Religious and Scientific Duality of Thought: How Ibn Rushd and al-Ghazili Set the Agenda for Medieval Scholastic Debates

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As inheritors of two conflicting metaphysical traditions, *kalam* theology and Greek philosophy "proper," Abu Hamid al-Ghazili (1058-1111) and Abu al-Walid Ahmad Ibn Rushd (1226-1298)[1] were forced to choose between two options: remain fully within the bounds of one camp, maintaining that it exclusively trades in truth, or take the unpopular and difficult road of attempting to harmonize the two traditions. Whereas al-Ghazili relinquishes his ties to philosophy, polemicizes the whole subject as heretical nonsense, and ultimately arrives at a stringent scriptural viewpoint, Ibn Rushd seeks something of a middle ground, using philosophical methods to extract truths that accord with an allegorical interpretation of relevant passages in the Qur'an. One of the most contentious doctrinal questions addressed in al-Ghazili's and Ibn Rushd's intertextual dispute is whether the world is eternal or created in time. Their divergent approaches to this issue exemplify their divergent methodologies. It is hardly surprising that al-Ghazili, as a mystic and skeptic, should protest loudly that demonstrative reasoning seldom leads to conclusive results. But one cannot discredit a tool by deploying it against one's enemies. This paper will demonstrate that al-Ghazili's entire project of refutation is undermined by the use of reason to disprove the philosophers' appeal to reason. Ibn Rushd's response to al-Ghazili 's rather specious use of logic introduces the differentiation of religious and "scientific" or philosophical truths: an important, necessary, and previously unarticulated distinction which reverberated in the cathedrals and

universities of Europe and which remains relevant for contemporary thinkers faced with similar dilemmas.

Confronted with an inherently speculative question such as the world's eternality, medieval thinkers had at least two possible methods of inquiry at their disposal. Applying demonstrative reasoning, more commonly referred to as "logic," to metaphysical questions is one way to arrive at a conclusion. For the purposes of this paper, logic refers to the tradition of systematic reasoning through valid inference moves and is traceable to the Islamic legal tradition as well as to Aristotelian syllogistic logic. Ibn Rushd's weapon of choice is the scientific application of logic; al-Ghazili, on the other hand, adopts logic only as a double-edged sword for undercutting the philosophers who claim to use reason. Another method of inquiry, dialectics, entails the systematic and thoughtful positing of questions in philosophical debate and disputation; the dialectical approach was favored most heavily by theologians like al-Ghazili in making positive arguments. Engaging in a "dialogue" with other theologians is intended to produce a communal consensus on doctrinal questions. This consensus ideally leads to a more unified society, crushing heretics and apostates by sheer force of public will. However, Islamic theologians hardly held consistent views about the details of creation and divine eternality.

The historical and theoretical background of the small but consequential juncture where al-Ghazili and Ibn Rushd crossed quills is long and complex, but the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632 can serve as an adequate starting point. From 632 to the middle of the 9th century (when Greek texts became more widely discussed and translated), Muslims looked primarily to the Qur'an and prophetic sayings and traditions[2] for truth and guidance. During this time, Islam's nascent theology developed independently of ancient and classical philosophy, primarily on the basis of legal reasoning from the law[3] and prophetic tradition, only using independent reasoning[4] as a last resort for problems not addressed in scripture (Hourani 3). In the 8th century, a group of theologians known as the Mutazilites came to dominate the political and intellectual scene in Iraq, advancing a school of thought known as *kalam*, Islam's rationalist theology, which focused on the justice and unity of God (Armstrong 48). In opposition to the Mutazilites stood the Asharites, who generally refused to make

concessions to reason in interpretive matters, even in the face of contradiction between the apparent meaning of scripture and what was known to be possible. Religious scholar Karen Armstrong notes that the somewhat abstruse and nuanced Mutazilah viewpoint had always perplexed unlearned Muslims, and for this reason, Asharite dogma became the predominant "popular" theology of Sunni Islam. Asharism offered the masses a more "mystical and contemplative discipline" that exhorted followers to seek the divine presence in all of creation, as prescribed in the Qur'an (Armstrong 64). Asharites saw little need to look for recondite meaning or underlying complexities in the Qur'an, and thought of the world as ordered only by the direct intervention and attention of God at every single moment.

