

# Ibn Taymiyyah: His Philosophical Thought on Causality

Sumedi

## ملخص

يرى الكاتب أن ابن تيمية كثيرا ما يساء إليه الفهم حتى الآن, فكثير من الناس يعرفونه كرجل ضد عقلي, ومفكر حربي ومتكلم إحيائي أكثر منه إلى فيلسوف. فيحاول الكاتب أن يبرهن بحجج قوية أن ابن تيمية أيضا فيلسوف, عن طريق إبراز أفكاره الفلسفية عن السببية.

وفي هذا المضمار يحاول لكاتب جمع آراء ابن تيمية المنتشرة في الكتب المتنوعة وإعادة بناءها في إطار تفكيري مترابط إذ ليس هناك كتاب مخصوص يبحث عن فلسفته السببية. ولهذا يقوم الكاتب بتحليل الكلمات الخاصة التي استخدمها والتي تتضمن معنى السببية وهي: علة و معثر و سبب و موجد و حدث أو أفعالها وهي: أعلّ و أثر و سبب و أوجد و أحدث. ويحلل الكاتب كلمات: العلة والتأثير والإحداث فيما يخص بالسبب, كما يحلل كلمات: المعلول والمعطر والمسبب والحادث المنتشرة في أعمال ابن تيمية فيما يخصّ بالمسبب.  
(س س)

## Abstrak

Ibn Taymiyyah, menurut penulis artikel ini, banyak disalahpahami. Ia lebih dikenal sebagai seorang tokoh yang anti-rasionalis, pemikir literal dan teolog revivalis, ketimbang seorang filosof. Berangkat dari sini lah artikel ini ingin melacak pemikiran filosofis Ibn Taymiyyah dengan merekonstruksi pemikirannya tentang kausalitas. Sebuah upaya yang tidak mudah memang, karena Ibn Taymiyyah tidak menulis satu buku tersendiri tentang hal ini.

Upaya rekonstruksi dilakukan dengan melacak konsep itu yang masih terserak di berbagai karyanya. Maka dipilihkan pengkajian atas beberapa kata kunci yang mengekspresikan kausalitas itu. Dalam kata benda: *sabab*, *al-'illah*, *al-muatstsir*, *al-sabab*, *al-muġid* and *al-ḥadats*; dalam kata kerja: *sabbaba*, *'allala*, *awjada*, *aḥdatsa*, dan *atstsara*. Sementara kata yang mengekspresikan proses transformasi dari sebab ke akibat (*causation*) adalah *al-ta'līl*, *al-ta'tsīr*, dan *al-iḥdāth*, sedangkan efek yang diproduksi oleh sebab diekspresikan dalam kata-kata: *al-musabbab*, *al-ma'lul*, *al-muḥdats* dan *al-muatstsar*.

Setelah membahas selintas tentang sejarah hidup Ibn Taymiyyah, penulis kemudian membahas sub-sub tema berikut: kausalitas dan kausasi, elemen-elemen kausasi, macam-macam sebab, persepsi-rasa dan kemampuan akal, statemen-stetemen empirik, dan kausasi dan kemungkinan peristiwa melingkar tanpa batas (*daur* atau *tasalsul*).

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## 1. Introduction

This writing will in particular focus on Ibn Taymiyyah's philosophical thoughts on the causality. Although his philosophical thoughts on the causality were expressed in a scattered manner, not only in a certain book written in a long manner and in detail - and this is one of the typical modes of his composition - but nearly in every part of his books as well, they will possibly be able to be reconstructed in such a way from some certain books such as *Muwaḥḥaqah Ṣaḥīḥ al-Manqūl li Ṣarīḥ al-Ma'qūl*, *Dar' Ta'ārūḍ al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, *al-Qadā' wa al-Qadar*, *Minḥāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah*, *al-Radd 'alā al-Manṭiqīyyīn*, *Naqd al-Manṭiq* and *al-Risālah al-Tadmuriyyah*, *Kitāb al-Nubuwwāṭ*, *Majmu' Fatawā*, *Majmu'ah al-Rasāil wa al-Masāil*, that his thought on the causality appears to be clear and to be easily understandable. However, other books or sources of his works will be made use as far as they are urgently needed to complete the explanation.

The present emphasis is placed solely on his books mentioned above in order to comprehend his deep philosophical thoughts on the causality necessarily and importantly informed to public thinkers who are eager to know more about Ibn Taymiyyah's original intellectuality. Because so far many of people might repeatedly hear that Ibn Taymiyyah is thought of as the originator of reformation of Islamic thought but they have hardly understood his so great ideas that it will be necessary to commence to let them

know his scattered thoughts which are obstructed or hidden on account of his other ones which are seemingly more dominant.

This is of much importance since Ibn Taymiyyah, to the writer's mind, has been misunderstood. Until now, he is still seen by many as an anti-rationalist, a literal thinker, and a theologian rather than a philosopher, and it does not mean that he is not so; but as a matter of fact, he is indeed not so. Through this writing, readers will find some of such accurate facts that they will show the readers that his ideas need developing further in order that what every Muslim thinker develops is based on a historical continuance because in the scientific world there is no jump and shock and they will also know whether or not his system of thought is theological or philosophical or even theologico-philosophical because in general there exist at least two things characterizing one to be a philosopher; firstly, he must be concerned with matters of a high degree of *generality*, and secondly, he must be at home among *abstract ideas*.<sup>1</sup> These two characteristics of philosophical thought may be used to see critically how far Ibn Taymiyyah's thought on causality is.

