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Ibn Taymiyya's use of Ibn Rushd to refute the incorporealism of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī¹

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Ernest Renan famously declared that Ibn Rushd/Averroes (d. 595/1198) was the “last representative” of philosophy in the Arab and Islamic world.² We now know that Ibn Rushd was by no means the last. Instead, the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā/Avicenna (d. 428/1037) triggered an “Avicennan pandemic” that spread throughout the lands of medieval Islam and profoundly shaped Islamic thought down to the nineteenth century.³ Ibn Rushd did not enjoy a comparable fortune. While he stirred debate in medieval Europe, his influence in the Islamic world appears to have been minimal. Peter Adamson in the introduction to the 2011 edited volume *In the Age of Averroes* briefly surveys possible reasons for this. One is that Ibn Rushd lived in Andalusia, far from the central lands of Islam. Adamson does not think this sufficient to explain his lack of impact. Instead, Adamson argues, it likely has to do with Ibn Rushd's links to the ruling Almohads, who many opponents took to be heretics, and even more so with the fact that Ibn Rushd did not engage the prevailing philosophy of Ibn Sīnā directly. He circumvented it by calling for a return to Aristotle.⁴ Yet, even if the Islamic world took far more interest in Ibn Sīnā than Ibn Rushd, the Andalusian philosopher was not ignored entirely. The Damascene traditionalist theologian Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) has much to say about Ibn Rushd and quotes him extensively. This attention to Ibn Rushd is extraordinary,

¹ The research for this publication was funded by a Leverhulme Trust Fellowship. All translations from the Qur'ān and other Arabic texts are my own.

² This statement is found in both the first and last editions of Ernest Renan, *Averroès et l'averroïsme: essai historique*, 1st ed. (Paris, A. Durand, 1852), 1; and 4th ed. (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1882), 2.

³ Jean R. Michot, “La pandémie avicennienne au VIe/XIIe siècle: présentation, *editio princeps* et traduction de l'introduction du *Livre de l'advenue du monde (Kitāb ḥudūth al-'ālam)* d'Ibn Ghaylān Al-Balkhī,” *Arabica* 40 (1993): 287-344. As examples of the literature on Ibn Sīnā's influence on medieval and early modern Islamic thought, see Robert Wisnovsky, “Avicenna's Islamic Reception,” in *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 190-213; and Heidrun Eichner, “Handbooks in the Tradition of Later Eastern Ash'arism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 494-514.

⁴ Peter Adamson, “Introduction,” in: *In the Age of Averroes: Arabic Philosophy in the Sixth/Twelfth Century*, ed. Peter Adamson (London: The Warburg Institute, 2011), 1-7 (3, 7). Oliver Leaman, *Averroes and his Philosophy*, rev. ed. (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press, 1998), 176-177, lists further reasons suggested by earlier scholars for Ibn Rushd's lack of influence.

especially when no one else in the medieval Islamic east seems to have shown much concern for him.⁵ This, too, requires explanation. Why was Ibn Rushd of interest to Ibn Taymiyya and not to others?

Before addressing this question, attention must first be given to the relevant texts and recent research. Ibn Taymiyya refers to Ibn Rushd in several of his books,⁶ and he quotes him extensively in his two long works *Bayān talbīs al-jahmiyya* [hereafter *Bayān*] and *Dar' ta'arūḍ al-'aql wa al-naql* [hereafter *Dar'*]. *Bayān*—eight volumes in the 2005 Medina edition—is a refutation of the Ash'arī theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 606/1210) *Ta'sīs al-taqdīs*, which is in turn a rebuttal of Karrāmī and Ḥanbalī anthropomorphism.⁷ Ibn Taymiyya wrote *Bayān* between Ramaḍān 705/April 1306 and Dhū al-Ḥijja 706/June 1307 while imprisoned in Cairo on charges of corporealism.⁸ In *Bayān* Ibn Taymiyya quotes at length from Ibn Rushd's *al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla* [hereafter *Kashf*], which outlines what the general public should believe, and also selections from Ibn Rushd's *Faṣl al-maqāl*, which explicates the religious obligation to engage in philosophy.⁹ Ibn Taymiyya's second

⁵ Henry Corbin, “En Orient, après Averroès,” in: *Multiple Averroès: Actes du Colloque International organisé à l'occasion du 850e anniversaire de la naissance d'Averroès. Paris 20-23 septembre 1976*, ed. Jean Jolivet (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1978), 323-332. Corbin claims that he had not found even one reference to Ibn Rushd in the Islamic east before the seventeenth century (323-324). Ibn Rushd did apparently receive some attention in the medieval Islamic west; see Yamina Adouhane, “Al-Miklātī, A Twelfth Century Aš'arite,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 22.2 (2012): 155-197 (155-156). Adouhane argues that the Maghribī Ash'arī theologian Abū al-Hajjāj al-Miklātī (d. 626/1228-1229) drew on Ibn Rushd, albeit without acknowledgement, in his work *Kitāb lubāb al-'uqūl fī al-radd 'alā al-falāsifa fī 'ilm al-usūl*.