Starting with the wider translation and dissemination of ancient Greek philosophical texts in the mid 9th century, the *falasifa* (Arabic philosophers) joined the Mutazilites and Asharites in the fray for doctrinal authority (Hourani 3). Hellenism made its way into the Muslim cultural mix primarily through large-scale projects patronized by learned caliphs, who wanted Greek and Syriac texts to be available in modern Arabic translation (Bello 2). Scholars began to write commentaries and treatises on the Greek classics, adopting diverse projects. A few examples include Al-Kindi's application of Aristotle's "proof for the existence of the First Cause" to the God of the Qur'an, Ibn Sina's harmonization of philosophy and mysticism, and al-Farabi's work on Plotinus, Aristotle, and Plato (Armstrong 72, 83). After the initial proliferation of these texts, it was only a matter of time before the philosophers and theologians would come into conflict.

Historian Miguel Cruz Hernandez opens his discussion of Andalusian philosophy and theology by observing that "if one admits the possibility of a formal duality of thought, on the one hand religious, on the other philosophical, the conclusion would be skepticism, as had occurred in the case of the mutakillimun[5] and Al-Ghazili" (794). Writing from Baghdad, al-Ghazili holds that philosophy, as conceived by Ibn Sina and Al-Farabi, is utterly discordant with the worldview espoused by the Qur'an, and therefore those who subscribe to it are misguided and can be justly characterized as disbelievers. In *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*[6], al-Ghazili takes umbrage primarily with the philosophers' various claims about the eternality of the world, the

doctrine of the unity of souls, and the proposition that God is unaware of "particulars." His refutation is, in effect, an all-out attack on both philosophy and Mutazilite *kalam* during the historical apogee of the philosopher-theologian conflict. Although the *Incoherence*'s clear explication of philosophical arguments ironically made philosophy more accessible by rarifying and summarizing the most important arguments of the day, the treatise is generally perceived as being sufficiently persuasive to have precipitated the decline of philosophical studies in the medieval Islamic world. Despite Ibn Rushd's spirited response to al-Ghazili, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* essentially nailed shut the coffin on debates about the eternality of the world — at least in the Islamic world. Europeans would resurrect these issues in centuries to come, and new Christian commentators would elaborate and build off of the work completed by their Muslim and Jewish predecessors, often sharing similar concerns about the consequences of holding to a system of dual thought.

That the cosmos is eternal is a conjecture advanced by Aristotle and even some neo-Platonists, while the older creationist view appears in Plato's *Timaeus* and also in the Qur'an, which uses accessible metaphors and a language of temporality to explain how an omnipotent and benevolent being fashioned the world.[8] Since medieval Islamic philosophers were conversant in all of these arguments, al-Ghazili was faced with the task of responding to an immense body of literature. In most cases, he traces the history of a position in the creation debate to some classical or ancient thinker, identifies a couple of the most prominent Islamic scholars who expanded the debate, and extracts the most compelling arguments they collectively make for that position. This attempt to simultaneously refute a number of disparate views might appear at first to be an overambitious goal or even a strategic misstep, but the choice is central to advancing his purpose: to conflate and reduce diverse philosophical viewpoints to a single laundry list of philosophical dogmas, so that the different arguments of philosophers come to seem inconsistent and petty. The contrast between godless, bickering philosophers and unified believers makes a compelling case for readers who value solidarity among Muslims.

Plato's *Timaeus* is one of the first works al-Ghazili cites as having addressed the issue of creation. In Plato's work, Timaeus discusses

the origin of the world with Socrates (29e-34c and 37d-38c). According to their account, the creator is inherently good and, being free from jealousy, wants everything to be as much like itself as possible. Out of disorder and chaos, the creator harmonizes the elements and generates symmetry and order. Timaeus talks of the generation and harmonization of pre-existing elements, not of a creation ex nihilo. Divine providence, then, brought our world into being as a truly living thing, endowed with soul and intelligence. The world itself contains all living things and is a blessed god, begat by the eternal god (demiurge). Since that which is begotten cannot be fully eternal, the Creator makes the world a "moving image of eternity," shifting according to number, remaining in unity. This enduring motion is what we call "time" (37d). Plato continues by saying that "time…came to be together with the heavens so that just as they were begotten together, they might also be undone together…And it came to be after the model of that which is sempiternal, so that it might be as much like its model as possible" (38b-c). Sempiternality, or everlastingness, implies that the demiurge is apart from creation, possessing at once knowledge of past, present, and future. Therefore, the demiurge exists in an absence of temporal sequence. This view of eternality is to be contrasted with the timelessness of the forms, which exist both presently and in the past, also persisting endlessly into the future (Helm).

