁹ Again, the cases of the Arabic and English linguistic conventions seem adequate to illustrate Ibn Taymiyya's point. The use of the word 'dates' in the English language is inclusive of the essential attributes found in the Arabic *busr*. In this case, the word 'dates' and its real definition remain wider than the objective, external reality of *busr*. Likewise, within one and the same language, the term 'laughing' may be used to indicate 'man' by entailment, since man is the only 'laughing' being.⁴⁰

Thus, the distinction, in Ibn Taymiyya's view, between essential and accidental, necessary attributes is as arbitrary as it is conventional and subjective. Against the argument that the quiddity must occur in the mind prior to the accidental attributes, he insists that a person may conceive the blackness of a thing—blackness being an accidental attribute according to the logicians—without at all conceiving that what he has conceived is a colour, this latter being in their view the quiddity. So also can the mind conceive a human without conceiving that he or she is rational.⁴¹ Thus, just as arbitrary as the distinction

³⁸ This example is borrowed from Copi, *ibid.* 155.

³⁹ See his *al-Radd*, 68.

⁴⁰ Examples of linguistic correspondence (*muṭābaqa*), inclusiveness (*taḍammun*), and entailment (*iltizām*) may be found in Ṭūsī, *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt*, i. 187; Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid*, 39; *idem*, *Mi'yār*, 72; Lawkarī, *Bayān al-Ḥaqq*, i. 131–2.

⁴¹ *al-Radd*, 70; *Jahd*, 99 (Translation, par. 35, below).

between essence and accident is the preferential arrangement of attributes, an arrangement which, Ibn Taymiyya forcefully argues, can exist only in the mind. In the external world there simply exists no such arrangement.⁴²

In Ibn Taymiyya's view, the philosophers' arbitrary and, at best, conventional distinction between essence and accident is matched only by their other distinction between, on the one hand, quiddity *qua* quiddity, that is, essence considered simply as essence, and, on the other, the ontological status of an essence. Essence as essence, Ibn Sīnā and his followers argue, exists neither in the mind nor in the external world. But when genus and difference or, alternatively, form and matter attach to it, it then comes into existence mentally or extramentally, respectively. For Ibn Taymiyya nothing can exist outside the realm of the external world and the sphere of the mind.⁴³ The essence must therefore be limited to only one of these two modes of existence. In the external world an essence is merely the very thing which exists, a particular and unique individual, while in the mind essence is what is represented (*yartasim*) of that individual therein.⁴⁴

3

Ibn Taymiyya's conception of nominal essences 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. The dispute, then, centred around a realist theory of universals that, in the opinion of Ibn Taymiyya, proved a God existing merely in the human mind, not in external reality.

We have seen that in the Avicennian tradition essence in itself has no mental or external existence, and that in order for such an essence to subsist in the two modes of existence certain qualities must be added to it. In the same vein, an essence in itself is neither universal nor particular, and in order for it to become universal,

⁴² *al-Radd*, 71 (ll. 16 ff.); *Jahd*, 99 (Translation, par. 35, below).

⁴³ *al-Radd*, 67; *Tawhīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 158.

⁴⁴ *al-Radd*, 67; *Tawhīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 163, 166.

universality, which is an accident that exists only in the mind, must be added to it once the mind abstracts the essence from extramental particulars.⁴⁵ This abstraction, however, is not limited to the essence of particulars; rather, the mind also abstracts what Ibn Sīnā characterized as that which is 'common to many' in external reality.⁴⁶ Therefore, universality, while being separable from essence, does exist in the external world.⁴⁷

From the foregoing it follows that universals may be, according to a dominant classification,⁴⁸ natural, logical, or mental. The natural universal (*kullī ṭabīʿī*) is commonly defined as the nature or quiddity as it is in itself, that is, when it is neither a universal nor a particular, neither existent nor non-existent, neither one nor many, etc.; it is absolute (*muṭlaq*) and unconditioned by anything (*lā bi-sharṭ shayʿ*). The logical universal (*kullī manṭiqī*), on the other hand, is the accident of universality *qua* universality; it is absolute and unattached to anything (*muṭlaq bi-sharṭ al-iṭlāq*). Universality in so far as it is universality, being a logical construct, was generally considered to exist only in the mind without having any ontological status externally. Finally, the mental universal (*al-kullī al-ʿaqlī*) represents the conjunction in the mind of the nature in itself and universality in itself, that is, nature conditioned by universality (*bi-sharṭ lā shayʿ*).⁴⁹

Moreover, many Avicennian Neoplatonists held the view that these universals subsist in three modes of existence. The first mode is that of divine and angelic minds where they exist 'prior to multiplicity' (*qabl al-kathra*); thereafter, they exist 'in multiplicity' (*fī al-kathra*), when they are individuated in the sublunar world of generation and corruption. And last, they subsist 'after multiplicity' (*baʿd al-kathra*), when, having been abstracted, they exist in our minds.⁵⁰

This theory of universals constitutes the foundation upon which a crucial aspect of philosophical and mystical metaphysics rests.

⁴⁵ Ibn Sīnā, *Shifāʾ: Madkhal*, 65; Lawkarī, *Bayān al-Ḥaqq*, i. 181, 183; Marmura, 'Avicenna's Chapter on Universals', 34–5, 53 n. 5.

⁴⁶ Ibn Sīnā, *Shifāʾ: Madkhal*, 66; Lawkarī, *Bayān al-Ḥaqq*, i. 181.

⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis see Marmura, 'Avicenna's Chapter on Universals', 35–6.

⁴⁸ For other classifications of universals see Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, ii. 1258ff., s.v. *kullī*.

⁴⁹ Ibn Sīnā, *Shifāʾ: Madkhal*, 65ff.; idem, *Najāt*, 256–7; Lawkarī, *Bayān al-Ḥaqq*, i. 181–3; Aḥmadnagarī, *Jāmiʿ*, iii. 192–3, s.v. *māhiyya*, and i. 413–14, s.v. *jins*; Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, ii. 1261–2, s.v. *kullī*; Heer, 'Al-Jāmi's Treatise on Existence', 227; Marmura, 'Avicenna's Chapter on Universals', 39–42.

⁵⁰ Ibn Sīnā, *Shifāʾ: Madkhal*, 69, 65; Lawkarī, *Bayān al-Ḥaqq*, i. 181ff.; Russell, *History*, 418.

Both Ibn Sīnā and Ibn 'Arabī, and their respective followers, have identified God with absolute existence (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*). Ibn 'Arabī, Qūnawī, and their like took absolute existence to be existence in itself, unconditioned and unaffected by anything (*lā bi-sharṭ shay'*). Ibn Sīnā had already subscribed to a conception of absolute existence that is conditioned by a denial of affirmative attributes (*bi-sharṭ nafy al-umūr al-thubūtiyya*). Still others are reported to have identified such an existence with an absolute existence that is conditioned by complete absoluteness and universality (*bi-sharṭ al-iṭlāq*).⁵¹ Now, whatever sort of absolute existence was advocated by these philosophers and mystics, all of them affirmed, expectedly, that the absolute existence they postulated exists in the external world.

It is then quite clear that what is at stake in adopting a realist theory of universals is no less than an entire metaphysic. And it is through an examination of this theory, which belongs squarely to the sphere of logic, that Ibn Taymiyya attempts to show how involved logic is in metaphysics. In literally dozens of his treatises, Ibn Taymiyya untiringly asserts time and again that universals can never exist in the external world; they can exist only in the mind and nowhere else.⁵² In the external world only individuated particulars exist, particulars that are specific, distinct, unique.⁵³ Each individual exists in the context of a reality (*ḥaqīqa*) that is different from other realities. The uniqueness of such realities renders the individual what it is in so far as it is an individual (*huwa bi-hā huwa*).⁵⁴ It is one of Ibn Taymiyya's cardinal beliefs that externally existing individuals are so distinct and different from one another that they cannot allow for the formation of an external universal under which they are subsumed. Between these individuals there can only be an aspect or aspects of similarity but they cannot be entirely identical.⁵⁵ From this

⁵¹ For these positions, see Ibn Taymiyya, *Muwāfaqat Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, i. 173, 175, 178; Marmura's section on Ibn Sīnā's metaphysics in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, iii. 73–9, esp. 75–7; Davidson, *Proofs*, 286–7 (and n. 31); Heer, 'Al-Jāmī's *Treatise on Existence*', 223 ff.

⁵² See e.g. *Naqd al-Mantiq*, 164, 194–6; *Jahd*, 118, 119, 204, 233 (Translation, pars. 63, 65, 225, 285, below); *Muwāfaqat Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, i. 128–9, 176 ff., 180, 184, ii. 236 ff.; *Furqān*, 154; *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 88 ff., 157 ff.; *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyya*, 47.

⁵³ *Muwāfaqat Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, i. 128, 129.

⁵⁴ *Naqd al-Mantiq*, 164.

⁵⁵ See *Muwāfaqat Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, i. 65, 177. On p. 65 he argues for the uniqueness of individuals on the basis of the Quran. See also *Naqd al-Mantiq*, 196.

it necessarily follows, and Ibn Taymiyya states it explicitly, that the universality of the genus, species, and difference cannot be the essence, and that individual members classed under one of these universals are not identical in essence.⁵⁶

The fact that externally existing individuals are only similar and not identical does not mean that universals cannot be formed. The mind can abstract that quality (or qualities) which is common to a group of externally existing individuals, thus creating a universal that corresponds (*yutābiq*) to these individuals. But Ibn Taymiyya rejected the view, espoused by the philosophers, that universals abstracted in this fashion or otherwise partake in the individuals in the external world. The uniqueness of the individual simply precludes the universal, which is common to many, from existing externally.⁵⁷ The universal is nothing more than a common, general meaning that the mind retains in order to signify individuals in the real, natural world. The universal and abstract mental meaning, Ibn Taymiyya seems to be saying, is identical with the verbal utterance and the written word that stand for that meaning. The written word corresponds to, and expresses, the verbal utterance, just as the verbal utterance represents and corresponds to the mental concept which applies to any one of the externally existing individuals. In the external world there exists no single entity that can be applied to individuals under which they can be said to be subsumed.⁵⁸

Ibn Taymiyya's rejection of externally existing universals perfectly agrees with, and in fact goes further to enhance, his total opposition to the distinction drawn between quiddity and its existence, particularly its extramental existence. The essence, for him, is no more than a generalization or abstraction by the mind of externally existing individuals;⁵⁹ thus, an essence has no existence other than in the mind.⁶⁰ Accordingly, man *qua* man, or an absolute man or human, exists only as a mental concept.⁶¹ From this it follows that all universals, be they natural, logical, or mental, have only mental existence, precisely like absolute existence when conditioned or

⁵⁶ *Naqd al-Manṭiq*, 191, 194, 196; *Muwāfaqat Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, i. 177.

⁵⁷ *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 88, 94; *Muwāfaqat Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, i. 65.

⁵⁸ *Muwāfaqat Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, i. 129; *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 158.

⁵⁹ *Tawḥīd al-ʾUlūhiyya*, 47; *al-Radd*, 118, 368; *Jahd*, 118, 238 (Translation, pars. 63, 64, 293, below).

⁶⁰ *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 163; *al-Radd*, 9.

⁶¹ See his *Furqān*, 154; *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 89; *Muwāfaqat Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, ii. 236–7.

unconditioned by anything.⁶² If absolute existence is merely a mental concept, then the Necessary Existent does not exist in external reality.⁶³ This conclusion, in Ibn Taymiyya's view, not only demonstrates the confusion and absurdity of the philosophers and mystics who hold a realist theory of universals, but also places them within the pale of heresy and unbelief.⁶⁴

4

To say that undermining the philosophical and mystical doctrine of absolute existence was less than crucial for Ibn Taymiyya would be to underestimate the metaphysical consequences of the realist theory of universals, at least as this theory or its ramifications were understood by our author. Refuting this theory was essential because such a refutation proved not only that the God of the philosophers and the mystics is a fabrication of their own minds and has no real external existence, but also prepared the ground for launching another level of criticism against what may perhaps be described as the two most fundamental doctrines of speculative mysticism, namely, the doctrine of 'fixed prototypes' and that of the Unity of Existence.

