

مجلة
كلية اللاهوت
للشرق الأدنى

XXVII 1-2006

THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

XXVII/1, 2006

The Near East
School of Theology

XXVII/1, 2006

Theological
Review



Ibn Taymiyya as an Avicennan Theologian: A Muslim Approach to God's Self-Sufficiency*

Jon Hoover†

The Ash'arīs and the Mu'tazilīs on Creation and God's Sufficiency

The meaning of the quranic verse, "Indeed, God is sufficient apart from the worlds" (Q. 3:97, cf. 29:6), is clear: God is independent of creation, and God does not need creatures. However, this affirmation does raise a question: If God does not need the world, why did He create it? Theologians and philosophers in the early and medieval periods of the Islamic tradition respond to this question in several ways. I will outline three here.

First, the Ash'arī Kalām theologians emphasize God's independence and self-sufficiency to such a degree that asking this question is simply inappropriate. God's ways are high above our ways, and God does what God does without cause or reason. So, asking why God does something is meaningless. God created the world in time *ex nihilo* when He so willed, and there is no reason why God willed to create the world at the point that He did. God is no better off with the world and no worse off without it. For the Ash'arīs, God clearly does not need the world to be God.

We see a second way of dealing with the question in the Mu'tazilī Kalām theologians. The Mu'tazalīs agree with the Ash'arīs that God

* This article is a slight revision of a public lecture given at the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies, American University of Beirut, March 8, 2006.

† Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies, Near East School of Theology, Beirut.

creates the world *ex nihilo* and that God does not need the world to be God. However, the Mu'tazilīs argue that the Ash'arīs make the world completely arbitrary, and they try to introduce some kind of rationality into creation. They explain that God did not create the world to benefit Himself. Rather, God created the world to benefit humankind. God does indeed create on account of a cause or purpose, but this cause or purpose is disjoined from Him. The cause is outside of God and has no impact on Him, and so God's sufficiency apart from the world is retained. The Ash'arīs reject the Mu'tazilī solution as completely irrational. On the one hand, if God acts for a cause outside of Himself, this means that God was first imperfect and then acted on account of the cause to perfect Himself. On the other hand, if the cause is in God, then change and temporal origination occur in God. Either way, the cause inevitably has some kind of impact on God.

Ibn Sīnā/Avicenna on Creation and God's Sufficiency

A third way of facing the issue is found in the eleventh century philosopher Ibn Sīnā. Ibn Sīnā is the premier philosopher of his time, and he became the most influential and widely read philosopher in medieval Islamic society¹. He is better known in European languages as Avicenna, and this is the Avicenna who appears in adjectival form in the main title of this article, "Ibn Taymiyya as an Avicennan theologian." I will outline Ibn Sīnā's views in some detail because I want to show afterwards that Ibn Taymiyya follows essentially Avicennan lines when addressing the question of God's sufficiency.

For Ibn Sīnā, God is completely perfect as He is. God is pure perfection, pure good and pure actuality. There is no imperfection in God. God has no need, and there is no unrealized potentiality or possibility in God. God does not change because change could only lead God away

1. On Ibn Sīnā and his influence see Robert Wisnovsky, "Avicenna and the Avicennan Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, eds., Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 92-136.

from His perfection². Concerning the world, Ibn Sīnā portrays creation as an emanation proceeding necessarily from its First Cause God. God emanates the world as a necessary concomitant of His perfection and essence, and the world is eternal because its cause is eternal.

Ibn Sīnā rejects the Mu'tazilī claim that God creates the world for the good of creatures. God does not emanate the world out of concern for the world itself, nor does God act for causes or purposes external to Himself because that would entail change in God.³ Instead the emanation of the world follows necessarily from the very essence of God. Ibn Sīnā puts it like this: "The emanation of things from [the Creator] is because of His essence, not because of something external, and His essence is the cause of order and good."⁴ Ibn Sīnā speaks about the origin of the world in a variety of idioms. For example, he speaks of the First's (i.e. God's) love (*'ishq*) of Itself: "When the First loves Its essence because It is good and Its beloved essence is the principle of existing things, then they emanate from It ordered in the best order."⁵ Another idiom is the First's knowledge of Itself. The First does not acquire knowledge from existing things but from Its essence, and Its knowledge is then the cause of existing things: "The First knows everything from Its essence, not that existing things are a cause of Its knowledge, but Its knowledge is a cause of them."⁶

