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CHAPTER THREE

**The Relationship between
Averroes and al-Ghazâlî**

**As it presents itself in Averroes' Early
Writings, especially in his Commentary on
al-Ghazâlî's *al-Mustasfâ***

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Averroes' attitude towards al-Ghazâlî has always been a central issue for scholars studying the Arabic tradition of this philosopher. Up until quite recently the common opinion on this subject held that Averroes was to a considerable degree hostile towards al-Ghazâlî and his works. The origins of this view lie in Averroes' *Tahâfut al-tahâfut* which was directed against al-Ghazâlî's *Tahâfut al-falâsifa*. Marcus Joseph Müller's discovery of further works containing a number of critical comments directed against al-Ghazâlî in 1859, i.e. the *Faṣl al-maqâl* and *al-Kashf 'an manâhij* supported this view. This opinion was further strengthened by an interpretation of the incompatibility of philosophy and religious law (*sharî'a*) in Islam which saw in al-Ghazâlî a vigorous champion of the latter and a destroyer of philosophy. As early as 1844 Salomon Munk wrote that al-Ghazâlî 'struck a blow against philosophy after which it never recovered in the Orient.'¹ In his prominent book on Averroes and his European followers Ernest Renan continued this approach in 1852 and called al-Ghazâlî 'an enemy of philosophy' (Renan 1852, 133, 135f). Renan drew the dark picture of a 'war' against philosophy which was waged in all countries of the Islamic world in the 12th century. He considered Averroes and the Andalusian philosophers of his century in the crosshair of a persecution by the Almohads, which he believed was a theological movement, inspired directly by al-Ghazâlî's attacks on philosophy (*Ibid.*, 22, 24).

Although this view of the relationship between al-Ghazâlî and Averroes was perpetuated for a considerably long period – far into the 20th century – we now know that nearly all the details contributing to this view are not true. Averroes was not persecuted by the Almohads, he was in fact a high ranking figure in this political and religious movement and had great influence on the formation of Almohad politics and ideology. What Renan interpreted as the persecution of Averroes in the year 592/1195 was a mere

falling into disgrace, which was in fact to some extent due to anti-philosophical tensions within the circles of religious scholars in al-Andalus. Al-Ghazālī did inspire the movement of the Almohads, but his attitude towards philosophy was far from being hostile. Al-Ghazālī should more accurately be called a champion of the philosophical method. Although he rejected a number of philosophical propositions he never rejected philosophy as a whole. His own teachings are deeply influenced by the ontology of Avicenna (Frank 1992, 52–62), and al-Ghazālī unreservedly employed philosophical concepts where it was appropriate.² Ibn Tūmart, the founder of the Almohad movement was inspired by this attitude towards philosophy, which he probably got to know in the seminar of al-Kiyā' al-Harrāsī (Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-ta'rikh* 400), a successor of al-Ghazālī at the Niẓāmīya-school in Bagdad and a colleague of al-Ghazālī from his student days in Nishapur. The writings of Ibn Tūmart reveal a considerable influence from the side of philosophical literature especially from Avicenna (Ibn Tūmart, *Le Livre de Mohammed Ibn Toumert* 229–242), and the Almohad movement at least until the year 592/1195 should not be regarded as anti-philosophical but as the exact opposite.

This reappraisal of the fundamental facts underlying the relationship between Averroes and al-Ghazālī has not yet been entirely acknowledged with all its consequences. A new chapter in the study of this relationship was opened by the late Jamāl al-dīn al-'Alawī who, in the mid-eighties, wrote two articles on the formation of Averroes' philosophical approach in which he emphasised the predominant rôle al-Ghazālī played very early on in Averroes' attitude towards the study of philosophy (al-'Alawī 1987 and al-'Alawī 1986). Al-'Alawī distinguished two main stages in Averroes' relationship to al-Ghazālī. In the early stage Averroes starts to write on philosophy and here he considers himself more or less a follower in al-Ghazālī's footprints, since both sought to establish accurate scientific methods in the religious sciences. The second stage was according to al-'Alawī the 'Ghazalian period' (*al-fatrah al-ghazāliyya*) in Averroes' writings, and here he tried to correct al-Ghazālī's views on the permissibility of *ta'wīl*, i.e. the harmonisation of reason and revelation by allegorical interpretation. This Ghazalian period is marked by the three works *al-Tahāfut*, *Faṣl al-maqāl* and *al-Kaṣf 'an manāhij*, all written around 575/1179. It is striking that in both periods Averroes agreed with al-Ghazālī in all of the major and minor issues of religious law and philosophy save one. The point where Averroes disagrees with al-Ghazālī and where he tries to correct his theory of *ta'wīl* was the ability of philosophy to be an apodictical science which comes to demonstrative conclusion. This dispute between the two sages is held in the *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* which is the cornerstone in this Ghazalian period and whose outcome determines the other two books. In the following paper I will restrict myself to the first of the two periods, distinguished by al-'Alawī, and I will try to examine, what