This writing of Ibn Taymiyyah's philosophical thought on the causality will be made up of Ibn Taymiyyah at a glance, meaning of causality itself and causation, requirements of causation, kinds of the cause, sense-perceptions, capability of the reason, empirical statements, and causation and probability of an endless chain of events (*al-tasalsul*). Each of those will be put forward as follows.

## 2. Ibn Taymiyyah at a Glance

Based upon the popularly trusted sources concerning Ibn Taymiyyah, it can be described that Ibn Taymiyyah (661 H/1263 M- 728 H/1328 M) was a Muslim thinker born in Harrān, Syria, on Monday, the 10<sup>th</sup> of Rabi' I 661/ 22 January 1263. His original name is Ahmad Taqī al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn 'Abd al-Salām ibn Taymiyyah. His father and grandfather were well-educated people. He together with them composed one book on *Usūl al-Fiqh, al-Musawwadah*. He was of high intelligence and strong memory shown by the fact that he had already kept the Koran in memory since seven years of

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Warnock (ed.), *Women Philosophers* (London: Orion Publishing Group, 1997), p.xxix.

his age and he had become a *muftī* in place of his father at seventeen years old.<sup>2</sup>

By Ibn Taymiyyah's time, theology, philosophy and jurisprudence have made remarkable progress and given rise to different schools of thought, but unfortunately the political dissensions and doctrinal differences sapped the unity of the Muslims and made their countries easy prey to Mongol invasions in the seventh/thirteenth century.<sup>3</sup> Although this situation was, as a matter of fact, not conducive for most of people to make the valuable achievement in the academic level, it is generative for him to do at his best so that his intellectual works left are useful for those who live and like to think after his death. He was at that time not only as a composer of various books of thoughts on religion, economy, state-constitution, and philosophy but also as an active participant of war to defend and to secure his own country from Tatar's attack. Such an achievement may be so rare, but real, that it can be regarded as an example for everyone to make a progress in spite of a lot of difficulties and hindrances.

### 3. Causality and Causation

The word *causality* is a noun formed from an adjective *causal* from an original noun, namely *cause* which means *something which produces an effect*. At the different time, *cause* can function as a verb which means *be the cause of or make happen*.<sup>4</sup> The noun form of the verb *cause* is *causation*. Causation is the process of transformation of the cause to the effect. Every change of something has more than three causes or at least four conditioning and influencing ones. Ibn Taymiyyah made use of the words *al-'illah*, *al-muaththir*, *al-sabab*, *al-muġid* and *al-ĥadath* for the similar meaning of the cause. The verbs used are *sabbaba*, *'allala*, *awjada*, *aĥdatha*, and *aththara* that stand for the verb *cause* and he sometimes also used other verbs having the same meaning as those ones. While for causation, he used *al-ta'līl* or *al-ta'thīr* or *al-iĥdāth*. Effect pro-

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<sup>2</sup> Abu al-Hasan 'Ali al-Hasani al-Nadwi, *Al-Hafiz Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah* (Kuwait: Dar al-Qalam, 1978), p. 34-38. And also see Abdul Azim Islahi, *Economic Concept of Ibn Taymiyyah* (United Kingdom: The Islamic Foundation, 1988), p. 58).

Serajul Haque, "Theologico-philosophical Thought Chapter XLI Ibn Taymiyyah," in M.M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1983), p. 796.

<sup>4</sup> A S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 133.

duced by the causes is termed *al-musabbab* or *al-ma'lul* or other terms with the same meanings as those, for example, *al-muh}dath* or *al-muaththar*.

Something, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, will not change or will not remain except with the existence of the cause.<sup>5</sup> This is his standpoint which is also held by most of the Muslim people and of the intellectuals. From his clear statement, it can be said that every happening or event in the world, either ordinary events or strange ones with no exceptions at all, must be able to be analyzed by use of the principle of causality or the causal law. This shows that causality is always concerned with every thing at any time. There is no happening at all without any causality which he regarded as God's iron law and this is knowable from his statement that if someone states: "In fact this thing has been determined (by God) and will be gained with no causes and if this thing has not been determined, this will of course not be gained", it is a must to tell him that this has been determined with causes and has never been determined without any causes at all.<sup>6</sup>

This principle of causality is, in his mind, one of the most important principles showing God's wisdom, sovereignty and absolute ability. God's absolute ability can be known from His first creation to the first creature while His wisdom is shown by the principle that His next creation to other creatures is through the principle of causality. Ibn Taymiyyah, concerning this, has ever said that:

It is He Who has created all of the causes and of the effects and He made His creation to some things as the requirements and causes for His creation to the others and at the same time He Himself does not need both (requirement and causes and He also constructs some of the creatures with some others (but) for the sake of His wisdom in relation to, and returning to, the causes.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah juz 1* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), p. 51. The Arabic text is *wa inna al-mumkin lā yah}duth wa lā yabqā illā}bi al-muaththir*.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu'ah al-Rasāil wa al-Masāil*, book 2, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1992), p. 331-332. The Arabic text is: *Fa idhā}qāla al-qāil: "in kāna maqdu}rā, h}as}jala bi dūni al-sabab, wa illā, lam yah}sul", fa jawābuh: "Annahu maqdu}r bi al-sabab wa laysa maqdu}rā bi dūni al-sabab*.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Qada} wa al-Qadar* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1991), p. 282. The Arabic text is: *Wa Allāh subhānahu khalāqa al-asbāb wa al-musabbabā} wa ja'ala khalqa al-ba'd} shartan wa sababan fi khalq} ghayrih wa huwa ma'a dhalika ghanīy 'an al-ishtirā} wa al-tasabbub wa nazama ba'dahā} bi ba'd} lakin li hikmah tata'allaq} bi al-asbāb wa ta'u}d ilayhā} wa Allāh 'azīz Hakīm*.

It seems to the writer that he wants to synthesize what Al-Gazaliy said in relation to God's absolute ability and what Ibn Rusyd defended concerning the principle of causality. It is of high probability because he also criticized them both as seen in his books especially in *Dar' Ta'ārud al-'Aql wa al-Naql*. Not only did he want to say that God is almighty but he was also willing to say that the causal law would never lower His all-powerfulness. It is these two principles, the principle of God's al-powerfulness beyond measure and the principle of certainty of the causal law, which enable all human-kinds to obey His rules either relating to the nature (worldly or *kawniyyah*) or to His commands and prohibitions (religious or *syar'iyyah*). Therefore, it may not be wrong to say that Ibn Taymiyyah has been influenced by Ibn Rusyd as expressed by 'Abid al-Jābirī or other intellectuals. As a matter of fact, Ibn Taymiyyah wanted to bring every thinker to come to his conclusion that nothing happens in this world or in the hereafter except with causes.<sup>8</sup> Or it can be said that causality is the only law existing in this world and in the hereafter. This causal law does not prevent God to do or to create something outside the general causal law known to common people. This does not mean that there is one happening without following the causal law because He, God, at any time needs to show His power to protect His bondmen faithful to Him as one of His guarantees.

Ibn Taymiyyah, then, reminded everyone of the danger of the acknowledgment that the causes influence the effect independently which he thought of as the entrance toward getting lost. The refutation to the influencing of the causes and the omission of them are likened to the riding of something impossible.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, everything has its own nature in itself and it is not by chance but intentionally willed by God. It is only God, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, Who created all causes and effects<sup>10</sup> but it is rather difficult for everyone to differentiate whether the nature of everything has been determined by God or whether everything has its own nature from within, without being given by Him. The second question seems to be answerable and understandable by two groups of people who have a point of view which is

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<sup>8</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Qaḍā'*, p. 92. The Arabic text is: *fa laysa fi al-dunya wa al-akhirat syay' illā bi al-sabab*.

<sup>9</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Qaḍā'*, p. 282. The Arabic text is: *fa inna i'tiqād ta'thīr al-asbāb 'alā al-istiqlāl dukhūl fī al-ḍalāl wa l'tiqād nafyi athariha wa ilgāiha rukub al-muḥāl*.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Qaḍā'*, p. 92. The Arabic Text is: *Wa Allāh khalaqa al-asbab wa al-musabbabāt*.

different from each other; but the first one is not easy for those who confess that the nature of everything is really determined by God to prove before their opponents that the effectiveness of the nature of everything is determined by God because of the fact that everything has its own permanent nature in itself. In such a condition, the miracle needs to be shown in front of the refuters when they deny the dependence of nature of everything on Him. The miracle-show is, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, of five functions, namely (1) to prove that it happens in a causal way,<sup>11</sup> (2) to prove that God's absolute ability is demonstrated not only for His first creation to the creature but it is also repeated at any time when necessary to look after His causal law and not to let many people become atheists or polytheists and to prevent them from thinking in a secular manner,<sup>12</sup> (3) to show the constant dependence of nature of everything on Him,<sup>13</sup> (4) to criticize an opinion or a view stating that the validity of science is unnecessarily legitimated by religion as held by some atheistic scientists and philosophers, if by religion changed and polluted by its adherents in its some principles, it is so (unnecessary), but if by the pure religion, it is necessary because the science is definite in itself,<sup>14</sup> and (5) to indicate that the Islamic religion has never been afraid of being lessened or lowered by the validity of the science because the pure religion such as Islam or others is not only in line with it but also give a support to it.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This is based on Ibn Taymiyyah's general principle of causality which says that nothing happens in this world and in the hereafter except on account of the cause. The Arabic text is *Wa laysa fī al-dunyā wa al-akhirah shay' illā bi sabab*. See: Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Qaḍā'*, p. 92.

<sup>12</sup> This comprehension is taken from Ibn Taymiyyah's statement that in fact Allah is the Creator of every thing and every thing other than Him is independently incapable of creating anything at all. See: Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kitāb al-Nubuwwat* (Kairo: Maktabah al-Salafiyyah, 1936), p. 275. *Fa inna Allah khāliq kulli shay' wa ghayruh lā yastaqill bi ihdāth syay'*.