It is instructive to note here that Ibn Taymiyya's unrelenting attack on the philosophers was in fact double-edged. On the one hand, by refuting philosophical logic he advanced his critique of the metaphysical doctrines of *falsafa*, and, on the other, by undermining logic in general and the realist theories of essences and universals in particular, he sought to shake the dogmatic foundation of mystical pantheism. It is patently clear that Ibn Taymiyya held the philosophers—and, incidentally, the Jahmīs,⁶⁵ whom he accused of stripping God of all attributes—responsible for the pantheistic heresies of Ibn Sab'īn, Qūnawī, Tilimsānī, Ibn 'Arabī, and their followers.⁶⁶

The first of the two fundamental doctrinal principles upon which speculative mysticism in general and that of Ibn 'Arabī in particular

⁶² *Muwāfaqat Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, i. 174 ff., ii. 237; *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 163 ff.

⁶³ *Muwāfaqat Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, i. 128–9; *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyya*, 47–8; *Furqān*, 118; *Aqwam mā Qīl fil-Mashī'a*, 153.

⁶⁴ *Muwāfaqat Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, i. 129, 174; *al-Radd*, 138; *Jahd*, 130–1 (Translation, par. 84, below).

⁶⁵ See Translation, par. 96, n. 1, below.

⁶⁶ *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 175.

was based is the postulate that non-existents are things that subsist in non-existence (*al-ma'dūm shay' thābit fī al-'adam*).⁶⁷ This doctrine is directly connected with the Aristotelian and Avicennian conception of universals and, to a lesser extent, with the forerunner of this conception, the Platonic Ideas.⁶⁸ Also connected with this doctrine is the Ishrāqī theory of universals which proclaims that universals exist in the external world as incorporeal substances which subsist in a separate non-material world of archetypes (*'ālam al-mithāl*).⁶⁹ Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya associates a modified version of this doctrine with the Mu'tazilis and Rāfiḍīs.⁷⁰ On the view of later speculative mystics, before coming into existence things in the external phenomenal world are potentialities in the mind of the Absolute. God's knowledge of these things, which Ibn 'Arabī called the 'fixed prototypes of things' (*al-a'yān al-thābita*), is identical with His knowledge of Himself, and thus they are both ideas in His mind as well as particular modes of the divine essence.⁷¹ Now, Ibn Taymiyya understood Ibn 'Arabī to be saying that these prototypes of things as well as their quiddities are not created, and that the external existence of things is a quiddity added to their quiddities.⁷² Such an understanding entails the conclusion, which Ibn Taymiyya must have been more than happy to reach, that the prototypes of things subsist outside God's mind,⁷³ thus making God less than the creator of the universe. This conception would certainly seem harmonious with Ibn 'Arabī's creed that things in the world cannot be changed, not even by God Himself. For this God, on this creed, is not the transcendent God of the monotheistic religions, but rather an Absolute Being who manifests Himself in all forms of existence in the universe.⁷⁴

This theory of prototypes is inextricably connected with the second Ṣūfī principle of the Unity of Existence. Here, external existence has no being or meaning apart from God, for God, the Absolute

⁶⁷ See Ālūsī, *Jalā' al-'Aynayn*, 91, where Ibn Taymiyya's letter to al-Shaykh al-Manbijī is cited; *Tawhīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 143.

⁶⁸ Cf. Affī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 51–2.

⁶⁹ Suhrawardī, *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, 92–6, 154–62, 211 ff.; Heer, 'Al-Jāmī's *Treatise on Existence*', 228.

⁷⁰ *Tawhīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 143.

⁷¹ Affī, *Mystical Philosophy*, 47 ff.; idem, 'Ibn 'Arabī', 412.

⁷² *Tawhīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 144.

⁷³ Ālūsī, *Jalā' al-'Aynayn* (Ibn Taymiyya's letter to al-Shaykh al-Manbijī), 92–3.

⁷⁴ Affī, 'Ibn 'Arabī', 417, 420; idem, *Mystical Philosophy*, 54–7.

Existent, is the only real existence outside the mind. The world is merely a manifestation of the Absolute, and thus it is no more than an expression of divine external existence.⁷⁵ From the proposition that reality is one and indivisible,⁷⁶ it was easy to maintain, as Ibn Taymiyya did, that in the view of Ibn 'Arabī, Tilimsānī, and other pantheists, the existence of created beings is identical with the existence of the Creator, and that God is indistinguishable from that reality which is other than He.⁷⁷

For Ibn Taymiyya, the theological and juristic ramifications of the doctrine of the Unity of Existence could hardly be more dangerous. Theologically, this doctrine, whether in its milder form expressed by Ibn 'Arabī or the more radical version espoused by Tilimsānī, Farghānī, and al-Ṣadr al-Rūmī, obliterated the distinction between cause and effect, primary and secondary, creator and created. In this doctrine, God becomes the universe, and the universe becomes God, and whatever attribute one cares to attach to created beings will be equally predicable of God.⁷⁸ This fact alone suffices to prove the heresies of these pantheists.⁷⁹ Moreover, from the juristic standpoint, obliterating the distinctions between God and the universe necessarily entails that in effect there can be no Shari'a, since the deontic nature of the Law presupposes the existence of someone who commands (*āmir*) and others who are the recipients of the command (*mā'mūr*), namely, God and his subjects.⁸⁰ On these grounds, Ibn Taymiyya strongly charges all pantheists, including Ibn 'Arabī, with rescinding the Shari'a.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Affifi, 'Ibn 'Arabī', 409–13.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 410.

⁷⁷ Ālūsī, *Jalā' al-'Aynayn* (Ibn Taymiyya's letter to al-Shaykh al-Manbijī), 92; Ibn Taymiyya, *Tawhīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 114, 124, 160; idem, *al-Radd*, 521.

⁷⁸ In addition to attributes God associates with Himself in the Quran, Ibn Taymiyya characterizes God with certain attributes which he predicates of Him analogically (namely, through *tashkīk*). See his *al-Radd*, 156, 521; idem, *Jahd*, 145, 147 (Translation, pars. 111, 114, and notes thereto, below); Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, i. 780–2, s.v. *al-tashkīk*.

⁷⁹ *Tawhīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 112–26.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 114.

⁸¹ In what seem to be Ibn Taymiyya's earlier treatises, this accusation is directed against such pantheists as Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Rūmī, Tilimsānī, and Sa'īd al-Farghānī, but to the exclusion of Ibn 'Arabī. See e.g. his letter to Manbijī in Ālūsī, *Jalā' al-'Aynayn*, 92–3, and his *Muwāfaqat Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, ii. 56. But in *Tawhīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 114, he also includes Ibn 'Arabī ('wa-li-hādhā imtana'a al-taklīf 'indahū', i.e. Ibn 'Arabī). For Ibn 'Arabī's juridical doctrines, see Ghurāb, *al-Fiqh 'inda al-Shaykh al-Akbar Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī*. For his critique of the legal schools and their *fiqh*, see Morris, 'Ibn 'Arabī's "Esotericism": The Problem of Spiritual Authority', 46–64.

It is therefore not surprising that Ibn Taymiyya should equate the speculative mystics' damaging effects on the Shari'a with the havoc wreaked by the Tatar invasion of the Eastern Caliphate. That Ibn Taymiyya thought the conscription of the masses in the cause of antinomian Sūfism to be as destructive as the Tatars' oppressive control of the community and its Law, easily explains the priority he gave to the refutation of the philosophical foundations of their doctrines.

5

Ibn Taymiyya considered the task of demolishing the methodological foundations of philosophy to be incomplete without demonstrating the weaknesses inherent in the syllogism and, more specifically, in syllogistic demonstration. Philosophy obviously rests on arguments, and all valid arguments, it was asserted as early as Aristotle, involve syllogistic reasoning.⁸² Even more than his physics and metaphysics, Aristotle's theory of syllogistics and demonstration, which stands central in his *Organon*, remained predominant among later Arabic and non-Arabic philosophers. It was a number of the fundamental rules which govern this theory that Ibn Taymiyya set out to refute.

Aristotle defined the syllogism as 'discourse in which, certain things being stated, something other than what is stated follows of necessity from their being so'.⁸³ Demonstration, on the other hand, he defined as 'a syllogism productive of scientific knowledge, a syllogism, that is, the grasp of which is *eo ipso* such knowledge . . . [T]he premisses of demonstrated knowledge must be true, primary, immediate, better known than and prior to the conclusion'.⁸⁴

A syllogism, Aristotle further stated, is an inference in which the conclusion necessarily follows from two and only two premisses. 'Whenever three terms are so related to one another that the last is contained in the middle as in a whole, and the middle is either contained in, or excluded from, the first as in or from a whole, the extremes must be related by a perfect syllogism'.⁸⁵ The three terms, by force of the *Dictum de omni et nullo*, thus require a pair of premisses. A syllogism consisting of one premiss, Aristotle explicitly

⁸² Kneale and Kneale, *Development*, 99.

⁸³ *Analytica Priora*, 24^b18; *Topica*, 100^a25. See also Joseph, *Introduction*, 225.

⁸⁴ *Analytica Posteriora*, 71^b18.

⁸⁵ *Analytica Priora*, 25^b32 ff.

states, cannot result in a conclusion.⁸⁶ Furthermore, one of the two premisses must be affirmative and at least one must be universal. Without meeting these requirements a syllogism will be either impossible or irrevocably defective.⁸⁷

According to this doctrine, then, the syllogism, when valid, has the following features. First, as stated in Aristotle's definition of the syllogism given earlier, all syllogistic arguments of the categorical type must produce new knowledge, or as he elsewhere stated, a syllogism 'makes use of old knowledge to impart new'.⁸⁸ Second, a syllogism must consist of no less and no more than two premisses, plus one premiss as a conclusion.⁸⁹ Third, it must contain at least one universal premiss.⁹⁰ These, of course, by no means constitute all the rules of the syllogism, though they are indeed indispensable for making a syllogism possible. All Arabic logicians writing in the Greek tradition have taken these rules for granted,⁹¹ and the centrality of these rules meant that successfully demolishing them would certainly be sufficient to prove the invalidity or, at least, the uselessness of the syllogistic theory. This is precisely what Ibn Taymiyya set out to do.

6

It is significant that, despite his intense disapproval of Greek logic, Ibn Taymiyya insisted on, and never retracted, the proposition that the categorical syllogism is formally impeccable.⁹² We have no indication that he was aware of the now well-known critique made by Sextus Empiricus nearly six centuries earlier.⁹³ The latter strongly argued, as in fact have several other philosophers more recently,⁹⁴ that the syllogism involves a *petitio principii*, since the conclusion,

⁸⁶ Ibid. 34^a15–17.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 41^a6.

⁸⁸ *Analytica Posteriora*, 71^a5.

⁸⁹ *Analytica Priora*, 42^a32.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 41^a6.

⁹¹ Fārābī, *al-Qiyās al-Ṣaghīr*, 250–7 (English trans., 59–73); Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, 69–70 and *passim*; Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid*, 67–83; Rāzī, *Lubāb al-Ishārāt*, 30 ff.; Aḥmadnagarī, *Jāmi'*, iii. 106–7, s.v. *qiyās*.

⁹² *al-Radd*, 293, 246 ff.; *Jahd*, 206–7, 217 (Translation, pars. 230, 253, below); *Ḍabṭ al-Mantiq*, 260.

⁹³ See n. 137 below.