Averroes' attitude towards al-Ghazālī in the years between 552/1157 and 565/1169 was, soon after Averroes started to write on philosophy and religious law.

The main source for this study is the paraphrase or epitome by Averroes of al-Ghazālī's main work on the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, *al-Mustaṣfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl*, which al-Ghazālī wrote at the end of his life around 504/1110. Averroes' paraphrase has the title *al-Ḍarūrī fī uṣūl al-fiqh*, 'The Necessary Knowledge in the Field of the Fundamentals of Jurisprudence' and its declared aim is to sum up what al-Ghazālī wrote in his quite voluminous work. The text by Averroes was not discovered until 1986 in the library of the Escorial by a Moroccan scholar. It was brought to the attention of Jamāl al-dīn al-'Alawī, whose edition of the text was published posthumously in 1994.

Averroes wrote his epitome to al-Ghazālī's *al-Mustaṣfā* at the very beginning of his career. He informs us via one of his pupils that he was introduced to the court of Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf by Ibn Ṭufayl (al-Marrākushī, *al-Mu'jib fī talkhīṣ akhbār al-Maghrib* 314f). This event may have occurred around 550/1155, when Abū Ya'qūb was still governor of Sevilla and Averroes was 30 years old. Via the same source we are informed that soon after his introduction at the court, Abū Ya'qūb asked Averroes to write commentaries or short explanations to the works of Aristotle. Abū Ya'qūb himself had difficulty in reading these texts. But since he wanted to spread their wisdom amongst the scholars of al-Andalus, he asked Averroes 'to make the procedure in these texts accessible for the people' (*Ibid.*, 315.12f). This gave rise to the books we know as Averroes' short and middle commentaries (*jawāmi'* and *talkhīṣāt*) on Aristotle's works.

If one takes a closer look at these books it is not only Aristotle on whom Averroes is commenting. The very first book in the cycle, and probably the very first book Averroes wrote anyhow, is the synopsis or short commentary on the *Organon* which has cautiously been dated to 552/1157, two years after Averroes first met Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf (al-'Alawī 1986, 49–59). This summary of the logical tools in philosophy is actually not a commentary on any of Aristotle's works but it has the logical works of al-Fārābī as its basis.³ At the beginning of his career, Averroes did not focus on Aristotle as the only author of pure philosophy. His interest lay rather in the method of philosophy as an apodictical science. The aim of the young Averroes and his mentor Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf was to spread the demonstrative method amongst the scholars of al-Andalus. Averroes' short commentaries were part of a whole program aimed at rationalising the sciences in al-Andalus (Urvoy 1991, 41–48). We know from the book 'The Introduction Into the Art of Logic' by Ibn Ṭumlūs, a pupil of Averroes, that al-Fārābī's works on logic were regarded as the most accurate introduction into logic combined with an easy access into the matter (Ibn Ṭumlūs, *Madkhal ilā ṣinā'at al-mantiq* 14f). In his very early writings Averroes did not yet attempt to

spread Aristotelism but he aimed at a general improvement of the sciences by the spread of the demonstrative method of philosophy.

This project embraced the religious sciences as well, and in this task al-Ghazālī was Averroes' predecessor. Al-Ghazālī too, had endeavoured to establish the use of a more accurate and logical method in the religious sciences. The logic al-Ghazālī chose was the one developed by Avicenna mainly in his writings on logic in *al-Shifā'* and in the *Danishnāmah-i 'Alā'i*. Al-Ghazālī developed several techniques to conceal the origin of his logical method. He thought this was necessary since the religious scholars of his period were quite reluctant to accept anything which bore the label of being philosophical. Therefore al-Ghazālī changed the terminology of the Avicennian logic, and employed words instead which had been used in the religious sciences for centuries, but which he gave a new and very philosophical meaning. Scholars familiar with the works of the philosophers saw through this veil and Ibn Ṭumlūs writes in his introduction to the art of logic that although al-Ghazālī's books on logic are quite well written and clear, they lack some accuracy, because of the often ambiguous terminology he uses (*Ibidem*, 13). The restraint and adaptability employed by al-Ghazālī to achieve his aim of rationalising the religious sciences was regarded as a weakness amongst the philosophers of al-Andalus.

