God Spatially Above and Spatially Extended: The Rationality of Ibn Taymiyya's Refutation of Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Ašʿarī Incorporealism

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Abstract

Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) wrote his tome *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* to refute Ašʿarī *kalām* theologian Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 606/1210) argument in *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* that God is not corporeal, located, or spatially extended. *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* is the largest known refutation of *kalām* incorporealism in the Islamic tradition, and al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* was apparently the most sophisticated work of its kind circulating in Ibn Taymiyya's Mamlūk scholarly milieu. Ibn Taymiyya in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* deconstructs al-Rāzī's rational arguments and explicates an alternative theology of God's relation to space. Translating his understanding of the meaning of the Qurʾān and the Sunna into *kalām* terminology and drawing on Ibn Rušd's (d. 595/1198) Aristotelian notion of place as the inner surface of the containing body, Ibn Taymiyya envisions God in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* as a very large indivisible and spatially extended existent that is above and surrounds the created world in a spatial sense.

Keywords

Résumé

Ibn Taymiyya (m. 728/1328) écrivit son traité *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* pour réfuter l'argument du théologien Ašʿarī Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (m. 606/1210) dans *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* selon lequel Dieu n'est pas corporel, situé ou spatialement étendu. Le *Bayān talbīs*

al-ǧahmiyya est la plus grande réfutation connue de l'incorporélisme du *kalām* dans la tradition islamique et le *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* d'al-Rāzī demeure l'œuvre la plus aboutie du genre circulant dans le milieu savant mamelouk d'Ibn Taymiyya. Ibn Taymiyya dans *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* déconstruit les arguments rationnels d'al-Rāzī et déploie une théologie alternative de la relation de Dieu à l'espace. Traduisant sa compréhension de la signification du Coran et de la Sunna dans la terminologie du *kalām* et s'inspirant de la notion aristotélicienne d'Ibn Rušd (m. 595/1198) du lieu comme surface intérieure du corps contenant, Ibn Taymiyya envisage Dieu dans le *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* comme un très grand existant indivisible et spatialement étendu qui est au-dessus et entoure le monde créé dans un sens spatial.

Mots clefs

anthropomorphisme, ašʿarisme, attributs divins, Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Dieu, ḥanbalisme, Ibn Rušd, Ibn Taymiyya, incorporélisme, *kalām*, espace, théologie

Introduction[1]

Qurʾānic verses such as "[The angels] fear their Lord above them" (*yaḫāfūna rabba-hum min fawqi-him*; Kor 16, 50) and "The All-Merciful sat over the Throne" (*al-Raḥmānu ʿalā l-ʿarši stawā*; Kor 20, 5) raise thorny questions about God's relation to body, location, and space. I will distinguish four approaches to these questions among early and medieval Muslim theologians to set the stage for this article's focus on the Ḥanbalī theologian Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). These issues are often analyzed through an epistemological lens of rationalism and traditionalism that identifies rationalism with Muʿtazilī adherence to the incorporeality of God and traditionalism with literalism. This dichotomy too easily obscures the rationality of views opposing the Muʿtazilīs, and it struggles to make sense of the rationalizing character of Ibn Taymiyya's "traditionalist" theology. The following typology therefore focuses on the theology of each approach rather than on the degree to which it might be considered rationalist or traditionalist.[2]

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1 The primary research for this article was funded by a Research Fellowship from the Leverhulme Trust.

2 On the limitations of the rationalist-traditionalist dichotomy, see further Sherman A. Jackson, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's* Fayṣal al-Tafriqa Bayna al-Islām wa al-Zandaqa, Karachi, Oxford University Press ("Studies in Islamic Philosophy," 1), 2002, p. 16-29. For a recent deployment of the rationalist-traditionalist

The first of the four approaches is the noncognitive stance of traditionists like Ġulām Ḫalīl (d. 275/888) and Ḥanbalīs such as Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223).[3] Scriptural texts speaking about God's names and attributes are deemed to be entirely devoid of cognitive content. Nothing is said about divine location or corporeality, neither to affirm nor to deny, and all interpretation of the meaning of God's attributes is shunned. Texts indicating God's names and attributes are affirmed verbally but passed over without comment (*imrār*) and without inquiring into their modality (*bi-lā kayf*). Intellectual effort should be devoted to understanding God's law instead of theology.

The second approach maintains explicitly that God is a body (*ǧism*). The early theologian Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) is reported to believe that God is a body in the form of a human being, which, however, does not resemble anything else, and the early Šīʿī Hišām b. Ḥakam (d. 179/795-796) is said to affirm that God is a body with dimensions, a radiant light like an ingot that glistens like a pearl.[4] The Karrāmī theologians, named after Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Karrām (d. 255/869) affirm that God is a body distinct from creation and located above God's Throne. The Karrāmīs thrived well into the seventh/thirteenth century.[5]

The third view situates God above the world spatially but avoids calling God a body explicitly. I will call this "spatialism" to distinguish it from the corporealism of the preceding approach. The two views taken together constitute what is called "transcendent anthropomorphism" in some of the scholarly literature.[6]

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dichotomy, see Livnat Holtzman, *Anthropomorphism in Islam: The Challenge of Traditionalism* (*700-1350*), Edinburg, Edinburg University Press ("Edinburgh Studies in Classical Islamic History and Culture"), 2018.

3   Maher Jarrar and Sebastian Günther, *Doctrinal Instruction in Early Islam: The Book of the Explanation of the Sunna by Ghulām Khalīl* (*d. 275/888*), Leiden-Boston, Brill ("Islamic History and Civilization," 174), 2020, p. 129-133, 156, 161-162, 186; George Makdisi, *Ibn Qudāma's Censure of Speculative Theology*, London, Luzac ("E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series. New Series," 23), 1962; Ayman Shihadeh, "Three Apologetic Stances in al-Ṭūfī: Theological Cognitivism, Noncognitivism, and a Proof of Prophecy from Scriptural Contradiction," *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies*, 8/2 (2006), p. 1-23, here p. 3-5.

4   Al-Ašʿarī, *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn wa-ḫtilāf al-muṣallīn*, ed. Hellmut Ritter, Istanbul, Maṭbaʿat al-dawla, 1929-1930, I, p. 31-33, 209.

5   Aron Zysow, "Karrāmiyya," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke, Oxford, Oxford University Press ("Oxford Handbooks"), 2016, p. 252-262, especially p. 256-257; *id.*, "Karrāmiya," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, xv, p. 590-601; al-Ǧuwaynī, *Kitāb al-Iršād ilā qawāṭiʿ al-adilla fī uṣūl al-iʿtiqād*, Beirut, Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 1416/1995, p. 21-23; transl. *id.*, *A Guide to Conclusive Proofs for the Principles of Belief*, transl. Paul E. Walker, Reading, Garnet ("Great Books of Islamic Civilisation"), 2000, p. 24-26.

6   Wesley Williams, "A Body Unlike Bodies: Transcendent Anthropomorphism in Ancient Semitic Tradition and Early Islam," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 129/1 (2009),

A prime example of spatialism is the traditionist al-Dārimī (d. between 280/893 and 282/895) who appears to be a noncognitivist at first glance because he says that God is to be described only as God describes Himself in the Qurʾān without delving into questions about the modality of God's names and attributes (*bi-lā takyīf*).[7] However, his noncognitivism is only partial, and he takes the liberty to interpret what it means for God to be above. Al-Dārimī attacks the theologian Ǧahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/746) for maintaining that "God has no boundary, no extremity, and no limit" (*laysa li-Llāh ḥadd wa-lā ġāya wa-lā nihāya*),[8] and he counters that all things have boundaries and extremities. Ǧahm's denial of a boundary for God is tantamount to denying that God is a thing (*šayʾ*), and denying that God is a thing is, in turn, equivalent to saying that God is nothing at all. Al-Dārimī thus claims that God is a thing with a boundary and in fact two boundaries. One boundary is known only to God. The other is God's place over the Throne above the heavens.[9] Al-Dārimī explains further that there is nothing else with God above the created world. There is no other heaven above God, and nothing encompasses God or contains God.[10] The late fourth/tenth-century Ḥanbalī text *al-Radd ʿalā l-zanādiqa wa-l-Ǧahmiyya* (*Refutation of the Heretics and the Ǧahmiyya*) attributed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) articulates a similar spatial interpretation. The Ḥanbalī *Radd* advances diverse arguments to show that God is a thing that is not inside the creation. Instead, God is above the Throne and surrounds the world.[11] As will become apparent below, Ibn Taymiyya falls within this spatialist tradition.[12]

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p. 19-44; and Aydogan Kars, *Unsaying God: Negative Theology in Medieval Islam*, Oxford, Oxford University Press ("Academy Series"), 2019, p. 195-212, who clears up confusion in the scholarly literature over the expression *bi-lā kayf* and elucidates the distinction between non-cognitivism and transcendent anthropomorphism.

7   ʿUṯmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī, *Naqḍ al-Imām Abī Saʿīd ʿUṯmān b. Saʿīd ʿalā l-Marīsī l-Ǧahmī l-ʿanīd fī-mā ftarā ʿalā Llāh ʿazza wa-ǧalla min al-tawḥīd*, ed. Rašīd b. Ḥasan al-Almāʿī, Riyadh, Maktabat al-rušd, 1998, p. 218, 301, 689.

8   *Ibid.*, p. 223.

9   *Ibid.*, p. 223-226.

10   *Ibid.*, p. 436-447.

11   Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *al-Radd ʿalā l-zanādiqa wa-l-ǧahmiyya*, ed. Daġaš al-ʿAǧmī, Kuwait, Ġirās, 1426/2005, p. 209-210, 287-295, 300-301; Andrew G. McLaren, "Ibn Ḥanbal's Refutation of the Jahmiyya: A Textual History," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 140/4 (2020), p. 901-926, argues that little if any of this Ḥanbalī text derives directly from Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal himself and that the earliest recension dates to the third quarter of the fourth/tenth century. Morris S. Seale, *Muslim Theology: A Study of Origins with Reference to the Church Fathers*, London, Luzac, 1964, p. 96-125, translates what is in effect the earliest recension from a manuscript in the British Library.

12   Farid Suleiman, *Ibn Taymiyya und die Attribute Gottes*, Berlin-Boston, De Gruyter ("Welten des Islams – Worlds of Islam – Mondes de l'Islam," 11), 2019, gives a general overview of

Fourth is the incorporealism of *kalām* theologians among the Muʿtazilīs, Ašʿarīs, Māturīdīs, and the Twelver and Zaydī Šīʿīs. Incorporealists argue that it is irrational for God to be a body or in a place, and they typically reinterpret (*taʾwīl*) God's attributes to avert connotations of corporeality and spatiality. God's sitting (*istiwāʾ*) on the Throne (Kor 20, 5) for example is reinterpreted as God's possessing (*istilāʾ*).[13] The Ašʿarī *kalām* tradition, Ibn Taymiyya's primary interlocutor, got off to an ambiguous start regarding God's incorporeality. Two or perhaps three different views may be identified in the works of the tradition's eponym al-Ašʿarī (d. 324/935). Al-Ašʿarī argues in his *Kitāb al-Lumaʿ* (*Highlights*) that it would violate God's unity for God to be a three-dimensional body assembled out of two or more things. God also did not call Himself a body in revelation.[14] However, al-Ašʿarī in his *al-Ibāna ʿan uṣūl al-diyāna* (*Elucidation of the Foundations of the Religion*) ignores the question of whether God is a body and instead adopts what appears to be a noncognitive posture. He affirms that God has a face, hands, and eyes without inquiring into how (*bi-lā kayf*), and he condemns the Muʿtazilī practice of reinterpreting such attributes to avert corporeal connotations.[15] Yet, al-Ašʿarī also affirms in *al-Ibāna* that God is over the Throne, without adding *bi-lā kayf*, and he interprets God's location to mean that God is not in created things such as the Virgin Mary's

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Ibn Taymiyya's positions on God and space (p. 123-125) and divine aboveness (p. 315-318). Livnat Holtzman and Miriam Ovadia, "On Divine Aboveness (*al-Fawqiyya*): The Development of Rationalized Ḥadīth-Based Argumentations in Islamic Theology," in *Rationalization in Religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, eds Yohanan Friedmann, Christoph Markschies and Marc Bergermann, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2018, p. 224-269, provide historical and textual detail on controversies over *ḥadīṯ* reports concerning God's location above and briefly note that Ibn Taymiyya attempts to rationalize God's aboveness from a few of his shorter works.

13   For the early Muʿtazilīs, see al-Ašʿarī, *Maqālāt al-islāmiyyīn wa-ḫtilāf al-muṣallīn*, p. 155, 211. The Zaydī reception of Muʿtazilī incorporealism is discussed in Binyamin Abrahamov, *Anthropomorphism and Interpretation of the Qurʾan in the Theology of al-Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm*: Kitāb al-Mustarshid, Leiden-New York-Köln, E.J. Brill ("Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science," 26), 1996; and the Twelver reception in Hussein Ali Abdulsater, *Shiʿi Doctrine, Muʿtazili Theology: Al-Sharīf Al-Murtaḍā and Imami Discourse*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2017, p. 70. The Māturīdī creed of Naǧm al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī (d. 537/1142) denies that God is a body or located in a place; al-Nasafī's *ʿAqāʾid* is the second creed printed in Naǧm al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī, *Pillar of the Creed of the Sunnites*, ed. William Cureton, London, Society for the Publication of Oriental Texts, 1843 (see p. 2). For the Ašʿarīs see the discussion following here.

14   Al-Ašʿarī, *The Theology of Al-Ashʿarī* [*Kitāb al-Lumaʿ*], ed. and transl. Richard J. McCarthy, Beirut, Imprimerie Catholique, 1953, p. 5-83 (p. 9-10, Arabic) and p. 5-116 (p. 11-12, transl.).

