

The Origin of Human Language according to Ibn Ḥazm and the Ikhwan al-Şafā'

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Abstract:

The question regarding the origin of human language was and still is one of the biggest philosophical questions which has been theorized and talked about for a very long time, this topic was one which Socrates talked about and was further elaborated upon by Plato in one of his dialogues called "Cratylus".

Therefore it should come as no surprise that Muslim philosophers, thinkers and theologians dealt with, wrote about, and continue to write about the topic of language and its origin. Regarding the Islamic perspective on this topic, some said that language is *tawqīf* from God and others said that it's *iştilāḥ*, the group who said that language is *tawqīf* justify their position from the Qur'ānic verse "And he taught Adam the names of all things" They said that this is evidence that the origin of human language is God. This group accentuated the pre-eminent role that divine agency played a part in the imposition of language, i.e. words have been assigned their meanings primordially by God.

The counter argument to the idea of *tawqīf* is that if God is the originator of human language, what was the language that he taught Adam? Is it Syriac or Arabic or Hebrew or the Greek language? Moreover, was it one language or more than one, or did he teach him the names of all things in all languages?

The second viewpoint contrary to *tawqīf* is referred to as *iştilāḥ*, this viewpoint predicates that language was established and evolved via a process of common convention and agreement: words together with their meanings were assigned and

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given intrinsic value by human beings, although both viewpoints posit that the actual relationship between words and their assigned meanings remain entirely arbitrary, rejecting any natural link between the two. It is important to add that later Islamic scholarship accepted that both the viewpoints of *tawqīf* and *iṣṭilāḥ* were plausible, furthermore, within the course of the 9th/10th century opinions on this topic were ostensibly polarized between the orthodox and rationalist camps, with the former endorsing *tawqīf* and the later endorsing *iṣṭilāḥ*.

The reason to why I was motivated to explore and write about this topic is so I can reintroduce the Islamic perspective regarding this controversial issue, I will mainly be concentrating on the ideas and viewpoints of Ibn Ḥazm and the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* from this point onwards, I would like to know their views about the origin of human language, i.e. what is the origin of human language according to them?

Keywords: language, Ibn Ḥazm, *tawqīf*, *Ikhwan al-Ṣafā'*, *iṣṭilāḥ*. human language.

The historical debate about language origin

The debate about language origin started with the ancient Greek, more specifically with Socrates in Plato's *Cratylus*, later on Muslim philosophers, thinkers and theologians began to investigate this subject, this included the *Mu'tazilite* and the *Ikhwān al-Ṣaffā'*.

According to Abu al-Fatih al-Baghdadi, the *Mu'tazilite* favored the viewpoint of *iṣṭilāḥ*, they said that all languages are proved via *iṣṭilāḥ*, because if languages were approved by *tawqīf* from God, then God must create the knowledge about the formula and then the knowledge about the content, then create the knowledge which makes this formula as an evidence for the content, and if he were to create for us the knowledge about his attributes then it necessarily follows that he will create the knowledge about himself.

They also criticize those who say that language is *tawqīf* based upon God's saying "And he taught Adam the names of all things", they say that this is not proof as it is general and not specific.

He also adds² that according to Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, who was a sunni Muslim theologian, jurist and logician, it can be proved by *tawqīf* and by *iṣṭilāḥ*, and it can be partly be proved as *tawqīf* and partly as *iṣṭilāḥ*.

As al-Razi states³, since the pronunciation is of a benefit for the meaning, there are four possibilities:

The first: The saying that the pronunciation is for itself, this was the viewpoint of Abaad bin Suleiman.

The second: The *tawqīf*, this was the viewpoint of al-Ashari and Ibn fūrak.

The third: *Iṣṭilāḥ*, this is the viewpoint of Abū Hāshim and his followers.

The fourth: Some of it is *tawqīf*, and some is *iṣṭilāḥ*, this has two viewpoints, the first is that the origin of language is *iṣṭilāḥ*, while the rest is *tawqīf*, and the second viewpoint is the opposite by stating that the origin of language is *tawqīf*, while the rest is *iṣṭilāḥ*, this is the viewpoint of abi- Ishaq al-Isfarā'inī.

Regarding the sayings of Abbad bin Suleiman, al-Razi criticized them and said that the proof for their incorrectness is that if the denotation of the terms is subjectivism, it doesn't differ by the difference of the places and

² Al-Baghdadi, Abu'l- Fatih, al-Wuṣol ila al-Uṣul, part one, al-Ma'arif library, al-Ryād, 1983, p.121.

³ Al-Razi, Fakhr al-Din, al-Maḥṣūl fi-ulum uṣul al-fikh, part one, al-Risala institution, pp. 181-182.

directions, as every person would be able to guide himself to every language.

According to Harris and Tiller⁴, the myths about the origin of language were prevalent in many civilizations, these myths are useful since they clear the entrenched assumptions about man's ability to speak; among these is the story of the Bible.

The main question asked was: were the words created or not? This was one of the topics that the Sanskrit grammarians differed about, while this question didn't arise in the ancient dialogues pertaining to the Greek or Hebrew language, because the assumption was that language is an innovative work of some kind, and that words don't have an independent existence as natural things, from this point onwards the research starts directly by concentrating on the following question: who formed the first words? How and why had he formed them? Were they formed?

Regarding the Bible, it viewed language as a concept originated by humans, and that it started with the first human being, Adam (peace be upon him) so there is no doubt in the Bible that Adam named the animals accurately, furthermore the Bible tells us implicitly that even though every animal in nature has a name that denotes it, animals didn't get prescribed a name until Adam named them from inspiration by God.

⁴ Harris, Roy, & Tolbit, G. Tiller, the famous people of the linguistic thought, translated by Ahmad Kiali, Daral-Kotob al-Jadedda al- Mutaḥida, Beirut 2004, p.70.

