

## ILLUMINATING AL-ḤAQQ: Unveiling Truth and Reality in Ibn Barrajân's Sufi Paradigm and Systems Thinking

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### *Abstract*

The concept of al-ḥaqq represents a foundational yet underexplored dimension in the philosophical discourse of Sufism. Despite its centrality, systematic elaborations on al-ḥaqq remain limited within classical Sufi scholarship. This article examines the significant contribution of Ibn Barrajân, a prominent Andalusian Sufi thinker, to the development of the concept through his unique tawḥîd paradigm. Adopting a systems approach, the study analyzes Ibn Barrajân's metaphysical interpretation of al-ḥaqq, revealing a comprehensive framework that integrates ontology (unity of reality), epistemology (unity of knowledge), and axiology (unity of purpose). This triadic structure forms the basis of Ibn Barrajân's multidimensional and goal-oriented view of existence, rooted in divine unity. Al-ḥaqq, in his thought, emerges as the ultimate ontological reality and the objective of all intellectual and spiritual endeavors. Epistemologically, the knowledge of al-ḥaqq is pursued through contemplation of the manifestations of God's Names within cosmic signs, facilitated by the spiritual practices of tafakkur (reflection), tadhakkur (remembrance), tadabbur (deep thinking), and i'tibâr (consideration).

KEYWORDS: al-ḥaqq, Ibn Barrajân, Sufism, systems thinking, tawḥîd

*Axiologically, this knowledge is not merely theoretical but is to be actualized through the embodiment of wisdom (hikmah) as practiced in the sunnah. The study highlights the urgent need to revisit and engage with Ibn Barrajān's integrative metaphysical insights, which offer a holistic model for understanding reality and its divine purpose. By articulating al-ḥaqq as both the ground and goal of knowledge, Ibn Barrajān's thought contributes significantly to Sufi philosophy and invites deeper exploration of divine-centered epistemology in Islamic intellectual tradition.*

**Keywords:** *al-ḥaqq; ibn barrajān; sufi paradigm; systems thinking*

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## Introduction

Humans are subjects who are constantly driven to seek and comprehend reality and truth (Pishnamazi 2020, 177). The discourse circulates around reality and truth holding significant prominence in Islam, particularly among philosophers, theologians, and Sufis. Within the Islamic context, the debate related to reality, truth and God is expressed through the term of “*al-ḥaqq*”. The conception of *al-ḥaqq* in Sufi's perspective is paradigmatically different from philosophers and theologians. The rational paradigm of philosophers and theologians accentuates God's transcendence and separateness from the reality of being and the total distinctiveness of the world from His unique reality; while the Sufi paradigm emphasizes God's omnipresence in every existence (Chittick 2020, 31).

Reality and truth in the Islamic intellectual tradition are mostly addressed in two terms, *al-ḥaqq* and *al-ḥaqqīqah* (Arroisi 2022, 143). The discourse on reality and truth, encapsulated in the concept of *al-ḥaqq* and *al-ḥaqqīqah*, represents a cornerstone in the philosophical discussions within the spheres of Sufi (Ahmed 2008, 234). However, the Sufi conception of *al-ḥaqq* is prone to misalignment of paradigms since it is difficult to understand and problematic. The difficulty arises from a disparity in the approach to understand Sufi thought. Similarly, scientists with different paradigms are struggling to communicate due to their fundamental differences in defining reality and methodology (Mertens 2012, 255). Most Sufis predominantly express their insights of reality and

truth symbolically, eschewing written discourse that are based on logical ideas (Corbin 1981,13-14). Hence, philosophical discussions in Sufi thought have garnered less attention. Moreover, Sufism is primarily recognised for its role in purifying humans' souls to bring humans closer to God through various forms of spiritual experience, such as repentance, *dhikr*, *ikhlâs*, *zuhud*, and others (Habib 2018, 210). Therefore, philosophical concepts in Sufi thought are difficult to accept and are even considered deviating from Islamic doctrine.

Ibn Barrajan was one of the pioneering Sufis who theoretically endeavoured to explicate the Sufistic conception of reality. Ibn 'Arabi considered him as the first Sufi to conceptualize *al-haqq* as God and His manifestations although he did not provide detailed explanation of Ibn Barrajan's conception. Apart from the previous acknowledgement, Ibn Barrajan has become one of the overlooked figures in Sufi history. His works have been published and studied in only within the last decade. The existing studies of Ibn Barrajan revolve around different aspects, including his biography (Bellver 2013), his methodology of interpreting the Quran (Khalil 2022; al-Qâri 2007; Husni 2009), his approach of commenting on Hadith (al-Anis 2019; Ghannam 2011), his accurate prediction of the Muslim's conquest of Jerusalem (Bellver 2014; ARPA 2015), the genealogy of his mystical thought (Bellver 2013; Bowering & Casewit 2015), and his overarching concept of Sufism (Yildiz 2019; Casewit 2014).

Despite the plethora of studies upon Ibn Barrajan, there is no specific study that discusses Ibn Barrajan's conception of *al-haqq* as well as his method in comprehending the concept. In this notion, this article aims at filling in the aforementioned gap and discusses Ibn Barrajan's conception of *al-haqq* (God, reality and truth) using the systems approach. Through the systems approach, researchers position Ibn Barrajan's thought as systems of thinking and analyse the fundamental components underlying his systems of thought, the Sufi paradigm, which includes dimensions of ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. Furthermore, systems analysis is used to identify the systems features of Ibn Barrajan's thought, comprises the concept of wholeness, multidimensionality, and purposefulness.