The fact that al-Ghazālī somehow fell short in his attempt to spread a more rational approach in the sciences was noted by the young Averroes as well. In the first paraphrase Averroes wrote on one of Aristotle's works, the epitome on *Physics*, Averroes makes clear to what extent his scientific program coincides with that of al-Ghazālī. In the introduction to this work Averroes explains his own method of paraphrasing all apodictical passages in the work of Aristotle while leaving out all passages which cover non-apodictical or dialectical arguments. This technique should serve to safeguard the acceptance of Aristotle's teaching, since most people do not understand what the inner core (*al-ḥaqīqa*) of Aristotle's wisdom is and reject him out of prejudice. After this methodological explanation Averroes pre-empts the possible accusation that such a book had already been written in al-Ghazālī's *Maqāsid al-falāsifa* and that Averroes' book would therefore be superfluous. Averroes acknowledges that al-Ghazālī wrote a book similar to the one he was writing. He explains that al-Ghazālī had aimed at convincing his contemporaries that they could only benefit once they adopted the teachings of Aristotle. But this aim – according to Averroes – was never achieved by al-Ghazālī (*Averroes, al-Jawāmi' fi l-falsafa* 7f).

In the same year 552/1157, in which Averroes presumably wrote his summary of the logical works of al-Fārābī, he also completed the paraphrase of al-Ghazālī's main work on the principles of jurisprudence (Averroes, *al-Darūrī* 146). The works of al-Ghazālī did not need an explanatory introduction as Aristotle's did. Al-Ghazālī was regarded as the most important author of religious texts at that time, and at least his less

voluminous works were well known. The spread of his teachings in al-Andalus is most prominently connected with Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī (d. 543/1148) who met al-Ghazālī in Damascus in 488/1095 and who later became one of his pupils in Bagdad. After he returned to al-Andalus, Ibn al-'Arabī had to fight against a rigorous opposition amongst the Mālikī scholars. The conservative Mālikī school in the West had been somehow out of touch with theological developments in the East and its members condemned al-Ghazālī's writings for their opposition to a key issue in Mālikī jurisprudence, namely the repetition of previous legal reasoning (*taqlīd*) and for al-Ghazālī's Sufi tendencies, a phenomenon then unfamiliar to the West. Although Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī was a Mālikī scholar himself, he understood the novelty of al-Ghazālī's thinking and his methods in the science of theology (*uṣūl al-dīn*) and became fascinated by it. He wrote a number of books in which he re-phrased al-Ghazālī's teaching in order to make it more accessible to his colleagues in the Mālikī school. One of his books, the *'Awāṣim min al-qawāṣim* may be regarded as a simplified version of al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*. Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī's lively interest in philosophy was noted in the remarkable monography on him written by 'Ammār Ṭalībī (Ṭalībī 1974; 1: 89–275).

After the Almohads came to power in al-Andalus in 540/1145 they favoured al-Ghazālī's new approach and supported the younger generation of religious scholars who were students of Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī. By now, Abū Bakr was 70 years old and for reasons we can only speculate upon fell into disgrace. Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī was such an important figure at that time that he cannot be disregarded in the formation of the young Averroes. All the numerous biographies on the life of Averroes mention only one single teacher of philosophy, Abū Ja'far ibn Hārūn al-Turjālī (Ibn al-'Abbār, *Kitāb al-Takmila li-kitāb al-ṣila* 1: 269). This Ibn Hārūn al-Turjālī was a pupil of Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī in Sevilla (Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, *Uyūn al-anbā'* 2: 75f). This however, is not the only connection to Abū Bakr: In one of his writings Averroes mentions a colleague of his who reportedly had a similar interest in philosophy and who was a student of Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī (Averroes, *Talkhīṣ al-athār al-'ulwīya* 116f). Averroes may have made the personal acquaintance of the aged Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī before the latter left Sevilla in 542/1147 when Averroes was 21 years old. All of this shows that the young Averroes belonged to the new generation of religious scholars who had a vivid interest in the philosophical methods and the teachings of the philosophers. This new brand of religious scholars all emerged from the critical examination of philosophy by the Ash'arite kalām, which began with al-Juwaynī at the Nizāmīya-school in Nishapur and followed al-Ghazālī to Bagdad. Several other names of this new brand of religious scholars emerging from the same tradition as Averroes include al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153), Ibn Ghaylān al-Balkhī (d. after 580/1184), Fakhraddīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) and in fact Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130).