   Other foundational work on this subject includes that of Aristotle, who made the important connection between necessity and everlastingness (Helm). Aristotle held that Plato's talk of creation was in conflict with the idea of the eternal as unchanging in all respects. This objection is probably one of the reasons why subsequent neo-Platonists (like al-Farabi and Ibn-Sina, who al-Ghazili attacks) take a reformed view, saying that Plato only used the Creator story as a kind of metaphor. Eternity, endurance, and lack of change are all indissociable qualities of God in the mind of many medieval thinkers, and it was Aristotle, through the work of Plotinus, who introduced the connection between these qualities. Anything that is unchanging must be sempiternal, and that which is unchanging must be necessary, in the sense that it cannot be otherwise. Similarly, anything that cannot be otherwise (i.e. is necessary) must be unchanging and sempiternal. Since God is necessary, God is also sempiternal. The following

argument from Ibn Rushd about the relationship between "beginnings" and "ends" spells out this relationship:

> 1. Something is ETERNAL if and only if it has no BEGINNING.
> 2. If something has no BEGINNING, it must be ETERNAL.
> 3. Anything that is ETERNAL is unchanging.
> 4. Anything that TERMINATES has undergone a kind of CHANGE.
> 5. Likewise, anything that is unCHANGING cannot TERMINATE.
> 6. Therefore, anything without a BEGINNING will never TERMINATE,
> 7. and anything that TERMINATES must have a BEGINNING. (299)

With respect to the eternality of the world, this argument does not fall clearly on the eternalist or creationist side. For a creationist such as al-Ghazili, who thought the world would someday be undone, this argument is affirming in so far as it demonstrates that once the creation (beginning) of the world is accepted, its eventual destruction must logically follow. For an eternalist like Ibn Rushd, the conclusion supports his notion of the Eternal. The argument does demonstrate that denying the temporal creation of the world is a kind of double heresy, because it amounts to denying an end to creation (day of judgment) as well. Ibn Rushd explains, "Plato and the Ash'arites believed that future celestial rotations could be infinite…Thus whoever supposes that the world has a beginning would have held more firmly to his principle…to suppose that it has an end, as many of the theologians had done" (301). To most readers, the necessary association between eternal endlessness and beginninglessness seems counter-intuitive, because it leads to denying the possibility of a one-directional infinite sequence (one with either a beginning or and end, but not both).

In *The Incoherence,* al-Ghazili responds to the philosophers' views of creation generally, taking issue especially with Plato's notion of a "world soul." But he reacts more vehemently against the subsequent

elaboration (and even distortion) of Plato's creation account by the neo-Platonists al-Farabi and Ibn Sina (Avicenna): "some of the philosophers subsequently interpreted away [Plato's] literal words, denying that he believed in the world's temporal creation" (2007: 241). At times he seems to be attacking Plato, while at others, he rails against Aristotle, "the philosopher par excellence and the 'first teacher'" (2000: 4).   In all of this, Al-Ghazili's project is to demonstrate that the philosophers hold beliefs that are incompatible with those espoused by the Qur'an. Al-Ghazili begins his offensive by presenting the philosophers' "strongest" proof for the eternality of the world:

1. If an Eternal being exists, then a selectively determining factor[9] must either come anew in it, or not, in order for the temporal to proceed from it.

2. The nature of the eternal is to exist unchangingly.

    a. A selectively determining factor coming anew amounts to change.

3. Since the Eternal exists unchangingly, something (such as the world) exists from the Eternal perpetually or it does not exist at all. (Things can be unchanging by either not existing at all, or by existing continuously)

    a. The world exists.

4. As a result, a selectively determining factor must not have come anew, and the world must exist from the eternal perpetually.

Also,

5. The existence of what is necessitated is necessary when the preconditions are in place.

6. Similarly, if intent and power are realized, and all obstacles removed, the delay of the intended effect is unintelligible (an analogy with human will).

7. There cannot be any obstacles to the realization of the Creator's intent and power, because this would mean that the Creator is not self-sufficient.