15   Al-Ašʿarī, *al-Ibāna ʿan uṣūl al-diyāna*, ed. Ṣāliḥ b. Muqbil b. ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿUṣaymī l-Tamīmī, Riyadh, Dār al-faḍīla ("Silsilat al-rasāʾil al-ǧāmiʿiyya," 68), 1432/2011, p. 213-215, 440, 455-461.

womb.[16] This is a kind of spatialism comparable to that of al-Dārimī and the Ḥanbalī *Radd*. Despite this, later Ašʿarīs such as al-Ǧuwaynī (d. 478/1085) in his *Kitāb al-Iršād ilā qawāṭiʿ al-adilla fī uṣūl al-iʿtiqād* (*The Book of the Guide to Conclusive Proofs for the Foundations of the Creed*) deny divine corporeality and spatial location unequivocally and take up reinterpretation,[17] and Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) articulates the interpretative approach that comes to dominate the mature Ašʿarī tradition. In his most extensive work on the topic *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* (*Establishing Sanctification*), al-Rāzī identifies his opponents as Karrāmīs and Ḥanbalīs and elaborates both rational and scriptural arguments for God's incorporeality and exoneration from location (*ǧiha*) and spatial extension (*taḥayyuz*).[18] Toward the end of the book, al-Rāzī sets out a rule for interpreting the plain (*ẓāhir*) senses of scriptural texts violating the Ašʿarī incorporealist rationality: the meanings of such texts must be either reinterpreted according to the custom of the later *kalām* theologians or delegated to God and given no further thought (*tafwīḍ*). Al-Rāzī ascribes *tafwīḍ* to the early Muslims (*salaf*) and states his own preference for reinterpretation.[19]

The present study explores the rational argumentation of Ibn Taymiyya's *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* (*Explication of the Deceit of the Ǧahmiyya*), a direct refutation of al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*.[20] At eight sizable volumes in the 2005

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16   *Ibid.*, p. 405-414; see Kars, *Unsaying God*, p. 221-228, for further analysis of ambiguity in early Ašʿarism.

17   Al-Ǧuwaynī, *al-Iršād ilā qawāṭiʿ al-adilla*, p. 21-23, 67-70; transl. *id.*, *A Guide to Conclusive Proofs*, p. 24-27, 86-91.

18   Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, ed. Anas Muḥammad ʿAdnān al-Šarafāwī and Aḥmad Muḥammad Ḫayr al-Ḫaṭīb, Damascus, Dār nūr al-ṣabāḥ, 2011. Jon Hoover, "Reason and the Proof Value of Revelation in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's late *kalām* works *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, *Maʿālim uṣūl al-dīn*, and *al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*," in *Rationalität in der Islamischen Theologie*, Band 1: *Die klassische Periode*, eds Maha El Kaisy-Friemuth, Reza Hajatpour and Mohammed Abdel Rahem, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2019, p. 373-390, here p. 378-383, briefly analyzes the structure of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*. Mohd Farid Bin Mohd Shahran, *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on Divine Transcendence and Anthropomorphism: A Refutation against the Literalists*, Putrajaya, Malaysia, Islamic and Strategic Studies Institute, 2017, is devoted entirely to investigating the theology of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*.

19   For later articulations of this Ašʿarī hermeneutic, see Khaled El-Rouayheb, "From Ibn Ḥajar Al-Haytamī (d. 1566) to Khayr al-Dīn al-Ālūsī (d. 1899): Changing Views of Ibn Taymiyya among Non-Ḥanbalī Sunni Scholars," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, eds Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, Karachi, Oxford University Press ("Studies in Islamic Philosophy," 4), 2010, p. 269-318, here p. 275-278; and Jon Hoover, "Early Mamlūk Ašʿarism against Ibn Taymiyya on the nonliteral reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*) of God's attributes," in *Philosophical Theology in Islam: Later Ashʿarism East and West*, eds Ayman Shihadeh and Jan Thiele, Leiden-Boston, Brill ("Islamicate Intellectual History," 5), 2020, p. 195-230.

20   The edition of *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* used for the present study is Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya fī taʾsīs bidaʿi-him al-kalāmiyya*, ed. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad al-Hunaydī

Medina edition, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* is the largest known refutation of *kalām* incorporealism in the Islamic tradition. *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* is also the largest work that Ibn Taymiyya wrote during his seven years in Egypt (705/1306-712/1313) and the earliest of his three most extensive works of theology, the other two being the comparably sized *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* (*Averting the Conflict between Reason and Revealed Tradition*)[21] and *Minhāǧ al-sunna l-nabawiyya* (*The Way of the Prophetic Sunna*).[22] Ibn Taymiyya wrote *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* in Damascus sometime after 713/1313 and then

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et al., Medina, Maǧmaʿ al-Malik Fahd, 1426/2005; the first eight volumes comprise the edited text, and the last two volumes studies and indexes. This edition was compiled from six manuscripts. Not all manuscripts are complete, and parts of the edited text are supported by only two or three witnesses (see the editors' comments on the manuscripts in *ibid.*, IX, p. 26-28). This 2005 edition of *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* supplants an earlier edition compiled by Ibn Qāsim that included only about one-half of the text now known to be extant: Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya fī taʾsīs bidaʿi-him al-kalāmiyya, aw Naqḍ taʾsīs al-ǧahmiyya*, ed. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Qāsim, Mecca, Maṭbaʿat al-ḥukūma, 1391/1971; Riyadh, Dār al-qāsim, 1421/2000; n.p., Muʾassasat Qurṭuba, n.d. There is a later two-volume edition: Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahymiyya fī taʾsīs bidaʿi-him al-kalāmiyya: al-Radd ʿalā Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, ʿAmmān, al-Dār al-ʿuṯmāniyya, 2008; this appears to be a reprint of the 2005 edition without the critical apparatus, but I was only able to inspect the first volume. I am grateful to Jamal Alghamdy for obtaining a hard copy of the 2005 edition of *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* for me. On the high regard in which the Iraqi reformer Maḥmūd Šihāb al-Dīn (1856-1924) held *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, see Ahmed El Shamsy, *Rediscovering the Islamic Classics: How Editors and Print Culture Transformed an Intellectual Tradition*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2020, p. 185-186.

21   Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*, ed. Muḥammad Rašād Sālim, Riyadh, Ǧāmiʿat al-imām Muḥammad b. Saʿūd al-islāmiyya, 1411/1991, 11 vols; the final volume is comprised of indexes. Recent studies of *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* include Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation: A Study of* Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql, Leiden-Boston, Brill ("Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science," 111), 2020; Frank Griffel, "Ibn Taymiyya and His Ašʿarite Opponents on Reason and Revelation: Similarities, Differences, and a Vicious Circle," *The Muslim World*, 108/1 (2018), p. 11-39; and Jon Hoover with Marwan Abu Ghazaleh Mahajneh, "Theology as Translation: Ibn Taymiyya's Fatwa Permitting Theology and Its Reception into His *Averting the Conflict between Reason and Revealed Tradition* (Darʾ Taʿāruḍ Al-ʿAql Wa l-Naql)," *The Muslim World*, 108/1 (2018), p. 40-86.

22   Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāǧ al-sunna l-nabawiyya fī naqḍ kalām al-šīʿa l-qadariyya*, ed. Muḥammad Rašād Sālim, Riyadh, Ǧāmiʿat al-imām Muḥammad b. Saʿūd al-islāmiyya, 1406/1986, 9 vols; the final volume is comprised of indexes. For a listing of studies on *Minhāǧ al-sunna l-nabawiyya*, see Yahya Michot, "Ibn Taymiyya's Critique of Šīʿī Imāmology: Translation of Three Sections of his *Minhāj al-Sunna*," *Muslim World*, 104/1-2 (2014), p. 109-149, here p. 111, n. 8 and 9; see also Roy Vilozny, "Some Remarks on Ibn Taymiyya's Acquaintance with Imāmī Šīʿism in light of his *Minhāǧ al-sunna al-nabawiyya*," *Der Islam* 97/2 (2020), p. 456-475.

wrote *Minhāǧ al-sunna l-nabawiyya* after *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*.[23] Despite its size and significance, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* has only recently begun to receive attention in western language scholarship. Since 2016, Sophia Vasalou, Livnat Holtzman, Miriam Ovadia, and Farid Suleiman have drawn upon it as a source in their respective monograph projects,[24] and I have investigated how Ibn Taymiyya uses Ibn Rušd's (d. 595/1198) *al-Kašf ʿan manāhiǧ al-adilla* (*Exposition of the Methods of Argument*) in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* to support his own views.[25] It remains, however, to contextualize *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* as a major work in its own right and analyze its core argument.

I will first examine Ibn Taymiyya's assertion in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* that the tome marks an expansion in his anti-Ašʿarī polemic to refute Ašʿarī incorporealism with rational arguments. Then, I will outline the basics of these arguments to illustrate how he defends his understanding of God in the terminology of *kalām* theology. This will show that Ibn Taymiyya deploys Ibn Rušd's Aristotelian notion of place as the inner surface of the containing body to envision God as a large spatially extended existent located outside of and surrounding the created world. God is therefore spatial in two senses: first in being spatially distinct from the world, and second in being spatially extended in His essence. At the end of the article, I briefly note how Ibn Taymiyya treats

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23   For the dating of these works, see Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism*, Leiden-Boston, Brill ("Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science," 73), 2007, p. 10-11.

24   Sophia Vasalou, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theological Ethics*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2016, *e.g.* p. 17, 106, 165-166, 190, 272, n. 108; and Holtzman, *Anthropomorphism in Islam*, p. 316, 327. Miriam Ovadia, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and the Divine Attributes: Rationalized Traditionalistic Theology*, Leiden-Boston, Brill ("Islamic Philosophy and Theology," 104), 2018, analyses Ibn Taymiyya's views on *taʾwīl* from *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, V, p. 447-458 (p. 44-52), translates *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, VIII, p. 480-483 (p. 149-151), and draws attention to *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* elsewhere (*e.g.* p. 153, 157, 249). Farid Suleiman, *Ibn Taymiyya und die Attribute Gottes*, uses *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* as a source for his wide-ranging thematic analysis of Ibn Taymiyya's theology of God's attributes (*e.g.* p. 14-15, 98-99, 123-128, 272-273, 324-326).

25   Jon Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya's Use of Ibn Rushd to Refute the Incorporealism of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," in *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th to the 14th Century*, ed. Abdelkader Al Ghouz, Göttingen-Bonn, V&R unipress-Bonn University Press ("Mamluk Studies," 20), 2018, p. 469-491. See further on Ibn Taymiyya's use of Ibn Rušd's writings in his theological works, including *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*: Fouad Ben Ahmed, "Ibn Rushd in the Ḥanbalī Tradition: Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and the Continuity of Philosophy in Muslim Contexts," *The Muslim World* 109/4 (2019), p. 561-581; Fouad Ben Ahmed, "Iʿādat kitābat tārīḫ al-falsafa fī l-siyāqāt al-islāmiyya l-sunniyya: Ibn Taymiyya wa-aṯar Ibn Rušd," *Hespéris-Tamuda*, 55/1 (2020), p. 303-354; and Fuʾād ibn Aḥmad, "Māḏā kānat tafʿal kutub Ibn Rušd fī Miṣr wa-l-Šām ḫilāl al-qarn al-rābiʿ ʿašar li-l-mīlād? Aw Ibn Rušd fī maktabat Ibn Taymiyya," *Maǧallat al-ibāna*, 6 (2020), p. 175-226.

the same topic in his later *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* and *Minhāǧ al-sunna l-nabawiyya*.

Ibn Taymiyya has sometimes been assimilated to Ḥanbalī noncognitivism or the *tafwīḍ* position of later Ašʿarism, often to shield him from charges of corporealism and anthropomorphism.[26] Ašʿarī *tafwīḍ*, however, requires denying the plain senses of texts indicating corporeality in God's attributes before delegating their meanings to God, whereas Ibn Taymiyya affirms the plain sense and does not deny that God is a body.[27] Noncognitivism also does not properly characterize Ibn Taymiyya because he does not seek to guard the formal wording of God's attributes from cognitive interference. Instead, and against al-Rāzī's Ašʿarī incorporealism, he explains what it means for God to be above the heavens and over the Throne, and he rationalizes the spatialism articulated earlier by al-Dārimī and the Ḥanbalī *Radd* attributed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal with far greater sophistication.[28]

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26   Henri Laoust, "Quelques opinions sur la théodicée d'Ibn Taimiya," *Mélanges Maspero*, Cairo, Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale ("Publications de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale;" "Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut français d'archéologie du Caire," 68), 1935-1953, III [*Orient islamique*], p. 431-438, portrays Ibn Taymiyya as traditionally Ḥanbalī in a non-cognitivist sense to ward off charges of anthropomorphism by Ašʿarīs and Ašʿarī-inspired western scholars. The contemporary Salafī author Ǧābir b. Idrīs b. ʿAlī Amīr, *Maqālat al-tašbīh wa-mawqif ahl al-sunna min-hā*, Riyadh, Aḍwāʾ al-salaf, 1422/2002, 3 vols, II, p. 12, 201, 208-209, 323-324, defends Ibn Taymiyya against corporealism in favor of what appears to be non-cognitivism. Aaron Spevack, *The Archetypal Sunnī Scholar: Law, Theology, and Mysticism in the Synthesis of al-Bāǧūrī*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2014, p. 127-130, interprets Ibn Taymiyya's position as tantamount to Ašʿarī *tafwīḍ*. El-Rouayheb, "From Ibn Ḥajar Al-Haytamī (d. 1566) to Khayr al-Dīn al-Ālūsī (d. 1899)," p. 300-302, 307-308, notes earlier attempts by Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1101/1690) and Ḫayr al-Dīn Nuʿmān al-Ālūsī (d. 1317/1899) to absolve Ibn Taymiyya of corporealism by assimilating him to *tafwīḍ*.

27   See Ibn Taymiyya's polemic against *tafwīḍ* in *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*, I, p. 201-208, which is summarized in Nadjet Zouggar, "Interprétation autorisée et interprétation proscrite selon *Le Livre du rejet de la contradiction entre raison et Écriture* de Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Taymiyya," *Annales Islamologiques* 44 (2010), p. 195-206, here p. 202-204.

28   Ibn Taymiyya occasionally cites and quotes from al-Dārimī's *Naqḍ* and the Ḥanbalī *Radd* as faithful predecessors to advance his argument in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*. See *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*'s index volume (*ǧuzʾ al-fahāris al-ʿāmma*), X, p. 250, 260-261 (references to al-Dārimī's *Naqḍ*), and p. 250-251 (references to the Ḥanbalī *Radd* attributed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal).

