

THE CONTRIBUTION OF IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYA TO SALAFI SUFISMS

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Abstract: This article aims to explore the Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's original views on Sufism. Ibn Qayyim is regarded as an authority in Salafi circles who reject Sufism as a legitimate representation of Islam, especially its philosophical orientation. This article uses a literature research model to reach the finding that Ibn Qayyim understood Sufism as a moral system and part of the science of Islamic morality. Sufism aims to purify the soul to prepare it for its return to God along the path of love. The basis of Sufism as revised by Ibn Qayyim was the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, the traditions of the companions, the ideas of Ibn Taymiyya, and the teachings words of the early Sufi masters. Ibn Qayyim strongly adhered to the orthodox principles of Islamic scholarship later dubbed as Salafism, especially in terms of prioritizing the shari'a over reason and rejecting esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*). For Ibn Qayyim, the Sufi philosophers were misled in overly relying on *ta'wīl* and disregarding the role of reason. His approach to Sufism was to perform an objective evaluation of the Sufi teachings circulating at his time. Instead of joining either side, the side of those who condemned it as unlawful innovation (*bid'a*) or the side of those who accepted it uncritically, Ibn Qayyim chose to conduct an extensive review of its ideas and practices, rejecting those elements that he found objectionable and accepting others that he found commendable.

Keywords: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya; philosophical Sufism; Salafi Sufism; morality.

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Introduction

The notion of Salafi Sufism is a combination of the terms Sufism and Salafi. The term Salafi is used to denominate the identity and method of interpretation of a specific school of Islamic thought. The original word *salaf* literally means predecessors,¹ as opposite to *khalaf* which means successors or succeeding generations. According to the famous Arabic lexicographer Ibn Manẓūr (d. 1311), *salaf* designates the revered forefathers of those living today.² Thus, *salaf* refers to the previous first three generations of Muslims who lived in the first three centuries of Islam, including those who lived during the time of the Prophet Muhammad or the Companions (*ṣaḥābah*), the successors (*ṭābi'ūn*), and those succeeding them (*ṭābi' al-ṭābi'īn*).³ The term Salafi is used to describe a person who adheres to the teachings of the Salafi school of thought.⁴

In general, the Salafi school follows a literal approach to reading Islamic sources. Literalism is an approach that refers to the pronunciation of a text explicitly as it is, without heeding the implied intentions in the text, and without recognizing the social context in which the texts were revealed and spoken, let alone paying attention to the changing social context of today's society.⁵ Thus, the source text is understood in its outer meaning, without considering other possible interpretations. According to the orientalist Montgomery Watt, as quoted by Tholhatul Choir and Ahwan Fanani, this fundamentalist interpretation refers to the general view that written

¹ Mufriḥ b. Sulaymān al-Qūsi, *al-Manhaj al-Salafi: Ta'rifuhu, Tarikhuhu, Majalatuhu, Qawa'iduhu, Kbaṣā'ishuhu* (Riyad: Dār al-Faḍīla, 2002), 36.

² Muḥammad b. Mukarram b. Manẓūr al-Ifriqī al-Miṣrī, *Lisān al-'Arab*, Vol. 6 (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 1992), 331.

³ Sabine Damir-Geilsdorf and Mira Menzfeld, "Methodological and Ethical Challenges in Empirical Approaches to Salafism", *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 9, no. 2 (2020): 135-149. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22117954-BJA10004>.

⁴ Philipp Bruckmayr and Jan-Peter Hartung, "Introduction: Challenges from "The Periphery"?" – Salafi Islam Outside the Arab World. Spotlights on Wider Asia", *Die Welt des Islams* 60, no. 2-3 (2020): 137-169. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-06023P01>; Roel Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (London: Hurst/New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006), 207-239.

⁵ Emad Hamdeh, "Qur'ān and Sunna or the Madhhab?: A Salafi Polemic against Islamic Legal Tradition", *Islamic Law and Society* 24, no. 3 (2017): 211-253. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685195-00240A01>.

injunctions must be accepted and followed to the letter, without leaving room for alternative opinions.⁶

‘Abd al-Qādir Maḥmūd states that the main characteristic of Salafi thought is that it rejects any form of esoteric interpretation (*ta’wīl*), which means that it places more emphasis on the outer than the inner meaning of a text and rejects the possibility of alternative readings.⁷ However, Muḥammad ‘Imārah argues that not all Salafi schools apply this principle. He identifies two distinctive Salafi schools: the circle of conservative Salafis initiated by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 855/241) and Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792/1206), and the circle of rationalist Salafis headed by Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328/728) and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350/751). ‘Imārah emphasizes that only the conservative Salafis reject applying *ta’wīl*.⁸

In this sense Salafi Sufism is a rather perplexing term because the terms Sufism and Salafi seem to negate one other.⁹ It is widely known that Salafi organizations carried out many attacks on Sufi shrines, such as their destruction of the tomb of Sheikh Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Sanūsī, the famous Sufi cleric and parent of the first ruler of Libya, King Idris. His tomb is located in the city of al-Kafrah in southeastern Libya where armed extremists carried out an attack in December 2017. This attack was preceded by the destruction of the Zawiyah Shaykhah Raḍiyah in Tripoli in the previous month.¹⁰ Elizabeth Sirriyeh concludes that the Salafi group perpetrating these violent attacks on Sufi shrines in Libya was decidedly opposed to Sufism and any notion of reform.¹¹ In response to this kind of Salafi extremism, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍawi called Muslims to action for the *Tashīf al-Ṣūfiyya* (Sufization of Salafism) and the *Taṣwīf al-Salafīyya*

⁶ Tholhatul Choir and Ahwan Fanani (eds.), *Islam dalam Berbagai Pembacaan Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2009), 428.

⁷ ‘Abd al-Qādir Maḥmūd, *al-Falsafah al-Ṣūfiyya fī al-Islām: Maṣadiruhā wa Naẓariyātuhā wa Makanatuhā min al-Dīn wa al-Ḥayāh* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1966), 79.

⁸ Muḥammad ‘Imārah, *al-Salaf wa al-Salafīyya* (Cairo: al-Ahrām, 2007), 55.

⁹ Muḥammad al-Hādī al-Ḥasanī, “al-Ṣūfī al-Salafī,” last modified May 18, 2017, accessed September 1, 2021, <https://www.echoroukonline.com/الصوفي السلفي>.

