

## RATIONALISM IN CLASSICAL MUSLIM THOUGHT

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**Abstract:** Quran claims that we are bestowed with *Fiṭrah*; basic world view, religious and moral awareness, God fearing etc. Rationalism was there in Muslim world before the translation movement, but the Greek and Indian philosophies strengthen the rational approach over the empirical and *firī* approach. Eventually, *firī* approach got vanished and idealism got dominant over every other approach. All of the thinkers, who are studied in this article believes that reason and senses are not totally reliable source of knowledge. Sufis, introduced mystic method for gaining true knowledge. The mystic approach is akin to rationalism in its core nature. As both work in isolation from external experience by senses. Mystic experience and reasoning seem sister approaches, as they both do not need testification for their findings. Rational awareness and mystic illumination donot necessarily correspond with reality. In this article some great thinkers of Muslim world are discussed. Their studies show that main stream thinkers tried to recognize empiricism, but their tilt was toward the reason. While *Fiṭrah* was not in their consideration. Ibn Taymīyah introduced the *Fiṭrah* again after long, but never subscribed by the scholars until Shah Walī Ullah and Hamid ud Din Farāhī but they are not part of this article, as the scope of the article is classic thought.

**Key words:** rationalism, empiricism, justification of knowledge.

**Key figures:** Al-Kindī, al-Māturīdī, Al-Fārābī, Abdul Jabbar Mu‘tazilī, Ibn Sīnā, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymīyah, Ibn Khaldūn, and Mullah Sadra.

Rationalism is usually used in contrast to religious beliefs, empirical way of knowing and emotional way of thinking. In epistemic world it usually opposes the empiricism. Here, rationalism is a theory that means that reason rather than experience/sense perception is the foundation of certainty in knowledge.

Rationalism and empiricism have been working simultaneously, since the human race is thinking and striving for its survival. Although, rationalism as an approach is attributed to Plato, it is in use since the eve of humanity on the planet. When the first man used to conclude that the shadow blocks the heat of sun, and making a shelter of leaves and branches would relieve him from hot

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sun light, he used this rationalism to understand a physical phenomenon, and sheltering was an empirical experience for him. But the Plato, brought a change, and rationalism dominated the empiricism. Thus, in the known academic history, we can see that this approach, created hindrances in the way of

empirical knowledge, namely; science. As rationalism in its core rely on the intellect only, for the justification of Knowledge, not on sense perception.

Rationalism or idealism has been governing the Muslims` thought since the advent of Mu` tazilī('isolationists'(Al-Jubouri 2006)school of thought. This trend strengthened by the Greek and Indian philosophy, after the translation work done into Arabic, perhaps in the first half of the eighth century AD. Mu` tazilite emerged near about in this time, the founder of the school was *Wāṣil ibn `Atā* (700-748). The reason of their origination was the issue of justice, which is mostly emphasized in the Quran. They drew a logical corollary of freedom of the subject from the principle of justices, which means that the determinism is against the justice. One can draw the advent of rationalism back to *Ma` badal-Juhni* (d.699/700/702), who started asking the question about the God`s knowledge and determinism etc. (Muslim 1334 AH, Hadith # 8) Anyhow, the rationalism originated in the last half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century or first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD which means second half of the first century after Hijra or first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AH. From then until the colonial era, it was the mainstream methodology, of Muslim intelligentsia.

There were four main streams, who indulged in this dialectical intellectual debate of ideas; namely they are *Mu` tazilites*, *Ash` arites*, *Māturīdīyah*, and *Hanbalīyah*. They can be categorized into two major divisions; rationalists and traditionalist, in Arabic, they were respectively called; *ahl al-R` ay* أهل الرأي and *ahl-a-Rawāyah* أهل الرواية. The first were also called *Hukmā`* حكماء and *Failsūf* فلاسفة (philosopher). The second ones were also named *Muḥadithūn* محدثون and *ahl-Āthār* أهل الآثار. *Mu` tazilites* were mainly rationalists while *Māturīdīyah* and *Ash` arites* were middle roaders, and *Hanbalīyah* were mainly traditionalists. They all were believers and did not denied the Quran. They interpreted the holy book according to their approach.

Mu` tazilites and philosophers were the catalyst of this dialectical war. They interpreted the Quran in a way that raised the fear of denial of the Quranic teachings specifically in metaphysical matters. Muslim philosophers and scholars were not purely rationalists. In the following lines, most influential philosophers will be discussed to view the position they took for or against the rationalism.

