

ANNALI DI SCIENZE RELIGIOSE

nuova serie

La rivista *Annali di Scienze Religiose* nasce dalle attività di ricerca del Dipartimento di Scienze Religiose dell'Università Cattolica di Milano, secondo un approccio multidisciplinare al fenomeno religioso, con particolare attenzione ai tre monoteismi e alle religioni del mondo mediterraneo antico. Ospita contributi di studiosi italiani e stranieri nelle principali lingue europee ed in arabo, suddivisi in una *sezione monografica* che determina il sottotitolo del fascicolo, una sezione di lectures, con testi che affrontano con taglio scientifico temi di ampio respiro storico o comparativo, e infine una sezione di *studi* che presentano contributi puntuali su temi specifici. Concludono ogni fascicolo la *Bibliografia ambrosiana* e la *Bibliografia gioachimita*, rassegne annuali delle pubblicazioni relative alla figura e alle opere di Ambrogio di Milano e di Gioacchino da Fiore.

Annali di Scienze Religiose is a periodical stemming from the research activities of the Department of Religious Studies at the *Università Cattolica di Milano* (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan) which apply a multidisciplinary approach to religious phenomena and focus particular attention on the three monotheistic religions and religions of the ancient Mediterranean world. It features contributions from Italian and foreign scholars writing in the main European languages and Arabic. Each issue is subdivided into a *monographic section* which gives its name to the subtitle of the issue, a section on lectures with texts that employ a scientific approach in dealing with a wide range of historical and comparative topics, and lastly a section regarding studies presenting timely contributions on specific themes. Every issue ends with the *Ambrosian Bibliography* and the *Joachimite Bibliography*, annual surveys of publications regarding the person and works of Ambrose of Milan and of Joachim of Fiore.

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Religions in Antiquity.
Problemi e temi della ricerca storico-comparativa
tra cristianesimo antico e tardo ellenismo

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tra cristianesimo antico e tardo ellenismo*

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MARCO DEMICHELIS

THE FATE OF OTHERS IN
FOURTEENTH-CENTURY HANBALISM.
IBN TAYMIYYA (D. 1328/728) – IBN
QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH (D. 1350/750)
AND THE FANĀ' AN-NĀR

1. *Introduction. Ibn Taymiyya and Evil*

The process of mystification of sources and theological elaboration that in a historical age are considered dangerously innovative, has always been a practice frequently used in Islām, as in all religions. The Mu'tazila, for example, went from being the primary Islamic defence against the Manichean, Iranian dualism and Christian oriental debaters (ninth century), to be considered the main un-orthodox anti-*Muḥaddithīn* theological school (tenth century); the same members of this school went from taking a critical stance on the excessive "creation" of traditions, being those who were strongly attacked and mystified by this creative process.

The thought of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328/728) circulating today has equally been distorted, in particular concerning his position on prominent aspects of Islamic elaboration. European Orientalism and contemporary Wahhābism have deeply affected the image of this author, triggering off an alteration process that can be stopped only in the long term. The author's position on Ṣufism and *Falsafa*, but also on the conflict between reason and revelation, have transformed this prominent Ḥanbalite theologian into a violent detractor of Islamic sophistication and a trivial inquisitor of religious thought¹. Ibn Taymiyya, however,

¹ YAHYA P. MICHOT, *An important reader of al-Ghazālī: Ibn Taymiyya*, in «The Muslim World», 103 (2013), pp. 131-132; B. ABRAHAMOV, *Ibn Taymiyya on the agreement of reason and tradition*, in «The Muslim World», 82 (1993), pp. 256-273; M. HASSAN KHALIL, *Islam and the Fate of Others*,

lived in a difficult historical phase, after the annihilation of the 'Abbāsid empire and in a geographical area which had long been devoid of a strong centralized power. His hard-liner attitude became on different occasions a deliberate failure to reach any compromise and was followed by a period of imprisonment both in Damascus than in Cairo².

Our intention here, nevertheless, is not only to work on Ibn Taymiyya's eschatological view, but also on his main disciple, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 1350/750).

The general position of the master on God's complex creation is that it is usually a blessing for his servants revealing God's wisdom, mercy and power; nothing is left to chance and the very creation of evil is itself responsive to his omniscience. The Qur'ān, moreover, is clear on that: everything is from God (IV: 78), God is the creator of all, which clearly also includes evil. Ibn Taymiyya argues that there is nothing among the existent things which God creates that is evil overall and in general³. It is reported by him that the existent evil is restricted, no names of God are related to evil, and the same divinity created evil to be an inevitable founding element of humanity. The main Ḥanbalite opinion is that human beings would not be human if God had created them differently; evil gives, in God's wise purpose, the educational function of deterrence and guidance away from the wrong path⁴. «So when they angered us, we took vengeance on them and we drowned them all together. We set them as a precedent and an example to later generations» (Cor. XLIII: 55-56), the Egyptian and the Pharaoh's role are a deterrent for the future. Human sins and failures are usually considered as lessons to evoke reflection, which in modern psychology is defined *reality testing*. Evil becomes a necessary pre-

New York, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 74ff.; J. HOOVER, *Ibn Taymiyya's theodicy of perpetual optimism*, Leiden, Brill, 2007, pp. 156ff, 177ff, 224ff.; SOPHIA VASALOU, *Ibn Taymiyya's Theological Ethics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 21ff, 100ff.

² DONALD P. LITTLE, *The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya*, in «International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies», 4/3 (1973), pp. 311-327.

³ HOOVER, *Ibn Taymiyya's theodicy of perpetual optimism*, p. 185.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

condition for repentance: «God did not decree anything for the believer except what is good for him».

The believer is he who does not persist in a sin but repents from it. Thus, it becomes a good deed. He does not cease repenting from it until he enters Paradise by means of his repentance from it. A sin necessitates a servant's humility, his subjection, invocation of God, his asking Him for forgiveness and his bearing witness to his poverty and to his need for Him and that no one can forgive sins except Him. Because of the sin, good things happen to the believer that would not have happened without this. Therefore, this decree is good for him⁵.

His main disciple, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, will start from here to explain that sins and disobedience afford God the occasion to demonstrate His mercy and forgiveness⁶. Ibn Taymiyya's ethical understanding of the evil's source is however the starting point of this last section. The holy Qur'ān, in IV: 78-79, clearly argued: «Death will overtake you no matter where you may be, even inside high towers. When good fortune comes their way, they say, 'This is from God', but when harm befalls them, they say, 'This is from you (Prophet).' Say to them, both come from God. What is the matter with these people that they can barely understand what they are told? Anything good that happens to you (Prophet) is from God; anything bad is ultimately from yourself. We have sent you as a messenger to people; God is sufficient witness». These paradigmatic verses, which consider a position that was usually mistrusted in earlier times, showed how Ibn Taymiyya also, as before him al-Ghazālī⁷ and al-Māturīdī⁸ needed to partially reconsider who is "ultimately" the shaper of evil action on the earth. The *nafs* of the Quranic

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 193; IBN TAYMIYYA, *Al-Ḥasana wa al-sayyi'a*, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-ʿilmiyya, MF. 14: 318-319.

