

ABU AL-WALID  
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IBN RUSHD

AL-QURTUBI

AVERROES'

TAHAFUT AL-TAHAFUT

E-text Edition

(The Incoherence of the Incoherence)

TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC  
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES  
BY

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## PREFACE

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## INTRODUCTION

If it may be said that Santa Maria sopra Minerva is a symbol of our European culture, it should not be forgotten that the mosque also was built on the Greek temple. But whereas in Christian Western theology there was a gradual and indirect infiltration of Greek, and especially Aristotelian ideas, so that it may be said that finally Thomas Aquinas baptized Aristotle, the impact on Islam was sudden, violent, and short. The great conquests by the Arabs took place in the seventh century when the Arabs first came into contact with the Hellenistic world. At that time Hellenistic culture was still alive; Alexandria in Egypt, certain towns in Syria-Edessa for instance-were centres of Hellenistic learning, and in the cloisters of Syria and Mesopotamia not only Theology was studied but Science and Philosophy also were cultivated. In Philosophy Aristotle was still 'the master of those who know', and especially his logical works as interpreted by the Neoplatonic commentators were studied intensively. But also many Neoplatonic and Neopythagorean

writings were still known, and also, very probably, some of the old Stoic concepts and problems were still alive and discussed.

The great period of translation of Greek into Arabic, mostly through the intermediary of Christian Syrians, was between the years 750 and 850, but already before that time there was an impact of Greek ideas on Muslim theology. The first speculative theologians in Islam are called Mu'tazilites (from about A. D. 723), an exact translation of the Greek word σχηματικοί (the general name for speculative theologians is Mutakallimun, διαλεκτικοί, dialecticians, a name often given in later Greek philosophy to the Stoics). Although they form rather a heterogeneous group of thinkers whose theories are syncretistic, that is taken from different Greek sources with a preponderance of Stoic ideas, they have certain points in common, principally their theory, taken from the Stoics, of the rationality of religion (which is for them identical with Islam), of a lumen naturale which burns in the heart of every man, and the optimistic view of a rational God who has created the best of all possible worlds for the greatest good of man who occupies the central place in the universe. They touch upon certain difficult problems that were perceived by the Greeks. The paradoxes of Zeno concerning movement and the infinite divisibility of space and time hold their attention, and the subtle problem of the status of the nonexistent, a problem long neglected in modern philosophy, but revived by the school of Brentano, especially by Meinong, which caused an endless controversy amongst the Stoics, is also much debated by them.

A later generation of theologians, the Ash'arites, named after Al Ash'ari, born A. D. 873, are forced by the weight of evidence to admit a certain irrationality in theological concepts, and their philosophical speculations, largely based on Stoicism, are strongly mixed with Sceptical theories. They hold the middle way between the traditionalists who want to forbid all reasoning on religious matters and those who affirm that reason unaided by revelation is capable of attaining religious truths. Since Ghazali founds his attack against the philosophers on Ash'arite principles, we may consider for a moment some of their theories. The difference between the Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite conceptions of God cannot be better expressed than by the following passage which is found twice in Ghazali (in his Golden Means of Dogmatics and his Vivification of Theology) and to which by tradition is ascribed the breach between Al Ash'ari and the Mu'tazilites.

'Let us imagine a child and a grown-up in Heaven who both died in the True Faith, but the grown-up has a higher place than the child. And the child will ask God, "Why did you give that man a higher place?" And God will answer, "He has done many good works." Then the child will say, "Why did you let me die so soon so that I was prevented from doing good?" God will answer, "I knew that you would grow up a sinner, therefore it was better that you should die a child." Then a cry goes up from the damned in the depths of Hell, "Why, O Lord, did you not let us die before we became sinners?"'

Ghazali adds to this: 'the imponderable decisions of God cannot be weighed by the scales of reason and Mu'tazilism'.

According to the Ash'arites, therefore, right and wrong are human concepts and cannot be applied to God. 'Cui mali nihil est nec esse potest quid huic opus est dilectu bonorum et malorum?' is the argument of the Sceptic Carneades expressed by Cicero (*De natura deorum*, iii. 15. 38). It is a dangerous theory for the theologians, because it severs the moral relationship between God and man and therefore it cannot be and is not consistently applied by the Ash'arites and Ghazali.