## Research Method

This study is a literature study that employs descriptive method. The primary data were obtained from Ibn Barrajân's works, which include *Tafsîr Tanbîh al-Afhâm Ilâ Tadabbur al-Kitâb al-Hakîm wa-Ta'arruf al-Âyât wa al-Naba' al-'Aẓîm*, *Îdâh al-Hikmah bi Ahkâm al-'Ibrah* and *Sharḥ al-Asmâ' Allâh al-Husnâ*. In addition, some other relevant data were used to enrich the discussion.

This study orchestrates the systems approach that serves as both the philosophy underpinning the study as well as an analytical tool perceiving the object as a system, in which it is understood as a series of interacting units or elements forming an integral entity to perform certain function (Mertens 2012, 255). The systems approach philosophically views the creation and functionality of nature and all its components in terms of a large holistic system that is composed of an infinite number of interacting, opened, hierarchical, and purposeful sub-systems (Auda 2017, 26). As an object of study, Ibn Barrajân's thought is seen as a system, namely Systems thinking.

The systems analysis in this study focuses on identifying the basic systems features encompassing wholeness, multidimensionality, and purposefulness. The feature of wholeness emphasizes the interrelation and interdependence of systems elements that differs itself from its individual parts. In other words, it is "creating feasible whole from infeasible parts". Systems theory views every relations as one part of a whole picture, in which groups of relations result in new emerging properties and combine to form a 'whole' that is more than a simple 'sum of the parts (Auda 2017, 46). Multidimensionality is the ability to see complementary relations in opposing tendencies and to create feasible wholes with infeasible parts. Opposing tendencies are formulated in such a way that they can be represented by a continuum (Gharajedaghi 2011, 38). The feature of purposefulness asserts that every system has a specific goal or set of goals that the system works to achieve.

## Results and Discussion

### Ibn Barrajân: A Brief History, Works, and Contributions

Ibn Barrajân (d. 536/1141) stands as a prominent figure among Andalusia's leading Sufis and intellectuals during the sixth century A.H., earning the distinguished title of the al-Ghazâlî of Andalus in his era (Bellver 2013, 659). His full name is documented as Abû al-Hakam Ibn

'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Abī al-Rijāl Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ifriqī al-Ishbīlī (Böwering & Casewit 2015, 1). There are no precise sources that can assure his birthplace and year of birth. However, it is estimated that he was born in 450 A.H./1058 A.D. in Seville (Küçük 2013, 383). Other researchers assumed that he was born in North Africa (Böwering & Casewit 2015, 2). Ibn Zubayr narrated him as "one of the most excellent men in the Maghrib, a leader (imām) in theology, Arabic language, and literature possessing both esoteric (*ta'wīl*) and exoteric (*tafsīr*) knowledge; who is also considered as an excellent grammarian and an unparalleled imām in various fields" (Bellver 2013, 677). Beyond Islamic sciences, he was also recognized as a master of arithmetic and geometry, astrology, and the study of human sects (*madhāhib al-nās*). Despite his diverse expertise, Ibn Barraḡān maintained a firm commitment to the Quran and al-Sunnah in his reasoning, distancing himself from misconceptions associated with the Batiniyah school of thought.

Toward the end of his life, Ibn Barraḡān faced a tragic fate. Sultan 'Alī Ibn Yūsuf Ibn Taṣfin summoned him from Seville, alongside other notable Sufi figures, including Ibn al-'Arīf, and Abū Bakr al-Māyurqī. Although the exact reason for his summons remains unclear, he was accused of religious heresy (*bid'āh*). Following a *munazarah* hearing, he was eventually imprisoned and died shortly afterward. It is estimated that he died in 536 (Küçük 2013, 383). Despite his untimely demise, he left behind significant works, including *al-Irshād ilā Subul al-Rashād*, *Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, and two works of *tafsīr*, namely *Tanbih al-Afhām ilā Tadabbur al-Kitāb al-Ḥakīm wa Ta'arruf al-Āyāt wa al-Nabā' al-'Aẓīm*, and *Idāh al-Ḥikmah bi Ahkām al-'Ibrah*. His innovative works exerted a considerable influence on many scholars, such as al-Suyūṭī, al-Zarkāshī, al-Alūsī, and Sheykh al-Akbar Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī. Ibn Barraḡān's name is well-recognised for his accurate prediction of the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem in 583/1187 that was based on his interpretation of the beginning of surah al-Rūm.

### ***Tawḥīd*, Sufi Paradigm and Systems Thinking**

The Quran emphatically asserts that the *tawḥīd* creed serves as the indispensable cornerstone for constructing a comprehensive and holistic worldview. It shapes our understanding of nature, humanity, and life itself (Hassan 2018, 4). Worldview functions as the environment within

which the mind operates and without which it cannot function (Acikgenc 1994, 170). On an individual level, worldview takes the form of paradigms; complex sets of conceptual, metaphysical, and methodological assumptions that are integral to the scientific tradition (Bagus, 1996, 779). As proposed by Lincoln and Guba, every paradigm comprises four pivotal elements: epistemology, ontology, methodology, and axiology (Kivunja 2017, 26).

As a thinker that is deeply rooted in the Sufi tradition, Ibn Barrajân's ideas are inseparable from the Sufi worldview of *tawhîd*. *Tawhîd* linguistically means judging something as one and knowing it as one (*al-ḥukmu bi anna al-shay' wāḥid wa al-'ilm bi annahu wāḥid*) (al-Jurjānī 2002, 83) or making something as one (*ja'l al-shay' wāḥidan*) (al-Tahānawī 1996, 528). In Sufism, there are degrees of *tawhîd* that can be experienced through various levels of *ma'rifah* (gnosis). The *tawhîd* expressed in *lā ilāha illallāh* (there is no God but Allah) is the *tawhîd* of the ordinary, whereas the *tawhîd* of the elect is *lā mawjûda illallāh* (there is nothing but Allah) (Shapoo 2018, 2019). With this, Sufi monotheism differs in spectrum from the understanding of the laity and theologians. Theologians try to prove the statement of monotheism rationally, while Sufis try to achieve it through the totality of the experience (Aždajić 2021, 12). The meaning of *tawhîd* from the Sufi perspective is not only the doctrine of the oneness of God, but it also penetrates the realm of metaphysics. For them, God is the only reality (ontology); hence, He is the only object of the required knowledge (epistemology) and the goal of all knowledge (axiology).