<sup>13</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Radd alā al-Mantiqiyīn* (Pakistan: Idārah Turjumah al-Sunnah Lahore, 1982), The Arabic text is *Lā yastaqill bi ihdāth shay' aḥad ghayr Allah*. What Ibn Taymiyyah said seemed to have been taken from Ibn Rusyd who said: "*Fa lā yasyukk aḥad min al-falasifah fī anna al-ihraq al-wāqī' fī al-qutn min al-nār mathalā, anna al-nār hiya alfa' ilah lahu, lākin lā bi iṭlāq*". See Ibn Rusyd, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, Volume 2, p. 793.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah said that everything which is known by the sound reason is always in line with, and is justified by, what is found from the revelation. See, Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Radd*, p. 260. The Arabic text is : *bal kullu mā 'ulima bi al-'aql al-ṣarīh, fala' yujād 'an al-rasul illā mā yuwāfiqih wa yusaddiquh*.

<sup>15</sup> This is based on Ibn Taymiyyah's statement that the logical proof which is clear will never be in contradictory with the revealed. See: Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū'ah al-Rasā'il wa al-Masā'il*, vol. 2 p. 206. The Arabic text is : *Bal al-'aql al-ṣarīh innamā yuwāfiq mā athbatah*

Because of this, Ibn Taymiyyah said that if its causes have definitely been determined (by God), then His determination is refutable by His other determination,<sup>16</sup> and consequently, someone can protect himself with God's determination from the danger of His other one. And also because of this, muslim thinkers believe that Even the causality itself is, as said by Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, a part of the religious belief,<sup>17</sup> and another thinker said :

"The coming of Islam has made the unification between reason and nature. It has decided the independence of reason and has determined the existence of the certain causal law and the harmony between God and nature. If the stereotype of Christian is a contradiction between reason and nature, then the stereotype of islam is the complete harmony between reason and nature and therefore the scientific thought appears from the religious one.<sup>18</sup>

Because if He does not guarantee to protect and to help those who really obey Him, it will at a time be very difficult for them to spread His teachings especially when His enemies with their mastery of science and technology overcome and enslave the right faithful who obey Him and therefore Ibn Taymiyyah talked at a length and thoroughly about the miracle in his book *al-Nubuwwat*. One of his statements is that prophets' miracles are unable to be done and made by anybody (such as men, angels, satans or genies as mentioned in his other statements) by means of any causes.<sup>19</sup> Prophets' miracles are different from fortunetellers' ones. The differences are, according to him, in their causes and aims and their causes are that the righteous bondmen always call Allah, remember Him, and do whatever He loves such as their unification to Him, obedience to Him; while their aims are to help

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*al-rasul*.

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu'ah al-Rasāil wa al-Masāil*, juz 1, p. 174. The Arabic text is: *wa in kānat asbabuhu qad quddirat, fa yudfa' qadar Allāh bi qadar Allāh*.

<sup>17</sup> Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī, *Bunyah al-'Aql al-'Arabi* (al-Markaz al-Saqafi al-'Arabi, 1985), p. 571. The Arabic text is *wa yusbiḥu al-qawl bi al-talī bi irtibat al-musabbabāt bi asbabihā irtibatā ḍarūriyyā juzā min al-'aqidah al-dīniyyah nafsihā*.

<sup>18</sup> Hassan Hanafi, *Muqaddimah fi 'ilm al-Istighrah*, translated into Indonesian by M. Najib Buchori (Jakarta: Paramadina, 200), p. 244.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kitāb al-Nubuwwat*, p. 278. The Arabic text is: *wa āyāt al-anbiyā' lā yaqdiru aḥad an yattasila ilayhā bi sabab*. It means that without God's interference as the most decisive cause among the others, the miracle will not happen because it is beyond the human beings.

the religion and to do good to those needing. The causes of the fortunetellers' miracles are because of being helped by the satans and are obtainable with the causes such polytheism, lie, sin and their aim is to help the same deeds.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. Elements of Causation

The causation will fully take place if a certain number of requirements are fulfilled. Its requirements, according Ibn Taymiyyah, must be four. All the four are determined by God so that although they are seemingly independent of God's interference, but really they are dependent on Him. Concerning this, he ever said: "every cause must need another cause and something that will refute the hindrance hindering and preventing it from it and This is God Himself who need nothing else at all."<sup>21</sup> The first is the existence of a *cause* or of something that gives a certain influence to something else; the second is the availability of some partner or assistance which will help the cause work effectively; and the third is the absence of hindrance preventing the process of the causation itself between the cause and its partner on the one hand and a receiver affected on the other hand; and the fourth is the existence of something receiving the influence called *al-qābil* by Ibn Taymiyyah; Truly, all the four are called *causes*. All of those can be known from Ibn Taymiyyah's statement: "None of the causes can work independently in producing an effect. One cause should be combined with the other causes and all the hindrances must be put aside so that the effect wanted comes into existence."<sup>22</sup> The other causes, meant by him in the statement, are assistance of the first cause and receiver intentionally affected because he also said in another place that every cause has some assistance (or partner) and some opposition (or enemy), and therefore if the assistance, he says, does not help the cause and the opposition are not put aside, the effect intended will not come into being.<sup>23</sup> Fire, for instance, has a nature of heat

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<sup>20</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kitāb al-Nubuwwāt*, p. 260.