2. Ibn Sīnā, "Al-Risāla al-'arshiyya fi tawhīdihī ta'ālā wa shifātihī," in Majmū' rasa'il al-Shaykh al-Ra'īs Abī 'Alī al-Ḥusayn b. 'Abd Allāh b. Sīnā al-Bukhārī, (Haydarābād al-Dakkān: Maṭba'at jam'iyyat dā'irat al-ma'ārif al-'uthmāniyya, 1354/1935-6), 5; idem, *Al-Mabda' wa al-ma'ād*, ed. 'Abd Allāh Nūrānī (Tehran: Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University—Tehran University, 1984), 10-11; idem, *Al-Shifā': Al-Ilāhiyyāt* (2), ed. Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsā, et al. (Cairo: Al-Hay'a al-'amma li-shu'ūn al-maṭābi' al-amīriyya, 1380/1960), 356; idem, *Al-Ta'liqāt*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahmān Badawī (Cairo: Al-Hay'a al-miṣriyya al-'amma li-l-kitāb, 1973), 21, 102-3, 150. Second mentions of Ibn Sīnā's works will be indicated by their shortened titles only.
3. Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt wa al-tanbīhāt*, 3 vols., ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār iḥyā' al-kutub al-'arabiyya, 1366-67/1947-48), 3:147-151; *Al-Ta'liqāt*, 16, 53-54, 159; *Al-Mabda' wa al-ma'ād*, 33.
4. *Al-Ta'liqāt*, 159.
5. *Al-Ta'liqāt*, 157.
6. *Al-Ta'liqāt*, 192. See also "Al-Risāla al-arshiyya," 9.

For all his efforts, Ibn Sīnā has often been criticized for denying the agency and will of God even though he claims that God is the Artisan and Agent of the world. Such arguments have been made most famously by al-Ghazālī in his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*).⁷ However, Ibn Sīnā does speak of God willing and choosing to create the world, albeit only in a certain way. He equates God's will (*irāda*) with God's knowledge or God's providence and insists that God's will is not subject to purpose in the Mu'tazilī sense.⁸ Rather, God's choice is conformity with His essence: "In the choice (*ikhtiyār*) of the First, no motive motivates It to [exercise] that [choice] other than Its essence and Its goodness. It does not have choice potentially and then become one who chooses actually. Rather, It has been eternally choosing in actuality. Its meaning is that It does not choose other than what It does."⁹ Here as with God's knowledge and God's love, any thought that God needs the world as an arena in which to manifest His attributes or carry out His will is eliminated by making God's essence the first point of reference. God's self-referentiality is essential while the world that emanates eternally from the essence is only accidental. As Ibn Sīnā puts it, "[The First] loves Its essence... and the order of the good is beloved to It accidentally (*bi-l-'araḍ*)."¹⁰ So, God only loves, wills, knows and chooses Himself. God has no need of the world, and He does not love or will it directly. The world only emanates from God as an accidental, but necessary, concomitant of God's self-love and self-willing.¹¹

7. Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, Arabic ed. of *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* and trans., Michael E. Marmura (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1997), 56-78 (Third Question).

8. *Al-Shifā': Al-Ilāhiyyāt* (2), 366-7; "Al-Risāla al-'arshiyya," 10-11; *Al-Mabda' wa al-ma'ād*, 20-21; *Al-Ta'liqāt*, 19, 71-2, 80, 117.

9. *Al-Ta'liqāt*, 50-51.

10. *Al-Shifā': Al-Ilāhiyyāt* (2), 363.

11. For further discussion, see Rahim Acar, *Talking about God and Talking about Creation: Avicenna's and Thomas Aquinas' Positions* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 132-149. Ibn Sīnā's view of God's creation of the world has often been portrayed as naturalistic—like fire burning—rather than volitional. Acar shows that this is =

Ibn Taymiyya and his Vision of a Perpetually Active and Creative God

With this overview of Ibn Sīnā's approach to God's sufficiency in place, we are now ready to turn to Ibn Taymiyya. Perhaps Ibn Taymiyya is best known today as the prominent fourteenth century jurist from Damascus who inspired the Wahhabis in Arabia and Osama Bin Laden. Be that as it may, my interest here is in Ibn Taymiyya's theological work, and I hope that the following analysis will broaden our view of this complex figure. I intend to show that Ibn Taymiyya addresses the problem of God's sufficiency in a peculiarly Avicennan fashion and thus that the shaykh may be called an Avicennan theologian, at least in this important respect.