### **Al-Kindī (185AH/801AD - 260/873)**

For al-Kindī the soul is an intellective self. (Adamson 2019), it has three faculties; "the rational, the irascible, and the appetitive." (El-Ehwany 1963, 432). From the difference between sensory cognition and intellectual cognition, al-Kindī derives his methodology. (Ya` qūb al-Kindī 1950) Al-Kindī says:

*"Thus, it is compulsory that we should use (that method) which is useful for our task. (E.g), We should not use persuasion in mathematics, five senses and analogy in theology, reason in physics, argumentation in rhetoric, and*

*in first principles, if we follow these conditions we will easily achieve our goals, and if we do not we will miss the target and the achievement of goals will get difficult". (Ya`qūb al-Kindī 1950, 106-112)*

On the bases of this principle, al-Kindī says we should not use senses for metaphysical entities, persuasion is not useful in math, when we use it in math, we cannot have certitude in mathematical knowledge.

Elaborating his theory 'Allāf says:

*"Al-Kindī stated that human perception and knowledge are of two kinds:*

- 1. Perception by the senses.*
- 2. Knowledge through the intellect.*

*The existents are of two kinds as well:*

- 1. Particulars, which are perceived by the senses, and*
- 2. Universals, which exist in the mind.*

*The mind, or the intellect is more qualified in establishing philosophical knowledge in dealing with universal concepts. This knowledge is superior to that of the senses, because it is possible to be validated and rendered certain by the intellectual principles that are necessarily true, such as the law of non-contradiction" (Al-Allaf 2017, 26)*

(Adamson 2019) says:

*"His on Recollection argues explicitly that we cannot derive intelligible forms from sense-perception. Thus, we do not "learn" these forms, but simply "remember" them from before the soul entered into the body. Here al-Kindī is of course broadly following the account of recollection given by Plato in the Meno or Phaedo, though how he might have known of this account remains obscure." (Adamson 2019)*

### **Al-Kindī's Approach and Rationalism**

The above discussion shows that Al-Kindī clearly, believe in the both approaches; rationalism and empiricism. Nevertheless, he is rationalist as he believes in the notion that man has knowledge by birth. Though he was considered first philosopher in Muslim world, but we can see that he suggests different approach for different objects of studies. Reason is not the only resort to visit every time.

#### **al- Māturīdī(238/853- 333/944)**

A-Māturīdī in his book:Kitāb al-Tauḥīd says:

ال يبذل الّ يبوصل بها الى الّ علم بحقائق اّ شفاء العيون واّ كلّ خبّار والنّظر - (al-

Māturīdī

, 7)

*Means of acquiring knowledge are three: (1) sensible(s) by direct observation (al-a'yan); (2) Reports (al-akhbar); (3) Reason (al-nazr). (Ali 2017)*

Then he explains the sense organs

*“The al-a'yan (sensible) are those which our senses find around us, sensible are sources of knowledge, that knowledge which is not deniable. Those who deny it, their listener calls them arrogant, as the animal instinct rejects his position, because animals know that what is that on which their survival rely, and by what they will die. They know what is pleasing and what is painful.”(al-Māturīdī -, 7)*

He says that sensory perception is a reliable source of knowledge. As we see, animals do perceive knowledge, by their senses. He elaborates;

*“It is consensus that the man who deny that knowledge of sensible is not eligible for any debate. Because, it means, he does not buy even his denial (immaterial thing) and existence of himself (a material and introspective self-consciousness), and because, debate would be about concept and material entity of anything, and he rejects the both kind of existence and his defense too. (Instead of debate) we can play a game with him, by saying him: do you know you deny everything? If he replies; “no”, then, he leaves his position. if he replies: “yes”. Then he accepts his denial, and opposes his opposition toward knowledge, (as he is accepting at least his own denial, which is a mental entity).(The second way could be that) he should be tortured, like by injuring him to stop him torturing us mentally by his denial, (as he will accept his sensual pain) because we know he believe in the sensible, for sensible are necessarily knowable, and he was denying that just to annoy us. Therefore, he deserve this treatment, so that he may be compelled to cry and seek help and face the same torture in reply (and admit what he denies of the reality of sensuous knowledge.)” (al-Māturīdī -, 7,8)*

His second source of knowledge is reports/narrations. Our senses and reason cannot cover everything of life and on earth, therefore, we need to hear from others. Reports are of two types. One, that is infallible (*mutawātir*); from a large number of people, like reports of people about the existence of Baghdad on the surface of the earth. Two, *khābr al-Wāḥid* (reports of a few people). They may be right or wrong. Those will be accepted when proven true. (al-Māturīdī -, 9) Third source of knowledge is reason. It is most important source, as it is the only thing, which assist to understand the sense perception and reports. Without that, both cannot give any knowledge. Reason is the only source that can grasp

metaphysical realities (first philosophy) and moral principles. (al-Māturīdī -, 10)(Ali 2017, w)