<sup>21</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-'Ubuliyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1981), p. 33. *Bal Kullu mā huwa sabab fa huwa muhtāj ilā sabab akhar yu'āwinuhu wa ilā mā yadfa' 'anhu al-dārar al-ladhī yu'ārīduhu wa yumānī'uhu wa huwa subḥānahu wahdahu al-ghanī 'an kulli ma siwāhu.*

<sup>22</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Qaḍā'*, p. 152. The Arabic text is: *wa laysa shay' min al-asbāb mustaqillā bi maṭlūb, bal lā budda min inḍimām asbāb ukhṛat ilayh wa lā budda ayḍā min ṣarḥ al-mawānī' wa al-mu'āradāt 'anhu hatta yuḥṣal al-maqsūd.*

<sup>23</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Qaḍā'*, p. 152. The Arabic text is: *fa kullu sabab fa lalu syarik wa lahu ḍidd. Fa in lam yu'āwinhu sharīkuhu wa lam yuṣarraḥ 'anhu ḍidduhu lam yuḥṣal sababuhu.*

which can flame the wood. The flamedness of the wood can happen with at least four causes which need one another, viz. fire, wood, no hindrance between both and the will as its assistance. Although the fire can flame the thing like the wood, but if the thing is like *al-yaqūt*, it will not flame the *al-yaqūt* at all because *al-yaqūt* is not able to become ready to be flamed by the fire. Although the first three have been ready but without any will of one who will cause three others to work properly, the causation will never take place as desired. The second instance is an *explosion* of a bomb. The explosion itself is an effect caused by four causes, namely a bomb which will explode, a bomber that will explode it, an earth with which the bomb will collide and no hindrance between them. Supposed the bomb is thrown from the outer space, it will not fall down to the earth because of no gravitation there. It means that the outer space is one of the hindrances that prevents the occurrence of explosion of the bomb. And although there are three causes, viz. bomb, earth, and no hindrance, but if without any bomber, the causation will not take place and there will be no explosion as an effect. Accordingly, Ibn Taymiyyah also said that if the causes are complete, the effect will be complete as well.<sup>24</sup> This means that Ibn Taymiyyah's thought can be made as a guidance of life, that is to say, the will to some effect will be fulfilled if the four causes have been ready.

It is worth mentioning, to make the causality clearer, that the effect intended can fail on account of other causes uncontrolled during the process of causation and to anticipate this great or small possibility of failure, it is important for everyone to know that in the process of causation there is a kind of movement, namely the process of transmission of the power influencing from the cause and its assistance to the effect receiving. Because of no movement, there will be no causation. Accordingly, it is necessary for everyone to be aware of the conception of the movement put forward by Ibn

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<sup>24</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhaj al-Sunnah al-nabawiyah*, juz 1, p. 76. The Arabic text is that *idha kamula al-sabab, kamula musabbabuhu*. Here the word *al-sabab*, in a singular form, can logically mean *one* or *several causes* because if someone says "book" in a singular form, it can mean any book in any number. And the prefix *al-* (or *the* in English) does not indicate the definite purpose but the kind or unit (or *al-jins* in Arabic). And therefore, the word *al-sabab* is translated into several causes because Ibn Taymiyyah has determined that the causation system must consist of at least three requirements, the influencer, the influenced and no hindrance between both. If one or two of them are absent, the causation will never take place. It means that the absence of one or two of them will be the cause of failure of the causation wanted.

Taymiyyah as well. Ibn Taymiyyah has explained obviously that:

There are three (kinds of) movements: natural, forced and intentional because something moving can move only with the power either in it or from without. The second movement, the forced, moves because of being forced. The first, if it does not have consciousness, is the natural movement; but if it has consciousness, it is the intentional movement. The forced movement always follows its forcer. Without its forcer, the forced movement (or the natural thing) will never move. While (of) the natural movement, if the natural object moves out from its place, it will return to its proper place, and (if) it has returned, it will rest in or on it, such as the soil and the water, if they fall down the earth and get to their proper places, (they both will rest and be calm automatically) and so do the others. Here there is nothing moving from the beginning except the mover having the intentional movement. So it has already been known that the beginning of all movements is the intentional movement and it has been known that human being do not move the air and the cloud and other objects. The movers of them are the living who always move them intentionally and they, the living, are angels.<sup>25</sup>

Although the angels are movers of objects or things which are not moved by the human being, they are God's messengers who are doing every His commands and therefore it is obvious for all of us to differentiate God as one of the causes from the other causes either already known or not yet known. The cause other than God, whatever it is or will be, cannot stand by itself in realizing the causation with a certain effect desired. The cause other than God must be together with three other compulsory causes, namely partner, receiver, and no hindrance between both. Every one of the four, other than God, must need the three others. This is the nature of each of the four