⁶ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl masā'il al-qadā' wa al-qadar wa al-ḥikma wa al-ta'līl*, Ed. Al-Sayyid M. al-Sayyid and Sa'īd Maḥmūd, Cairo, Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1994, p. 486.

⁷ ERIC LINN ORMSBY, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014, p. 197ff, 232ff., 257ff.

⁸ MUSTAPHA CERIC, *Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islam*, Kuala Lumpur, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1995, p. 124ff.

verse, is usually translated with “self, soul or person”, it could create both obedience and disobedience, the former as the latter, the first and its contrary, as an anti-early Ash‘arite position testified within Kalām. Ibn Taymiyya’s *Irāda* awareness is related to an evil affliction which comes from the person who submits himself to sins that God creates. The act of disobedience is located in human beings: obedience is a blessing that comes to a person from God while disobedience is an affliction that comes to him because of himself, in some sense, he does it⁹.

A position that still seems illogically linked to the human being’s capability of doing good (or its contrary), but that is certainly innovative in a late Islamic period of theological elaboration and that approached previously unthinkable positions, reached, many centuries after the Mu‘tazila, very similar questions: «If acts of obedience and acts of disobedience are predetermined (*muqaddar*) and blessings and afflictions are predetermined, then what is the difference between good things, which are blessings, and evil things, which are afflictions, so as to deem the one from God and the other from the human soul?»¹⁰.

A strict predetermination of human actions is furthermore unreliable and ineffective because it is impossible to make a real distinction between good things and their opposite. In spite of this, the omission of a prohibited thing is an act of obedience to a command which explains how human knowledge is aware of what is forbidden. God’s main ethical understanding is based on a reward for omitting evil deeds, but also for the recognition of divine love. Moreover, there is no reward for omitting forbidden things that one never thought to commit, and there is no punishment for neglecting to do what is commanded, unless there is a perverse refusal to obey¹¹. Ibn Taymiyya was able to identify the roots of evil deeds in ignorance and lack of knowledge. The *Fiṭra* is not sufficient to bring human beings towards a correct guidance and it is here that the later Hanbalite reached another anti – predestinarian goal: if it is



⁹ IBN TAYMIYYA, *Al-Hasana wa al-sayyi’a*, MF, 14: 234-239; HOOVER, *Ibn Taymiyya’s theodicy of perpetual optimism*, p. 197.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, MF, 14: 259.

¹¹ HOOVER, *Ibn Taymiyya’s theodicy of perpetual optimism*, p. 200.

knowledge that leads men to follow good deeds avoiding the contrary, it is clear that if God is the creator of all, knowledge included, human beings are empowered by the divine to remain in ignorance or the opposite.

The good certainly comes from God and it is a blessing for Him to impose it on human beings, but, at least it is mankind that partially decided to remain ignorant or not. According to the above passages there are therefore different typologies of obedience and the contrary in Ibn Taymiyya's human comprehension of the divine; as the cases of disobedience are more important for our study than the former, the distinction is dual: there are those who are not aware of their disobedience due to lack of knowledge and proper guidance (similar to al-Ghazālī's position within *Fayṣal*), but there are also those who could be permanently disobedient and aware that their actions are evil ones. Ibn Taymiyya's position on the human comprehension of the divine emphasizes that its lack of knowledge is nothing at all, because God is the divine creator of the existing thing not of the contrary, i.e. ignorance.

2. *Ibn Taymiyya and the temporality of Hell*

The eschatological awareness of Ibn Taymiyya became important regarding the punishment of human sins, attributable to the exact contrary of what God would like to do. The main problem is the failure of human beings to commit good deeds and those that also clearly emerged after the guidance that God gave mankind (the Prophets and his words). Here, Ibn Taymiyya highlights the historical phase in which human beings acted without the presence of a real messenger, and the one when, in opposition, the Prophet reached society and punishment could be complete. A pre-Islamic Arab world could not be chastised in relation only to the ethical awareness of the *Fiṭra*: "the primordial human nature" of every newborn as a monotheist without religious distinctions. This opinion is attributable for Muslims as for other believers, as the Qur'ān clearly states: (XVII: 15) «No soul will bear another's burden, nor do we punish until we have sent a messenger»; however, the Ḥanbalite argued and comments the above verse, saying that each individual

divine message is based on God's truth and every believer will be judged in relation to its message of reference, because since they have a portion of the message, their responsibility is related to this part: the Hebrews to the Old Testament, the Christians to the Gospels, the Muslims to the Qur'an. In particular, referring to Jesus' status, they could have made mistakes, but as long as they struggle for the truth, they will not be judged differently and will be as blameworthy as every Muslim who, striving for the truth, makes mistakes in Islamic scripture¹². In clear logical continuity with the Quranic verse II, 62: « The Muslim believers, the Jews, the Christian and the Sabians, all those believe in God and the last day and do well, will have their rewards with their Lord. No fear for them, nor will they grieve ».

This reflection is completely detached from Ibn Taymiyya's obvious opinion that Islām is also authentic and even superior to the other revelations; the above view is an expression of the Ḥanbalite's personal understanding and acquisition of inter-religious eschatological competences as well as of awareness of what the Islamic world of God truly attests on this topic.

The Quranic verses mentioned above are indicative that the Islamic text could easily become inclusivist or exclusivist in relation to the interpretation that the expert decided to encourage. It would not be necessary therefore to attribute to the Islamic Tradition a greater role, but as it was in the past, just that of confirmation, and not mystification, of what emerges from the Qur'an.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah in the *Shifā'* demanded to his master if Hell was everlasting, obtaining as a short response that this topic was cryptic, vital and serious at the same time¹³. However, *al-Radd 'alā man qāla bi-fanā' al-janna wa l-nār* is able to give some relevant information about the Ḥanbalite point

¹² IBN TAYMIYYA, *Al-Jawāb al-saḥiḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*, ed. M.H. Ismā'il, Vols. 2, Beirut, Dār al-Ilmiyya, 2003, I, pp. 272-275, tr. and ed. by T.F. Michel as *A Muslim theologian's response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's al-Jawab al-Saḥih*, Delmar, NY, Caravan Books, 1984; *Iqtiḍā' al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaḳīm mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jahīm*, ed. M.H.a al-Fiḳī, Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyya, 1950, pp. 36ff.

¹³ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Shifā'*, II, pp. 245; HASSAN KHALIL, *Islam and the Fate of Others*, p. 80.

of view; the topic nevertheless has already been dealt with well in M. Hassan Khalil's *Islam and the Fate of Others*¹⁴.