⁶ See for example *Al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ*, ed. 'Alī ibn Ḥasan ibn Nāṣir, 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Ibrāhīm al-'Askar, and Ḥamdān ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥamdān, 7 vols. (Riyadh: Dār al-'āṣima, 1993-1999), 5:19, 31; *Kitāb al-radd 'alā al-manṭiqiyyīn*, ed. 'Abd al-Ṣamad Sharaf al-Dīn al-Kutubī (Bombay: Al-Maṭba'a al-qayyima, 1368/1949), 148; *Kitāb al-ṣafādiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, 2 parts in 1 vol. (Manṣūra, Egypt: Dār al-hudā al-nabawiyya, 1421/2000), 1:149, 2:186; *Kitāb al-nubuwwāt*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Ṭuwayyān, 3 vols. (Medina: al-Jāmi'a al-Islāmiyya bi-l-Madīna al-Munawwara, 'Imādat al-baḥth al-'ilmī, 1420/2000), 1:364, 459, 2:760; and *Minḥāj al-sunna al-nabawiyya fī naqḍ kalām al-Shī'a al-Qadariyya*, ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, 9 vols. (Riyadh: Jāmi'at al-Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd al-Islāmiyya, 1986), 1:199, 236, 246, 323, 348, 356, 357, 374, 375, 399, 402, 2:281.

⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān talbīs al-Jahmiyya fī ta'sīs bida'ihim al-kalāmiyya*, ed. Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad al-Hunaydī, et al., 10 vols. 2d printing (Medina: Majma' al-Malik Fahd li-tibā'at al-muṣḥaf al-sharīf, 1426/2005); volumes 1-8 contain the edited text; volume 9 comprises studies on the text; and volume 10 is indexes. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Ta'sīs al-taqdīs*, ed. Anas Muḥammad 'Adnān al-Sharafāwī and Aḥmad Muḥammad Khayr al-Khaṭīb (Damascus: Dār nūr al-ṣabāḥ, 2011); also known as *Asās al-taqdīs* as in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Asās al-taqdīs*, ed. Aḥmad Hijāzī al-Saqqā (Cairo: Al-Maktaba al-azhariyya, 1406/1986).

⁸ For the dating and circumstances of Ibn Taymiyya's writing of *Bayān*, see Jon Hoover, “Early Mamlūk Ash'arīs against Ibn Taymiyya on the nonliteral reinterpretation of God's attributes (*ta'wīl*),” in: *Philosophical Theology in Islam: The Later Ash'arite Tradition*, ed. Jan Thiele and Ayman Shihadeh (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

⁹ Editions of Ibn Rushd's *al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla* will be discussed below. Further reference to *Faṣl al-maqāl* will be to Averroës, *Decisive Treatise & Epistle Dedicatory* [Arabic and English], trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2001), 1-33; an earlier English translation is found in Ibn Rushd (Averroës), *On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy: A Translation, with Introduction and Notes, of Ibn Rushd's Kitāb faṣl al-maqāl, with Its Appendix (Ḍamīma) and an Extract from Kitāb al-kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla* (London: Luzac, 1961). For a recent analysis of *Faṣl al-maqāl*, see Caterina Belo, *Averroës and Hegel on Philosophy and Religion* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013), 21-47. For references to and quotations from Ibn

tome *Dar*’ comes to ten volumes in the edition of Rashād Sālim and dates to 713/1313 or later.¹⁰ In *Dar*’ Ibn Taymiyya argues that there is no contradiction between reason and revelation, and he quotes several selections from Ibn Rushd’s *Kashf* and the latter’s *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*¹¹ refuting the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*¹² of al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), as well as nearly the whole of his short *Ḍamīma*.¹³

There is furthermore the question of which text of *Kashf* Ibn Taymiyya quotes. In a 2005 study, Marc Geoffroy explains that Ibn Rushd wrote two distinct versions of *Kashf*. The first version was composed in 575/1179-1180. At the outset, Ibn Rushd divides human beings into the general public (*jumhūr*) and the learned elite (*‘ulamā*’), and he explains that the treatise is devoted to explaining what the general public should believe. Whereas the elite for example know that God is incorporeal, the general public should not deny that God has a body so as not to sow confusion concerning the affirmations of revelation. Then, Ibn Rushd carefully sidelines Ash‘arī theological positions dominant among the Almohads ruling Andalusia and North Africa at the time in favor of views more amenable to Aristotelianism. Geoffroy suggests that Ibn Rushd’s aim in doing this is to offer an alternative expression of Almohad orthodoxy. This effort failed, and Geoffroy shows that Ibn Rushd, apparently under duress, rewrote the section in *Kashf* on God and body to conform to the teaching of Almohad founder Ibn Tūmart (d. 524/1130) that everyone—even the general public—must affirm God’s incorporeality. Ibn Rushd justifies his new view not from the texts of revelation but as required by the needs of the time to ward off corporealist error.¹⁴

The first version of *Kashf* is preserved in MS Escorial 632, fols. 20v–74r, which is the sole source for the first modern edition, by Müller in 1859,¹⁵ and the primary source for the

Rushd in Ibn Taymiyya’s *Bayān*, see the index entries in *Bayān*, 10:210 (Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Rushd), 10:256-257 (*Faṣl al-maqāl*), and 10:260 ([*al-Kashf ‘an*] *manāḥij al-adilla*).

