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11

AVERROES ON THE *SHARĪʿAH*
OF THE PHILOSOPHERS

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Toward the beginning of his *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, a work generally agreed to be among his most mature (ca. 1190),[1] Averroes writes the following, which did not pass through in the Latin translation of this work:

The *sharīʿah* specific to the philosophers (*ash-sharīʿah al-khāṣṣah bi-l-ḥukamāʾ*) is the investigation of all beings, since the Creator is not worshipped by a worship more noble than the knowledge of those things that He produced which lead to the knowledge in truth of His essence—may He be exalted! That [investigation philosophers undertake] is the most noble of the works belonging to Him and the most favored of them that we do in God's presence. How great is it that one perform this service which is the most noble of services and one take it on with this compliant obedience which is the most sublime of obediences! (Averroes 1952, 10.11-16).[2]

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1   The works of Averroes are notoriously difficult to date, particularly since he is known to have returned to revise some. The work of Ruth Glasner on the Latin and Hebrew texts of the *Long Commentary on the Physics* revealed a surprising and valuable note by Averroes indicating that the first of his *Long Commentaries* on Aristotle was on the *De Anima*, which was followed by the *Physics*. See Glasner (2004). This is also discussed in Glasner (2009) 19-21.

2   My thanks to Dr. Dag Hasse of Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg for confirming the absence of this passage from the Latin translation. Hasse is currently working on the critical edition of the Latin text. See http://www.philosophie.uni-wuerzburg.de/en/forschung/ forschungsstellephilosophie-un/.

This statement is at once both surprising—if not astonishing—and at the same time profoundly illuminating. The surprise consists of Averroes' assertion that there is a *sharī'ah*, that is, a religious law (inclusive of scripture as well), which is specific to the philosophers, for surely one would think that the *sharī'ah* or religious law of the community applies equally to all Muslims insofar as it derives from the Qur'an, the *Ḥadīth* (traditions or sayings of the Prophet), and the various traditions of Islamic law and religious observance. The statement is astonishing in its audacity given the historical context, for we know that for some years Averroes, a *qāḍī* or judge, had been arguing openly to make space for philosophy in religious discussion, clear evidence that philosophy and its methods did not play a central role in the reflections of leaders in the religious community. We also know that some of his books were burned and Averroes himself was banished from Cordoba for a time toward the end of his life. Averroes stood at the apex of the classical rationalist philosophical tradition initiated by al-Farabi (d. 950) and furthered by Avicenna (d. 1037). Yet, Averroes also stood at the end of that tradition of rationalism and close to a developing tradition which can truly be called Islamic philosophy.[3] The latter was already dominant in the East, but later came to the fore in the Western lands of Islam.

Averroes' assertion is also profoundly illuminating in its clear display of his views on the ultimate end of philosophy and the nature of the ultimate object of metaphysics. The end of philosophy is to be found in the science of metaphysics where there takes place "the investigation of all beings" or the study of being *qua* being. Yet, for Averroes this undertaking is ultimately reduced to the intellectual search for "the knowledge in truth

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3 I understand Islamic philosophy here to denote philosophical accounts for which teachings from Islamic revelation or religious tradition are foundational and essential. Such is the case for Suhrawardi (d. 1191) and later thinkers. Such a label would also befit, for example, al-'Amiri (d. 992), a follower in the school of al-Kindi (d. 870), who in some respects might also be considered a proponent of Islamic philosophy.

of His essence," the essence of the Creator.[4] The value of "the investigation of all beings" and "the knowledge of those things that He created" can be found to the extent in which these contribute to the knowledge of the Divine Essence. This philosophical investigation as described here is not merely the pursuit of theoretical science as the highest mode of understanding beings and God. Rather, it is this very undertaking of the philosopher that is itself the most noble and most favored work human beings can embark upon, a "service which is the most noble of services," one taken on "with this compliant obedience which is the most sublime of obediences!" As such, this "*sharīʿah* specific to the philosophers" here is clearly said to transcend all other forms of *sharīʿah*, all other forms of worship, and to be the most perfect worship of God.

In what follows here I will undertake two tasks before summarizing in my conclusion. First, I will expound the methodological framework for dealing with matters of religion set forth in the *Faṣl al-maqāl*. Second, I will consider some statements on method by Averroes in the *Tahāfut at-tahāfut / Incoherence of the Incoherence* and *al-Kashf ʿan al-manāhij al-adillah fī ʿaqāʾid al-milla / The Explanation of the Sorts of Proofs in the Doctrines of Religion* with examples illustrating the method at work in those writings. Finally, I will return to the text quoted to explain how it is that it can be said that there is a "*sharīʿah* specific to the philosophers" and how that *sharīʿah* specific to the philosophers consists in the requirement that philosophers study the Divine Nature in the science of metaphysics as the highest worship human beings can undertake.

I. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The *Faṣl al-maqāl*, or so-called *Decisive Treatise*, or, as I prefer to render it, "The Book of the Distinction of Discourse and the

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4 Here Averroes seems to endorse the object of metaphysics to be both all beings and through them, God, in a combination of the ontological and theological approaches. For a discussion of Averroes' vacillation on this issue, see Bertolacci (2007).

Establishment of the Connection between the Religious Law and Philosophy" (see El Ghannouchi 2002), *Kitāb faṣl al-maqāl wa-taqrīr mā baina ash-sharī'ah wa'l-ḥikmah min al-ittiṣāl*, is generally taken to have been written in the period 1179-1181 when Averroes is also thought to have written his short *Epistle Dedicatory on Divine Knowledge*, his work of *kalām,* or religious dialectic called *The Explanation of the Sorts of Proofs in the Doctrines of Religion,* and his famous *Incoherence of the Incoherence.*

I understand the *Faṣl al-maqāl* to be constructed of six sections: (i) the determination of the issue of whether, from the perspective of religious study (*an-naẓar ash-shar'ī*), "study of philosophy and the sciences of logic is prohibited, permitted or commanded by religious law (*bi'sh-shar'*)," and, if commanded, as recommended or obligatory; (ii) the modes of assent; (iii) the defense of philosophy; (iv) the intentions of religious law (*sharī'ah*) regarding assent; (v) factionalism in Islam; and (vi) the conclusion.[5] For the purposes of expounding a methodological framework, my concern here is with the first two sections.

After introducing the issue to be investigated, Averroes proceeds to set forth the criteria for its determination. Asserting that "the activity of philosophy is nothing more than the study of beings (*al-maujūdāt*) and the consideration of them (*i'tibār*) insofar as they are an indication of the Artisan (*al-ṣāni'*)," Averroes immediately associates this notion of the subject matter of philosophy with the call of the *sharī'ah* for "consideration of beings by intellect" (*i'tibār al-maujūdāt bi-l-'aql*) and the pursuit of the knowledge of beings by means of intellect or natural intellectual abilities. In this context, consideration (*al-i'tibār*) of beings "is nothing more than inferring and drawing out the unknown from the known," writes Averroes, implicitly referencing the opening lines of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics at* 1.1, 71a1. Citing *Sūrah* 59, 2 of the Qur'an, "[c]onsider (*fa-'tabirū*), you who have sight," Averroes then explains that this text obliges that one make use of both religious *qiyās* and intellectual *qiyās*. In the context of *sharī'ah*, religious *qiyās* (*al-qiyās ash-shar'ī*), means the

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5   In the paragraphs of Butterworth in Averroes (2001a) these are (i) (1-10); (ii) (11-15); (iii) (16-37); (iv) (38-51); (v) (52-58); and (vi) (59-60).

use of *qiyās* as analogical reasoning based on statements in the *Qurʾān*, the *Ḥadīth* (Traditions of Muhammad) or other religious sources for the determination of present day religious concerns and issues, be they practical or theoretical in nature. *Qiyās*, however, has another meaning—syllogistic reasoning—and it is this on which Averroes plays, when he writes that "it is obligatory that we go about study of beings by means of intellectual *qiyās* (*bi'l-qiyās al-ʿaqlī*)." That is, Averroes here asserts that traditional *sharīʿah* obliges one to undertake the study of beings by means of intellectual syllogistic reasoning practiced in philosophy. He then writes:

> ... it is evident that this manner of study the Religious Law calls for and urges is the most complete kind of study by means of the most complete kind of *qiyās* and is called 'demonstration' (Averroes 2001a, 4, trans. mod.).