Ibn Taymiyya's methodological exposition needs some limited adjustments in relation to what has already emerged in this text. Ibn Taymiyya's *Fanā' al-Nār* is technically considered through three options and in relation to Heaven as well: that both persist eternally (1), that both will eventually perish (2), that Heaven will last while Hell will be annihilated (3) that is also Ibn Taymiyya's position¹⁵. If the first is the canonical interpretation, literally interpreted from what the Qur'ān and the Tradition supports, the second is directly related to the thought of authors such as Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān and Abū al-Hudhayl: the first probably in relation to a first example of neo-Platonic understanding in Islamic Thought, the second to a Gnostic Christian awareness, at least as maintained by J. Van Ess¹⁶. What is incredibly sterile in Ibn Taymiyya's analysis about the third option is his methodological approach: on the one hand, to argue about Heaven's eternity, he used some classical Quranic verses, XI: 108, XIII: 35, LVI: 33¹⁷, while in supporting the eventual annihilation of Hell, he starts with a banal semantic analysis which had already been adopted in the previous centuries, or worse, raising traditions with an evident lack of credibility, even giving acknowledgment to the *Isnād* method¹⁸. The famous VII century author Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, is reconsidered and transformed into a transmitter of *Ḥadīth* which has as their main source, the second rightly guided caliph 'Umār, but it remains

¹⁴ HASSAN KHALIL, *Islam and the Fate of Others*, p. 80ff.

¹⁵ IBN TAYMIYYA, *Al-Radd 'alā man qāla bi-fanā' al-janna wa l-nār*, ed. M.A. al-Samharī, Riyadh, Dār al-Balansiyya, 1995, pp. 40-52; J. HOOVER, *Islamic Universalism. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's Salafi Deliberation on the Duration of Hell-Fire*, in «Muslim World», 99/1 (2009), pp. 181-201; MUHAMMAD IBN ISMĀ'ĪL AL-AMĪR AL-ṢAN'ĀNĪ, *Raf' al-astār li-ibtāl adillat al-qā'ilin bi-fanā' al-Nār*, ed. M.N. al-Albānī, Beirut, al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1984, pp. 21ff.; CATERINA BORI, *Ibn Taymiyya: una vita esemplare, analisi delle fonti classiche della sua biografia*, Supplemento, n. 1, in «Rivista degli Studi Orientali», 76 (2003), pp. 167.

¹⁶ J. VAN ESS, *Das Begrentze Paradies*, in «Mélanges d'Islamologie» volume dédié à la mémoire de Armand Abel, Leiden: Brill (1974), 108-127, p. 121.

¹⁷ IBN TAYMIYYA, *Al-Radd 'alā man qāla bi-fanā' al-janna wa l-nār*, pp. 42-44.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-55.

very weak and uncanonical¹⁹. Ibn Taymiyya will subsequently insist on the semantic analysis concerning the real meaning of *ahl al-Nār* (people of the Fire), and *abadan* (for a long time and not forever), an option that will be used by J. Robson in his famous article published in 1938 and entitled *Is the Moslem Hell Eternal?*²⁰; finally, our author starts the only possible investigation on the real Qur'anic verses in which the non-eternity of Hell is literally mentioned: LXXVIII: 21-23 which recites: «Hell lies in wait, a home for oppressors to stay in for a long, long time, where they will taste no coolness, no drink [...]»; and XI: 106-108: «The wretched ones will be in the Fire, sighing and groaning, there to remain for as long as the heavens and earth endure, unless your Lord wills otherwise: your Lord carries out whatever He wills. As for those who have been blessed, they will be in Paradise, there to remain as long as the heavens and earth endure, unless your Lord, wills otherwise an unceasing gift». Both verses are indicative of the possibility of a salvation from Hell, however, the second one is particularly important for our article because it confirmed the “*Big Fanā*”, proving, at the same time that the philosophical cosmological vision of the world, Hell and Heaven, will exist as long as the heavens and the earth last, i.e., until the known world continues to exist. This is still more problematic, because this option literally clarified Jahm ibn Ṣafwān's early position on the final annihilation of both. However, the interpretation of these verses could also be different. Ibn Taymiyya stressed that Heaven is fundamentally different from Hell because evil is completely in antithesis to God's nature, or better, evil is ignorance of God and of the divine as previously reported²¹. In spite of this evil, it is the non-existence of something, an essence, the privation of an intellectual knowledge that God and his word are love and mercy. As for the Mu'tazilite al-Jāhīz, the Ḥanbalite author argued that Hell is related to the complete absence of good, but certainly not of God, which is, on the contrary, everywhere. So, if on the



¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-56.

²⁰ J. ROBSON, *Is the Moslem Hell eternal?*, in «*The Muslim World*», 28/4 (1938), pp. 386-396.

²¹ HOOVER, *Ibn Taymiyya's theodicy of perpetual optimism*, p. 207.

one hand, evil is the non-existence of God and the ignorance of Him, not created by Him, but by human souls, for this reason it could not be absolute, because what is created by a secondary cause is anyway submitted to God's wise purpose. It is therefore clear that the human souls that will continue to be mostly afflicted by the ignorance of the divine need to dwell for a long period of time in a place of chastisement and purification, created for them by God himself as reported by the Qur'an. Once all the inhabitants of Hell finish purging their ignorance, the same location will cease to exist²².

This analysis is also in continuity with Ibn Taymiyya's optimism on God's justice and with that of an author such as al-Māturidī²³. Justice puts everything in the correct place, while injustice puts something in a place other than its own; in spite of this, it is not permissible for natural constitution that God in his justice, mercy and wisdom punishes those who do good works and raise the unpurified ignorants to merits and awards²⁴. This is a very rational position in which the promise and the threat are clearly respected in continuity with another later Mu'tazilite attitude about God's injustice which is not impossible for Him, but it is not chosen by God himself: God has the power to pursue unfairness, but then why praise and pray to Him²⁵.

2.1. Tawhīd and Waḥdat al-Wujūd, a not reconcilable position

The most relevant aspect, however, has not yet been revealed. The Ḥanbalite is perfectly aware of the existence of a mystical theory on *Fanā'*, because he had worked on it in the *Kitāb iqtidā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jahīm*²⁶,

²² IBN TAYMIYYA, *Al-Radd 'alā man qāla bi-fanā' al-janna wa l-nār*, pp. 81-83.

²³ AL- MĀTURIDĪ, *Kitāb al-Tawhīd*, Ed. F. Kholeif, Beirut, 1970, p. 97; SHAHARASTĀNĪ, *Kitāb al-Milal wa l-nihāl*, ed. W. Cureton, London, 1842, pp. 36-37; J.M. PESSAGNO, *The uses of Evil in the Maturidian thought*, in «Studia Islamica», 60 (1984), pp. 59-82: 68-69.

²⁴ HOOVER, *Ibn Taymiyya's theodicy of perpetual optimism*, p. 221.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 224ff.

