

AGAINST KALĀM FOUNDATIONALISM: IBN TAYMIYYAH'S EPISTEMOLOGY AND ITS STRUCTURAL CONVERGENCE WITH WITTGENSTEINIAN FIDEISM

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Abstract: *This article examines whether Ibn Taymiyyah's rejection of taqdim al-'aql, the kalām principle assigning rational argument priority over apparent scriptural meaning, constitutes an independent epistemological theory, and whether that theory shares structural features with Wittgensteinian post-foundationalism as developed by D. Z. Phillips and Norman Malcolm. The analysis applies a two-stage method combining Davidsonian interpretive charity with a Lakatosian distinction between the hard core and protective belt of Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemological program, drawing primarily on the Dar' Ta' arud al-'Aql wa-al-Naql, al-Radd alā al-Mantiqiyyīn, and Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya. The study identifies four structural homologies between Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemology and Phillips-Malcolm fideism, alongside three irreducible ontological divergences at the level of correspondence theory, cosmological realism, and the transcultural scope of fiṭra. These findings weaken the irrationalism charge associated with Laoust, Massignon, and Wolfson, demonstrating that Ibn Taymiyyah's resistance to kalām operates as a coherent epistemological position rather than fideistic evasion.*

Keywords: *Ibn Taymiyyah; Epistemology of kalām; Wittgensteinian fideism; Post-foundationalism; Islamic philosophy of religion.*

Abstrak: Artikel ini berupaya menelisik apakah penolakan Ibnu Taimiyah terhadap *taqdīm al-'aql*, prinsip *kalām* yang memberikan prioritas argumen rasional atas makna kitab suci yang jelas merupakan teori epistemologis independen? Dan apakah teori itu memiliki fitur struktural yang sama dengan pasca-fundamentalisme Wittgensteinian seperti yang dikembangkan oleh D. Z. Phillips dan Norman Malcolm? Artikel ini menerapkan dua tahap analitik yang menggabungkan amal interpretatif Davidsonian dengan perbedaan Lakatosian antara inti keras dan sabuk pelindung dari format epistemologi Ibn Taymiyyah dalam *Dar' Ta'ārud al-'Aql wa-al-Naql*, *al-Radd 'alā al-Mantiqiyīn*, dan *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya*. Artikel ini mengidentifikasi empat homologi struktural antara epistemologi Ibn Taymiyyah dan fideisme Phillips-Malcolm, di samping tiga divergensi ontologis yang tidak dapat direduksi pada tingkat teori korespondensi, realisme kosmologis, dan ruang lingkup transkultural *fiṭra*. Temuan dalam artikel ini menggugat tuduhan irasionalisme yang terkait dengan Laoust, Massignon, dan Wolfson, menunjukkan bahwa perlawanan Ibn Taymiyyah terhadap *kalām* beroperasi sebagai posisi epistemologis yang koheren daripada penghindaran fideistik.

Kata kunci: Ibn Taymiyyah; Epistemologi *kalām*; fideisme Wittgensteinian; Pasca-fundamentalisme; Filsafat Islam.

Introduction

Ibn Taymiyyah spent the better part of three decades constructing one of the most technically demanding rational arguments in the medieval Islamic tradition, and that argument was a case against letting reason adjudicate between revelation and itself. The *Dar' Ta'ārud al-'Aql wa-al-Naql*, the work through which he prosecutes this case across ten volumes, deploys the full technical apparatus of Aristotelian logic, Avicennan ontology, and Ash'arite *kalām* against the epistemological assumptions that underwrote them.¹ The paradox is not accidental. His project required that kind of formal immersion, because he was doing something more specific than rehearsing traditionalist suspicions of speculative theology. He was arguing that the rational framework *kalām* theologians used to arbitrate disputes between reason and scripture was self-defeating on its own terms.

The object of his critique was what he called the *qānūn kullī*, the universal principle that *kalām*-based rational argument must take precedence over apparent scriptural meaning wherever the two appear to conflict. In the *Dar' Ta'ārud*, he subjected this principle to what amounts to a forty-four-argument *reductio*, showing that its acceptance commits its proponents to a circularity in which the authority of reason is established by means that presuppose that authority.² His argument is not that reason is unreliable in general. It is that reason cannot legitimately occupy the adjudicative role *kalām* assigns it without that assignment already having been made on grounds that reason itself cannot supply.

Two dominant modes of reading have handled this position badly. The older tradition, running from Henri Laoust's 1939 monograph through Harry Wolfson's treatment of the *kalām* and Louis Massignon's broader characterizations, read Ibn Taymiyyah's opposition to speculative theology as a form of anti-intellectualism, a traditionalist reflex dressed in polemical garb.³ The reading was never unreasonable given the evidence available before critical editions of his major works were in wider circulation, but it depended heavily on secondary sources and produced a portrait of a thinker more reactive than constructive. Wolfson's position was particularly influential: he argued that Ibn Taymiyyah's hostility to the Aristotelian logical tradition left him without principled grounds for discriminating among theological claims.⁴ The more recent wave of scholarship, associated with Jon Hoover, Ovamir Anjum, and most fully with Carl Sharif El-Tobgui's 2020 monograph *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation*, has dismantled that portrait systematically, showing that Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemology is coherent and constructive.⁵ What this rehabilitation has not yet attempted is a dialogue with analytic philosophy of religion, specifically with the post-foundationalist tradition in which Wittgensteinian fideism occupies a significant position.

This article takes that step, asking two questions. *First*, whether Ibn Taymiyyah's rejection of *taqdīm al-'aql*, the priority of rational argument over apparent scriptural meaning, constitutes an independent epistemological position with internal coherence, or whether it is best understood as a derivative of his theological commitments. *Second*, whether his position shares structural features with Wittgensteinian fideism as developed by D. Z. Phillips and Norman Malcolm, and what those shared features and their limits reveal about the irrationalism charge both figures have attracted.⁶ The argument here is that Ibn Taymiyyah holds a position with four structural homologies to Phillips-Malcolm fideism, alongside three ontological divergences that make any claim of equivalence unsustainable. The structural homologies are sufficient to show that his resistance to *kalām* operates at the level of a coherent epistemological theory. The divergences prevent the structural reading from collapsing into an apologetic assimilation. The argument is a modest one, restricted to formal structure: whether Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemological critique and Wittgensteinian post-foundationalism share the same formal architecture, and what that shared architecture reveals when placed against the irrationalism charge both figures have attracted.⁷

The analysis is limited to three primary texts: the *Dar' Ta'āruḍ* in the Muḥammad Rashād Sālim critical edition (Riyadh, 1991), *al-Radd 'alā al-*

Mantiqiyīn, and *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya*. On the Wittgensteinian side, the comparison draws on Phillips's *The Concept of Prayer and Wittgenstein and Religion*, and on Malcolm's "The Groundlessness of Belief." The broader debate about Wittgensteinian fideism, including Conant's and Schönbaumsfeld's more deflationary readings of Wittgenstein himself, falls outside the scope of this article.