Thus, according to Averroes, it is the *sharīʿah* itself which urges human beings toward the attainment of knowledge of God and beings by demonstation, *burhān*. Indeed, while it is analogous in use to religious *qiyās*, one more fittingly makes use of naturally occurring intellectual *qiyās* which in its most perfect form is *burhān*, the demonstrative syllogism. Clearly, such use is by no means *bidʿah* or heretical innovation on this account (Averroes 2001a, 4). What is more, the best instruction in intellectual *qiyās*, or the demonstrative syllogism, is to be found in Greek philosophy. Hence, "the study of philosophy and the sciences of logic" (*an-naẓar fī'l-falsafati wa-ʿulūmi l-mantiq*) is commanded "from the perspective of the study of the *Sharīʿah*," (*ʿalā jihati n-naẓari sh-sharʿī*, Averroes 2001a, 1) not merely as recommended but as obligatory for the sake of gaining the fullest understanding of God and the beings He has created through which we know God.[6] Those making any mistakes in employing these most perfect of methods should be forgiven their accidental failings, for failings of this sort are also found in *al-fiqh* or jurisprudence and should

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6 This is established through a negative argument: "[O]ne who is not cognizant of the artfulness is not cognizant of what has been artfully made, and one who is not cognizant of what has been artfully made is not cognizant of the Artisan ...." Averroes (2001a) 5.

be regarded as accidental to the undeniably essential value of the art of jurisprudence (Averroes 2001, 7-8).

Central to such an account is the psychology of assent. For:

> [P]eople's natures vary in excellence with respect to assent. Thus, some assent by means of demonstration; some assent by means of dialectical statements *in the same way the one adhering to demonstration assents by means of demonstration*, there being nothing greater in their natures; and some assent by means of rhetorical statements, *just as the one adhering to demonstration assents by means of demonstrative statements* (Averroes 2001a, 8, emphasis added).

Such are the three methods by which the *sharīʿah* calls to all people so that assent to the *sharīʿah* may be given by all human beings. Some assent by rhetorical and emotive means, others assent by means of dialectical arguments, and yet others assent as a result of demonstration. What is more,

> Since this *Sharīʿah* is true (*ḥaqqan*) and calls to the study leading to the knowledge of the truth (*maʿrifati l-ḥaqq*), we, the Muslim community, know firmly that demonstrative study (*an-naẓar al-burḥānī*) does not lead to differing with what is set down in the *sharīʿah*. For truth does not contradict truth but rather is consistent with it and bears witness to it (*fa-inna al-ḥaqq lā yuḍāddu al-ḥaqq bal yuwāfiqu-hu wa-yashhadu la-hu*) (Averroes 2001a, 8-9, trans. mod.).[7]

To this extent, while jurists use *qiyās* based on opinion or supposition (*qiyās ẓannī*) in their interpretation of *sharīʿah*, how much more appropriate is it for the practitioner of demonstration to provide interpretation regarding *sharīʿah* since he knows by a certain and sure *qiyās, qiyās yaqīnī* (Averroes 2001a, 9)! With the priority of demonstrative *qiyās* or demonstrative syllogism over religious *qiyās* established, Averroes then states, "... we adamantly affirm that, whenever demonstration leads to something different from the apparent sense of the *sharīʿah*, that apparent sense admits of interpretation ...." (Averroes 2001a, 9, trans. mod.) That is, textual interpretation must submit to the findings

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7   This is a quotation from the *Prior Analytics* of Aristotle, 1.32, 47a7-9. See Taylor (2000).

of philosophical demonstration where such demonstration can be established. To the objection that consensus, *ijmāʾ*, may have formed in the Muslim community to understand some aspect of the *sharīʿah* in its apparent (scil., literal) sense, Averroes responds that to this "…we would say: 'If the consensus (*al-ijmaʾ*) were established by a method of certainty (*bi-ṭarīq yaqīnī*), it would not be valid [to disregard consensus] (Averroes 2001, 9, my addition).'" That is, if there is unanimity of consensus for allegorical interpretation or for literal interpretation, then, on the condition that the method for reaching consensus is that this method contain certainty, that is a consensus philosophical reasoning cannot overturn. However, if the consensus is merely a matter of assumption and not certainty, philosophical reasoning may be permitted priority.[8] However, in matters outside the practical, that is, in matters of fact or "in theoretical matters (*fīʾn-naẓarāt*) consensus cannot be determined with certainty," given the stringency of criteria for consensus (Averroes 2001a, 10-11, trans. modified). Complete unanimity cannot be attained for it would impossibly require (i) a limitation to a certain period of time, (ii) full and individual knowledge of the opinion of each and every scholar, (iii) absolute assurance in the chain of transmission of the opinion, (iv) certainty that it was never held that the text is incapable of both literal and allegorical interpretations, (v) knowledge that no secret interpretations were kept by any scholar, and (vi) full agreement by all on one and only one interpretation of the text. Given these criteria, consensus adequate to contend with demonstrative certainty cannot be reached. Hence, in scientific matters (*fīʾl-ʿilmīyāt*) (Averroes 2001a, 12) where issues can be decided by means of demonstrative certainty, perfect community consensus does not apply, since the truth of matters demonstrated is certain and true per se by virtue of itself because of the nature of its methodology. In contrast, consensus founded not on demonstration but perhaps

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8 In this latter case, writes Averroes, leading theological thinkers, among them al-Ghazali, "said that unbelief (*kufr*) is to be affirmed of no one for going against consensus by interpreting things like these. Averroes (2001a) 10.

founded on rhetorical, emotive or dialectical persuasion is not certain and true per se, that is, in virtue of itself, but only *per aliud*, in virtue of something outside itself, some exterior or accidental circumstances.