²⁶ IBN TAYMIYYA, *Kitāb iqtidā' al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jahīm*, pp. 439-468.

in which he clarified his awareness on what speculative Sufism defined, identifying it with Ibn al-‘Arabī’s (d. 1240/637) and Ibn Sab‘īn’s (d. 1270/668)²⁷ opinions of *Fanā*. The problem of this kind of annihilation is that it firstly culminates in the belief of the contemplation of the Pure Essence, in God’s self, which represents the highest degree of witnessing, and secondly the monistic doctrine of the *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*²⁸, the unity of existence, which, this is the accusation of the Ḥanbalite, is an attempt to destroy the main theological theory of Islām: the *Tawḥīd*. Ibn Taymiyya’s analysis of annihilation in *Al-Radd* remains rational and theologically-oriented, with a limited influence of Islamic philosophy and Ṣufism; the main objection made against the latter is linked with a clear *Kalām* response: a God stripped of all its attributes is, for all intents and purposes, an impotent God. The presence of a pantheistic and Gnostic image of the divinity is clear.

Ibn Taymiyya argues that all moral life is God; one cannot even associate, for example, the attribute of Will in such an inactive entity, because, at once there is no Will and secondly there is obviously no meaning of Quranic teaching about divine commands or prohibition. God becomes a shadowy entity and an un-indifferentiated aggregate of everything, a single being dwelling in every phenomenon. Are all human beings not aware in their hearts of what is appreciated by God, of what angers the

²⁷ On Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fanā* the literature is particularly abundant: IBN ‘ARABĪ, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. A. al-‘Afīfī, Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabī, 1946, pp. 94-95; *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Vol. 4, Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1968; HASSAN KHALIL, *Islam and the Fate of Others*, pp. 54ff.; W.C. CHITTICK, *Imaginal worlds: Ibn al-‘Arabī and the problem of religious diversity*, Albany, State of New York University Press, 1994, pp. 25ff.; ID., *Ibn ‘Arabī’s Hermeneutics of Mercy*, in *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture*, ed. S. Katz, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 153-168; Mohammed Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy. Philosophy and scripture in Mullā Ṣādra*, Albany, State of New York University Press, 2012, pp. 21ff.; ABDUL HAQ ANSARI, *Ibn ‘Arabī: the doctrine of Waḥdat al-Wujūd*, in «Islamic Studies», 38/2 (1999), pp. 149-192.

²⁸ According to Ibn ‘Arabī and in antithesis with Ibn Taymiyya, the Sūfī’s master, wanted to preserve *Tawḥīd*; the doctrine was based on two assumptions: one, there is an Absolute Being (*al-wujūd al-muṭlaq*), identified as the Real (*al-Haqq*: God), which is both one and indivisible, and the ground of everything in existence; and two, before they are bestowed actual existence in the eternal world, all things of the phenomenal world subsist as potentialities in the Divine Mind.

same divinity? Early mysticism, as clearly emerged in the thought of al-Muḥāsibī and al-Junayd, while understanding the *Fanā'* in God, exhorted a differentiation between God's Command and Prohibition, between what pleases Him and what displeases Him, so that you would love what He loves and detest what He detests, also because, in contrast to that, it would be unusual to wonder about the soul's purification (*tazkiyya al-nafs*). The Hanbalite's critique would continue towards the essence of Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine of *Waḥdat* which maintains that God has no control over the essences of the individuals and has no choice except to bring them into existence. Therefore, He is not responsible for our destinies²⁹. If the first assumption is explicable, the second is unassailable. In spite of this, our essences (*a'ayān*) are not properly ourselves. They are only God's ideas of ourselves in eternity with no power or will at all. Beliefs are our beliefs when we think about them and hold them, and acts are ours acts when we will and perform them. The beliefs and acts contained in our essences are not ours in this sense that it is necessary to hold us responsible for them. According to that, it is also not true that beliefs and acts proceed from our essences. They proceed, as Ibn 'Arabī explains, not according to us, but from the will of God. We have no will of our own other than the will of God.

Finally, if God is not responsible because His will does not fashion our essences and only brings what they have into existence even though the essences are: his essential modes, we will be far less responsible for our so-called beliefs and acts, because we neither choose them in eternity nor do we effect them now; in other words, total irresponsibility. It is God who effects them in us³⁰. Ibn Taymiyya's imperative to demolish this argument reflects on the human responsibility for our wonderings and actions which preclude thinking that our beliefs and acts are rationally linked with our essences; so, it is not the pantheistic understanding of the divine that will encompass all, no

²⁹ ABDUL HAQ ANSARI, *Ibn 'Arabī: the doctrine of Waḥdat al-Wujūd*, p. 185; M. 'UMAR MEMON, *Ibn Taymiyya's struggle against popular religion*, The Hague, Mouton & Co, 1976, pp. 35ff.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

distinction from what is ready to be close to the divine and what needs purification, but it is Ibn Taymiyya's independent judgement which suggests that it is the human soul that reaches the divine when it is ready to embrace its vicinity. Ibn 'Arabi's *Fanā'* is likely to be unethical, while, that of the Ḥanbalite clearly pre-supposed action on the moral plane in temporal life since man's acts not only determined the extent of his reward and punishment in the world-to-come, but were also the very *raison d'être* of the Divine Judgment. Man must act, so that God may judge and Allāh will do that because this knowledge is derived from the Quranic revelation³¹.

It is evident that the final work of Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Radd*, probably written while was imprisoned in Cairo, is symptomatically connected with his previous works in which his complaint against Šūfi's orders and the popular forms of religiosity which affected common people is abundantly confirmed in his career.

Ibn Taymiyya did not believe in any form of annihilation, but in a Universalist theological understanding of the afterlife clearly rooted in the Qur'an (XI; 106-108, but also II; 62) and Tradition: « Death will come in a form of spotted ram, and will be slaughtered between Heaven and Hell. It will be said: People of the Garden, abiding, there is no death; People of the Fire, abiding, there is no death »³².

3. *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and the undetermined will of God*

It is historically reported that Ibn Taymiyya's last arguments do not seem to have generated greater interest or even been known until his disciple, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350/750), renewed interest in this topic in his *Ḥādī al-Arwāḥ*, probably written in around 1345/745³³. B. Abrahamov in *Islamic theology* reports the main arguments used by the opponents of Hell's

³¹ M. 'UMAR MEMON, *Ibn Taymiyya's struggle against popular religion*, p. 44.

³² IBN TAYMIYYA, *Al-Radd 'alā man qāla bi-fanā' al-janna wa l-nār*, p. 87; AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Vol. 8, Book 76, n. 421; AL-ŠAN'ĀNĪ, *Raf' al-astār*, p. 20.