⁹⁴ See n. 137 below, and Dummett, 'Justification of Deduction', 300 ff.; Cohen, *Preface*, 25 ff.

which is to be proven, is already found (or at least implicit) in the premisses.⁹⁵ We are certain, however, that despite the constant preoccupation of medieval Muslim scholars with the issue of circular reasoning (*dawr*), Ibn Taymiyya seems never to have associated the syllogistic form of argument with circularity. This is somewhat surprising since, as we shall see, Ibn Taymiyya persisted in the view that in so far as things in the external world are concerned, the syllogism can lead to no new knowledge whatsoever;⁹⁶ in a syllogism treating of such existents there is nothing in the conclusion that is not already found in the premisses. The substantive arguments he adduced to vindicate this position could have been extended—I believe with relative ease—to a more serious charge that the syllogism inherently begs the question. But Ibn Taymiyya does not seem to have been ready to make such a categorical charge.

Why he did not make such a charge is not readily obvious. Ibn Taymiyya conceived the syllogism as an inference that may deal either with mental concepts or with things in the real, objective world. Mental concepts are ideas that can have no external existence,⁹⁷ such as, for instance, the rules of mathematics, geometry, and logic. The Law of the Excluded Middle, the Law of Contradiction, mathematical truths, and other similar principles, have no real ontological status apart from their existence in particulars. Yet because they are irrefutable as universal propositions, they can lead to knowledge of particulars subsumed under them. In other words, because, for example, the Law of the Excluded Middle is irrefutable without it being necessary to enumerate all the particular instances in the world falling under such law, we can derive new knowledge from this law about something that was not considered when the law came to be formulated in our minds. But since the Law of the Excluded Middle is entirely mental, any new knowledge that would be derived therefrom is also mental, teaching nothing about things existing in the natural world. Thus, by acknowledging the possibility of acquiring new knowledge by means of syllogistic reasoning, Ibn Taymiyya was not willing to accept the claim that the form of the

⁹⁵ Sextus argued that the major premiss can be established only by induction. Now, if induction is incomplete, the so-called universal premiss may prove false since it might be refuted by new evidence. But if the induction is complete, then the particular in the minor premiss must have been examined in order to establish the major.

⁹⁶ *al-Radd*, 299, 355; *Jahd*, 218, 235 (Translation, pars. 256, 288, below).

⁹⁷ *al-Radd*, 299.

categorical syllogism entails the fallacy of a *petitio principii*. At the same time, however, Ibn Taymiyya could not see the utility of mathematical and logical knowledge for the human understanding of the real world. He simply dismissed this knowledge as irrelevant.⁹⁸

The insistence upon the formal validity of the categorical syllogism was due not only to his conviction of the validity of the syllogism in mathematical and geometrical matters, but also of its validity when dealing with external existents. His argument that in such syllogisms there is nothing in the conclusion that is not already found in the premisses cannot, strictly speaking, be interpreted as meaning that a *petitio principii* is involved in these syllogisms, although, admittedly, a case for circularity can be made.

Syllogisms treating of matters in the external world do not yield new knowledge, on the grounds that the so-called universal premisses they contain are not truly universal.⁹⁹ They are formed through an enumeration of particulars which, however numerous, can never be the entirety of the particulars existing in the external world.¹⁰⁰ The formulation of a universal then proceeds from particulars to a universal, and then to the same particulars which were enumerated when the universal was formed. In these pseudo-universals, whenever a new particular arises, the universal is no more helpful in deducing an attribute found in that particular than is the particular in lending credibility to the universal. Hence, we can hardly learn anything about the particular through the universal without first learning something about the particular itself.

The sterility of the syllogism for studying *natura rerum* is then to be attributed to a problematic inherent, not in the formal structure of the argument, but rather in the epistemic value of the premiss which is claimed to be universal. Ibn Taymiyya retained the view that apart from the universal statements embodied in the revealed

⁹⁸ *al-Radd*, 135, 316; *Jahd*, 128, 221–2 (Translation, pars. 80, 265, below); *Naqd al-Manṭiq*, 202. Ibn Taymiyya's interest obviously lies in what he called 'knowledge of external existents' (*ilm bil-mawjūdāt al-khārija*), existents that are unique. This knowledge he considered beneficial because it is knowledge of God and of all mundane matters that are necessary for man to lead a lawful (*sharʿī*) life. It must be understood that for him the purpose of human life is not a better understanding of the natural world in order to control nature and subject it to man's wishes (a vision that constituted the nerve of the Scientific Revolution in the West); rather, the human purpose lies in understanding the divine will in order that man may observe it and comply with it.

⁹⁹ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, 113–14, 328, 355; idem, *Jahd*, 113, 235 (Translation, pars. 56, 288, below).

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, 113–14; idem, *Jahd*, 113 (Translation, par. 56, below).

texts, all universal propositions uttered about things in the real world are formed through observation of particulars.¹⁰¹ This empiricist attitude, however, raises a problem in Ibn Taymiyya's critique. Thus far we have seen him as an advocate of the position that the only non-divine, certain, and exhaustive universals are those employed in mathematics and geometry. And as a confirmation of this position we find him in one place declaring that mathematical principles, such as 'one is half two', are *a priori*, for God implants them in our souls upon birth.¹⁰² Surely, a flagrant contradiction ensues from this assertion, since he also holds that all unrevealed universals are the result of generalizations made by the mind on the basis of empirical observations of particulars that share a certain attribute. A detailed analysis of the apparent contradiction will take us beyond the bounds of this introduction. I will only argue that one way out of this dilemma might lie in establishing a chronology for Ibn Taymiyya's relevant works. The statement concerning the *a priori* character of mathematical universals is found in *Naqḍ al-Manṭiq*, a work whose contents point to a date of composition earlier than his *al-Radd*, where he set forth his arguments in the greatest detail. In the latter work we find a consistent empiricist view to the effect that all universal propositions, including mathematical and geometrical universals, are acquired through an empirical observation of particulars.¹⁰³ It is Ibn Taymiyya's thesis that aside from revelation all human knowledge begins with particulars.¹⁰⁴ The mind first conceives a particular 'one' and then judges it to be half of a particular 'two'. Such knowledge does not come into existence in isolation from the particulars found in the phenomenal world. Having observed that two equal parts of one thing constitute two halves, the mind, upon observing the recurrence of this phenomenon in a number of qualitatively different particulars, will form the generalization that one is half of two.¹⁰⁵ This conception accords with Ibn Taymiyya's cardinal principle that knowledge of particulars occurs in the mind

¹⁰¹ *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyya*, 47; *al-Radd*, 316; *Jahd*, 223 (Translation, par. 267, below).

¹⁰² *Naqḍ al-Manṭiq*, 202 ('al-badihiyyāt, wa-hya al-'ulūm al-awwaliyya al-latī yaj'aluhā Allāh fī al-nufūsi ibtidā'an bi-lā wāsiṭa, mithl al-ḥisāb, wa-hya kal-'ilm bi'anna al-wāḥid niṣf al-ithnayn').

¹⁰³ See e.g. *al-Radd*, 316–17, 363 ff.; *Jahd*, 222–3, 236–7 (Translation, pars. 267, 291, below); Hallaq, 'Ibn Taymiyya on the Existence of God', 58–66.

¹⁰⁴ See sources cited in previous note.

¹⁰⁵ *al-Radd*, 315–16, 108–9, 371; *Jahd*, 221–2, 107–8, 239 (Translation, pars. 264–7, 48, 295, below).

prior to knowledge of the universal, for one knows that ten pebbles is twice the number of five pebbles before knowing that every number is divisible by two and that any number is two times as large as either one of its halves.¹⁰⁶

If we accept Ibn Taymiyya's position that all universal propositions represent mental generalizations formed on the basis of empirical observation of external particulars, then another difficulty arises with regard to reconciling this position with his earlier assertion that mathematical and geometrical universals do not involve a *petitio principii* since their truth does not depend on a complete enumeration of the relevant particular instances. Now, nowhere does Ibn Taymiyya address the difficulty as posed here. It is clear, however, that he does not develop a classification of universals into types, though he certainly thought of universal propositions as belonging to at least two categories: one is irrefutable, and the other is not. Mathematical principles belong to the former, while empirical propositions belong to the latter. Universal propositions about medical matters, grammatical rules, habitual events in nature, etc., can never be conclusive and irrefutable.¹⁰⁷ The mind cannot simply rule out the possibility of contrariety, such as in the case of the universal proposition 'All animals move their lower jaw when they chew', a proposition proven false by the fact that crocodiles move their upper jaw when feeding.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, mathematical and geometrical principles are irrefutable, although the mind initially apprehends them by abstracting them from particulars in the external world. Ibn Taymiyya seems to have thought that, once abstracted, these propositions become virtually axiomatic in the mind, and are not susceptible to refutation. Unfortunately, however, we find no explanation as to why mathematical universals, unlike empirical propositions, become irrefutable despite the fact that both types of propositions are abstracted from particulars.

7

The philosophers' claims for the truth of the universal proposition in a categorical syllogism drew more than one critical argument from

¹⁰⁶ *Tawhīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 11.

¹⁰⁷ *al-Radd*, 328.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 208–9; *Jahd*, 196–7 (Translation, par. 211, below). See also Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid*, 89.

Ibn Taymiyya. In the first place, he insisted that all syllogistic reasoning about things in the external world proceeds from less than universal premisses, since the alleged universality of premisses in such syllogisms is established by incomplete induction. We shall see later how our critic employed this argument in his attack against the philosophers' doctrine which assigns to the syllogism a place logically and epistemologically superior to that of analogy. But even if we suppose, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, that such a premiss is indeed universal, the categorical syllogism remains none the less useless. The first of the two arguments he adduces to prove his proposition is one that derives from Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), a theory that tends to view all syllogistic arguments of the categorical type, not as inferences, but rather as linguistic analysis of the particulars embedded in a universal statement. These particulars, however, are not to be found subsumed under the universal proposition through a middle term, since the very language expressing the proposition speaks of the predicate as applicable to every individual subsumed under the subject.¹⁰⁹ The implications of this view are clear: the universal premiss speaks of all its particulars without the need for a middle,¹¹⁰ and this means that in an inference of the categorical type the minor premiss is superfluous. Indeed, even the conclusion amounts to little more than a particular emphasis upon the major, universal premiss. The conclusion 'Socrates is mortal' does nothing but emphatically particularize the fact expressed in the categorical premiss 'All men are mortal'.

Closely related to, if not part of, this criticism is an argument urged against the famous logical doctrine, first stated by Aristotle, that the premisses of the syllogism must ultimately originate in truths that are necessary and indemonstrable.¹¹¹ Ibn Taymiyya maintains that if the syllogistic premisses revert back to self-evident, indemonstrable truths, then all particulars subsumed under these truths are *a priori* self-evident and thus do not need a syllogism.¹¹²

The other argument he produces against the syllogism issues from his empiricist world-view, namely, that in the external world only individuals exist. It is the knowledge we acquire about these par-

¹⁰⁹ See Hallaq, 'Non-Analogical Arguments', 287; Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, 151, 203, 361; idem, *Jahd*, 143, 190, 236 (Translation, pars. 108, 196, 290, below).

¹¹⁰ *al-Radd*, 190-1; *Jahd*, 180 (Translation, par. 174, below).

¹¹¹ *Analytica Posteriora*, 72^b15 ff.; Bochenski, *Ancient Formal Logic*, 46.

¹¹² *al-Radd*, 315-16, 363; *Jahd*, 221, 236-7 (Translation, pars. 264, 291, below).

particulars that allows us to form the so-called universal propositions, not the other way round. Our knowledge then proceeds from the particular to the general, from the one to the many. The syllogism is thus useless since through it we are led to knowledge that we have already acquired from the particular.¹¹³ We come to the knowledge that Socrates is mortal before we know that all humans are mortal.