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<sup>25</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Radd*, p. 499-500. The Arabic text is *wa buyyina fihi anna al-harakat thalathah: tabi'iyyah wa qasriyyah wa iradiyyah. Li anna al-mutaharrik innama yataharrak bi quwwah fihi aw kharijah 'anhu. Wa al-thani huwa al-maqsur al-mutaharrik qasra. Wa al-awwal in lam yakun lahu syu'ur, fa hiya al-harakah al-tabi'iyyah. Wa in kana lahu syu'ur fa hiya al-iradiyyah. Wa al-qasriyyah tabi'ah lil-qasir. Fa law la huwa, lam yataharrak al-maqsur. Wa al-tabi'iyyah innama yakun idha kharaja al-jism al-tabi'iy 'an mahallih, fa yatlub bi tab'ih al-'ud ila mahallih. Fa idha 'ada, sakana. Ka al-turab idha saqata 'ala al-arḍ wa al-ma', idha wasala ila maqarrih, wa nahw dhalika. Fa lam yabqa huwa mutaharrik ibtida' illa al-mutaharrik bi al-harakah al-iradiyyah. Fa 'ulima anna jami'a al-harakat mabdaaha harakah iradiyyah. Wa ma'lum anna al-adamiyyin la yuharriku al-hawa' wa al-sahab wa ghayra dhalika min al-ajsam. Fa al-muharrik laha'ahya' yuharriku laha' bi al-iradah wa haula' hum al-malaikah. And also see *al-Qada'*, p. 154.*

causes which always function reciprocally because every cause must have some opposition and some partner except God only. Nevertheless, God will never nullify the nature being in every of His creature and it is noteworthy that the partner of one cause may be God Himself who can be a hindrance and who cannot be controlled by unbelievers physically.

It is true that everything has its own nature determined by God and this nature will never be changed nor be replaced for ever till Doomsday. Concerning this, Ibn Taymiyyah said that God the Sublime in reality will not nullify His *custom* which is His *law*<sup>26</sup> and in another place he affirmed that He will never nullify and never change it.<sup>27</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah equalized the term custom and law both of which he utilized to refer to God's deeds in accordance with the principle of wisdom and justice.<sup>28</sup> The intended is that the effectiveness of all causes is inseparable from God and this is what is meant by Ibn Taymiyyah's statement that in fact Allah is the Creator of everything and whatever other than Him cannot alone create anything.<sup>29</sup> This will be clearer with his other statement that It is Allah the Sublime who creates (everything) by making all causes effective and by putting all hindrances aside.<sup>30</sup> The constant effectiveness and exactitude of the causes which last for ever constitute His wisdom and justice. It is only with the effectiveness and the exactitude of the causes that God will be possible to be obeyed by the human being during their lives. Therefore, if there are two things which are exactly the same from all sides and they both have a different effect and one of which is admitted and the other is denied, such attitude is, by Ibn Taymiyyah, regarded as a mistake. He has ever said:

"Your belief that Allah sometimes nullifies the custom (His laws) without any cause and wisdom falsifies yourselves. This is not known by you definitely and this falsifies you because you admit that there are the two

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<sup>26</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kitāb al-Nubuwwat*, p. 219. *Wa al-Rabb Ta'ālā fi al-haqīqah la yanquḍu 'ādātah al-latī hiya sunnatuh al-latī qāla: Sunnah Allah.....(al-Ahzāb: 62; al-Isrā': 77).*

<sup>27</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kitāb al-Nubuwwat*, p. 249. *Wa annahu lā yanquḍuhā wa la yubaddiluhā.*

<sup>28</sup> In Taymiyyah, *Kitāb al-Nubuwwat*, p. 219. *Fa 'ādātuhu wa sunnatuhu lā tatabaddalu idh af'ālūhu jāriyah 'alā wajh al-hikmah wa al-'adl.*

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kitāb al-Nubuwwat*, p. 275. The Arabic text is : *Fa inna Allāh khāliq kulli syay' wa ghayruhu lā yastaqill bi ihdāsi shay'.*

<sup>30</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Radd*, p. 537. The Arabic text is : *Wa Allāh Ta'āla huwa al-ladhī yakhlūq bi ta'thīr al-asbab wa bi daf' al-mawāni'.*

exactly same things and you confess one of them and deny the other one.”<sup>31</sup>

So it becomes clear that God, according to Him as well, will not go beyond what is customary except owing to the suitable cause.<sup>32</sup> This will also be clearer by the awareness of the kinds of causes to be explained then.

## 5. Kinds of Causes

The causes, according to Ibn Taymiyyah as far as the inquiry to his works is concerned, are determinable by two points of view, first, from power of the cause, and second, from the known cause. By a consideration of the power of the cause, the causes can be divided into two, namely, the definite cause and the indefinite one. The former is of the creature and the latter is only God. This is based on his statement that only God is the Creator of all causes and effects and there is nothing in the universe which can create one thing or two things except Allah only who created everything in pairs.<sup>33</sup> From the second point of view, the causes are also dividable into two, namely the known causes usually called *mu'tād* or *mu'tādah* and the unknown ones which he called *nādir* or *gharībah*.<sup>34</sup>

## 6. Sense-Perception and Capability of Reason

There are, in Ibn Taymiyyah's mind, two kinds of senses, namely, external senses and internal ones.<sup>35</sup> The external senses are senses of sight (eyes),