1   The Purpose and Dating of *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*

Ibn Taymiyya tells the story of what led him to write *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* in his introduction to the work. First, he received a question from Hama in Syria sometime after the year 690/1290 about how to interpret Qurʾānic verses and *ḥadīṯ* reports on the attributes of God. He replied with a fatwa outlining the doctrine of the early Muslims (*salaf*) over against the Ǧahmiyya (named after Ǧahm b. Ṣafwān) whom he accuses of denying the reality of God's attributes. Ibn Taymiyya notes that the fatwa sparked opposition, but he does not mention specific names, dates, or events. He then informs us in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* that he received a book written by "the best of the opposing judges" (*afḍal al-qudāt al-muʿāriḍīn*) posing questions and objections to his treatise and that he replied with the several volume *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya l-wārida ʿalā l-futyā l-ḥamawiyya* (*The Response to the Egyptian Objections against the Ḥamawiyya Fatwa*). Ibn Taymiyya says that this proved insufficient to deal with opponents who depended on the books of Ǧahmī *kalām* theologians, foremost among them Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. He, there-fore, had to complete the task that he had begun in *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya* by responding to al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*. This was necessary, he writes, "so that the difference between explication and deceit is clarified, the deceit is purged thereby, and the crux of the matter is known in what concerns the foundations of *kalām* theology" (*li-yatabayyana l-farq bayna l-bayān wa-l-talbīs wa-yaḥṣula bi-ḏālika taḫlīṣ al-talbīs wa-yuʿrafa faṣl al-ḫiṭāb fī-mā fī hāḏā l-bāb min uṣūl al-kalām*).[29]

While short on historical particulars, Ibn Taymiyya's introduction does clearly outline a sequence of three identifiable works and explain that he wrote *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* to expose the corrupt rational arguments of *kalām* theologians. This fits with what we know otherwise about the three works. The first text that Ibn Taymiyya mentions, the response to a request from the people of Hama, is his famous 698/1298 fatwa *Ḥamawiyya*, which examines how to interpret scriptural texts such as "The All-Merciful sat over the Throne" (*al-Raḥmānu ʿalā l-ʿarši stawā*; Kor 20, 5).[30] According to Ibn Taymiyya, the

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29   Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, I, p. 4-9 (quotation p. 8); Ibn Taymiyya also refers to *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya* in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, V, p. 315, 457; VI, p. 111, 119, 265, 480, 487; VII, p. 571; VIII, p. 537.

30   Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawiyya*, in *Maǧmūʿ fatāwā šayḫ al-islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*, eds ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Qāsim and Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad, Cairo, Dār al-raḥma, n.d., 37 vols, V, p. 5-120; *Ḥamawiyya* will be cited from this edition due to its wide accessiblity. There is also a critical edition of the text: *id.*, *al-Fatwā l-ḥamawiyya l-kubrā*, ed. Ḥamd b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Tuwayǧirī, Riyadh, Dār al-Ṣumayʿī, 1425/2004².

Ğahmī *kalām* theologians, whom he equates with the Muʿtazilīs and later
Ašʿarīs, first deny the plain sense (*ẓāhir*) of such texts. Then they either cease
thinking about them in accord with what they call the way of the *salaf*, or they
reinterpret the texts to mean something else (*taʾwīl*), as when they reinterpret
God's sitting as possessing.[31] Ibn Taymiyya rejects such reinterpretation as
stripping (*taʿṭīl*) God of His attributes, and he singles out the *Taʾwīlāt* of Ašʿarī
theologian Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015)[32] and al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* as prominent
books expounding erroneous reinterpretations.[33] He also excoriates the Ašʿarī
hermeneutic for making the *salaf* out to be ignorant of the meanings of the
texts. For Ibn Taymiyya, the *salaf* affirmed and understood the plain senses of
the texts but without inquiring into the modality of the attributes (*bi-lā kayf*).[34]
He adds that he has proofs from both reason and scripture for his views but
that a fatwa is not the place to present them.[35]

Ibn Taymiyya adopts a firm stance against the Ašʿarīs in *Ḥamawiyya*, and
he clearly already had al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* in his sights as a major threat
to his position. Ibn Taymiyya's challenge drew the attention of his contempo-
raries.[36] His opponents accused him of corporealism (*taǧsīm*) and began agi-
tating against him. The governor of Damascus intervened quickly to quell the
commotion.[37] The matter then lay dormant for about seven years.

The second work that Ibn Taymiyya mentions in the introduction to *Bayān
talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* is his *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya* in response
to *al-Iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya*. The author of *al-Iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya*, whom Ibn
Taymiyya calls "the best of the opposing judges," is the Egyptian Ḥanafī judge

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31　Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawiyya*, in *Maǧmūʿ fatāwā šayḫ al-islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*, v, p. 96,
　　109, 116.

32　Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Fūrak, *Kitāb Muškil al-ḥadīṯ aw Taʾwīl al-aḫbār
　　al-mutašābiha*, ed. Daniel Gimaret, Damascus, al-Maʿhad al-faransī li-l-dirāsāt al-ʿarabiyya
　　bi-Dimašq ("Publications de l'Institut français de Damas," 203), 2003; this work consists
　　largely of reinterpretations of anthropomorphic *ḥadīṯ* reports.

33　Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawiyya*, in *Maǧmūʿ fatāwā šayḫ al-islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*, v, p. 22-23.

34　*Ibid.*, v, p. 6-42.

35　*Ibid.*, v, p. 25. For a fuller account of the argument of *Ḥamawiyya*, see Hoover, "Early
　　Mamlūk Ashʿarism against Ibn Taymiyya on the nonliteral reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*) of
　　God's attributes," p. 197-204.

36　Holtzman, *Anthropomorphism in Islam*, p. 317, calls *Ḥamawiyya* "a political manifesto"
　　for reasons that are not clear. While it did lead to conflict among the elites of the day,
　　Ḥamawiyya presents itself as a polemic against a theological position. It does not out-
　　line political demands or a program of political action, and there is no evidence that Ibn
　　Taymiyya issued the fatwa in a quest for political influence.

37　Hasan Qasim Murad, "Ibn Taymiya on Trial: A Narrative Account of His Miḥan," *Islamic
　　Studies*, 18/1 (1979), p. 1-32, here p. 3; Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, London, Oneworld Press
　　("Makers of the Muslim World"), 2019, p. 11.

Šhams al-Dīn al-Sarūǧī (d. 710/1310). Only a small portion of Ibn Taymiyya's *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya* has been located and published, and the text of al-Sarūǧī is lost except for a few paragraphs quoted within the extant part of *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya*.[38] From these few paragraphs, however, we can ascertain that al-Sarūǧī argues that the *salaf* themselves engaged in reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*) and that rational arguments require reinterpreting texts suggesting temporal origination and spatial extension in God in order to avoid corporealism.[39] Ibn Taymiyya rejects al-Sarūǧī's claims, and he observes among other things that the Qurʾān, the Sunna, and the *salaf* do not condemn corporealism, even if they do not affirm it.[40] This is a key point that he will reiterate in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, as we will see below.

While the extant portion of Ibn Taymiyya's *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya* is relatively short at 177 pages in the printed edition, *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya* was apparently a large work of four volumes.[41] If the extant pages are anything to go by, the entirety of *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya* was devoted to hermeneutics and the interpretation of scriptural texts, much like the earlier *Ḥamawiyya* fatwa. This fits with Ibn Taymiyya's observation in the introduction to *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* that *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya* was inadequate to the task of confuting the *kalām* argumentation that was infecting his opponents. It thus remained to write *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* to overturn the rational proofs undergirding the Ašʿarī conviction that one must reinterpret God's attributes implying corporeality and spatial extension. In taking on al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, Ibn Taymiyya sought to refute what was evidently the most powerful and influential presentation of Ašʿarī arguments circulating at the time.

Ibn Taymiyya wrote both *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya* and *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* in the wake of the controversy that reemerged over his views on God's attributes in mid-705/early 1306. At the instigation of his enemies in Cairo, the governor of Damascus subjected him to three hearings. Ibn Taymiyya defended himself successfully but was summoned to Cairo several weeks later. Upon arriving in Cairo, the Mamlūk sultan and high-ranking officials and religious scholars convicted Ibn Taymiyya of corporealism and errors

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38 Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya l-wārida ʿalā l-futyā l-ḥamawiyya*, ed. Muḥammad ʿUzayr Šams, Mecca, Dār ʿālam al-fawāʾid, 1429/2008; the portions of al-Sarūǧī's text are found on p. 3-4 and 157 of the edited text.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 3-4 (text).

40 *Ibid.*, p. 152 (text).

41 *Ibid.*, p. 9 (editor's introduction).

in the doctrine of God's speech, and they imprisoned him in the Cairo citadel on Friday, 23 Ramaḍān 705/8 April 1306 for 18 months.[42]

The editors of the 2005 Medina edition of *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* date the work to this 18-month imprisonment.[43] Both *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* and *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya* appear in Ibn Raǧab's (d. 795/1392) list of works that Ibn Taymiyya wrote in Egypt,[44] and the biographer al-Kutubī (d. 764/1363) speaks of "what he wrote in the dungeon of Cairo in refutation of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*" (*mā amlā-hu fī l-ǧubb raddan ʿalā* Taʾsīs al-qiddīs [*sic*]).[45] However, a letter that Ibn Taymiyya wrote from prison indicates that the *terminus ad quem* for both works can be moved to about six months before his release. Ibn Taymiyya received a message from some scholars in Cairo in Ramaḍān 706/March-April 1307, and his letter in reply likely dates to shortly thereafter.[46] The letter describes *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* without naming it explicitly and then alludes to his *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya*:

وقد كتبت في هذا ما يجيء عدة مجلدات وذكرت فيها مقالات الطوائف جميعها وحججها الشرعية والعقلية واستوعبت ما ذكره الرازي في كتاب تأسيس التقديس ونهاية العقول وغير ذلك حتى أتيت على مذاهب الفلاسفة المشائين أصحاب أرسطو .[...] وأيضا ما كنت

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42 For the events surrounding Ibn Taymiya's imprisonment, see Murad, "Ibn Taymiya on Trial," p. 6-16; Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya*, p. 24-27. The official charges against Ibn Taymiyya are recorded in Šihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, Beirut, Dār al-kutub al-ʿilmiyya, 2004, 33 vols, XXXII, p. 82-84; and Abū Bakr b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar wa-ǧāmiʿ al-ǧurar*, ed. Hans Robert Roemer, Cairo, Qism al-dirāsāt al-islāmiyya bi-l-maʿhad al-almānī li-l-āṯār bi-l-Qāhira ("Quellen zur Geschichte des Islamischen Ägyptens"), 1960, IX [*al-Durr al-fāḫir fī sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*], p. 138-142.

43 Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, IX, p. 22-25.

44 Ibn Raǧab, *Kitāb al-Ḏayl ʿalā ṭabaqāt al-ḥanābila*, Cairo, Maṭbaʿat al-sunna l-muḥammadiyya, 1372/1952-1953, 2 vols, II, p. 403.

45 Muḥammad b. Šākir al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt wa-l-ḏayl ʿalay-hā*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1973, 5 vols, I, p. 76.

46 Ibn Taymiyya, *Ǧawāb waraqa ursilat ilay-hi fī l-siǧn fī ramaḍān sanat sitt wa-sabʿa miʾa*, in *Maǧmūʿ fatāwā šayḫ al-islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*, III, p. 211-247, here p. 227. Yahya Michot, "Textes spirituels d'Ibn Taymiyya. IX : 'Moi, je ne vous ai pas demandé de me faire sortir d'ici...'," *Le Musulman* (Paris), 22 (March-June 1993), p. 10-15, here p. 10-11, n. 7, dates the letter to between Šawwāl and early Ḏū l-Ḥiǧǧa 706, that is, between April and early June 1307, and Henri Laoust provides a description of the letter in Ibn Taymiyya, *La profession de foi d'Ibn Taymiyya : texte, traduction et commentaire de la Wāsiṭiyya*, ed. and transl. Henri Laoust, Paris, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner ("Bibliothèque d'études islamiques," 10), 1986, p. 26-29.

في البرج ذكر لي أن بعض الناس علق مؤاخذة على الفتيا الحموية وأرسلت إلي وقد كتبت فيما بلغ مجلدات.

> I wrote about [matters relating to God's sitting on the Throne] in what comes to several volumes. I mentioned in them the views of all the sects and their revelation-based and reason-based arguments. I dealt extensively with what al-Rāzī says in *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl* (*The Utmost in Rational Knowledge*) and other works, to the point that I mentioned the doctrines of the peripatetic philosophers, the followers of Aristotle [...]. Also, when I was in the tower (*burğ*) [of the citadel in Cairo], it was mentioned to me that someone had written an objection to the *Ḥamawiyya* fatwa. It was sent to me, and I wrote several volumes [in reply].[47]

The Egyptian encyclopedist al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333) states that Ibn Taymiyya was moved from the tower of the Cairo citadel to the dungeon (*ğubb*) on the night of the Feast of Fast-Breaking (*ʿīd al-fiṭr*), five or six days after his initial incarceration on 23 Ramaḍān 705/8 April 1306.[48] At the end of the quotation above, Ibn Taymiyya mentions hearing about the response to his *Ḥamawiyya* – al-Sarūğī's *al-Iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya* – while in the tower. So, he must have learned of al-Sarūğī's work in his first five or six days of imprisonment. Over the course of twelve months, from Ramaḍān 705/April 1306 to Ramaḍān 706/March-April 1307, Ibn Taymiyya wrote two massive works, first *al-Ğawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya* and then *Bayān talbīs al-ğahmiyya*, to defend his views and refute those of his opponents comprehensively. Moreover, the contents of *Bayān talbīs al-ğahmiyya*, examined in what follows, bear out Ibn Taymiyya's stated purpose in writing the work, namely, to complete the job of replying to the Ašʿarīs by refuting their rational argumentation.

2   *Bayān talbīs al-Ğahmiyya* as a Refutation of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*

In *Bayān talbīs al-ğahmiyya* Ibn Taymiyya responds to the second of two recensions of al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*. Different prefaces distinguish the two.[49] What

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47   Ibn Taymiyya, *Ğawāb waraqa ursilat ilay-hi fī l-siğn fī ramaḍān sanat sitt wa-sabʿa miʾa*, in *Mağmūʿ fatāwā šayḫ al-islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*, III, p. 226-227.

48   Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, XXXII, p. 82.

49   I am grateful to Abdallah Demir for help in procuring manuscripts of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* from Istanbul and to Ayman Shihadeh and Frank Griffel for assistance examining the

may be called the "Herat" preface is printed in the 2011 edition of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, and its earliest known witness is MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Hekimoğlu, 821, which was copied in 598/1202 and claims comparison with the original (*aṣl*).[50] In the Herat preface, al-Rāzī states that he wrote the book after arriving in Herat in Muḥarram 596/October-November 1199 and finding the people of the city discussing God's incomparability (*tanzīh*). This corresponds to what we know about al-Rāzī's difficulties at the time. In 595/1198-1199, al-Rāzī arrived in Fīrūzkūh, a city about halfway between Kabul and Herat. While disputing with scholars in the city, he slandered a leading Karrāmī theologian, and the Ġūrid ruler Ġiyāṯ al-Dīn expelled him to Herat to calm the ensuing Karrāmī uproar.[51]

In what may be called the "Ayyubid" preface of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, al-Rāzī does not mention his visit to Herat but instead dedicates the work to al-ʿĀdil Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ayyūb (d. 615/1218), apparently to honor him on becoming sultan of the Ayyubid Empire of Egypt and Syria in 596/1200. The biographer Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa reports that the sultan paid al-Rāzī 1000 dinars for the book.[52] The Ayyubid preface is printed in several modern editions of al-Rāzī's book. The most often cited is the 1986 Cairo edition of Aḥmad Ḥiǧāzī l-Saqqā.[53] The

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manuscripts and sorting out the implications of the two prefaces. Griffel also discusses the two prefaces and the dating of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* in "Ibn Taymiyya and His Ašʿarite Opponents on Reason and Revelation," p. 17-18.