It turns out then that in confirmation of the largely enigmatic acknowledgement of the formal validity of the categorical syllogism, Ibn Taymiyya apparently could not credit the syllogism with impeccable structure or semantic force. Indeed, by insisting on syllogistic entailment as a case of the obvious subsumability of individuals under the universal premiss, Ibn Taymiyya was able to dispense with the *Dictum de omni et nullo*, the backbone sustaining the categorical syllogism. Furthermore, doing away with the *Dictum* also enabled him to question another crucial requirement in the categorical syllogism, namely, that every syllogism must contain no more and no less than two premisses. As we have seen, he deems a truly universal premiss sufficient to yield a conclusion. He demands no other premiss for the inference because all the knowledge needed subsists in that universal premiss.¹¹⁴ Yet, one premiss may not suffice if the reasoner finds himself in need of additional data in order to arrive at the required conclusion. Thus, the number of premisses in the argument is determined by the particular needs of the reasoner, needs that vary from one person to another.¹¹⁵ Knowledge is so relative, he maintains, that the same matter may be quite self-evident for one person and not so for another.¹¹⁶

That confining the number of premisses in the syllogism to two is arbitrary is proven, he asserts, by the logicians' recognition of the validity of both the enthymeme and the sorites. One of the major reasons given for the suppression of the premiss in the enthymeme is the fact that the premiss is obvious.¹¹⁷ The suppression of one premiss owing to its clarity is proof that at times one premiss may be

¹¹³ *al-Radd*, 151, 251, 303, 361–2; *Jahd*, 143, 211, 221, 236 (Translation, pars. 108, 262, 290, 293, below).

¹¹⁴ *al-Radd*, 190–1; *Jahd*, 179–80 (Translation, par. 174, below).

¹¹⁵ *al-Radd*, 167, 250, 251; *Jahd*, 159, 209–10, 211 (Translation, pars. 137, 237, 238, below).

¹¹⁶ *al-Radd*, 167; *Jahd*, 159 (Translation, par. 137, below).

¹¹⁷ *al-Radd*, 187–8, 199; *Jahd*, 176, 186 (Translation, pars. 168, 186, below). The other reason usually given for suppressing the premiss is the reasoner's attempt to deceive his interlocutor.

all that is needed. At other times, however, even two premisses may be insufficient to yield a conclusion, and thus three or more premisses may be required. The need for more than two premisses is again attested by the logicians' acceptance of the sorites,¹¹⁸ which is a compound syllogism consisting of a chain of syllogisms in which each term except the first and last occurs twice, once as subject and once as predicate. Thus, the sorites and enthymeme, in Ibn Taymiyya's view, make nonsense of the two-premiss stipulation. If all the premisses upon which the knowledge of the conclusion depends are to be mentioned, then the number of premisses may be only one¹¹⁹ or it may exceed ten.¹²⁰

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Thus, the syllogism is open to criticism on more than one account, and as we have seen, the alleged universality of the syllogistic premiss seems to be most vulnerable. A complete induction of all particulars in the external world is postulated by Ibn Taymiyya as impossible, and thus cannot lead to a truly universal premiss or to certitude. The problematic nature inherent in the syllogism renders it hardly superior to analogy, since however valid the syllogism may be, it cannot, by virtue of form alone, lead to a certain conclusion.¹²¹ It is the *subject-matter* of the argument, *not its form*, that determines the truth of the conclusion. If the form is irrelevant, and if the so-called universal premiss in the syllogism is not really universal, then how does the syllogism differ from analogy? Ibn Taymiyya answers that it does not. The syllogism does not differ from analogy except in form, and form, it has been said, is irrelevant to the acquisition of knowledge. Both analogy and the syllogism yield certitude when their subject-matter is veridical, and they result in mere probability when their subject-matter is uncertain. A syllogistic mode of reasoning will not result in a certain conclusion by virtue of form alone.

But what makes analogy and the syllogism equal? Ibn Taymiyya understands analogy in a more developed sense than do Aristotle

¹¹⁸ *al-Radd*, 171; *Jahd*, 163 (Translation, par. 144, below).

¹¹⁹ Ibn Taymiyya does not adduce a well-developed argument in favour of a one-premiss inference, although, like the author of *Naqd al-Nathr*, he advocated the possibility of an inference that is nothing but the hypothetical syllogism. See n. 128 below, and van Ess, 'Logical Structure', 40.

¹²⁰ *al-Radd*, 172, 199; *Jahd*, 165, 186 (Translation, pars. 146, 186, below).

¹²¹ *al-Radd*, 200–1, 211; *Jahd*, 199 (Translation, pars. 190, 216, below).

and other Greek logicians. By the century in which he lived, analogy had already generated one of the most sophisticated discussions Islamic legal theory—and for that matter the history of thought—has ever known, and analogical reasoning was thus developed in an unprecedented manner. Moreover, and this is significant, Ibn Taymiyya was first and foremost a lawyer and jurist, and his world-view was considerably coloured by his characteristically juristic thinking. Now, legal analogy, the paradigm of all analogical reasoning in medieval Islam, was considered complete—but not necessarily valid—when it contained four elements: the original case, the assimilated case, the cause, and the judgement.¹²² The original case (*aṣl*) represents the precedent. In the proposition 'Grape-wine is prohibited' there is given both the original case, grape-wine, and its judgement (*ḥukm*), namely, prohibition. The assimilated case is the new case for which the jurist seeks to formulate a judgement. If the assimilated case proves to be equivalent to the original case by way of sharing the same cause, then the judgement in the original case is transferred to the assimilated case. Again, the case of wine affords a basic example. Grape-wine was prohibited by the Lawgiver owing to its intoxicating quality. Accordingly, intoxication represents the cause. Date-wine is a novel case whose legal status is yet to be determined. Like grape-wine, date-wine possesses the quality of intoxication which we establish through sense perception. Having determined that intoxication, the cause of the judgement, is present in both date-wine and grape-wine, we transfer the judgement, namely prohibition, to date-wine.¹²³

The syllogism, on the other hand, consists of the same elements. The middle term in a syllogism is the cause in an analogy, and the major premiss, which contains the major and middle terms, is equivalent in an analogy to the concomitance (*talāzum*) or necessary relation between the cause, on the one hand, and the original and assimilated cases, on the other. Whatever is required to prove the truth and certainty of the universal premiss in a syllogism will be required to prove that the cause is for certain always concomitant with the judgement.¹²⁴ Put differently, the means through which we

¹²² Discussions concerning legal analogy may be found in works of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. On the four components of analogy (*qiyās (al-tamthīl)*), see e.g. Ibn Qudāma, *Rawḍa*, 283–7; Ibn al-Humām, *Tahrīr*, 419–21; Āmidī, *Iḥkām*, iii, 9–10.

¹²³ For this and similar examples see *al-Radd*, 211, 213; *Jahd*, 199–203 (Translation, pars. 216–18, 222–3, below).

¹²⁴ *al-Radd*, 204, 211; *Jahd*, 191, 199–200 (Translation, pars. 200, 216, below).

establish the truth of the proposition 'All intoxicants are prohibited' are identical with those through which we prove that whenever there is a given intoxicant, prohibition is necessarily concomitant with it. In the same vein, the grounds on which the causality in a judgement may be refuted are identical with those on which the universality of the premiss of a syllogism may be questioned. If there is good reason to doubt the analogy 'Men are corporeal, analogous to horses, dogs, etc.', then there is as good a reason to doubt the major premiss 'All animals are corporeal'.¹²⁵ However, since in the external world we have no way of establishing with certainty any universal proposition, we are left with propositions containing only probable knowledge, regardless of whether these propositions are employed in a syllogism or in an analogy. But analogy, Ibn Taymiyya goes on to say, is surely more informative as it includes the mention of at least one particular upon which the conclusion is based, whereas the syllogism, also probable, makes no mention of particulars.¹²⁶

It is obvious that Ibn Taymiyya does not credit the syllogism with the ability to bring about certitude any more than he does analogy. On first appearance he seems to overlook the commonly held doctrine that even if the premiss in a syllogism is not universal, it stands, on the scale of probability, superior to analogy. While the latter, on this doctrine, proceeds from a single particular, the former is established inductively on the basis of a number of particulars. If Ibn Taymiyya did not subscribe to this doctrine it is because he, like all his fellow legists, refused to limit analogy to an inference which proceeds from one particular to another. Islamic juristic theory had already developed a variety of methods and procedures through which the cause of the judgement in the original case is established.¹²⁷ It was the task of these methods to verify the absence of another identical case or cases (particulars) in which the cause did not produce the same judgement. For if such a case does exist, the predication of the judgement in the original case becomes questionable, and the transfer of the judgement will not be possible. In the context of the syllogism, the existence of such a case means that the universality of the major premiss is highly dubious. Thus, establishing the universal character of the major premiss is equivalent to verifying that whenever there is a cause there is a judgement; and in the final

¹²⁵ *al-Radd*, 213; *Jahd*, 202 (Translation, par. 222, below).

¹²⁶ *al-Radd*, 205, 211–12; *Jahd*, 200 (Translation, par. 218, below).

¹²⁷ See e.g. Āmidī, *Ihkām*, iii. 17–51, *passim*.

analysis an examination of other particulars (cases) is involved in both inferences. The difference, if any, between analogical and syllogistic verification is that in the latter the universal subject and predicate are completely abstracted from the particulars, while in the former the predicate is affirmed of the subject in so far as one actual case (particular) is concerned, though such an affirmation is possible only through an examination of a certain number of other relevant cases. The process may be different but the result is identical.

When Ibn Taymiyya spoke of the identical natures of analogy and the categorical syllogism, he was speaking of an analogy whose cause is established by methods which presuppose an inductive survey of all relevant particulars. This developed conception of analogy, together with his considered opinion that in the natural, objective world there can be only refutable universal propositions, amounts to a position—which he does, indeed, take—that analogy and the categorical syllogism are equivalent and interchangeable. In fact, he goes further and argues that not only may an analogy be converted into a syllogism in the first figure and vice versa, but an analogical or syllogistic inference can also be recast in the form of hypothetical and disjunctive syllogisms.¹²⁸

Casting an inference in a formal or non-formal mode is possible, Ibn Taymiyya maintains, owing to the fact that the essence of any inference is not its form but rather the connection between the components within a proposition expressing certain relationships in the external world. Things in the world are concomitant, and there can be no external particular that is not concomitant or conjoined in one form or another with other particulars. Concomitance (*talāzum*) exists in degrees of strength, from the much-coveted certitude to the lower degrees of probability. If we know for certain that whenever *A* exists, *B* also exists, we can infer with all certainty that *B* exists since we observe *A* to be in existence. Conversely, if we know with the same certainty that when *A* exists *B* can never exist, we will be able to judge without a shade of doubt that *B* now does not exist since *A* exists. In these inferences, whatever the form, our conclusion will be probable if the relationship of concomitance between *A* and *B* is less than certain.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ *al-Radd*, 201, 294–5; *Jahd*, 188 (Translation, par. 191, below). It is interesting to note that Lukasiewicz and Patzig have argued the equivalence of the categorical and the conditional syllogisms, but Smiley and Concoran have discredited their arguments. See Lear, *Aristotle and Logical Theory*, 8–9.

¹²⁹ *al-Radd*, 206; *Jahd*, 193 (Translation, par. 204, below).

It would hardly be an overstatement to say that for Ibn Taymiyya the challenge facing the logician lies not in an investigation of forms, figures, and moods—which he repeatedly characterizes as far too prolix and otiose—but rather in arriving at the truth and certainty of propositions. For him, this *is* the question. It is also not an exaggeration to maintain that Ibn Taymiyya was an ardent sceptic, but a sceptic who was saved by religion. Our simple minds, he persistently held, cannot establish certainty and truth in the natural world. The only source of truth and certainty is revealed knowledge, knowledge conveyed to us by the prophets.¹³⁰

II. Sources of the Critique

Ibn Taymiyya's ultimate goal was the demolition of the logical foundations of philosophical metaphysics and speculative mysticism, and he considered as a candidate for adoption any argument that proved appropriate and useful for achieving that end. But what were the sources of these arguments and to what extent was Ibn Taymiyya indebted to them? To answer this question it is necessary to begin where logic began, for shortly after their inception Aristotelian (and apparently pre-Aristotelian) and Stoic logic had their share of criticism from within the Greek tradition itself. It is with this criticism that we should begin to consider Ibn Taymiyya's possible indebtedness to his predecessors.

