**IBN RUSHD: PHILOSOPHER AND JURIST**

**Outline:**

a. Correcting the errors of philosophers:

1. Critique of Al Farabi.
2. Critique of Ibn Sina.

b. Defense of Philosophy:

The Decisive Treatise Determining the Nature of the connection between Philosophy and Religion:

1. The Law obliges us to study beings and reflect on them.
2. Reflection is only possible through intellectual reasoning, the highest of which is demonstration.
3. This means one has to study the rules and principles of reasoning, various types of arguments, etc…
4. This means that one has to study the works of those before us who have done work in these matters…
5. Having gained the skill, one has to now study beings and reflect upon them
6. This means one has to study what those before us have done in this field (the study of beings) just like with any other field ...

As such: the Law obliges us to study philosophy.

Error in philosophy: accidental not essential

The differing natural capacities of humans to arrive at assent (tasdīq): through demonstrative, dialectical, or rhetorical paths.

The conclusion of the argument for philosophy restated: the Law commands the study of philosophy to those whose natural capacity is suited to such a study.

c. Resolving the conflict between The Law and wisdom/philosophy (Sharī’ah and Hikma)

The truth in religion and in philosophy

Allegorical interpretation (of Scripture) as the means of resolving apparent conflict

Lack of ijmā’ (unanimity) in theoretical issues as defense against charges of unbelief

Misunderstanding or misrepresenting the view of philosophers as cause for the conflict

Allegorical interpretations ought not to be made public

“Injuries from a friend are more severe than injuries from an enemy”.

**Class notes:**

He was an Aristotelian; he was the one who commented on Aristotle’s work.

In his opinion philosophy is not against the law (religion). He says that since both religion and philosophy study the existence of god and seek the truth. Ibn Rusd argues that the verses of the Quran urge us to reflect on beings and creatures, but how can we reflect on them if we don’t know how to reflect or we cannot differentiate between the different types of reasoning?

Quran and religion and law oblige us to reflect on beings so we have to have the principles to be able to analyze. There are three types of reasoning: demonstrative, dialectical, and rhetorical reasoning. However, not all people can understand philosophy.

Those who opposed ibn rushd argue that the first Muslims did not reason so he answered that the first Muslims did reason but under another title and in different manner, they did reflect but in different context. And if they did not reflect, ibn rushd says that it’s another reason for us to reflect because it’s an obligation. Ibn Rushd mentioned that we have to study the books of ancients because they already studied the existence so why should we start from the null if we already have a background. For him, there is no harm no study the ancients’ book. Hence, we read their work, analyze It, and then we either accept its contents or we refuse the parts that contradicts with our religion and we give an explanation. Even ibn rushd goes further, and said that if we forbid others from studying philosophy and ancient books, we are against the law and religion.

For Ibn Rushd, demonstrative truth cannot conflict with scripture (Qur'an), since Islam is ultimate truth and the nature of philosophy is the search for truth. Ibn Rushd begins with the contention that Law (religion) commands the study of philosophy. Therefore for him, a person who has the capacity of “natural intelligence” and “religious integrity” must begin to study philosophy. In addition, for him, Error in philosophy are accidental not essential, the philosopher, when following the proper order of education, should not be harmed by his studies, hence it is wrong to forbid the study of philosophy. Any harm that may occur is accidental, like that of the side effects of medicine. Ibn Rushd claims that not all people are able to find truth through philosophy, which is why the Law speaks of three ways for humans to discover truth and interpret scripture: the demonstrative (argues for the sake of arguments), the dialectical (argues using logic), and the rhetorical (taking people by emotions). These, for Ibn Rushd, divide humanity into philosophers, theologians and the common masses. The simple truth is that Islam is the best of all religions, in that, consistent with the goal of Aristotelian ethics, it produces the most happiness, which is comprised of the knowledge of God. As such, one way is appointed to every person, consistent with their natural disposition, so that they can acquire this truth.