The historiography of Ibn Taymiyyah scholarship falls roughly into three stages, each with its own methodological assumptions and corresponding interpretive limitations. Laoust's 1939 *Essai* established the terms within which Ibn Taymiyyah would be discussed in Western scholarship for several decades.⁸ Laoust read the Ḥanbalī tradition as fundamentally conservative and Ibn Taymiyyah as its most consistent representative, a thinker whose primary intellectual energy went toward defending received tradition against Mu'tazilite, Ash'arite, and Sufi departures from it. Wolfson's *The Philosophy of the Kalam* reinforced this picture, situating Ibn Taymiyyah as a polemicist rather than a systematic philosopher.⁹

The second wave began in the 1990s and accelerated through the 2000s. Yahya Michot's work on Ibn Taymiyyah's relationship to Avicennism recovered the textual sophistication of his philosophical engagements.¹⁰ Caterina Bori's studies of his political theology complicated the Laoust portrait by attending to the institutional contexts of his polemics.¹¹ Wael Hallaq's analysis of his legal epistemology showed that his rejection of Aristotelian syllogistic was grounded in a specific and arguable account of how language and evidence function together.¹²

El-Tobgui's 2020 monograph is the most thorough product of this rehabilitation. Working through the *Dar' Ta'arūḍ* in systematic detail, El-Tobgui demonstrated that Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemology is built around a coherent account of the relationship between *'ilm darūri* (necessary knowledge) and *'ilm nazari* (discursive knowledge), and that his critique of *kalām* targets a specific epistemological model in which formal deductive argument from self-evident premises is assigned a foundational and adjudicative role it cannot bear.¹³ El-Tobgui's reading stops, however, at the boundary of analytic philosophy of religion. He does not ask whether Ibn Taymiyyah's position shares formal features with post-foundationalist accounts of religious knowledge, and does not need to for his purposes. That gap is where this article begins.

On the Wittgensteinian side, the fideism debate has a different but partially overlapping arc. Kai Nielsen coined the term "Wittgensteinian fideism" in a 1967 article as a critical label for the position he attributed to Phillips, Malcolm, Peter Winch, and others who had drawn on the

Philosophical Investigations and *On Certainty* to argue that religious language is answerable only to criteria internal to its own form of life.¹⁴ Nielsen's charge was that this position granted religion an immunity from criticism it did not deserve. Phillips and Malcolm responded that the demand for foundationalist criticism of the kind Nielsen wanted was itself epistemologically incoherent as a universal criterion.¹⁵

Comparative work between Islamic anti-*kalām* arguments and Wittgensteinian post-foundationalism has been attempted only obliquely in existing literature. David Burrell's *Knowing the Unknowable God* approached both traditions through an ontological lens, finding analogies in their accounts of divine simplicity and the limits of propositional theology.¹⁶ Zarepour's recent work on Ibn Taymiyyah's metaphysics in the *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* examined the philosophical commitments of his rejection of Avicennan modal ontology.¹⁷ Neither Burrell nor Zarepour undertook the epistemological structural comparison this article proposes. The absence of an analytic philosophy of religion interlocutor in the Ibn Taymiyyah rehabilitation literature has left the irrationalism charge partially unaddressed.

And the analytical procedure here runs in a fixed sequence, with hermeneutics preceding comparison. Ibn Taymiyyah's texts are read on their own terms first, with the *Dar' Ta'arūḍ* in the Sālim critical edition as the controlling primary source. *Al-Radd 'alā al-Manṭiqiyyīn* and *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya* supplement the analysis where specific sub-arguments require elaboration. Transliteration follows ALA-LC conventions with JIS internal modifications. Arabic passages appear in footnotes; English translations in the body text are the author's own unless otherwise stated. Where translation choices carry interpretive weight, those choices are accounted for explicitly.

Philosophical reconstruction draws on Donald Davidson's principle of interpretive charity, which requires giving each argument its strongest defensible form before subjecting it to critique.¹⁸ A structural comparison that proceeded from weak versions of either position would produce conclusions about caricatures rather than about the positions themselves. The charity principle applies symmetrically to both sides of the comparison. The second analytic tool is the Lakatosian distinction between the hard core and the protective belt of a research program.¹⁹ Applied here, it separates Ibn Taymiyyah's central epistemological commitments from the theological positions he builds on them. That separation matters because it makes the question of epistemological independence answerable without requiring that his theological commitments be bracketed entirely, which would

distort rather than clarify the texts. The protective belt can shift without collapsing the hard core. The comparative method is structural homology at the level of formal argument, with no genealogical claim asserted and no equivalence of concepts assumed.²⁰ Comparison operates at three levels separately, namely: structure of argument, ontological commitment, and normative consequence. Those three levels produce different results, and the differences are analytically informative. Anachronism is managed by restricting all homology claims to formal structure and treating any slippage toward influence or genealogical claims as a methodological failure.

Four explicit limits govern the analysis. This article claims no influence of Ibn Taymiyyah on Wittgenstein or the reverse. It does not equate *fiṭra* with form of life. It does not evaluate the truth of the positions being compared, only the coherence of their formal structures. And it does not treat structural compatibility between two positions as an argument for either of them.

Ibn Taymiyyah's Diagnosis of *Kalām* Epistemology

The epistemological argument of the *Dar' Ta'āruḍ* begins with a reconstruction of what Ibn Taymiyyah takes to be the foundational commitment of *kalām* theology as practiced in the Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite schools: that rational argument, specifically the kind organized around Aristotelian syllogistic and the principle of non-contradiction as *kalām* theologians understood it, provides the court of final appeal in any dispute between apparent scriptural meaning and theological reason.²¹ This is what the *qānūn kullī* asserts, and Ibn Taymiyyah's forty-four-argument *reductio* is directed at the epistemological structure of that assertion rather than at its theological conclusions.