50   Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, p. 43; this edition is based on manuscripts bearing the Herat preface that are later than MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Hekimoğlu, 821.

51   Frank Griffel, "On Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Life and the Patronage He Received," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 18/3 (2007), p. 313-344, here p. 334-337.

52   Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, ed. August Müller, Cairo, al-Maṭbaʿa l-wahbiyya, 1299/1882, 2 vols, II, p. 29; see also the open-access edition with English translation: *id.*, *A Literary History of Medicine – The* ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ *of Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿah*, eds and transl. Emilie Savage-Smith, Simon Swain and Geert Jan van Gelder, Leiden-Boston, Brill ("Handbook of Oriental studies. Section 1, The Near and Middle East," 134), 2020, chapter 11.19.7, item 18, https://scholarlyeditions.brill.com/library/urn:cts:arabi cLit:0668IbnAbiUsaibia/, accessed 10 July 2021.

53   Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Asās al-taqdīs*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥiǧāzī l-Saqqā, Cairo, al-Maktaba l-azhariyya, 1406/1986, p. 10; the editors of Ibn Taymiyya's *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* cite this 1986 edition. Other printed editions with the Ayyubid preface are *id.*, *Kitāb Asās al-taqdīs*, Cairo, Maṭbaʿat Kurdistān al-ʿilmiyya, 1328/1910-1911, p. 3-4; *id.*, *Asās al-taqdīs*, Cairo, Maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā l-Bābī l-Ḥalabī, 1354/1935, p. 3; and *id.*, *Asās al-taqdīs*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ʿAbd Allāh Ismāʿīl, Cairo, al-Maktaba l-azhariyya li-l-turāṯ, 2010, p. 64-65. Abdullah Demir kindly supplied me with the 1935 edition and Frank Griffel with the 2010 edition. The origin of the title *Asās al-taqdīs* requires further investigation. Al-Rāzī names the book *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* in the Ayyubid preface of MS Istanbul, Millet, Feyzullah Efendi, 1106, and this is the title given to MS Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Hekimoğlu, 821 as well. Several medieval authors also render the title *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*: Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ*, II, p. 29; al-Ṣafadī, *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, ed. Sven Dedering, Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner

earliest known witness to the Ayyubid preface is ᴍꜱ Istanbul, Millet, Feyzullah Efendi, 1106, which dates to 606/1210. Presumably, al-Rāzī wrote *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* with the Herat preface shortly after arriving in Herat in 596/1199 to address the theological issues under discussion in that city and to counter the views he had encountered in Fīrūzkūh.[54] Then, he reissued the book soon thereafter to garner the patronage of the Ayyubid sultan. Ibn Taymiyya knows and refutes only the recension of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* containing the Ayyubid preface.[55]

Ibn Taymiyya's refutation of al-Rāzī in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* takes the form of a rambling commentary on major portions of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*.[56] Following is an outline of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* with note of the corresponding commentary in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*. Pagination for the parts and sections of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* are first to the 2011 Damascus edition and then to the 1986 Cairo edition. Direct translations of part and section titles are placed between quotation marks; other titles are my own paraphrases or summaries. Volume and page numbers for Ibn Taymiyya's corresponding discussions in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* are placed between parentheses. As Ibn Taymiyya indicates in his 706/1307 letter to Cairene scholars quoted above, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* contains extensive quotation from and comment upon al-Rāzī's *kalām* work *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl*[57] and numerous other sources, and I have noted a few of these below.

("Bibliotheca Islamica," 6), 1974², ɪᴠ, p. 255; Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawiyya*, in *Maǧmūʿ fatāwā šayḫ al-islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*, ᴠ, p. 23; and Ḥāǧǧī Ḫalīfa, *Kašf al-ẓunūn ʿan asāmī l-kutub wa-l-funūn*, ed. Gustavus Fluegel, London, Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1835-1858, 6 vols, ɪɪ, p. 170.

54 Holtzman, *Anthropomorphism in Islam*, p. 301-303, incorrectly dates al-ʿĀdil's ascent to the throne and the origins of al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* to 1193 and states that *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* is a refutation of Ibn Ḫuzayma's (d. 311/924) *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*. In an endnote (p. 347, n. 122), Holtzman credits Aḥmad Ḥiǧāzī l-Saqqā, editor of the 1986 Cairo edition of *Asās al-taqdīs*, with the date. However, no such dating is found on the cited page in al-Saqqā's discussion (p. 259) or elsewhere in his edition. Al-Saqqā does say on p. 259-260 that al-Rāzī's work is a refutation of Ibn Ḫuzayma's *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* on the grounds that al-Rāzī treats the same *ḥadīṯ* reports discussed in Ibn Ḫuzayma's book, and al-Rāzī does indeed cite some *ḥadīṯ* from Ibn Ḫuzayma's *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* in the second part of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*. However, al-Rāzī does not indicate that Ibn Ḫuzayma is his primary target, nor does Ibn Taymiyya take al-Rāzī's work to be directed against Ibn Ḫuzayma specifically. The book is addressed to Karrāmīs and Ḥanbalīs generally.

55 Ibn Taymiyya quotes the Ayyubid preface in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, ɪ, p. 15-16.

56 L.W.C. (Eric) van Lit, "Commentary and Commentary Tradition: The Basic Terms for Understanding Islamic Intellectual History," *Mélanges de l'Institut dominicain d'études orientales du Caire*, 32 (2017), p. 3-26, defines a commentary as a text having a "structural textual correspondence" with the base text.

57 Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl fī dirāyat al-uṣūl*, ed. Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Laṭīf Fūda, Beirut, Dār al-ḏaḫāʾir, 1436/2015, 4 vols.

3   **Outline of al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* and Ibn Taymiyya's *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya***

Preface p. 43-44/9-11 (Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, I, p. 3-24)

Part One: "The proofs proving that [God] is exonerated of corporeality (*ǧismiyya*) and space (*ḥayyiz*)," p. 45-114/13-102 (Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, I, p. 25-V, p. 446)

Section One: "Firmly establishing the premises that must be presented before delving into the proofs," p. 46-58/15-29 (Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, I, p. 25-III, p. 83 include extensive quotation and discussion of texts from al-Dārimī, al-Ašʿarī, Ibn Fūrak, Ibn Rušd, etc.)

Section Two: "Firmly establishing the tradition-based proofs that [God] is exonerated of corporeality, space and location (*ǧiha*)," p. 59-73/30-47 (Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, III, p. 84-286)

Section Three: "Furnishing the reason-based proofs that [God] is definitely not spatially extended (*mutaḥayyiz*)," p. 74-84/48-61 (not addressed in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*)

Section Four: "Furnishing the demonstrations (*barāhīn*) that [God] is not localized in (*muḥtaṣṣ bi-*) any spaces and locations," p. 85-97/62-68 (Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, III, p. 287-IV, p. 241)

Section Five: "Concerning the specious rational arguments of those [Karrāmīs and Ḥanbalīs] who affirm [God's] localization in space and location," p. 98-112/79-99 (Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, IV, p. 242-V, p. 323, of which roughly the last third discusses passages from al-Rāzī's *Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl* and *al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl l-dīn*)

Section Six: Charging the Karrāmīs with affirming that God is composite (*murakkab*) and assembled (*muʾallaf*), p. 113-114/100-102 (Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, V, p. 324-446)

Part Two: "Concerning reinterpreting (*taʾwīl*) the indeterminate (*mutašābihāt*) among the [*ḥadīṯ*] reports and [Qurʾānic] verses," p. 115-217/103-221 (Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, V, p. 447-VIII, p. 214)

Introduction: "Elucidating that all sects of Islam confess that there must be reinterpretation of some plain senses (*ẓawāhir*) of the Qurʾān and the reports," p. 115-120/105-109 (Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, V, p. 451-VI, p. 354)

Sections 1-30: Reinterpretations of specific reports and verses, p. 121-216/110-219 (Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, VI, p. 355-VIII, p. 214, of which VI, p. 355-VII, p. 390 discusses Section 1 on God

and form [*ṣūra*]; sections 9-30 are not addressed in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*)

Section 31: On isolated reports (*aḫbār āḥād*), p. 212-216/215-219 (not addressed in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*)

Section 32: The universal rule (*al-qānūn al-kullī*) of reinterpretation, p. 217/220-221[58] (not addressed here in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* but in its response to the next part)

Part Three: "Firmly establishing the doctrine of the *salaf*," p. 219-234/222-243 (Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, VIII, p. 215-549)

Part Four: Miscellaneous questions, p. 235-245/245-258 (not addressed directly in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*)[59]

The first part of al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* occupies the first third of the work. It divides into six sections and provides reason- and tradition-based proofs that God is not corporeal, spatially extended, or located. Ibn Taymiyya's repetitious response takes up nearly the entirety of the first five volumes of *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, with the bulk of his attention devoted to the first, fourth, and fifth sections of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, which contain al-Rāzī's main premises and rational arguments. I will analyze Ibn Taymiyya's reply to the first part of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* in the following sections of the present article.

Al-Rāzī dedicates the second part of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, about half the work, to reinterpreting texts of the Qurʾān and the *ḥadīṯ* literature that he calls indeterminate (*mutašābih*), that is, texts implying that God is corporeal and spatial. Ibn Taymiyya gives Part Two of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* comparatively little attention and does not discuss the latter two-thirds directly. The upshot of his argumentation is that al-Rāzī's reinterpretations distort and deny the plain senses of the texts.

At the end of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* Part Two, al-Rāzī sets out the universal rule guiding his reinterpretations that was noted above. When decisive rational proofs contradict the plain sense (*ẓāhir*) of a text, those who permit reinterpretation must reinterpret it, and those who do not permit that must delegate its

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58   This passage is translated in Hoover, "Reason and the Proof Value of Revelation," p. 380, and Nicholas Heer, "The Priority of Reason in the Interpretation of Scripture: Ibn Taymīyah and the *Mutakallimūn*," in *Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of James A. Bellamy*, ed. Mustansir Mir, Princeton, New Jersey, The Darwin Press, 1993, p. 181-195, here p. 184-185.

59   At an earlier point, Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, VIII, p. 247-254, does respond to al-Rāzī, *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, p. 237-238/248-250, which outlines the religious benefits of indeterminate revealed texts.

meaning to God.[60] Then in the brief third part of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* al-Rāzī identifies *taʾwīl* as the practice of the *kalām* theologians and *tafwīḍ* as the doctrine of the *salaf*. The *salaf* know that God did not intend the meanings conveyed by the plain senses of indeterminate texts. They therefore make it an obligation to delegate the meanings to God and do not permit further interpretation.[61]

In reply to *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* Part Three, Ibn Taymiyya rejects the necessary priority of reason over revealed texts and contends that there is no contradiction between reason-based and revelation-based proofs.[62] He also faults al-Rāzī for ignorance of the true views of the *salaf*. Following lines developed earlier in *Ḥamawiyya* and *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya*, Ibn Taymiyya maintains in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* that the *salaf* affirm knowledge of the meaning (*maʿnā*) of the plain sense. They only delegate knowledge of the modality (*kayfiyya*) to God.[63] They also avoid comparison (*tašbīh*) and likening (*mumāṯala*) of God to creatures, and they neither affirm nor deny that God is corporeal and spatially extended.[64]

The fourth and final part of al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* is also brief. It treats a few miscellaneous questions, including whether those who affirm that God is spatially extended, corporeal, and located are guilty of unbelief (*kufr*). Al-Rāzī replies that the most obvious answer is that they are unbelievers, but that the Prophet Muḥammad did not make exonerating God of such things a condition for belief.[65] Ibn Taymiyya does not discuss the fourth part of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* directly.

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60   Al-Rāzī also presents this rule of reinterpretation in *Muḥaṣṣal afkār al-mutaqaddimīn wa-l-mutaʾaḫḫirīn min al-ʿulamāʾ wa-l-ḥukamāʾ wa-l-mutakallimīn*, ed. Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raʾūf Saʿd, Cairo, Maktabat al-kulliyyāt al-azhariyya, n.d., p. 155-158; and *id., al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥiǧāzī l-Saqqā, Cairo, Maktabat al-kulliyyāt al-azhariyya, 1986, 2 vols in one, I, p. 149-164. For further references to and discussions of al-Rāzī and *taʾwīl*, see Heer, "The Priority of Reason in the Interpretation of Scripture," p. 183-185; and Tariq Jaffer, *Razi: Master of Quranic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 54-83; Jaffer confusingly credits al-Rāzī for introducing *taʾwīl* into the Ašʿarī tradition while simultaneously acknowledging that it is also found earlier in al-Ǧuwaynī and al-Ġazālī.

61   Al-Razī, *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, p. 229/236. Many of the linguistic issues that al-Rāzī discusses in *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, Part Three, are analysed from a similar treatment in his *Tafsīr* by Carl Sharif El-Tobgui, "The Hermeneutics of Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī," in *Coming to Terms with the Qurʾān: A Volume in Honor of Professor Issa Boullata, McGill University*, eds Mohammed Khaleel and Andrew Rippin, North Haledon, Islamic Publications International, 2008, p. 125-158.

62   Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, VIII, p. 530.

63   *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 545.

64   *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 540.