It is also to be noted⁵ that according to what has been mentioned in Genesis, God didn't reject the names which Adam gave to the animals even if the name given was inaccurate, he also

didn't favor certain names over other names, so one can fairly concluded that this wasn't an invention neither was it a test from God to ensure that Adam recognized the names correctly, on the other hand, names were a human invention in which human beings specialized in giving names to animate and inanimate objects.

According to Ibn fūrak⁶, Abi-Hassan al-Ash'arī was favoring the viewpoint that language is tawqīf from God, and that it's not iṣṭilāḥ, as if it were iṣṭilāḥ, language acquisition will have no end, i.e. humans won't be able to agree on language until they have a language through which they use to arrive at an agreement upon a language that has no end that has no end.

He also adds that al-Ash'arī believed that language is tawqīf, as in his views he was firm that they mustn't exceed what has been mentioned in the Quran and sayings of the prophet and the convention of the Muslims.

Regarding Ikhwan al-Ṣafā', according to Ḥanafī⁷, they were a group of Islamic philosophers who wrote 51 epistles under the title "Epistles of brothers of purity" these epistles represent a philosophical encyclopedia

⁵ Harris & Tiller, *ibid*, pp. 70-71.

⁶ Ibn fūrak, Muhammad, *Maqalat al-shiekh Abi Hassan al-Ashari*, first edition, the library of religious culture, 2005, p.42.

⁷ Ḥanafī, Abd al-Min'im, *The encyclopedia of Islamic groups, schools and doctrines*, Dar al-Rashad, first edition, 1993. pp. 22-23.

that talk about many subjects such as math, logic and language, in these epistles they included their beliefs, ideas, thoughts and viewpoints on certain issues and subjects, from these epistles it seems as if Ikhwan al-Şafā' were influenced by the Neo-Platonic and Pythagorean Gnosticism, their purpose for writing the epistles was to form a panoramic view and a world religion that extends beyond all religions, which aims to connect man with the truth.

It's unknown who established this Islamic philosophical group, some said that Abdullah bin Maymūn, (one of the founders of the Bāṭiniyyah beliefs, which insists on the esoteric interpretation of the Qur'ān), was one of its founders, while the members were also unknown since the information and beliefs are hidden, it's said that Abu Suleiman al-Maqdisi, Abu al-Ḥassan al-Zinjabi and Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri were all members.

According to Al-Sawaḥ⁸, they believe that when God created Adam, he favored him over many other creations, and one of the favors that God gave Adam is the knowledge of the various sciences, this knowledge that differentiated Adam from all other creations of God, and in order to be able to acquire all these sciences God gave him the five senses, and through the five senses Adam can recognize everything around him, for example the ability to conceptualize about the past and the present anywhere at any time, which is also something that differentiates him from other creation which reside around him, he can understand the absent matters either by time or by place, God also provides him with the tools

⁸ Al-Sawaḥ, Firas, Ṭarīq Ikhwan al-Şafa'a, third edition, Dar al-Taqeen for translation and publishing, Damascus, 2016, p.189.

of reading and writing which he uses to understand the different meanings of words, languages and speech.

He also adds that Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' represent one of the Islamic theological and philosophical groups, they used to meet in secret to speak and negotiate about many religious and philosophical topics, they had their own ideas and interpretations for the religious texts, and their special philosophical beliefs are a result of their own research and studies after investigating the Greeks and the Persians.

As Ḥaja states⁹, their beliefs depend on the idea which states religion was befouled with ignorance and unawareness, and that philosophy is the only way to purify it from this ignorance and blindness, since it's the way to human wisdom and knowledge, and since the Greek philosophy connects to the beliefs of Muḥammad then it's a perfect match, i.e. perfection of the human being is in the Greek philosophy and the beliefs of Muḥammad, not in anything else.

What is important here is their ideas and thoughts, especially what they said and wrote about pertaining to the topic of language, since each Islamic philosophical group has its own thoughts and ideas that differentiate from other groups, as they even wrote about language before the time of Ibn Ḥazm, it's important for me to research and investigate their views about it.

⁹ Ḥaja, Muḥammad Luṭfi, *The history of Islamic Philosophy*, Hindawi Foundation for Education and Culture, Cairo, 2012, pp. 255-256.

Regarding their view about language, Ikhwan al-Şafā' say¹⁰ that the Knowledge about languages differs, and the reasons behind that include the following questions: What are the beliefs and view speech and sound pertaining from speech? How did one language turn into many languages while spreading everywhere? And finally how did language develop over time while changing from one generation to the other? All these questions are very important, especially the question about the origin from which all these various languages came from, and the various methodologies that interpret the origin of human language.

They also believe¹¹ that the origin of sound was from the movement of the bodies and their engagement with each other, and this engagement produces sounds that differ from each other, they also mention that sounds are of two kinds, the first is understandable and the second is an understandable, the first is the sounds of animals and the second is the sound of the other bodies, like stones and minerals, while the animal sounds are either logical or illogical, and the illogical ones are the sounds of the unspeakable animals, these produce intonations that are called sounds, but don't produce logical speech, since logical speech only comes out from sound articulation, then the tongue arranges these sounds to make them clear, understandable, full of meaning and well understood by the people receiving the sound, through this language they can deal with

¹⁰ Ikhwān al-Şafā' wa khilan al-wafā', The second part of the book of Ikhwān al-Şafā' wa khilan al-wafā', edited by: Abdullah, Aḥmad the seventeenth epistle on the diversity of languages, Nukhbat al-Akhbar Press, 1305 AH, p. 365.

¹¹ Ikhwān al-Şafā' wa khilan al-wafā' 1305, *ibid*, p. 370.

each other, fulfill their needs, express their views and opinions and this is what differentiates between the animal's voice and the logic of humans, and the language which they use.

I can now say that it became obvious for me how they perceive language, they classify it according to many aspects, i.e. either it's logical and meaningful or it is not, furthermore if it's understandable or if it is not, and from this point, they indicate that the language of humans is a logical language, i.e. the letters and the words must be arranged in a logical way to carry the meaning of each word by itself, and the meaning of each word in a sentence, through this, people will be able to express themselves and communicate with each other.