Averroes was – via Abū Ja'far al-Turjālī and Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī – a pupil of al-Ghazālī in the third generation.

Since Ibn Tūmart and the Almohad movement sprang from the same tradition, it is not at all astonishing that Averroes associated himself with the Almohads once they came to power in al-Andalus. His successful career as a judge in Cordoba and Sevilla, and after 578/1182 as the principal judge of al-Andalus with his seat in Cordoba, was not only a result of the tradition of his family holding these offices, but was also due to the fact that he was an indirect pupil of Abū Bakr ibn al-'Arabī and al-Ghazālī and hence had a thorough knowledge of both philosophy and religious law. Averroes came from an archetypal Almohad background. He could be regarded as the personification of what the Almohads had aimed for: the tradition of Mālikī scholarship, which Averroes had inherited from his family, fused with an expertise in the latest developments of Muslim theology.

When Averroes wrote his paraphrase of al-Ghazālī's *al-Mustasfā* his career as a judge and political adviser still lay ahead of him. In 552/1157 Averroes was a young and promising scholar of 31 years of age who was well aware of the shortcomings within traditional Mālikī scholarship. He chose al-Ghazālī's work as a foundation for his introduction into the principles of jurisprudence because al-Ghazālī's situation at the beginning of the 6th/12th century resembled his own. When al-Ghazālī wrote his book the Sunni caliphate and the Seljuq sultanate in the East were threatened by the propaganda of the Ismā'īlī Shi'ites which shortly later developed into a number of very successful local uprisings. The intellectual tool of Ismā'īlī propaganda was a radical scepticism that cast doubts on the results in all of the sciences (van Ess 1968). According to the Ismā'īlis, true knowledge could only come from the prophetic insight of the Ismā'īlī Imām. Al-Ghazālī realised that the religious sciences could only survive the sceptic attacks of Ismā'īlī propaganda, if they adopted a proper method that lead to conclusions which were as close to indubitability as possible. The Ismā'īlī scepticists – or rather the Sunni Muslims who were tempted by their teachings – should be convinced by the force of reason that Sunni theology was not a science for which they could have scant respect. It was for this reason that the beginning of al-Ghazālī's main work on the principles of jurisprudence covers a long explanation of logic (al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā min 'ilm al-uṣūl* 1: 10–55).

The opposition Averroes faced two generations later was not the radical scepticism of the Ismā'īlis. Ismā'īlism failed to have an impact on al-Andalus and by the time Averroes wrote his paraphrase it had past its zenith in any event. Averroes was confronted with a different sort of scepticism in reasoning which had been well established in Andalusian Muslim society from its very beginning. Traditional Mālikism has always been extremely reluctant to accept any form of rational approach. The main line of argument in Mālikī scholarship was to return to the judgements of

the founding fathers of that school and to apply their decisions. The early Mālikī scholars were opponents of the translation movement from Greek into Arabic which led to the beginning of Muslim philosophy in the 2nd/8th century (Gutas 1998, 156f). The method of Mālikī jurisprudence was perpetuated by the majority of Mālikī scholars in their hostile attitude towards the Greek sciences up until the days of Averroes.

But there was a second reason which prompted Averroes and his mentor Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf to apply a more rationalistic method in all branches of scientific research. Al-Ghazālī's attack against philosophy implied that philosophy was not a demonstrative science but one that was ruled by dialectic arguments whose premises rely on common acceptance (al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* 73–85). His critique places philosophy on the same level as revelation, which relies on common acceptance as well. In this point Averroes did not agree. He was convinced that there is a science, which is superior to what is written in the Qur'ān and which can in fact illuminate the meaning behind all of the verses in the sacred text. Al-Ghazālī's attempt to lower the status of the demonstrative sciences to mere dialectical ones could only be answered by employing a rigorously demonstrative method. Thus, as far as jurisprudence is concerned the attempts of both al-Ghazālī and Averroes to rationalise converge even though they had rather different motives.