In his work *Against the Logicians*, Sextus Empiricus reports that as early as Socrates, logic—which kind we do not know—encountered the opposition of a number of Greek thinkers. The Cyrenaics, a school which appears to have risen from the teachings of Socrates, from which also emerged the school of Plato and his successors, apparently held that physics and logic have nothing to contribute to the happiness of life.¹³¹ But this opposition appeared too early for Aristotelian logic to have been its possible object. Sextus similarly reports the disapproval of Epicurus and Archelaos of logic, although it is not clear what logic they opposed and on what grounds.¹³²

Zeno's disciple, Ariston of Chios (fl. c.300 BC), also held logic to

¹³⁰ *Tawhīd al-Rubūbiyya*, 47; *Muwāfaqat Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl*, i. 28–9; *al-Radd*, 472; *Jahd*, 250 (Translation, par. 315, below).

¹³¹ Sextus, *Against the Logicians*, 7, 103. On the scepticism of the Cyrenaics, see Groarke, *Greek Scepticism*, 72–7 and *passim*.

¹³² Sextus, *Against the Logicians*, 9.

be unprofitable and injurious to those who study it, leading neither to virtue nor to the purification of the soul. It is significant that some of the statements made by Ibn Taymiyya are reminiscent of the sweeping condemnation of logic pronounced by Ariston ten centuries earlier. Consider the following comment of E. Zeller:¹³³

Logic, as doing more harm than good, he compared to a spider's web, which is as useless as it is curious; or else to the mud on a road. Those who studied it he likened to people eating lobsters, who take a great deal of trouble for the sake of a little bit of meat enveloped in much shell. Convinced, too, that the wise man is free from every deceptive infatuation, and that doubt, for the purpose of refuting which logic had been invented, can be more easily overcome by a healthy tone of mind than by argument, he felt no particular necessity for logic. Nay, more, he considered that excessive subtlety transforms the healthy action of philosophy into an unhealthy tone.

Like Ariston, Ibn Taymiyya repeatedly remarks that logic is excessively prolix, unduly complicated, and tedious, and he too offers metaphors to illustrate this view. In lieu of seafood, his examples issued from desert animals. Logic, he thought, is like the flesh of a slaughtered camel found on the summit of a mountain; the flesh is not good enough to warrant climbing the mountain, nor is the road leading to it easy to follow.¹³⁴ More important, like Ariston, Ibn Taymiyya constantly held natural, innate intelligence (*fiṭra*) to be sufficient for thinking and reasoning soundly, thus rendering logic superfluous.

About five centuries after Ariston of Chios, Sextus himself levelled a massive attack against Aristotelian and Stoic logic. His chief concern centred around truth, its criterion and its existence. He was a sceptic whose points of departure in such criticism shared no common ground with Ibn Taymiyya's basic assumptions. Any legitimate attempt at finding similarities will then have to be limited to two areas of enquiry, namely, the theory of signs and that of the syllogism. There is little doubt that Islamic scholastic theology as well as legal theory adopted an epistemic theory of signs that considerably resembled the Stoic doctrine.¹³⁵ But the resemblance is significantly diminished in the case of Ibn Taymiyya and Sextus because the latter developed a theory of signs that was not only

¹³³ Zeller, *Stoics*, 60.

¹³⁴ *Naqḍ al-Mantiq*, 155; Translation, par. 253, below.

¹³⁵ Jadaane, *L'Influence du stoïcisme*, 113 ff., 97; van Ess, 'Skepticism', 11.

different from that conceived by Ibn Taymiyya (and the Stoics), but was also largely irrelevant to Ibn Taymiyya's critique. More specifically, Sextus' dichotomous idea of commemorative and indicative signs represents a considerable advance over Ibn Taymiyya's notions of *dalāla*.¹³⁶ And in any case, Ibn Taymiyya does not seem to utilize these notions in any criticism that goes beyond asserting the superiority of Stoic conditional arguments to Aristotelian categorical syllogisms.

There is, however, one major similarity between Sextus' and Ibn Taymiyya's critiques, and that is their rejection of the syllogism. Sextus suggested that in the syllogism 'Every man is an animal; Socrates is a man; therefore, Socrates is an animal', we can establish the major premiss only through induction. If the induction is incomplete, then the examination of a new instance might prove it false; and if it is complete, then the conclusion must have been taken into account in formulating the major premiss. Therefore, Sextus concluded, the categorical syllogism is circular.¹³⁷

As we have seen earlier, Ibn Taymiyya's critique of the syllogism distinguishes itself from the doctrine of Sextus in that it adopts a different approach in attacking the problem and takes a much wider view of the weaknesses of the syllogism. And, unlike Sextus, Ibn Taymiyya stops short of levelling a charge of circularity against the inference. But even if we assume that Sextus constituted a source of Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of the syllogism, we must insist that the latter critique represents a considerably transformed version of the Sceptic's views. Furthermore, it seems well-nigh impossible to establish any link between Ibn Taymiyya and Sextus. Just as we know of no doctrine or work attributed to Ariston of Chios to have survived in Islam, we have no evidence that any of the writings of Sextus were known to Muslims. Sextus' name is hardly ever mentioned in Muslim writings, and thus the only possible channel of influence conceivable is through indirect transmission of his criticism. The writings of the Sceptics, like those of the Stoics and the Sophists, were never transmitted to Islam in the manner in which Aristotle, for instance, was. What Islam received of Sceptic doctrines

¹³⁶ On commemorative and indicative signs, see Sextus, *Against the Logicians*, 313 ff.; Stough, *Greek Skepticism*, 125–37; Chisholm, 'Sextus Empiricus', 371 ff.; Mates, *Stoic Logic*, 13 ff. On *dalāla*, see Translation, par. 42, n. 2, below.

¹³⁷ For a summary of Sextus' criticism, see *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, v. 41, s.v. 'Logic, Traditional' (by A. N. Prior).

was both marginal and thin. As van Ess has aptly remarked, not only were the names of famous old Sceptics unknown to Muslims, but Scepticism as a whole appeared in Islam 'as an isolated flash of thought and as a rhetorical bluff'.¹³⁸ We must therefore conclude that borrowing from the Greek sources must remain at best both indirect and insignificant.

It is perhaps more convincing to argue in favour of the rise of a native Muslim criticism of what was chiefly considered to be Aristotelian logic. Muslims generally had a better reason to attack this logic than their Greek predecessors since they construed it as posing a major threat to the fundamentals of their faith. The criticism of logic had a long history in Islam before Ibn Taymiyya. It is here that we should look for influences on Ibn Taymiyya. Unfortunately, our data about writings critical of logic are so scant that we shall be able to draw no more than a general and tentative outline of this fascinating history.

The earliest Muslim critic of Aristotelian logic appears to have been the Mu'tazili poet and thinker Abū al-'Abbās al-Nāshī' al-Akbar, better known as Ibn al-Shirshīr (d. 293/905).¹³⁹ Although the substance of his criticism is virtually unknown,¹⁴⁰ it is significant that he was cited as a major critic of Greek logic by Abū Sa'īd al-Sīrāfi¹⁴¹ in his celebrated debate with Mattā b. Yūnus, a debate well known to Ibn Taymiyya.¹⁴² There is no evidence, however, to indicate that Ibn Taymiyya knew much of Ibn al-Shirshīr's criticism beyond the name of its author.

In contrast, Ibn Taymiyya was intimately familiar with what appears to have been a scathing and elaborate criticism of Aristotelian logic authored by the Shī'ī thinker Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī (died between 300/912 and 310/922).¹⁴³ The treatise containing the criticism, *Kitāb al-Ārā' wal-Diyānāt*, also treats, as the title suggests,

¹³⁸ Van Ess, 'Skepticism', 2, 3.

¹³⁹ Van Ess, *Mu'tazilitische Häresiographie*, 1 ff.

¹⁴⁰ Some of his arguments may be found in his *al-Kitāb al-Awsaf*, 116–26, esp. 119–20. For a German translation with commentary, see van Ess, *Mu'tazilitische Häresiographie*, 150 ff. However, these fragments shed no light on what is presumed to have been a more systematic critique of Aristotelian logic.

¹⁴¹ Tawhīdī, *Imtā'*, 124; and Iḥsān 'Abbās's introduction to Ibn Ḥazm, *Taqrīb*, 38; Zimmermann's introduction to *Al-Fārābī's Commentary*, pp. cxxii–cxxxiv, esp. cxxiv–cxxv.

¹⁴² *al-Radd*, 178; *Jahd*, 171 (Translation, par. 159, below).

¹⁴³ *al-Radd*, 331. See also Rescher, *Development*, 41; and Translation, par. 282, n. 3, below.

of several non-Islamic dogmas and religions, such as the Brahman and Magian creeds.¹⁴⁴ Nawbakhtī also seems to be the author of a no longer extant treatise entitled *al-Radd 'alā Ahl al-Manṭiq*,¹⁴⁵ which, judging from the title, is entirely dedicated to the refutation of logic. It is possible, however, that this work represents the logical part as extracted from the larger work *Kitāb al-Ārā'*. Be that as it may, Ibn Taymiyya acknowledged having read the latter work,¹⁴⁶ a fact that finds corroboration in the multiple quotations made by his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya.¹⁴⁷ But beyond the obvious debt to Nawbakhtī concerning the criticism of the number of premisses in the syllogism, a debt that finds ample attestation in a lengthy quotation in Ibn Taymiyya's critique,¹⁴⁸ we have no means of establishing, in precise terms, any further influences until such time as Nawbakhtī's work is recovered. However, if Nawbakhtī adduced further criticisms—and it is quite possible that he did—Ibn Taymiyya *may* have made use of them without acknowledging the source. In any case, the evidence available points in the direction of Nawbakhtī's work as the earliest criticism known to Ibn Taymiyya.

I said that Ibn Taymiyya *may*—but not *must*—have made use of arguments included in Nawbakhtī's work, on the grounds that there is at least one instance where he was familiar with an attack against logic and logicians but simply chose, with minor exceptions, not to incorporate it into his critique. This attack was launched in 320/932 by the grammarian Abū Sa'īd al-Sīrāfī against the philosopher-logician Mattā b. Yūnus.¹⁴⁹ None of the main arguments set forth by Sīrāfī can be found in Ibn Taymiyya's work, and such criticism as that which stresses the conventional nature of logic and its incompatibility with the rules of the Arabic language¹⁵⁰ was made so often in medieval Islam that Sīrāfī's censure cannot claim any monopoly. At any rate, Ibn Taymiyya's concern with the relation of logic to grammar, and other cognate issues constituting the backbone of the Sīrāfī–Mattā debate, was indeed negligible.

The sparseness of primary sources renders difficult the task of

¹⁴⁴ See Ritter's introduction to Nawbakhtī's *Firaq al-Shi'a*, pp. *kāf-jīm* to *kāf-zā'*.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. *yā'-tā'*.

¹⁴⁶ *al-Radd*, 337–9; *Jahd*, 231–2 (Translation, par. 282, below).

¹⁴⁷ See e.g. Nawbakhtī, *Firaq al-Shi'a*, pp. *kāf-jīm* to *kāf-zā'*.

¹⁴⁸ *al-Radd*, 337–9; *Jahd*, 231–2 (Translation, par. 282, below).

¹⁴⁹ See Translation, par. 159, n. 1, below.