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<sup>31</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kitāb al-Nubuwwāṭ*, p. 220. *Lākin khatḥaakum l'tiqādukum anna al-'ādāt qad yanquḍuhu Allāh bi lā sabab wa li hikmah. Fa hādha laysa ma'lūmā lakum bi al-ḍarūrah wa khaṭaakum min haythu jawwaztum an yakūn shay'an mutasāwiyā min kulli wajh summa yu'lam bi ḍarūrah aw nazr thubūt aḥadithimā wa intifa'i al-ākhar.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, *Fa innahu subḥānahu lam yakhrūq 'ādah illā li sabab yunāsib dhalika mithl falaq al-bahr li muṣa.*

<sup>33</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, “al-Risalah al-Tadmuriyyah”, in Muḥammad Ḥamid al-Fiqi (ed.), *Nafāis* (t.k. : Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), p. 74. The Arabic text: *Fa innahu laysa fī al-wujūd wāhid ṣadara 'anhu wahdahū syay', lā wāhid wa la ithnān illā Allāh al-ladhī khalaqa al-azwāj kullahā.* And also before this he said that *Fa laysa fī al-wujūd syay' wāhid ya'af shay'an idhā sha'a illā Allāh wāhdahu.*

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Qaḍā'*, p. 219 and 358. *Wa al-asbāb minhā mu'tād wa minhā nādir.*

<sup>35</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dar' Ta'arud al-'Aql wa al-Naql*, juz' 6 (t.k.: Jami'ah al-Imam Muhammad ibn Su'ud al-Islamiyyah, 1981), p. 108. The Arabic text: *Fa al-hiss naw'ān; hiss zahir yuhissuhu al-insān bi masyā' irihi al-zahirah fa yarahu wa yasma' uhu wa hubāsyiruhu bi jildihi, wa hiss ba'in kamā anna al-insān yuhiss bimā fī ba'inīhi in al-ladhdhah wa al-alam wa al-hubb wa al-bughḍ wa al-farah wa al-huzn wa al-quwwah wa al-ḍa'f wa ghayr dhalika.*

of hearing (ears), of smelling (nose), of tasting (mouth), and of touching (skin). The internal sense is the heart (*al-qalb*). Each of the five senses has a special power and there is no sharing between them in perceiving something being without. The external and internal senses are ways by which things are known.<sup>36</sup>

The sense, said Ibn Taymiyyah, can only perceive the particular things,<sup>37</sup> and the sense perception gives an impression of the perceived to the reason or the mind. If someone sees a table, he will then get in his mind the impression of the table given by his sense. The impression or the picture of the table in his mind is called a *concept* or an *idea*. It is with the concept or the idea which someone can think or reason. The concept can be understood by other people if it is expressed in the form of a *word* of a certain language spoken or used together.

Because of the limitation of the sense capability of perceiving, each of the senses will never be able to know the general thing. The generality of things is only done by the reason or mind helped by its senses. The specialty of the reason is its capability of knowing the general concepts (or statements) but only by means of the senses. Concerning this, Ibn Taymiyyah said that the specialty of the reason is (its capability of) knowledge of the general concepts through the knowledge of the particular things and whoever denies this means his denial to the specialty of the reason of the human being.<sup>38</sup> Without any help from its senses, the reason will never be able to think or work properly. This means that the sense and the reason must help each other to know the reality of everything seen or unseen.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Naqd al-Mantiq* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, t.t.), p. 186. The Arabic text: *al-wajh al-rabi' anna Allah ja'ala li ibn Adam min al-hiss al-zahir wa al-baqin ma' yuhiss bihi al-asyya' wa ya' rifuha. Fa ya' rif bi sam' ihi wa basarihi wa syammihī wa dhawqihī wa lamsihī al-zahir mā ya' rif. Wa ya' rif ayda' bi mā yasyhaduhu wa yuhissuhu bi nafsihī wa qalbihī mā huwa a'zamu min dhalika.*

<sup>37</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Radd*, p. 300., The Arabic text is: *Fa inna al-hiss lā yudrik illa> shay'an khaṣṣan.*

<sup>38</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu'ah Fatawā*, Juz 9 (al-Ribāṭ al-Magrib: Maktabah al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), p. 238. The Arabic text is: *Fa inna khaṣṣah al-'aql ma' rifah al-kulliyāt bi tawassuṭ ma' rifah al-juziyyāt. Fa man ankarahā ankara khaṣṣah 'aql al-insān.*

## 7. Empirical Statements

A proposition inferred by the reason, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, is empirical,<sup>39</sup> or gained by means of the use of the sense because the reason will not work without any concept or idea given by the sense. However, the particular ideas, to him, are essentially more important for the reason than the universal ones because only from particular ideas will the general conclusion be able to be drawn correctly and usually found in the inductive inference. Indeed such an inference is found in the inductive reasoning which treats of the process of inference from the particular facts to the general conclusion.

The proposition inferred by reason through the process of reasoning based on the facts observed repeatedly can be the general one which is applied to every of the same case. The general inference, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, is also empirical because of incapability of the reason of thinking anything without any help of any sense. This principle of relationship between the reason and the sense determine the work of reason such as thinking, reasoning, memorizing, etc. and therefore the proposition whether it is general or particular is empirical.