They also add¹² that the sound of the human speech isn't high nor is it low, it is in between, i.e. it's not too high as the snarl of the lions, the whinnying of the horse and even the braying of a donkey, and not silent like the sound of a fish, this logic also enables man to differentiate between the sounds that he hears such as the sound of wood, iron or the sound of water, he can differentiate between all these sounds by the logic that he has, while animals can't do this, they can't differentiate between all these sounds or tell what/who each one of these sounds belong to, in the same way as humans can do by the help of the logic that God gave them.

What I understood from this paragraph is the relationship between language and logic, i.e. without logic we can't have language, therefore

¹² Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa khilan al-wafā' 1305 AH, ibid, pp. 378-379.

we can't speak, moreover, humans think in a logical manner and this differentiates us from animals, as they don't have this form of logic, and because of this, they just make sounds, but are unable to create and use a language, they live with instinct but not logic, but the human being is a logical creation, he can use his mind to differentiate between evil and good, for this he is responsible for his deeds and his speech, even if it's a small word or a small action, and will be either rewarded or punished for them.

They also state¹³ that God created Adam and Eve from mud, they lived in heaven, then God enabled Adam to speak and he spoke, and taught him the names of all things, names of all animals, minerals and plants, they (Adam and Eve) stayed in heaven until they ate from the tree that God asked them not to eat from, then they were forced to come down on earth, they lived on earth with other animals eating from the fruits of the trees and drinking from the water of the earth, until Eve became pregnant, and that was the beginning of the human race, then they began to increase and Adam started teaching and educating them the things that are important for them, and for their benefit such as planting in order to be able to feed themselves.

What I can take away from this is that language was an important aspect from the beginning of human existence on earth, or how could Adam teach his sons without language? And how could he speak and communicate

¹³ Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa khilān al-wafā' 1305 AH, ibid, p. 384.

with his children and his wife? All these questions testify the importance of the language.

They also indicate¹⁴ that the sounds that animals make, such as the sounds they make when they call their infants if they became absent, or the sounds that birds make when they imitate humans, or the monkeys' imitation of man, all these sounds can't be called meaningful, but they are natural sounds without the logic of the human language.

They also found¹⁵ that meanings are found and expressed by all people, whether they are educated or uneducated, meanings can be made everywhere, whether in homes, markets and in streets, but few are those who are able to express these meanings with good language, some people may want to get a point across but are unable to deliver it in the way or the language that makes it understandable, and others struggle to get the intended meaning behind a certain message across, since meanings are similar to souls and terms are similar to the physical body, it's important to use the appropriate language that enables the speaker to deliver his speech and message in the correct way, and makes the listener understand it in the way that's similar to what he/she meant.

Regarding the Arabic language, it's mentioned¹⁶ that the first one who spoke in Arabic was Ya'rub bin Sam, afterwards it spread into many places and increased in usage as the speakers of the Arabic language increased, it grew until each Arab tribe had its own dialect which

¹⁴ Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa khilan al-wafā' 1305 AH, ibid, p. 386.

¹⁵ Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa khilan al-wafā' 1305 AH, ibid, p. 391

¹⁶ Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' wa khilan al-wafā' 1305 AH, ibid, p. 412.

differentiated from other tribes, because of this, they called certain animate and inanimate objects different names in comparison to other Arab tribes, this continued until one object had different names in the Arabic language.

I do in fact agree with what they say, i.e. between the speakers of the same language sometimes it's difficult to understand what they are saying, and if I take the Arabic language as an example, I will say that even though we use the same letters, it's difficult for me to understand people from Algeria or Morocco, even those who live in the same country use different terms and dialects, i.e. you can tell if the person lives in the city, or in the countryside or in the wild, by listening to the language and the terms that he/she uses.

According to Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'¹⁷, after Adam came down to earth, he spoke to his children in Syriac, although others have said in Nabataean, which stipulates that they understood each other through meaning, while also describing everything through letters, although they weren't composed letters and weren't formed by writing, Adam taught them names through pronunciation, then people memorised the names and attributes from their ancestors, and it continued to be passed on from generation to the next, then the letters proceeded to settle at 24 which had direct influence from Greek writing.

¹⁷ Ikhwan al-Ṣafā' wa khilan al-waffa 1305 AH, *ibid*, p. 385.

So, it seems to me that the views about the origin of language were indeed different and conflicting, some said it's *tawqīf* from God, depending on the Qur'ān as evidence, and depending on what has been mentioned above regarding the origin of the human language, while others said it's *iştilah*, and these people also have their theories, which they used to advocate their view that language is *iştilah*, for this they criticize the idea of *tawqīf*, while the third party maintain the idea that part of language is *tawqīf* and the other part is *iştilah*, and from this, it's clear that Muslims didn't have a particular opinion with consensus about the origin of human language, in addition, this was evidence that they had the opportunity to think independently about this topic, and to interpret the verses of the Qur'ān, and this can be seen when viewing what they had to say about God stating "And he taught Adam the names of all things", some said that this is general, and can't be used to advocate the viewpoint of *tawqīf*.

They also mention that the origin for this language differs due to the increasing number of humans and the fact that they live in different parts of the world.

Regarding the difference between animal voice and human speech, they say that human speech attest to meanings, it's the full pronunciation by any letter, while the animal voice doesn't have the logical directions and the pronounced phrases that humans form, they (animals) use their sounds to attract provisions and to prevent harmful situations, such as when they want to be fed, or are thirsty and need to drink water but are prevented from getting it, or upon calling their children if they wander away from their mother, the same can be said about birds.

While the sound of the human being¹⁸ is of speech and pronunciation as a whole, such as reciting the Qur'ān and the reading of poetry, all of this speech belongs to it the meaning that is wanted from it, so it's important to mention that the difference between the speech and languages of the human being is due to the difference in their physical bodies, while the origin of language issue is due to the letters outcome, while others said that bad speech is due to bad composition and a bad mood, it's not as simple, it's due to a flaw in the tongue which causes the letters to come out in a different notion.