¹⁵⁰ See, in particular, Mahdi, 'Language and Logic', 58–83.

establishing any debt to the writings of early theologians. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, the founder of the Ash'arī school of theology, is reported to have written *Kitāb 'alā Ahl al-Manṭiq* (*A Response to the Logicians*).¹⁵¹ But this book, as Rescher stated, seems to have been a refutation of Christian dogmas propounded by Christians who happened to be logicians.¹⁵² Whatever the nature of the work, Ibn Taymiyya makes no reference to any logical criticism by Ash'arī, just as he makes no mention whatsoever of Ash'arī's contemporary, the Mu'tazilī Ibrāhīm b. 'Ayyāsh, who appears to have written against the demonstrative syllogism.¹⁵³ Nor does he mention the Jewish scholar Ya'qūb b. Ishāq al-Qirqisānī (*fl.* second quarter of the tenth century AD), who espoused the view that the syllogism yields no new knowledge,¹⁵⁴ a view we have seen to be central to Ibn Taymiyya's critique. However, he is familiar with the polemical writings of the renowned Ash'arī theologian Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, particularly his treatise *al-Daqa'iq*, in which he seems to have argued against the philosophers' metaphysics and logic.¹⁵⁵ Again, owing to the sparseness of sources, the identification of possible borrowings here is at present impossible.

We may also mention the well-known *fatwā* issued by Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245) against logic.¹⁵⁶ It is unlikely that Ibn Taymiyya did not know of this *responsum*. But even if we grant that he was familiar with it, there is very little in common between his massive work which was written in a critical and scrutinizing vein and the brief and narrowly legal contents of the *responsum*. Finally, we should draw attention to a highly interesting critique written by a certain Abū al-Najā al-Fāriḍ, who is entirely unknown.¹⁵⁷ If the treatise can be dated earlier than the end of the seventh/thirteenth century, then there arises the possibility that Ibn Taymiyya may have been indebted to some aspects of al-Fāriḍ's refutation of the essentialist definition. For while most of the latter's criticism is not to be found in Ibn Taymiyya's work, there are similarities in the unfavour-

¹⁵¹ Rescher (*Development*, 41) lists it on the authority of Wilhelm Spitta.

¹⁵² Rescher, *Development*, 41.

¹⁵³ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, 246.

¹⁵⁴ Van Ess, 'Skepticism', 13.

¹⁵⁵ *Naqd al-Manṭiq*, 196.

¹⁵⁶ See Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Fatāwā*, 32, 34–5; Goldziher, 'Attitude of Orthodox Islam', 205–6.

¹⁵⁷ See Falātūri's Persian introduction to the text, in Mohaghegh and Izutsu, *Collected Texts*, 7–8. For the text, *Khamisn Mas'ala fī Kasr al-Manṭiq*, see 13–60.

able attitude of both men towards the Aristotelian concept of the complete definition.

Difficult as it may be to establish specific debt to the various theological schools, Ibn Taymiyya could not have launched his attack against logic without drawing upon the earlier polemical writings of theologians, including those who were Shī'ī, Mu'tazilī, Māturīdī, or Ash'arī. That he derived material from a wide spectrum of theological schools which stood in blatant opposition to the Hellenic tradition of learning is expected. But Ibn Taymiyya did not limit himself to theological discourse: rather, he entered the abode of philosophy itself and selectively appropriated some of its own arguments and counter-arguments. Whether he adequately represented or misrepresented the metaphysical doctrines of the philosophers is a question worthy of an independent study. What we cannot question, however, is the fact that he was intimately familiar with a significant bulk of philosophical discourse. Even a preliminary reading of his works readily reveals that he had firsthand knowledge of the writings of Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd, Suhrawardī, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, to name only a few major figures.¹⁵⁸ Interestingly enough, it is from these sources that he derived a considerable portion of his argumentation against logic.

We can identify two kinds of philosophical material that made itself useful to Ibn Taymiyya. The first, and perhaps less important, were the relatively short remarks made by these philosophers with regard to difficulties inherent in the logical and philosophical doctrines they were expounding. A case in point is Ibn Sīnā's admission that real definitions are difficult, if not impossible, to formulate.¹⁵⁹ Admittedly, however, such admissions of weakness could not have supplied Ibn Taymiyya with any significant ammunition. The second, and main, source of ammunition he found in the philosophers' criticisms of each other's doctrines, in *ikhtilāf al-falāsifa*, so to speak.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ See Translation, pars. 18, 29, 76, 88, 103, 208, 281, below. Laoust (*Essai*, 84-6) discusses Ibn Taymiyya's knowledge of philosophical doctrines, including his familiarity with the philosophical novel *Ḥayy b. Yaḡzān* and the political writings of Fārābī.

¹⁵⁹ Ibn Sīnā, *Hudūd*, 1-7 (French trans., 1-6); for another example (about the definition of the sun), see Translation, pars. 9 (and n. 2 thereto), 107, 135, 148; and Ghazālī, *Mi'yār*, 52.

¹⁶⁰ Ibn Taymiyya had full knowledge of the refutations by philosophers of each other's doctrines. See the revealing passage in *Jahd*, 195 (Translation, par. 208, below). Laoust (*Essai*, 86) also observes the same characteristic in metaphysics, where Ibn Taymiyya plays the philosophers against each other.

Although it is not always possible to identify this sort of borrowing, we are able at least to establish that the writings of Suhrawardī, Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī—writings which drew on a long tradition of philosophical and theological learning—provided him with some fundamental criticism. We can also mention, among others, Ibn Sīnā, who directed certain criticisms against his Greek predecessors. The borrowings from Suhrawardī, Baghdādī, and Rāzī, however, are far more evident, since all three were highly critical of earlier philosophical doctrines, and their writings were quite familiar to Ibn Taymiyya.

Having attempted to identify and document in the notes to the translation the arguments which Ibn Taymiyya owed or may have owed to these thinkers, we shall be content here to speak briefly of Suhrawardī, who was not only highly critical of the Aristotelian logicians but also espoused certain theories that are central to Ibn Taymiyya's methodology in general and his critique in particular. Though in his *Manṭiq al-Talwihāt* Suhrawardī expounds a theory of logic that is faithful to his Peripatetic predecessors,¹⁶¹ in *Hikmat al-Ishrāq* he presents us with a critique of the Peripatetics with which, we have every reason to believe, Ibn Taymiyya was familiar.¹⁶² Among Suhrawardī's arguments against the Aristotelians at least two deserve to be mentioned: the first is his vehement refutation of the essentialist definition, and the second, his uncompromising attack against Aristotelian and Avicennian realism, an attack that was motivated by an unrelenting nominalism.¹⁶³ It is this nominalist position, which rejected complete definition and a realist theory of universals, that constitutes the heart and soul of Ibn Taymiyya's critique. But Ibn Taymiyya's nominalism was not restricted to his critique of Greek logic. The dozens of published tomes and tracts he wrote on (or against) theology, law, mysticism, and countless other subjects betray a strict nominalist approach. It would be unreasonable to argue that he owed his nominalism exclusively to Suhrawardī, particularly since nominalistic tendencies do not seem to have been uncommon in the midst of Sunnī theology and theory of law. Accord-

¹⁶¹ Suhrawardī, *Manṭiq al-Talwihāt*, 7–8 (on essence and accident), 10 ff. (on predicables), 14 ff. (on definition), 27 ff. (on propositions), 46 ff. (on the syllogism). In the same vein he also wrote *al-Lamahāt*. See Farhān, 'al-Baḥṭh al-Manṭiqī', 76–100.

¹⁶² See *al-Radd*, 40, 125, 140, 148; *Jahd*, 95, 125, 133, 139 (Translation, pars. 29, 76, 88, 103, below).

¹⁶³ Suhrawardī, *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, 17–21. Now see Ziai, *Knowledge and Illumination*, 41 ff., 65, and esp. 78 ff.

ingly, we must conclude that while Suhrawardī's criticism may well have been a source for Ibn Taymiyya's attack on the essentialist definition, we have little reason to believe, in light of the larger context of Ibn Taymiyya's career and intellectual background, that he owed his nominalism exclusively to Suhrawardī or, for that matter, to any other single predecessor.

To sum up, on the basis of the meagre evidence available to us, we tentatively conclude that Ibn Taymiyya clearly owes a debt to his Greek and Muslim predecessors. But the degrees of influence vary from one source to another. The debt to the Greek sources, particularly to the Sceptics, who seem to have been more critical of logic than others, is not easily identifiable. Certain arguments against logic may have crept in as part and parcel of the Greek philosophical discourse transmitted to the Arabs. A more readily identifiable source of influence is the polemical writings of the theologians, who, like Ibn Taymiyya, had earlier stood in defence of Islam against the 'Greek heresies'. An equally, if not more, important source is the philosophers' criticisms of each other. The available evidence points to the contributions of Suhrawardī, Baghdādī, and Rāzī as major sources of Ibn Taymiyya's criticism.

Ibn Taymiyya's critique then represents not so much the culmination of a tradition of anti-logical discourse as an ingenious and creative selection of already existing but disparate arguments. It is not the culmination of a tradition because there was no such identifiable tradition which can be justifiably defined in terms of genre, movement, trend. Doubtless, Ibn Taymiyya approached the problem with an intellectual framework of his own, one that derived from, and was squarely based upon, his own notions of empiricism. The critique is thoroughly imbued with a peculiarly Taymiyyan methodology and epistemology. What Ibn Taymiyya did was to introduce a variety of arguments excerpted from a wide range of sources, and fit them into his own framework after having cut, changed, or transformed them according to a mould that met his particular needs. To be sure, a mere aggregation of these arguments could hardly amount to the coherent and effective critique that Ibn Taymiyya mounted. Without a theoretical framework capable of pulling together these arguments into a meaningful and consistent whole, the mere act of collecting criticisms from a disparate variety of sources could in no way be better than a collection of fossil material which once formed some sort of unidentifiable but now extinct animal. Ibn Taymiyya was able

to identify and in fact to draw a detailed picture of the animal while using the fossils excavated by the likes of Nawbakhtī, Suhrawardī, and perhaps Sextus. Ibn Taymiyya's genius does not lie in the particular arguments he adduced, though even here he was impressive; rather, his genius manifests itself in creating, from the material that consisted of these particular arguments, a complete, systematic, and coherent critique.

It is an instructive coincidence that virtually all the criticisms common to Ibn Taymiyya and the Greeks are also common, though in a more articulate manner, to Ibn Taymiyya and later European philosophers. Seen against a scale ranging from the rudimentary critique made by Ariston to the subtle and extensive arguments adduced by such later philosophers as the British empiricists, Ibn Taymiyya can be conveniently located in the second half of the continuum. The attacks against Aristotelian logic in Islam continued after Ibn Taymiyya, though they were not conducted with the extraordinary energy, vigour, and creativity demonstrated by Ibn Taymiyya. In the Christian West, on the other hand, the movement towards rejecting Greek logic seems to have begun sometime after Ibn Taymiyya's death. In the 1580s, William Temple enthusiastically advocated the views of Petrus Ramus (d. 1572), who had earlier defended the thesis that the entirety of Aristotle's doctrines are false and that his logic is artificial and intolerably and unnecessarily complicated. Logic, he asserted, must follow the natural movement of thought.¹⁶⁴ During the same period, François Sanchez produced another attack on Aristotle, with particular emphasis on his syllogistic reasoning. The Aristotelian syllogism, Sanchez maintained, does not lead to the understanding of reality, and it is artificially and excessively occupied with verbal subtlety.¹⁶⁵

In the beginning of the seventeenth century the criticisms of Ramus and Sanchez were not without following.¹⁶⁶ Descartes, for instance, explicitly wrote:

I noticed that as far as logic was concerned, its syllogisms and most of its other methods serve rather to explain to another what one already knows, or even, as in the art of Lully, to speak freely and without judgment of what one does not know, than to learn new things. Although it does contain many

¹⁶⁴ Quinton, *Francis Bacon*, 11; *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vii. 66–8, s.v. 'Ramus, Peter' (by W. J. Ong).

¹⁶⁵ Butterfield, *Origins*, 110.