Every sense can only know something particular, not general or universal. The reason, on account of its higher capability of knowledge of the things, can know and make the generalization based on the observed particular facts as mentioned before and from this it can be concluded that the general propositions really only exist in the mind and are never real outside the mind and this is what Ibn Taymiyyah said that the general propositions are only able to be proved in the mind, not outside it, and in the outside there are nothing except the particular things.<sup>40</sup> The truth of a statement must be empirical if in relation to the physical objects; but if in relation to the unseen, its standard for the truth of a statement is a revelation understandable by reason.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Radd*, p. 92-93. The Arabic text is: *Wa al-'ilm bi haḍhihi al-qaḍiyyah al-kulliyah tajribī ... fa haḍhihi la-qaḍiyyah al-kulliyah la tu'lam bi al-hiss, bal bima yatarakkab min al-hiss wa al-'aql.*

<sup>40</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Radd*, p. 124. The Arabic text is: *Wa al-kulliyāt innamā tatahaqqaq fī al-adhḥān lā fī al-a'yān wa laysa fī al-khārij illā ma'wjud mu'ayyan.*

## 8. Causation and Probability of an Endless Chain of Events

If it has been said before that a change in something has at least four causes which are not all independent of God because their effective work has been determined by Him for the first time and for ever so that the effectiveness of their causation represents and constitutes God's law and "no change" means "no causation" although no change itself is because of the causes, namely the absence of the causation itself and every body sees that there are a lot of changes in this world although some others seemingly remain, it means that all of those let one know that causality is the only general God's law applied to all His creatures without exception. If everything comes into existence or undergoes a change or keep permanent only on account of the existence of the causation in accordance with the causal law, it will lead us to think about the chain of all happenings, which sometimes makes us feel forced to conclude that each thing is doubly the cause and the effect. It means that every cause is the effect of the previous cause and every effect will become the cause of the next happening and so forth. Such thought will lead us to some conclusion that world come into being by itself and this is as the consequence of thinking causally and such will also bring us into an atheistic attitude. It is the problem being the lack of the causality of which Ibn Taymiyyah treated in detail by putting forward a theory that an endless chain of causality to the past (*al-tasalsul al-qablī*) is impossible but that to the future is possible, not a must,<sup>41</sup> because, as it has been explained before, God will at any time be one of the causes uncontrollable with the sophisticated and the most modern technology.

The causal law created by God and invented or discovered by the scientists aided by the philosophers, according to Ibn Taymiyyah, will never be nullified forever till Doomsday because it has been designed by Him in accordance with His wisdom and justice and His acts have always been running in a wise and just manner,<sup>42</sup> and God, he said, will actually never nullify or change His laws.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Muwafaqah Sahih al-Manqul li Sarih al-Ma'qul*, volume 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1985), p. 272-274.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kitab al-Nubuwwat*, p. 219. The Arabic text is: *Fa 'ādatuh wa sunnatuh lā tatabaddal idh al'aluhu jāriyah 'alā wajh al-hikmah wa al-'adl*.

<sup>43</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Kitab al-Nubuwwat*, p. 249. The Arabic text is: *Wa hādhihi sunnah Allah wa 'ādatuhu wa lihādihā yaqul subhānahu fī tahqīq 'ādātihi wa sunnātihi wa annahu lā yanquduhā wa lā yubaddiluhā*.

Events or happenings, which are so many, are effects which come into being with the existence of the previous causes either intentionally controlled or uncontrollable. What are now effects will be able to become the new causes of other happenings and so forth. Therefore, it can be said that every effect of the previous causes can be regarded as one of the new causes for the next effects desired and the previous causes were truly the effects. If there are ten happenings, each of which happened in a chainlike manner, it can be said that the second happening to the last one are effects. The first to the ninth are the causes and the first itself must have the causes which are not mentioned. From this explanation, it can be concluded that every event or happening must have the causes if traced backward so that this conclusion can sometimes lead one to believe in an endless chain of events (*al-tasalsul* or *al-dawr*) which will force him to be an atheist in the end. To this endless chain of events, Ibn Taymiyyah commented that the endless chain of the causes and effects is prevented.<sup>44</sup>

It seems physically provable that the endless chain of causality is true as shown by the principle of the energy conservation easily believed by the determinist physicists but based on the logical reasoning it is difficult to be defended on account of the presence of the natural happenings such as an unpredictable earthquake, a windstorm, and a rainstorm, which are all uncontrollable by the experts and scientists. Such happenings always bewilder them. In short the causation is a must for every change of all creatures and the endless chain of events is impossible because this shows the reason contradiction.

*The author is a lecturer at the Faculty of Education of State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) Sunan Kalijaga and doctoral candidate of the same institute, conducting the research on the comparison between the epistemological thought of Ibn Taymiyyah and that of Karl Raimund Popper.*

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<sup>44</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Qaḍāʾ*, p. 143. The Arabic text is: *al-tasalsul fī al-ʿilal wa al-maʿlūlāt fa hādha mumtaniʾ wifaqā.*