First however I must face an objection. Is it not odd even to suggest that Ibn Taymiyya might be an Avicennan theologian? If we are to believe Majid Fakhry in his well known textbook *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, Ibn Taymiyya is certainly not a philosopher and not even philosophical. To characterize Ibn Taymiyya's place in the philosophical tradition, Fakhry uses the strong words "anti-rationalist," "slavish traditionalist," and "misology" (hatred of reason).¹² Fakhry is not alone in reading Ibn Taymiyya this way, and the shaykh is well known for his polemic against Aristotelian logic, Kalām theology, Ibn 'Arabī's theosophy, and of course Ibn Sīnā. So what is going on? How can Ibn Taymiyya possibly be called Avicennan when he appears to reject not only Ibn Sīnā but the greater portion of the intellectual tradition of Islam?

It is certainly true that Ibn Taymiyya is not a philosopher. He is a *faqīh*, a jurist, who is trying to ascertain how one may speak about God, and he is an apologist who wants to show that his doctrine is rational. It is also true that Ibn Taymiyya spills a great deal of ink analyzing and undermining opponents with his incisive mind and his vast knowledge of

= inaccurate, interprets Ibn Sīnā's view of creation along lines compatible with what I present here, and shows that Thomas Aquinas holds much the same view.

12. Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 2d ed. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1983), 312-318.

the Qur'an and the Hadith. But what Fakhry and others like him fail to notice is that Ibn Taymiyya critiques these various currents of thought not because he is against reason as such but because he has a different vision of God. What I want to show here is how Ibn Taymiyya's theology does owe something quite important to Ibn Sīnā even if he differs with Ibn Sīnā on some issues.¹³

To get a sense for Ibn Taymiyya's basic theological vision, we need to back up a bit and observe that the Ash'arīs, the Mu'tazilīs, Ibn Sīnā and most other medieval philosophers and theologians all share an ancient Greek vision of God's perfection as eternal, immutable, unchanging and timeless. God in His perfection does not move and does not change. If God changed in any way, it would only be away from perfection and into imperfection. Now Ibn Taymiyya turns this mainstay of the Greek tradition completely on its head and radically alters the meaning of God's perfection by introducing activity and movement into God's essence. A God who is motionless and inactive is imperfect, and the hallmark of God's perfection is perpetual activity. Ibn Taymiyya does not speak

13. Unless otherwise noted, what follows is based on Ibn Taymiyya, "Aqwam mā qīla fī al-qada' wa al-qadar wa al-ḥikma wa al-ta'līl" [hereafter *Irāda*, following this text's alternative title "Al-*Irāda* wa al-amr"] in *Majmū' fatawā shaykh al-Islām Ahmad b. Taymiyya*, 37 vols., ed. 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Muḥammad b. Qāsim and Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Muḥammad (Cairo: Dār al-Rahma, n.d.) [hereafter MF], 8:81-158; and idem, *Minhāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya fī naqḍ kalām al-Shī'a al-Qadariyya*, 9 vols., ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim (Riyadh: Jāmi'at al-Imām Muḥammad b. Su'ūd al-Islāmiyya, 1406/1986), 1:146-420. Although these texts are analyzed in detail in Chapter Two of my Ph.D., "An Islamic Theodicy: Ibn Taymiyya on the Wise Purpose of God, Human Agency, and Problems of Evil and Justice" (University of Birmingham, UK, 2002), the data is now better interpreted according to the perspective outlined in the present article. (The Ph.D. thesis is being revised for publication). For additional discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's theological vision, see my two articles: "Perpetual Creativity in the Perfection of God: Ibn Taymiyya's Hadith Commentary on God's Creation of this World," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15:3 (Sept. 2004): 287-329; and "God Acts by His Will and Power: Ibn Taymiyya's Theology of a Personal God in his Treatise on the Voluntary Attributes," forthcoming in the proceedings of the "Ibn Taymiyyah and His Times" conference, Princeton University, April 8-10, 2005.