8. As a result, it cannot be said that the world is temporally created by means of an eternal will that made the world's existence necessary at some point and not another.[10]

In sum, al-Ghazili characterizes the philosophers as holding that the procession of the temporal from an eternal Creator is impossible. As a result of this supposed impossibility, al-Ghazili says, the philosophers assert that the world must exist coeternally with God, like light shining from the sun, where God is prior in rank (cause) but not time. Obviously, this conclusion contradicts the personified visualization of God given by texts like the Qur'an.

After giving a representation of the philosophers' argument, al-Ghazili mounts his polemic proper, insisting that, if the philosophers assert the impossibility of the linkage of the terms "eternal will" and "temporal creation," they must justify this assertion either through inference[11] or necessity. Al-Ghazili eliminates the first possibility by pointing out that the philosophers may be using an inappropriate analogy for the eternal will, effectively likening God's will to our own temporal volitions when in fact the two may not be at all analogous (2007: 244-245). A shrewd point, no doubt, but one that only excludes making inferences from personal experience in matters concerning the divine, and one which al-Ghazili must himself ignore if he is to avoid interpreting creation, as described in the Qur'an, allegorically.[12] Given that the analogy is flawed, the philosophers' conclusion against the theory of temporal creation of the world may still be demonstrable through the "necessity" of reason. Moving to eliminate this second possibility, al-Ghazili explains that innumerable civilizations and wise (i.e. rational) people evidently hold beliefs in the temporal creation of the world by an eternal will, so, the impossibility[13] is not necessary in this sense. This argument is essentially an appeal to tradition. Al-Ghazili continues his refutation by saying that the necessity of reason can be invoked against the philosophers themselves, because it shows us that the world cannot be eternal just as readily as it shows the opposite (2007: 245). He notes that, by the "necessity of reason," a criterion to which philosophers supposedly hold themselves, God could not possibly be that which the philosophers claim he is: a "single entity that knows all universals without that knowledge requiring multiplicity" (2007: 245). Al-Ghazili hopes to have identified an example where, at least on the surface, the philosophers hold a view that is contrary to the necessity of reason. The audience is led to believe that this contradiction on the part of the philosophers is

sufficient proof that their other beliefs ought to be rejected as well.

Al-Ghazili's claims, in particular the one appealing to "countless" other civilizations and wise people, are rhetorical and set out a pattern of argumentation that he repeats later in his refutation.[14] In each case, al-Ghazili begins by noting that the philosophers must prove something either analogically or demonstratively. Invariably, the analogy put forth by the philosophers (or rather attributed to the philosophers) is a poor one, and so the only option left open for the philosophers is to prove the point by the "necessity of reason." At this juncture al-Ghazili usually makes a kind of argumentative appeal to ignorance, showing that using the rules of necessity, it is possible to argue against any of the philosophers' arguments and arrive at a situation in which the philosophers contradict one another. Instead of showing that the view in question is not demonstrable, al-Ghazili shifts the focus to some other instance where a conclusion that the philosophers reach would seem to contradict the conclusion at issue. This method aligns with al-Ghazili's overall strategy of playing the philosophers' views against one another in order to discredit the discipline, by demonstrating how unstable and "shifty" their arguments are. This modus operandi never analyzes an argument in and of itself but instead concludes each debate by directing the audience's attention away from the matter at hand and toward a new instance of philosophical apostasy. In this way, al-Ghazili's "refutations" seem to transition smoothly into one another, and his approach provides an appearance of logical flow and structure.

Al-Ghazili's rather sophistical methods notwithstanding, his main contention that the philosophers are unable to meet their own criterion of demonstrability is damaging in the eyes of most Muslims, and he occasionally backs up this refutation with new pseudo-rational arguments of his own. For example, he says that maintaining the world's eternality leads to affirming an infinite number of rotations in the celestial sphere, while concurrently affirming that those rotations are divisible into fractions in relation to one another (2007: 245). This is an argument from the impossibility of an infinite regress, an argument popular among *kalam* theologians, inherited perhaps from John Philoponus's proofs of creation (Davidson 93-94). For example, an absurdity arises if the total rotations of one slowly revolving planet are 1/3 of those of some other faster planet, but infinitely so, because

an infinite sequence cannot be divisible or in proportion to another sequence. Al-Ghazili mentions a similar absurdity that arises with respect to the evenness or oddness of the units in an infinite series, in so far as planetary rotations are non-existents numbered conceptually (as opposed to existing in totality) (2007: 246). Al-Ghazili uses these points to show that the supposed contradiction between the terms "eternal will" and "temporal creation" cannot be known necessarily and cannot be asserted by way of demonstrable proof. In fact (continuing on in this diversionary vein), al-Ghazili contends that demonstrative proof can be invoked against the philosophers, as in the case where they make absurd claims about the soul (2007: 247). Al-Ghazili characterizes the philosophers as having inconsistent views about infinity: they seem to be asserting both that an actual infinite regress cannot exist and that a numerical multiplicity of souls dividing, yet remaining a unity, exists as a part of Plato's world-soul.