The core of the *reductio* is a circularity diagnosis. For the *qānūn kullī* to function as a legitimate methodological principle, its own authority must be established by criteria that do not already presuppose it. But the *kalām* tradition grounds the authority of rational argument in rational argument, which means the principle that reason adjudicates between itself and scripture is justified by rational argument of exactly the kind whose adjudicative authority is in question.²² Ibn Taymiyyah develops this with considerable formal precision in the *Dar' Ta'āruḍ*, showing that the move from "this argument is formally valid" to "this argument therefore overrides the apparent meaning of this text" requires a prior commitment about the relative authority of formal validity and textual apparent meaning that formal validity itself cannot supply.

This argument has a recognizable structure in the history of epistemology.

It shares the form of regress objections to foundationalism, which identify a problem in any attempt to establish first principles by means that are not themselves already secured. Ibn Taymiyyah did not use that vocabulary, but his diagnosis of the *kalām* principle maps cleanly onto the structure of that objection. His engagement with *al-Radd 'alā al-Mantiqiyīn* extends the critique to the logical framework itself, arguing that Aristotelian syllogistic as deployed by *kalām* theologians carries hidden ontological presuppositions that cannot be legitimized by syllogistic means.²³

His critique of *ta'wīl*, the allegorical interpretation of scriptural anthropomorphism, makes the broader argument specific. The *kalām* tradition's *ta'wīl* practice presupposed that the plain meaning of certain Quranic passages about divine attributes was incompatible with the philosophers' account of divine incorporeality, and that this incompatibility gave rational argument a mandate to override apparent meaning. In *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya*, Ibn Taymiyyah argued that this presupposition smuggled in a specific metaphysical account of divine attributes borrowed substantially from Neoplatonist ontology, then used that account as a supposedly neutral rational standard against which to measure scriptural language.²⁴ The standard was not neutral, and the procedure was not rational in any sense that could justify the epistemological authority claimed for it.

His resistance to the universals question in *al-Radd 'alā al-Mantiqiyīn* adds a further dimension. *Kalām* logic, following Aristotle and his Arabic commentators, treated universal categories as having a kind of ontological stability that could anchor the deductive movement from premises to conclusions about particular theological questions. Ibn Taymiyyah's position here tends toward a nominalist account: the universals that logic manipulates have a different ontological status from the particulars that scripture addresses, and the inferential bridge between them that the *qānūn kullī* assumes is not as secure as the *kalām* tradition supposed.²⁵ Frank Griffel's recent analysis of the structural symmetry between Ibn Taymiyyah and his Ash'arite opponents is illuminating on this point, showing that the circularity objection has traction against both sides of the debate.²⁶

Ibn Taymiyyah's Positive Epistemology: *Fitra* and *Tawātur*

The destructive side of Ibn Taymiyyah's argument would be epistemologically unfinished without a positive account of how religious knowledge is possible if the foundationalist structure he rejects is set aside. The *Dar' Ta'arud* is not, at its core, a work of critique alone. Across its later volumes, Ibn Taymiyyah builds an alternative epistemological framework

around two interlocking concepts, *fiṭra* and *tawātur*, each of which addresses a different dimension of how religious knowledge is grounded and transmitted, the first at the level of the individual cognitive subject, the second at the level of the believing community across generations.

Fiṭra is the natural constitution with which human beings are created and which, in Ibn Taymiyyah's account, disposes them toward recognition of God, toward basic moral distinctions, and toward a range of immediate certainties that do not depend on syllogistic inference for their justification.²⁷ The Quranic locus classicus is 30:30, *fiṭrat Allāh allatī faṭara al-nāsa 'alayhā*, "the *fiṭra* of God upon which He created mankind," and Ibn Taymiyyah returns to this verse repeatedly throughout the *Dar' Ta'arud* and the *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* to press a specific epistemological claim: that the disposition toward God encoded in *fiṭra* carries genuine epistemic content, organized as a cognitive orientation toward the divine that precedes and conditions all subsequent inferential activity. In volume seven of the *Dar'*, he writes that *fiṭra* is that through which "the servant knows his Lord by recognition (*ma'rifah*) and not by inference (*istidlāl*), just as the child knows its mother before any demonstrative process has been undertaken."²⁸ The analogy is deliberate. Recognition (*ma'rifah*) and inference (*istidlāl*) are structurally different epistemic operations, and the priority of the former over the latter is foundational to Ibn Taymiyyah's entire critique of *kalām*'s procedural assumptions.

El-Tobgui's extended treatment demonstrates that *fiṭra* operates simultaneously as a faculty and as a content in Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemology, the capacity for a certain kind of knowledge and the vehicle through which certain basic truths are known.²⁹ The analogy El-Tobgui draws to what Alvin Plantinga would later call "properly basic beliefs" is suggestive, though El-Tobgui is careful to note the disanalogies. The most consequential is ontological. Plantinga's properly basic beliefs are embedded in an epistemological framework that remains neutral about their metaphysical basis, while Ibn Taymiyyah's account of *fiṭra* is explicitly grounded in a theology of creation. *Fiṭra* delivers its deliverances reliably because God created human beings with that capacity, and the reliability is thus a structural feature of the relationship between Creator and creation, not a contingent empirical fact about cognitive processes.