Here they differentiate between the animals' voices including birds, and the language of the human being, because animals use their voices for things which pertain to no logic, such as the sounds they make when they are hungry and are asking for food, or if there is danger to which they need protection from their mothers and fathers, while human language is first of all a logical language, it's not just sounds like the ones that animals make, moreover, human language solidifies a meaning.

In their book titled "the philosophy of language"¹⁹, the authors consider it as a puzzle that the human being is the only species, who can speak, not only that, but he is able to speak many languages that are different from one another, and they differ to the point that there becomes no connection whatsoever between one language and the other, so they ask why? And

¹⁸ Ikhwan al-Ṣafā' wa khilan al-waffa 1305 AH, ibid, p. 388.

¹⁹ Oro, Slivian, Dishan, Jack, kologly, Jamal, *philosophy of language*, the Arabic organization for translation, first edition, Beirut 2012, p.51.

this is the question that all other theories tried to answer, in Genesis for example it present the topic from two points of view:

From one side there's Adam who named animals and all other animate and inanimate objects, and this explains the emergence of the first language, and on the other side, there's God who established the first difference between the languages.

According to Shah²⁰, Muslim scholars developed two principle theses on language origin (aşl al-lugha), the first thesis is what is commonly referred to as tawqīf, accentuating the pre-eminent role that divine agency played in the imposition of language, if we take this perspective, it follows that words have been assigned their meanings primordially by God.

On the other side, there's an antithesis to this position, that's called iştīlāh, which predicates that language was established and evolved via a process of common convention and agreement i.e. words with their meanings were assigned by human beings, although the two viewpoints posit that the actual relationship between words and their assigned meanings remains entirely arbitrary, rejecting any sort of natural link between the two.

Shah also mentions that within the orthodox Islamic circles, they tended to endorse the thesis of tawqīf, despite the fact that a number of its

²⁰ Shah, Muştfa, “*Classical Islamic discourse on the origins of language*”: *Cultural memory and the defense of orthodoxy*, School of Oriental and African studies, London University, brill.nl/nu, 2011, p. 314.

advocates were individuals who weren't known for their orthodox inclination.

I believe that orthodox Muslims restricted themselves to what the Qur'ān says, and not only that, they also restricted themselves to the apparent meaning of the Qur'ān, and this is because they think the Qur'ān is clear and therefore needs no interpretation of any kind, therefore since God says in the Qur'ān "And he taught Adam the names of all things", they believe that this is a clear proof that God is the originator of human language.

He continues and states²¹ that as the theological trajectories of the discourse evolved, both theories were equally plausible, and of course some scholars adapted alternate explanations of the origins of language that fused peculiar aspects of the two main viewpoints. The

writer also states that classical Muslim sources which talked about the origin of language, frequently affirm that the *iṣṭilāḥ* viewpoint was first introduced by Abū Hāshim Ibn al-Jubbā'ī, who was a distinguished Mu'tazilite theologian.

He also mentions²² that much of the discussion about the origins of language was inspired by the intellectual milieu of deliberations between the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites, and as one would expect other contributions to the debate came from other fractions within the religious circle.

²¹ Shah 2011, *ibid*, pp. 315-316.

²² Shah 2011, *ibid*, pp. 318-319.

According to the writer, during the era in which Abū Hāshim lived, the movement associated with the Mu'tazilites had relinquished much of its political influence, but at the same time continued to develop theological ideas and solutions regarding various theological quandaries.

He also declared that the idea of language being *tawqīf* or *iṣṭilāḥ* is preserved in theological, philosophical, exegetical and legal literature, and by virtue of these materials, a discussion arose relating to the origin of human language, he also adds that the concept of *iṣṭilāḥ* was articulated before it was attributed to Abū Hāshim ibn al-Jubbā'ī.

The writer states²³ that al-Ash'arī is identified himself as a rejecter of the thesis of *iṣṭilāḥ*, and leaned towards the thesis of *tawqīf*.

He also adds that Ibn Fūrak confirms that al-Ash'arī was of the opinion that language was established via *tawqīf*, he uses the argument of infinite regress to dismiss *iṣṭilāḥ* on the basis that every stage of positing the communicative meaning of language would necessarily require a preceding phase of *muwāḍa'a*: Which means that language isn't *tawqīf* but is a result of common agreement between the people in a society, therefore it means that the only plausible explanation left for the origin of language was that of *tawqīf*.

Ibn Fūrak also contends that while al-Ash'arī accepted that the very roots of language were established via *tawqīf*, he conceded that some of the branches of language could be determined by a process of analogy and applied by endeavor (*ijtihād*).

²³ Shah 2011, *ibid*, pp. 322-323.

What I can extrapolate from what has been mentioned above is that this topic, referring to the origin of human language is one of the topics that both Islamic groups, the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites differed about, this is just a small fraction of groups whom differed about this topic, there are many other theological groups that had a difference of opinion as related to the topic, but since it doesn't affect the basic principles of the Islamic religion, it doesn't pose a problem to have contradicting views about it, whereas basic principles such as the Qur'ān is from God, and Muḥammad is the prophet of God and the prayers have no room for interpretation, while the question about the origin of language is something that Muslims can have different views about.

What must be taken into consideration is that both parties are Sunni Muslims, so these dialogues can be considered as an intellectual debate no more and no less, even then, the Qur'ān itself asks Muslims to think about and ponder over it's verse, as God says²⁴ "Don't they then earnestly seek to understand the Qur'ān, or are there locks upon their hearts".

From this verse, I can make the claim that it's a divine order for Muslims to think about the Qur'ān and to interpret it to be able to get to the truth behind its verses, and not to just read and memorize it, and the prophet himself encouraged the Muslims to interpret the Qur'ān, and get to the truth behind its verses.

Part 2: The life and the educational background of Ibn Ḥazm

²⁴ The Holy Qur'ān, Surrat 20: 24.