Ibn Barrajân's sufi paradigm is based on the ontological meaning of *tawhîd* that there is nothing in the entire reality of existence but Allah (*laysa fi al-wujûd kullihî illâ Allâh*) (Barrajân 2013, 60). According to him, the understanding of *tawhîd* in this case is the most sublime understanding of *tawhîd* (*al-tawhîd al-a'lâ*), which is the knowledge of the *al-siddiqûn* (Sufis who have a level of belief because they provide a lot of justification). This understanding of *tawhîd* is a form of realization that God is the only absolute Reality and is present in everything (Ahmed 2008, 233). With this understanding of *tawhîd*, where reality is seen as a unity, the parts are hierarchically interrelated as well as construct the whole. This form of understanding in contemporary scientific discourse is derived from a way of systems thinking. Systems thinking is a way of

making sense of the complexity of the world by looking at it as a whole entity and relationships rather than splitting it down into parts. It provides "a way of seeing and talking about reality that helps us understand and work with systems to influence the quality of our lives" (Kim 1999, 2). Systems thinking understands objects by focusing on the relationships that exist between elements (Nakamori 2020, 43).

In the realm of systems thinking, Ibn Barrajân profoundly perceives God as the only reality. This reality is apprehended through signs and associated with specific addresses (*ma'rûf bi al-âyat, man'ût bi al-'alâmât*). Given the ontological oneness of reality, it stands as the exclusive subject of knowledge, where knowledge itself possesses a beginning but no culmination (Barrajân 2013, 193). Ibn Barrajân's approach to this reality reflects a holistic mode of thought. The plurality in the universe is not perceived as contradictory to the principle of oneness. In his view, plurality arises because of God's attribute as *al-Ḥaqq al-Mubîn* (the Reality that explains Himself). He elucidates *al-ḥaqq* through the names and attributes that permeate the world (Barrajân 2013, 338). Everything apart from God is merely a manifestation of His names. He contends that just as the numerous names of God refers to the singular owner of the name (*al-musammâ*), so do the various attributes return to the singular owner of the attribute (*al-mawṣûf*) without implying changes or numerical consequences in Him (Barrajân 2010, 358). The multiplicity of names serves the sole purpose of fostering comprehension, while the name (*al-musammâ*) remains one (Ibn Barrajân 2013, 333). Similarly, actions are ultimately traced back to one actor (*fâil*).

Epistemologically, Ibn Barrajân's *tawḥîd* paradigm incorporates a profound awareness, which was rooted in the understanding of meanings. The meanings were unfolded through the complex interrelations among elemental parts to form a cohesive whole. This perspective transcends a simplistic causal link where God is merely perceived as the cause of universe. This awareness, in the systems perspective, is referred to emergent property; sufficiently characterizes the birth of novel properties from comprehending the relational meanings. Emergent property, by its nature, cannot be analyzed, cannot be manipulated with analytical tools, and cannot be explained as causal (Gharajedaghi 2011, 45). These properties do not stem from individual parts or their summation. Rather, it is manifested from the entirety of

the system. For instance, love serves as a poignant example of an emergent property in humans. Although love resides within an individual, dissecting the individual components reveals no part is explicitly labelled as "love." It is mainly because love lacks tangible attributes like colour, sound, or smell. It cannot be touched or tasted. Then how does one measure love? Of course one may always measure the manifestation of love. "If you love me why don't you call me?" someone may say (Gharajedaghi 2011, 45).

On the other hand, Ibn Barrajân's *tawhîd* paradigm exhibits another facet of systems thinking that is notably multidimensional in nature. Thus, in Ibn Barrajân's point of view, God and everything else are not viewed as two entirely distinct, separate, and opposing entities (binary opposition). Those entities are seen as a unified whole. For him, the concept of *tawhîd* encompasses not only the oneness of God, but also His relationship with others. The multiplicity of existence is perceived as indicative signs that point to, and are inseparable from, the essence of oneness. Therefore, this Sufi paradigm of *tawhîd* leans more towards a form of comprehension than mere rational information and knowledge. It denotes the ability to integrate contradictions, juxtapose differences, and reconcile scattered elements (Barrajân 2010, 232). According to him, the essence of *tawhîd* is grasped through the unity of the four names of Allah: *al-Awwal*, *al-Âkhir*, *al-Zâhir*, and *al-Bâṭin* (Barrajân 2010, 112). The seemingly contradictory names of God, such as *al-Awwal* and *al-Âkhir*, and *al-Zâhir* and *al-Bâṭin*, are perceived as distinct dimensions of a singular reality. Similarly, oneness and plurality are not perceived as conflicting concepts but as two facets of divine reality. In a systems perspective, this mode of thinking aligns with a multidimensional approach.

From an axiological standpoint, within Ibn Barrajân's *tawhîd* paradigm, akin to the broader perspective of Sufis, knowledge serves the purpose of attaining true awareness of God (*al-taḥaqquq bi ma'rifatillâh*) (Librizah 2020, 167). The ultimate aspiration of Sufis is to achieve union with the Truth (the divine Reality) which is the oneness of existence, i.e., God (Ahmed 2008, 234). This concept is occasionally misconstrued by those entrenched in binary thinking as the notion of *ḥulûl* or *ittiḥâd*. For Ibn Barrajân, the ideas of *ittiḥâd* and *ḥulûl* represent a form of *kufr* and lack a foundation in *tawhîd* (Barrajân 2013, 604). According to him,



acknowledging the presence of God in everything does not necessitate duality, as the fundamental principle emphasizes the singularity of reality from the outset.