The Ash'arites have taken over from the Stoics their epistemology, their sensationalism, their nominalism, their materialism. Some details of this epistemology are given by Ghazali in his

autobiography: the clearness of representations is the criterion for their truth; the soul at birth is a blank on which the sensations are imprinted; at the seventh year of a man's life he acquires the rational knowledge of right and wrong. Stoic influence on Islamic theology is overwhelming. Of Stoic origin, for instance, are the division of the acts of man into five classes; the importance placed on the motive of an act when judging its moral character; the theory of the two categories of substance and accident (the two other categories, condition and relation, are not considered by the Muslim theologians to pertain to reality, since they are subjective); above all, the fatalism and determinism in Islam which is often regarded as a feature of the Oriental soul. In the Qur'an, however, there is no definite theory about free will. Muhammad was not a philosopher. The definition of will in man given by the Ash'arites, as the instrument of unalterable fate and the unalterable law of God, is Stoic both in idea and expression. (I have discussed several other theories in my notes.)

Sometimes, however, the theologians prefer to the Stoic view the view of their adversaries. For instance, concerning the discussion between Neoplatonism and Stoicism whether there is a moral obligation resting on God and man relative to animals, Islam answers with the Neoplatonists in the affirmative (Spinoza, that Stoic Cartesian, will give, in his *Ethica*, the negative Stoic answer).

The culmination of the philosophy of Islam was in the tenth and eleventh centuries. This was the age also of the great theologians. It was with Greek ideas, taken in part from Stoics and Sceptics, that the theologians tried to refute the ideas of the philosophers. The philosophers themselves were followers of Aristotle as seen through the eyes of his Neoplatonic commentators. This Neoplatonic interpretation of Aristotle, although it gives a mystical character to his philosophy which is alien to it, has a certain justification in the fact that there are in his philosophy many elements of the theory of his master Plato, which lend themselves to a Neoplatonic conception. Plotinus regarded himself as nothing but the commentator of Plato and Aristotle, and in his school the identity of view of these two great masters was affirmed. In the struggle in Islam between Philosophy and Theology, Philosophy was defeated, and the final blow to the philosophers was given in Ghazali's attack on Philosophy which in substance is incorporated in Averroës' book and which he tries to refute.

Ghazali, who was born in the middle of the eleventh century, is one of the most remarkable and at the same time most enigmatic figures in Islam. Like St. Augustine, with whom he is often compared, he has told us in his autobiography how he had to pass through a period of despair and scepticism until God, not through demonstration but by the light of His grace, had given him peace and certitude. This divine light, says Ghazali, is the basis of most of our knowledge and, he adds, profoundly, one cannot find proofs for the premisses of knowledge; the premisses are there and one looks for the reasons, but they cannot be found. Certitude is reached, he says, not through scholastic reasoning, not through philosophy, but through mystical illumination and the mystical way of life. Still Ghazali is not only a mystic, he is a great dogmatist and moralist. He is regarded as Islam's greatest theologian and, through some of his books, as a defender of Orthodoxy. It is generally believed that the *Tahafut*, the book in which he criticizes Philosophy, was written in the period of his doubts. The book, however, is a Defence of Faith, and though it is more negative than positive, for it aims to destroy and not to construct, it is based on the theories of his immediate predecessors, many of whose arguments he reproduces. Besides, he promises in this book to give in another book the correct dogmatic answers. The treatise to which he seems to refer does not contain anything but the old theological articles of faith and the Ash'arite arguments and solutions. But we should not look for consistency in Ghazali; necessarily his mysticism comes into conflict with his dogmatism

and he himself has been strongly influenced by the philosophers, especially by Avicenna, and in many works he comes very near to the Neoplatonic theories which he criticizes. On the whole it would seem to me that Ghazali in his attack on the philosophers has taken from the vast arsenal of Ash'arite dialectical arguments those appropriate to the special point under discussion, regardless of whether they are destructive also of some of the views he holds.

Averroës was the last great philosopher in Islam in the twelfth century, and is the most scholarly and scrupulous commentator of Aristotle. He is far better known in Europe than in the Orient, where few of his works are still in existence and where he had no influence, he being the last great philosopher of his culture. Renan, who wrote a big book about him, Averroës et l'Averro'asme, had never seen a line of Arabic by him. Lately some of his works have been edited in Arabic, for instance his Tahafut al Tahafut, in a most exemplary manner. Averroës' influence on European thought during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance has been immense.