What *fiṭra* provides epistemologically is *'ilm darūri*, necessary knowledge that does not require discursive justification because it is embedded in the structure of the knowing subject prior to deliberative inquiry. Ibn Taymiyyah distinguishes this from *'ilm nazari*, discursive or acquired knowledge, and assigns each its proper domain.³⁰ The error of

kalām, in his reading, was to treat *'ilm nazārī* as capable of grounding and adjudicating *'ilm darūrī*, which inverts the actual epistemic relationship. Discursive reason draws on and is answerable to the basic certainties of *'ilm darūrī*; it cannot stand above them as an independent tribunal. Ayman Shihadeh's analysis of the development of the *darūrī* or *nazārī* distinction in the classical *kalām* tradition before Ibn Taymiyyah shows that the distinction itself was present in the Ash'arite tradition. The polemical force of Ibn Taymiyyah's argument lay in turning the distinction against *kalām*'s own methodological self-understanding, showing that the very framework Ash'arite theologians used implied a hierarchy that their adjudicative procedures systematically violated.³¹

The structural parallel to Alvin Goldman's process reliabilism is worth noting, though the parallel is at best partial.³² Goldman defines justified belief as belief produced by reliable cognitive processes, without requiring the believer to have reflective access to the reliability of those processes. Ibn Taymiyyah's *fiṭra* functions similarly at the level of basic religious knowledge: the reliability of *fiṭra* is grounded in its divine origin rather than in the believer's capacity to justify that reliability from a neutral standpoint. But Goldman's reliabilism is a formal theory of justification agnostic about the metaphysical basis of reliable processes, while Ibn Taymiyyah's account is embedded in a specific theology of creation that determines both the content and the reliability of *fiṭra*'s deliverances. The parallel is formal; the ontological foundations are incommensurable.

Fiṭra in Ibn Taymiyyah's account does not operate in isolation from prophetic revelation. In the *Nubuwwāt*, he argues that prophecy and *fiṭra* are mutually reinforcing: the prophet's message addresses, articulates, and in some sense completes what *fiṭra* already reaches toward, so that revelation does not arrive as information from outside the knowing subject but as the explicit formulation of what *fiṭra* inclines toward by constitution.³³ This relationship between *fiṭra* and prophetic communication is part of what distinguishes Ibn Taymiyyah's positive epistemology from a simple appeal to natural religion. The content of *fiṭra* is not self-sufficient, and its fullest actualization requires the prophetic tradition as its articulate complement.

Tawātur is the second pillar. In hadith methodology, *tawātur* designates reports transmitted through enough independent chains that their collective weight makes deliberate fabrication across all of them implausible to the point of practical impossibility, producing a degree of certainty that classical theorists assigned to *'ilm* rather than to *ẓann*, probable conjecture.³⁴ Ibn Taymiyyah extends the concept's epistemological reach considerably, using it to account for a kind of communal knowledge transmission that carries

its own evidentiary weight independently of the logical reconstruction of individual transmission chains. In the *Dar' Ta'arud*, he draws on it to argue that certain theological convictions, about divine attributes, about the nature of the prophetic office, and about the basic structure of moral obligation, are *mutawātir* in a sense that encompasses both explicit textual transmission and the broader pattern of consensus across generations of Muslim scholars. This *tawātur ma'nawī*, the transmission of meaning rather than exact verbal formulation, is for Ibn Taymiyyah a genuine epistemic category carrying its own standards of assessment, distinct from the standards appropriate to individually reported *khabar*.³⁵

Ahmad El Shamsy's work on the social epistemology of the early Islamic tradition provides useful context: the *tawātur* concept, as it developed through the second and third Islamic centuries, encoded a conviction that the reliability of transmitted knowledge was secured by the social conditions of its transmission rather than by the logical properties of any individual chain.³⁶ Jonathan Brown's analysis of the hadith sciences reinforces this: *tawātur* functioned in classical Islamic epistemology as a threshold concept, marking the point at which testimony accumulates to the level of *'ilm* rather than remaining probable conjecture, and the threshold was determined by the structural features of the transmitting community rather than by any single agent's inferential reconstruction.³⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah appropriated both dimensions for his epistemological argument. For him, *tawātur* generates *'ilm ḍarūri* at the communal level in the same way that *fiṭra* generates it at the individual level, so that the two concepts together cover the range of religious knowledge that does not depend on *kalām*'s inferential procedures for its foundation.

Anjum's analysis draws out the full significance of this pairing. His argument is that Ibn Taymiyyah's move was to treat communal attestation through *tawātur* as itself a source of necessary knowledge, which means that the community's accumulated theological consensus carries the epistemic status of *'ilm* in the full sense, secured by the social conditions of its transmission rather than by any individual's capacity to reconstruct it syllogistically.³⁸ *Fiṭra* and *tawātur* together define an epistemological space that is neither rationalist in the *kalām* sense nor fideist in the sense that would make religious knowledge arbitrary or merely subjective. Both concepts ground religious knowledge in sources that are prior to and independent of the syllogistic procedures *kalām* deployed, *fiṭra* in the cognitive constitution of the individual subject, and *tawātur* in the accumulated attestation of the believing community across generations.

Structural Mapping of Ibn Taymiyyah's Epistemology

Four formal homologies connect Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemology to the Wittgensteinian post-foundationalism of Phillips and Malcolm, and three ontological divergences prevent the comparison from becoming identification. The homologies are located at the level of argument structure; the divergences at the level of ontological commitment. Both sets of findings carry analytical weight, and neither cancels the other.

The first homology is the rejection of an external adjudicator for religious knowledge. Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* had argued that the framework within which doubt is possible is itself not an object of doubt in the same manner as the propositions it contains. His formulation at §253, "at the foundation of well-founded belief lies belief that is not founded," became a touchstone for Phillips's subsequent argument that the demand for a standpoint outside all language games from which to evaluate religious language imports a philosophical fiction.³⁹ There is no such standpoint, and the pretense that its absence leaves religious language epistemologically deficient confuses the conditions under which evaluation makes sense with the conditions under which any particular evaluation is correct.⁴⁰ Ibn Taymiyyah's rejection of the *qānūn kullī* operates on formally the same terrain. In the *Dar' Ta'ārūd*, he pressed the argument that any attempt to assign rational argument a position outside both scripture and reason, from which to adjudicate their apparent conflicts, already presupposes an answer to the question it claims to be settling. As El-Tobgui reconstructs the core move across volumes one through three of the *Dar'*: "the authority of *'aql* over *naql* cannot be established by *'aql* alone without circularity, and cannot be established by *naql* without abandoning the very priority being argued for."⁴¹ The structure of the argument in each case is the same that the demand for external adjudication presupposes a standpoint that is not available to any actual epistemic agent, and the pretense that it is available distorts rather than resolves the problem of how religious knowledge is to be assessed.

The second homology concerns the location of knowledge in practice and community. Malcolm's "Groundlessness of Belief" argued that religious belief is grounded in forms of life within which evidence is meaningful, and that the community embedded in the practice is constitutive of the conditions under which the belief makes sense at all.⁴² This is a point about the epistemological structure of religious knowledge, about where its conditions of possibility actually lie, and those conditions lie in a form of social practice that cannot be reconstructed from outside by logical inference. Ibn Taymiyyah's account of *tawātur* carries a structurally analogous weight.