In Māturīdī's theory the reason holds a very high position, but he also believes that the reason can be influenced. That influence reduces its functionality, and obscures its vision. For example, our desires, motives, our environment, our relation may harm objectivity of our reasoning. Eventually, it may fail to provide any knowledge. Disagreements of thinkers on same issues provides him an adequate ground for his next theory of need for divine-revelation. Where, revelation guards our intellect from straying. Intellect is also an important thing as it is only thing that comprehend the revelation. (al-Māturīdī -, 10)(Ali 2017, w)

Human needs revelation, not only for spirituality, but also for worldly matters, like in medicine, art, crafts, and foodstuff. All human progress in these fields is just because of the revelation, in Arabic: *Ilhām*, which, in Muslim tradition, is inspiration; mystic experience. Secondly, it is a sudden occurrence of idea in mind, when someone is working on something and out of the blue a solution came into the mind. This inspiration, sometimes, becomes obstacle in the way of acquiring knowledge. It “creates chaos and conflicts in the domain of knowledge, makes true knowledge impossible, and is ultimately liable to lead humanity to disintegration and destruction for want of a common standard of judgment and universal basis for agreement”(Ali 2017)

### **Māturīdī's Approach and Rationalism**

Knowledge is the outcome of senses and cognitive power al-Nazr/al-fikr (reason/intellect) and reports;

Senses provide us true knowledge; hence, they could do mistakes.

Reason cannot provide always true knowledge, as internal and external factors as desires etc. may lead it astray.

While reports can provide true and probable knowledge according to their mode of transmission.

Revelation is needed to correct the knowledge; he considered the hypothetical occurrence of inferential ideas in our mind as revelation.

Māturīdī subscribe partially all sources of knowledge and think that they are not able to bring forth truth, for that they need the judgements of revelation.

### **Al-Fārābī(258/870- 339/950)**

Al-Fārābī follows Aristotle, when he says the learning of knowledge for humans takes place through the senses (in Arabic وحصول المعارف بالذمائران يلقون من ج (الحواس) he says that when, the rationalists usually mistook that they know everything by birth, the reason of this mistake is that we learn from senses unknowingly. Thus, they thought that they learned the knowledge from a source other than the senses. The learning through senses is gradual and by this learning our soul gets experienced and intellectual. Intellect is nothing but the experience. (al-Fārābī 1968, 99) The connection of intellect turns the sensory

perception into rational perception, by that human understands the meaning of existence more clearly. All abstract things are known only by the intellect.

Al-Fārābī's intellect in its highest form is active intellect, that receives form of the things from divine source. These forms are confirmed by the sense-perceptions. Here the intellect jumps into the realm of non-material word. Only philosophers and prophets have this ability to learn. Rationalism here in al-Fārābī's thought is limited to the abstracts and forms.

### **Al-Fārābī's Approach and Rationalism**

From the above, al-Fārābī seems empiricist. But he also believes in reason and intellect. But his intellect is a product of empirical experiences and divine inspiration.

Fārābī introduced the types of intellect, his elaboration of all types of intellect, is all rational.

### **Abdul Jabbār al-Mu'tazilī (d. 415/1015)**

He defines the knowledge as:

*"One should know that the knowledge is the understanding<sup>1</sup> (معنى *ma'nā*) that ends the occurrence of the doubts/questions in the knower's mind about what the knower has learnt. This is what make it different form non-knowledge. This understanding could not be ascribed as knowledge until it falls under the category of firm-opinion. Opinion that's content is in accordance with what it in reality is, in a specific way."* (Qadī 1960, 13)

### **Sources of knowledge**

There are five groups of people regarding to the notion of sources of knowledge. Jabbār says:

*"It is reported that the atheists say that it is our senses which are decisive, the others say that the senses and reason both do this task, the third group say that it is senses that govern the reason and the fourth group say that it is reason that governs the senses, the fifth group say that both do different task they do not govern each other."*

*Know that, the satisfaction of the knower is not in the demonstration of our sense perception, but by the intellectual obviousness (بديهية). E.g. the knowledge of the evilness of the injustice and goodness of the justice. Or by the reasoning; the rational-justification that takes place the knowers' satisfaction with what he knows by his senses. The most*

<sup>1</sup> It is the translation of Arabic word; معنى *ma'nā*. In Mu'tazilites' doctrine it has technical connotations; ground/entitative ground etc. **Invalid source specified.** but here I think it is in its literal meaning understanding.