¹⁰ Frederic Wehrey and Katherine Pollock, “al-Hajamāt al-Akhirah fī Libyā ḍidda Ahdāf Ṣūfiyya,” last modified January 23, 2018, accessed September 1, 2021, <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/75327>.

¹¹ Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufi dan Anti-Sufi*, trans. Ade Alimah (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Sufi, 2003), 135 & 146.

(Salafization of Sufism).¹² This is where the significance of this research on Salafī Sufism lies, as this phenomenon has yet to be thoroughly investigated. Among the few academics who have attempted to describe Sufi Salafism are Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, ‘Abd al-Qādir Maḥmūd, and Sihām ‘Abd Allah Kuraydiyya.¹³ According to Maḥmūd, Sufism in this classification has long roots in Islamic studies. The emergence and existence of this type of orthodox Sufism coincided with the emergence of Sunni Sufism, whereby Salafī Sufism and Sunni Sufism predate the emergence of philosophical Sufism. However, the latter branch of Sufism has overshadowed the study of Salafī Sufism by historians, so that its existence has been largely overlooked.¹⁴

For this reason, it is necessary to examine the views of those Muslim scholars who are deemed Islamic authorities in Salafī circles, such as the figure of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya who lived in the fourteenth century. His works began circulating in Southeast Asia in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and more and more Muslims became aware of his views on Sufism.¹⁵ His *Ranks of the Divine Seekers (Madārīj al-Sālikīn)* and similar works were soon regarded as representative of the new school of Salafī Sufism which stood in sharp contrast to philosophical Sufism. Ibn Qayyim successfully deconstructed many Sufi concepts that had become the cornerstone of philosophical

¹² Hudā Ṣāliḥ, “al-Qardāwī: Ad‘ū Ila Taslīf al-Ṣūfiyah wa Taṣwīf al-Salafīyah,” last modified December 22, 2010, accessed September 1, 2021, <https://archive.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=600505&issueno=11712#.Xx58gOdx2Hs>.

¹³ ‘Abd al-Qādir Maḥmūd, *al-Falsafah al-Ṣūfiyya fī al-Islām: Maṣādiruhā wa Naẓariyātuhā wa Makānatuhā min al-Dīn wa al-Ḥayāh* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1966); Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, *al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Ittijāh al-Salafī fī al-‘Aṣr al-Ḥādīth* (al-Iskandariyya: Dār al-Da‘wa, 1982); Sihām ‘Abd Allāh Kuraydiyya, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī al-Salafī: Aṣlubu wa Uṣūlubu fī al-Qur‘ān wa al-Sunnah wa Khaṣā’iṣhu al-Ma‘nawīyya wa al-Uṣlūbiyya* (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-‘Arabiyya, 2000).

¹⁴ Ghozi, “Ma‘rifat Allah Menurut Ibn ‘Aṭā’Allah al-Sakandarī?” (PhD Thesis UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2017), 90; Ghozi, “Landasan Ontologis dan Kualifikasi Makrifat Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh al-Sakandarī”, *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 6, no. 1 (June 3, 2016): 57-91. <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2016.6.1.57-91>.

¹⁵ Syamsuddin Arif, “Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya in the ‘Lands Below the Wind’: An Ideological Father of Radicalism or a Popular Sufi Master?,” in Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer (eds.), *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2013), 230. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110285406.220/html>.

Sufism such as the unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). For example, he argued that the opening chapter of the Qurʾān (*al-Fātiḥah*) firmly denies the Sufi understanding of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, as it clearly established the oneness of Allah's lordship (*rubūbiyya*). It means that Allah is clearly and unmistakably identified as the originator and the creator of the universe. It cannot be said that Allah is the originator of nature that would deny the existence of God and His creation, or there would be neither God nor His servants.¹⁶ Ibn Qayyim further argued that those who think that God is the essence of nature are misguided and in fact disbelievers,¹⁷ because the teachings of *waḥdat al-wujūd* run contrary to the fundamental Islamic principle of oneness (*tawḥīd*). Therefore, the oneness of God is paramount, and Allah is not part of the universe. He has no beginning and no end, and no one is equal to Him in any respect.¹⁸

Ibn Qayyim also emphasized that *tawḥīd* is the first station (*manzīla*) where a spiritual seeker (*sālik*) begins his spiritual journey but also his last station. In other words, *tawḥīd* is not only an essential part of theology and central part of a seeker's faith, it also marks the limit and end of his spiritual journey.¹⁹

Another teaching of Sufism which Ibn Qayyim criticized is the concept of annihilation in God (*al-fanā' fī Allāh*). He thought it a major philosophical error to declare that the goal of *tawḥīd* is annihilation in the unity of Allah's lordship (*al-fanā' fī tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*) because the goal is annihilation in the unity of worship (*al-fanā' fī tawḥīd al-uluḥbiyya*). He not only criticized the standard Sufi concept of *fanā'* but also offered a viable alternative.²⁰

Therefore, this article aims to explore Ibn Qayyim's views on Sufism and his criticism of widely accepted Sufi concepts.

¹⁶ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Madārij al-Sālikin bayn Manāzil Iyyāka Na'budu wa Iyyāka Nasta'in* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 2004), 42.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 923.

¹⁸ Mulyadhi Kartanegara, *Lentera Kehidupan: Panduan Memahami Tuban, Alam, dan Manusia* (Bandung: Mizan, 2017), 30.

¹⁹ Ibn Qayyim, *Madārij al-Sālikin*, 559.

²⁰ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Tariq al-Hijratayn wa Bāb al-Sa'adatayn* (Makka al-Mukarrama: Dār 'Ālam al-Fawā'id, 1429), 60.

Salafi Sufism: An Overview

Salafi Sufism denotes a type of orthodox and pristine Sufism that is in *accordance* with the original teachings and practices of the *salaf* in person of the Companions (*ṣaḥābah*) and the following generation (*ṭābi‘ūn*) of the early Muslims and in accordance with the Qur’ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. In other words, they practiced a type of Qur’ānic Sufism which included teachings about piety (*warā’*) and ascetism (*ẓuhd*), remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*), and contemplation (*tafakkur*), in addition to practicing the Prophet’s Sunnah out of fear (*khawf*) and hopefulness (*rajā’*). In this sense, Salafi Sufism is type of Sufism that is oriented towards spiritual education and training, purifying the soul, and habitually engaging in the worship of Allah.²¹ In other words, Salafi Sufism is understood as a type of Sufism that applies the Salafi methodology.