This different background of the two sages is the main cause of their disagreement in matters of Muslim jurisprudence. Al-Ghazālī and Averroes agreed that well founded knowledge in jurisprudence relies upon the application of set rules (*qawānīn*) and arrangements (*aḥwāl*) (Averroes, *al-Darūrī* 35). But Averroes disagreed with his predecessor on how these rules should be presented. He dismissed al-Ghazālī's attempt to disregard the terminology of philosophy and to create a new language of logic based on the words used in the religious sciences. In his paraphrase Averroes leaves out the long methodological introduction at the beginning of al-Ghazālī's book, since he himself wrote an introduction into the logic of al-Fārābī in the same year. In cases where al-Ghazālī employed his new terminology, Averroes used the original philosophical term and in this way re-philosophied al-Ghazālī's language, for example by re-employing *ḥadd* 'definition' where al-Ghazālī used the word *al-ḥaḳīqa* which has the original meaning of 'core' or 'truth of a matter' but was sometimes used by al-Ghazālī as meaning 'definition'.

Al-Ghazālī's juridical work contains a strong opposition to some kinds of *taqlīd*, such as the belief that one should follow in the footprints of former generations. Al-Ghazālī taught that only lay-men and minor jurists should practice *taqlīd*, a qualified jurist should be capable of casting his own judgement on the basis of independent reasoning (al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfā* 2: 387–392). In his paraphrase, Averroes takes up this line of argument and stresses that every scholar should have the ambition to achieve the qualified stage of a *mujtahid*. But since not everybody is blessed

with the time and the means to achieve this education there should be three groups of Muslims. First the ordinary Muslims, who are excluded from any sort of judgements in religious matters and who should form their religious convictions by adopting those of the more superior and learned people. The second group are the inferior jurists whose task it is to spread the decisions and the teachings of the third group, the *mujtahidūn* (Averroes, *al-Ḍarūrī* 137f., 143f). Here we have an early version of the three way division in the people of rhetoric, the people of dialectic, and the people of demonstration which will be so important in Averroes later works and which is clearly drawn from the writings of al-Ghazālī (Frank 1991/92, 215–218).

The sources of law are again a case in which there is total agreement between Averroes and al-Ghazālī. Both were quite reluctant to accept the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the doctors of law as an infallible source of law. Both Averroes and al-Ghazālī argued that there is neither a single individual nor a group of people which is save from error. If *ijmāʿ* is accepted by both Averroes and al-Ghazālī as a source of law then only because the Muslim revelation states that the community of Muslims will not be united in an error (al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā* 1: 173; Averroes, *al-Ḍarūrī* 91).

Ironically, this agreement is the source of a misunderstanding between al-Ghazālī and Averroes which puzzled many readers of the *Faṣl al-maḳāl* (cf. Bello 1989, 43f). In this later work Averroes writes that al-Ghazālī held the opinion that nobody should be charged with unbelief if he disagreed with the *ijmāʿ* of the Muslim community (Averroes, *Faṣl al-maḳāl* 16f). Without getting into the details of this rather tricky problem it may be said that Averroes was ill-informed in this matter. His false conviction that al-Ghazālī did not allow a judgement of unbelief if someone opposes the consensus, can be traced down to one of Averroes' early writings, namely to his short commentary on Aristotle's Rhetoric. This book was written in the same period as the paraphrase of al-Ghazālī's *al-Mustaṣfā*. Here again Averroes writes that al-Ghazālī held the opinion that any Muslim, who left the *ijmāʿ* was not an unbeliever (Averroes, *Three Short Commentaries* 76, 195). This misjudgement may be the consequence of al-Ghazālī's presentation in his *al-Mustaṣfā* which is in fact quite ambiguous.