*reliable thing that necessitate the believe in any peace of knowledge known, is that satisfaction of our self. So, if one finds that state of satisfaction in any knowledge one must believe in it. ('Abd-al-jabbār 2012, 227)*

He writes: one may say that the sense must be trusted as all wise people do that. While on the other hand they differ in rational thoughts. Similarly, they sometimes reject their own opinion and embraced its opposite, and sometimes they leave right and come at wrong, by that they consider the rejected wrong, while formerly it was true for them. That all tells that the rational thoughts are not reliable. While that is not the case of sensual observations. So, if it is said that the wise cannot agree on the falsehood, even then speciousness is possible, so this possibility reduce the chances of truth of their consensus. ('Abd-al-jabbār 2012, 227)

This is why he says that we need to trust our satisfaction of our senses, intellect and reasoning, altogether. ('Abd-al-jabbār 2012, 229) The our-inner-self's satisfaction means that it considers our opinion as knowledge, in this regard it does not differ between sense perception and rational opinion. The only difference between both is that our-self cannot deny sense perception on its own, while it can do in rational understandings. The first comes into existence initially, while the latter emerges dependently. ('Abd-al-jabbār 2012, 229) Knowledge is that which brings the satisfaction of the knower's self, (Qadī 1960, 20) in other words it is the judge for knowledge. (Qadī 1960, 70) This satisfaction means the elimination of all doubts, by the evidences (دليل) and reasoning (النظر). (Qadī 1960, 71) our intellect is created by God, it is God who bestowed us the faculties of knowledge and conscious, so its content is required. Nature of Knowledge can be divided into three; Knowledge through sense, necessary knowledge by intellect and knowledge by reflection and pondering. ('Abd-al-jabbār 2012, 229) The three of them are knowledge only when they occur as knowledge used to occur. Then they are truths. The sense perception is the base for the knowledge by intellect. When our-soul get satisfied with any of them they should be considered true. The intellect is in a way is the decisive judge for the truthfulness of the sensory knowledge. ('Abd-al-jabbār 2012, 230) Perhaps, the satisfaction of the soul is based on the necessary/compulsive knowledge, that is bestowed by the Almighty God, when our learning-self was made. ('Abd-al-jabbār 2012, 230)

### **Jabbar's Approach and Rationalism**

We can see that though intellect is not fully reliable, even though with support of senses and pondering it can play a role for judge. It is our inner-self, whose satisfaction is the only judge for knowledge. He is though considered rationalist, but he is not so. Nevertheless, just because of the fact that he made the inner-self judge for knowledge, therefore we can list him under rationalists.



**Ibn Sīnā(370/980-428/1037)**

Ibn Sīnā added and endorsed the theory of active intellect postulated by Al-Fārābī. Ibn Sīnā in his book *al-Shifā'* and other books, says that the emanation is the source of Human knowledge. This emanation is the task of active intellect. This emanation is done by the revelation from God. The senses and lower intellects prepare a man to receive the emanation. This idea is borrowed by al-Fārābī, that the sensory knowledge is secondary for knowing, here Ibn Sīnā differ with Aristotle. For him internal or rational knowledge is primary and sensory knowledge endorses the intellect and confirm it, because the rational knowledge is actually eternal essence that never change. The eternal essence/truth exists independent of the existent individuals. "To know these things, emanation proceeds from the Intellect of God to the orbital intellects, then down to the human intellect, which alone can conceive things as a whole." (Al-Jubouri 2006, web) "Ibn Sīnā argues that the mind must be eternal as such since unless it was eternal in the first place it could not comprehend eternal objects, based on the same principle that the knower and the object of knowledge must be the same for knowledge to be possible." (Groff & Leaman 2007, 35)

His addition on the theory is that, Human knowledge is of three kinds;

1. Knowledge by *Fiṭrah*
2. Knowledge by reflection
3. Knowledge by discursive inference

Knowledge by *Fiṭrah* means the knowledge of first principles like; "part is smaller than the whole" (Ghālib 1983, 37). While the knowledge by reflection means the cognition by the help of faculty of imagination and memory. Knowledge by inference is conjecturing a general rule from the happening of a few events by the discursive analysis. (Marḥabā 2009, 486) Ibn Sīnā added also that there are some people who can get this knowledge without discursive analysis, they get it from divine realm through revelation; Sufis and prophets. In accordance with the universal Greek tradition, Ibn Sīnā describes all knowledge as some sort of abstraction on the part of the cognizant of the form of the thing known. (F. Rahman 1983, 500)

*"The first internal sense is eensus commune which is the seat of all the senses. It integrates sense-data into percepts. This general sense must be internal because none of the external five senses is capable of this function. The second internal sense is the imaginative faculty in so far as it conserves the perceptual images. The third faculty is again imagination in so far as it acts upon these images, by combination and separation. In man this faculty is pervaded by reason so that human imagination can deliberate and is, therefore, the seat of the practical intellect. The fourth and the most important internal faculty is called *wahm* which passed into the West as*