### Ontological Meaning of *al-Haqq*

*Al-haqq* is a Quranic terminology that linguistically refers to many meanings. It means truth, reality, certainty, and honesty (al-Tahânawî 1996, 682). According to al-Jurjânî, *al-haqq* means something fixed that cannot be denied. *Al-haqq* is also used to designate one of the names of Allah, the opposite of *al-bâtil*, true speech (*al-ṣidq*), and true knowledge (*al-ṣawâb*) (al-Jurjânî 2002, 94).

In Sufi discourse, the concept of *al-haqq* holds a pivotal position, capturing the philosophical essence and commanding the focal point of Sufi contemplation. Thus, within the Sufi tradition, God is predominantly referred to by the name *al-Haqq*. This overarching concept delineates the Sufi perspective on reality, the methodology for its recognition, and the ultimate objective of the entire Sufi spiritual odyssey. Within Ibn Barrajân's framework, *al-haqq* stands out as the most exalted and noblest name of God. It is the source of all laws and sciences, the origin of everything, and the ultimate destination to which everything returns (Barrajân 2010, 131). The essence of *al-haqq* is generally derived from this divine name. According to him, the meaning of the name of God, *al-Haqq*, can be summarized as follows:

*"Al-Haqq, Allah knows its meaning, signifies a meaning that is beyond non-existence, eternal, and perpetual element. It encompasses all goodness and commendation, glory, and excellent praise. It embodies beautiful names and sublime attributes. It serves as a reference to the utmost perfection and the pinnacle of excellence" (Barrajân 2010, 129).*

Ontologically, *al-haqq* signifies a reality that is inherently necessary (*wâjib al-wujûd*) and encompasses all aspects of goodness and perfection. In this context, *al-haqq* can exclusively be ascribed to Allah and not to any other entity. Everything apart from Him essentially lacks existence and perpetually relies on Him for its being. The existence of all things emanates from the Necessary Being (*al-wâjib al-wujûd*) (Barrajân 2010, 130). Consequently, Allah is the sole *al-haqq* (the Real), whereas

everything other than Him is deemed *bātil*, devoid of any true existence, always in a state of nothingness and dependence. What is termed the opposite of *al-ḥaqq*, namely *al- bātil*, exists only in misconception (*wahm*). Essentially, it holds no actual reality (Barrajân 2010, 133).

The above conception doesn't imply that Ibn Barrajân denies the existence of everything other than God or considers every entity in this world as God. Employing a multidimensional perspective, Ibn Barrajân perceives everything existing beside God as simultaneously unreal (*bātil*) and, in another sense, it is real (*ḥaqq*). It is unreal in terms of its ontological essence and real in terms of its existence because of God and for God (Barrajân 2010, 130). Everything exists in this world resembles accidents (*al-a'râd*), impermanent in nature, while the existence it derives from *al-ḥaqq* is what sustains it. Ibn Barrajân expressed this concept, stating:

*"Understand that although you have a genuine existence in reality, your reality does not stem from your own essence. This principle holds true statement for every existence apart from Allah. Every existence is authentic in one aspect and illusory in another. Its genuine existence is grounded in its being because of Allah and for Allah. However, its existence from the perspective of its intrinsic essence is deemed invalid. It happens because Allah is the Creator, Controller, and Owner of its soul, spirit, life, the cohesion of its body parts, and the entire meaning of its existence along with its consequences."* (Barrajân 2010, 130).

In Ibn Barrajân's holistic view, *al-ḥaqq* covers all existence. It pervades everything as life pervades the living and as spirit (*rûḥ*) pervades the body. It is the origin of all existence and the end of it. *Al-ḥaqq*, in every shape of existence, is like a seed in which all the meanings and potentials of a tree are accumulated, such as colour, taste, smell, shape and all the meanings it encompasses. The tree continuously reveals the meanings contained in the seed. Capturing *al-ḥaqq* is like capturing all the meanings of the tree in the seed. Ibn Barrajân's explanation, in terms of systems theory, is referred to as holistic thinking, where reality is seen as a 'whole' that is more than the sum of its parts. With this systems thinking, the end can be seen from the beginning and vice versa. Everything that exists comes from Allah, *al-Ḥaqq*, points to Him and returns to Him because He created everything with *ḥaqq* (*bi al-ḥaqq*) and

for *al-ḥaqq* (li *al-ḥaqq*). He sees universe as nothing but universal object of divine act (*maʿfūl*) of the single divine Subject (*fāʾil*). Through his systems thinking, Ibn Barrajān imagines universe as a global object (*al-maʿfūl al-kullī*) that is inseparable from divine Subject and at the same time it is distinct from him. Analogously, a writing is distinct from its author and just as a building is distinct from its builder. However, since the *maʿfūl* is related to the *fāʾil* and is a sign that points to it, the perfection of this *al-maʿfūl al-kullī* is in the same format of its doer (*alā ṣūrah fāʾilihi*) and the attributes of its creator are recognized through it (Barrajān 2013, 303).