¹⁶⁶ Quinton, *Francis Bacon*, 16.

true and good precepts, they are interspersed among so many others that are harmful or superfluous.¹⁶⁷

Still later, several British philosophers, including J. S. Mill, G. Campbell, and Thomas Brown, voiced grievances against logic in general and the syllogism in particular.¹⁶⁸ Other empiricists espoused views quite similar to those of Ibn Taymiyya concerning the equivalence of analogy and induction.¹⁶⁹ The general similarities between these philosophers' criticisms and those of Ibn Taymiyya are too obvious to rehearse here.

It is a historical curiosity that it was British, not Muslim, philosophy which carried Ibn Taymiyya's methodology to its logical conclusion. What is interesting is not only the resemblance between the Taymiyyan and the British criticism, but the distinctly empiricist bent common to both. The empiricism which came to be regarded in the West as one expression of scientific enquiry was completely lost on the Muslims. Western science realized the value of empiricism and succeeded in sifting it out of theology and metaphysics. This process is best exemplified in the transformation from the empirical theology and metaphysic of Occam, F. Bacon, and Berkeley to the modern secular empiricism of A. J. Ayer. The Muslims, on the other hand, were not able to see the significance of Ibn Taymiyya's devastating attack against Aristotelian logic, let alone the extraordinary potential of his empiricist methodology. As is borne out in the later logical and anti-logical discourse in Islam, neither Ibn Taymiyya's critique nor the epistemology and methodology behind it were adequately appreciated. Such logicians as 'Abd Allāh al-Jīlānī¹⁷⁰ represented a prevalent trend whose task it was to rebut objections directed against logic, but with the raw enthusiasm of a young student impatiently defending the teachings of his illustrious master. On the other hand, such Ibn Taymiyya loyalists as Suyūṭī, who also enthusiastically pursued the anti-Aristotelian path, were able to produce only a shallow and ineffective critique which lacked a respectable methodology or theoretic.¹⁷¹ On Suyūṭī and his co-religionists both the

¹⁶⁷ Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 14.

¹⁶⁸ Dummett, 'Justification of Deduction', 300 ff., 305 ff.; *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, v. 41-2, s.v. 'Logic, Traditional' (by A. N. Prior).

¹⁶⁹ Heer, 'Ibn Taymiyyah's Empiricism', 113.

¹⁷⁰ See his *al-Risāla al-Muḥīṭa*, 359-95.

¹⁷¹ See *Ṣawn al-Manṭiq wal-Kalām*. I was not able to consult his other work, *al-Qawl al-Mushriq fī Tahrīm al-Ishtighāl bil-Manṭiq*.

substance of their predecessor's critique as well as his methodology and epistemology were lost.

III. *Ibn Taymiyya's Discourse*

The discourse employed in Islamic positive law, legal theory, theology, and philosophy may be characterized as highly formal. The arrangement and classification of topics, chapters, sections, and subsections followed a certain logic and order. Subjects were divided into manageable units, and each unit was, as a rule, treated in full before the transition to another unit occurred. While cross-reference was unavoidable, repetition was rare. Authors, expectedly, employed the jargon special to the field within which they were writing, and the utilization of concepts and terminology belonging to another field of enquiry was by and large kept to a minimum. A glance at the works of Juwaynī the theologian, Ghazālī the lawyer, Āmidī the jurist, and Ibn Sīnā the philosopher is sufficient to make the point.

That Ibn Taymiyya rejected this established form of discourse should come as no surprise. His mission was unique, and the conventional, formal structure of the theological and philosophical treatise would not do. His goal was simple: to dissuade Muslims from the heretical beliefs of the Ṣufīs, philosophers, speculative theologians, the Shī'īs, and a score of other groups. If writing a treatise on divine matters was commonly considered a good reason to hope to attain a reward in the hereafter, Ibn Taymiyya thought that writing a treatise exposing the heresies of those whom he believed to be the enemies of Islam was likely to be doubly rewarded.¹⁷² There was no need to abide by the systematic and orderly mode of exposition. Cross-reference and repetition became not only unavoidable but necessary. The aim was not merely to spread and articulate knowledge but to convince believers who had gone astray. His, then, was a mission whose aim was persuasion, if not outright dissuasion.

The particular purpose behind Ibn Taymiyya's mission explains three conspicuous features of all his writing. The most striking of these features is the uncontrollable penchant for digression. He could never resist the urge to move into another, albeit related, issue

¹⁷² That he thought so, we deduce from, among other things, his letter to his mother. Cited in Abū Zahra, *Ibn Taymiyya*, 63-4.

before offering a full treatment of the issue with which he began. This he seems to have done because priority was given to showing the weaknesses of one doctrine or another, not to the elaboration and development of a doctrine of his own. Nowhere, for instance, does he offer a discussion of universals without hastening to attack the philosophical and mystical doctrines that were based on a realist theory of universals.¹⁷³ While this mode of discourse apparently fulfilled his own needs as a critic and reformer, it leaves the modern reader with a sense of frustration. Ibn Taymiyya's digressive mode of discourse means that the treatment of a particular issue may often not be found in any one chapter, or even in any one work. The search bearing on an issue takes one through the entire treatise, if not through several other tracts and tomes. Some two dozen treatises of his must be consulted in order to establish, for instance, his views on the problem of God's existence.¹⁷⁴ We are therefore fortunate to find in a single treatise a comprehensive catalogue of what seem to be all the arguments Ibn Taymiyya adduced against logic.

The second feature of Ibn Taymiyya's work is repetition, a feature that becomes not only often unavoidable as an accompanying consequence of digression, but also indispensable in a discourse whose aim is to convince, dissuade, and recruit.

A third characteristic feature of his work is the imbalance between the criticism he advanced (why '*P* is *Q*' is false) and the solutions he proposed as a substitute for what he thought false (why '*P* is *S*' is true). In his preoccupation with launching attacks on his adversaries, leading to digression into what he perceived to be issues whose immediate introduction to the discussion would win him points against his foes, Ibn Taymiyya seems to have been unable to dwell in any one place on the issue he was discussing or to force himself to ask questions he may have answered. As a critic he no doubt excelled, but he was no systematic and organized writer. I have said 'writer' in preference to 'thinker' advisedly, since what becomes registered discourse must not necessarily be taken to represent the ideas in the mind of the author. We have no proof that Ibn Taymiyya was interested in constructing a system of logic which would replace that of the Peripatetics. His methodology and epistemology—which partly derived from the then prevalent theological and legal doctrines, but

¹⁷³ See Sections 3 and 4 of Part I, above.

¹⁷⁴ See Hallaq, 'Ibn Taymiyya on the Existence of God'.

to no small extent were his own—he modestly thought to have come down from the *salaf*. The task he assigned himself was confined to demolishing logic, and this fact clearly dictated his mode of discourse. In his case a systematic and complete presentation of a body of thought was not a significant concern.

Ibn Taymiyya's critique may then be characterized as a set of arguments whose ultimate goal is to undermine the validity of the philosophical, and consequently mystical, postulates making up, and deriving from, logic. These arguments were intended to create an aggregate effect; no single argument in the work could, or was expected to, deal a *coup de grâce* to logic. Against the most central postulates upon which this discipline is founded, Ibn Taymiyya marshalled a legion of arguments that were intended to enhance and corroborate each other. Each argument was thought to carry an *independent* weight, and therefore the more arguments that were adduced the stronger the case against logic became.¹⁷⁵ When refutation of a postulate required the refutation of a sub-postulate, another group of corroborative arguments was introduced. Frequently, he informs us that against such-and-such a postulate he will advance a certain number of objections; and the aggregate of these objections was intended to constitute his response to that particular postulate. At other times, he integrates into one lengthy argument a variety of sub-arguments that are of a different type altogether. A substantive argument may thus be combined with a religious or a historical one.¹⁷⁶ The point is that Ibn Taymiyya consistently attempted to bring about a cumulative and corroborative effect.

¹⁷⁵ On the significance of corroboration in Islamic thought, with special reference to jurisprudence, see Hallaq, 'Inductive Corroboration', 3–31.

¹⁷⁶ It is possible to categorize arguments in a number of ways, one of which is according to their logical structure. Another categorization may issue from the content of arguments, not their form. The first category that makes itself evident in Ibn Taymiyya's work is the substantive argument, since the critique itself is a substantive one: it attacks statements and assumptions as propositions containing concrete ideas, and the attacks themselves consist of counter-ideas of the same order. The dominant arguments of the critique belong to this category. Another type is religious. Arguments belonging to this class are few in number, but their weight must not be underrated. They are consistently introduced as subsidiary arguments, and never as self-sufficient. Their significance lies in the fact that they are rooted in wider assumptions that define and prejudge the position of the opponent. One such central assumption is the superiority of the truth as carried by Judaism, Christianity, and particularly Islam over the truth of non-religionists: though the Jews and Christians have corrupted their own religions, they remain superior to Aristotle, who was nothing but a godless man. But the most superior of all religions is Islam, whose truth is manifest. The superiority of

IV. The Arabic Texts

Two centuries after Ibn Taymiyya's death, 'Abd al-Rahmān Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), an Egyptian Shāfi'ī scholar, found in Ibn Taymiyya's refutation of logic a tool that would serve his purpose in the debate about the scholarly credentials required to qualify a jurist to rise to the rank of *mujtahid*.¹⁷⁷ A group of scholars, ostensibly supporters of the Greek logical tradition,¹⁷⁸ maintained that a knowledge of logic constituted one of the prerequisites for exercising *ijtihād*.¹⁷⁹ Following in the footsteps of Ibn Taymiyya, Suyūṭī argued that logic is not a requirement on the ground that it is not a sound discipline.¹⁸⁰ But a mere dismissal of this requirement was too facile and cryptic to be sufficient. He had to vindicate his claim, and he did so by writing two treatises of his own in refutation of logic, namely, *al-Qawl al-Mushriq*¹⁸¹ and *Ṣawn al-Manṭiq*.¹⁸² Moreover, he abridged

Islam would have been a sufficient argument against the Greek doctrines had these doctrines not penetrated the Islamic sciences. The somewhat embarrassing fact that more than a few major Muslim scholars writing in the most traditional religious sciences resorted to Greek logic certainly blunted Ibn Taymiyya's religious argument. This may in part explain why this type of argument does not stand as self-sufficient, though it permeates the spirit of the critique. I say 'in part' because the chief reason for resorting to the rational, non-religious argument (*al-dalīl al-'aqlī*) was the position—adopted by the great majority of Muslim intellectuals—that the best weapon against rational arguments must come from reason, not revelation, and Greek logic was, in the final analysis, a product of reason (see Translation, par. 210, below).

There can be identified further types of arguments that also played a subsidiary role in the critique. *Ad hominem* arguments such as those attempting to smear the characters of Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā are but one example. That Aristotle never visited the 'land of the prophets' and thus was not exposed to their teachings is corroborative, in Ibn Taymiyya's discourse, of the fact that his logic and metaphysics were erroneous (see Translation, par. 90, below; the point is further elaborated in *Mufaṣṣal al-I'tiqād*, 136). Ibn Sīnā's affiliation with the Ismā'īlīs (ibid.) was also so construed, an affiliation that prevented him from being exposed to the divinely guided doctrines and behaviour of *ahl al-sunna wal-jamā'a*.

¹⁷⁷ See Translation, par. 1, n. 1, below. For Suyūṭī's problem, see also Hallaq, 'Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?', 27–8.

¹⁷⁸ Exceptions, however, could be found. Ibn Qudāma, a traditionalist Ḥanbali jurist, prefixed his *uṣūl al-fiqh* work with a logical introduction, thus implying, like his forerunner Ghazālī, that logic is indispensable for legal reasoning. See *Rawḍat al-Nāẓir*, 13–30.

¹⁷⁹ This requirement had a long-standing tradition in Islam. See Translation, pars. 1, n. 1, and 160, n. 1, below.

¹⁸⁰ Although he still claimed that he was adept in this art. See his *Ṣawn*, 1.