*aril estimativa: it perceives immaterial motions like usefulness and harmfulness, love and hate in material objects, and is, in fact, the basis of our character, whether influenced or uninfluenced by reason. The fifth internal sense conserves in memory those notions which are called by him "intentions" (ma'dni)."* (F. Rahman 1983, 493) (Sharif 1963, 1:493)

### **Ibn Sīnā's Approach and Rationalism**

Ibn Sīnā used five senses, but his tilt is more rational than the empirical. One can see his concepts of internal senses is entirely rational. His three types of knowledge all are rational

#### **Al-Ghazali (1058-1111)**

Al-Ghazali adopted a method of skepticism and arrived at the certainty through the mystical experience. Al-Ghazali define the knowledge as it is the conception of rational faculty, at its satisfaction, about the realities of things and their pictures devoid of their materials. (Al-Ghazālī 1328 AH, 4)

Al-Ghazali has been fighting with what he gained from *taqlīd* (تقليد)<sup>2</sup>, senses, reason and intuition. *Taqlīd* which he learnt from his family, and society did not stand fast against his scrutiny, and did not fulfil the conditions of a true knowledge. Thus, he concluded that *taqlīd* cannot provide justified true knowledge.

Then he scrutinized the sensory knowledge, his first stance was that the sensory perception is infallible. But then he, like *taqlīd*, found unreliable. He stated in his book, *Al-Manqadh Minal-Ḍalāl* (Deliverance from Error) that

Then I get ahead, with a result-bearing effort, towards the sensory perception and undeniable realities perceived from senses. ... After a thorough thinking I came to conclusion that I cannot let myself believe unassailably in sensory perceptions. ....How one can rely on senses? The most powerful of them is eye. It sees shadows static, unmoving. Its perception is that shadow is motionless, but after a moment, I observe that shadow is changing its direction. (AlGhazālī n.d., 84)

In this regard Ghazali follows the Plato and followed by Descartes. Similarly, he rejected the reason, but it was not total rejection like Sufis did. Reason brings a priory truth like, law of non-contradiction. The reason of his doubts about rational knowledge was mystic position, the Sufis hold for their mystic experiences. They used to say that our mystic experience is a direct-vision, and not a rational one. They claimed that their direct-vision is experienced when

<sup>2</sup> It connotes two senses: to follow a competent authority without asking its reason, evidence or proof; to follow society's common practices and ideologies as a common man does.

they were far away from their senses and reason during their journey through their souls. Their experience is against reason. (AlGhazālī n.d., 85-86) Knowledge according to al-Ghazali is of two types; knowledge from Supernatural Being (*shar'atī* شرعي) and knowledge from reason (Al-Ghazālī 1328 AH, 96-106). Mystics have another a special kind of knowledge, which cover *al-hal3*, *al-muqām* (status), *al-wajd* (The intuitive cognitions), *al-sukr* (inebriety because of being in His presence), *al-mahv* (engrossment) and *al-fanā'* (being consumed) etc. (Al-Ghazālī 1328 AH, 96-106). Anyhow the knowledge gained by Sufis is higher than every other knowledge in its certainty and trueness. He said:

*I know that the only Sufis are traveler of true path their mode of life is the best one, their methods are truest, and their character is the purest. (AlGhazālī n.d., 139)*

Al-Ghazali criticized the theological philosophy that it is full of mistakes. He mentioned twenty mistakes of philosophers, three of them, according to him, cause infidelity; 1-eternity of universe, 2-denial of bodily resurrection hereafter, and 3-the notion that God knows only universals and never knows particulars. (AlGhazālī n.d., 96-116)

Thus, reason according to al-Ghazali has no role in the regime of religion. But it can help us in geometry, mathematics, physics, astronomy and logic. Anyhow reason supports the religion by understanding the revelation. "Algazel (al-Ghazali) concluded that the intellect is unable to search out metaphysics. In any case, as Algazel affirms in *M'iraj al-Qudos* ('Ascent of Holiness'), "Sharia is external intellect and intellect is internal code. Thereby they are both in cooperation and unified": as God said, "Brightness upon brightness" (that is, the brightness of the intellect with the brightness of the Sharia)" (Al-Jubouri 2006, web)

In his critique on philosophers, Ghazali says that inspiration (*kashf* كشف)<sup>4</sup> and revelation (*wahī* وحي)<sup>5</sup> are the supporters of the intellect, wherever intellect find itself helpless to solve any problem. It is evident from that the intellect is the very interpreter of the revelation and inspiration. It is actually the intellect that understand and interpret the Shariah. He is close to Mu'tazilites in this regard, as he is moderate in valuing the intellect. He also supports logic as an effective tool to explain Islamic creed. "However, he warned against digging too deeply in pursuit of pure facts, on the grounds that the intellect without revelation was

<sup>3</sup> In *tasawwuf* the term denotes an instantaneous trans-temporal mystical state by which a Sufi is seized in the act of encounter with a "favour" or grace from God.