In Ibn Barrajān's systems thinking, Allah *al-Ḥaqq* is not confined to a single dimension but is perceived as multidimensional. In this notion, every reality possesses two dimensions: the outer dimension and the inner dimension, where each outer reality unveils an inner reality (Barrajān 2013, 134). Reality consists of two parts: God and His manifestation, or God and “everything other than God” (*mā siwā Allāh*) (Casewit 2014, 347). Embracing the abovementioned principle, the term *al-ḥaqq* is allowed to be applied to various entities, while also signifying diverse meanings. Allah is *al-ḥaqq*, His actions are *al-ḥaqq*, His words are *al-ḥaqq*, and His promises are *al-ḥaqq*, along with everything He does and creates. These logics are stemmed from His names and attributes (Barrajān 2016, 151). The term *al-ḥaqq* encompasses a wealth of knowledge, including Allah Himself, i.e., *al-Ḥaqq al-Mubīn*, His names, attributes, commands, prohibitions, and the fulfilment of their demands. It extends to law, justice, its intricate details, death, and the subsequent realities of the Hereafter, such as the Day of Gathering, Resurrection, the calculation of deeds (*ḥisāb*), the Bridge over Hell (*al-ṣirāt*), the Scales of Charity (*al-mīzan*), the Prophet's pool (*al-ḥawḍ*), and intercession. Consequently, *al-ḥaqq* is essentially His creation (*khalquhu*), His matter or command (*amruhu*), His action, His power, and every existence in its entirety (Barrajān 2013, 500).

Through his systems thinking, Ibn Barrajān reconciles many meanings of *al-ḥaqq* without contradicting its singular essence. He comprehends *al-ḥaqq* holistically, enabling its understanding as a meaning that cannot be fully grasped through its fragmented parts.

### Epistemological Dimension of *al-Ḥaqq*

One of the dimensions of *al-ḥaqq*'s meaning is the truth relating to the conformity of human knowledge with reality. In Ibn Barrajân's view, Allah *al-Ḥaqq* cannot be overwhelmed by the knowledge of His nature. However, because He wants His servants to know Him, He introduces Himself to His creatures by showing His names (*asmâ'*) and attributes. His names refer to His attributes and His attributes refer to His Essence. Therefore, He characterizes Himself as *al-Ḥaqq al-Mubîn* (the Most-Evident Reality), i.e. the one who explains *al-ḥaqq* through His names and attributes that apply in the cosmos (Barrajân 2013, 338). Cosmos becomes a sign that points to what it signifies, namely *al-ḥaqq*.

Unveiling *al-ḥaqq* amidst the intricacies of nature without the illumination of preconceived notions about the subject often leads to complexities, resulting in frustration and futility. This is akin to the predicament faced by blind men placed at different parts of an elephant, attempting to describe the creature without prior understanding of elephants. A parallel illustration is found in Jalâluddîn Rûmî's tale of a group encountering a mysterious object in complete darkness. With no information from the storyteller, their attempts to identify the object by feeling its various parts prove futile until someone brings light (Gharajedaghi 2011, 89). According to Ibn Barrajân, the role of revelation is to illuminate and elucidate the reality (*al-ḥaqq*) dispersed in nature, transforming it into a guide for comprehending the intended meanings behind cosmic symbols (Barrajân 2013, 256).

It can also be perceived that Allah *al-ḥaqq* has dual dimensions, namely the discernible outer dimension and the enigmatic inner dimension. Akin to every entity which harbors a meaning, each outer dimension possesses an inner dimension, and every reality (*al-ḥaqq*) has an essence (*likulli ḥaqq ḥaqqiqah*) (Barrajân 2013, 156). *Al-ḥaqqiqah* represents the inner dimension of *al-ḥaqq*, while *al-ḥaqq* constitutes its outer dimension. Consequently, Ibn Barrajân discerns the comprehension of the divine reality into two categories: *ma'rifah al-ḥaqq* and *ma'rifah al-ḥaqqiqah*. *Ma'rifah al-ḥaqq* involves what Allah manifests to His creatures (*al-khalîqah*) in the form of His names (*asmâ'*) and attributes, while leaving traces in His creations, signifying and describing it in His Books, and conveying it through the words of the Apostles and Prophets. On the other hand, grasping the essence of divinity (*ma'rifah al-ḥaqqiqah*) remains inaccessible (Barrajân 2013, 473).

Humans, as per Ibn Barraġân believed, have been predisposed to recognize Allah *al-ḥaqq*. However, due to the inherent limitations in the comprehension of their Creator's essence, and given the imperative to recognize Him, Allah elucidates His attributes and unveils these attributes through His names. Through the recognition of His attributes, a servant can come to understand His *Dhat*. Each of His names leaves an imprint on every creation, and each creation serves as a clue to His names. Simultaneously, He bestowed His Book to expound upon His expectations from His servants and dispatched Messengers to elucidate His Book (Barraġân 2010, 130). Consequently, humans are inherently predisposed to discern the truth conveyed through both revelation and the natural world. Ibn Barraġân emphasizes this by stating, "Let the seeker of wisdom recognizes that Allah has encapsulated all knowledge within His servant" (Barraġân 2013, 107). Hence, when humans are reminded through individuals' recollection and contemplation, they will attain understanding. In Ibn Barraġân's view, every morsel of knowledge acquired by humans is essentially a form of recollection and inspiration. It awakens what has been forgotten and overlooked within their essence.