Several Salafi principles are applied to Sufism, as put forward by Ḥilmī.²² First is prioritizing the uncritical and literal reading of the religious texts and not allowing reason to override the revealed and divinely inspired truth. This means that the Qur’ān and ḥadīth must be adhered to without questioning or further interpretation. Muslims must not alter the original message contained in the Qur’ān and ḥadīth, even though they may seem contrary to reason. Rather than arriving at an own understanding, the Salafi Muslim takes the Companions as role models and emulates their understanding and interpretation of both sources, unquestioningly. The Companions witnessed the revelation and were taught directly by the Prophet Muhammad; therefore, they understand the Qur’ān and ḥadīth best, and their explanations should be given due credence. This principle of the authority of the Companions is the most visible characteristic of Salafi thought: the Islamic injunctions are clear and require no further interpretation of what is true and lawful and what is not, and there is no need for reasoning. In other words, the Salafi method prioritizes narration (*riwāya*) over thought (*dirāya*), and acceptance and rejection of an argument must be based on the Qur’ān and ḥadīth. Their stated goal is to maintain Islamic law, act charitably, and worship Allah in the most authentic way possible. The criterium of authenticity also entails that any arising matter is resolved by referring it back to the

²¹ Kuraydiyya, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī al-Salafī*, 95.

²² Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, *Qawā‘id al-Manhaj al-Salafī fī al-Fikr al-Islāmī: Buḥūth fī al-‘Aqīdah al-Islāmiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2005), 159-165.

Qur'ān, being certain that it contains all the knowledge and wisdom necessary to answer all questions.

The second Salafi principle is rejecting esoteric interpretation (*ta'wil*).²³ The use of *ta'wil* in general requires the use of reason to derive new meaning; thus, reason takes precedence over Shari'a, which is deemed erroneous. If there is a conflict between reason and shari'a, then religious texts must be interpreted according to reason. In the philosophical approach the religious text is not understood in its literal meaning, and it is the task of reason and logic to arrive at the metaphorical or actual meaning which is hidden. This system of thinking is often applied to verses of the Qur'ān that describe God as having physical attributes (*tajsīm*), such as Allah having hands and a face, and sitting on a throne. This stands in stark contrast to the Salafi approach, whereby the literal meaning is accepted as it is given, without further interpretation and elaborate explanations. In the Salafi mind the verses of the Qur'ān are very clear, and there is no need to twist their literal meaning into a complex metaphorical meaning.²⁴ The argument is that the human mind is not able to know the divine reality behind those truths, and it is not man's place to speculate about them.²⁵ It is this second principle that reveals the most noticeable difference between the methods applied in Salafi Sufism and Sunni Sufism, which arrive at different conclusions.

The third Salafi principle is adhering strictly to the text of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth. This means in practice that revelation and not reason should guide human conduct and thinking. It is the duty of every Muslim to obey the legal injunctions contained in the Qur'ān and ḥadīth and direct one's attention to what is said in the Qur'ān rather than ponder about what has not.²⁶ Furthermore, opinion, preference, and intuition must not stand in the way of accepting the words of Allah and His Messenger, as revealed in QS. 49:1. The role

²³ Maḥmūd, *al-Falsafah al-Ṣūfīyya fī al-Islām*, 39.

²⁴ Adis Duderija, "Neo-Traditional Salafi Qur'an-Sunnah Hermeneutic and the Construction of a Normative Muslimah Image", *Hanwa* 5, no. 2-3 (2007): 289-323. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156920807782912526>; Wasim Shiliwala, "Constructing a Textual Tradition: Salafi Commentaries on al-'Aqida al-Taḥāwīyya", *Die Welt des Islams* 58, no. 4 (2018): 461-503. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-00584P03>

²⁵ Ḥilmī, *Qawā'id al-Manhaj al-Salafi*, 162.

²⁶ M. Yunan Yusuf, *Alam Pikiran Islam: Pemikiran Kalam dari Khawarij ke Buya Hamka hingga Hasan Hanafi* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2014), 185.

of human reason is to understand the revelation and apply it in practice, in addition to justifying its veracity.

The eminent Salafi figures laid out a spiritual path that is built on a legitimate purpose, basis, principles, and methods. They invite modern Muslims back to the teachings of the early ascetics among the Companions and their followers. In their view, the Companions are the people who knew the stages of sainthood and were the people closest to Allah after the Prophet Muhammad. Their spiritual practices were firmly rooted in Islam and not influenced by other traditions, which cannot be said of later Sufi masters.

Regarding its historical development, ‘Abd al-Qādir Maḥmūd describes three major periods of Salafi *taṣawwuf*.²⁷ The first period began with the establishment of the Muqatelite school founded by Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150 H/767 CE) who lived one time with Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148 H/765 CE), and Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150 H/767 CE). The second period commenced with the circle of Imam Mālik (d. 179 H/795 CE) known as the Sufi legalist (*al-faqīh al-ṣūfī*) who reportedly said, “Whoever follows *fiqh* but does not practice Sufism is a *fāsiq*. Whoever practices Sufism but does not follow *fiqh* is a *ẓindīq*. Whoever practices Sufism and adheres to *fiqh* reaches the truth.”²⁸ The third and last period is closely related with Abū Ismā‘īl ‘Abd Allah b. Muḥammad al-Anṣārī al-Harawī (d. 481 H/1088 CE), author of *Stations of the Wayfarer (Manāzil al-Sā‘irīn ilā Rabb al-‘Ālamin)*, an authoritative representation of Salafī Sufism. He followed by other eminent figures such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728 H/1328 CE) and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya who commented on al-Harawī’s work in *Ranks of the Divine Seekers (Madārij al-Salīkin fī Ma‘rifat Iyyāka Na‘budu wa Iyyāka Nasta‘in)*, generally viewed as a compendium of Salafi thought on *taṣawwuf*.

²⁷ Maḥmūd, *al-Falsafah al-Ṣūfīyya fī al-Islām*, 79.

²⁸ Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Īsā Zarrūq al-Fāsī al-Burnusī, *Qawā‘id al-Taṣawwuf* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2005), 22; Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Ajīb al-Ḥasanī, *Īqāz al-Himam fī Sharḥ al-Ḥikam* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, n.d.), 18; Muḥammad b. Ja‘far al-Kattanī, *Jalā’ al-Qulūb min al-Aṣḍā’ al-Ghaybiyya bi-Bayān Iḥāṭatibi ‘alayh al-Salām bi-l-‘Ulūm al-Kawniyya*, Vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2005), 38.