In his *Ṭabaqat al-Umum*²⁵, Al-Andalusi states that Ibn Ḥazm was born before sunrise in the last day of Ramaḍān in the year 384 AH, and died in the year 456 AD, his full name was Abu-Muḥammad Ali bin Aḥmad bin Sa'īd bin Ḥazm al- Andalusī. His father's origins were from the west of Andalusia. He lived in Cordoba with his family, where they enjoyed great fame because his father Abū 'Amr Aḥmad bin Sa'īd was a man of great position and a minister for al-Manṣur Muḥammad bin Abd -Allah, who was the governor of Andalusia at the time of the Caliph Hisham al-Mu'ayyad bi-llah, while Ibn Ḥazm was a minister for Abd-Alraḥman al-Mustazhr bi-Allah, he left the job and started reading and investigating sciences, especially the sciences pertaining to logic. He wrote a book about logic which he called "al-Taqrīb fi-Ḥadd- al-Mantiq", through which he explained how to gain knowledge.

Abu -Ṣi'lik mentions²⁶ that according to those who translated for him, he is of Persian descent, while others had the notion that he is of Spanish descent, he was raised in a rich family, and this offered him the time to study and educate himself, he was educated at the hands of many scholars, then he moved from the eastern part of Cordoba to the western part, and continued on his journey to al-Marya in order to ask for and gain knowledge.

Regarding his theological beliefs, he started his life by studying the Maliki doctrine, but then he moved on to study the Shāfi'ī doctrine, afterwards

²⁵ Al-Andalusi, *Abi-Al-Qasim, Ṭabaqat al-Umum*, the catholic press for Jesuits fathers, Beirut 1912, pp. 75-76.

²⁶ Abu -Ṣi'lik 1995, *ibid*, p.35

he followed the *Zāhirī*, the doctrine that he advocated and put its origins and this is why it's connected to his name.

He also adds²⁷ that he was a person of encyclopedia, i.e. he was a linguist, historian, logician, and poet, he wrote many books pertaining to many subjects, including language, logic, jurisprudence, love, and interpretation, such as *Maratib al-'Ulūm*, *Ṭawq al-Ḥamāmah*, *Al-Tasaffuh fi al-Fiqh* and *Al-Fara'id*.

According to *Al-Andalusi*²⁸, who is second to *al-Ṭabarī* in regards to the number of books he has written, is specialized in many fields of sciences such as language sciences, poetry, rhetoric, and grammar.

Abu Ṣi'lik says²⁹ that he lived in an era that was full of political tumult referencing Andalusia, the caliph at that time was *Hisham bin Abd al-Malik*, he was the Caliph until the year 399 AH, then he was followed by *Muḥammad al-Mahdi* until the year 403 AH, after that Andalusia was a court for conflict between *al-Umaween* and *al-Alween*, and the sons of *Idrees bin Abd-al-Malik*, the political situation there was similar to that of the East.

But those years were years of educational development and what helped in that was the diversity of the Andalusian community, there were Arab, Berbers, and *Saqaliba*, there were also Muslims and non-Muslims, and the

²⁷ Abu -Ṣi'lik 1995, *ibid*, p.24.

²⁸ *AL-Andalusi* 1912, *ibid*, p. 77.

²⁹ Abu -Ṣi'lik 1995, *ibid*, pp. 13-15.

common binding agency was the intellectual and literary experience which was embodied by the language of the Holy Qu'rān.

At that time, a social phenomenon which embodied using religion as a way for life arose, as well as using religion to attack the adversary, so some of the governors used this against their adversaries, and Ibn Ḥazm was one of those who were influenced by this dangerous phenomena.

I.e. he was prisoned after the debacle of al-Murtaḍa by the army of Granada, then he was exiled, and what made matters even worse was that his books were burned, these incidents affected him psychologically, but on the other hand, all these incidents which he had to endure motivated him intellectually, and helped him to build his character and reputation as an important Muslim scholar, and this demonstrated through his writings³⁰.

As Afgani mentions³¹, Ibn Ḥazm had certain teachers of his following the customs of those who live in palaces, one of his teachers known to us is Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Abd al-Warṭh, as a young man, he had the permission to attend some of his classes in the Great Mosque of Cordoba, from these classes he gained knowledge in grammar, literature, and the Qur'ān, as a result he became fluent in literary writing and also started to compose poetry, it even reached a point to which he and his father began to attend the lectures of al-Muzāfar bin abi A'mir, these lectures were

³⁰ Abu -Ṣi'lik 1995, ibid, pp. 24-25.

³¹ Al-Afghani, Saied, glances at language according to Ibn Hazm, second edition, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, 1969AD, pp.16-17.

filled with poets and literary men of the highest status, from this he became more intelligible in language and literature to the extent that he became the first follower of the Zāhiri school of thought, and was advocating for it as supposed to other schools of thought as he was trying to make it stronger.

According to Oueiss³², Ibn Ḥazm lived between 384 and 456 AH, he was known as a Zāhiri scholar and poet, he studied the other viewpoints and schools of thought as well as other Muslim groups, and all those who studied him said that he was a great Muslim historian and thinker and played a big role in Islamic civilization.

Oueiss also states³³, that after the failing of banū A'mer's authority for Cordoba had failed, Andalusia went through a time of disturbance between the year 399 and 422 AH, this era was full of a lot of chaos and confusion, as ten leaders held the authority during that period, four of them held it for two periods, some of them were from the Umayyad caliphate and others were from Bani Ḥamood, they dominated the authority in Cordoba in the year 406 AH, then they started to abuse the authority through their power by appointing and removing whoever they want.

As a result of this, people started to abandon religion, and as the authorities of that time kept distancing themselves from religious teaching, the animosity turned into conflict between Arabs, Berbers, and

³² Oueiss, abd al-Ḥalim, Ibn hazm and his effort in the historical and cultural research, al-Zahra'a for Arabic media, second edition, Cairo, 1988, p.7.

³³ Oueiss 1988, ibid, pp. 26-27.

Ṣaqāliba, some of them even asked for help from the Christians at the time to aid them in winning the conflict.