Human capacity to recognize the reality of divinity is confined to the outer dimension (*al-ḥaqq*), while the inner dimension (*al-ḥaqīqah*) remains beyond attainable bounds. Diverging from the extreme Sufi notion to assert direct divine access, as exemplified by *al-Hallāj's fanā'*, Ibn Barraġân adopts a more moderate stance that navigates between such claims and the conventional beliefs of Muslims. According to him, human capabilities extend to perceiving God through contemplating His manifested signs in nature. The method of *'ibrah* (crossing over) is employed by Ibn Barraġân to cross over from the visible to the unseen. It represents a nuanced realization between the ambitious claims of accessing divine knowledge (*the fanā' of al-Hallāj*) and the more conventional beliefs held by ordinary Muslims. Implicitly, he criticizes the "extreme" Sufis who make false claims after experiencing intense revelations. Some of them even refer to themselves as *al-ḥaqq* (The Real/Truth). For Ibn Barraġân, one can only realize the name of God *al-ḥaqq* by becoming a servant of *al-ḥaqq* (*'abd li al-ḥaqq*) (Casewit 2014, 105). This supposition aligns with Ibn 'Arabi's view that the most important aspect of acquiring knowledge is the inherent acceptance or "devotion" (*'ubūdiyyah*) that comes purely from this inspired knowledge receiver (Herawati 2013, 220).

The path to recognizing the reality of divinity (*al-ḥaqq*), as proposed by Ibn Barrajân, involves discerning it through the manifestations of God in this world. Ibn Barrajân categorizes these manifestations into three broad categories which signal God in distinct ways. These are: man, creation, and revelation (Casewit 2014, 347). The common thread among these three forms of God's self-disclosure is that they are manifestations of God's names. God (*al-ḥaqq*) reveals Himself through the "traces" (*ithâra*), "pathways" (*masâlik*), and intrinsic consequences (*muqtaḍâ*) of His names and attributes in the cosmos (*khalq*). Similar to cosmos, Quran is nothing but the names of God and what unveils them (Barrajân 2013, 192).

As manifestations of God, both the Quran and cosmos encapsulate the reality of truth (*al-ḥaqq*). Ibn Barrajân derives this understanding from various Quranic verses which emphasize that Allah revealed al-Kitab (the Quran) to Prophet Muhammad PBUH with *ḥaqq* (Q.S. Ali Imrân[3]:3), and that He created the heavens and the earth with *ḥaqq* (Q.S. al-An'am[6]:73). The cosmos (*âlam*) and the revelation (*wahy*) are complementary and ultimately identical because they are both differentiations of God's Knowledge in the Guarded Tablet. Everything conveyed in revelation finds its testimony in cosmos, and vice versa (Barrajân 2013, 103). As a result, cosmos and revelation serve as the means by which individuals recall the knowledge of *al-ḥaqq* within themselves.

The essence of contemplating cosmos, according to Ibn Barrajân, lies not in understanding its external laws but in unravelling the inner reality of *al-ḥaqq*. He terms this inner reality of cosmos as *al-ḥaqq al-makhlûq bihi al-khalq* (the Real in Accordance to Which Creation Was Created). According to him, it is the only means by which God can be known (Böwering & Casewit 2015, 42). To know *al-ḥaqq al-makhlûq bihi al-khalq* entails recognizing God as He is and understanding the consequences of His Names and attributes that are manifested in cosmos. These names and Attributes serve as the path (*sirât Allâh*) for Allah's servants which guide them toward Him through knowledge and benevolence (Barrajân 2013, 224).

Epistemologically, the capturing of *al-ḥaqq al-makhlûq bihi al-khalq* is attained through complete immersion in the three avenues of divine disclosure. Moreover, as any reality encompasses inner and outer

dimensions, capturing this reality necessitates the integration of both inner and outer epistemological tools. In Ibn Barrajân's epistemology, human epistemological faculties include *fitrah*, the five senses, news (*khabar*), reason, and intuition. Each faculty has both outer and inner dimensions. The five senses, for example, comprise a *zahir* dimension (*al-ḥawâs al-zâhir*) and a *bâtin* dimension (*al-ḥawâs al-bâtin*) (Barrajân 2013, 56). Similarly, reason is categorized into *al-'Aql al-adnâ* (low reason), which represents acquired intellect used by worldly experts, and *al-'aql al-'âlâ* (sublime reason), endowed intellect to *ulûl albab*, is illuminated by the light of faith (Barrajân 2013, 141). While the outer device is confined to grasping external realities, the inner device is equipped to apprehend supernatural realities. The activation of this inner epistemological device is contingent upon faith (*imân*) (Barrajân 2013, 56). When faith radiates, the inner eye of the servant gains the ability to perceive the *lawḥ mahfûz* (the Mother Book of the Book of nature and revelation) with Allah's permission. This enlightenment allows the servant to witness the objects of both the worldly and Hereafter realms. It also guides them on their path toward their ultimate goals. The efficacy of this state is contingent on the clarity of faith that is free from doubt's impurities and the luminosity of faith that is untainted by the clouds of desire (Barrajân 2016, 104-105).

Ibn Barrajân contends that a comprehensive understanding of the Quran requires concurrent contemplation of God's creation in natural symbols. However, a complete knowledge of both revelation and cosmos is unattainable without self-awareness. According to him, individuals relying solely on guidance from either cosmos or revelation are epistemologically deficient (Barrajân 2013, 113). Conversely, those who integrate insights from both realms can achieve true guidance (Barrajân 2013, 64). In his view, the Quran, being fundamentally a form of news (*nabâ'*), inherently contains the potential for belief or disbelief. Even when people believe in it, they may not attain absolute certainty. On the other hand, the *lawḥ mahfûz* or *al-Kitâb al-Mubîn* is observable by eyes and devoid of doubts because its original script (*nuskhah*) is embodied in the heavens, the earth, and its contents (Barrajân 2013, 103). Additionally, the Quran, as a manifestation of God in the form of words, encompasses everything but lacks detailed elaboration. The specifics unfold through the continuous manifestation of Allah's creation, both in the world and



the Hereafter. Consequently, the truth of the Quran is revealed through the ongoing stream of knowledge manifested in the evolution of historical consciousness and will fully materialize on the Last Day. Hence, the knowledge of the Quran is incomplete except in the Hereafter (Barrajân 2013, 67). The functions of revelation (Quran) and nature are to serve as reminders (*al-dhikr*) for humans, ingrained within them by *fitrah* with the inherent knowledge of the names of God.