In the *Dar' Ta'arud*, he argued that the consensus of the *salaf* on questions of theological interpretation carries epistemic authority that individual syllogistic reconstruction cannot override, because that consensus is the vehicle through which a certain class of religious knowledge has been transmitted in a form that preserves its integrity. Ahmad El Shamsy's work on the social epistemology of early Islamic thought provides useful context here: the *tawātur* concept, as it developed through the second and third Islamic centuries, encoded a conviction that the reliability of transmitted knowledge was secured by the social conditions of its transmission rather than by the logical properties of any individual chain.⁴³ Anjum's analysis of Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemological appropriation of *tawātur* extends this argument. Ibn Taymiyyah's move was to treat communal attestation as a source of *'ilm darūri*, necessary knowledge, and not as a probabilistic accumulation of testimonial evidence which is the move that makes the community constitutive of the knowledge rather than merely a conduit for it.⁴⁴

The third homology is the refusal to derive normative theological conclusions from formal-logical premises alone. Phillips was persistent in his criticism of philosophical theology's tendency to treat the grammar of religious language as if it operated by the same logical rules as the grammar of empirical or mathematical claims. What presents itself as a logical inference from shared premises to a theological conclusion is, on his analysis, typically a move that imports assumptions about how religious language refers (assumptions the shared premises do not actually contain).⁴⁵ Ibn Taymiyyah's critique of *kalām's* use of Aristotelian syllogistic for theological inference runs in a closely parallel direction. In *al-Radd 'alā al-Mantiqiyyīn*, he argued that the universal categories through which Aristotelian logic moves, genus, species, essential definition, have a different ontological status from the particular truths that theological knowledge concerns. Hallaq's translation captures the key formulation: Ibn Taymiyyah argued that "a universal proposition cannot, by logical means alone, establish anything about a particular unless the connection between the universal and the particular has already been established by other means," which is exactly what the *qānūn kullī* failed to secure.⁴⁶ The formal validity of a syllogism does not confer on its conclusions the right to override apparent scriptural meaning, because the inferential procedure already embeds contestable assumptions about the relationship between formal-logical categories and the subject matter of theology.

The fourth homology is the appeal to internal coherence as the appropriate criterion for belief assessment. Malcolm, in his response to

Nielsen, argued that the question whether religious belief is rational is badly posed when posed as a question about whether it meets standards of rationality developed for other domains. The appropriate question is whether the practice of religious belief is internally coherent and whether criticism from outside engages with what the practice actually is.⁴⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah's methodological insistence throughout the *Dar' Ta'arud* runs parallel to this: the proper way to evaluate *kalām* arguments is to ask whether they accurately represent the epistemological structure of the knowledge they claim to adjudicate. The criterion is adequacy to the subject matter rather than conformity to a formal standard borrowed from elsewhere.

The three divergences are equally important and analytically more revealing, because they show where structural similarity at the level of argument terminates at the level of ontological commitment.

The first divergence concerns the theory of reference. Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemology is committed to correspondence: *fiṭra* delivers knowledge of how things actually are, including truths about divine attributes, creation, and the moral order. In *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya*, he insisted at length that the attributes affirmed in scripture are real attributes belonging to a real God, and that the referential character of scriptural language about God is among its most basic and ineliminable features.⁴⁸ Phillips's post-foundationalism is agnostic about correspondence in a way that is central rather than peripheral to his position. On his reading, the grammar of religious language does not make reference to an independently existing divine object of which statements can be true or false in any correspondence sense; it participates in a form of life that has its own grammar, which philosophical analysis can describe but cannot transcend.

The second divergence is cosmological realism. Ibn Taymiyyah's account of creation, divine attributes, and the structure of natural knowledge presupposes an independently existing world with a determinate causal order that knowledge tracks. This realism is the ontological precondition of his epistemology, and no part of his epistemological account is intelligible without it. Phillips's Wittgensteinian inheritance is hostile to the metaphysical realism this requires. Wittgenstein's grammatical investigations had not straightforwardly denied an external world, but they had treated the philosophical question of whether language corresponds to an independently structured reality as a question that dissolved under careful attention rather than one that admitted a theoretical answer.

The third divergence is the most analytically revealing, because it exposes a resource in Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemology that addresses a

persistent vulnerability in Phillips's position. *Fiṭra* is transcultural and transhistorical in a way that Phillips's form of life is not. For Phillips, the form of life within which religious belief makes sense is a particular historical formation, shaped by a specific linguistic community, with its own historically contingent practices. It has no claim to universality beyond those contingent conditions. This is what makes Phillips vulnerable to the charge, pressed repeatedly by Nielsen, that his position makes religious belief an arbitrary product of cultural contingency, with no purchase on anyone outside the relevant community. Ibn Taymiyyah's *fiṭra*, by contrast, is the constitutive cognitive equipment of every human being regardless of cultural context. In the *Dar' Ta'āruḍ*, he explicitly accounts for the apparent failure of religious knowledge in terms of *inhirāf*, the deviation or distortion of *fiṭra* produced when cultural conditioning or corrupting education displaces the natural recognition that *fiṭra* would otherwise secure, so that the universality of *fiṭra* remains the default even when its deliverances are obscured.⁴⁹ This gives Ibn Taymiyyah a response to the arbitrariness charge that Phillips cannot offer within his framework. The resource *fiṭra* provides in his epistemology is structurally closer to Plantinga's account of the *sensus divinitatis*, a natural, God-given cognitive faculty whose deliverances are properly basic and whose universality is grounded in the act of creation, than to anything in Phillips or Malcolm.⁵⁰