The name of Ghazali's book in which he attacks the philosophers is Tahafut al Falasifa, which has been translated by the medieval Latin translator as Destructio Philosophorum. The name of Averroës' book is Tahafut al Tahafut, which is rendered as Destructio Destructionis (or destructionum). This rendering is surely not exact. The word 'Tahafut' has been translated by modern scholars in different ways, and the title of Ghazali's book has been given as the breakdown, the disintegration, or the incoherence, of the philosophers. The exact title of Averroës' book would be The Incoherence of the Incoherence.

...A suitable title for his book might perhaps be 'The Bankruptcy of Philosophy'.

In the introduction to his book Ghazali says that a group of people hearing the famous names Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and knowing what they had attained in such sciences as Geometry, Logic, and Physics, have left the religion of their fathers in which they were brought up to follow the philosophers. The theories of the philosophers are many, but Ghazali will attack only one, the greatest, Aristotle; Aristotle, of whom it is said that he refuted all his predecessors, even Plato, excusing himself by saying 'amicus Plato, amica veritas, sed magis amica veritas'. I may add that this well-known saying, which is a variant of a passage in Plato's Phaedo and in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, is found in this form first in Arabic. One of the first European authors who has it in this form is Cervantes (Don Quijote, ii, c. 52). I quote this saying-Ghazali adds-to show that there is no surety and evidence in Philosophy. According to Ghazali, the philosophers claim for their metaphysical proofs the same evidence as is found in Mathematics and Logic. But all Philosophy is based on supposition and opinion. If Metaphysics had the same evidence as Mathematics all philosophers would agree just as well in Philosophy as in Mathematics. According to him the translators of Aristotle have often misunderstood or changed the meaning and the different texts have caused different controversies. Ghazali considers Farabi and Avicenna to be the best commentators on Aristotle in Islam, and it is their theories that he will attack...

IN THE NAME OF THE MERCIFUL AND COMPASSIONATE  
GOD: AND AFTER PRAISE TO GOD AND BENEDICTION  
UPON ALL HIS MESSENGERS AND PROPHETS:

The aim of this book is to show the different degrees of assent and conviction attained by the assertions in The Incoherence of the Philosophers, and to prove that the greater part has not reached the degree of evidence and of truth.

## THE FIRST DISCUSSION

### Concerning the Eternity of the World

## ABOUT THE NATURAL SCIENCES

Ghazali says:

*The so-called natural sciences are many, and we shall enumerate their parts, in order to make it known that the Holy Law does not ask one to contest and refute them, except in certain points we shall mention. They are divided into principal classes and subdivisions. The principal classes are eight... The seventh is alchemy, whose aim is to change the properties of minerals so that finally gold and silver are produced by a kind of magic. And there is no need to be opposed to any of these sciences by reason of the Divine Law; we dissent from the philosophers in all these sciences in regard to four points only.*

I say:

As to his enumeration of the eight kinds of physical science, this is exact according to the doctrine of Aristotle. But his enumeration of the subdivisions is not correct. Medicine is not one of the natural sciences, but is a practical science which takes its principles from physical science; for physical science is theoretical and medicine is practical, and when we study a problem common to theoretical science and practical we can regard it from two points of view; for instance, in our study of health and illness the student of physics observes health and nature as kinds of natural existents, whereas the physician studies them with the intention of preserving the one, health, and keeping down the other, illness. Neither does judicial astrology belong to physical science; it is only a prognostication of future events, and is of the same type as augury and vaticination. Physiognomy is also of the same kind, except that its object is occult things in the present, not in the future. The interpretation of dreams too is a prognosticating science, and this type belongs neither to the theoretical nor to the practical sciences, although it is reputed to have a practical value. The telematical art is vain, for if we assume the positions of the spheres to exert a power on artificial products, this power will remain inside the product and not pass on to things outside it. As to conjuring, this is the type of thing that produces wonder, but it is certainly not a theoretical science. Whether alchemy really exists is very dubious; if it exists, its artificial product cannot be identical with the product of nature; art can at most become similar to nature but cannot attain nature itself in reality. As to the question whether it can produce anything which resembles the natural product generically, we do not possess sufficient data to assert categorically its impossibility or possibility, but only prolonged experiments over a lengthy period can procure the necessary evidence. We shall treat the four points Ghazali mentions one after the other.