To recognize *al-ḥaqq*, someone is required to traverse toward the right path (*al-ḥaqq*) because any other routes lead only to superficial knowledge or devoid of value in the eyes of Allah. In other words, an incorrect path will lead to partial and incomplete knowledge, which is similar to the understanding of blind individuals examining elephants or those in dark caves. Prior knowledge of the names of Allah serves as foundational understanding prior to delving into the Quran and nature. This effort acts as a guide in interpreting both revelation and nature. Once the names of Allah and the Quran are comprehended, the next step involves understanding how each name manifests in the reality of nature. The findings from this exploration are then validated through revisiting the initial phase. Ibn Barrajân articulates this methodology as follows:

*“Understand that the Quran represents the foremost and most elevated knowledge, serving as the foundation upon which other sciences are constructed and find their culmination. The path to this understanding lies in recognizing that the reported names of Allah, ninety-nine, serve as the foundational names.” .... The names of Allah act as the pillars supporting the two realms of nature and revelation. How can nature and revelation be void of their meanings when Asmâ' envelops them, both apparent and concealed?”* (Barrajân 2013, 327).

In Ibn Barrajân's perspective, the comprehensive understanding of the two Books, the book of revelation and the book of existence, remains incomplete without adherence to and emulation of the Messenger. This is attributed to the dual formulation of revelation, encompassing both *al-Kitâb* (the Quran) and the Sunnah of the Apostle. According to him, Allah has bestowed three interconnected main pillars as a path guiding servants to the Reality of truth (*al-ḥaqq*). These three pillars named the



Prophet as a guide, the *Kitābullāh* as a reminder, and cosmos as a means of profound insight into it (Barrajān 2013, 52).

Epistemologically, Ibn Barrajān formulates the process of complete immersion in the three modes of God's self-disclosure by integrating four cognitive processes: *tafakkur*, *tadabbur*, *tadhakkur*, and *i'tibār*. The *tafakkur* method involves a rational process which aims at understanding phenomena as it is indicated by different signs in nature. On the other hand, the *tadabbur* method is focused on the verbal verses of the Quran. It integrates the Quranic verses as a cohesive unit by examining similarities and compatibilities of meanings. Meanwhile, the *i'tibār* process entails crossing over (*al-'ubūr/cross over*) from what is witnessed in nature to the inner reality that remains unseen (*al-'ibrah min shāhid ilā ghāyb*). The process of *tadhakkur* involves self-reflection which aims at recalling the primordial knowledge within.

The aforementioned cognitive processes are interconnected. Ibn Barrajān emphasizes the continuous use of *tadhakkur* by stating that the process is perpetual and concurrent, in which after *tadabbur* and *i'tibār* someone could engage in *tadhakkur*. While proceeding with *tadhakkur*, someone should inquire about the state of what is present in the world that necessitates a connection (*al-liḥâq*) with what exists in the hereafter, respond to it by glorifying Him and bearing witness to what Allah, and testify for Himself and others (Barrajān 2013, 96).

Ibn Barrajān conceptualizes human knowledge of *al-ḥaqq* as multidimensional. Although knowledge is fundamentally unified, it possesses a starting point with no defined endpoint. Human perception of God in this world is hierarchical. Non-believers, who fail to recognize God's signs in nature and revelation, remain obstructed from the truth (*al-ḥaqq*). On the other hand, believers experience varying levels of vision (*naẓar*) toward Allah *al-Ḥaqq*. These differences in vision levels are not viewed in binary terms of right and wrong but as distinct tiers of knowledge, characterized by varying degrees of confidence and certainty. According to Ibn Barrajān, a believer's vision of Allah *al-Ḥaqq* in this world encompasses six levels.

First, the vision of the lay believer is grounded in firm belief without the need for explicit proof. Second, we encounter the theologian who employs the method of *jadāl*, establishes proofs, and articulates rational arguments. Third, the vision ascends to the level of the expert in

*wara'*, repentance, utilizing the heart for self-introspection, practicing *tawakkal*, and employing emotions such as *khawf*, *rajâ'*, and *yaqîn*. Fourth, the knowledge (*ma'rifat*) at this tier is acquired through evidence and explanations pointing to Him, while also affirming the truth of His Messengers and His Books. Fifth, it is the perspective of those who are elevated among the pious (*ahl al-'aliyah min a'immah al-muttaqîn*). Their understanding surpasses what the *a'immah al-muttaqîn* knew previously by engaging in inductive research (*istiqrâ'*) on *Asmâ' al-Ḥusnâ* and Allah's glorious Attributes. They explore the manifestation of *Asmâ'* (*masâlik al-asmâ'*) in nature, along with the intrinsic consequences of *al-ḥaqq al-makhlûq bihi al-khalq* and their attribution to *Asmâ'* and attributes. This exploration leads them to attain a lofty level of *tawḥîd* (*al-tawḥîd al-'alî*), specifically *'ayn al-yaqîn* that represents a directly witnessed reality (*mushâhadah*). As for the seventh *naẓar* vision, it remains forbidden and inaccessible in this worldly realm. Only after entering paradise, undergoing purification and rectification, will they witness *al-Ḥaqq al-Mubîn* (God) with absolute clarity (*'iyânan*) (Barrajân 2013, 465).

