



Aims of the Lecture

- To present a brief overview of the place of philosophy in the Arab-Islamic world, Eastern and Western
- To introduce the general aims and concerns of Ibn Rushd and Ibn Maymūn in their respective works on and in philosophy
- To highlight some of the most central ideas and arguments presented by Ibn Rushd and Ibn Maymūn in presenting and 'defending' the place of philosophy and its role within a monotheistic context (Islamic and Judaic)



I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- a. Entry of philosophy into Baghdad – 9th C AD
- b. Al-Ma'mūn and the House of Wisdom
- c. Natural co-existence of science and religion – Al-Kindī: "reason central to shed light on revelation"
- d. Opposition to philosophy by traditionalists: Hanbalites and Malikites
- e. 10th C: al-Ash'arī, al-Ghazālī, and the defeat of philosophy in the East?
- f. Cordoba: The new Baghdad?
- g. 11th C: Al-Murābitūn contra philosophy; 12th C: Al-Muwahhidūn and the revival of philosophy – Ibn Tumart: the conflict between the philosophers and the theologians could be resolved through recourse to rational principles and arguments

Philosophers of al-Andalus: Ibn Bajja (d. 1138); Ibn Tufayl (d. 1185), **Ibn Rushd**, and **Ibn Maymūn**

II. THE AUTHORS AND THEIR WORKS

A. Brief biographical sketch

Ibn Rushd (1126 – 1198)

- ➔ Born 1126, Córdoba - Spain
- ➔ Studied: Maliki law and Ahs'ari Kalam, philosophy, medicine...
- ➔ Met Ibn Tufayl in Marakesh in 1153, and Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf 1169, and was commissioned by the latter to write commentaries on Aristotle
- ➔ Judge of Seville: 1169-1172; Chief judge of Cordoba: 1172-1182; physician to the royal court as of 1182
- ➔ Wrote profusely on Aristotle, as well as on philosophy, medicine, Law...
- ➔ 1195: fell from grace and exiled
- ➔ Died: 1198, Marakesh

Ibn Maymūn (1135 – 1204)

- ➔ Born 1135, in Córdoba – Spain
- ➔ Following the abolishment of *dhimmi* status in Córdoba in 1148, he moved around mostly in southern Spain and then settled in Morocco, where he studied at *Jami'at al Qarawiyyin* and wrote his first major work, the commentary on the *Mishnah*
- ➔ 1168, moved with his family and settled in Fostat – Egypt
- ➔ One of the most influential physicians of his time, eventually official doctor to Salah ad-Din ibn Ayyub
- ➔ 1171, appointed *Nagid* or leader of the Egyptian Jewish community
- ➔ Died: 1204, Egypt

B. Highlights from the works under discussion

The Decisive Treatise

- ➔ Standpoint of the Law (shari'ah) in relation to philosophy.
- ➔ Summary of the argument:
 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 (back to 1).
 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.

The Guide for the Perplexed

- ➔ Rejection of essential attributes in reference to God.
- ➔ “Every description of an object by an affirmative attribute, which includes the assertion that an object is of a certain kind, must be made in one of the following five ways”:
 - **First:** Description by definition.
 - **Second:** Description by part of the definition.
 - **Third:** Description relating to quality.
Four kinds of qualities:
 - ❖ Intellectual or moral qualities, or by dispositions belonging to...
 - ❖ Physical qualities.
 - ❖ Passive qualities or emotions.
 - ❖ Quality resulting from quantity.
 - **Fourth:** Description by the things or person's relation to another thing.
 - **Fifth** manner to describe a thing is by its action, i.e. actions performed by it.

Consequently, Maimonides will move to argue that any knowledge of God by us can only be, and rightly be, knowledge of the negative attributes of God, i.e. knowledge of what God is not.

REPRESENTATIVE QUOTATIONS FROM THE AUTHORS UNDER DISCUSSION:

IBN RUSHD

- *If the activity of philosophy is nothing more than study of existing beings and reflection upon them as indications of the Artisan... and if the Law has encouraged and urged reflection on beings, then it is clear that what this name signifies is either obligatory or recommended by law.*
- *Reflection is nothing more than inference and drawing out the unknown from the known, and since this is reasoning or at any rate done by reasoning, therefore we are under an obligation to carry our study of beings by intellectual reasoning.*
- *Our soul is in the utmost sorrow and pain by reason of the evil fancies and perverted beliefs which have infiltrated religion, and particularly such afflictions as have happened to it at the hands of people who claim an affinity with philosophy... Injuries from people related to philosophy are the severest [to religion]... It (i.e. religion) has also been hurt by a host of ignorant friends who claim an affinity with it: these are the sects which exist within it.*

IBN MAYMŪN

- *There cannot be any belief in the unity of God except by admitting that He is one simple substance, without any composition or plurality of elements.*
- *Hence it follows that no attribute coming under the head of quality in its widest sense, can be predicated of God. Consequently, these three classes of attributes, describing the essence of a thing, or part of the essence, or a quality of it, are clearly inadmissible in reference to God.*
- *In short, it is necessary to demonstrate by proof that nothing can be predicated of God that implies any of the following four things: corporeality, emotion or change, nonexistence... In this respect our knowledge of God is aided by the study of Natural Science. For he who is ignorant of the latter cannot understand the defect implied in emotions, the difference between potentiality and reality, the non-existence implied in all potentiality... He who knows these things, but without their proofs, does not know the details which logically result from these general propositions: and therefore he cannot prove that God exists, or that the [four] things mentioned above are inadmissible in reference to God.*