Averroes is more explicit about the priority of the demonstrative in the next section of the *Faṣl al-maqāl* where he defends the philosophers against the charge of unbelief. There he draws further conclusions about the nature of demonstrative reasoning and the interpretation of *sharī'ah* or religious texts. He asserts explicitly the dominance of the philosophers or people employing the demonstrative arts in the context of religious interpretation. He writes:

> Those faithful not adept in science are people whose faith (*al-īmān*) in them is not based on demonstration (*min qiba-li l-burhān*). So, if this faith by which God has described the learned is particular to them, then it is obligatory that it come about by means of demonstration. If it is by means of demonstration, then it comes about only along with the science of interpretation (*ma'a 'ilmi 't-ta'wīl*). For God (may He be exalted) has already announced that there is an interpretation of them that is the truth, and demonstration is only of the truth (*wa'l-burhān lā yakūnu illa 'alā al-ḥaqīqah*). Since that is the case, it is not possible for an exhaustive consensus to be determined with respect to the interpretations by which God particularly characterized the learned (Averroes 2001a, 13).

The methodological framework for the interpretation of the *sharī'ah*, be it understood as the religious Law or as particular religious texts, for Averroes is overwhelmingly Aristotelian, something evident from his account of religious *qiyās* as inferior to intellectual *qiyās*. This intellectual *qiyās* in its perfect form is simply demonstrative syllogistic method, which is productive of knowledge and truth. This is also evident in his surreptitious use of a quotation from Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* 1.32, 47a7-9, in asserting that "truth does not contradict truth but rather is consistent with it and bears witness to it," as well as in his implicit reference to *Posterior Analytics* 1.1, 71a1-2, when he writes that with respect to reflecting on and considering existing things, "consideration (*al-i'tibār*) is nothing more than inferring and

drawing out of the unknown from the known" (Averroes 2001a, 9 and 2, respectively).

II. TWO EXAMPLES OF DIALECTICAL METHOD IN *THE INCOHERENCE OF THE INCOHERENCE* AND *THE EXPLANATION OF THE SORTS OF PROOFS IN THE DOCTRINES OF RELIGION*

In his dialectical works Averroes reasons from assumed premises or presuppositions to formulate teachings in support of commonly held views which have the value of sustaining religious doctrines important to the well being and happiness of the community and individuals in society. However, for Averroes all religious views are not accepted uncritically. Where religious views are based on faulty reasoning such as those of the occasionalist Ash'arite tradition of *kalām* or those of al-Ghazali on the temporal origin of the universe, Averroes brings to bear critical philosophical analysis and critique from his own understanding of Aristotle's works. However, while critical of the reasoning and teachings of many practitioners of particular forms of *kalām*, Averroes himself sees *kalām* to have positive value as dialectical religious reasoning founding views essential to the formation of a successful religious basis for Muslim political society. His work, *The Explanation of the Sorts of Proofs in the Doctrines of Religion*, contains both Aristotelian based critique of earlier advocates of *kalām* and also his own Almohad *kalām* in support of doctrines of Islam. But the reader of this work must keep in mind the methodology of Averroes: *The Explanation* is itself a work of dialectical *kalām*, a work of persuasion, and not a work of demonstration written for those capable of the sophisticated and complex syllogistic reasoning of a philosopher.