The Irrationalism Charge Reconsidered

The irrationalism charge against Ibn Taymiyyah has a genealogy, and that genealogy matters for understanding what the charge actually claims. Massignon's characterizations were the broadest and the least textually grounded, reading Ibn Taymiyyah's opposition to philosophical theology as the expression of a temperamental hostility to systematic thought rather than as a position with its own internal logic. Laoust's 1939 monograph was more historically careful, but his reading still relied on secondary summaries of Ibn Taymiyyah's major epistemological works rather than on the critical editions that later became available, and the portrait it produced was of a thinker whose intellectual energy was primarily reactive.⁵¹ Wolfson's version of the charge, in *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, was the most analytically specific. His argument targeted something more focused than a general failure of formal reasoning. He contended that Ibn Taymiyyah's rejection of the *kalām* epistemological framework left him without principled grounds for discriminating among theological claims, and that his appeal to scripture and the *Salaf* effectively insulated his own theological positions from the rational scrutiny he applied to everyone

else's.⁵²

The charge has a certain surface plausibility. Ibn Taymiyyah did reject the procedure by which Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite theologians regulated theological inquiry, and he did insist that the apparent meaning of scriptural texts about divine attributes should be allowed to stand without the kind of philosophical reconstruction that *kalām's ta'wīl* procedures supplied. If those rejections are read as simply clearing the field of rational constraints, Wolfson's reading follows naturally. But reading them that way requires an assumption that the *kalām* framework exhausted the available options for principled theological reasoning, and that assumption is exactly what Ibn Taymiyyah's argument in the *Dar' Ta'arūḍ* calls into question from the opening pages of volume one.

The structural analysis of the preceding sections gives Wolfson's charge considerably less purchase than it has traditionally had. Ibn Taymiyyah's rejection of the *qānūn kullī* is a rejection of a specific claim about the epistemological status of formal-logical argument in theological contexts. The circularity argument he prosecutes against that claim across the first three volumes of the *Dar'* is itself a piece of sustained formal reasoning. Across forty-four distinct arguments, he demonstrates that the principle assigning rational argument authority over apparent scriptural meaning cannot establish its own authority without presupposing what it is supposed to prove. In volume one of the *Dar'*, he formulates the core diagnosis with particular directness, arguing that the claim for reason's priority over transmitted revelation itself requires rational justification, which means reason is being called upon to establish the legitimacy of its own adjudicative role, "and this is circular (*wa-hādhā dawr*) in a manner that no careful thinker can accept."⁵³ The argument is a formal demonstration that a specific epistemological principle is self-defeating, and its logical structure would be recognizable as such in any tradition of philosophical analysis.

The positive epistemology built around *fiṭra* and *tawātur* reinforces this point. Both concepts provide principled grounds for discriminating among theological claims, which is what Wolfson argued was missing. *Fiṭra* supplies a universal cognitive basis for basic theological certainties, grounded in the structure of the human constitution as created, which means that claims about God which conflict with what *fiṭra* delivers carry the burden of justification rather than claims that accord with it. *Tawātur* supplies a communal epistemic standard for distinguishing well-attested theological convictions from individual speculation, organized around transmitted consensus rather than formal inference but no less rigorous for

that. Ibn Taymiyyah invokes both standards with considerable consistency in the *Dar' Ta'arud*. His judgment that Ash'arite *ta'wil* of divine attributes was epistemologically illegitimate was grounded in the claim that *ta'wil* violated the *fiṭra*-based recognition of divine reality and departed from the transmitted consensus of the *salaf*, while offering in return only a procedure whose internal justification was circular.⁵⁴

The comparison with Phillips and Malcolm adds a further dimension to this defense. Phillips attracted the same irrationalism charge from Kai Nielsen in 1967. Nielsen argued that the Wittgensteinian position, by locating religious belief inside a language game with its own internal criteria of coherence, effectively immunized religion against rational assessment. His formulation was direct. He wrote that Wittgensteinian fideism “gives us a picture of language games as self-contained units, each with its own distinctive criteria,” and that “this conceptual immunity from rational criticism is exactly what is objectionable.”⁵⁵ Malcolm’s response was that Nielsen had misread the position. The criteria religious belief answers to are appropriate to its subject matter, and the criteria Nielsen wanted to apply were themselves the product of a specific epistemological framework, empiricist foundationalism, which had no more claim to universal authority than the framework it criticized.⁵⁶ What Nielsen took to be a refusal of rational assessment was, on Malcolm’s account, a rejection of a particular theory of what rational assessment must look like. The structural parallel with Ibn Taymiyyah is close. His rejection of the *qānūn kullī* is a rejection of a particular theory of what rational assessment of theological claims must look like, a theory he argued was circular and borrowed its apparent authority from Neoplatonist metaphysics rather than from any rationally self-evident source.

Ibn Taymiyyah’s position also has a resource available to it that Phillips’s lacks, and that resource matters for assessing the irrationalism charge at its deepest level. Nielsen’s worry about Wittgensteinian fideism went beyond the internal/external criteria question to the arbitrariness of those criteria. If the form of life within which religious belief makes sense is a particular historical formation, shaped by a specific linguistic community, there is no principle by which it can be assessed or criticized from outside, which means that its standards are, in the end, culturally contingent. Phillips had no answer to this worry within his framework. *Fiṭra* gives Ibn Taymiyyah an answer. Because *fiṭra* is the constitutive cognitive equipment of every human being and its deliverances are, in principle, available to anyone whose *fiṭra* has not been corrupted by distorting habituation, the basic religious knowledge it grounds carries a universality that Phillips’s form-

of-life framework cannot supply. The standard by which Ibn Taymiyyah assesses theological claims is grounded in a theory of universal human cognitive constitution, which is a genuinely non-arbitrary principle even if its ontological basis, divine creation, is itself a theological commitment.⁵⁷ Nielsen could argue that Plantinga's *sensus divinitatis* faces the same challenge and survives it no more successfully than *fiṭra* does. But that is a different argument from the irrationalism charge, and it is one that Ibn Taymiyyah, unlike Phillips, has the conceptual resources to engage.

The irrationalism charge finally depends on an assumption that the *kalām* framework is the appropriate standard of rationality against which Ibn Taymiyyah's alternative should be measured. That assumption was never argued for in Wolfson's work or in Laoust's; it was presupposed. If the circularity argument in the *Dar' Ta'āruḍ* is taken seriously, measuring Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemology against the *kalām* standard begs the question it claims to answer, because the authority of that standard is what the circularity argument challenges. El-Tobgui's reconstruction makes clear that Ibn Taymiyyah was acutely aware of this question-begging move and deployed it as a central element of his *reductio*. In the opening pages of volume one, he explicitly identifies the circularity of using the *kalām* framework to assess itself as a methodological failure that no amount of internal refinement within the *kalām* tradition could correct.⁵⁸ Reading Ibn Taymiyyah's epistemology against a non-circular standard, one that does not presuppose the very authority it is supposed to establish, is what the structural comparison with post-foundationalist philosophy of religion in this article has attempted to supply.