The last point to be examined is the disagreement between al-Ghazālī and the young Averroes over the application of *taʿwīl*. Again this a topic which will gain much importance in the later writings of Averroes. Here in his paraphrase to al-Ghazālī's juridical work, his opposition to al-Ghazālī is carefully concealed. On careful reading of both works, however, quite significant differences between al-Ghazālī and Averroes become evident. In his *Fayṣal al-tafrīqa*, written only shortly before the *al-Mustaṣfā*, al-Ghazālī puts forward a maxim which allows a less literal reading of the Muslim revelation. This maxim is called the 'rule of interpretation' (*qānūn al-taʿwīl*). In simple terms this rule allows a deviation from the wording of the revelation only in cases where an argument founded on reason

contradicts the wording of revelation (al-Ghazālī, *Fayṣal al-tafrīqa* 187–194). In his *al-Mustaṣfā* al-Ghazālī reiterates this rule which here is put into the single sentence:

'One can only deviate, if there is proof.'
'*lā yatrūk illā bi-dalīl.*' (*Ibidem* 1: 92)

In his paraphrase of this book, Averroes totally misrepresents this element in al-Ghazālī's teachings. He does not raise his opposition openly but instead, through his misrepresentation of al-Ghazālī's message, leaves his readers with the opinion that his summary represents al-Ghazālī's rule. The way in which the question of the applicability of *taʿwīl* is raised is quite minor in either book by al-Ghazālī or Averroes. But since this minor point sheds some light on a fundamental disagreement between the two it shall be examined here. Al-Ghazālī argued against some Muslims who claimed that they cannot fulfil the duty to pray five times a day because they were often dirty and therefore not in the proper state to fulfil this duties. These rather lazy people argued that a Muslim is not obliged to fulfil his religious duty as long as he is not in a state to fulfil it. Consequently, if someone never cleans his body, he would never be under the obligation of performing the prayer (al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā* 1: 95). Al-Ghazālī dismissed this rather weak argument by referring to a verse of the Qurʾān where it says:

'What has brought you into hell? They will reply: "We did not perform the prayer (...)." (Qurʾān 74.42f)

This group of people then argues that the words 'we did not perform the prayer' in the revelation are not to be understood literally, but these words mean: 'we were unbelievers'. The quintessence of this argument is that only the unbelievers will go to hell and this should be understood and read unanimously in all of the verses of the Qurʾān. Al-Ghazālī dismisses this line of thinking because, as he puts it, there is not the slightest trace of a rational argument which might contradict this Qurʾānic passage. God condemns to hellfire whomever he wants, and there can be no rational proof in favor of an indemnity for any group of Muslims.

In contrast, Averroes in his paraphrase accepts the interpretation of this group of Muslims who are in opposition to al-Ghazālī. Averroes holds that the proposed interpretation of the quoted verse in the Qurʾān is correct. And he turns al-Ghazālī's objection into its opposite when he writes:

'In these or similar cases he (*scil.* al-Ghazālī) did not turn down any attempt to change the understanding of the wording of the Qurʾān by means of reason. He employed *taʿwīl*, as it is common (even) in the case of a wording which is not improbable.' (Averroes, *al-Ḍarūrī* 55)

This can only mean that the young Averroes did not accept the 'rule of interpretation' as it was put down by al-Ghazālī. For the young Averroes all

of the Qur'an's verses were open to allegorical interpretation. For him there was no condition that the passage in the Qur'an must be contradicted by an argument based on reason. If reason just provided a better explanation than the wording of the Qur'an, then the interpretation proposed by reason should be accepted. Al-Ghazālī was much more strict in this matter. In his teachings, the understanding of any word in the Qur'an could only be altered if a number of conditions were fulfilled. The most common condition was that a passage in the Qur'an was contradicted by another, more important passage (al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustaṣfā* 1: 392). Averroes paraphrases this rule much more liberally, when he says that one has to stick to the wording of the verse unless reason *suggests* a different understanding (Averroes, *al-Darūrī* 107). In only one case does Averroes *demand* an argument founded on reason in order to justify a proposed interpretation: that is, if a verse in the revelation is to be read metaphorically and this understanding is inferior to the wording of the Qur'an. According to the rules as set out by al-Ghazālī such an interpretation would be far-fetched and hence not allowed.

In conclusion it may be said that al-Ghazālī's book on the principles of jurisprudence fitted into the program of rationalising the sciences which was pursued by Averroes and by his mentor Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf, because amongst all jurists al-Ghazālī's approach to jurisprudence was the most rational at that time. To propagate the views of al-Ghazālī was one of the main aims of Almohadism as a whole, and there are no significant discrepancies between the young Almohad scholar Averroes and the great Ash'arite scholar from Khorasan who gave the inspiration for the Almohad movement. The issues where there was disagreement between al-Ghazālī and Averroes were not openly addressed by Averroes and by no means did he criticise al-Ghazālī or accuse him of any misdemeanour.