The project of using reason to deconstruct reasonable arguments, however, is flawed from the outset, because if reason is a steadfast tool, then it should not be dispensed with once the deconstruction is complete. At the very least, one's own views ought to stand up to the same kind of scrutiny one employs against one's enemies. Using the laws of mathematics, for example, to reach conclusions about the orbits of planets and overall structure of the universe could, and did over time, yield multitudinous paradigms. That these various models of the universe have subsequently fallen out of favor does not preclude the validity of mathematical inferences. Al-Ghazili is happy to use reason so long as it destroys his opponents' worldviews, yet he would refuse to apply the same criteria to his own theological positions. Granting that the philosophers arrive at some conclusions that seem logically inconsistent with others, al-Ghazili's refutation of their arguments is overshadowed by the greater degree to which his own creationist perspective deviates from what is reasonable. He polemicizes against the philosophers for making false analogies between the human and divine will, yet he is bound by his own beliefs in theological consensus (dialectical agreement) to speak literally about God sitting in a throne (11:7). Similarly, he claims for theologians all the know-how and logical ability of the philosophers, yet he refuses to specify the logical justifications for his doctrinal views and ignores

that even flawed philosophical arguments may attain a degree of correctness that those of theologians can only pretend to.

Eighty years after al-Ghazili 's *Incoherence*, Ibn Rushd responded with *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*[15] and *The Decisive Treatise*,[16] works in which he set out first, to explain the correct Aristotelian position on metaphysical and doctrinal matters of contention; and second, to vindicate the study of philosophy with legalistic argument. In Ibn Rushd's *Incoherence,* the main concern is not so much to defend the works of al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, but to assert the superiority of his own Aristotelianism over theirs, as well as to repudiate al-Ghazili's claim that all philosophers are guilty of disbelief. Throughout the text, Ibn Rushd chides al-Ghazili for subscribing to a popular or "common" understanding and for making sophistical appeals that lack true weight. In *The Decisive Treatise*, Ibn Rushd argues more generally that there is nothing heretical about studying the ancients or appropriating the "best" of their methods and beliefs; he maintains that the law exhorts Muslims to conduct philosophical inquiry so as to better understand creation and appreciate God. Unlike al-Ghazili, Ibn Rushd views philosophy as a milk-brother to the Qur'an, and even goes so far as to give philosophers ultimate scriptural authority concerning doctrinal matters requiring a depth of understanding and rigor of thinking beyond the ability and/or training of most theologians.

Ibn Rushd reacts forcefully to al-Ghazili's characterization of the philosophers' views on the eternality of the world and to his somewhat rhetorical argument from the impossibility of an infinite regress, which, according to Ibn Rushd, completely ignores the difference between a potential and necessary infinite chain. For Ibn Rushd, the notion of a lesser and greater infinite number of rotations is absurd only in a situation where those infinite rotations actually exist and a proportion exists between two infinites. If the two are taken as only potentially infinite, however, no proportion, and hence no contradiction, results (298). An infinite number is only impossible in the case where all the objects exist concurrently. With respect to heavenly rotations, however, that criterion for impossibility remains unfulfilled. In the similar case of an infinite line (or "chain of events"), for example, it would be absurd to "break" the line and have two infinities going off in different directions, because the two parts would be the same as the whole, an

absurdity that no philosopher allows. The rotations of planets, in so much as their movements resemble "chained" events, likewise cannot stop and have not terminated, because they rotate ceaselessly; at any given time no "rotation" as such tangibly exists.