explicitly of time in God, but it is implicit in His notion of God's voluntary acts and attributes which God exercises in temporal sequence through His will and power. From eternity, God has been willing what He does on account of causes or wise purposes, and likewise from eternity, God in His perfection has been creating things in the world. This does not mean that any part of the world is eternal, but it does mean that there have always been created things of one sort or another. As Ibn Taymiyya puts it, the genus of created things is eternal, but no individual created thing is eternal. In sum God's perfection for Ibn Taymiyya consists in perpetual dynamism and creativity, not in eternal stillness and inactivity.

This dynamic vision of God provides Ibn Taymiyya a basis from which to raze the emanation cosmology of Ibn Sīnā. In very rough outline, Ibn Sīnā explains that our world of temporality derives from the eternal movements of the celestial spheres, which in turn emanate from the eternal First Cause. Ibn Taymiyya contends that this is nonsense because temporal origination and movement can never arise out of an eternal and motionless Cause. The eternal can never give rise to the temporal. For Ibn Taymiyya, the perpetually creative God wills and creates each created thing directly in time. The shaykh uses the same principle against the Ash'arīs. The Ash'arīs say that the world is not eternal; God created the world *ex nihilo*. But what then caused God to create the world at the point that He did and not at some other point? If the Ash'arīs reply that nothing caused God to do that, it follows that something came out of nothing. Ibn Taymiyya takes this to be patently absurd.

Al-Ghazālī defends the Ash'arī view in his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* by locating the "cause" or the factor preponderating the existence of the world in God's eternal will. Al-Ghazālī argues that it is in the very nature of God's will to have designated the time at which the world originated. The world did not come into existence until the point at which God in His eternal will had set, and God did not will it to be created prior to that.¹⁴ Ibn Taymiyya rejects this, and he asserts that al-Ghazālī errs in adopting

14. Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 15-26.

this Kalām position. God cannot decide for one of two possibilities over the other without a preponderating factor, that is, without something prompting God to make this choice.

Ibn Taymiyya denies that an eternal will can give rise to temporal origination and the temporal world, and he asserts that it is impossible for God to will an individual existent in eternity. The shaykh argues that if God had an eternal will that applied in general to all things, then everything would be eternal and nothing could originate. This, he says, denies the origination and movement that we actually see, such as the movements of the sun, moon, celestial bodies, wind, clouds, living beings, and plants. Rather, he argues, God's willing of something to happen occurs at the moment that it happens.

The fact that Ibn Taymiyya maintains causality and wise purpose in God's will puts him face to face with three particular Ash'arī objections. The first is that causality in God's will yields an infinite regress. If God acts on account of a cause, this cause is itself an effect in time of a prior cause, which prior cause is an effect in time of a cause even more prior, and so on into eternity in the past. Ibn Taymiyya accepts that his theology entails an infinite regress, and he refutes various Ash'arī arguments against it.

A second Ash'arī objection to God acting on account of an originating cause is that it subjects God to change and time. Temporal events (*ḥawādīth*) end up subsisting in God's essence, and God becomes subject to time. We have already seen that the Mu'tazilīs try to avoid this by saying that God acts for a cause that is disjoined from His essence. This does not convince the Ash'arīs who believe that the Mu'tazilīs cannot avoid origination in God, no matter what. For his part, Ibn Taymiyya complains that the Mu'tazilīs make God indifferent to His creation. Here again Ibn Taymiyya adopts the very view that the Ash'arīs reject. Temporal events do in fact subsist in God's essence. However, he speaks this way only very rarely. Instead, as I mentioned earlier, he prefers to speak of God's voluntary acts—God's acts of will and choice—subsisting in God's essence.