<sup>4</sup> A Sufi experience of receiving guidance from God.

<sup>5</sup> Coming of divine-guidance from God onto the holy prophets like Moses, Jesus and Muhammad ﷺ.

not always able to grasp the truth, especially in religious and divine issues”(Al-Jubouri 2006, web) Groff says;

“Al-Ghazali in his Sufi phase talks of three levels of knowledge that correspond with three levels of faith. The faith of the ordinary people is based on imitation or obedience (taqlid); the faith of the theologians is based on reason; and the faith of the mystics (‘arifin) and saints (awliya’) is based on the light of certainty (nur al-yaqin).” (Groff & Leaman 2007, 34)

### **Al-Ghazali’s Approach and Rationalism**

Al-Ghazali believes that mystic experience is the only way of true knowledge, reason and senses though brings knowledge but they are not infallible. Revelation (Irfan) is the judge and means of certainty. One can say that mystic experience is different than the reason. Sufis, introduced mystic method for gaining true knowledge. The mystic approach is akin to rationalism in its core nature. As both work in isolation from external experience by senses. mysticism does not have any external criterion to judge, like the rationalism. Mystic experience and reasoning seem sister approaches, as they both do not need testification for their findings. Rational awareness and mystic illumination do not necessarily correspond with reality. If mysticism does not correspond to reason, it is as rationalism does not coincide with experience. Both avoid external testing to be attested.

### **Ibn Taymīyah**

Ibn Taymīyah stated his point of view in his treatise on critiques on Jahmīyah School of thought titled: *Bayāntal bīs al-Jahmīyah fī Ta’sīs Bidi`him al-Kalāmīyah* [Arabic: بيان تأسيس الجهمية نى تاسيس بدعهم الكالمية]. Here is abstract of his treatise.

Man is gifted with love for knowledge, cognition, wisdom, and grasping the reality, as he is given love for truth, loyalty, fulfilling promises, credibility, keeping relations and forgiving mistakes of others etc. These traits are commonly found in Muslims and non-Muslims; in the form of knowledge and as in their practices. Humans do these acts not necessarily for pleasing their almighty Lord, as a Muslim does, but they may do for their self-satisfaction. Knowledge, sageness and cognizance gives that very pleasantness to the seeker of knowledge and wisdom.

Knowledge comes from *badīhah*<sup>6</sup> [self-evidence: بدية], *Nazr*<sup>7</sup> [pondering and reflection: نظر] and divine guidance [الشرع]. While channels of knowledge are three; Hearing, Seeing and intellect.

<sup>6</sup> That to which we give our assent without any question or investigation, opposite to *Nazr*.

<sup>7</sup> That to which we do not give assent without investigation of pondering upon, opposite to *badīhah*.

### Al-Fiṭrah

The other main point of Ibn Taymīyah's theory is Fiṭrah [Arabic: فطرة]. We cannot say, he took this idea originally from the Quran only, or he was influenced by Ibn Sīnā. Fiṭrah is derivative of faṭar, which means: to fashion; to form; to frame; to mold; to shape; etc. Human and jinn has a Fiṭrah is now a commonly accepted notion among Muslims. There are two means of Knowledge for Ibn Taymīyah; Fiṭrah and `Aql respectively intuitive knowledge and reason. Ibn Taymīyah's notion is scriptural, one can find both in the Quran and in Hadith. Qur'ānic verse is as follow:

So, directed yourself to the Faith قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَدْعِي إِلَىٰ فِطْرَةِ اللَّهِ  
 the Way Allah has created the h الَّتِي أَنزَلَ فِيهَا رُوحَهُ مِن مِّنْ لَّدُنْهُ  
 the correct Faith, but most of the وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هُمُ الْمُنْكَرُونَ.

The Hadith is as follow:

Allah's messenger Muhammad ﷺ صَلَّىٰ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ  
 said that no child comes into this قَالَ: كُلُّ مَوْلَدٍ يُولَدُ عَلَىٰ فِطْرَةِ  
 world, but with the True Nature. It إِسْلَامٍ، نَحْنُ نَجْعَلُهُ يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ نَجْعَلُهُ  
 is only his parents who turn him نَسْرَانِيًّا أَوْ مَجَانِيًّا أَوْ يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ  
 Jew, Christian and Magian, نَسْرَانِيًّا أَوْ يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ مَجَانِيًّا أَوْ  
 (parent's false religion does not يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ مَجَانِيًّا أَوْ يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ  
 spoil the Fiṭrah, until the baby يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ مَجَانِيًّا أَوْ يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ  
 learns from them. They give birth يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ مَجَانِيًّا أَوْ يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ  
 their child with pure nature) you يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ مَجَانِيًّا أَوْ يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ  
 see, an animal give birth a healthy يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ مَجَانِيًّا أَوْ يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ  
 animal. Do you see any part of baby يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ مَجَانِيًّا أَوْ يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ  
 is amputated! (Even if its parents' يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ مَجَانِيًّا أَوْ يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ  
 limbs are amputated). (al-Bukhārī يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ مَجَانِيًّا أَوْ يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ  
 1422 AH, hadit # 1359 ) يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ مَجَانِيًّا أَوْ يَهُودِيًّا أَوْ