65   Al-Rāzī, *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* p. 244/257-258.

4 Ontology

Turning back now to the first part of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* and its refutation in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, we find that fundamentally different ontologies stand between Ibn Taymiyya and al-Rāzī. Al-Rāzī begins *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* by asserting the existence of an existent (*i.e.* God) that is not perceptible by the human senses, that is not subject to space (*ḥayyiz*) or location (*ǧiha*), and that neither dwells inside the world nor is located outside of it. He also explains that his opponents – Karrāmīs and Ḥanbalīs – deny these premises. They maintain instead that it is axiomatic that one of two existents either indwells the other or is located outside of it; there is no third category of existents. Al-Rāzī positions himself as defender of the rational mainstream of humanity, which includes philosophers and theologians among the Muʿtazilīs, Twelver Šīʿīs, and his own Ašʿarī colleagues, and he explains that a God accessible to the senses would be divisible into parts and a composite of those parts. For al-Rāzī the human intellect can know the existence, attributes, and acts of the non-spatial, incorporeal God, but the senses cannot, neither the outer five senses, nor the inner senses of the estimation (*wahm*) and the imagination (*ḫayāl*). God exists in a plane of reality inaccessible to sense perception.[66]

Ibn Taymiyya in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* rejects al-Rāzī's claim that God dwells neither inside the world nor outside of it. It is necessary knowledge in the human natural constitution (*fiṭra*) that nothing exists neither inside the world nor outside of it.[67] A God neither inside nor outside the world would not exist at all.[68] Instead, Ibn Taymiyya explains, God is located above (*fawq*) and over (*ʿalā*) the world, and this is known necessarily by the human natural constitution. Revealed texts also indicate that God is sitting over the Throne.[69]

As I showed in my previous study on *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, Ibn Taymiyya sidesteps al-Rāzī's claim to speak for the rational mainstream of humanity by castigating his ignorance of reputable authorities who uphold God's aboveness. These authorities include Ibn Kullāb (d. *ca* 240/855), the Ḥanbalī *Radd*

66　*Ibid.*, p. 46-55/15-25. The background to al-Rāzī's inner senses of imagination and estimation is the philosophical psychology of Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037). The role of the imagination is to take in the forms of things perceived by the outer senses, and the function of the estimation is to perceive nonsensible meanings or intentions in sensible objects. Ibn Sīnā's stock example of estimation is a sheep perceiving the intention of hostility in a wolf. See further Ahmed Oulddali, *Raison et révélation en Islam : les voies de la connaissance dans le commentaire coranique de Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (m. 606/1210)*, Leiden-Boston, Brill ("Islamic History and Civilization," 156), 2019, p. 138-140, 147-150.

67　Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, II, p. 294, 304, 311, 315-316 ; V, p. 134.

68　*Ibid.*, II, p. 325-391.

69　*Ibid.*, I, p. 54, 388-389, 396-398; II, p. 454; IV, p. 545.

attributed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, the *Ibāna of* al-Ašʿarī, Ibn Qudāma, and espe-
cially the philosopher Ibn Rušd.[70] Ibn Taymiyya quotes the entire section on
God and location (*ǧiha*) from Ibn Rušd's *al-Kašf ʿan manāhiǧ al-adilla* to under-
mine al-Rāzī's claim that the philosophers support his position.[71] Ibn Rušd in
al-Kašf observes that all divine revelations affirm that God is located in heaven.
He explains that those who deny location of God think that location necessarily
implies place (*makān*) which in turn implies corporeality (*ǧismiyya*). Ibn Rušd
avoids these implications by adopting an Aristotelian cosmology in which the
place of a body consists in the surfaces of the bodies surrounding it, not the
body's own outer surfaces.[72] The place of the earth's atmosphere is the inner
surface of the first celestial sphere, and place of each of the celestial spheres is
the inner surface of the celestial sphere above it and surrounding it. However,
the outermost celestial sphere has no place because there are no further bo-
dies above it, and there are no bodies beyond the outermost sphere because
an infinite sequence of bodies is impossible. Neither dimension nor void exists
beyond the outermost sphere.[73] Ibn Rušd notes that the ancients located God
and the angels in the realm of the outermost sphere, which is not subject to
place, and he affirms that both reason and revelation establish the locatedness
of God without ascribing to God place and corporeality. Ibn Taymiyya does not
comment on Ibn Rušd's text after quoting it in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*. Ibn
Rušd has well served the purpose of proving that philosophers affirm God's
location above the world against al-Rāzī. However, Ibn Taymiyya is aware that
Aristotle is the source of Ibn Rušd's notion of place,[74] and, as we will see below,
this conception of place forms the foundation of Ibn Taymiyya's understand-
ing of space.[75]

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70   *Ibid.*, I, p. 61-217; Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya's Use of Ibn Rushd to Refute the Incorporealism of
        Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," p. 477-480. On Ibn Taymiyya's appeal to al-Ašʿarī and his predeces-
        sor Ibn Kullāb in support of his own views against later Ašʿarīs more generally, see Racha
        el Omari, "Ibn Taymiyya's 'Theology of the Sunna' and his Polemics with the Ashʿarites,"
        in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, eds Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed, Karachi, Oxford
        University Press ("Studies in Islamic Philosophy," 4), 2010, p. 101-119.

71   Ibn Rušd, *al-Kašf ʿan manāhiǧ al-adilla fī ʿaqāʾid al-milla*, ed. Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Ǧābirī,
        Beirut, Markaz dirāsāt al-waḥda l-ʿarabiyya, 1998, p. 145-149, quoted in *Bayān talbīs
        al-ǧahmiyya*, I, p. 158-166.

72   See Aristotle, *Physics*, IV, 4, 212a2-14.

73   On Ibn Rušd and the void see further Miklós Maróth, "Averroes on the Void," in *La lumière
        de l'intellect : la pensée scientifique et philosophique d'Averroès dans son temps*, ed. Ahmad
        Hasnawi, Leuven-Paris, Peeters ("Ancient and Classical Sciences and Philosophy"), 2011,
        p. 11-22.

74   Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, I, p. 405.

75   I touch on this briefly in Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya's Use of Ibn Rushd to Refute the
        Incorporealism of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," p. 480; the present article fleshes it out.

Apart from wrangling over who gets to speak for the philosophers, Ibn Taymiyya further undermines al-Rāzī incorporealist ontology with a multi-faceted epistemology that is strongly empiricist.[76] People vary in intellectual ability and arrive at knowledge in diverse ways. Most people in fact depend upon the inner senses of the estimation and imagination in theological matters, and the senses can produce certain knowledge. Contrary to the assertions of al-Rāzī, God did not limit knowledge of theology to the intellect.[77] Furthermore, Ibn Taymiyya alleges that al-Rāzī posits a God who exists only in the mind and has no reality in the extramental world.[78] For Ibn Taymiyya, every existent thing, whatever it may be, must be potentially accessible to the human senses to count as an existent, and this includes God. While he does speak of existents known by the inner senses,[79] he also indicates that everything is ultimately perceptible by the outer senses:

أن كل موجود يجوز أن يحس بالحواس الخمس، ويلتزمون على ذلك أن الله يجوز أن يحس به بالحواس الخمس: السمع والبصر والشم والذوق واللمس، وأن مالا يحس به بالحواس الخمس لا يكون إلا معدوما .فعامة السلف والصفاتية على أن الله يمكن أن يشهد ويرى ويحس به .وأول من نفى إمكان إحساسه الجهم بن صفوان.

[Opponents of the Ğahmīs affirm] that every existent is perceptible by the five senses. They make follow necessarily from that that God is perceptible by the five senses – hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch – and that whatever is not perceptible by the five senses is nothing but a non-existent. The generality of the *salaf* and those who affirm [God's] attributes maintain that God can be witnessed, seen, and sensed. The first to deny that He is perceptible by the senses was Ğahm b. Ṣafwān.[80]

Ibn Taymiyya takes Ğahm to be the origin of Muslim problems with denying God's attributes, and he applies the adjectival form Ğahmī to all theologians who fall into this basic error, including al-Rāzī.[81] For Ibn Taymiyya there are no

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76   For an extended analysis of Ibn Taymiyya's epistemology based on *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*, see El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation*, p. 227-276.

77   Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, I, p. 434-436; II, p. 305, 318.

78   *Ibid.*, I, p. 225-226, see also *ibid.*, V, p. 265 where Ibn Taymiyya complains that philosophers imagine universals in the mind to exist in extramental reality and cites Plato's forms as an example.

79   *Ibid.*, II, p. 264.

80   *Ibid.*, III, p. 565-566, see also I, p. 229; II, p. 353; III, p. 453-454; IV, p. 320, 323.

81   *Ibid.*, II, p. 341-345.

incorporeal intelligibles – God or otherwise – accessible only to the intellect. It is true, concedes Ibn Taymiyya, that God cannot be seen in this visible world and that the modality (*kayfiyya*) and quiddity (*māhiyya*) of God's attributes cannot be known.[82] Nonetheless, one can see and speak to God in dreams;[83] some of God's messengers have seen and heard God in this life;[84] and human eyes will see God in the hereafter.[85] Moreover, argues Ibn Taymiyya, seeing God is all the more possible than seeing anything else because God's existence is greater in perfection than the perfection of anything else.[86]

This assertion of God's superior visibility dovetails with Ibn Taymiyya's view that the term "existence" (*wuǧūd*) is predicated of God in an analogical or modulated (*mušakkik*) manner.[87] The term existence means much the same thing when applied to God and creatures, albeit in different ways. Al-Rāzī claims the opposite in *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*: "The term existence applies to the visible world and the unseen only equivocally" (*kāna wuqūʿ lafẓ al-mawǧūd ʿalā l-šāhid wa-ʿalā l-ǧāʾib laysa illā bi-l-ištirāk al-lafẓī*).[88] There is no connection whatsoever

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82   *Ibid.*, I, p. 307-308.

83   *Ibid.*, I, p. 326.

84   *Ibid.*, II, p. 342.

85   *Ibid.*, I, p. 227-230; II, p. 392-453. Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya's Use of Ibn Rushd to Refute the Incorporealism of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," p. 483-487, shows how Ibn Taymiyya draws on Ibn Rušd's *al-Kašf ʿan manāhiǧ al-adilla* in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, II, p. 392-453 to refute Ašʿarī incorporealist interpretations of the vision of God as an increase in knowledge or as seeing God without location.

86   Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, IV, p. 323-336. Suleiman, *Ibn Taymiyya und die Attribute Gottes*, p. 259, notes that he is not aware of Ibn Taymiyya ever saying that visibility is an attribute of perfection and that God would therefore be all the more visible than anything else. Ibn Taymiyya does in fact affirm this here in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*.

87   There is uncertainly whether to vocalize this term *mušakkik* or *mušakkak*. For a succinct discussion of the issues, see Damien Janos, "Avicenna on Equivocity and Modulation: A Reconsideration of the *asmāʾ mushakkika* (and *tashkīk al-wujūd*)," *Oriens*, 50/1-2 (2022), p. 1-62, here p. 2-3, n. 2. I vocalize it *mušakkik* following Alexander Treiger, "Avicenna's Notion of Transcendental Modulation of Existence (*taškīk al-wuǧūd*, *analogia entis*) and Its Greek and Arabic Sources," in *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas*, eds Felicitas Opwis and David Reisman, Leiden-Boston, Brill ("Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science," 83), 2012, p. 327-363, here p. 328, n. 2, who is following al-Tahānawī, *Mawsūʿat Kaššāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn wa-l-ʿulūm*, ed. Rafīq al-ʿAǧam, Beirut, Maktabat Lubnān, 1996, 2 vols, I, p. 447.

88   Al-Rāzī, *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, p. 107/89; quoted in Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, IV, p. 369. Al-Rāzī here appeals to the equivocity of existence to knock down a Karrāmī argument, but he upholds the univocity of existence (*al-ištirāk al-maʿnawī*) in many of his other works. See Robert Wisnovsky, "Essence and Existence in the Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Islamic East (*Mašriq*): A Sketch," in *The Arabic, Hebrew and Latin Reception of Avicenna's Metaphysics*, eds Dag Nikolaus Hasse and Amos Bertolacci, Berlin-Boston, De Gruyter ("Scientia Graeco-Arabica," 7), 2012, p. 27-50, here p. 40-44; Fedor Benevich,

between the meanings of the word existence when predicated of this visible world and the unseen world. What it means for God to exist and what it means for creatures to exist are entirely unrelated. In *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* Ibn Taymiyya objects that the term existence and names such as living, knowing, and powerful are predicated of both God and creatures not merely equivocally but "univocally and also modulated" (*bi-l-tawāṭuʾ wa-hiya ayḍan mušakkika*).[89] The terms existence, living, and powerful mean similar things when applied to God and to creatures. However, the predication is modulated with respect to worthiness: God has a greater right to existence and the meanings of His names than creatures have to their existence and the meanings of their names.[90]

Ibn Taymiyya is at pains in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* to clarify that the univocity of existence does not imply that God and creatures participate in existence as a real extramental universal. There is no likeness (*miṯl*) between God and creatures in their worthiness, existence, names, or attributes. Nothing exists in the extramental world except God and creatures as concrete existents. The expression "existence" points simply to a quality shared among things that the mind has abstracted from all other characteristics. Absolute existence or existence as such is found nowhere but in the mind. Every extramental existent is ontologically distinct from every other, and there is no fundamental likeness between any two existents.[91] Ibn Taymiyya articulates this nominalist approach to universals to undermine al-Rāzī's incorporealism. However, Ibn Taymiyya's nominalism is not absolute insofar as he also affirms logical axioms that apply self-evidently to all existents, including God. The universal logical axiom at the core of the present discussion is his claim that the natural human constitution knows necessarily that every single existent must exist in only one

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"The Necessary Existent (*wāǧib al-wuǧūd*): From Avicenna to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," in *Philosophical Theology in Islam: Later Ashʿarism East and West*, eds Ayman Shihadeh and Jan Thiele, Leiden-Boston, Brill ("Islamicate Intellectual History," 5), 2020, p. 123-155, here p. 124-135; and Frank Griffel, *The Formation of Post-Classical Philosophy in Islam*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2021, p. 394-399.

89 Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, IV, p. 371.

90 Ibid., IV, p. 370-371. For further discussion of Ibn Taymiyya's views on univocity, equivocity, and modulation (or analogical predication), see Suleiman, *Ibn Taymiyya und die Attribute Gottes*, p. 159-171; and Mohamed M. Yunis Ali, *Medieval Islamic Pragmatics: Sunni Legal Theorists' Models of Textual Communication*, Richmond, Surrey, Curzon ("Curzon Studies in Arabic Linguistics"), 2000, p. 116-125. For the background of these concepts in Ibn Sīnā, see Janos, "Avicenna on Equivocity and Modulation," and the literature discussed therein.