³³ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Ḥādī al-Arwāḥ ilā bilād al-afrāḥ*, ed. by M.I. al-Zaghli, Damman (Saudi Arabia), Ramādi li-l-Nashr, 1997, pp. 307-340;

annihilation or better, its emptying, in turn refuted by Ibn Taymiyya's main scholar: 1. *The eternity of Hell is based on general consensus*; however, as this work clearly disproved, if on the one hand a majority group of Islamic experts maintained the eternity of Hell's punishment from the eighth century, there is another group, on the other hand, which argued the opposite, as early as the second century of the Islamic age. 2. *The Qur'ān generally maintains that Hell is eternal*; this is however clearly in contrast with some specific verses (XI: 106-108; II: 62; LXX-VII: 22-23; XXXIX: 53, etc.), Ibn Qayyim's interpretation is that the everlasting stay of the unbelievers in Hell is conditioned by the existence of the same; so as long as Hell exists, the unbelievers dwell in it, but when it perishes, the unbelievers will move to Paradise. 3. *According to Tradition only Muslim sinners will leave Hell*; this option is already answered by the above option, Ibn Qayyim maintains that Muslim sinners will leave Hell, but the unbelievers will too when the Fire is annihilated. 4. Jahm Ibn Safwān's sectarian idea of the perdition of the afterlife, is different from the idea, already elaborated by Ibn Taymiyya, about the annihilation of Hell only, which is a view, says Ibn Qayyim, maintained by the companions of the prophet himself. 5. *Finally, Hell's eternity is known by reason and sam'*; Ibn Qayyim answers that reward and punishment are clearly attested in the Qur'ān, however, if proof of an eternal reward is apparent, as is that concerning Hell's abandonment of Muslim sinners, the unbelievers' punishment is disputed and unclear, which is why the search in the word of God must be more sophisticated³⁴.

Ibn Qayyim, therefore, feels less sure than his master about the unbelievers' salvation and, logically, about Hell's final annihilation. However, as with other previous authors, it is important to understand first of all how Ibn Qayyim conceives of evil and evilness. Ibn Taymiyya's follower, updating an early under-

IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Shifā' al-'alīl masā'il*, pp. 540-565; AL-ṢAN'ĀNĪ, *Raf' al-astār*, p. 21ff, 62ff.

³⁴ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Ḥādī al-Arwāḥ*, pp. 318-322; B. ABRAHAMOV, *Islamic Theology. Traditionalism and Rationalism*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1988, pp. 12, 54; ID., *The creation and duration of Paradise and Hell in Islamic Theology*, in «Der Islam», 79/1 (2002), pp. 87-102: 96; HOOVER, *Islamic Universalism*, p. 184.

standing by Kalām of when Heaven and Hell were created by God, he questions the differences between the Garden of Eden from Paradise: the perfection of the physical world of the Garden is certainly dissimilar from that of Heaven, but at the same time, God's wise purpose in highlighting his excellence is evidently limited by the clear absence of evil in this perfect Garden. In spite of this, Ibn Qayyim, concerning the *Miftāḥ*, argued about the necessity of Adam's fall from the Garden as a necessary manifestation of God's real knowledge. God's power, mercy and justice, for example, could be considered not really existent, if Adam had remained in Eden, far away from the real problems of human beings. Only by sending Adam into the realm of trial could give God the opportunity to be truly known in his entirety, adopting the attributes of forgiveness and mercy, but also punishment and justice³⁵. It is clear that the Adam's fall from the Garden is willed by God and could be metaphorically considered a fall in the true knowledge of the divinity, but it is also for Adam true comprehension of the everyday problems and the evilness that this understanding could certainly bring out. However, in spite of this, establishing God's fundamental goodness and justice is not only a way of discerning God's wise purposes in the act of creating Iblīs, but it is also a way of clarifying that God's creation of Iblīs is certainly linked with divine attributes such as mercy and forgiveness which themselves are necessary concomitants of God's essence. In other words, God needs to create Iblīs and evil in the world, to be able to properly act and behave like God through his wise purpose. Ibn Qayyim inherits this position from his master, who, in turn, is closely linked with his Twelver Shī'ite colleague al- 'Allāmah Ibn al-Muṭahhar

³⁵ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Miftāḥ dār al-sa'ādah*, Cairo, Dār al-ḥadīth, 1994, pp. 12-17; J. HOOVER, *God's wise purposes in creating Iblīs. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah's theodicy of God's names and attributes.*, in «Oriente Moderno», Nuova Serie, 90/1 (2010), pp. 113-134: 114; another text in which Ibn Qayyim deeply criticized the Ash'arite doctrine accusing it of having tried to explicitly disregard the Scripture in favour of rational arguments is *al-Ṣawā'iq al-mursalah*; at the same time, this text could also be considered that of Ibn Qayyim's maturity in which Ibn Taimiyya's mentorship is definitely abandoned to shape an independent awareness, YASIR QADHI, *The Unleashed Thunderbolts' of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah: an introductory essay*, in «Oriente Moderno», Nuova Serie, 90/1 (2010), pp. 135-149: 148-149.

al-Ḥillī (d. 1325/725), in clear contrast with the Ashʿarite attitude. Ibn Taymiyya, although stating that God is the sole creator of human acts, in antithesis with al-Ḥillī, against Ashʿarism, maintains that God's acting for wise purposes does not mean that God was imperfect before undertaking any of his acts. God does not love human beings in order to obtain something from them; God's love for humans is instead deeply related to the same sentiment he has for himself and his creation³⁶.

Ibn Qayyim's position is not different from that of his master: God created all things, evil included (even though for both it is human souls that commit evils actions), for wise purposes by virtue of which they are fully good. As an example, the Pharaoh's rebellion against God's will (through Moses' command) and his punishment, is a deterrent against disobedience and an instrument to encourage spiritual growth; Ibn Qayyim adds that imperfection needs to know perfection, that Iblīs' creation provides an enemy against which to strive, to improve, to grow in the servitude to God and in continuity with that, as a catalyst by which to distinguish the good from the bad. This position is very similar to that which emerged from M.T. Heemskers's text on suffering in Muʿtazilite theology³⁷.

Ibn Qayyim, returning to Adam's fall from the Garden, adds that God decided to remove the first man from the Garden because happiness (a philosophical term encountered several times in this work) could only be obtained through troubles and suffering; the world arena in which God placed the human being under *taklīf* (obligation), to consider every singular struggle toward perfection and amelioration³⁸.

However, in addition, Ibn Qayyim also rejects the determinist position (early Ashʿarite) that God shapes people from the beginning to have them languish eternally in the fire. No one is created to be a perennial unbeliever; the *Fiṭra* is evidently created by God in every human being to emphasize divine love in supporting his unity and final destination. God's wise

³⁶ HOOVER, *God's wise purposes in creating Iblīs*, pp. 117ff.

³⁷ M.T. HEEMSKERS, *Suffering within the Muʿtazilite theology: 'Abd al-Jabbār's teaching on Pain and Divine Justice*, Leiden, Brill, 2000, pp. 150-155.

³⁸ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Shifā' al-'alīl masā'il*, pp. 1146-1147.

purpose in punishment is not vengeance, but a purification process³⁹. Fire is a peculiar punishment rooted in a purge, suffering, a remedy (*dawāʾ*) against maladies that in this case are not physical, but spiritual (as for the Pharaoh)⁴⁰.