Ghazali says:

*The first point is their assertion that this connexion observed between causes and effects is of logical necessity, and that the*

*existence of the cause without the effect or the effect without the cause is not within the realm of the contingent and possible...*

*...As to the first point, it is necessary to contest it, for on its negation depends the possibility of affirming the existence of miracles which interrupt the usual course of nature, like the changing of the rod into a serpents or the resurrection of the dead or the cleavage of the moon, and those who consider the ordinary course of nature a logical necessity regard all this as impossible. They interpret the resurrection of the dead in the Qur'an by saying that the cessation of the death of ignorance is to be understood by it, and the rod which conceived the arch-deceiver, the serpent, by saying that it means the clear divine proof in the hands of Moses to refute the false doctrines of the heretics; and as to the cleavage of the moon they often deny that it took place and assert. that it does not rest on a sound tradition; and the philosophers accept miracles that interrupt the usual course of nature only in three cases...*

I say:

The ancient philosophers did not discuss the problem of miracles, since according to them such things must not be examined and questioned; for they are the principles of the religions, and the man who inquires into them and doubts them merits punishment, like the man who examines the other general religious principles, such as whether God exists or blessedness or the virtues. For the existence of all these cannot be doubted, and the mode of their existence is something divine which human apprehension cannot attain. The reason for this is that these are the principles of the acts through which man becomes virtuous, and that one can only attain knowledge after the attainment of virtue. One must not investigate the principles which cause virtue before the attainment of virtue, and since the theoretical sciences can only be perfected through assumptions and axioms which the learner accepts in the first place, this must be still more the case with the practical sciences.

As to what Ghazali relates of the causes of this as they are according to the philosophers, I do not know anyone who asserts this but Avicenna. And if such facts are verified and it is possible that a body could be changed qualitatively through something which is neither a body nor a bodily potency, then the reasons he mentions for this are possible; but not everything which in its nature is possible can be done by man, for what is possible to man is well known. Most things which are possible in themselves are impossible for man, and what is true of the prophet, that he can interrupt the ordinary course of nature, is impossible for man, but possible in itself; and because of this one need not assume that things logically impossible are possible for the prophets, and if you observe those miracles whose existence is confirmed, you will find that they are of this kind. The clearest of miracles is the Venerable Book of Allah, the existence of which is not an interruption of the course of nature assumed by tradition, like the changing of a rod into a serpent, but its miraculous nature is established by way of perception and consideration for every man who has been or who will be till the day of resurrection. And so this miracle is far superior to all others...

## THE FIRST DISCUSSION

Ghazali says:

*According to us the connexion between what is usually believed to be a cause and what is believed to be an effect is not a necessary connexion; each of two things has its own individuality and is not the other... For the connexion in these things is based on a prior power of God to create them in a successive order... It is in God's power to create satiety without eating, and death without decapitation, and to let life persist notwithstanding the decapitation, and so on with respect to all connexions. The philosophers, however, deny this possibility and claim that that is impossible. To investigate*

*all these innumerable connexions would take us too long, and so we shall choose one single example, namely the burning of cotton through contact with fire...*

*...The true philosophers' were therefore unanimously of the opinion that these accidents and events which occur when there is a contact of bodies, or in general a change in their positions, proceed from the bestower of forms who is an angel or a plurality of angels, so that they even said that the impression of the visible forms on the eye occurs through the bestower of forms, and that the rising of the sun, the soundness of the pupil, and the existence of the visible object are only the preparations and dispositions which enable the substratum to receive the forms; and this theory they applied to all events. And this refutes the claim of those who profess that fire is the agent of burning, bread the agent of satiety, medicine the agent of health, and so on.*

I say:

To deny the existence of efficient causes which are observed in sensible things is sophistry, and he who defends this doctrine either denies with his tongue what is present in his mind or is carried away by a sophistical doubt which occurs to him concerning this question. For he who denies this can no longer acknowledge that every act must have an agent. The question whether these causes by themselves are sufficient to perform the acts which proceed from them, or need an external cause for the perfection of their act, whether separate or not, is not self-evident and requires much investigation and research. And if the theologians had doubts about the efficient causes which are perceived to cause each other, because there are also effects whose cause is not perceived, this is illogical. Those things whose causes are not perceived are still unknown and must be investigated, precisely because their causes are not perceived; and since everything whose causes are not perceived is still unknown by nature and must be investigated, it follows necessarily that what is not unknown has causes which are perceived. The man who reasons like the theologians does not distinguish between what is self-evident and what is unknown, and everything Ghazali says in this passage is sophistical.