My notes:

**Philosophy and Religion**

In his time, philosophy was viewed with suspicion. Despite the political support given to philosophy because of the Mutazilites and the early philosophers, a strong anti-philosophical movement rose through theological schools like the Hanbalites and the Asharites. These groups, particular the latter, gained public and political influence throughout the tenth and eleventh century Islamic world.

Ibn Rushd begins with the contention that Law commands the study of philosophy. Many Quranic verses, such as "Reflect, you have a vision" (59.2) and “they give thought to the creation of heaven and earth” (3:191), command human intellectual reflection upon God and his creation. This is best done by demonstration, drawing inferences from accepted premises, which is what both lawyers and philosophers do. Since, therefore, such obligation exists in religion, then a person who has the capacity of “natural intelligence” and “religious integrity” must begin to study philosophy. If someone else has examined these subjects in the past, the believer should build upon their work, even if they did not share the same religion. For, just as in any subject of study, the creation of knowledge is built successively from one scholar to the next. This does not mean that the ancients' teachings should be accepted uncritically, but if what is found within their teachings is true, then it should not be rejected because of religion. And their teaching can be classified as true by comparing them to the scripture and law, if they don’t contradict we accept them since ancients have the same goal which is finding the truth.

Not all people are able to find truth through philosophy, which is why the Law speaks of three ways for humans to discover truth and interpret scripture: the demonstrative, the dialectical and the rhetorical. These, for Ibn Rushd, divide humanity into philosophers, theologians and the common masses. For Ibn Rushd, demonstrative truth cannot conflict with scripture (i.e. Qur'an), since Islam is ultimate truth and the nature of philosophy is the search for truth. If scripture does conflict with demonstrative truth, such conflict must be only apparent. If philosophy and scripture disagree on the existence of any particular being, scripture should be interpreted allegorically. Ibn Rushd contends that allegorical interpretation of scripture is common among the lawyers, theologians and the philosophers, and has been long accepted by all Muslims; Muslims only disagree on the extent and propriety of its use. God has given various meanings and interpretations, both apparent and hidden, to numerous scriptures so as to inspire study and to suit diverse intelligences. The early Muslim community, according to Ibn Rushd, affirmed that scripture had both an apparent meaning and an inner meaning. If the Muslim community has come to a consensus regarding the meaning of any particular passage, whether allegorical or apparent, no one can contradict that interpretation. If there is no consensus about a particular passage, then its meaning is free for interpretation. The problem is that, with the international diversity and long history of Islam, it is all but impossible to establish a consensus on most verses. For no one can be sure to have gathered all the opinions of all scholars from all times. With this in mind, according to Ibn Rushd, scholars like al-Ghazzali should not charge philosophers with unbelief over their doctrines of the eternity of the universe, the denial of God's knowledge of particulars, or denial of bodily resurrection. Since the early Muslims accepted the existence of apparent and allegorical meanings of texts, and since there is no consensus on these doctrines, such a charge can only be tentative. Philosophers have been divinely endowed with unique methods of learning, acquiring their beliefs through demonstrative arguments and securing them with allegorical interpretation. So, masses cannot interpret, they just have to know the apparent meaning because if they do they might lose their faith, in the contrary, philosophers can interpret and must interpret and if they commit error these errors are accidental and they can correct them hence we cannot blame them.

**God and the world: 2 different points of view**

His [*Tahafut al-tahafut*](http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ir/tt/default.htm)(Incoherence of the Incoherence) is a response to an earlier attack upon philosophy, the [*Tahafut al falasifa*](http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/gz/tp/default.htm)(Incoherence of the Philosophers) written by AL-GHAZALI, who had argued in this work that there are two major problems with Islamic philosophy.

**The first problem** is that it misapplies the very philosophical techniques.

**The other problem** is that the conclusions of philosophy go against the principles of Islam, which the philosophers pretend they are supporting.