Ibn Taymiyya on God's Sufficiency

The third Ash'arī objection brings us to the question of God's sufficiency. The Ash'arīs charge that cause or wise purpose in God's will makes God imperfect: "If [God] created creation for a cause, He would be imperfect without it and perfected (*mustakmal*) by it."¹⁵ Someone who acts on account of a cause is perfected by completing the act and was imperfect before the act, which is impossible for God. The Mu'tazilīs respond to this by disjoining God's purpose from God and making God's purposes yield a return of beneficence and profit only to creatures and not for God. Ibn Taymiyya takes a decidedly different route. He asserts God's sufficiency (*ghinā*), but he also boldly maintains that God acts on account of wise purposes that return to God. The following statement of his position clearly reveals its paradoxical nature:

God has a wise purpose in everything that He creates. As He said, "The handiwork of God who perfected everything" (Q. 27:88), and He said, "Who made good everything He created" (Q. 32:7). He—Glory be to Him—"is sufficient apart from the worlds" (Q. 3:97, 29:6). The wise purpose [i.e. the cause] includes two things. First is a wise purpose that returns to Him (*ta'ūdu ilayhi*), which He loves and with which He is well pleased. The second [returns] to His servants, which is a blessing for them at which they rejoice and in which they take pleasure.¹⁶

Ibn Taymiyya makes no attempt in this particular text to resolve the paradox between God's sufficiency and God's apparent interest in creation. How is God sufficient apart from the worlds, but yet acts for a wise purpose that returns to Him? What we find in some other texts only accentuates the paradox. In polemic against the Mu'tazilīs, Ibn Taymiyya rejects their notion of God's disinterested beneficence. Rather, he argues, someone who is beneficent is praised, and it is the judgment that returns to the beneficent that makes beneficence praiseworthy. Moreover,

15. *Irāda* MF 8:83.

16. Ibn Taymiyya, "Fī qudrat al-Rabb 'azza wa jalla," MF 8:35-36.

someone who is beneficent is not indifferent to his acts: “The generous soul rejoices, is glad and takes pleasure in the good that proceeds from it to another.”¹⁷ Conversely, it is irrational that someone not seek gain through his acts: “Anyone who commits an act in which there is neither pleasure, nor benefit nor profit for himself in any respect, neither sooner nor later, is aimless, and he is not praised for this.”¹⁸

With this Ibn Taymiyya makes a measure of self-interest intrinsic to what constitutes rational and praiseworthy action. Implied, but left unstated, is that God is perfect and praiseworthy because of the rationality in the things that He does. From this, it could be understood that God acts rationally in order to elicit His servants’ praise. God acts well so that we praise Him. However, this would run counter to what we find in a different text where Ibn Taymiyya vigorously defends God’s sufficiency.¹⁹ Ibn Taymiyya denies that God’s servants can profit Him, and he denies that God needs them. Likewise, God has no need to fear creatures. Unbelievers cannot harm God, and it does God no harm when people fail to keep His commands. But this also does not resolve the paradox.

In another text, Ibn Taymiyya takes up the matter far more comprehensively.²⁰ A discussion of love between God and human beings sets the stage. On the authority of texts from the Qur’an and the Hadith, Ibn Taymiyya argues that God’s servants should love God in Himself and love other things only for God’s sake. Conversely, God loves His servants who believe in Him and do what He loves. Then with clear echoes in Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Taymiyya locates the source of God’s love for His servants in God’s love for Himself: “What God loves of worship of Him and obedience to Him follows from love for Himself, and love of that is the cause of [His] love for His believing servants. His love for believers follows from love for Himself.”²¹ Here we see that God’s love for Himself is primary, and

17. *Irāda* MF 8:89.

18. *Irāda* MF 8:89-90.

19. Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-nubuwwāt* (Beirut: Dār al-qalam, n.d.), 135-6.

20. *Irāda* MF 8:141-9.

21. *Irāda* MF 8:144. Similarly, Ibn Taymiyya writes elsewhere, “The Lord—Exalted is =

God’s love for human beings follows on from that secondarily. On this basis Ibn Taymiyya argues comparatively that God’s self-love, self-praise and self-laudation so greatly exceed human love, praise, and laudation of God that God has no need of them. That is, God does not need our love and praise of Him. More decisively, however, the shaykh leaves the human vantage point completely aside and adds that God has no need because it is He who creates the love and good deeds of His servants:

[God] is the Sufficient-in-Himself (al-ghaṭī bi-nafsihi). He does not need anyone else. Even more, everything other than Him is in want of Him... When He rejoices at the repentance of the repenting, loves whoever draws close to Him with supererogatory deeds, is well pleased with the earliest predecessors and such like, it is not permissible to say that He has want of another in that. He is not perfected by another. It is He who created them, and it is He who guided them and helped them so that they did what He loves, is well pleased with and rejoices at.²²