And further, what do the theologians say about the essential causes, the understanding of which alone can make a thing understood? For it is self-evident that things have essences and attributes which determine the special functions of each thing and through which the essences and names of things are differentiated. If a thing had not its specific nature, it would not have a special name nor a definition, and all things would be one-indeed, not even one; for it might be asked whether this one has one special act or one special passivity or not, and if it had a special act, then there would indeed exist special acts proceeding from special natures, but if it had no single special act, then the one would not be one. But if the nature of oneness is denied, the nature of being is denied, and the consequence of the denial of being is nothingness.

Further, are the acts which proceed from all things absolutely necessary for those in whose nature it lies to perform them, or are they only performed in most cases or in half the cases? This is a question which must be investigated, since one single action-and passivity between two existent things occurs only through one relation out of an infinite number, and it happens often that one relation hinders another. Therefore it is not absolutely certain that fire acts when it is brought near a sensitive body, for surely it is not improbable that there should be something which stands in such a relation to the sensitive thing as to hinder the action of the fire, as is asserted of talc and other things. But one need not therefore deny fire its burning power so long as fire keeps its name and definition.

Further, it is self-evident that all events have four causes, agent, form, matter, and end, and that they are necessary for the existence

of the effects-especially those causes which form a part of the effect, namely that which is called by the philosophers matter, by the theologians condition and substratum, and that which is called by the philosophers form, by the theologians psychological quality . The theologians acknowledge that there exist conditions which are necessary to the conditioned, as when they say that life is a condition of knowledge; and they equally recognize that things have realities and definitions, and that these are necessary for the existence of the existent, and therefore they here judge the visible and the invisible according to one and the same scheme. ‘ And they adopt the same attitude towards the consequences of a thing’s essence, namely what they call ‘sign’, as for instance when they say that the harmony in the world indicates that its agent possesses mind and that the existence of a world having a design indicates that its agent knows this world? Now intelligence is nothing but the perception of things with their causes, and in this it distinguishes itself from all the other faculties of apprehension, and he who denies causes must deny the intellect. Logic implies the existence of causes and effects, and knowledge of these effects can only be rendered perfect through knowledge of their causes. Denial of cause implies the denial of knowledge, and denial of knowledge implies that nothing in this world can be really known, and that what is supposed to be known is nothing but opinion, that neither proof nor definition exist, and that the essential attributes which compose definitions are void. The man who denies the necessity of any item of knowledge must admit that even this, his own affirmation, is not necessary knowledge.

As to those who admit that there exists, besides necessary knowledge, knowledge which is not necessary, about which the soul forms a judgement on slight evidence and imagines it to be necessary, whereas it is not necessary, the philosophers do not deny this. And if they call such a fact ‘habit’ this may be granted, but otherwise I do not know what they understand by the term ‘habit’ - whether they mean that it is the habit of the agent, the habit of the existing things, or our habit to form a judgement about such things? It is, however, impossible that God should have a habit, for a habit is a custom which the agent acquires and from which a frequent repetition of his act follows, whereas God says in the Holy Book: ‘Thou shalt not find any alteration in the course of God, and they shall not find any change in the course of God. If they mean a habit in existing things, habit can only exist in the animated; if it exists in something else, it is really a nature, and it is not possible that a thing should have a nature which determined it either necessarily or in most cases. If they mean our habit of forming judgements about things, such a habit is nothing but an act of the soul which is determined by its nature and through which the intellect becomes intellect. The philosophers do not deny such a habit; but ‘habit’ is an ambiguous term, and if it is analysed it means only a hypothetical act; as when we say ‘So-and-so has the habit of acting in such-and-such a way’, meaning that he will act in that way most of the time. If this were true, everything would be the case only by supposition, and there would be no wisdom in the world from which it might be inferred that its agent was wise.