Philosophers have allowed for a particular kind of accidental infinity, but not the essential kind that Al-Ghazili attributes to them in his refutation (Ibn Rushd 298). Ibn Rushd most likely means "accidental" in the Aristotelian sense of "said of" a primary substance and also "present in" that substance. Infiniteness is a universal accident, said of primary substances but accidental to them and not individually numbered or particularized. Thus the movement of the celestial spheres is potentially and temporally infinite. A problem with acknowledging temporality is that the cause of temporality cannot itself be temporal. To exist diachronically (changing through time) is to be a product, which is why the philosophers (including Plato) have placed the Agent completely outside the temporal world. Hence, this accidental infinity is a necessary consequence of the first principle's existence:

> [This necessary consequence—accidental infinity] is not only the case with respect to successive or continuous motions, but also with respect to things about which it is supposed that the prior is a cause of the posterior…That is to say, that the temporal creation of some [thing] must go back to a First, Eternal Agent Whose existence has no beginning and Whose bringing about [of things] has no beginning. (Ibn Rushd 298)

For example, humans may produce humans infinitely, but this is only the result of a kind of corruption and generation; nothing changes with respect to substance. The same can be said of the movements of the planets and of other changes in the world. Ibn Rushd further explains, "Whoever claims that the rotations of the celestial spheres are infinite in the future need not suppose they have a beginning" (299). The acts of the Agent whose existence has no beginning must themselves have no beginning, as in Aristotle's pairing of necessity and eternality (endurance).

With respect to even and odd, Ibn Rushd explains that those designations refer only to numerable actualities with a clear beginning

and end (299-300). Because the motions have no beginning, they cannot be numbered, and hence the designation of "even" or "odd" would be a kind of category mistake. Ibn Rushd's other main point is that rotations exist only conceptually, and are actually non-existents in the past, present, and future, making the designation that much more problematic. Rotations, similarly, are not a totality of units, because this classification would imply an actually existing thing (297). (Al-Ghazili also notes this possible weakness, accusing the philosophers of numbering things that lie outside their own definitions, namely a numerical multiplicity of souls (2007: 261). This leads to another fascinating dispute about the properties of souls, which is beyond the scope of this paper.)

Ibn Rushd further rejoins that, by refuting the analogy to human will, al-Ghazili is compelled to accept that either 1) the Agent's act does not necessitate change in the agent — in which case there is an external cause; or that 2) some changes can be self-changed (from within) and can be associated with the Eternal without changing the eternal.[17] With respect to the first possibility, it is evident that change entails the activity of the agent (cause), especially in the case of God (Ibn Rushd 296). So given that the eternal doesn't undergo any new change, al-Ghazili cannot consistently hold that God has a first temporal act without being obliged to accept that some new state or relation must have come to be. The second possibility is simply incoherent, because change implies some new condition of which change itself is a measure. (Ibn Rushd takes for granted that every new state or relation has an agent.)

After responding to al-Ghazili's first objections, Ibn Rushd concludes that al-Ghazili's account is somewhat laughable: "his putting forth the likes of these sophistical claims is obscene, for one would think that [my objections] would not escape his notice. He intended that only to dupe the people of his time, but it is incompatible with the character of those striving to reveal the truth" (302). In the rest of his *Incoherence*, Ibn Rushd continues to respond to al-Ghazili's refutations, clarifying the actual positions of philosophers and admonishing al-Ghazili for ignoring nuance. Ibn Rushd has a firm idea of the "character" of truth-seekers and of how to approach the truth, and these ideas are the topic of his *The Decisive Treatise*.

In direct opposition to al-Ghazili's technique of eschewing philosophical inquiry in favor of dialectics, Ibn Rushd outlines an approach to understanding Qur'anic doctrine through the use of philosophy and logic. *The Decisive Treatise* is a work of legalistic argumentation that puts forward three main points: first, that the law makes philosophic studies obligatory; second, that philosophy contains nothing opposed to Islam; and third, that philosophical interpretations of scripture should not be taught to the majority. Ibn Rushd saw a need to acknowledge philosophy as a method of inquiry compatible with belief in Islam, and in this sense, the work is a kind of apologia. Whereas al-Ghazili says that the philosophers "have fallen into confusion in certain details beyond [religious Laws]" and are guilty of "unproductive extravagance" (2000: 3), Ibn Rushd claims that philosophy is the most perfected method of teleological inquiry available. Citing passages in the Qur'an that enjoin believers to contemplate creation and the Creator, Ibn Rushd even claims for philosophers scriptural authority above and beyond that of theologians, who in his opinion lack the teleological insights necessary to make complex judgments about the Qur'an. He concludes that "if teleological study of the world is philosophy, and if the Law commands such a study, then the Law commands philosophy" (309). In order to master this most perfect of disciplines, one must first make a study of logic as already expounded by the ancient masters, even though they were not Muslims (Ibn Rushd 310). In this sense, "the study of the books of the ancients is obligatory by the law" for those people who have the natural intelligence, religious integrity, and moral virtue required (312). Al-Ghazili, of course, takes a different view, saying that the "source of unbelief" for contemporary philosophers is their "hearing high-sounding names such as 'Socrates,' 'Hipocrates,' 'Plato,' and 'Aristotle'…and the exaggeration and misguidedness of groups of their followers in describing [the excellence of] their minds" (2000: 2).