The existing disagreement between al-Ghazālī and Averroes can be traced down to their contrasting assessment of the relationship between revelation and reason. This point is fundamental in the thinking of both scholars, but again Averroes did not address this directly. This difference in his attitude to revelation is not evident in his very early writings. One has to proceed to Averroes' most important work on the principles of jurisprudence, his 'Introduction Into the Technique of Reaching Independent Verdicts' (*Bidāyat al-mujtahid*). This book was written around 563/1168 – mid-way between his earliest works on logic and jurisprudence and his 'Ghazalian period' 575/1179 (al-'Alawī 1986, 66f). This book displays a stage in Averroes' thinking where he is more conscious about the nature of the revelation, and here the issue over which he disagrees with al-Ghazālī fundamentally, becomes clear.

For al-Ghazālī the Muslim revelation was the source of a supererogatory knowledge to reason revealed to the Muslim community purely out of God's grace. This revelation contains branches of knowledge which cannot

be obtained by any other means of insight. The knowledge of the afterlife, for example, cannot be achieved by reason or by any sort of meditation. The only source for man's knowledge of what will happen after his death is revelation. It would be futile for man to speculate on what will happen at the day of judgement in any form that disgresses from the text of the Qur'an. We know that in this point Averroes disagreed. From the works of his 'Ghazalian period' it becomes clear that for Averroes the Muslim revelation is just a simplified rephrasing of a knowledge which can be attained more precisely by demonstrative science. From these works we also know that Averroes held the opinion that there is a way to attain knowledge of the afterlife, because man can determine the underlying principles of the word, and is justified in assuming that these principles must be valid even under circumstances which he has not yet witnessed, such as the afterlife (Averroes, *al-Kashf 'an manāhij* 162, 233).

This opinion cannot yet be found in his early writings. But there is an early stage to this conception of revelation, which he makes clear in his *Bidāyat al-mujtahid*. In this text he claims, that a good jurist will not just end his investigation by finding out what the imperative of the revealed law is. A good jurist carries on and asks why the law contains this imperative and why it is advisable to follow it. Al-Ghazālī would not allow any jurist to consider such a question. For al-Ghazālī man cannot understand the wisdom of God and therefore it would be futile to ask why God wants us to do this or that. For al-Ghazālī such an investigation would constitute a disrespect for the revealed law, which is sent to us for no reason understandable to man. Averroes on the contrary teaches in his book on the principles of jurisprudence that every imperative in the revealed law has a twofold nature. There is on the one hand a ritual nature (*ibādī*) which in itself contains the necessity to obey this order of God. But apart from this there is in every revealed imperative something which is for the good of the society and this is its useful nature (*maṣlaḥī*). Averroes explains the two natures by choosing the example of the ritual ablution. The ritual nature of the ablution is to purify the soul before one approaches to God. The useful nature of ablution is to maintain public health since dirt is a major factor for diseases. The ordinary jurist understands only the ritual nature and judges accordingly in his verdicts. But the good jurist also investigates the usefulness (*maṣlaḥa*) of the religious imperative and tries to inflict an increase of this usefulness into his verdict (Averroes, *Bidāyat* 1: 39, 165). This approach can even be followed in the case of the religious law as a whole. According to the jurist Averroes there is even an answer to the question, why God has revealed the religious law as a whole. This answer is not very different from the one Averroes the philosopher gives in his later writings. At the very end of his work on the principles of Muslim law Averroes writes that a good judge should always keep in mind that all religious directions and instructions discussed in this book follow just one

aim: the establishment and maintenance of four cardinal virtues in society, these being modesty, justice, courage and generosity ('*iffa*, '*ād*l, '*shaja'a* and '*sakhā*') (Averroes, *Bidāyat* 4: 1795).

Notes

- 1 Cf. Franck (Ed.) 1844–52; 2: 512 and the reprint of the quoted passage in Munk 1857–59, 382f.
- 2 Cf. my introduction to al-Ghazālī, *Über Rechtgläubigkeit und religiöse Toleranz* 34–42.
- 3 Averroes, *Talkhīṣ maṭīq Aristū* 1: 51.8 and *idem*, *al-Jawāmi' fī l-falsafa. Kitāb al-Samā' al-ṭabī'ī* 7.

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