¹⁸¹ Full title: *al-Qawl al-Mushriq fī Tahrim al-Ishtighāl bil-Manṭiq*. See Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, suppl. ii. 189 (169gg).

¹⁸² Published by Nashshār together with the 1947 edition of *Jahd al-Qarīḥa*. See list of References below.

Ibn Taymiyya's *al-Radd*, apparently to render it more accessible to the interested student,¹⁸³ with a view, however, to bolstering his own claims against logic through the magisterial authority bestowed by his Ḥanbalī predecessor.

Suyūṭī abridged the approximately 138,000 words of *al-Radd* to about 32,000 words under the title *Jahd al-Qarīḥa fī Tajrīd al-Naṣīḥa*. A literal translation of the title would be *The Exertion of Effort in Divesting the Naṣīḥa*, the *Naṣīḥa* being the alternative title of *al-Radd*, namely, *Naṣīḥat Ahl al-Imān fī al-Radd 'alā Manṭiq al-Yūnān*.¹⁸⁴ Now, 'divesting' in the title of the abridged work refers to extracting the logical content from *al-Radd*, which is, from the viewpoint of the logician, thoroughly encumbered by metaphysical discussions. And this is precisely what Suyūṭī successfully did.

Since Suyūṭī was not interested in abridging the logical content of the work but only in eliminating repetition together with the greatest bulk of metaphysical discussions therein, he did not reformulate Ibn Taymiyya's text in his own words. In other words, his abridgement is not paraphrastic: he simply left the logical parts intact and deleted the greatest part of metaphysical digressions. And by omitting a good deal of repetition from the logical discussion he succeeded in creating a sequence of ideas that is superior to that found in *al-Radd*. One may assert that the overall result of Suyūṭī's abridgement is a more effective critique of logic than that originally formulated by Ibn Taymiyya.¹⁸⁵

Despite the efforts expended in abridging *al-Radd*, Suyūṭī was still unable to rid the text of the vexatious problem of repetition, and of this he was fully aware.¹⁸⁶ Another related problem which seems to have escaped the attention of Suyūṭī is the frequent use of the formula 'what we mean to say', or 'what is intended here' (*wal-maqṣūd (hunā)*), a formula used by Ibn Taymiyya to indicate that he was reverting back to the logical discussion after having lapsed into a lengthy comment on other, mainly metaphysical, matters. While the repeated use of the formula may be justifiable in light of Ibn Taymiyya's practice of digression, it is no longer relevant to an abridgement which claims to, and in fact does, eliminate a significant

¹⁸³ See Translation, par. 1, below.

¹⁸⁴ Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, suppl. ii. 124.

¹⁸⁵ Others have expressed similar opinions. See Brunschvig, 'Pour ou contre', 326; van Ess, 'Logical Structure', 50.

¹⁸⁶ On this problem, see *Jahd*, 254 (Translation, par. 322, below).

part of material that bears little on the logical issues at hand. All these, however, are minor shortcomings and should not detract from Suyūṭī's contribution towards providing a more readable and succinct treatise.

In 1947, 'Alī Sāmī al-Nashshār published the text of *Jahd* for the first time. He relied on a single manuscript found in Dār al-Kutub al-Azhariyya (Majmū' 204), although he was aware of the existence of another manuscript in the Library of the University of Leiden,¹⁸⁷ this being the only other copy known to be extant.¹⁸⁸ Two years later, in 1949, 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Kutubī published the unabridged version of *al-Radd* in Bombay on the basis of a unique manuscript extant at the Khizānat al-Kutub al-Āṣafiyya (Kalām 219) in Haydarabad.¹⁸⁹ Reportedly, this manuscript, an autograph, was brought into India from Yemen over a century ago by Nuwwāb Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān (d. 1307/1889) where it was in the possession of Zaydī Imāms.¹⁹⁰ Kutubī, encountering several difficulties in the Āṣafiyya manuscript, sought the help of Nashshār's edition, from which, Kutubī acknowledged, he benefited.¹⁹¹ This was possible because Suyūṭī's abridgement does not alter or paraphrase Ibn Taymiyya's words and sentences; hence, one manuscript could significantly inform the other concerning a substantial part of the logical subject-matter. In his edition, however, Nashshār did not benefit from the unabridged manuscript of Haydarabad. But the later edition of 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Qāsim and his son Muḥammad did. The latter reprinted Nashshār's edition in 1961 in Rabat as part of volume ix in the thirty-seven-volume collection of Ibn Taymiyya's works.¹⁹² The editors do not care to tell us anything beyond the fact that the work is based on a previously printed text of *Jahd*.¹⁹³ Nor do they tell us what corrections to the manuscript they made and the bases of such corrections. However, we have two good reasons to believe that the edition they depended upon was that of

¹⁸⁷ See Voorhoeve, *Handlist*, 248–9; and Nashshār's introduction to the 1947 edition of *Ṣawn* and *Jahd*, p. zā', reproduced in Su'ād 'Abd al-Rāziq's edition of the same work, p. 17; Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Rāziq, *Faylasūf al-'Arab*, 124. Goldziher also announced the existence of this manuscript in his article 'Stellung der alten islamischen Orthodoxie', published as early as 1916 (English trans., 'Attitude of Orthodox Islam', 207).

¹⁸⁸ See Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, suppl. ii. 124 (no. 93).

¹⁸⁹ See *ibid.*, and the editor's introduction to *al-Radd*, pp. zā' to mīm.

¹⁹⁰ See Sulaymān Nadwī's foreword to *al-Radd*, p. qāf.

¹⁹¹ See his introduction to *al-Radd*, p. sīn.

¹⁹² Entitled *Majmū' Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya*.

¹⁹³ See the introduction to vol. i. of *Majmū'*, p. mīm.

Nashshār and the corrections they implemented were based on the Bombay edition. First, no editions other than those of Nashshār and Kutubī are known to have been published in or prior to 1961. These two editions have also become reputable and standard among Middle East scholars. Even if we assume the unlikely, namely, that there might have been other editions, it would have been considered quite injudicious on the part of the editors to resort to poorly received or lesser-known editions. Second, the Rabat edition at times commits the same errors found in Nashshār's edition, errors that are peculiar to the latter edition and which can be found neither in the unabridged work nor in the Leiden manuscript.¹⁹⁴

Since 1961, *Jahd* and *Radd* have both been edited once more. The latter was published in 1977 in two volumes,¹⁹⁵ of which I was able to obtain only the first. This edition, also based on the unique Āṣafiyya manuscript, does not appear to make a significant advance over the 1949 edition. But more relevant to our concern is the 1970 Cairo text of *Jahd*, edited by both Su'ād 'Abd al-Rāziq and, presumably, Nashshār himself.¹⁹⁶ In reality, Nashshār was not involved in any collaborative effort with 'Abd al-Rāziq beyond providing her with his 1947 edition, which she used, supposedly, as a starting-point. Her contribution consisted in collating Nashshār's edition with both the original manuscript in Dār al-Kutub al-Azhariyya and the Bombay edition of the complete work. Furthermore, she redivided Nashshār's text into smaller paragraphs, the latter's division being indeed cumbersome. Unfortunately, 'Abd al-Rāziq can be said to have completely failed to provide us with a credible edition. Not only does she take no note whatsoever of the Leiden manuscript, but her work is distressingly replete with misprints and errors.

¹⁹⁴ See e.g. the Rabat edition, p. 121 (l. 12): in 'innamā dhālika yaḥṣul fī al-mithāl al-ladhī lā yaḥṣul bihi . . . ' the negative particle *lā* was omitted following the edition of Nashshār, p. 235 (ll. 7–8). In the Leiden manuscript, fol. 144 (l. 22), and the Bombay edition of *al-Radd*, p. 121 (l. 14), the negative particle was retained. A more obvious omission unique to both editions is to be found on p. 140 (l. 7) in the Rabat edition and p. 251 (l. 3) in Nashshār's edition. There, nearly two lines were omitted from both texts, whereas the Leiden manuscript and *al-Radd* contain them.

¹⁹⁵ Edited by Muḥammad 'Abd al-Sattār Naṣṣār and 'Imād Khafājī.

¹⁹⁶ Published together with Suyūṭī's *Ṣawn al-Manṭiq wal-Kalām 'an Fannay al-Manṭiq wal-Kalām*, by Dār al-Naṣr lil-Ṭibā'a. I am indebted to Professor Aron Zysow for providing me with a copy of this edition.

V. Notes on the Translation

For the translation I have used the Rabat edition since it has proven superior to Nashshār's edition and certainly to that of 'Abd al-Rāziq. I have constantly referred to the Leiden manuscript¹⁹⁷ as well as the Bombay edition for collation with the present edition, though Nashshār's edition was by no means neglected. Suyūṭī's introduction to the abridgement (pars. 1–2) was omitted in the Rabat edition, but I have restored it using both Nashshār's edition and the Leiden manuscript. Also omitted was Suyūṭī's colophon, which I have also recovered from the same sources. Apart from these two additions, I have noted all corrections as well as the bases of these corrections towards the end of this volume (see Emendations to the Arabic Text).

The paragraphing of the Rabat text has been considerably changed. In the translation I have redivided the text into consecutively numbered paragraphs (1–323). The List of Paragraphs at the end of the volume offers the corresponding page and line numbers in the 1961 Rabat edition and the 1949 unabridged Bombay edition as well as the folio and line numbers in the Leiden manuscript.

I have also deviated in part from Ibn Taymiyya's division of the text into *fuṣūl* (sing. *faṣl* = chapter). All *fuṣūl* indicating the chapters in which he refuted the four major logical propositions have been retained (see the headings of pars. 6, 17, 41, and 230). The rest of the *fuṣūl* are three, and were subsumed by Ibn Taymiyya under the third *faṣl*, namely, the Third Point. These were obviously intended as sections or sub-chapters rather than as independent chapters. Since the subject-matter under each of these sections does not pertain to single, self-contained issues, the three subheadings have been omitted altogether. In the translation they would have fallen at the beginning of paragraphs 119, 137, and 211 respectively.

Words in square brackets represent my own insertions, which I found at times quite necessary for a better rendering of the text. Parentheses are, as a rule, used for the equivalent Arabic terms in

¹⁹⁷ See Voorhoeve, *Handlist*, 248–9. The manuscript (Or. 474 (20) in the Library of the University of Leiden) consists of 69 folios, each containing 31 lines with an average of 15 words per line. The copying of the manuscript was completed on the third of Ramaḍān 987 (22 Oct. 1579) by a certain 'Alī b. 'Alī al-Būṣīrī al-Azharī al-Shāfi'ī.

Ibn Taymiyya's text. On rare occasions they serve as parenthetical punctuation.

For the Quranic verses cited in the text, I have most often depended on both Arberry's and Pickthall's translations. At times I have used a synthesis of these two elegant renderings, and at others made slight changes therein in order to convey more precisely the intended meaning. In just a few instances, however, I deemed it necessary to give my own translation.

Finally, it must be noted that I have attempted to document all the arguments cited by Ibn Taymiyya in the name of the philosophers, theologians, *Ṣūfis*, and others. When Ibn Taymiyya tells us, without naming any one thinker in particular, that the logicians or philosophers held a certain doctrine, I have provided a reference to the discussion in the authoritative works in the field; for example, for metaphysical and logical doctrines, I have referred the reader to such authorities as Ibn Sīnā, Fārābī, Ghazālī, Ibn Rushd, Ṭūsī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and Ibn Malkā. When a logical doctrine is cited by Ibn Taymiyya on behalf of the logicians, I have also attempted, to the best of my ability, to point out the extent to which our author was faithful in conveying that doctrine. (It will hopefully become clear in the course of the commentary on the text that Ibn Taymiyya has at times exaggerated the claims of the logicians.) I have not made this comparison, however, in the case of metaphysical or theological doctrines, since metaphysics and theology are not deemed to be at the centre of the treatise as abridged by Suyūṭī.

Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians

TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES BY

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