91 Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, IV, p. 371-374. Elsewhere in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, Ibn Taymiyya writes, "There are no absolute universals in the extramental world" (*ibid.*, I, p. 229), and "Absolute existence has no existence in the extramental world at all" (*ibid.*, I, p. 430).

of two ways: either inside the world or outside of it. For Ibn Taymiyya, this axiom impinges on all existents, and it admits of no exceptions.[92]

5   Theology as Translation of Meaning

Not only matters of ontology divide Ibn Taymiyya and al-Rāzī. Al-Rāzī also has no qualms deploying the technical terminology of *kalām* theology, whereas Ibn Taymiyya favors a textualism that eschews terminology not found in the Qurʾān and the Sunna. He maintains often in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* that the Qurʾān, the Sunna, and the *salaf* are silent on the technical terms of *kalām* theology, terms such as body (*ǧism*), spatial extension (*taḥayyuz*), substance (*ǧawhar*), accident (*ʿaraḍ*), and composition (*tarkīb*). The foundational texts of the religion neither affirm such terms of God nor deny them, and the *salaf* and the religious leaders of the Muslim community condemn using them.[93] Additionally, Ibn Taymiyya invokes Ibn Rušd to support the principle that revelation neither affirms nor denies that God is a body,[94] and he claims that this is the mainstream stance of Sunnī Islam: "The majority of the Sunnīs, the religious leaders, and the *ḥadīṯ* scholars do not say that [God] is a body, and they do not say that God is not a body" (*kāna ʿāmmat ahl al-sunna wa-aʾimmat al-dīn wa-ahl al-ḥadīṯ lā yaqūlūna huwa ǧism wa-lā yaqūlūna laysa bi-ǧism*).[95]

Now, if one is to avoid the terminology of *kalām* theology, how does Ibn Taymiyya propose to address the challenges of *kalām*? He responds in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* by permitting elucidation of the meanings of the Qurʾān and the Sunna in the terminology of *kalām* as needed. He writes,

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92   On Ibn Taymiyya's adherence to the universality of logical axioms, see El-Tobgui, *Ibn Taymiyya on Reason and Revelation*, p. 279-285; Anke von Kügelgen, "The Poison of Philosophy: Ibn Taymiyya's Struggle for and against Reason," *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya*, eds Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer, Berlin-Boston, De Gruyter ("Studien zur Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur des Islamischen Orients: Beihefte zur Zeitschrift 'Der Islam', Neue Folge"), 2013, p. 253-328, here p. 296; and Suleiman, *Ibn Taymiyya und die Attribute Gottes*, p. 316-317.

93   Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, I, p. 219-220, 272, 289, 372-373, 401; II, p. 526; III, p. 298; IV, p. 388-390, 623.

94   Hoover, "Ibn Taymiyya's Use of Ibn Rushd to Refute the Incorporealism of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī," p. 480-483.

95   Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, III, p. 430; Ibn Taymiyya also states that the natural constitution does not know that God is not a body (*ibid.*, I, p. 359).

كان الذي عليه أئمة الإسلام أنهم لا يطلقون الألفاظ المبتدعة المتنازع فيها لا نفيا ولا

إثباتا إلا بعد الاستفسار والتفصيل فيُثبت ما أثبته الكّاب والسنة من المعاني وينفي ما نفاه

الكّاب والسنة من المعاني.

> The leaders of Islam do not use innovated and disputed terms, neither
> to deny nor to affirm, until seeking explanation and detailed explication.
> Then, they affirm the meanings that the Book and the Sunna affirm, and
> they deny the meanings that the Book and the Sunna deny.[96]

The aim of theological discourse is to elucidate the meanings of the revealed
texts in attentive dialogue with the terminology of opposing views. He elabo-
rates by comparing this interpretive process to the practice of translating the
Qurʾān and the Sunna into other languages:

فلم يكن واحد من هذين مشروعا على الإطلاق ولا هو أيضا منهيا عنه على الإطلاق،

بل إذا أثبت الرجل معنى حقا ونفى معنى باطلا واحتاج إلى التعبير عن ذلك بعبارة

لأجل إفهام المخاطب لأنها من لغة المخاطب ونحو ذلك لم يكن ذلك منهيا عنه لأن

ذلك يكون من باب ترجمة أسمائه وآياته بلغة أخرى ليفهم أهل تلك اللغة معاني كلامه

وأسمائه وهذا جائز بل مستحب أحيانا بل واجب أحيانا وإن لم يكن ذلك مشروعا على

الإطلاق كمخاطبة أهل هذه الاصطلاحات الخاصة في أسماء الله وصفاته وأصول الدين

باصطلاحهم الخاص إذا كانت المعاني [التي] تبين لهم هي معاني القرآن والسنة تشبه قراءة

القرآن بغير العربية وهذه الترجمة تجوز لإفهام المخاطب بلا نزاع بين العلماء.

> [Affirming *kalām* technical terms or denying them] is not prescribed
> absolutely, nor is it prohibited absolutely. Rather, if a man needs to articu-
> late affirmation of a true meaning or denial of a false meaning using an
> expression in the language of the addressee to enable the addressee to
> understand, and such like, that is not prohibited. That falls under the cat-
> egory of translating [God's] names and verses into another language so
> that the people who speak that language can understand the meanings of
> His speech and His names. This [translation] is permissible, even recom-
> mended sometimes, or even at times obligatory, even if that is not pre-
> scribed absolutely. Similarly, addressing those who use these technical

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96   *Ibid.,* III, p. 137.

terms in the names of God, His attributes, and the foundations of religion in their technical terminology – when the meanings elucidated for them are the meanings of the Qurʾān and the Sunna – resembles reciting the Qurʾān in [a language] other than Arabic. This translation is permitted to enable the addressee to understand. There is no dispute [about this] among the scholars.[97]

We may briefly illustrate Ibn Taymiyya's method with his interpretations of the terms "boundary" (ḥadd) and "body" (ǧism). Ibn Taymiyya says that God does not have a concrete attribute called boundary, and revelation does not ascribe such an attribute to God. A boundary is no more than that which distinguishes one thing from another. However, Ibn Taymiyya explains, the Ǧahmīs deny that God has a boundary even in this sense. They affirm that God is neither inside nor outside the world, and they thereby fail to distinguish God from the created things. Therefore, to oppose the Ǧahmīs, one may say that a boundary distinguishes God from the world. This does not ascribe an additional attribute to God. It simply clarifies God's separateness.[98]

Regarding the term body, Ibn Taymiyya denies corporeality in God when body means something composed and assembled out of parts. He explains that God's names One (aḥad) and Self-Sufficient (ṣamad) found in Qurʾān 112, 1-2 negate "composition, divisibility, and corporeality" (al-tarkīb wa-l-inqisām wa-l-taǧsīm) in God.[99] Yet, Ibn Taymiyya does allow God to be spoken of as an indivisible body: "It does not follow necessarily from [God's] being a body, spatially extended, above the world, or such like that He is divisible" (lā yal-zamu min kawni-hi ǧisman aw mutaḥayyizan aw fawq al-ʿālam aw ġayra ḏālika an yakūna munqasiman).[100] Such a view of body runs completely contrary to

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97   *Ibid.*, IV, p. 389-390. Ibn Taymiyya continues in this passage that most scholars do not permit using translations for ritual prayer or other purposes, although some permit it to those with poor Arabic. He also permits translation of the Qurʾān and the ḥadīṯ literature in *ibid.*, VIII, p. 474; Ibn Taymiyya, *Kitāb al-Radd ʿalā l-manṭiqiyyīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ṣamad Šaraf al-Dīn al-Kutubī, Bombay, al-Maṭbaʿa l-qayyima, 1368/1949, p. 48-49; and Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*, I, p. 43-44; translated in Hoover, "Theology as Translation," p. 67-68.

98   Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, II, p. 604-III, p. 52 (especially III, p. 42-49).

99   *Ibid.*, III, p. 461; Ibn Taymiyya also says that God's name Self-Sufficient (ṣamad) precludes embodiment or incarnation (taǧassud; *ibid.*, III, p. 487).

100   *Ibid.*, III, p. 440. In a separate analysis of diverse Muslim views on divine corporeality, Ibn Taymiyya does not explicitly affirm a sense in which God may be said to be a body; he simply says, "The necessary concomitants for those who deny body are worse than the necessary concomitants for those who affirm it" (*ibid.*, V, p. 326-380, quotation p. 362). Elsewhere, Ibn Taymiyya says that no Ḥanbalī is known to have called God a body, while

that of al-Rāzī. For al-Rāzī, bodies, as well as spatial extensions, are intrinsically composed of and divisible into separate parts. This brings us to al-Rāzī's proofs against spatiality in God along with Ibn Taymiyya's refutations.

6   The Indivisibility of God's Spatial Extension

The core of Ibn Taymiyya's rational argumentation against al-Rāzī is found in his reply to Part One, Section Four of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* where al-Rāzī outlines eight rational proofs against qualifying God with space and location. Ibn Taymiyya responds with conceptual analyses and rational arguments found neither in his earlier *Ḥamawiyya* fatwa nor in the extant portion of *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya*. I will sketch Ibn Taymiyya's responses to al-Rāzī's first, second, third, and fifth proofs. This will clarify the essential outlines of how he expresses God's spatial relation to the world in *kalām* terminology. I present only the basics of these often lengthy and detailed arguments for the sake of economy, and I omit al-Rāzī's other four proofs because Ibn Taymiyya's comments on them add nothing substantially new to the overall picture. Al-Rāzī's first proof begins with the following disjunction:

<div dir="rtl">

لو كان تعالى مختصا بحيز أوجهة بمعنى أنه يصح أن يشار إليه بالحس أنه هٰهنا أو هناك لم يخل إما أن يكون منقسما أو غير منقسم، فإن كان منقسما كان مركبا وقد تقدم إبطاله، وإن لم يكن منقسما كان في الصغر والحقارة كالجزء الذي لا يتجزأ وذلك باطل باتفاق العقلاء.

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If God were localized in space and location in the sense that it would be correct for sense perception to indicate that He is here or there, [God] would have to be either divisible (*munqasim*) or indivisible. If He were divisible, He would be composed (*murakkab*). That has already been

falsified. If He were indivisible, He would be very small and minute like an indivisible particle, and that is false by agreement of all rational people.[101]

On the one hand, according to al-Rāzī, a God who is both accessible to sense perception and divisible would certainly suffer from composition, that is, being composed of different parts. Earlier in *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, al-Rāzī rules out composition for God, as well as body, spatial extension, and location, because God is one, and he supports this by invoking the Qurʾānic verse, "Say! God is One" (*qul huwa Llāhu aḥadun*; Kor 112, 1).[102] On the other hand, al-Rāzī argues, a God who is both accessible to sense perception and indivisible would have to be the size of the tiniest possible particle, a particle so small as not to be divisible into anything smaller. Otherwise, God would be bigger than that tiny particle, which would mean that He is divisible and composed of parts. However, God is neither minute in size nor divisible. Therefore, it is not possible that He be localized in space and location, which shows that God is not subject to space and location.

Ibn Taymiyya in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* agrees with al-Rāzī that God is not composed of two or more self-subsisting parts that were previously located in separate spaces. Likewise, God could not be separated and divided into parts that are then placed in different spaces. However, Ibn Taymiyya differentiates himself from al-Rāzī by asserting that something can be simultaneously indivisible and extremely big. A corporeal and spatially extended God located above His Throne need not imply that God is divisible into separate parts located in separate spaces.[103]

Ibn Taymiyya explains that al-Rāzī's notion of divisibility involves differentiation even within a unity, that is, division between different aspects of one single thing. In Ibn Taymiyya's own words, al-Rāzī means by divisible

أن ما في هذه الجهة منه غير ما في هذه الجهة كما نقول إن الشمس منقسمة يعني أن
حاجبها الأيمن غير حاجبها الأيسر والفلك منقسم بمعنى أن ناحية القطب الشمالي غير
ناحية القطب الجنوبي.

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101 Al-Rāzī, *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, p. 85/62 (first demonstration); quoted in Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, III, p. 426.

102 Al-Rāzī, *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, p. 59/30; Ibn Taymiyya responds directly to al-Rāzī's interpretation of Qurʾān 112, 1 in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, III, p. 165-214.

103 Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, III, p. 430-440.

that whatever is in one location in [God] is different from whatever is in the [other] location, as when we say that the sun is divided, meaning that its right side is different from its left side, and the celestial sphere is divided, meaning that the northern hemisphere is different from the southern hemisphere.[104]

For al-Rāzī, whatever is divisible or composite in this sense, in the sense of having different sides or aspects, cannot be called one. Ibn Taymiyya rejects this out of hand. He observes that every existent – whether necessary (*i.e.* God) or merely possible – is subject to this kind of divisibility and composition, and he says that al-Rāzī has no proof that divisibility of this sort compromises the unity of an existent.[105] Ibn Taymiyya denies that God could be divided up or sliced up into separately existing parts, but he allows differentiation within God between God's sundry attributes. He furthermore explains that the Ašʿarīs themselves, of whom al-Rāzī happens to be one, affirm multiple attributes of God without this compromising God's unity. Given this, he argues that spatial extension or measure should not compromise God's unity either:

وإذا جاز أن يقولوا إن هذا الموصوف الذي له صفات متعددة هو واحد غير متكثر ولا مركب ولا ينقسم، جاز أيضا أن يقال إن الذي له قدر هو واحد غير متكثر ولا مركب ولا ينقسم وإن كان في الموضعين يمكن أن يشار إلى شيء منه فلا يكون المشار إليه هو عين الآخر.

If it is permissible for [the Ašʿarīs] to say that the One-Who-Is-Qualified – Who has diverse attributes – is one, not multiple, not composed and not divisible, then it is also permissible to say that the One-Who-Has-Measure (*qadr*) is one, not multiple, not composed and not divisible, even if in both instances it is possible to point to some aspect (*šayʾ*) of Him and that [aspect] that is pointed to is not the very same as another.[106]

In short, if multiple attributes do not render God divisible, measure and spatial extension do not render God divisible either. Ibn Taymiyya then fields an objection. It would seem, according to the logic of this argument, that everything in existence besides God must therefore also be said to be indivisible and non-composite. Nothing would be divisible and composite. Ibn Taymiyya

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104   *Ibid.*, III, p. 440.
105   *Ibid.*, III, p. 440-442.
106   *Ibid.*, III, p. 481; see *ibid.*, III, p. 483-484, for a similar argument.

solves the problem by distinguishing between created things and God. God has the power to divide created things into separate pieces, but nothing can divide God from His essential attributes.[107] To sum up, Ibn Taymiyya rejects al-Rāzī's definition of oneness as simplicity that precludes spatial extension, and he has no difficulty speaking of a non-composite God who is subject to measure in a spatial sense.