3.1. Ibn Qayyim and proto-Şufism

The rational analysis of Ibn Taymiyya's disciple is followed by his mystical comprehension of the human soul in the *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*⁴¹, in which a rational theology and mysticism meet to shape, in a late Ḥanbalite era, an unprecedented speculation.

Ibn Qayyim is aware of the existence of authors, from al-Tirmidhī and al-Junayd, to al-Ghazālī, who have argued about the necessary distinctions between the spirit and the body of human beings with a methodological approach which is indicative of a rational, but at the same time, mystical awareness of the transcendent. It is also evident that al-Jawziyyah's writings affected their influence; according to the main aspects of the *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*, the spirit that was insufflated by God into Adam is the same that the divine blew into Mary's womb as also reported by the Qurʾān (IV: 171) and the Gospels; this spirit created by God in some of his prophets is not dissimilar from human souls which will be taken back by Him at the time of death (XXXIX: 42): God is indeed the creator of human bodies as of human souls⁴². The only difference between Jesus' soul from that of the other human beings, is that God has reserved this specific spirit for him only; this aspect, that has also been adopted by the Ḥanbalite to refute the Christian speculation

³⁹ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Hādī al-Arwāḥ*, pp. 324-326.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 332; MOSHE PERLMANN, *Ibn Qayyim and the Devil*, in «Studi Orientalistici in Onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida», Vol. 2, Roma, Istituto per l'Oriente, 1956, pp. 330-337; AL-ŞANʿĀNĪ, *Raʿ al-astār*, p. 25.

⁴¹ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Al-Rūḥ fī l-kalām ʿalā arwāḥ al-amwāt wa-l-aḥyāʾ bi-l-dalāʾil min al-kitāb wa-l-sunnah wa-l-aḥādīth wa-aqwāl al-ʿulamāʾ*, Ed. Khālid al-ʿAṭṭār, Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1998; G. GOBILLOT, *Corps (Badan) Ame (Nafs) et esprit (Rūḥ) selon Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah à travers son Kitāb al-Rūḥ. Entre théologie rationnelle et Pensée Mystique*, in «Oriente Moderno», Nuova Serie, 90/1 (2010), pp. 229-259.

⁴² IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*, pp. 193-194; GOBILLOT, *Corps (Badan) Ame (Nafs) et esprit (Rūḥ)*, pp. 236-237.

about the divine nature of Jesus, introduces his questionings about the non-existence of a predestined mankind in relation to the *mīthāq* (the covenant of Adam, Cor. VII: 172-173)⁴³; Ibn Qayyim argues that the notion of *Fiṭra* like that of *sons of Adam* is not linked to an admission of a pre-existence of human beings, as for Rabbinic Judaism and Christian Patristic, the Islamic scholar is rationally aware that human souls came into the world with their bodies and not before them; the pact of Adam is highlighted at two different moments: before the creation of Adam, but also afterwards, with his sons, the inheritance of the nations to whom God will send the prophets⁴⁴. The main paradigmatic problem is linked with the interpretation of the *mīthāq* as a clear symptom of God's predetermination (*qadar*): different traditions argued that, in contrast with the Qur'ān, which in antithesis for our scholar does not maintain this option. As a conclusion, Ibn Qayyim will argue that human souls are insufflated into bodies at the same instant when both are created; however, the term *rūḥ* is synonymous with soul, not in connection with a specific body (this is the anomaly of Jesus), but with a spiritual designation which comes directly from God, even if through an angel. God's *rūḥ* becomes a source of inspiration and guide for human beings' spiritual sensitiveness, impacting on the individual being with an attitude which could be more related with the physical world: in this case the role of the human's body is preponderant over its spirit, but also, on the contrary, to the spiritual one: this is the case in which the soul becomes more slender. Ibn Qayyim's elaboration in this case is very close to that of al-Tirmidhī⁴⁵.

⁴³ « When your lord took out the offspring from the loins of the children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves, He said: Am I not your Lord?, and they, Yes, we bear witness. So, you cannot say on the day of resurrection, we were not aware of this, or, it was our forefathers who, before us, ascribed partners to God, and we are only the descendants who come after them: will you destroy us because of the deeds of those who invented falsehood? In this day we explain the messages, so that they may turn to the right path » Qur'ān VII: 172-174.

⁴⁴ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*, pp. 214-215; GOBILLOT, *Corps (Badan) Ame (Nafs) et esprit (Rūḥ)*, pp. 243-244.

⁴⁵ GOBILLOT, *Corps (Badan) Ame (Nafs) et esprit (Rūḥ)*, p. 244ff.; *Le livre de la profondeur des choses d'al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī*, étude historique et thémati-

However, the thinner the soul becomes, the more it can understand the love of God and his mercy. The idea of a conclusive apocatastasis (*Fanā*) in the divine light of divine benevolence is not only a soteriological aspect that al-Tirmidhī evaluates in the *Kitāb al-amṭāl*, as univocally connected with the souls already established within Paradise, but is also related with the hearts of the inhabitants of Hell. For the mystic of the ninth century, Paradise is located just above Hell with a porous border from which the water in which the chosen have cleaned themselves is drunk by the damned below; this water is a purgative source that in the short or long term will purify their hearts which find God's mercy as the main reason for the exit from Hell⁴⁶. Ibn Qayyim was perfectly aware of al-Tirmidhī's entire eschatological elaboration, since in the *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*, our scholar argued about the heart as a spiritual location of the soul: the peaceful one is accompanied by an angel, the one still linked to the evil is escorted by a devil.

Ibn Qayyim, nevertheless, like his master, refuted the dangerous *finale* of Ibn 'Arabī, in which human souls are a limited part of the divine spirit, a theophany of the divine attributes, even if Qur'ān XVII: 85, recites: «Prophet, they ask you about the Spirit. Say: the Spirit is part of my Lord's domain. You have been given a little knowledge»; it is therefore evident that the human soul is at the origin related to God, an aspect that al-Jawziyyah is unable to refute⁴⁷. If our scholar in this article clarified the non-divinity of Jesus, as one of the main targets of his *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*, he became particularly aware of a mystic-spiritual understanding of the relation between God and human souls without being able to define a clear soteriological comprehension of it.

que suivie de la traduction par Geneviève Gobillot, Lille, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 1996, pp. 223-226.

⁴⁶ GOBILLOT, *Corps (Badan) Ame (Nafs) et esprit (Rūḥ)*, p. 246, n. 75; GOBILLOT, *Faṭara et Fiṭra, quelques acceptions oubliées*, in *En hommage au père Jacques Jomier*, ed. Marie Thérèse Urvoy, Paris, Le Cerf, 2002, pp. 101-120.

⁴⁷ GOBILLOT, *Corps (Badan) Ame (Nafs) et esprit (Rūḥ)*, pp. 252, 255-256.