Although his *Incoherence of the Incoherence* is not itself a work of *kalām*, it too is a dialectical work containing an Aristotelian philosophical critique of al-Ghazali's attacks on the doctrines of the philosophers and also non-demonstrative suggestions of religious reasoning which support certain fundamental teachings of Islam. Just what sort of work the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* is Averroes makes fully explicit by stating that his argumenta-

tion in that work is not to be taken as demonstrative but rather as primarily dialectical. He writes:

> All this is the theory of the philosophers on this problem and in the way we have stated it here with its proofs, it is a persuasive not a demonstrative statement. It is for you to inquire about these questions in the places where they are treated in the books of demonstration, if you are one of the people of complete happiness (*as-saʿāda at-tāmma*) and if you are one of those who learn the arts the function of which is proof. For the demonstrative arts are very much like the practical; for just as a man who is not a craftsman cannot perform the function of craftsmanship, in the same way it is not possible for him who has not learned the arts of demonstration to perform the function of demonstration which is demonstration itself: indeed this is still more necessary for this art than for any other—and this is not generally acknowledged in the case of this practice only because it is a mere act—and therefore such a demonstration can proceed only from one who has learned the art. The kinds of statements, however, are many, some demonstrative, others not, and since non-demonstrative statements can be adduced without knowledge of the art, it was thought that this might also be the case with demonstrative statements; but this is a great error. And therefore in the spheres of the demonstrative arts, no other statement is possible but a technical statement which only the student of this art can bring, just as is the case with the art of geometry. Therefore, nothing of what we have said in this book is a technical demonstrative proof; they are all non-technical statements, some of them having greater persuasion than others, and it is in this spirit that what we have written here must be understood. (Averroes 1930, 427-28; 1969, 257-58, tr. modified, Arabic added)

That is, successful demonstration, as Aristotle indicates in *Posterior Analytics* 1.2, requires that it "proceed form premises which are true, primary, immediate, better known than, prior to, and causative of the conclusion" (Aristotle 1966, 71b20-23). The premises must be known by the practitioner of demonstration to fulfill all these criteria. When that is the case and the practitioner sets the premises in proper syllogistic form, then in carrying out the demonstration the practitioner brings about in

herself scientific knowledge. Demonstration, then, is not merely a matter of a student perhaps parroting the words of a teacher since the premises must be known in the manner indicated by the one carrying out the activity of demonstration. While it may appear to suffice if one carry out the act of repeating the words of another, demonstration itself is a precisely defined activity internal to the one carrying out the demonstration and so the result of the activity is also one internal to the agent, namely the production of scientific knowledge as necessary in the agent. While there are rhetorical and dialectical statements and arguments, there are no statements that suffice as demonstrations without meeting all the precise and technical criteria for scientific demonstration.

In the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* there are many examples of the dialectical method as well as many instances of what must be considered philosophical argumentation certainly close to what Averroes would call demonstrative. One example of dialectical argument is particularly illuminating for the careful reader. In the penultimate section of the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* Averroes discusses al-Ghazali's account of the philosophers' views on the imperishability of the soul. There Averroes very briefly considers the requirement of matter as the principle of individuation for post mortem existence of the soul. Simply put, if the soul is immaterial and separates from the body at death, then if continued existence is to be possible, the soul must have subsistence in a new matter. Here Averroes is reasoning dialectically only suggesting the possibility that the soul rises to the heavens and unites with celestial matter thereby satisfying its need for matter in its post mortem existence.[9] However, Averroes does not explicitly endorse that doctrine but rather mentions it as one which would support religious teachings on the afterlife, even the notion of the soul rising out of the body and up to the

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9 Averroes (1930) 576-7; (1969) 357. Something similar to this is attributed by Avicenna to "one of the scholars, who does not say things rashly" in his *al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ād,* Avicenna (1984) 114-115. See the full translation of this passage in the article by Michael E. Marmura in the present volume.

heavens at death. That reasoning, however, is merely dialecti-
cal and is based on human imagination rather than reason and
demonstration, as one can see by considering his demonstrative
works on the soul (Taylor 1998a). In none of his three philosoph-
ical commentaries on the *De Anima* does Averroes have provision
for an afterlife for human souls. In the *Short Commentary on the
De Anima*, the intellectual part of the human soul, the material
intellect, is individual and is said to be a disposition of the forms
of the imagination. As such, its individuation and existence in
this life are dependent upon the imagination, which itself is de-
pendent on body.[10] Without going into the details of the doctrine
here, it is clear that when the body perishes, the power of imagi-
nation perishes along with anything dependent upon it. The hu-
man material or receptive intellectual power individuated and
having existence through its relation with the imagination can-
not avoid perishing with the body and imagination. That is, the
soul and its intellectual power both perish with the perishing
of the body. No provision for post mortem existence is made in
the *Short Commentary on the De Anima*. The same is true for the
Middle Commentary on the De Anima. In that work the receptive or
material intellect is immaterial and separate from the imagina-
tion and body, but it still receives its individuation and existence
through association with the individual human soul that exists
in the body. He writes:

> For, by our position as stated, we are saved from positing
> something separate in its substance as a certain disposition,
> positing [instead] that the disposition found in it is not due to
> its [own] nature but due to its conjunction with a substance
> which has this disposition essentially—namely, man—while,
> in positing that something here is associated incidentally with

10   Insofar as the material intellect is a disposition of the forms of
      the imagination, it is dependent on the imagination the existence
      of which is dependent on the body. In this early work Averroes says
      that the agent intellect actualizes "the disposition which is in the
      forms of the imagination for receiving the intelligibles" and calls this
      "the first material intellect." Averroes (1950) 86; Averroes (1985) 124;
      Averroes (1987) 209.