### The Axiological Dimension of *al-Ḥaqq*

In the realm of Sufi discourse, the ultimate objective of all knowledge is nothing but the attainment of genuine knowledge of Allah (*al-taḥaqquq bi ma'rifatillâh*) (Librizah 2020, 167). Ibn Barrajân asserts that this objective is achieved through understanding *al-ḥaqq al-makhlûq bihi al-khalq* and fulfilling the rights that such understanding demands. Wisdom, that is positioned at the core of all knowledge, embodies this goal. According to Ibn Barrajân, once wisdom is realized within an individual, there remains nothing beyond his comprehension (Ibn Barrajân 2013, 107). He defines wisdom as:

"Wisdom is to acquire truth and align it with reality (*al-ḥaqq*), demonstrate justice in both speech and action. It involves recognizing God through knowledge and encompasses, in terms of actions, the ability to harmonize contradictory elements, juxtapose differences, and unite scattered elements" (Barrajân 2010, 232).

Wisdom, in the perspective of Ibn Barrajân, embodies a holistic and multidimensional mode of thinking which transcends mere rational knowledge (*al'ilm*). It represents a comprehensive understanding of

reality. According to Ibn Barrajân, wisdom in comprehending everything within its domain involves understanding the essence of each entity, its creation, purpose, and ultimate destination (*ilâ ma yaûlu*). It encompasses awareness of its creator and the infusion of wisdom within it, leading to the practical application of its demands, namely the pursuit of *al-haqq* and adherence to the blessed Sunnah (Barrajân 2013, 36).

Hikmah is not merely the knowledge of *al-haqq* but, more significantly, is the realization of *al-haqq* (*al-tahaqquq*) in actual existence. Therefore, hikmah, akin to the Quran, involves understanding its interpretations and grasping its meanings that constitute the highest form of wisdom (Barrajân 2013, 210). Hikmah also signifies the truthfulness of words and actions, the performance of the essential and superior deeds despite encountering obstacles (Barrajân 2013, 337). It further encompasses the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and every uttered word that outwardly refers to the inward, unveiling the truth (Barrajân 2013, 357). Essentially, hikmah is closely linked to the knowledge of *al-haqq* in its various dimensions and the actualization of its demands.

According to him, the origin and wellspring of wisdom in this world lie in the actions of Allah, which were manifested through both the breaths of Jahannam and His mercy. Thus, attaining the pinnacle of wisdom requires a soul that is pure, and a mind illuminated by the light of faith. He critiques philosophers who seek wisdom through avenues other than its authentic source. In his perspective, wisdom is solely attained through the appropriate channels—specifically, in places where the names and attributes of God manifest in this world, coupled with submission and faith, while highlighting the essential role of guidance from revelation (Barrajân 2013, 357).

Methodically, the purification of the soul is achieved through *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) and *tafakkur* (contemplation), intertwining *dhikr* with reflective thought (*fikr*) and thought with *dhikr*. These profound sciences find resonance within a heart that palpitate with the robust radiance of unwavering faith. It happens since this knowledge mostly resides in forms that transcend the realms of theoretical and rational written sciences (*'ilm al-suḥuf*). Guidance (*hudâ*) remains elusive without piety, and true guidance is only attained through knowledge (Barrajân 2013, 103).

The essence of understanding *al-ḥaqq* lies in fulfilling the rights inherent in each aspect of *ḥaqq*. Meeting these rights in their various dimensions and scopes is a tangible manifestation of *al-ḥaqq*. This is evident in Allah's command to fulfil the rights of those entitled to them (*i'ta' kulli dhi ḥaqqin ḥaqqahu*). Ibn Barrajān emphasizes that the supreme right of *al-ḥaqq* (*aḥaqq al-ḥaqq*) is to believe in Allah, His angels, His messengers, and His Books, bearing witness to what Allah testifies (Ibn Barrajān 2013, 179). Consequently, the realization of *al-ḥaqq* is achieved by wholeheartedly serving *al-ḥaqq*, encompassing both physical and mental dimensions.

### Conclusion

This study concludes that Ibn Barrajān's conception of *al-ḥaqq* is firmly rooted in the Sufi paradigm of *tawḥīd*, which posits God as the singular, all-encompassing reality. This metaphysical foundation gives rise to a coherent systems-based framework that integrates ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions into a unified structure, grounded in divine unity. Ontologically, *al-ḥaqq* is understood as the absolute reality comprising both a perceivable outer dimension—*al-ḥaqq al-makhlūq bihi al-khalq*—and an imperceptible inner essence—*al-ḥaqq al-qah*. Human knowledge of *al-ḥaqq* is inherently limited and gradational, confined to the outer manifestations of divinity discernible in cosmic signs, revelation, and the human experience.

Epistemologically, the pursuit of *al-ḥaqq* involves contemplative engagement with these divine signs, guided by spiritual practices such as *tafakkur* (reflection), *tadhakkur* (remembrance), *tadabbur* (deep contemplation), and *i'tibār* (consideration). These methods form an integrated pathway for attaining insight into the divine names and their manifestations, fostering both intellectual and spiritual realization. Axiologically, the ultimate goal of recognizing *al-ḥaqq* is the attainment of *hikmah* - a form of embodied wisdom that transcends theoretical knowledge and is expressed through ethical conduct in accordance with the Prophetic Sunnah. This conception situates knowledge within a transformative moral framework, emphasizing the unity of knowing and being.

This study affirms that Ibn Barrajān's metaphysical thought constitutes a distinctive form of systems thinking, offering a holistic and

internally coherent model that stands apart from conventional dualistic approaches. His integrative vision provides a valuable framework for reengaging Sufi philosophy and for articulating a divine-centered epistemology within the Islamic intellectual tradition. Nonetheless, the present research is limited in scope, focusing solely on the concept of *al-haqq*. Further exploration is needed to examine additional system features—such as cognitive dynamics, systemic openness, and hierarchical interrelations—in order to fully appreciate the depth and breadth of Ibn Barrajān's contribution to Islamic thought.

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