And, as we said, we need not doubt that some of these existents cause each other and act through each other, and that in themselves they do not suffice for their act, but that they are in need of an external agent whose act is a condition of their act, and not only of their act but even of their existence. However, about the essence of this agent or of these agents the philosophers differ in one way, although in another they agree. They all agree in this, that the First Agent is immaterial and that its act is the condition of the existence and acts of existents, and that the act of their agent reaches these existents through the intermediation of an effect of this agent, which is different from these existents and which, according to some of them, is exclusively the heavenly sphere, whereas others assume

besides this sphere another immaterial existent which they call the bestower of forms.

But this is not the place to investigate these theories, and the highest part of their inquiry is this; and if you are one of those who desire these truths, then follow the right road which leads to them. The reason why the philosophers differed about the origin of the essential forms and especially of the forms of the soul is that they could not relate them to the warm, cold, moist, and dry, which are the causes of all natural things which come into being and pass away, ‘ whereas the materialists related everything which does not seem to have an apparent cause to the warm, cold, moist, and dry, affirming that these things originated through certain mixtures of those elements, just as colours and other accidents come into existence. And the philosophers tried to refute them...

## The Fourth Discussion

Having finished this question Ghazali begins to say that the philosophers deny bodily resurrection. This is a problem which is not found in any of the older philosophers, although resurrection has been mentioned in different religions for at least a thousand years and the philosophers whose theories have come to us are of a more recent date. The first to mention bodily resurrection were the prophets of Israel after Moses, as is evident from the Psalms and many books attributed to the Israelites. Bodily resurrection is also affirmed in the New Testament and attributed by tradition to Jesus. It is a theory of the Sabaeans, whose religion is according to Ibn Hazm the oldest.

But the philosophers in particular, as is only natural, regard this doctrine as most important and believe in it most, and the reason is that it is conducive to an order amongst men on which man’s being, as man, depends and through which he can attain the greatest happiness proper to him, for it is a necessity for the existence of the moral and speculative virtuous and of the practical sciences in men. They hold namely that man cannot live in this world without the practical sciences, nor in this and the next world without the speculative virtues, and that neither of these categories is perfected or completed without the practical virtues, and that the practical virtues can only become strong through the knowledge and adoration of God by the services prescribed by the laws of the different religions, like offerings and prayers and supplications and other such utterances by which praise is rendered to God, the angels, and the prophets.

In short, the philosophers believe that religious laws are necessary political arts, the principles of which are taken from natural reason and inspiration, especially in what is common to all religions, although religions differ here more or less. The philosophers further hold that one must not object either through a positive or through a negative statement to any of the general religious principles, for instance whether it is obligatory to serve God or not, and still more whether God does or does not exist, and they affirm this also concerning the other religious principles, for instance bliss in the beyond and its possibility; for all religions agree in the acceptance of another existence after death, although they differ in the description of this existence, just as they agree about the knowledge, attributes, and acts of God, although they differ more or less in their utterances about the essence and the acts of the Principle. All religions agree also about the acts conducive to bliss in the next world, although they differ about the determination of these acts.

In short, the religions are, according to the philosophers, obligatory, since they lead towards wisdom in a way universal to all human beings, for philosophy only leads a certain number of intelligent people to the knowledge of happiness, and they therefore have to learn wisdom, whereas religions seek the instruction of the masses generally. Notwithstanding this, we do not find any religion which is

not attentive to the special needs of the learned, although it is primarily concerned with the things in which the masses participate. And since the existence of the learned class is only perfected and its full happiness attained by participation with the class of the masses, the general doctrine is also obligatory for the existence and life of this special class, both at the time of their youth and growth (and nobody doubts this), and when they pass on to attain the excellence which is their distinguishing characteristic. For it belongs to the necessary excellence of a man of learning that he should not despise the doctrines in which he has been brought up, and that he should explain them in the fairest way, and that he should understand that the aim of these doctrines lies in their universal character, not in their particularity, and that, if he expresses a doubt concerning the religious principles in which he has been brought up, or explains them in a way contradictory to the prophets and turns away from their path, he merits more than anyone else that the term unbeliever should be applied to him, and he is liable to the penalty for unbelief in the religion in which he has been brought up.

Further, he is under obligation to choose the best religion of his period, even when they are all equally true for him, and he must believe that the best will be abrogated by the introduction of a still better. Therefore the learned who were instructing the people in Alexandria became Muslims when Islam reached them, and the learned in the Roman Empire became Christians when the religion of Jesus was introduced there. And nobody doubts that among the Israelites there were many learned men, and this is apparent from the books which are found amongst the Israelites and which are attributed to Solomon. And never has wisdom ceased among the inspired, i. e. the prophets, and therefore it is the truest of all sayings that every prophet is a sage, ' but not every sage a prophet; the learned, however, are those of whom it is said that they are the heirs of the prophets.