> this disposition, we are saved from [considering] the intellect
> in potentiality as a disposition only (Averroes 2002, 112).

The individual human material intellect is a disposition for the reception of intelligibles which must be immaterial and must be an immaterial receptive subject so that the human being may have intelligibles in act and thereby have intellectual understanding.

Without a connection to the human being for whom the soul is the actuality of body, the power of receptive intellect belonging to each human being no longer has individuation or existence. The material intellect does not have an existence in its own right separate from the human soul, which is the life principle of the human body. When the body perishes and no longer exists as a living being, the soul can no longer exist, nor can the individual material intellect. In neither of these two works does Averroes spell out these details. Rather, he leaves it to the careful reader to draw these conclusions from the philosophical analysis of the meaning of his doctrine of intellect. The *Long Commentary on the De Anima*, written some years after the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* and after the *Short* and *Middle Commentaries* on the *De Anima*, also has no provision for personal immortality or the continued existence of individual human beings as such, something obvious in its famous teaching of the single, shared Material Intellect which is one for all humankind (Taylor 1998b). The demonstrative accounts are available to the thoughtful reader trained in philosophy and in the art of syllogistic and those accounts convey the scientific truth of the issue for Averroes. But rhetorical accounts which feed the human imagination or dialectical accounts which persuade are also permitted so long as they do not dissuade people from those beliefs consisting of suitable representations which in important ways lead the philosophically untrained toward the truth or some appropriate aspect of it.

In the example above we see the division of the rhetorical and dialectical from the philosophical and demonstrative clearly indicated. For those of a character able to be moved to assent by rhetorical or dialectical reasoning, the methods of assent to religious teachings valuable for the formation of human society and

right conduct are methods appropriate for shaping human life. Philosophy, however, uses syllogistic method and, where possible, the certain and sure methods of demonstration which yield truth per se when arguments are properly sound. Yet the truths reached by philosophy are not suitable for all human beings.

As indicated earlier, *The Explanation of the Sorts of Proofs in the Doctrines of Religion* is explicitly a work of dialectical theology, which severely corrects the accounts of literalists, Ash'arites, and others, for faulty religious argumentation not in accord with proper accounts of God, His creation, and matters of religion. It has to be emphasized here that this work itself, while corrective of dialectical theologies, does not denounce dialectical theology itself, since the foundational principles properly assumed in religion should be conveyed to the people in dialectical and rhetorical form to guide the people along the correct path. However, this does not mean that the philosopher, who has access to truth through science or demonstrative syllogism, should take literally the dialectical or rhetorical accounts of matters of religion. Truths should be taught in accord with the understanding of the psychology of assent that takes into account the abilities for understanding by human beings who live and think on various levels. That is to say, the methodological principles set forth in the *Faṣl al-maqāl* apply in *The Explanation of the Sorts of Proofs in the Doctrines of Religion* both in the critical analysis of inadequate dialectical theologies and in the very dialectical theology Averroes himself establishes. This is particularly the case in his account of two proofs of the existence of God in providence and in creation in *The Explanation* based on statements in the Qur'an.

The Qur'an provides "the religious method (*aṭ-ṭarīqah ash-sharī'yah*) by which religion (*ash-shar'*) summons all human beings." First, the establishment of the existence of God is reached with reasoning about Divine will with respect to providence in relation to human beings (*al-'ināyah bi-l-insān*) for whose sake all beings of the world have been created (*khalqi jamī'i l-maujudāt min ajli-hā*). That providence is found in the presence of the sun, the moon, the seasons, and the earth itself, as well as in the plants, animals, inanimate things of the earth, and even in the very or-

der and suitability of human organs, all of which are fit for the existence of human beings (*muwāfaqah li-wujūdi al-insān*). Since all this could not come about by chance (*bi'l-itifāq*), it is evident that there is an agent intending and willing this (*fā'ilun qāṣdun li-dhalika murīdun* Averroes 2001b, 118; 2001c, 33). Second, Divine existence is affirmed by the argument from creation (*dalālatu l-ikhtira'*). Two principles are recognized as present in potency in the very nature of human beings (*fitr an-nās*): (i) it is known per se in regard to plants, animals, and the heavens that these are created or originated (*mukhtara'ah*) beings; and (ii) everything created has a creator (*anna kulla mukhtara'in fa-lahu mukhtari'*). For (i) the determination (*qat'ān*) of life in what is first without life gives certainty of the existence of its producer, God, as does the subservience of the heavens in movement in a manner providential for things having earthly existence, and (ii) is immediately self-evident (Averroes 2001b, 119; 2001c, 33-34).