7   The Self-Sufficiency of God

Al-Rāzī's second proof in Part One, Section Four of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* purports to defend God's self-sufficiency. Al-Rāzī writes, "If [God] were localized in space and location, He would need that space and that location for His existence. This is absurd" (*law kāna muḥtaṣṣan bi-l-ḥayyiz wa-l-ǧiha la-kāna muḥtāǧan fī wuǧūdi-hi ilā ḏālika l-ḥayyiz wa-tilka l-ǧiha wa-hāḏā muḥāl*).[108] Al-Rāzī here invokes a Platonic notion of space in which space and location subsist independently of what they contain.[109] God cannot be localized in a space and a location because such a God would need that space and that location to exist. Moreover, the space in which God resides would need to be eternal because God is eternal. All of this, according to al-Rāzī, is absurd because God is self-sufficient and has no need of anything outside of Himself.[110]

In *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* Ibn Taymiyya denies that what al-Rāzī calls space and location have separate existences. For Ibn Taymiyya, all things in the world are surely in existing spaces. However, if the world as a whole is said to be in a space or a location, that space or location does not exist. If such a space or location did exist, it would count as part of the world.[111] There is no location, space, or other existent above the world except God Himself. Everything that exists apart from God is part of the world. Thus, God does not direct Himself toward or away from anything else above the world. There is also no space existing above the world outside God that God could be said to occupy, and it

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107   *Ibid.*, III, p. 482.
108   Al-Rāzī, *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, p. 86/64 (second demonstration); quoted in Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, III, p. 584.
109   Al-Rāzī affirms the self-subsistence of space in several of his works, although as something created by God. On this see Peter Adamson, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on Place," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, 27/2 (2017), p. 205-236; and *id.*, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on Void," in *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th to the 14th Century*, ed. Abdelkader Al Ghouz, Göttingen-Bonn, V&R unipress-Bonn University Press ("Mamluk Studies," 20), 2018, p. 307-324.
110   Al-Rāzī, *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, p. 86-89/64-67.
111   Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, III, p. 603-604.

cannot be said that there are multiple things existing above the world of which God happens to be one.[112] Ibn Taymiyya also clarifies that location or direction (*ǧiha*) may indicate a relation between two things, but the relation has no real existence of its own. So, in the case of God, God's location above and over the world is a relation between God and the world. The location does not exist in and of itself.[113]

Al-Rāzī and Ibn Taymiyya propound fundamentally different notions of space. For al-Rāzī space is a self-subsisting container that exists independently of the objects located within it. If God were a body, God would need to occupy a portion of that space in order to find His location within it. Ibn Taymiyya, however, works on the premise that no self-subsisting space exists. His intuitions follow the Aristotelianism of Ibn Rušd. Space (*ḥayyiz*) is "the boundaries of something which are conjoined to it and which contain it. [Space] is its sides. The [boundaries] are intrinsic to it. They are not independent of it, despite its need of them" (*ḥudūd al-šayʾ al-muttaṣila bi-hi llatī taḥūzu-hu wa-hwa ǧawānibu-hu wa-tilka takūnu dāḫilatan fī-hi fa-lā takūnu mustaġniyyatan ʿan-hu maʿa ḥāǧati-hi ilay-hā*).[114] Space refers to the boundary of an object inside of which the object exists, and which cannot exist independently of the object itself. Without the presence of the object, no space exists.

On this conception of space, Ibn Taymiyya explains, spatially extended objects are not dependent on the space that they occupy. Instead, spatial extension subsists in the object or body itself, and it in fact depends upon the body for its existence. The body does not need independently existing space, but space derives from the body.[115] So, for Ibn Taymiyya, if space depends upon the spatially extended object for its existence rather than the other way around, then al-Rāzī cannot say that a spatially extended corporeal God needs the space that inherently characterizes Him. For that would be tantamount to saying that God needs whatever follows necessarily from His essence.[116]

As noted above, al-Rāzī also protests that the space in which God exists would need to be eternal because God is eternal. This poses no difficulty for Ibn Taymiyya. He responds that this eternal space would lie within the eternal God and derive from God. It would not exist independently of God. Affirming

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112   *Ibid.,* III, p. 610-611, 614.

113   *Ibid.,* III, p. 612, 615.

114   *Ibid.,* III, p. 626; see also *ibid.,* III, p. 633. In similar fashion, Ibn Taymiyya explains that a location (*ǧiha*) does not exist without that which is located: "[A location] inasmuch as it is a location needs that which is located. That which is located does not need a location in itself at all" (*ibid.,* III, p. 626-627).

115   *Ibid.,* III, p. 630.

116   *Ibid.,* III, p. 647-652.

the eternity of space in this fashion, clarifies Ibn Taymiyya, is no different from affirming the eternity of God's attributes of knowledge, power and life, all of which subsist in God.[117] Al-Rāzī only creates difficulties by positing a space outside of God's essence in which God would have to take up His place.[118] For Ibn Taymiyya, there is no reason to imagine that a spatially extended God needs His spatial extension, and al-Rāzī's argument fails.

Ibn Taymiyya rounds out his response to al-Rāzī's proof by contending that his construal of God's distinction (*mubāyana*) from the world is superior to that of his Ǧahmī opponents. It is better at avoiding likening God to creatures, and it adheres to the Qurʾānic dictum, "There is nothing like Him" (*laysa ka-miṯli-hi šayʾun*; Kor 42, 11). God's distinction from the entirety of creation is greater than the distinction between any two objects within the world. The distinction between God and the world is not only one of essence (*ḥaqīqa*) and attribute (*ṣifa*) but also one of location, space, and measure. Not distinguishing God from creation in every respect – including location, space, and measure – is to liken God to creatures. Averting likening is not fundamentally a matter of negating things of God, as the Ǧahmīs imagine, but of affirming things that exist, such as God's names and attributes.[119]

8   The Finitude of God's Spatial Extension

Ibn Taymiyya's responses to al-Rāzī's first two rational arguments show that he speaks of God in *kalām* terms as a self-sufficient, spatially extended, and indivisible existent. His response to al-Rāzī's next argument inquires into the extent of God's spatial extension. The third proof in Part One, Section Four of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* maintains that conceiving God as spatial would require specifying whether God was infinite or finite in dimension. Al-Rāzī's proof begins,

لو كان تعالى مختصًا بحيز وجهة لكان لا يخلو إما أن يقال إنه غير متناه من جميع الجوانب أو يقال إنه غير متناه من بعض الجوانب ومتناه من بعض الجوانب أو يقال إنه متناه من كل الجوانب والأقسام الثلاثة باطلة.

If [God] were localized in space and location, it would have to be said either that He was infinite (*ġayr mutanāhin*) on all sides, or that He was

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infinite on some sides and finite on other sides, or that He was finite on all sides. The three divisions are false.[120]

Al-Rāzī provides three reasons that a spatial God cannot be infinite on all sides. First, an infinite dimension (*buʿd*) is absurd. Al-Rāzī offers the following proof for this. Imagine two lines in parallel, one infinite in length and the other finite. Then, incline the line of finite length so that the path or course extending outward from it intersects with the infinite line. There is presumably a point on the infinite line that marks the first point of contact between it and the course of the inclined finite line. However, there is in fact always a point further up the infinite line with which the course of the finite line will have intersected earlier. There can never be a point of first intersection with the infinite line without there being a prior point of first intersection. This is absurd and shows that an infinite dimension is impossible. Al-Rāzī's second argument against a spatially infinite God proceeds as follows. If an infinite distance or dimension were possible, it would be impossible to prove that the world in its entirety is finite. This, claims al-Rāzī, is known to be false by consensus (*iǧmāʿ*). (The finitude of the world is a key premise in al-Rāzī's proof that God is the Creator.) Al-Rāzī's third reason has to do with protecting God from impurity. The essence of an infinitely extended God would exist everywhere, and it would therefore mix with the world and all its filth.[121]

Al-Rāzī also denies that God could be infinite on some sides and finite on other sides. As in the first case, God cannot have any infinite sides because an infinite dimension is impossible. Additionally, if the finite and the infinite sides were equal in essence (*ḥaqīqa*) and quiddity (*māhiyya*), then all of the sides would have to become either infinite or finite and that would introduce increase or decrease into the essence of God. Alternatively, if the sides differed in essence and quiddity, God's essence would be composed of parts of fundamentally different kinds.[122]

Finally, al-Rāzī argues that God cannot be finite on all sides. As in the case of a God with both finite and infinite sides, such a God would be susceptible to increase and decrease. This God would have required an external cause, a preponderater (*muraǧǧiḥ*), to determine His size or measure, and that determination would have to have occurred in time subjecting God to temporal origination. Moreover, a God with only finite sides would leave empty spaces

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120   Al-Rāzī, *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, p. 89/68 (third demonstration); quoted in Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, III, p. 676-677.

121   Al-Rāzī, *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, p. 89-90/68-69.

122   *Ibid.*, p. 90-91/69-70.

and locations above Him. This God could even create a body above Himself, and He would then no longer be above all things.[123]

Ibn Taymiyya refutes al-Rāzī's arguments against a completely finite-sided God first. He rejects al-Rāzī's claim that such a God must be subject to temporal origination. He has already shown in response to al-Rāzī's previous proof that God could be both eternal and spatially extended. Ibn Taymiyya moreover observes that al-Rāzī takes spaces and locations to be real existents and that these could exist above God. He responds that he has already explained that spaces do not have independent existences. Additionally, he contends, the revealed sources deny that anything exists above God. In support, he quotes the Qurʾānic verse, "He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden" (*huwa l-awwalu wa-l-āḫiru wa-l-ẓāhiru wa-l-bāṭinu*; Kor 57, 3), and he interprets it with the following report from the *ḥadīṯ* collection of Muslim (d. 261/875): "You are the First; there is nothing before You. You are the Last; there is nothing after You. You are the Manifest; there is nothing above You. You are the Hidden; there is nothing below You" (*anta l-awwal fa-laysa qabla-ka šayʾ wa-anta l-āḫir fa-laysa baʿda-ka šayʾ wa-anta l-ẓāhir fa-laysa fawqa-ka šayʾ wa-anta l-bāṭin fa-laysa dūna-ka šayʾ*).[124] As God is above all things, there are no existent spaces and locations above God, and God does not create anything above Himself. Besides, Ibn Taymiyya asks, how could al-Rāzī posit spaces above God when he rejects the possibility of an infinite dimension and, by implication, an infinity of spaces? If al-Rāzī does not permit infinite dimensions and spaces beyond the finite world, he cannot posit spaces existing above God. Ibn Taymiyya concludes that al-Rāzī ultimately has no proof for his suppositions.[125]

Having refuted al-Rāzī's arguments against a fully finite-sided God, Ibn Taymiyya also challenges al-Rāzī's proofs against a God with sides that are all infinite in extent. It is true, he says, that no point of first intersection can occur between an infinite line and the intersecting course of a finite line. However, he rejoins, this does not prove the impossibility of an infinite line or dimension per se. As for the second argument, Ibn Taymiyya has no time for al-Rāzī's worry that the possibility of infinite dimension would undermine the consensus around the world's finitude. He retorts that a consensus does not rest on any specific proof. Consensus is a proof on its own, and al-Rāzī's worry is groundless. Al-Rāzī's third concern was that the essence of an infinitely extended God would mix with the impurities of the world. Ibn Taymiyya simply retorts that

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123   *Ibid.*, p. 91/70-71.

124   Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, III, p. 753; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Ḏikr, 61 (*ḥadīṯ* numbering of Wensinck), Kitāb al-Ḏikr wa-l-duʿāʾ wa-l-tawba wa-l-istiġfār, Bāb Mā yaqūlu ʿind al-nawm wa-aḫḏ al-maḍǧaʿ.

125   Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, III, p. 751-758, 771, see also *ibid.*, V, p. 322-323.

some Ǧahmīs affirm that God is in every place and that the Ittiḥādīs – followers of the Sufi theorist Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240) – equate God's existence with that of dogs, pigs, and impurities.[126] Ibn Taymiyya of course agrees with al-Rāzī that God cannot mix with filth. As noted earlier, he maintains that there is a boundary between God and the world. This boundary also implies that God cannot be infinite on all sides.

Al-Rāzī's remaining category is a God who is finite on some sides and infinite on the others. Ibn Taymiyya responds,

فما علمت به قائلا فإن قال هذا قال فإنه يقول إنه فوق العرش ذاهبا إلى غير نهاية فهو متناه من جهة العالم غير متناه من الجهة الأخرى وهذا لم يبلغني أن أحدا قاله.

> I have never known anyone to say this. If someone says this, he will say that [God] is above the Throne extending to infinity. He is finite in the direction toward the world and infinite in the other direction. It has not come to my attention that anyone says that.[127]

Ibn Taymiyya himself apparently does not hold this view either. Nevertheless, he adds that al-Rāzī has not given any proof to falsify it. Al-Rāzī's proof against an infinite dimension was already shown to be ineffective, and a God with a finite side toward the world would not suffer from mixing with the world's filth.[128]

As we saw above, al-Rāzī also subjects a God with both infinite and finite sides to the following disjunction. The infinite sides and the finite sides are either equal in essence and quiddity or unequal. If the various sides of God are equal in essence and quiddity, the infinite sides will need to be reduced to a finite measure or the finite sides increased to an infinite dimension. If they are unequal, God is composed of parts. Ibn Taymiyya dismisses the claim that different sides of a God equal in essence and quiddity must have the same dimensions. Things can be the same in essence but different in measures and sizes, like different amounts of gold and silver. As for the second half of the disjunction, Ibn Taymiyya denies that unequal sides in God entail composition, and he refers to his earlier argument that spatial extension need not imply composition.[129]

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126   *Ibid.*, III, p. 766-769, see also *ibid.*, IV, p. 406.
127   *Ibid.*, III, p. 770.
128   *Ibid.*, III, p. 771-772.
129   *Ibid.*, III, p. 773-775.

Ibn Taymiyya does not state explicitly that God is finite on all sides. However, that is the gist of his argumentation. He refutes al-Rāzī's arguments against a fully finite-sided God, and he agrees with al-Rāzī that God is not infinite on all sides. He does not entirely dismiss the third view that God is finite on some sides and infinite on others, but he has never heard of it. So, he presumably understands God to have sides of finite extension all around. A brief discussion later in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* bears this out. Ibn Taymiyya distinguishes between existents with respect to time, which can extend infinitely into the future, and with respect to space, body, and place (*makān*), which are finite. He writes, "[A place] must have a boundary and an essence. The existence of an infinite place or an infinite body is not possible" (*fa-lā budda la-hu min ḥadd wa-ḥaqīqa wa-lā yumkinu wuǧūd makān lā nihāya la-hu wa-lā ǧism lā nihāya la-hu*).[130] Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya continues, it is said that God's existence has no beginning and no end in time. However, "the same is not said of the bigness of His essence and His measure. On the contrary, it is said, 'Eyes cannot grasp Him' (Kor 6, 103), 'They do not encompass Him in knowledge' (Kor 20, 110), 'And they do not measure God with a true measure. The earth in its entirety will be in His grip on the Day of Resurrection' (Kor 39,67)" (*lā yuqālu miṯl ḏālika fī ʿaẓamat ḏāti-hi wa-qadri-hi bal yuqālu "lā tudriku-hu l-abṣāru" "wa-lā yuḥīṭūna bi-hi ʿilman" "wa-mā qadarū Llāha ḥaqqa qadri-hi wa-l-arḍu ǧamīʿan qabḍatu-hu yawma l-qiyāmati"*).[131] Ibn Taymiyya conceives of God as infinite temporally but not spatially because infinite spatial extension is not possible. God is extremely large, so large as to be beyond human comprehension, but God's spatial measure is nonetheless finite. It does not extend to infinity in any direction. There is moreover nothing above God, not even empty space, as empty space does not exist.

