



Ibn Taymiyyah, The Qur'an and the Cosmological Argument

Ibn Taymiyyah, The Qur'an and the Cosmological Argument

Despite his critique of the philosophers and the Ash'arites, Ibn Taymiyyah has made important contributions to the cosmological argument. Some of his works on this argument include *Dar' Al-Ta'rrud*, *Al-Safadiyah*, *Mas'alah Hudooth Al-Aalam*, and *Sharh Aqeedah Al-Isbahani*. We will focus on the latter text, which translates to *An Explanation of the Creed of Al-Isfahani*. Ibn Taymiyyah undoubtedly affirmed not only the term *wajib al-wujood* (necessary existence), but also the rationale that led to it. Ibn Taymiyyah connects this kind of rationalisation with Qur'anic arguments and alludes to the fact that the argument is, in effect, Qur'anic. This is similar to Al-Ghazali in his book *Al-Qistaas al Mustaqeem*. After mentioning the standard ways in which the philosophers and Ash'arites have argued the existence of God, Ibn Taymiyyah writes:

And from that which demonstrates the many ways in which one can argue for the existence of the Maker, Glory be to Him, is dividing existence into possible and necessary, and using possible existences to prove necessary existences. The genus 'necessary existence' is clearly relative to 'possible existence' (for this reason). This is similar to dividing existence into emergent and eternal, and using emergent things to reason the existence of the eternal. So, if someone says, that is the existent thing, it is either possible or necessary, and the possible thing ultimately requires a necessary thing (in order to exist). This affirms the existence of a necessary in all circumstances. We

can then say the existent thing is either emergent or eternal, and the emergent requires an eternal thing which affirms the existence of the eternal thing in all scenarios. It is said that the existent thing is either dependent or independent (self-sufficient). The dependent thing requires an independent thing to depend on, and this affirms the existence of the independent in all circumstances. Likewise, it could be said that the existent thing could either be created or uncreated. This necessitates the existence of a creator which is uncreated in all circumstances. [From] this meaning, many of the later theoreticians such as the author of this creed [Al-Isfahani] and his like affirm the existence of knowledge of the creator. So, they affirm that he is a necessary existence, and this is correct in meaning and is some of which the divine texts have indicated with reference to Allah's divine names and attributes. However, the texts also indicate many meanings which comprehensively link this meaning and others similar to it from the perfect characteristics of Allah. This is not limited to the fact that Allah is referenced as *Al-Qayyum* [the Self-sufficient/Maintainer] and *Al-Samad* [the Sovereign/Independent). This is even present in his names the *Rabb* (Master) and *Ilaah* (Deity), and other such words. We have mentioned the exegesis of *Surah Al-Ikhlaas* in another publication, and also the meaning of it being equivalent to one-third in the Quran in another place. We have also mentioned that the term *Al-Samad* (means) that He is the independent one (from everything other than him), and everything apart from him is dependent upon him. This includes the meaning that He is the necessary existence in and of Himself reliant upon Him. This also includes that all of existence is existence by Him and from Him. (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2009:60-61)

As we saw with Immanuel Kant in Chapter 1, Ibn Taymiyyah saw the need for the argument to have practical applicability in the real world. He starts his discursion (before the quote

abovementioned mentioned) by mentioning that, in order for the category of ‘possible existence’ to have any ‘real’ meaning, it must be applicable in the real world. From this, Ibn Taymiyyah’s discursive rationalisation is not dissimilar from that of the Ash’arites in many ways, including proving possibility based on cosmological elements. The final chapter of this book will assess some of the logical points, as well as the strengths and limitations, of these arguments. The ‘strongest form’ of these arguments from a logical perspective will be proposed.

Bibliography

Ibn Taymiyyah. 2009. *Sharh Al-Ishbahaniyah*. 1 ed. Riyadh: Maktabah Dar Al-Mihaaj.