Conclusion

Ibn Taymiyyah's rejection of the *kalām* epistemological framework has a formal structure that is neither simply traditionalist reflex nor irrationalist fideism. The *Dar' Ta'āruḍ*'s *reductio* against the *qānūn kullī* is a circularity argument with recognizable philosophical force, and the positive epistemology built around *fiṭra* and *tawātur* provides an alternative account of religious knowledge that is principled, coherent, and genuinely different from what the *kalām* tradition offered. The structural homologies with Phillips-Malcolm Wittgensteinian fideism, the four formal parallels at the level of argument structure, run alongside three irreducible divergences at the level of ontological commitment. Ibn Taymiyyah is a correspondence realist, a cosmological realist, and a proponent of a transculturally objective cognitive faculty that has no equivalent in Phillips's Wittgensteinian framework. The comparison illuminates both positions without dissolving

either into the other.

The immediate consequence for the irrationalism charge is that it has less traction than the Massignon-Laoust-Wolfson tradition supposed. The charge depended on an implicit privileging of the *kalām* epistemological standard that Ibn Taymiyyah's own argument calls into question. Reading his position through the structural comparison with post-foundationalist philosophy of religion shows that resistance to foundationalist epistemology in theology is not a mark of irrationalism but the signature of a different and defensible account of how theological knowledge works. Three questions remain open. Whether Ibn Taymiyyah's *fiṭra*-based epistemology can withstand the internal coherence challenges that Phillips faced, whether the *tawātur* account of communal knowledge is adequate to the demands a full epistemology of testimony would place on it, and whether the Lakatosian hard-core/protective-belt distinction can be applied to a premodern theological text without anachronistic distortion are questions that deserve separate treatment. The structural reading proposed here makes them available for serious investigation.

Endnotes

1. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dar' Ta'ārūḍ al-'Aql wa-al-Naql*, ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, 11 vols. (Riyadh: Jāmi'at al-Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd al-Islāmiyya, 1991). All subsequent citations of the *Dar'* refer to this edition unless otherwise noted.
2. The forty-four arguments (*wujūh*) against the *qānūn kullī* are distributed across *Dar'* 1–3. For a systematic reconstruction of their logical sequence, see Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation: A Study of Dar' ta'ārūḍ al-'aql wa-al-naql* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 136–72.
3. Henri Laoust, *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Taki-d-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taimiyya* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1939); Louis Massignon, *La Passion de Husayn Ibn Mansūr Hallāj*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 2:456–60.
4. Harry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 570–89. Wolfson's reading drew substantially on secondary summaries rather than on the critical Arabic editions that became available in subsequent decades.
5. Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Ovamir Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation*.
6. D. Z. Phillips, *Wittgenstein and Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1993); Norman Malcolm, "The Groundlessness of Belief," in *Reason and Religion*, ed. Stuart Brown (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 143–57.
7. Kai Nielsen, "Wittgensteinian Fideism," *Philosophy* 42, no. 161 (1967): 191–209.
8. Laoust, *Essai*, 35–84; for a critique of Laoust's dependence on secondary summaries of Ibn Taymiyyah's theological positions, see Caterina Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya wa-Jamā'atuhu: Authority, Conflict and Consensus in Ibn Taymiyya's Circle," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 23–52, at 24–26.
9. Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Kalam*, 3–58.

10. Yahya Michot, "A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary on Avicenna's Risāla Adḥawiyya," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2003): 149–202; for a comprehensive account of Ibn Taymiyyah's engagement with Avicennan philosophy, see Michot, *Ibn Taymiyya: Textes Spirituels*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Muslim Academic Trust, 1999).
11. Bori, "Ibn Taymiyya wa-Jamā'atuhu," 30–45.
12. Wael B. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), xxi–xl. Hallaq's introduction provides the most analytically precise account in English of why Ibn Taymiyyah's rejection of syllogistic inference rests on epistemological rather than simply theological grounds.
13. El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation*, 67–135 (on the historical formation of the *qānūn kullī* doctrine within *kalām*), and 205–47 (on the positive epistemology of *fiṭra*).
14. David Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986). Burrell's work is the most sustained earlier attempt at a comparative reading of classical Islamic epistemology and Western analytic philosophy, though his primary concern is ontology of divine attributes rather than epistemological theory as such.
15. Mohammed Sami Zarepour, "Ibn Taymiyya on the Non-Existence of Abstract Objects," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 27, no. 5 (2019): 1000–1024, at 1004–12.
16. Donald Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 47 (1973–74): 5–20. For the application of interpretive charity in comparative philosophy of religion, see William J. Wainwright, *Reason and the Heart: A Prolegomenon to a Critique of Passional Reason* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 1–30.
17. Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 91–196. For an application of the hard-core/protective-belt distinction to comparative theology, see Nancey Murphy, *Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 55–90.
18. The distinction between genealogical and structural comparison follows the methodological discussion in Shlomo Pines, "The Limitations of Human Knowledge According to Al-Fārābī, Ibn Bājja, and Maimonides," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. Isadore Twersky (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 82–109.
19. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dar'* 1:3–25. The opening volume presents the *qānūn kullī* in its fullest formulation before subjecting it to systematic critique.
20. For the circularity argument's logical structure, see Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya against the Greek Logicians*, xxv–xxxii; El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation*, 149–62.
21. Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Radd 'alā al-Mantiqiyyīn*, ed. 'Abd al-Ṣamad Sharaf al-Dīn al-Kutubī (Bombay: al-Qayyima, 1949), 87–134.
22. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Bayān Talbis al-Jahmiyya fī Ta'sīs Bida'ihim al-Kalāmiyya*, ed. Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim, 10 vols. (Mecca: Muḥamma' al-Malik Fahd, 2005), 1:187–253 (on the Neoplatonist presuppositions embedded in *kalām's ta'wīl* procedures).
23. Frank Griffel, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Ash'arite Opponents on Reason and Revelation: Similarities, Differences, and a Vicious Circle," *Muslim World* 108, no. 1 (2018): 11–34. Griffel's analysis of the structural symmetry between Ibn Taymiyyah's position and that of his Ash'arite opponents is particularly illuminating for understanding why the circularity objection has force against both sides.
24. Zarepour, "Ibn Taymiyya on the Non-Existence of Abstract Objects," 1004–12.
25. El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation*, 205–47.
26. Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," in *Faith and Rationality*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 16–93. El-Tobgui draws attention to the structural parallel at *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and*