Among this political situation, Cordoba, the city of Ibn Ḥazm, occupied important status for its rule in the history of Andalusia. This period of time began from the emergence of Banu A'mer's authority until the middle of the 5th century AD.

Regarding the cultural life at that time, as mentioned by the writer³⁴, Ibn Ḥazm inherited the cultural heritage that Abd al-Raḥman al-Naṣer, the 8th governor for the Umayyad dynasty in Andalusia, and the 1st Caliph for Córdoba at the beginning of the year 316 AH, left behind, that period is seen as the peak of cultural life in Andalusia.

A lot of debates about many subjects³⁵, such as religion, language politics, took place in the palaces of Andalusia, these debates were between poets, theologians, and literary men, there were debates whose aim was to defeat the other side, which included Muslims and non- Muslims, and also included people from different Islamic schools of thought, among these debates, there were the debates that Ibn Ḥazm had with Abū al-walīd al-Bājī, they were of the most important debates that reflect the kind of intellectual competition that was present at that time, these debates were attended by many intellectuals of all thoughts, and each attendee would take sides depending on whom they agree with.

³⁴ Oueiss 1988, *ibid*, pp.36-37.

³⁵ Oueiss 1988, *ibid*, p. 39.

From what I have mentioned about the life of Ibn Ḥazm, it seems that his social life influenced his intellectual life, he left his job as a minister and re-directed his attention towards writing, he studied the writings of the ancients, most notably the Greeks, and the Muslim scientists before his time, he read them with a critical mind and a very critical eye, i.e. he accepted some aspects and disagreed with other aspects.

The story of his life tells us how much he suffered, although he had a beautiful childhood, as he grew older, life wasn't easy for him, he was imprisoned for his political views during a very critical period in the history of Andalusia, which was full of conflict between Muslims themselves, and all of this had an effect on his writings from many perspectives, i.e. how did he write? And why did he write what he wrote?

In the same context, the cultural and intellectual life in Andalusia was rich during his time, and the palaces were a place for intellectual debate between Muslim scholars, they talked about nearly everything, including religion, politics, language, Islamic doctrines, philosophy and all of this enriched his character and his knowledge about the many subjects that he wrote about.

Ibn Ḥazm Zāhirī doctrine

As mentioned by Abu -Ṣi'lik³⁶, the Zāhirī school of thought belongs to Imam Dawod bin Ali bin khalf Abi Suliman al-Zāhirī, he is of Asbahani origin, but came to Baghdad and lived there, and the reason that this school of thought is called Zāhirī is because it is named after the founder,

³⁶ Abu -Ṣi'lik 1995, *ibid*, pp. 143-144.

this school of thought was first to call for the literal meaning of the law, and to depend on the literal meaning of the text without any kind of interpretation, or seeking for any justification, i.e. following the *Zāhir* of the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

At the time of Ibn Ḥazm, there was a disagreement between the followers of the *Zāhirite* school of thought and the followers of other schools of thought; this occurred by rejecting some of the foundations that the other groups relied on.

According to Goldziher³⁷, *ahl al-Zāhir* rejected analogy, but they still used independent judgment in legal deduction through the reliance on the meaning of the words and the sense of the address, he also adds that according to the *Zāhirite* school, one mustn't search for the cause of any of God's law, just as the cause for the creation of any of God's works mustn't be investigated, and to submit that the only cause for their creation is God's sovereign will.

Goldziher states³⁸ an example of their literal interpretation and understanding of the texts, includes the following example, they say that the saying of the prophet "he who drinks from a golden or silver vessel, sips (with his draught) hellfire into his stomach" So they restrict themselves to what the literal meaning of the words imply. Drinking from

³⁷ Goldziher, Ignaz, *The Zāhirīs, their doctrine and their history, a contribution to the history of Islamic theology*, Brill classics in Islam, volume 3, Leiden. Boston, 2008, pp. 41-41.

³⁸ Goldziher 2008, *ibid*, p. 44.

gold and silver vessels is exclusively forbidden, however any other usage, like eating from them, is allowed.

He also adds³⁹ that the main distinction between the law, according to the view of the Zāhirite school which is applied through fiqh, and developed through the qiyās schools, lies in the fact that in the Zāhirite school, the literal wording and meaning of legal texts recognized as authoritative and are exclusively the determining factor, while the later goes beyond the strict wording in elaboration of the law.

He also states⁴⁰ the distinction between Zāhir and Bāṭin, and says that the basic difference between them is best understood in the light of its essential aspect: the allegorical interpretation of basic religious material: truth is contained in the esoteric sense (bāṭin). The outward meaning (Zāhir) is an insubstantial veil meant for the uninitiated, such outlooks were fostered by Ismā'īlīs and Sufīs alike. In Sufism, the idea of “esoteric meaning” gained central importance.

Regarding Ismā'īlīsm, their boundless extravagance in ta'wīl, inspired a number of offshoots. The most important among them is a secret group called Ḥurūfīs “they interpret the letters of the alphabet”, it's based on the theory of cyclical evolution of the world spirit.

³⁹ Goldziher 2008, *ibid*, p. 43.

⁴⁰ Goldziher, Ignaz, *Introduction to Islamic theology and law*, Princeton university press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1981, pp. 223-224.

According to Orvoy⁴¹, the political situation of Ibn Ḥazm is embodied in the possibility that there can be a device which can be used to navigate the Imama deal, but he took the initiative to name the Caliph in the political system, he didn't care about the performance of Bay'ah (An Islamic practice of declaring an oath, or allegiance to a particular leader), because of this, the political beliefs of Ibn Ḥazm were a device to stay close to the origins of Islamic faith, and to ablate any deviation.

So at the time of Ibn hazm, the Salafī movement was praised in Ḥanbali schools, it was an answer to the Mu'tazilite pertaining in the third century, and as a result of this, support came from the Abbasid Caliph for two centuries afterwards, because of this he chose the Ḥazirī school of thought, although he was attracted to the Shāfi'ī school of thought because it represented the protector of the correct approach, for this purpose, his book *al-Iḥkam fi uṣul al-Aḥkam* had the same messages found in the literature of the Shāfi'ī.