And since in the principles of the demonstrative sciences there are postulates and axioms which are assumed, this must still more be the case for the religions which take their origin in inspiration and reason. Every religion exists through inspiration and is blended with reason. And he who holds that it is possible that there should exist a natural religion based on reason alone must admit that this religion must be less perfect than those which spring from reason and inspiration. And all philosophers agree that the principles of action must be taken on authority, for there is no demonstration for the necessity of action except through the existence of virtues which are realized through moral actions and through practice.

And it is clear from this that all the learned hold about religions the opinion that the principles of the actions and regulations prescribed in every religion are received from the prophets and lawgivers, who regard those necessary principles as praiseworthy which most incite the masses to the performance of virtuous acts; and so nobody doubts that those who are brought up on those principles are of a more perfect virtue than those who are brought up on others, for instance that the prayers in our religion hold men back from ignominy and wickedness, as God's word certifies, and that the prayer ordained in our religion fulfils this purpose more truly than the prayers ordained in others, and this by the conditions imposed on it of number, time, recitation, purity, and desistance from acts and words harmful to it. And the same may be said of the doctrine of the beyond in our religion, which is more conducive to virtuous actions than what is said in others. Thus to represent the beyond in material images is more appropriate than purely spiritual representation, as is said in the Divine Words: 'The likeness of the Paradise which those who fear God are promised, beneath it rivers flow. ' ; And the Prophet has said: 'In it there is what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, nor ever entered the mind of man. ' And Ibn Abbas said: 'There is no relation in the other world to this world but the names. '

And he meant by this that the beyond is another creation of a higher order than this world, and another phase superior to our earthly. He need not deny this who believes that we see one single thing developing itself from one phase to another, for instance the transformation of the inorganic into beings conscious of their own essences, i. e. the intellectual forms. Those who are in doubt about this and object to it and try to explain it are those who seek to destroy the religious prescriptions and to undo the virtues. They are, as everyone knows, the heretics and those who believe that the end of man consists only in sensual enjoyment. When such people have really the power to destroy religious belief both theologians and philosophers will no doubt kill them, but when they have no actual power the best arguments that can be brought against them are those that are contained in the Holy Book. What Ghazali says against them is right, and in refuting them it must be admitted that the soul is immortal, as is proved by rational and religious proofs, and it must be assumed that what arises from the dead is simulacra of these earthly bodies, not these bodies themselves, for that which has perished does not return individually and a thing can only return as an image of that which has perished, not -as a being identical with what has perished, as Ghazali declares. Therefore the doctrine of resurrection of those theologians who believe that the soul is an accident and that the bodies which arise are identical with those that perished cannot be true. For what perished and became anew can only be specifically, not numerically, one, and this argument is especially valid against those theologians who hold that an accident does not last two moments.

Ghazali accused the philosophers of heresy on three points. One concerns this question, and we have already shown what opinion the philosophers hold about this, and that according to them it is a speculative problem. The second point is the theory attributed to the philosophers that God does not know individuals, but here again we have shown that they do not say this. The third point is their theory of the eternity of the world, but again we have shown that what they understand by this term has not the meaning for which they are accused of heresy by the theologians. Ghazali asserts in this book that no Muslim believes in a purely spiritual resurrection, and in another book he says that the Sufis hold it. According to this latter assertion those who believe in a spiritual but not in a perceptible resurrection are not declared heretics by universal consent, and this permits belief in a spiritual resurrection. But again in another book he repeats his accusation of heresy as if it rested on universal consent. And all this, as you see, is confusing. And no doubt this man erred in religious questions as he erred in rational problems. God is the succourer for the finding of what is true, and He invests with the truth whomever He chooses.

I have decided to break off my inquiry about these things here, and I ask pardon for their discussion, and if it were not an obligation to seek the truth for those who are entitled to it-and those are, as Galen says, one in a thousand'-and to prevent from discussion those who have no claim to it, I would not have treated all this. And God knows every single letter, and perhaps God will accept my excuse and forgive my stumbling in His bounty, generosity, munificence and excellence-there is no God but He!