How could Ibn Rushd think that philosophy was compatible with scripture? He believed in the eternality of the world, but scripture clearly endorses a creationist view. Apparent contradictions notwithstanding, Ibn Rushd holds that "truth does not oppose truth, but accords and bears witness to it" (313). In cases of conflict between

scripture and what can be known from demonstrative reasoning and natural science, Ibn Rushd invokes the need for allegorical interpretation of scripture.[18]   He elucidates the purpose of allegory and metaphor in the Qur'an by saying that the diversity of people's natural capacities accounts for different "layers" of meaning: rhetorical, dialectical, and demonstrative (Ibn Rushd 320).   Given Ibn-Rushd's views about the Qur'an and demonstrative reasoning, it is reasonable to suggest that he believed in two different kinds of "truth."   For him, scripture and prophetic tradition may be concerned only with human activity, serving primarily to delineate appropriate modes of behavior and acceptable beliefs for humans who accept dogma.   For most people, the Qur'an provides invaluable moral and spiritual instruction that is not available in such an accessible form from any other source.   But moral and spiritual instruction is distinct from the demonstrative truth sought by philosophy, and also set out in the Qur'an.   Ibn Rushd seems to view the Qur'an as a very special and sacred text, but one that is nonetheless open to interpretation like any other, especially with regard to philosophical matters:

> There has never been a consensus against allegorical interpretation.   The Qur'an itself indicates that it has inner meanings that it is the special function of the demonstrative class to understand…Moreover it is evident…that a unanimous agreement cannot be established in questions of this [metaphysical] kind, because of the reports that many of the early believers…have said that there are allegorical interpretations that ought not to be expressed except to those who are qualified to receive allegories. (Ibn Rushd 316)

Ibn Rushd's point is that the mere fact that people reach consensus on an issue (via dialectical methods) does not exclude the possibility that the truth lies elsewhere, perhaps even with a dissenting view.   Although opinions on "practical" and well-established matters of Islamic tradition and orthopraxy ought not to be violated by allegorical interpretations, with regard to theoretical matters and verses, no such well-established tradition exists and any "consensus" reached by theologians amounts to disingenuous pretension.   Whereas al-Ghazili

might consider contradictions between philosophy and scripture frustrating, Ibn Rushd takes such tensions as an explicit encouragement and challenge from God to conduct a systematic investigation of His Creation. Calling philosophers disbelievers based on their incongruent beliefs, according to Ibn Rushd, is a mistake: "the Peripatetics only disagree with the Ash'arites and the Platonists in holding that past time is infinite. This difference is insufficient to justify a charge of disbelief" (318). Religious/spiritual truth and philosophical truth, according to the paradigm advanced by Ibn Rushd, are harmonizable and mutually inclusive for the class of people who are capable of conducting sustained inquiry.

The religio-scientific dualism advocated by Ibn Rushd was precedent-setting. According to a popular Western Civilization textbook, "the rediscovery of ancient culture inspired Byzantine writers…and would have profound consequences for both eastern and western European civilization in centuries to come" (Hunt et al. 360). This rediscovery in the East was attributable in large part to the translations and commentaries of Arab philosophers. Eastern Christians and Muslims engaged in positive exchanges leading up to the Crusades. In many ways, the debate between al-Ghazili and Ibn Rushd was a forerunner of subsequent controversies in Europe during the age of expansion, such as that between Saint Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-1274), who sought to harmonize reason with religion, and John Duns Scotus (c. 1266-1308), who thought reason could not "soar to God" (Hunt et al. 413). Even the more general divide between Islam's dual tradition of *kalam* theosophy and *falsafa* proper can be easily conceived as an antecedent or precursor to the partitioning of Europe's intellectual elites into University Scholastics and Cathedral Scholars. Ibn Rushd's embrace of the incongruity between faith and reason may have grown out of his diverse Andalusian background, and is very much within the "western" tradition of assimilating the best practices from diverse traditions and forging them into one culture. Maria Menocal, a scholar of al-Andalus, focuses attention on the manner in which Ibn Rushd "focused unflinchingly on the paradoxes that must be embraced in order for faith and reason to flourish in their respective domains…each was to have a generous and uncompromised place at a table where both could share in the banquet of truth" (209). In this