Orvoy says⁴² that Ibn Ḥazm's change to the Ḥazirī school of thought, and this can be understood by the idea that the Ḥazirī doctrine can be considered as a severe form of the Shāfi'ī school of thought, since it doesn't believe in anything other than the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, which means that they abandon any other opinion coming from the Ḥanafī and the Shāfi'ī thought.

⁴¹ Orvoy, Dominique, *the history of Arabic and Islamic thought*, the eastern library, first edition, Beirut, 2010, pp. 492-493.

⁴² Orvoy 2010, *ibid*, p. 494.

While the *Zāhiriti* of Ibn Ḥazm expanded itself in order to occupy the Sharia by becoming a public religious thought, the reason for its expansion goes back to psychological experiences that he went through during his young life, he evolved from writing texts which were not religious nor philosophical, to writing literature specialized in topics such as love between man and woman, called “*Ṭawq al-Ḥamāma*”, through which he considered God as the lawgiver and the one who determines the feelings of certain emotions, after which Ibn Hazm expounds upon his previous psychological experiences through his book “*al-Taqrīb li-Ḥadd al-Mantiq*”, in which he assures that God who is the creator of everything, is the one who determines the terms of thought, which depend on the recognition of the first facts given to us primordially by God.

According to al-Zugbi⁴³, Ibn Ḥazm considered language as one of the many categories of existence, language according to him is a system that abbreviates the meanings of existence, although he concedes that there is variation in language, he argues that this variation doesn't follow the meaning, i.e. meaning is the same in all languages, but it is the terms that differ, and these terms are the apparent sounds that come out of the speakers.

What he means here is that by using language, humans can express themselves; they can express their ideas, views, fears, etc. And by doing this, i.e. human beings are able to say whatever they want to say, proves that human being intuitively exists, and has the right to use language to

⁴³ Al-Zughbi, Anwar Khalid, *Zāhriyat Ibn hazm al-Andalusi*, Amman, published by ministry of culture, 1st ed. 1995, p. 118.

advocate his opinion, as languages are different, but meaning stay the same, i.e. I can say that I love my mother in many different languages, but the meaning of what I'm saying remains the same, i.e. I love my mother can be expressed if I used English, Arabic or French.

Because of this, there is a difference between language as a meaning and language as pertaining to sounds and letters, but the difference between sounds and the letters doesn't make the meanings different from language to language, since the meaning refer to things in nature, and nature is one, and since it's one, the meanings are one and the same.

The writer also states⁴⁴ that Ibn Ḥazm adopted the Zāhiri doctrine regarding language as well, i.e. he considered names as something that represent existence and its attributes, moreover, they allow meanings to have intrinsic value, he considers taking the apparent meaning of language and the words being used as an obligation that mustn't be neglected accept by a text or consensus.

From this, he notes⁴⁵ that Ibn Ḥazm gave religious texts certain preference over other texts, he allows the interpretation of language if the text itself allows this interpretation, or if there is consensus that the text can be interpreted, since he believes that God is the creator of everything in this world, therefore he has the right to duplicate whatever he wants, he also has the right to transfer certain terms from their position as he is the creator of all terms and what they stand for, but this can't be the case for anyone

⁴⁴ Al-Zughbi 1995, *ibid*, p. 118.

⁴⁵ Al-zugbi 1995, *ibid*, p. 119.

except for God, because a human being will most likely follow his/her desires. For this reason, Ibn Ḥazm refuses interpretation completely if it is without a text, consensus or proof, asking people to restrict themselves to the Ṣāḥīḥī school of thought.

The nature of the Ṣāḥīḥī school of thought⁴⁶ is that of which Ibn Ḥazm paid particular devotion to take care of language, and the meanings of the terms, and this can be considered as a reaction to the deviation that was committed by some people who distorted and rejected many texts at his time, they were directed to look for the opposite meaning of texts rather than the true meaning, and as a result of that, the Ṣāḥīḥī school of thought violated all other groups, viewpoints and beliefs, as they were deviating in terms of interpreting theological texts.

Ibn Ḥazm adopted the Ṣāḥīḥī school of thought as a philosophical worldview for his life, his actions, jurisprudence, and his beliefs, even in his poetry, he incorporated it:

Don't you see that I'm Ṣāḥīḥī and I'm on what I see until a proof rises.

ألم تر أنني ظاهري وأني على ما أرى حتى يقوم دليل

According to Al-Rashidi⁴⁷, Ibn Ḥazm rejected esoteric interpretation, and invoked the literate meaning of texts, as the Ṣāḥīḥī doctrine insists on understanding texts by their apparent meaning without any kind of interpretation.

⁴⁶ Al-Afgani 1969, *ibid*, p.33.

⁴⁷ Al-Rashidi, faisal, The concept of the philosophy of language according to Ibn Ḥazm, comparative analytical study, 2013-2014, pp.12-13.

As states by Oueiss⁴⁸, Ibn Ḥazm chose the Ṣāḥīrī doctrine because he was influenced by the intellectual and historical circumstances that he was in, during his time, social and moral chaos had spread like decay, and theologians began to support the governors and Sultans in justifying their tyranny and absolutism, in order to get money and rankings.

Ibn Ḥazm recognized this after studying the theological beliefs of other groups, he then came to the conclusion that the reason behind the majority of differences and conflicts is related to the deviation of some of the theologians, they wanted to adapt their legal opinions to the demands of the corrupted life which was devoid of moral principles, and then abandon all the principles of their religion.

Because of this, the Ṣāḥīrī doctrine of Ibn Ḥazm was the answer for the atrocities which have been occurring at his time. He was known for his knowledge, well-set, asking for knowledge, and has spent a lot of time searching for knowledge everywhere; he was a man who inclined on putting his religion first and above anything else.