- Revelation*, 224–30, while being careful to note that Ibn Taymiyyah’s *fiṭra* has a different ontological grounding from Plantinga’s *sensus divinitatis*.
27. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dar’ Ta’arūḍ* 7, 389–412; see also Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation: A Study of Dar’ ta’arūḍ al-‘aql wa-al-naql* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 205–47.
 28. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dar’ 7*: 397. The Arabic reads: *ya ‘rifu rabbahu bi’l-ma’rifā lā bi’l-istidlāl, kamā ya ‘rifu al-waladu ummahu qabla kull dalīl*. Translation is the author’s own; for an alternative rendering, see El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation*, 217–18.
 29. El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation*, 205–47; for the faculty/content distinction in Ibn Taymiyyah’s *fiṭra* epistemology specifically, see 210–16.
 30. Ayman Shihadeh, “From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī: 6th/12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 15, no. 1 (2005): 141–79, at 162–68.
 31. *Ibid.*, 165–68. Shihadeh shows that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī had already formulated the *darūri/nazarī* hierarchy in ways that generated tensions with the *kalām* adjudicative model, tensions that Ibn Taymiyyah exploited with greater polemical consistency.
 32. Alvin Goldman, “What Is Justified Belief?” in *Justification and Knowledge*, ed. George Pappas (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979), 1–23; for the broader reliabilist framework, see Goldman, *Epistemology and Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 41–93.
 33. Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Nubuwwāt*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Šāliḥ al-Ṭawayyan, 2 vols. (Riyadh: Aḍwā’ al-Salaf, 2000), 1:142–78 (on the relationship between *fiṭra*, prophetic address, and the actualization of religious knowledge); for discussion, see Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 44–52.
 34. For the classical hadith-methodological account of *tawātur*, see Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi‘ī, *al-Risāla*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Šākīr (Cairo: al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1940), 369–72; and, for a secondary analysis, Christopher Melchert, “The Musnad of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal: How It Was Composed and What Distinguishes It from the Six Books,” *Der Islam* 82, no. 1 (2005): 32–51, at 35–37.
 35. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dar’ 1*:180–97 (on *tawātur ma’ nawī* and the epistemological conditions under which communal consensus generates *‘ilm darūri*); for analysis, see Ovamir Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 187–210.
 36. Ahmad El Shamsy, “The Social Construction of Orthodoxy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 97–117, at 104–10.
 37. Jonathan Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunnī Ḥadīth Canon* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 8–14.
 38. Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community*, 196–202.
 39. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), §253.
 40. D. Z. Phillips, *Wittgenstein and Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1993), 45–67.
 41. Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation: A Study of Dar’ ta’arūḍ al-‘aql wa-al-naql* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 149–62. The formulation here is El-Tobgui’s reconstruction of the circularity argument as it unfolds across the first three volumes of the *Dar’ Ta’arūḍ*.
 42. Norman Malcolm, “The Groundlessness of Belief,” in *Reason and Religion*, ed. Stuart Brown (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 143–50.
 43. Ahmad El Shamsy, “The Social Construction of Orthodoxy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 97–117, at 104–10.

44. Ovamir Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 187–210.
45. Phillips, *Wittgenstein and Religion*, 72–89.
46. Wael B. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 7–8. The passage translates Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Radd 'alā al-Mantiqīyyīn*, ed. 'Abd al-Šamad Sharaf al-Dīn al-Kutubī (Bombay: al-Qayyima, 1949), 87–95.
47. Malcolm, “Groundlessness of Belief,” 151–57.
48. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya fī Ta'sīs Bida'ihim al-Kalāmiyya*, ed. Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim, 10 vols. (Mecca: Mujamma' al-Malik Fahd, 2005), 1:187–253. For analysis of the correspondence commitments in Ibn Taymiyyah's attribute theology, see Frank Griffel, “Ibn Taymiyya and His Ash'arite Opponents on Reason and Revelation: Similarities, Differences, and a Vicious Circle,” *Muslim World* 108, no. 1 (2018): 11–34, at 18–24.
49. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dar' Ta'arud* 7, 389–412 (on *inḥināf* and the conditions under which *fiṭra* is corrupted). See also El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation*, 215–22.
50. Alvin Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” in *Faith and Rationality*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 41–65. The parallel between *fiṭra* and the *sensus divinitatis* is discussed in El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation*, 224–30, with appropriate caution about the disanalogies at the level of ontological grounding.
51. Henri Laoust, *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Taki-d-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taimiyya* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1939), 35–84; Louis Massignon, *La Passion de Husayn Ibn Mansūr Hallāj*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 2:456–60. For a direct critique of Laoust's dependence on secondary summaries, see Caterina Bori, “Ibn Taymiyya wa-Jamā'atuhu: Authority, Conflict and Consensus in Ibn Taymiyya's Circle,” in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 23–52, at 24–26.
52. Harry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 570–89.
53. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dar' Ta'arud* 1, 7. The Arabic phrase *wa-hādḥā dawr* is Ibn Taymiyyah's own formulation of the circularity diagnosis; for detailed discussion of its logical structure across volumes one through three, see Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation: A Study of Dar' ta'arud al-'aql wa-al-naql* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 136–72. Translation is the author's own.
54. For Ibn Taymiyyah's application of the *fiṭra* and *tawātūr* standards as discriminating criteria in the attribute theology debates, see *Dar' Ta'arud* 7:389–412 and *Bayān Talbīs* 1, 187–253; for analysis, see Ovamir Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 157–76.
55. Kai Nielsen, “Wittgensteinian Fideism,” *Philosophy* 42, no. 161 (1967): 191–209, at 196–97.
56. Norman Malcolm, “The Groundlessness of Belief,” in *Reason and Religion*, ed. Stuart Brown (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 143–57, at 155–57.
57. Alvin Plantinga, “Reason and Belief in God,” in *Faith and Rationality*, ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 41–65; El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation*, 224–30.
58. El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation*, 149–62; Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dar' Ta'arud* 1:3–25.

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