sense, al-Ghazili and Ibn Rushd were among the many Muslim torchbearers of western civilization, who elaborated and enriched the traditions they inherited from their Greek and Latin predecessors and established the terms under which Christian Europe would struggle to understand the roles of science, philosophy, and religion.

Notes

[1] Ibn Rushd is also known in the West by his Latin designation, Averroes. The Latinization of al-Ghazili is Algazel, although this version appears less frequently.

[2] The Arabic *sunnah* refers to any habitual practice, norm, custom, or usage sanctioned by prophetic tradition or traceable to a companion of the prophet. *Sunnah* is from the verbal root *sin-nun,* n*un* meaning either "to mold," "prescribe," "enact," or "establish."

[3] *Shar'* refers to the canonical law of Islam and is from the verbal root *shin-ra-'ayn*, which means "to begin," "enter," "fix," "enact," or "prescribe."

[4] *Qiyâs* refers to an analogy, deduction by analogy, logical conclusion, or syllogism and is derived from the verbal root *qaf- ya-sin*, which means to measure, weigh, judge, or compare.

[5] This Arabic term refers to those who practice the Mutazilite (rationalist) version of *kalam* "theosophy."

[6] The Arabic transliteration of the title is *Tahafut al Falasifah*. *Falasifah* is the plural of *faylasuf*, the Arabic word (via Greek) for philosopher. Tahafut is more complex; the verbal noun implies a self-reflexive action and means any of the following: "to swarm," "to throng," "to tumble over oneself," and also "to suffer a breakdown," "to be infatuated," or "to have weakened nerves." As a noun it means "craze," "infatuation," or "collapse." The root (*ha-fa-ta*) in its base form means to be nonsensical or absurd. The derived forms also contain connotations of error.

[7] In particular, that of Ibn Rushd, who along side Aristotle (known simply as "the philosopher") would come to be known by an epithet, "the commentator." A notable group of masters at the University of Paris, the Paris "Averroists," are named after Ibn Rushd because of their "radical" Aristotelianism.

⁸ Throughout this paper, "world" will function as a stand-in for similar notions such as "creation" and "universe."

⁹ By "selectively determining factor," in Arabic *murajjih*, al-Ghazili means any of the following concepts: a power, an instrument, a moment, an intention, or a nature.

¹⁰ These arguments are extracted from paragraphs 1-18.

¹¹ Al-Ghazili calls this a "middle term." An alternate translation for "inference" (from Marmura) is "reflective theoretical method."

¹² An example from the Qur'an involving creation, "He it is Who created the heavens and the Earth in six days, and His throne was on the water," (11:7) suggests a being before this present one and also a (human-like) creator. Another example, "Then He directed Himself towards the sky, and it was smoke," (41:11) implies that the heavens were created from something.

¹³ The impossibility of the linkage of the two terms "eternal being" and "temporal creation"

¹⁴ Another example is in paragraph 35, during a discussion of the properties of souls.

¹⁵ The Arabic transliteration of the title is *Tahafut al-Tahafut*. See note 6 for the meaning of *tahafut*.

¹⁶ The Arabic transliteration of the title is *Fasl al-maqâl fi ma bayna al-shari'ah wa al-hòikmah min al-ittisâl*, meaning literally, "the book/ section of the treatise on what is between law and wisdom in the way of intersection/connection." *Maqâl* means a "treatise," "proposition," or "doctrine." *Ittisâl* is from the root *wa–sad-lam*, which means "union," "juncture," or "intersection."

¹⁷ These options of course imply that Ibn Rushd believes human will involves a change in the willing agent, either upon the appearance of a new desire or in the fulfillment of a longstanding one.

¹⁸ Ibn Rushd's discussions of allegorical interpretation are part of a long line of works on exegetic theory by Jewish, Christian, and Muslim thinkers. One example is Pope Gregory the Great's (590-604) work on allegory (Hunt, 296).

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