3.2. Later Ḥanbalism's eschatology and Neo- Wahhābism trivialization

In *al-Shifā'*, as in the *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*, evil is declared as necessary for a greater good and even if God hates and disapproved when Iblīs conquered part of the human's heart, Allāh has shaped him to make Him the greater pardoner and to provide a full manifestation of His mercy, His names and attributes⁴⁸. It is therefore clear that, even if in contrast with Mu'tazilite Kalām, which argued God's impossibility to shape evilness, Ibn Taymiyya's and Ibn Qayyim's interpretation of Allāh's wise purpose supported the contrary in connection with a clear Ghazalian "optimum"⁴⁹. In spite of this, and in opposition with contemporary authors such as 'Alī al-Ḥarbī's attempt⁵⁰ to prove that both authors supported the eternity of Hell-Fire, God's mercy will prevail over all, as doubly argued by Ibn Taymiyya in *Fanā'al-Nār* and Ibn Qayyim in the *Mukhtaṣar al-Ṣawā'iq*⁵¹. Al-Jawziyyah's arguments on the non-eternity of the Fire seems to be put *sub judice* by the Saudi scholar's interpretation⁵² of *Zād al-Ma'ād*⁵³, where God's associators must be considered foul in constitution and foul in essence and Fire could not cleanse their foulness. The Garden for the associators continued to be forbidden. However, in the same text, a few lines above, Ibn Qayyim also argued:

⁴⁸ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Shifā' al-'alil masā'il*, p. 1195.

⁴⁹ ERIN LINN ORSMBY, *Theodicy in Islamic Thought*, pp. 217ff.

⁵⁰ Abdul 'Azīz al-Ḥarbī (b. 1965) is a Saudi Arabian Islamic scholar of Umm al-Qurā University who in 1990 tried to refute Ibn Taymiyya's and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah's arguments on the non-eternity of Hell-Fire arguing that finally both continued to support the eternity of damnation. However, as Jon Hoover supports in an important article, the Saudi scholar failed: J. HOOVER, *Against Islamic Universalism. 'Alī ibn al-Ḥarbī's 1990 attempt to prove that Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah affirm the eternity of Hell-Fire*, in *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law. Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah*, eds. B. Krawietz, G. Tamer, Boston, Walter de Gruyter, 2013, pp. 378ff., 390.

⁵¹ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Mukhtaṣar al-Ṣawā'iq al-mursala 'alā al-Jahmiyya wa al-mu'aṭṭila*, ed. al-Ḥasan ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-'Alawī, Riyadh, Maktabat adwā' al-salaf, 2004, pp. 642-671.

⁵² HOOVER, *Against Islamic Universalism*, pp. 391ff.

⁵³ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Zād al-Ma'ād fī hady khayr al-'ibād*, ed. S.A. al-Arna'ūt and A. al-Arna'ūt, Vols. 6, Beirut, Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1994, I, p. 68.

And what is meant is that Allah has shaped signs for the unhappiness and happiness by which they are known. And there might be two components in a man (i.e. good and evil), so whichever of them is predominant, he belongs to its people; so if Allah wishes good for His slave, He will purify him before death and he will not require cleansing by the Fire (this is probably the case of who asks for forgiveness). The Wisdom of Him, Most High rejects that He should make the slave to be accompanied in his abode by his evil deeds and so He places him in the Fire in order to cleanse him of sins. And the time for which he will remain in the Fire is dependent upon the rapidity or slowness with which the sins are removed⁵⁴.

Which is followed by the phrase *sub judice*:

But since the polytheist is evil by nature, the Fire does not cleanse him, just as if a dog enters the sea (it is not cleansed), while because the Believer is free from sins, the Fire is forbidden to him, since there is nothing in him which necessitates cleansing; so Glorified be He Whose Wisdom overwhelms the minds.

However, this sentence needs to be interpreted because it is less clear than the one above it: first of all, why should the polytheist not be purified? Furthermore, when a dog enters the sea, it is usually to cleanse itself from foulness; finally: «so Glorified be He Whose Wisdom overwhelms the minds» is a phrase which turns God's real intent upside-down, paraphrasing it, God is glorified for His Wisdom which overwhelms the minds, the logical understanding of human beings, the "false" rational comprehension of God by mankind. So, we could claim that the last phrase is in continuity with the preceding one, in contrast with al-Ḥarbi's interpretation. In spite of this, the other two phrases in which Ibn Qayyim seems to argue about the eternity of the Fire, in the *Ijtimā' al-juyūsh* and *Ṭarīq al-Hijratayn* are still weaker than the preceding sentence and rooted in very weak traditions⁵⁵. In this work, the author did not want to argue

⁵⁴ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Zād al-Ma'ād fi hady khayr al-'ibād*, I, p. 68.

⁵⁵ HOOVER, *Against Islamic Universalism*, pp. 392ff.

about the *Fanā' al-Nār*, using weak supportive *Ḥadīth*⁵⁶ but at the same time, he certainly could not take them into account to his disadvantage.

4. Conclusion. Doubts and afterthought

As a conclusion, and as reported by Jon Hoover⁵⁷, it is possible that Ibn Qayyim had more doubts on the annihilation of the fire in comparison to his master, probably also due to the refutation attempt by Taqī ad-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 1355/755) who in 1347/747, a few years before Ibn Qayyim's death, tried to deny Ibn Taymiyya's arguments of the *Fanā'*. Al-Jawziyyah's texts are not dated and if we are able to maintain that *Ḥādī* probably precedes *Mukhtaṣar al-Ṣawā'iq* and is followed by *Shifā'*, the texts in which Ibn Qayyim seems to assume a less clear position on the eternity of the Fire, could follow Subkī's tentative to dispute Ibn Taymiyya and his disciple. However, as reported above, Ibn Qayyim's phrases in which he seems to abandon the previous positions are weak and too limited to assert with clarity this new arrangement.

It is in relation with Ibn al-Wazīr (d. 1436/839) a Yemenite scholar with a Zaydī background, but who decided to abandon it for a more Sunnī theological view⁵⁸, that a mediating approach between al-Subkī and Ibn Taymiyya positions emerged in two texts: *al-'Awāṣim wa al-qawāṣim* and *Īthār al-Ḥaqq 'alā al-Khalq*. If Ibn al-Wazīr confirms the Sunnite attitude that an unrepentant Muslim hypocrite is an unbeliever that will spend eternity in Hell, he also adds that the true monotheists will eventually enter Paradise, passing a limited period of time in Hell, as punishment: a Hell, I presumed that assumed a purgative

⁵⁶ HASSAN KHALIL, *Islam and the Fate of Others*, pp. 99.

⁵⁷ HOOVER, *Against Islamic Universalism*, pp. 394ff.