The Perspective of Ibn Qayyim on Sufism

Most scholars conclude that today's Salafis categorically reject Sufism and consider it a heretical practice that has deviated from the true teachings of Islam. However, Salafi scholars of the past were more accepting of Sufism.²⁹ In this respect, al-Makkī stated that the Sufi scholars were acknowledged as experts of *taṣawwuf* such as there were experts of *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *kalām*, and the like. In other words, Salafi scholars who reject Sufism are not real Salafi scholars, as they do not apply the Salafi methodology correctly.³⁰ In the following paragraphs, the views of Ibn Qayyim as a representative authority of the Salafi school of Sufism are presented.

Ibn Qayyim was a prominent student of Ibn Taymiyya. According to al-Makkī, Ibn Qayyim was the ideological and spiritual son of Ibn Taymiyya.³¹ They shared a life-long and close friendship as teacher and student, as evidenced in the frequency in which Ibn Qayyim referred to Ibn Taymiyya's opinion and their shared positions on various issues. Although Ibn Qayyim continued his teacher's debates in philosophy, theology, and Sufism and shared many of his views, he developed his own it cannot be stated that there is a clear agreement between the methods and views of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya and his teacher, Ibn Taymiyya, in defining and viewing Sufism.³² Ibn Qayyim's accomplished level of scholarship meant that he developed his own approach and arrived at his own conclusions. Compared to Ibn Taymiyya his tone was more respectful in his criticism, less inclined to condemn, and more intuitive. Unlike his teacher he

²⁹ Ḥilmī, *al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Ittijāh al-Salafī*, 21.

³⁰ 'Abd al-Ḥāfiẓ b. Mālik 'Abd al-Ḥāqq al-Makkī, *Mawqif A'immat al-Ḥarakah al-Salafiyya min al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Ṣūfiyya* (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2001), 8.

³¹ Diego Sarrió Cucarella, "Spiritual Anti-Elitism: Ibn Taymiyya's Doctrine of Sainthood (*Walāya*)", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 22, no. 3 (2011), 277. DOI: 10.1080/09596410.2011.568812; Alina Kokoschka and Birgit Krawietz, "Appropriation of Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: Challenging Expectations of Ingenuity", Birgit Krawietz and Georges Tamer (eds.), *Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Law: Debating Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2013), 1. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110285406.1>; Yossef Rapoport, "On *Taqīd*: Ibn al-Qayyim's Critique of Authority in Islamic Law by Abdul-Rahman Mustafa, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 3 (2014), 353-354. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etu053>.

³² Arjan Post, "A Glimpse of Sufism from the Circle of Ibn Taymiyya", *Journal of Sufi Studies* 5, no. 2 (2016): 156-187. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/22105956-12341289>.

developed a keen interest in *taṣawwuf* and dedicated some of his works exclusively to the study of Islamic spirituality.³³ What further distinguishes him from his teacher is the notion of affectionate love (*maḥabbah*) which colors his works. Ibn Qayyim concluded that the Sufi path is essentially a path of love that is determined by the seeker's longing to re-unite with the beloved. The only object truly worthy of love is Allah, and only He "is the one who is loved".³⁴

Ibn Qayyim studied Sufism systematically and extensively and produced many influential works on Sufism. The legitimacy of this discipline was hotly contested at the time, and Ibn Qayyim not only took part in the ongoing debate but eventually resolved it, a feat which demonstrates the height and depth of his insight and understanding. His *Ranks of the Divine Seekers (Madārij al-Sālikīn)*, for example is still a popular reference today because of its spiritual and psychological insight, its erudition, and its refreshing lack of polemics.³⁵

Ibn Qayyim's carefully studied views on Sufism prove far superior to the imbalanced views of its most ardent proponents as well as its harshest critics. He offered a thorough and critical evaluation of the major Sufi concepts, solely based on their compatibility with the basic tenets of Islam. If they are in accordance with Islam, then they must be accepted, and if they are contrary to Islam, then they must be rejected. Thus, Ibn Qayyim's calm and analytical approach offered an alternative stance that is both spiritually as well as intellectually satisfying to the reader.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Ibn Qayyim neither condemned Sufism outright nor did he accept it uncritically. His single criterion is that any of its teachings are in accordance with the basic tenets of Islam. In the *Madārij al-Sālikīn* certain statements can be found to illustrate this point. For instance, he praises the good behavior of the Sufis when claiming, "They are the people of the highest and noblest desire and concern. They are persistent in gaining wisdom and knowledge, purifying the heart, purifying the soul, and

³³ Ḥilmī, *al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Ittijāh al-Salafī*, 67.

³⁴ Ibn Qayyim, *Tariq al-Hijratayn*, 116.

³⁵ Ovamir Anjum, "Sufism without Mysticism? Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah's Objectives in *Madārij al-Sālikīn*", *Oriente Moderno* 90, no. 1 (2010): 166-188. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22138617-09001009>.

improving behavior in their association.”³⁶ Similar positive observations about Sufism can be found in his *Path of the Two Migrations (Ṭarīq al-Hijratayn)* where he stated, “Indeed this knowledge [Sufism] is a noble science. There is no knowledge that is more noble after the knowledge of monotheism. This knowledge is only suitable for noble souls.”³⁷

On the other hand, he was ready to criticize and denounce those Sufi concepts and practices that are not compatible with the Qur’ān and ḥadīth. His critique is mainly directed at certain philosophical concepts related to the much-contested *wahdat al-wujūd*. Without hesitation he stated that those who think that God is the essence of nature, and that nature is the essence of God are in fact disbelievers and misguided in their belief.³⁸ His harsh criticism was especially directed at the Sufi sects that were popular in his time. He rejected their fanatical insistence on renouncing all worldly life (*zuhd*) which only led to passivity and fatalism and rendered their followers incapable of enjoining the good (*amr bi-l-ma’rūf*) and forbidding the evil (*nahi ‘an al-munkar*). A Muslim who does not enjoin the good and forbid the evil is worse than a sinner.³⁹ Further, there are the contentious issues of annihilation (*fanā’*) and fatalism (*jabr*) that al-Harawī discussed in his commentary of the *Manāẓil al-Sā’irīn*.⁴⁰

However, Ibn Qayyim and al-Harawī agreed in defining Sufism as morality. The latter stated that Sufism is mostly about morality in the form of personal piety, which forms the basis of the primary duty of the Muslim community namely to enjoin goodness and forbid evil.⁴¹ Ibn Qayyim agreed on this definition⁴² and considered *taṣawwuf* as reflecting proper Islamic morality. He explained that “all religion is morals; whatever makes your morals increase, then it has added to your religion, as well as Sufism.”⁴³ Elsewhere he stated, “Sufism is one part of the proper conduct (*sulūk*), purification, and purification of

³⁶ Ibn Qayyim, *Madārij al-Salīkīn*, 90.