“Ibn Taymiyya's epistemological scheme results in creating two distinct domains of knowledge” (Lamotte 1994, 48). One is revelation from God and second is knowledge perceived by man about the corporeal world. As the seeker of knowledge, he has to rely on two natural dispositions; his mind (‘aql) and his intuitive knowledge (Fiṭrah). (Lamotte 1994, ibid). In his article, Hallaq mentions that Ibn Taymīyah did conceive of numerous ways of knowledge acquisition (Hallaq. 1991. p. 54). Ibn Taymīyah refutes the believed benefits inherent in the discipline of logic. He adamantly believes in a fundamental disjunction between reality and logic. The two can never be in full correspondence. Logic is thus always defective in its expression of the true reality. (W. Hallaq 1993) All the constituents of the created plane are innately aware of the Divine's invisible immanence through their engrained Fiṭrah faculty. The certitude in Allah's existence is thus immediate, unreasoned and represents a form of imposed knowledge inasmuch as it self-proclaims the

Divine Reality. Ideally, all of creation participate in this reductionist form of knowledge of Allah. And, it can easily be equated with "original state" of existence to postulate the reality of a pristine original state in which all of creation partakes, through its *Fiṭrah* faculty, is the equivalent to the premise which stipulates that all of creation is existentiated under the aegis of Islam. (Lamotte 1994, 55-56)

### **Main Features of the *Fiṭrah***

*Fiṭrah* is universal; all humans are similar in their *Fiṭrah*. (Ibn Taymīyah, Al-Radd `alá al-Manṭaqyīn -, 26)

Reasonable means that humans know and understand just because of their make (*Fiṭrah*), without learning from each other. E.g. one body cannot be on two different places at same moment of time. This notion we know due to our *Fiṭrah*. When one reports that do not fit to that notion we do not believe. (Taymīyah 1999, 4:398)

*Fiṭrah* is necessarily engraved in human hearts (Ibn Taymīyah, Dr`u Ta`āruḍ al-`Aql wa al-Naql 1991, 3:70-71, 72).

Human are made in their nature (*Fiṭrah*) that when they see, anything new, or unusual, they attribute it to God and glorify Him. Because they are made in a way that their *Fiṭrah* knew that a new unusual thing cannot happen on its own. This very notion is applicable on thing happening in routine. (Ibn Taymīyah, Dr`u Ta`āruḍ al-`Aql wa al-Naql 1991, 3:122) *Fiṭrah*, sometimes, becomes sick, in that state of sickness; it may judge the truth as falsehood, and delusion. (Ibn Taymīyah, Dr`u Ta`āruḍ al-`Aql wa al-Naql 1991, 3:306)

Our *Fiṭrah* knows, as a self-evident concept, that if there is a creation, there must be its creator. (Ibn Taymīyah, Dr`u Ta`āruḍ al-`Aql wa al-Naql 1991, 3:314)

*Fiṭrah* is prime self-evident. (Ibn Taymīyah, Dr`u Ta`āruḍ al-`Aql wa al-Naql 1991, 4:213)

Wail Hallaq says Ibn Taymīyah equates the Islamic notion of *Fiṭrah* with a form of a priori knowledge (W. Hallaq 1991, 61) As *Fiṭrah* is engrained in all human beings, and represents an innate disposition towards truth, the sincere individual can turn to this latent potential for private inspiration (*ilhām*) and intuitive perception (dhawq ذوق). (Lamotte 1994, 4). LaMotte writes:

### **Ibn Taymīyah`s Approach and Rationalism**

The *Fiṭrah* is the justifier, even the senses and intellect serve the purpose of attainment of knowledge. logic was a main tool of rationalism, but Ibn Taymīyah does not rely on this tool to be true in his knowing.