He used the Ṣāḥīrī⁴⁹ doctrine to get-out of absconding, i.e. interpretation, from the clear meaning that's derived by the mind through the language that can be understood by any one.

The remarks which I can make here is that from its name, the Ṣāḥīrī doctrine restricts itself to the literate meaning of the text, to do this it refuses any kind of interpretation if the text itself doesn't allow it, and

⁴⁸ Oueiss 1988, *ibid*, pp. 87-88.

⁴⁹ Oueiss 1988, *ibid*, p. 90.

since Ibn Ḥazm is considered an advocator of this doctrine, he restricts himself to the traditionalist and fundamental principles of the Islamic religion, and therefore refused any kind of deviation that will affect the literal meaning of the text.

The apparent meaning of the Qur'ān is the basic ground frame, and those who want to interpret these apparent meanings aren't on the right path, according to Ibn Ḥazm, they want to advocate their own views and ideas, to do this they purposely use the Qur'ān as a tool to achieve their own agendas.

Ibn Ḥazm chose the Zāhiri doctrine and wrote many books to advocate its principles, and to attack other viewpoints that other theologians held which he thought were wrong, he believed that his school of thought is the righteous one, and is the one that helps him and his followers to stay close to the teachings and rulings of the Qur'ān, as a Zāhirite doesn't believe in anything rather other than the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the prophet, from these lenses, he was able to criticize the Mu'tazilites and their beliefs.

Since he adopted the Zāhiri doctrine, he gave religious texts and their apparent meanings the preference over all other interpretations, but at the same time, he allowed interpretation only if and only if the text itself allows it, in order to do this he asked Muslims to restrict themselves to his doctrine and its principles, since any bad interpretations of the Qur'ān will lead to bad outcomes in the Islamic community, and in the life of Muslims, and it's from this point onwards where he notifies his care for

language, as to him language for him is a system that includes the meanings as an essence of its existence.

He chose this doctrine because of the political and intellectual circumstances that surrounded him at that time in Andalusia, for this, he found that the righteous path is to restrict himself to the Ṣāḥīḥī doctrine, at a time where theologians were justifying the tyranny of their leaders to gain political and social advantages.

These theologians were also the reason behind the disparities and discrepancies between Muslim at that time, they were intrigued by the corrupted lives of the politicians, and this led them away from the morals and the religious principles of Islam, because of this he was the 1st advocator of the Ṣāḥīḥī doctrine, which he considered as the right answer for all these bad and corrupted worldviews.

Conclusion

As I come to the conclusion of my research, just to summarize, in this research paper I investigated the origin of human language according to Ibn Ḥazm and the Ikhwan al-Ṣafā', I concentrated my research strictly on Ibn Ḥazm after investigating the historical debate about this topic, I also briefly went through some of the ideas about the origin of human language that were present before the time of Ibn Ḥazm, such as the Greeks, the Mu'tazilites the Asharites, and the Ikhwan al-Ṣafā'.

What I found through my research is that there are two contradictory opinions about the origin of human language, which Muslim parties and scholars differed about, the first opinion is *tawqīf* and the second is *iṣṭilāḥ*, these two viewpoints contradict each other, so while the *tawqīf* viewpoint accentuated the pre-eminent role that divine agency played a part in the imposition of language, God taught Adam the names of everything, and words have been assigned their meanings primordially by God.

The second viewpoint which is referred to as *iṣṭilāḥ* predicates that language was established and evolved via a process of common convention and agreement, i.e. the origin of language is not from God, and words along with their meanings were assigned by humans.

Regarding Ibn Ḥazm and the Ikhwan al-Ṣafā', they emphasize the *tawqīf* viewpoint, but inside this viewpoint itself there are some other important questions that need to be asked, i.e. what was the language that God taught Adam? Was it one language or many or did he teach him all the names in all languages? These are the questions that Ibn Ḥazm was trying to answer

even though he didn't specify a text for the study of language, but he indicates his views through many theological and philosophical writings.

Although my research title indicates that I will talk and deal with the ideas of Ikhwan al-Ṣafā' as well as the ideas of Ibn Ḥazm, I found it more appropriate to concentrate my research on the ideas of Ibn Ḥazm, and this was for many reasons, the first is that Ikhwan al-Ṣafā' talked about language in one of their epistles, epistle 17, while the second reason is that they represent part of the historical debate about language and not all, as they were before the time of Ibn Ḥazm, and the third and final reason is that Ibn Ḥazm and his ideas about language and its origin need a lot more research and investigation, thus more content and information.

In addition to Ibn Ḥazm and the Ikhwan al-Ṣafā' and the Ashirīti also said that the origin of language is *tawqīf* from god, they also depend on the Qur'ānic verse "and he taught Adam the names of all things", as according to this verse, they state that the origin of human language is from God, while the other party assured that language is *iṣṭilāḥ*, since they believe that languages don't demonstrate its implications for itself like the mentality implications.

Not just this, they also criticize those who say that language is *tawqīf* from God according to the Qur'ānic verse "And he taught Adam the names of all things", they believe that this verse is general.

Another view that I have mentioned is by Abu bakr al-Razi which says that language can be proved by *tawqīf* and *iṣṭilāḥ*, i.e. partly be proved via *tawqīf* and partly via *iṣṭilāḥ*.

What I have mentioned above shows us that this topic was studied and debated upon by many Muslim scholars and parties before the time of Ibn Ḥazm, furthermore, from this research, I found that Ibn Ḥazm was answering questions about this topic from one side by restricting himself to the apparent meaning of the Qur’ān, and from another side he was criticizing those who say that language is iṣṭilāḥ and agreement between people.

As I have mentioned at the beginning of my research, this topic was also investigated in the Greek philosophical heritage, especially in the dialogues of Socrates, which is called Cratylus and this is according to the person who engaged with Socrates in the dialogue about the origin of human language.

In the same context, it has also been mentioned in the Bible, as it was said that Adam named animals accurately, and that animals didn’t have names until Adam named them, and from this we can come to the understanding that God didn’t reject the names that Adam gave to the animals.