³⁷ Ibn Qayyim, *Ṭarīq al-Hijratayn*, 260.

³⁸ Ibn Qayyim, *Madārij al-Salīkīn*, 923.

³⁹ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *I’lām al-Muwaqqi’im ‘an Rabb al-‘Ālamīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1993), 119.

⁴⁰ Ḥilmī, *al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Ittījāb al-Salafī*, 88.

⁴¹ ‘Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī al-Harawī, *Manāẓil al-Sā’irīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1988), 59.

⁴² Ibn Qayyim, *Madārij al-Salīkīn*, 289.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 519.

the soul, so that it is ready to travel to Allah and be friends with Him, and be together with the loved ones, because one will be with the one he loves".⁴⁴ In other words, the scope of morality or mysticism is wider than Sufism, because Sufism is only part of morality. In essence, Sufism revolves around three aspects of personal developments namely to stop hurting, to bear pain, and to realize peace.⁴⁵ Thus, the goal of this *sulūk* journey is to reach the station of love (*maqām al-mahabbah*). Anyone on this path has to practice patience in respecting the religious commands and prohibitions.⁴⁶ Ibn Qayyim also draws the figure of the enlightened seeker on the path:

An *'arif* [knower] according to them [the Sufis] is a person who knows Allah through His names, attributes, and deeds, then shows his belief through behavior, makes his intentions and goals only for Him and frees himself from bad morals, cleanses his heart of its impurities, and then is patient in all the blessings and trials that come. Then he invites to Allah's religion with confidence, and he invites to Allah only with what His messenger brought and does not mix it with the opinions of other people, with their feelings, intuition, and reasoning.⁴⁷

Examining his theoretical approach, Ibn Qayyim consequently applied the Salafī method in the following points: 1) prioritizing Shari'a over reason; 2) rejecting the use of *ta'wīl*; 3) referring to the evidence in the Qur'an; 4) eliminating any contradictions with revelation by reason, opinion, and analogy; 5) taking instructions from the *ṣaḥābah*, *tābi'ūn*, and other trustworthy people; 6) accepting the validity of solitary ḥadīths (*aḥādīth al-aḥād*).⁴⁸ Thus, Ibn Qayyim insisted on applying the rigorous principles of orthodox scholarship and rejected any form of speculative interpretation that was not supported in the source texts. If there was a conflict between the sources and reason, then the sources had to be interpreted in accordance with reason. He defended this Salafī principle and criticized those scholars who supported their ideas solely on *ta'wīl*. In his view those were the people who had lost their path as described QS. 18: 103. They were no longer guided by the light of revelation

⁴⁴ Ibid., 525.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 618.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 857.

⁴⁸ al-Qūṣī, *al-Manhaj al-Salafī*, 357-400; Hilmī, *Qawā'id al-Manhaj al-Salafī*, 157-163.

and were following pure conjecture and their own desires.⁴⁹ Ibn Qayyim strongly advised them to stop this erroneous practice and instead submit themselves fully to the revealed truth of the Qur'ān which is God's uncorrupted word. The Qur'ān is eternal and will not be lost and swallowed up by time, while individual trends and opinions will come and go.⁵⁰

This principle of prioritizing revelation over reason is also evident in his introduction to the *Madārij al-Sālikin*. In order not to go astray as mentioned above a person must submit his reason to revelation, perfect his faith with righteous deeds, and combine them with patience. Ibn Qayyim placed great emphasis on the virtues of knowledge and charity, both inspired by the Qur'ān. The way (*ṭarīqah*), experience (*dhawq*), and rapture (*wajd*) originate from the light of the Qur'ān and are the fruit of it.⁵¹

Besides their over-reliance on *ta'wil*, the philosophical Sufis erred in placing their own notions of experience, rapture, and state (*ḥāl*) above the Qur'ān and ḥadīth. He said:

Whoever shows you other than *akḥbaranā* or *ḥaddathbanā*, then he has led you to the imaginings of the Sufis or the analogies of the philosophers. There is nothing after the Qur'ān and ḥadīth; they are only the assumptions of theologians, the opinions of people who deviate, and the illusions of the Sufis. Whoever does not use the evidence of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth has gone astray. There is no way to Allah and Paradise other than through them.⁵²

Elsewhere he said:

The beginning of the error of the Sufis was that they raised their own devices like experience and rapture, and other things as valid criteria of judgment. They make them the judges of right and wrong. They used to walk towards Allah, but eventually started walking towards themselves, so that they were no longer worshipping Allah; instead, they were worshipping themselves.⁵³

⁴⁹ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Ijtima' al-Juyush al-Islamiyya 'ala Harb al-Mu'attilah wa al-Jahmiyya* (Makka al-Mukarrama: Dār 'Ālam al-Fawā'id, 1431), 32.

⁵⁰ Ibn Qayyim, *Madārij al-Sālikin*, 8.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 618.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 308-309.

It follows from this description that the characteristics of the Salafi Sufism devised by Ibn Qayyim differed from those expressed by the Persian jurist and theologian Abū al-Wafā al-Ghanīmī al-Taftāzānī (d. 792 H /1390 CE), author of *Madkhal ilā al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī*. Ibn Qayyim did not make use of any symbolism when discussing Sufism because he wanted to avoid any form of *ta'wil*. Its primary purpose is moral perfection (*iḥsān*) which is the pinnacle of true worship.

Another characteristic of Ibn Qayyim's take on Sufism is the depth of discussion and analysis in terms of describing all the role of the heart and the soul in spiritual development, in addition to being able to uncover hidden secrets and explain their essence.⁵⁴ His Sufism focused on the faith (*imān*) that is embedded in the heart and supported and protected through the shari'a.

This faith that is firmly planted in the heart will produce knowledge about the nature of God's creation. With this knowledge, the believer can interact with nature which will lead him back to its Creator. This will increase his understanding of life, makes him ready to submit himself wholly to his Creator and worship Him alone. In short, only the believer truly knows his purpose in life, his role, and his way home.