#### **Ibn Khaldūn(1332-1406AD)**

Ibn Khaldun writes in his famous book *Al-Muqaddimah* that “God distinguished man from all the other animals by an ability to think which He made the beginning of human perfection and the end of man's noble superiority over existing things”. (Ibn Khaldun 2005, 333) Ibn Khaldun says:

*“This comes about as follows: Perception - that is, consciousness, on the part of the person who perceives, in his*

*essence of things that are outside his essence - is something peculiar to living beings to the exclusion of all other being and existent things. Living beings may obtain consciousness of things that are outside their essence through the external senses God has given them, that is, the senses of hearing, vision, smell, taste, and touch. Man has this advantage over the other beings that he may perceive things outside his essence through his ability to think, which is something beyond his senses. It is the result of (special) powers placed in the cavities of his brain. With the help of these powers, man takes the pictures of the sensibilia, applies his mind to them, and thus abstracts from them other pictures. The ability to think is the occupation with pictures that are beyond sense perception, and the application of the mind to them for analysis and synthesis. This is what is meant by the word *af'idah* "hearts" in the *Qur'an*. ...The ability to think has several degrees. The first degree is man's intellectual understanding of the things that exist in the outside world in a natural or arbitrary order, so that he may try to arrange them with the help of his own power. This kind of thinking mostly consists of perceptions...*

*The second degree is the ability to think which provides man with the ideas and the behavior needed in dealing with his fellow men and in leading them. It mostly conveys apperceptions, which are obtained one by one through experience, until they have become really useful. This is called the experimental intellect.*

*The third degree is the ability to think which provides the knowledge, or hypothetical knowledge, of an object beyond sense perception without any practical activity (going with it). This is the speculative intellect. It consists of both perceptions and apperceptions. They are arranged according to a special order, following special conditions, and thus provide some other knowledge of the same kind, that is, either perceptive or apperceptive. Then, they are again combined with something else, and again provide some other knowledge. The end of the process is to be provided with the perception of existence as it is, with its various genera, differences, reasons, and causes. By thinking about these things, (man) achieves perfection in his reality and becomes pure intellect and perceptive soul. This is the meaning of human reality" (Ibn Khaldun 2005, 545-547)*

He says:

*“We observe in ourselves through sound intuition the existence of three worlds. The first of them is the world of sensual perception. We become aware of it by means of the perception of the senses, which the animals share with us. Then, we become aware of the ability to think which is a special quality of human beings. We learn from it that the human soul exists. This knowledge is necessitated by the fact that we have in us scientific perceptions which are above the perceptions of the senses. They must thus be considered as another world, above the world of the senses. Then, we deduce (the existence of) a third world, above us, from the influences that we find it leaves in our hearts, such as volition and an inclination toward active motions. Thus, we know that there exists an agent there who directs us toward those things from a world above our world. That world is the world of spirits and angels. It contains essences that can be perceived because of the existence of influences they exercise upon us, despite the gap between us and them. (Ibn Khaldun 2005, 551)*

*“Often, we may deduce (the existence of) that high spiritual world and the essences it contains, from visions and things we had not been aware of while awake but which we find in our sleep and which are brought to our attention in it and which, if they are true (dreams), conform with actuality. We thus know that they are true and come from the world of truth. “Confused dreams,” on the other hand, are pictures of the imagination that are stored inside by perception and to which the ability to think is applied, after (man) has retired from sense perception.*

*For ibn Khaldūn, the outcome of inner and corporeal perceptions is source of knowledge, he says: Among the (three) worlds, the one we can perceive best is the world of human beings, since it is existential and attested by our corporeal and spiritual perceptions.” (Ibn Khaldun 2005, 555)*

### **Ibn Khaldun’s Approach and Rationalism**

The Knowledge is testable by our corporeal and spiritual perception. Thinking is the vital power human has.



**Mullah Sadra (1572-1640)**

Reconciliation between Islam and Philosophy remained a major theme of Muslim thinkers like Averroes etc. Sadra tried to reconcile three major themes; Islam, mysticism and rationalistic philosophy. Sadra named this synthesis *الحكمة* usually translated as

"Transcendent Wisdom". Here in his theme Knowledge is the mode of existents. Which mean the classical concept of knowledge that was perception, abstraction and representation was rejected by Sadra. "For Sadra, in knowing things, we unveil an aspect of existence and thus engage with the countless modalities and colors of the all-inclusive reality of existence. In such a framework, we give up the subjectivist claims of ownership of meaning. The intrinsic intelligibility of existence strips the knowing subject of its privileged position of being the sole creator of meaning. Instead, meaning and intelligibility are defined as functions of existence to be deciphered and unveiled by the knowing subject. This leads to a redefinition of the relationship between subject and object." (*Kalin 2 2010, abstract*)

**Sadra`s Approach and Rationalism**

Sadra was intuitive, mystic and rationalist as well. His above stated ideas show that he was never an empiricist, but the knowledge by presence *حضور*, could be categorized under the empiricism, in a way.

**Conclusion**

In classical Muslim thought no one is purely rationalist. They all preferred to use a combination of approaches. The main approaches that were in use were reason, senses, revelation, and *Firah*.

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