Al-Ghazali produced accurate descriptions of philosophical arguments and then set about demolishing them, **using** the same philosophical principles which his opponents try to employ. He argued that although the philosophers purport to prove that philosophy is merely a more sophisticated analysis of the nature of reality than that available to ordinary Muslims, the philosophers are in fact involved in dismantling (=tajrid) the religious notion of God, the afterlife and creation.

**The differences are**:

1. The nub of al-Ghazali’s attack on philosophy is what he regards as its misguided interpretation of the relationship between God and the world. The Qur’an is full of references to the creation of the world and to its eventual destruction should the deity feel it appropriate, yet Islamic philosophy tends to argue that the world is eternal. If God really is an agent, al-Ghazali asks, why cannot he just create the world ex nihilo and then later destroy it? Ibn Rushd replies that temporal and eternal agents act very differently. We can decide to do something, we can wait for a certain time before acting, we can wonder about our future actions; but such possibilities cannot arise for God. In his case there is no gap between desire and action, nothing stands in the way of his activity; and yet we are told by al-Ghazali that God suddenly created the world. What differentiates one time from another for God? What could motivate him to create the world at one particular time as opposed to another? For us, different times are different because they have different qualitative aspects, yet before the creation of the world, when there was nothing around to characterize one time as distinct from another, there is nothing to characterize one time over another as *the* time for creation to take place. So, Ibn Rushd says that God is not limited by time, god is above time, if we say that God created the world from ex nihilo we are practically saying that there is a certain time where god created the world. But, Al-Ghazali argues that such a response is evidence of mental laziness.
2. Along with his insistence that the deity is a real agent, al-Ghazali was concerned to provide God with real knowledge of the everyday events of the world he created. IBN SINA argued that God is limited to knowing only very general and abstract features of the world, since any other sort of knowledge would diminish him as an eternal and immaterial being. Al-Ghazali objects that any God which is acceptable to Islam must know the everyday events of our world. Ibn Rushd suggests that on the contrary, this would make God into someone very like his creatures and would provide him with knowledge that is beneath his dignity. But for him god’s knowledge is different from our knowledge and way of thinking. **God’s knowledge** is superior and unique because he is not limited to receiving information from the world, as is the case with finite creatures like human beings. He is the creator of the objects in the world, and he knows them in a more perfect and complete way than we can hope to attain. This suggests that God cannot know individuals as such. The best knowledge is abstract and universal, and this is the sort of knowledge which God can be thought to enjoy. One might expect Ibn Rushd to share Ibn Sina’s view that God’s knowledge is limited to universal judgments, but he does not adopt this line, arguing rather that God’s knowledge is neither universal nor individual, although it is more like the latter than the former. Our knowledge is the result of what God has brought about, whereas God’s knowledge is produced by that which he himself has brought about, a reality which he has constructed. The organization of the universe is a reflection of God’s thought, and through thinking about his own being he is at the same time thinking about the organization of the world which mirrors that essence. Ibn Rushd argues that this is not to diminish God’s knowledge, but rather emphasizes the distinctness of the deity from his creatures and their ways of finding things out.

***The soul: one different point of view***

Another charge which al-Ghazali brought against philosophy was that it fails to allow the physical resurrection of human beings and the provision of physical rewards and punishments appropriate to their behaviour during their lives. He has in mind here the Aristotelian notion of the soul, which makes the idea of an afterlife difficult to grasp. This is because the soul is the form of the living being, an aspect of the being itself, and there is no point in talking about the matter existing without the form when we are considering living creatures. Persons are combinations of soul and body, and in the absence of the latter there are no persons left. Ibn Rushd appears to argue that body is resurrected in afterlife but in glorified form, not in the same form of earthly bodies.

Ibn Rushd spoke about what is known today by secularism, he argues that we have to separate the true religion and practical acts. Religion is a direct relation with god; it is the relation of the soul with its creator. This why we have to separate politics from religion.