Ibn Qayyim was aware of the human tendency to deviate from the truth and follow one's desires. This nature must be corrected and fortified so that man can get closer to His Creator. The heart has to be freed from what pollutes it so that it can be purified and become pure, glowing with divine light. He emphasized that "the origin of all goodness and happiness of a servant, even all humans, is the perfection of life and the light of his heart. Life and light are goodness itself".⁵⁵

Another characteristic of his understanding of *taṣawwuf* is its wide scope and comprehensiveness. It is related to life, existence, and the universe, and life in the hereafter. It is also related to the events experienced by humans and the impressions generated by these events. People have by nature material needs but also psychological, emotional, and spiritual needs that must be fulfilled in order to achieve a proper balance in his life. However, these needs must be

⁵⁴ Kuraydiyya, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī al-Salafī*, 455.

⁵⁵ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Ighātha al-Lahfān min Maṣāyid al-Shayṭān*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Kaylānī, Vol. 1 (Cairo: Maktaba Dār al-Turāth, n.d.), 27.

fulfilled in legitimate ways, and man must not have complete freedom to follow his instincts and lustful tendencies. Instead, he must discipline his body, mind, and heart and focus on his primary purpose in life, which is to worship God. Life in this world is temporary, while the hereafter is eternal. Ibn Qayyim states:

Creatures were created for the afterlife, and all pleasures in their various forms are found there. The world is a place to enjoy temporary pleasures, the hereafter is the place to enjoy permanent pleasures. He must know that pleasure is an adornment and a means to the pleasures of the hereafter. Every pleasure that can help in achieving the pleasures of the hereafter pleases Allah. Pleasures that a reasonable person should pursue are not pleasures that cause misery and take away the greatest pleasure, namely the pleasure to enjoy the pleasures of the hereafter.⁵⁶

This statement confirms the conclusion expressed by Kuraydiyah and Barowi that the goal of Salafi *taṣawwuf* is to reach the level of *iḥsān* in worshipping Allah.⁵⁷

The Basis of Ibn Qayyim's Salafi Sufism

After explaining the views and opinions of Ibn Qayyim related to Sufism, in the following paragraphs, the foundations and sources he relied upon will be presented. 'Abd al-'Azīm 'Abd al-Salām Sharaf al-Dīn stated that the basis of Ibn Qayyim's Sufism is the Qur'ān, the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, and the teachings of the Companions in renouncing the temporary delights of this world, the words of the early Sufis, and the words of his teacher, Ibn Taymiyya.⁵⁸

1. Qur'ān and Sunnah

The Qur'ān and the Sunnah constitute the basis of Islam, and all spiritual teachings must be based on these two sources. The commitment of the scholars to these source texts reflects their willingness to submit reason to revelation. The Qur'ān is the word of Allah which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad SAW who recited its words and practiced its contents in form of his Sunnah, and

⁵⁶ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Rawḍa al-Muḥibbīn wa Nuẓḥa al-Mushtāqīn* (Makka al-Mukarrama: Dār 'Ālam al-Fawā'id, n.d.), 235-236.

⁵⁷ Kuraydiyah, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī al-Salafī*, 77.

⁵⁸ 'Abd al-'Azīm 'Abd al-Salām Sharaf al-Dīn, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya: 'Aṣrūhu wa Manhajuhu wa Arāuhū fī al-Fiqh wa al-'Aqāid wa al-Taṣawwuf* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1984), 392.

in extension the words, actions, and provisions of his early successors, the four rightly guided caliphs.

Many verses of the Qur'ān and ḥadīths command the Muslims to hold fast onto the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. All religious affairs and matters relating to religion must refer to these two sources, as shown by the Companions who were committed to these two sources in all their attitudes, words, and actions. This commitment to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah they passed on to the generation after them, namely the *ṭābi'ūn*. Especially QS. 4:59, QS. 8:20, QS. 25:54, QS. 33: 21 highlight the importance of following the Messenger of Allah SAW in all his words, actions, and thoughts.

Further, Allah reminds the Muslims to obey the Prophet Muhammad because obeying him means in fact obeying Allah. Happiness in this world and in the hereafter can only be obtained by following the path of guidance and mercy that was sent down through His messenger. Every dispute should be returned to Allah and His Messenger or to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. The return of disputes in religious matters will be complete and perfect if they are returned to the Messenger of Allah. Ibn Qayyim asserted that:

If there was no explanation of a law that they contradicted in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, and that explanation was not sufficient, surely Allah would not have ordered them to return to them. It would be impossible if Allah had ordered them to return the matter to them if there were no explanations or the information they disputed.⁵⁹

Thus, making the Messenger of Allah as a judge is like making him the locus of Islam (*maqām al-islām*), ruling on him the locus of faith (*maqām al-īmān*), and willing to accept the results of his decision the locus of perfection (*maqām al-ihsān*). There are many verses of the Qur'ān and Prophetic ḥadīth that command obedience to Allah and His Messenger and prohibit the Muslims from disobeying them. These orders and prohibitions were carried out by the Companions and their followers dubbed later as the righteous predecessors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) who serve the later generations of Muslims as examples, up to this day.

The same injunction was followed by Ibn Qayyim when critically reviewing the tenets of Sufism. He believed that the task of teaching how to purify the soul (*taẓkiyat al-naḥs*) was left to the

⁵⁹ Ibn Qayyim, *I'lām al-Munwaqqi'in*, 39.

prophets who were sent for this purpose. He believed that those on the path of spiritual practice (*riyādat al-nafs*) would not be able to purify themselves, and their lack of knowledge would cause harm.⁶⁰

2. Opinion of Ibn Taymiyya

Ibn Taymiyya is frequently referred to by Ibn Qayyim. The opinions of his teacher were often identical with his own opinions whom he admired for his strong sense of pride in his work and his patience.⁶¹ This ideological closeness between teacher and student is described by Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852 H/1449 CE) with the following words:

He was conquered by his love for Ibn Taymiyya, so that he did not veer from his opinion in the slightest, and in fact he always defended every opinion of Ibn Taymiyya. It was Ibn Qayyim who played a major role in selecting and disseminating the various works and sciences of Ibn Taymiyya. Both were imprisoned in al-Qalʿah, after being humiliated, beaten, and forced from their homes. Only after Ibn Taymiyyah died in prison, Ibn Qayyim was released from the prison. However, he was still punished for his words which he took from the fatwas of Ibn Taymiyya. Therefore, Ibn Qayyim received many attacks from the scholars of his time, some of which he had openly criticized.⁶²

Ibn Qayyim's love for his teacher was inspired by Ibn Taymiyya's humility towards Allah but fierce determination to fight injustice, falsehood, and oppression. Further, he admired his teacher's solemn attitude and lack of worldly aspirations which he had never been seen in other people.⁶³ Likewise, Ibn Taymiyya's example helped Ibn Qayyim understand the importance of the Sufi principle of renunciation (*zuhd*).⁶⁴ He quoted the words of his teacher when he stated that "renunciation is leaving what does not benefit in the hereafter, while watchfulness (*wara'*) is leaving what is feared to endanger the hereafter".⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Ibn Qayyim, *Madārij al-Salīkīn*, 523.