Ibn Taymiyya here preserves God’s sufficiency not by making the world arbitrary—as the Ash‘arīs do—but by crediting all that occurs within the world to God’s creative acts. God’s sufficiency apart from the worlds consists in not needing help from anyone else in creation. Moreover, as with Ibn Sīnā, the source of God’s love for creation is not God’s regard for creatures in themselves. Rather, God’s love for creation is nothing but a necessary concomitant, a necessary byproduct, of God’s love for Himself. Likewise, God’s will to create the world and all that is in it derives from the internal workings of God’s perfection and owes nothing to the responses and desires of creatures.

Ibn Taymiyya finishes this discussion by clarifying the meaning of

= He—loves Himself, and among the necessary concomitants of His love of Himself is that it is a love willing what He wills to do. What He wills to do, He wills for an objective (*ghāya*) that He loves. Love is the final cause (*al-‘illa al-ghā’iyya*) because of which everything exists” (*Kitāb al-nubuwwāt*, 111). Although not explicitly stated, context indicates that the final cause here is God’s essence.

22. *Irāda* MF 8:145.

God's perfection. In reply to the Ash'arī complaint that God's acting for a cause makes God imperfect prior to His alleged perfection, Ibn Taymiyya explains that perfection is the existence of something only when wise purpose requires. If something exists when it is not supposed to exist, that is imperfection. Imperfection is not the absence of something as such, but only its absence when God's wise purpose dictates that it should exist. Basically, what God brings into existence at any given time is perfect for that time.

Ibn Taymiyya also clarifies again that a God who acts for a cause is not perfected *by another*, as the Ash'arīs allege. Rather, God is perfected by His own will and power without help from anyone else. The shaykh further explains that perfection through acts is rational. Reason knows that someone who acts for a wise purpose is more perfect than someone who acts without purpose. In fact, the Ash'arī view of God who acts without wise purposes is irrational.

Ibn Taymiyya also again rejects the thought that God somehow gains something from others through His acts. He writes, "When it is said that [God] is perfect through (*kamula bi*) His act in which He does not need anyone else, it is as if it were said that He is perfect through His attributes or perfect through His essence."²³ So for Ibn Taymiyya, God's acts are just as constitutive of God's perfection as are God's attributes and essence. Put differently, God's acts are necessary concomitants flowing out of God's perfection, and in no way does God acquire perfection through His acts.

Conclusion

To sum up it is clear that Ibn Taymiyya faces a major theological problem reconciling God's absolute self-sufficiency and God's interaction with the created world. Ibn Taymiyya's insistence that God's acts rationally in the temporal world in a self-interested sense strongly suggests that God needs creatures to manifest His perfection. To avoid

this, Ibn Taymiyya resorts to the very basic Avicennan notion that, while the world is not essential to who God is, it is nonetheless a necessary concomitant of God's perfection and self-love. God does not need the world to reveal His perfection. The first point of reference for God's perfection, love and will is Himself; the world—even if necessary—is accidental to God's self-referentiality. Ibn Taymiyya of course rejects Ibn Sīnā's emanation cosmology, and he portrays God's creation of the world as voluntary and dynamic, but this dynamic and voluntary creativity is nonetheless a necessary concomitant of God's internal and self-sufficient perfection, and on this count at least, we may justifiably call Ibn Taymiyya an Avicennan theologian.

I conclude with a note on Ibn Sīnā's influence. It used to be thought that al-Ghazālī with his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* put an end to philosophy and its impact in the Islamic world. The careful labor of numerous scholars over the last decade or two has seriously undermined this view. What we find in Ibn Taymiyya—that allegedly most intractable of anti-philosophical thinkers—adds important evidence that Ibn Sīnā's ideas outlived al-Ghazālī. We might also ask whether Ibn Sīnā's ideas continue to live on in those Muslim circles today who read Ibn Taymiyya, not as a matter of historical research but as a matter of nurturing faith. While the research on this remains to be done, I suspect that Ibn Sīnā is more alive today—and in the most unexpected places—than we may realize.