⁵⁸ JON HOOVER, (27 March 2014), *Withholding Judgement on Islamic Universalism: Ibn al-Wazīr's ecumenical Agnosticism on the duration and purposes of the Hell-Fire*. I really have to thank Prof. Jon Hoover for allowing me a preview of his article on this scholar of the fourth/fifteenth century. I would also like to mention here the web site where you can also find Prof. Hoover's entire paper presented at the Symposium of 28-29 of April 2012 at the University of Leiden, entitled: *Locating Hell in Islamic Tradition* (<https://vimeo.com/45033581>).

role and that could not remain eternal for Muslim unbelievers, while temporary for a Christian or a Jew⁵⁹. In *Īthār al-Haqq*, the Yemenite scholar maintains that the attribution of disbelief is one of the worst crimes one could commit against fellow Muslims, as already maintained by al-Ghazālī in previous centuries; in spite of this God could act for wise purposes which human beings are normally unable to understand; the Quranic exception of “*istiṭhnā*”⁶⁰ concerning the eternity of the Fire (VI, 128; XI, 107) or better, the chastisement of the People of the fire, was something that God willed for himself. Nevertheless, the unbelievers have not been shaped by God for chastisement only, but probably for many reasons, which probably include testing God’s blessing versus those who denied his existence⁶¹. One passage by Ibn al-Wazīr, is, from my point of view, particularly important:

If the purpose of the Fire is reformative and therapeutic, as in the theology of Ibn Taymiyya, chastisement of unbelievers must eventually come to an end. If the purpose of the Fire is retribution for the entirely unforgivable sin of associating partners with God, chastisement must be eternal. Consigning unbelievers to Hell eternally implies that Hell’s ultimate wise purpose is retribution, and consigning them to Hell temporarily implies that its ultimate wise purpose is reform⁶².

If it is logical that a Muslim unbeliever is a sinner, could he also be an unbeliever because he is an associationist? Ibn al-Qayyim, in *Zād al-Ma’ād*, when he uses the word polytheists, referring to those of the Meccan-Medinian Prophetic phase, identically also defined the Magians⁶³, clearly distinguishing them from

⁵⁹ HOOVER, *Withholding Judgement on Islamic Universalism*, p. 6.

⁶⁰ IBN AL-WAZĪR, *Īthār al-Haqq ‘alā al-Khalq: Fī radd al-khilāfāt ila al-Madhab al-Haqq min al-Uṣūl al-Tawhīd*, Cairo, Sharikat Ṭab’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, 1900, p. 194.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 284-285.

⁶² HOOVER, *Withholding Judgement on Islamic Universalism*, p. 17.

⁶³ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *Zād al-Ma’ād fī hady khayr al-‘ibād*, I, p. 488ff; this is also one of the main reasons for which al-Ḥarbī’s tentative to refute Ibn al-Qayyim’s non eternity of Hell is not particularly effective: the entire first volume of the *Zād al-Ma’ād* is an eschatological provision of the

the Arab Christians and the Jews; in this case adopting Ibn al-Ḥarbi's methodology, the whole of the Arab Christian and Jewish communities are liable to be saved. Opposing that, Ibn Qayyim's idea of the Fire is both reformatory and retributive, or better purgative and corrective, because when a damned human soul, even a polytheist, is condemned by God to Hell, he became aware of his ignorance and misguiding attitude during the earthly life, so is able to ask for forgiveness; it is not the location that makes Hell reformatory or retributive, but God's mercy.

A God that forgives the infidel Muslim, or worse a Muslim associationist, but who also forgives the children of the unbelievers, like the other monotheist believers in general, in relation to the message of their scriptures, has certainly the power to forgive also, after a long purgative period in Hell, the worst of the unbelievers, who could be a Muslim, a Jew, a Christian, but also an associationist. There is indeed a double salvation in Islām, as attested in the Qur'ān: that guaranteed through the scripture that anticipated the Seal of Prophecy and that guaranteed by the Seal of Prophecy, a policy of divine mercy with 100% coverage of all Abrahamic human beings.

Abstracts

In a recent publication entitled *Ibn Taymiyya's Theological Ethics*, Sophia Vasalou tackles the moral objectivism that Ibn Taymiyya would reworked inspired to the unorthodox thought of Mu'tazilite school. The importance of this comparison not only clarifies the relationship between these two actors of the Islamic *Kalām*, but points out that the neo-Hanbali reformist had to recognize a *via media* between Mu'tazilite logical rationalism and Ash'arite orthodoxy. In the last fifty years Ibn Taymiyya was perhaps one of the most analyzed Muslim theologians, but also one of the least understood

behaviour and the events during Muḥammad's prophetic phase in which polytheism is historically detached from the same meaning assumed two, three or nine centuries later, during Ibn al-Qayyim's historical period or even later, in the contemporary age, when the Saudi scholar lives. The use of a text by Ibn Qayyim which referred to the Prophet's age, to argue about the non-eternity of the Fire in a historical period in which this topic was far away from theological elaboration is methodologically pointless. The lack of historical critical interpretation, quite usual for contemporary Neo-Wahhābism, is completely in disagreement with one of the main goals of this essay.

because crushed by the ideological embrace of those who identified him as the main inspiration behind current Neo-Wahhabi ideology. This article delves into the eschatological vision of Ibn Taymiyyah and of his main student, Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya (d. 1350/750), emphasizing the attention, despite of what it might imagine, on the heterodox theory of *Fanā' an-Nār*, the annihilation of Hell: there will be a time known only by God, where the hell will no longer exist because no longer inhabited. A survey that emphasizes not only the difficulty in exploiting the thought of Ibn Taymiyya, but also in making it conform to contemporary ideological interests.

In una recente pubblicazione dal titolo *Ibn Taymiyya's Theological Ethics*, Sophia Vasalou affronta l'obbiettivismo morale che il teologo neo-Hanbalita avrebbe rielaborato ispirandosi al pensiero eterodosso della scuola Mu'tazilita. L'importanza di questo confronto non solo chiarisce il legame esistente tra questi due protagonisti, ma sottolinea come il riformista in questione abbia dovuto riconoscere una *via media* tra il razionalismo Mu'tazilita e l'ortodossia Ash'arita. Negli ultimi cinquant'anni Ibn Taymiyya è stato forse uno dei teologi musulmani più analizzato, ma anche uno di quelli meno compresi, perché schiacciato dall'abbraccio ideologico di chi lo ha identificato come il principale ispiratore dell'odierna corrente Neo-Wahhabita. Questo articolo approfondisce la visione escatologica di Ibn Taymiyya e del suo principale allievo, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350/750), enfatizzando l'attenzione, a dispetto di quello che si potrebbe immaginare, all'eterodossa teoria del *Fanā' an-Nār*, l'annientamento dell'inferno: ci sarà un tempo, conosciuto a Dio soltanto, nel quale l'inferno non esisterà più perché disabitato. Studio che enfatizza non soltanto la difficoltà nello strumentalizzare il pensiero di Ibn Taymiyya, ma anche nel renderlo conforme agli interessi ideologici contemporanei.