⁶¹ Sharaf al-Dīn, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, 392.

⁶² Aḥmad b. Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *al-Durar al-Kāmina fī Aʿyān al-Mīʾa al-Thāmina*, Vol. 4 (Egypt: Maṭbaʿat al-Madani, n.d.), 21.

⁶³ Ibn Qayyim, *Madārij al-Salīkīn*, 327.

⁶⁴ Sharaf al-Dīn, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, 394.

⁶⁵ Ibn Qayyim, *Madārij al-Salīkīn*, 335.

Another opinion taken from Ibn Taymiyya is about the happiness growing in the believer's heart when striving hard to please Allah.⁶⁶ When Ibn Qayyim described the happiness one feels because of the increased closeness to Allah, he not only referred to the ḥadīths of the Prophet Muhammad but also quoted the words of his teacher. Verily, the happiness and joy of the heart is from Allah, and there is nothing that can match it from the pleasures of this world. There is no doubt that this enjoyment will encourage one to always walk towards Allah and devote all efforts in seeking His pleasure. This is in accordance with what was stated by the Prophet Muhammad that people who are willing to accept Allah as their God, Islam as their religion, and Muhammad as their Prophet and the Messenger of God will taste and feel the pleasures of faith.

Further, his division of patience into three parts was also the opinion of Ibn Taymiyya.⁶⁷ According to him, there are three kinds of patience, namely patience with obedience, patience with immorality, and patience in trials. The first and second types of patience are the results of efforts, while the third type of patience is not the result of efforts because of a higher position in the level of patience.⁶⁸ To support this point he added the opinion of Ibn Taymiyya by stating that:

Yusuf at the temptation the king's wife was more perfect than her patience to endure the trials of being put into a well by his brothers, sold into slavery, and separated from his father. This is because all of that happened without any choice for him and not as the result of his efforts. There is no reason for him but to be patient. As for his patience with disobedience, then it is patience that he can choose and willing do so, and it is a form of struggle against desire, especially if there are reasons for giving in to this temptation, because he is a teenager prone to be overpowered by lust, a foreigner, and a slave. The woman is a beautiful woman who has a powerful position and is the wife of his master. No one is watching the two of them, and the woman tries to coerce him into committing a sinful act, because he will be imprisoned if he does not do as told. Yet, despite all these conditions, Yusuf prefers to be patient and put God first.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Sharaf al-Dīn, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, 394.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 395.

⁶⁸ Ibn Qayyim, *Tarīq al-Hijratayn*, 577.

⁶⁹ Ibn Qayyim, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, 426.

When describing heart's diseases, Ibn Qayyim stated that there are two major diseases that a servant must know how to identify and cure them: hypocrisy (*riyā'*) and arrogance (*takabbur*). Both diseases of the heart will lead to the destruction of one's faith. Ibn Qayyim referred to his teacher when stating, "often I heard Shaykh Ibn Taymiyya say that "you alone we worship" (*iyāka na'budu*) will protect from hypocrisy and "you alone do we beseech" (*iyāka nasta'in*) protect from arrogance".⁷⁰

These examples clearly illustrate Ibn Taymiyya's profound influence on Ibn Qayyim. Ibn Taymiyya's opinions were not revolutionary but were firmly grounded in Islam and reflected the exact sentiments that Ibn Qayyim wanted to emphasize. Like his teacher Ibn Qayyim was highly influenced among his contemporaries but also had many enemies. Both were imprisoned and punished for their unwillingness to compromise with the truth and be silenced. After the death of his teacher, he continued to propagate their shared ideas and disseminate Ibn Taymiyya's works. The profound relationship between teacher and student is a well-recognized principle in psychology and educational science. In his wish to emulate his teacher whom he loves and trusts for his knowledge and righteousness the student internalizes his teacher's methods and ideas. In the same manner Ibn Qayyim adopted and expanded much of Ibn Taymiyya's thought on *taṣawwuf*.

3. Opinions of the Early Sufis

The foundation of Ibn Qayyim's reviewed version of Sufism is based on the opinion of the earlier Sufi masters (*al-mutaqaddimūn*). Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465 H/1072 CE) and Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sullamī al-Naysābūrī (d. 412 H/1021 CE) mention figures like al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298 H/910 CE), Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245 H/859 CE), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161 H/778 CE), Abū Yazīd al-Buṣṭāmī (d. 261 H/874 CE), Sahl b. 'Abd Allah al-Tustarī (d. 283/896 CE), Sarī al-Saqāṭī (d. 253 H/867 CE), and Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215 H/830 CE). Ibn Qayyim quotes their sayings and opinions to support his arguments criticizing certain Sufi concepts.⁷¹ In his view these early ascetics represented the authentic form of Islamic *taṣawwuf* included people who were steadfast in their positions,

⁷⁰ Ibid., 39.

⁷¹ Sharaf al-Dīn, *Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, 396.

leaders of the *ṭariqahs* on the way towards Allah, and the knowers of God (*al-ʿarifūn bi-Allāh*).

In the following section some opinions of the early ascetics and Sufis are discussed that corroborate the opinions of Ibn Qayyim. First are the opinions of al-Junayd and al-Naṣr Abadi about the necessity of Sufis to adhere to the Qurʾān and the Sunnah. Al-Junayd stated that “all paths have been closed except those who follow the path of the Messenger of Allah, outwardly and inwardly”.⁷² Elsewhere al-Junayd wrote, “Our school is bound by the Qurʾān and the Sunnah. Whoever does not read the Qurʾān and does not record the ḥadīth, his opinion cannot be followed”.⁷³ Naṣr al-Abadi explained that “there are three foundations of Sufism: holding fast to the Qurʾān and the Sunnah, leaving lust and heresy, repeated invocation, and abandoning interpretation”.⁷⁴

In summary, Ibn Qayyim was very respectful and considerate of the opinions of the early ascetics and Sufi masters. He frequently quoted their teachings to support his own opinion or to reject other opinions that were not in accordance with the Shariʿa.