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130   *Ibid.*, v, p. 180.
131   Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, v, p. 180, see also *ibid.*, III, p. 784-785. Ibn Taymiyya underlines God's large size in a similar manner in *al-Risāla l-ʿaršiyya*, in *Maǧmūʿ fatāwā šayḫ al-islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya*, VI, p. 545-583; he writes, "It must be known that the upper and lower world relative to the Creator is extremely small," and then quotes this same Qurʾānic verse (Kor 39, 67; *ibid.*, VI, p. 559-560). Later in this treatise, he states, "God surrounds all created things in a manner that befits His majesty. For the seven heavens and the earth in His hand are smaller than a chickpea (*ḥamṣa*) in the hand of one of us" (*ibid.*, VI, p. 567). For further discussion of the contents of *al-Risāla l-ʿAršiyya*, see Livnat Holtzman, "The Bedouin Who Asked Questions: The Later Ḥanbalites and the Revival of the Myth of Abū Razīn Al-ʿUqalī," in *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th to the 14th Century*, ed. Abdelkader Al Ghouz, Göttingen-Bonn, V&R unipress-Bonn University Press ("Mamluk Studies," 20), 2018, p. 431-468, here p. 457-463.

9   God Surrounding the World

The fourth and last of al-Rāzī's proofs that we take up is the fifth in Part One, Section Four of *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*. This proof affords Ibn Taymiyya opportunity to clarify how he understands God to be located above the world. Al-Rāzī writes:

الأرض كرة، فإذا كان كذلك امتنع كونه تعالى في الحيز والجهة. بيان الأول أنه إذا حصل خسوف قمري فإذا سألنا سكان أقصى المشرق عن ابتدائه قالوا إنه حصل في أول الليل وإذا سألنا سكان أقصى المغرب قالوا إنه حصل في آخر الليل، فعلمنا أن أول الليل في أقصى المشرق هو بعينه آخر الليل في أقصى المغرب وذلك يوجب كون الأرض كرة. وإنما قلنا إن الأرض لما كانت كرة امتنع كون الخالق في شيء من الأحياز وذلك لأن الأرض إذا كانت كرة فالجهة التي هي فوق بالنسبة إلى سكان أهل المشرق هي تحت بالنسبة إلى سكان أهل المغرب وبالعكس، فلو كان الله تعالى مختصا بشيء من الجهات لكان تعالى في جهة التحت بالنسبة إلى بعض الناس وذلك بالاتفاق بيننا وبين الخصم محال. فثبت أنه يمتنع كونه تعالى مختصا بالجهة.

> The earth is a sphere, and if that is so, it is impossible that [God] is in a space or a location. The elucidation of the first [assertion, namely, that the earth is a sphere] is this: when a lunar eclipse occurs and when we ask those living in the far east about when it began, they say that it occurred at the beginning of the night, and, when we ask those living in the far west, they say that it occurred at the end of the night. Thus, we know that the beginning of the night in the far east is identical to the end of the night in the far west. So, the earth must be a sphere. Then, we say that if the earth is a sphere, it is impossible that the Creator is in any spaces. That is because, if the earth is a sphere, the location that is above relative to those who live in the east is below relative to those who live in the west. The opposite [is also the case]. If God were localized in one of [these] locations, He would be in the location "below" relative to some people. We and the opponent agree that that is absurd. So, it has been established that it is impossible that [God] is localized in a location.[132]

Al-Rāzī first argues here that the earth is spherical by invoking differing perceptions of a lunar eclipse. The earth passes between the sun and the moon

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132   Al-Rāzī, *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs*, p. 94/74 (fifth demonstration); quoted in Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, IV, p. 3-4.

and casts its shadow on the moon simultaneously for everyone on the night-time side of the earth. However, the eclipse occurs when different places on the earth are at different stages of the night. As al-Rāzī puts it, when the lunar eclipse occurs early in the night for those on the east side of the earth, it occurs near the end of the night for those on the west side. Then, al-Rāzī explains, given a spherical earth, what is above the heads of people on the eastern side of the earth will be below the feet of people on the west side. So, if God were located above the heads of those people standing on the east, God would be below those standing on the west. Al-Rāzī says that this is absurd, and so God cannot be in a space or location.

In *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* Ibn Taymiyya first emphasizes that he has no dispute with al-Rāzī over the roundness of the earth (*arḍ*) and the celestial spheres (*aflāk*). Ibn Taymiyya allows that some people disagree, but he counters that they have no evidence from revelation, reason, or earlier scholars of Islam to support their views. On the contrary, he continues, some scholars claim that the roundness of the celestial spheres is the consensus of the Muslims. Various scholars have mentioned proofs from the Qur'ān and the Sunna for the round-ness of the spheres, and no one among the *salaf* contests that.[133]

With this common ground established, Ibn Taymiyya addresses al-Rāzī's argument. Ibn Taymiyya first observes that no one disputes that the earth is below the sky, no matter where one happens to be on the earth. No one says that the sky in the east is below the sky in the west or vice versa. Wherever one is on the earth, the sky is always above, and the earth is always below. The sky will be above the head of someone on the east side of the earth just as it will be above the head of someone on the west side. Likewise, the earth will be below the feet of each of them. Above and below are fixed locations or directions relative to the spherical earth. The six directions that apply to creatures on the earth – above, below, left, right, front, and behind – do not apply to the sky. In like fashion, God is always regarded as above, never below.[134]

Ibn Taymiyya's argument strongly suggests that God surrounds the universe in its entirety like the sky surrounds the spherical earth. He makes this explicit when addressing an objection that his view turns God into a celestial sphere. He dismisses the comparison because God and celestial spheres are not mem-bers of the same genus (*ǧins*). However, he does affirm that God surrounds the world: "The Creator of all things is above all things and surrounds them from His location that surrounds all of [the celestial spheres]" (*an yakūna ḫāliq*

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133   Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, IV, p. 4-25.
134   *Ibid.*, IV, p. 26-49, see also *ibid.*, I, p. 27-28.

al-ǧamīʿ fawq al-ǧamīʿ wa-muḥīṭan bi-hi).[135] Ibn Taymiyya corroborates this
with a comment from the early Qurʾān exegete Ibn ʿAbbās (d. *ca* 68/687-688):
"The seven heavens and the seven earths and what is in them and between
them in the hand of the All-Merciful are nothing but a mustard seed in the
hand of one of you" (*mā l-samawāt al-sabʿ wa-l-araḍūna l-sabʿ fī yad Allāh illā
ka-ḫardala fī yad aḥadi-kum*), and he underlines the smallness of the created
world compared to God.[136]

10   God's Spatial Relation to the World in Ibn Taymiyya's *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* and *Minhāǧ al-sunna l-nabawiyya*

It remains for further research to establish the extent to which Ibn Taymiyya
reiterates and develops his rational explanation of God's spatial distinction
from the world in other works. It will suffice here to note that Ibn Taymiyya
defends the same theological vision articulated in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*
in his two later theological tomes *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* and *Minhāǧ
al-sunna l-nabawiyya*. The fullest treatment of the issues within *Darʾ taʿāruḍ
al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* quotes and discusses the chapter on God's exoneration from
location (*ǧiha*) and place (*makān*) in Sirāǧ al-Dīn al-Urmawī's (d. 682/1283)
Lubāb al-Arbaʿīn (*The Quintessence of the Forty*), an abridgement of Faḫr al-Dīn
al-Rāzī's *al-Arbaʿīn fī uṣūl al-dīn* (*The Forty in the Foundations of Religion*). This
abridgement includes short versions of arguments found also in al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs
al-taqdīs* such as the following: it would be irrational to follow the Karrāmīs
and Ḥanbalīs in denying an existent that has no location or measure; a spa-
tially extended God would be divisible and composite; and it would be absurd
to imagine that God could be located above a spherical world from both of its
opposite sides. Al-Urmawī's abridged chapter ends with al-Rāzī's *taʾwīl-tafwīḍ*
rule for interpreting revealed texts that contradict rational proofs.[137]

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135   *Ibid.*, IV, p. 51-52 (quotation p. 52).

136   *Ibid.*, IV, p. 53-54 (quotation p. 53). Ibn Taymiyya affirms later in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*
        that God "surrounds the world entirely" (*ibid.*, VI, p. 77), and he earlier quotes the same
        statement from Ibn ʿAbbās in order to elaborate on the Qurʾānic verse, "The whole earth
        will be in His grip on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens will be folded up in His
        right [hand]" (Kor 39, 67; *ibid.*, I, p. 447).

137   Muḥammad [correct to Maḥmūd] b. Abī Bakr al-Urmawī, *Lubāb al-arbaʿīn*, eds
        Muḥammad Yūsuf Idrīs and Bahāʾ al-Ḫalāyla, Cairo, al-Aṣlayn, 1437/2016, p. 118-123, which
        abridges al-Rāzī's *al-Arbaʿīn*, p. 152-164 (al-Masʾala l-ṯāmina). I am grateful to Hamid Ataei
        Nazari and Hadel Jarada for sending me the relevant pages in *Lubāb*.

At 483 pages, Ibn Taymiyya's response takes up the whole of Volume 6 and part of Volume 7 in the 11-volume critical edition of *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*.[138] Ibn Taymiyya argues as he does in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* that all existents are perceptible to the senses and that any one of two existents must either indwell the other or exist separately from it spatially. There is no third non-spatial category for God.[139] Also, the human natural constitution (*fiṭra*) knows necessarily that God is over and above the world in a spatial sense.[140] God surrounds the spherical world, and God is over every point in the world just as the sky is over every location on the earth.[141] Furthermore, it is not true that every spatial extension is divisible, and God's finite extension does not mean that there are void spaces above God because there is in fact nothing above God at all.[142] Finally, Ibn Taymiyya denies that there is any contradiction between rational proofs and revealed texts. The texts indicate that God is above the world, and reason indicates likewise.[143]

Ibn Taymiyya's discussion in *Minhāǧ al-sunna l-nabawiyya* is shorter and less developed than that of *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*. He affirms that God is distinct from creation, above the heavens, and over the Throne. There is nothing above the world except God, and God is not subject to composition. Furthermore, there is nothing above God or encompassing Him. Ibn Taymiyya discusses the term *mutaḥayyiz* (spatially extended) in *Minhāǧ al-sunna l-nabawiyya* and implies that this applies to God in the sense of an existent perceptible to the senses, but he does not speak of God as *mutaḥayyiz* explicitly in the way that he does in *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*.[144]

Conclusion

Ibn Taymiyya's *Bayān talbīs al-Ǧahmiyya* marks a new departure in his polemics against Ašʿarī *kalām* theology. *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* not only reprises the hermeneutical critique of Ašʿarī reinterpretation (*taʾwīl*) found in his earlier *Ḥamawiyya* fatwa and *al-Ǧawāb ʿan al-iʿtirāḍāt al-miṣriyya*. It also refutes

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138   Ibn Taymiyya, *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*, VI, p. 5-352; VII, p. 2-140. See also Ibn Taymiyya's discussions of divine corporeality (*taǧsīm*) at *ibid.*, IV, p. 137-237, and X, p. 259-319.
139   *Ibid.*, VI, p. 32-33, 83, 88-89, 108-112.
140   *Ibid.*, VI, p. 12-14, 82-86.
141   *Ibid.*, VI, p. 327-340; VII, p. 3-8.
142   *Ibid.*, VI, p. 294-295, 301-302; VII, p. 9-17.
143   *Ibid.*, VII, p. 26-140.
144   Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāǧ al-sunna l-nabawiyya*, II, p. 145, 538-539, 555-560.

the rational arguments for the incorporeality and non-spatiality of God spelled out in Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Taʾsīs al-taqdīs* and explicates an alternative theological rationality of God's relation to space. Ibn Taymiyya would much prefer to limit discourse about God to the affirmations of the Qurʾān and the Sunna, as this is what he understands to be the teaching of the *salaf*. Yet, when pressed by the needs of his intellectual context, Ibn Taymiyya translates his understanding of the sacred sources into the terminology of his adversaries. The God that Ibn Taymiyya envisions in the language of al-Rāzī's *kalām* is a very large existent of finite spatial extension that surrounds the created world and is distinct and separate from it. If one is to call this God a body – and Ibn Taymiyya is extremely reticent to do so – it must be completely clear that it is neither divisible nor composite. As this God is finite in dimension, it might be thought that Ibn Taymiyya imagines open space above God, but he draws on Ibn Rušd's Aristotelian denial of independently self-subsisting space to banish that thought from possibility. Nothing exists apart from the created universe and God who surrounds it. While Ibn Taymiyya's *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya* provides the fullest expression of a spatialist view of God known to exist within his corpus, and indeed within the whole Islamic tradition, it is not unique in its underlying theology. Ibn Taymiyya expands on earlier spatialisms of the sort found in al-Dārimī and the Ḥanbalī *al-Radd ʿalā l-zanādiqa wa-l-ǧahmiyya* attributed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and he reprises his spatialist views and arguments more briefly in his later tomes *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql* and *Minhāǧ al-sunna l-nabawiyya*. Given the extent to which Ibn Taymiyya works out this spatialist vision of God in his three largest theological works – *Bayān talbīs al-ǧahmiyya*, *Darʾ taʿāruḍ al-ʿaql wa-l-naql*, and *Minhāǧ al-sunna l-nabawiyya* – it is not possible to assimilate his thought to Ḥanbalī noncognitivism, which precludes theological reflection entirely, or to Ašʿarī *tafwīḍ*, which explicitly rejects divine corporeality and then delegates the meaning of God's attributes to God without further consideration. Ibn Taymiyya's thoroughly reasoned theology of divine spatiality stands firmly against al-Rāzī's Ašʿarī incorporealism and theological incorporealism more generally.

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