These religious arguments meant for all human beings are each dialectical in nature quite obviously and that is appropriate in this work of dialectical theology. The first argument presupposes that it is self-evident that the world itself gives evidence of Divine providence; the second recognizes a priori truths present to all human beings and simply explicates the conceptual content of the term 'creature' to draw the conclusion that the world is created by God. As dialectical arguments, they are suitable and sufficient for the people of belief or supposition, those who assent not because of the compulsion inherent in demonstrative argumentation but because of belief in revelation and religious doctrines. Yet both of these arguments in their conclusions are in accord with the Aristotelian teleology of nature insofar as the existence of the universe and the life of every living thing depend on the First Principle; and each is in accord with Averroes' own philosophical reflections on the establishment of the existence of God as final cause of all.

The second, the argument from creation, merely requires that we understand creation in the sense of ontological dependency as discussed in his later *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*. There, Averroes understands the activity of final causality to

be an equivocal efficient cause of the universe and its motion. As that toward which all the separate intellectual substances turn and against which they judge their own perfection, God, to whom reference is found in their definitions, is a final cause for their being. These substances, in turn, are causes of the movement of the heavens. In turn, the heavens are the causes of the forms of things here below in a way which is cooperative with or even a necessary condition for the efficacy of natural forms.[11] In this way, then, God is the ultimate cause and even creator responsible for the determination of life and all the movement of the universe that makes and continues its existence as a single universe. Thus, the second argument from creation, which Aver-

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11 In his *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* Averroes speaks of "creation" as meaning "bringing what is in potentiality into actuality," *ikhrāju mā bi'l-quwati ilā al-fi'li.* Averroes (1952) 1504; Averroes (1984) 112. God as first mover is "pure actuality" *fi'lun maḥḍun* (1952, 1599; 1984, 151) and "in the highest degree of excellence and perfection" (1952, 1697; 1984, 193) such that the Divinity "does not think something external to itself" (1952, 1703; 1984, 195), while all other immaterial intellects moving the heavens think something outside themselves and are perfected through a relation to God (1952, 1695; 1984, 192). In this way the hierarchy of intellects moving the heavens stretches upward to God who is mover of the outermost sphere and the ultimate cause of the perfection of those intellects and all things in the universe in an ontological dependency rather than a temporal or willed creation *de novo* and *ex nihilo*. This is what Averroes describes when he writes the following in the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*: "The difference between the First's understanding of Itself and the understanding of themselves which the rest of the intellects have is that the First Intellect understands Itself as existing through Itself, not as what is related to a cause, while the rest of the intellects understand themselves as being related to their cause so that plurality enters into these in this way. For it is not necessary that they all be in one grade of simplicity since they are not in a single grade in regard to the First Principle and none of them exists simply in the sense in which the First is simple, because the First is considered to exist by Itself, while they are in related existence." Averroes (1930) 204. My translation. For discussion of celestial causes in natural generation, (see Freudenthal 2002; see also Freudenthal 2006). Regarding the ontological dependency of separate intellects on the First, see Taylor 2011.

roes finds in the Qur'an, is in accord with the principles of his Aristotelian physics and metaphysics.

The first argument, which asserts providence for the sake of human beings, is of the same ilk and concludes that natural evidence indicates that the world was created for human beings by an intending agent's will, namely the Divine will. This is also a philosophically valuable argument, even if it lacks needed details, because it is in accord with his Aristotelian philosophical account. Teleological providence by way of final causality exists for all entities in the world but this is particularly evident for human beings whose perfection is to be found in the achievement of intellectual completeness through the agency of the lowest of the hierarchy of transcendent intellects, the Agent Intellect. Of course, in this context the notion of God as an agent intending this human perfection by willing has to be understood not as God's anthropomorphically intending and willing something outside himself directly with particular providence but rather as His intending and willing His own perfection in being with the attendant consequence that the unity of His nature and perfection as ultimate final cause thereby also entails his equivocally intending and willing the rest of the universe (Druart 1996; Taylor 2011).