4. Intellect and Natural Disposition

The epistemological foundation of Ibn Qayyim’s approach to Sufism is based on the intellect and the natural disposition (*fiṭra*).⁷⁵ The intellect is the source of human knowledge and understanding, but “the knowledge produced by intellect is more limited”.⁷⁶ Intellect is the characteristic that differentiates humans from animals. Humans are burdened with religious obligations because of their reason but also higher in rank because of their faith.⁷⁷ It is also the intellect that enables the believers to understand revelation and obey its laws. Thus,

⁷² Ibn, *Ṭariq al-Hijratayn*, 9. Ibn Qayyim, *Madarij al-Salikin*, 739.

⁷³ Ibn Qayyim, *Madarij al-Salikin*, 354.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 617.

⁷⁵ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Miftah Dar al-Saʿādah wa Mansūr Wilāyah al-ʿIlm wa al-ʿIrādah* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1994), 342.

⁷⁶ Muḥammad Muḥammad b. al-Mawṣilī, *Mukhtaṣar al-Sawāiq al-Mursalab ʿalā al-Jahmiyya wa al-Muʿaṭṭilab li al-Imām Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya*, Col. 1 (Riyad: Maktaba Adwāʾ al-Salaf, 2004), 156.

⁷⁷ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Fawāʾid*, ed. Muḥammad Azīz Shams (Makka al-Mukarrama: Dār ʿĀlam al-Fawāʾid, 1429), 151.

without it the Shari'a brought by the messengers has no wisdom or benefit for mankind.⁷⁸

According to Ibn Qayyim, there are two kinds of intellect. First, the innate intellect which is the father of knowledge, its educator, and the one who produces it. Second is the acquired intellect which is the result of that knowledge. Intellect is the instrument of all knowledge, and its scales determine what is good and what is bad.⁷⁹ The intellect allows humans to reason and think about the universe, life, and all observable phenomena. Reflection and contemplation also allow humans to believe and unveil the essence of all things.⁸⁰ Thinking is the basis of all theoretical knowledge because thinking will generate new ideas, while ideas will motivate the growth of desires that must be realized in an action or deed. When this process is often repeated it becomes a mental habit.⁸¹

In the view of Ibn Qayyim knowledge (*ma'rifa*) that comes from reason can be regarded as true and useful knowledge. Similarly, the knowledge of Allah, His names and attributes, His power, and the teachings of the Prophets in form of the Shari'a are known through reason.⁸² However, Ibn Qayyim goes further by highlighting the important role of reason as one of the epistemological foundations of Sufism. This can mean that the literalist method embedded in the Salafi school cannot be fully applied, which is the reason for Imarah to group Ibn Qayyim in the rationalist Salafi school together with his teacher Ibn Taymiyya.⁸³

The second epistemological foundation of Ibn Qayyim's Sufism is the natural disposition (*fiṭra*).⁸⁴ He offers the many meanings of the word which can mean to split, start, create, create, and something that Allah gives to His creatures in the form of knowledge.⁸⁵ *Fiṭra* is also interpreted as a straight religion and straight instincts. He asserts that the human instinct entails worshipping its Creator and reflects its religious nature.

⁷⁸ Ibn Qayyim, *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa'ādah*, 353.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 120.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 215.

⁸¹ Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Fawa'id*, 252.

⁸² Ibn Qayyim, *Rawḍa al-Muḥibbin*, 11.

⁸³ Imārah, *al-Salaf wa al-Salafīyya*, 55.

⁸⁴ Ibn Qayyim, *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa'ādah*, 216.

⁸⁵ al-Qūṣī, *al-Manhaj al-Salafī*, 241.

Ibn Qayyim understood *fiṭrah* as one of the sources of human knowledge. Combined with reason it has a very important role in knowing Allah and His nature. He emphasized that “the human disposition, which is a religious instinct, believes that this world has a creator who is all-powerful, gentle, and perfect in His substance and nature, who wants nothing but goodness for His servants”.⁸⁶ Thus, *fiṭra* is a priori knowledge that is known instinctively without research and reasoning. This knowledge is embedded in man and cannot be erased.

Concluding Remarks

Based on the discussion above the researcher has been able to draw several conclusions. First, the basis of the thought of the Salafi *taṣawwuf* of Ibn Qayyim is the Qur’ān, the Sunnah, and the teachings of the trusted authorities. He emphasized the necessity of consistency in adhering to the two foundations, the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. He also heavily relied on the ideas of his teacher, Ibn Taymiyya who exerted a strong influence on him, yet allowed him to grow and further develop his own position independently. Ibn Qayyim’s analytical approach allowed him to incorporate many of the teachings of previous ascetics and Sufi shaykhs who had proven steadfast in their faith, and founded their own *tariqahs*, as long as their opinions did not contradict the two main sources of Islam. Second, Ibn Qayyim established that reason and *fiṭrah* play a very important role in generating knowledge, especially the knowledge of God. Reason is the key tool for accepting the divine message. Likewise, *fiṭra* encompasses the aspect of intuitive knowledge that shapes man’s religious nature and awareness of the Creator. Third, Ibn Qayyim equalled the discipline of *taṣawwuf* with morality. It aims to purify the soul so that the soul is ready to travel to God, which is a path of love. Fourth, he consequently applied the Salafi method, specifically in terms of placing revelation above reason, rejecting the use of *ta’wīl* and closely adhering to the words of the Qur’ān. His approach to Sufism was to perform an objective evaluation of the Sufi teachings circulating at his time. Instead of joining either side, the side of those who condemned it as unlawful innovation (*bid’ā*) or the side of those who accepted it uncritically, Ibn Qayyim chose to conduct an extensive review of its

⁸⁶ Ibn Qayyim, *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa’ādah*, 342.

ideas and practices, rejecting those elements that he found objectionable and accepting others that he found commendable. By assuming the role of an independent arbitrator and applying his methodology consequently, he succeeded in influencing both camps, and his authority as a scholar was acknowledged in Sufi and non-Sufi circles alike.

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