Grounded in Aristotelian philosophical accounts understood by Averroes as demonstrative, the truth of the accounts is available to the philosopher and the philosopher's proper methodology shows these to be true by arguments demonstrative in nature. This is what provides the proper grounding for the truth apprehended only dialectically or rhetorically in the assent of people of the other intellectual classes who operate on the level of assumptions and arguments which necessitate no truth per se but rather have all their truth only per accidens. For these people, concepts used in the course of such arguments, such as the notion of Divine will, are to be understood literally in accord with their psychology of assent, even if the attribution of will to God does not have the same conceptual content for the philoso-

pher who refuses to anthropomorphize and to attribute human will to God.[12]

III. CONCLUSION:
THE *SHARĪʿAH* OF THE PHILOSOPHERS AGAIN

These observations make it clear that Averroes, working in the philosophical shadow of al-Farabi, constructed a theory of interpretation which had at its center the absolute primacy of philosophy and its infallible method of demonstration. The highest understanding of God as the creative final cause and the understanding of God's creation can only be had in accord with the assent in which truth is found per se, and that is an understanding only open to the philosopher.[13] It is this understanding, reached

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12   In the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, Averroes writes toward the beginning of the Third Discussion, "[W]e observe in the empirical world two kinds of agents, one which performs exclusively one thing and this essentially, for instance warmth, which causes heat and coldness which causes cold; and this kind is called by the philosophers natural agents. The second kind of agents are those that perform a certain act at one time and its opposite at another; these, acting only out of knowledge and deliberation, are called by the philosophers voluntary and selective agents. But the First Agent cannot be described as having either of these two actions, insofar as these are ascribed to transitory things by the philosophers. For he who chooses and wills lacks the thing which he wills, and God cannot lack anything He wills. And he who chooses makes a choice for himself of the better of two things, but God is in no need of a better condition....The way in which God becomes an agent and a willer has not become clear in this place, since there is no counterpart to His will in the empirical world. How is it therefore possible to assert that an agent can only be understood as acting through deliberation and choice? For then this definition is indifferently applied to the empirical and the divine, but the philosophers do not acknowledge this extension of the definition, so that from their refusal to acknowledge this definition as applying to the First Agent, it cannot be inferred that they deny that He acts at all." Averroes (1930) 148-140; Averroes (1969), 88.

13   For those unable to achieve the truth in its fullness at the level of the philosopher, religion provides proper guidance in morality by structuring social life in a suitable way. In his *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics* Averroes writes, "The reason for all of this is that human

through empirical observation of the world and the heavens and arguments concerning motion in physics leading to the assertion of the existence of a single First Mover, that the philosopher can possess and understand. It is the philosopher who studies philosophical psychology and establishes through it that intellectual understanding is an immaterial activity, thereby providing the reasoned grounds—indeed empirical grounds!—for asserting that God's immaterial activity is suitably classified as intellectual understanding or thinking (Taylor 1998c). Thus, science and philosophy in search of the truth have as their end the intellectual apprehension of the principles of the universe leading to the true demonstrative—not dialectical or rhetorical—knowledge of God, as Averroes clearly states:

> The *sharīʿah* specific to the philosophers (*ash-sharīʿah al-khāṣṣah bi'l-ḥukamā'*) is the investigation of all beings, since the Creator is not worshipped by a worship more noble than the knowledge of those things that He produced which lead to the knowledge in truth of His essence—may He be exalted! That [investigation philosophers undertake] is the most noble of the works belonging to Him and the most favored of them that we do in God's presence. How great is it that one perform this service which is the most noble of services and one take it on with this compliant obedience which is the most sublime of obediences! (Averroes 1952, 10.11-16).

Metaphysics is the science which carries out this activity of knowing the Creator and of doing so through His creation. Thus, study or investigation (*an-naẓar*) of beings which is itself the most noble of the works to be traced to God and, through those beings, to God as the Creator, constitutes the greatest *sharīʿah*,

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beings are not perfected in their existence except through social life and social life is not possible except through moral virtue. For their attainment of moral virtues is something necessary for all, while the matter is not likewise in their attainment of the knowledge of the truths of things, since not all of them are capable of this" (Averroes 1952 43).

that is, the *sharī'ah* of the philosopher, namely, worship through the study of the metaphysics of beings and of the First Being.[14]

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14   This article is a product of the *Aquinas and the Arabs Project* at Marquette University. For information, see www.AquinasAndTheArabs.org.

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