¹⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar’ ta ‘āruḍ al-‘aql wa al-naql*, ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, 11 vols. (Riyadh: Jāmi‘at al-Imām Muḥammad ibn Sa‘ūd al-Islāmiyya, 1979-1983). On the dating of *Dar*’, see Jon Hoover, *Ibn Taymiyya’s Theodicy of Perpetual Optimism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 10-11.

¹¹ Averroës. *Tahāfut at-Tahāfut*, ed. Maurice Bouyges (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1930); trans. Simon van den Bergh, *Averroës’ Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, 2 vols. (London: Luzac, 1954).

¹² Al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, ed. and trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1997).

¹³ The Arabic of *al-Ḍamīma (Risālat al-ihdā’)* is printed with an English translation in Averroës, *Decisive Treatise & Epistle Dedicatory*, 38-42. For references to and quotations from Ibn Rushd in *Dar*’, see the index entries in *Dar*’, 11:77-78 (Ibn Rushd), 11:329-330 (*Tahāfut al-tahāfut*), and 11:345-346 ([*al-Kashf ‘an*] *manāḥij al-adilla*). Ibn Taymiyya’s quotes Ibn Rushd’s *Ḍamīma* in *Dar*’ 9:383-390.

¹⁴ Marc Geoffroy, “À Propos de l’almodhadisme d’Averroës: L’anthropomorphisme (*taḡsīm*) dans la seconde version du *Kitāb al-kaṣf ‘an manāḥij al-adilla*,” in *Los Almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, ed. Patrice Cressier, Maribel Fierro, and Luis Molina, 2 vols. (Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 2005), 2:853–894. On Ibn Rushd’s rewriting of *Kashf*, see also Maribel Fierro, “The Religious Policy of the Almohads,” in: *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 679-692 (681-683).

¹⁵ Marcus Joseph Müller, *Philosophie und Theologie von Averroës* (Munich: G. Franz, 1859), 27-127 (Arabic), 26-118 (German).

later editions of Qāsim (1964)¹⁶ and al-Jābirī (1998).¹⁷ Qāsim also consulted MS Taymūriyya, *ḥikma* 129 located in Dār al-kutub in Cairo and noted that it contained various additions, but he did not include these in his edition, nor recognize the significance of the revised text. Geoffroy has now identified MS Istanbul, Köprülü 1601, fols. 117v – 194v, as a better witness to this same revised text. This manuscript contains additions mentioning Ibn Tūmart and affirming Almohad doctrines and deletions of material offending orthodox Almohad sensibilities. Geoffroy provides an edition of the chapter on God and body from the later version of *Kashf* and translates key passages to illustrate Ibn Rushd’s retraction of his earlier views.¹⁸

Geoffroy observes that Ibn Taymiyya copies parts of Ibn Rushd’s second Arabic version of the chapter on God and body into his *Dar’*.¹⁹ From this, Geoffroy surmises that it was only this last version that circulated in eastern Islamic lands.²⁰ However, Ibn Taymiyya in fact copies the first version of the *Kashf* discussion on God and body into *Bayān*. None of the revisions found in the later version are included.²¹ It is thus apparent that Ibn Taymiyya had access to both Arabic versions of Ibn Rushd’s *Kashf*, at least by the time he wrote *Dar’*. It

¹⁶ Ibn Rushd, *Manāḥij al-adilla fī ‘aqā’id al-milla*, ed. Maḥmūd Qāsim, 2d ed. (Cairo: Maktabat al-anjlū al-Miṣriyya, 1964). Qāsim also published an earlier edition with the same press in 1955 based on MS Taymūriyya, *ḥikma* 133, which, unbeknownst to Qāsim, was a copy of Müller’s edition; for details see Geoffroy, “À Propos de l’almodhadisme d’Averroès,” 856-857. Qāsim’s 1964 edition of *Kashf* is translated as Averroes, *Faith and Reason in Islam: Averroes’ Exposition of Religious Arguments*, trans. Ibrahim Najjar (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001). A nearly full translation of *Kashf* from a 1910 Cairo printing is found in J. Windrow Sweetman, *Islam and Christian Theology*, 2 parts in 2 vols. each (London: Lutterworth, 1945-1967), 2.2.82-180, and there is also a Spanish translation of *Kashf* in Manuel Alonso, *Teología de Averroës: estudios y documentos* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto Miguel Asín, 1947), 203-355.

¹⁷ Ibn Rushd, *Al-Kashf ‘an manāḥij al-adilla fī ‘aqā’id al-milla*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Jābirī (Beirut: Markaz dirāsāt al-waḥda ‘arabiyya, 1998); subsequent references to *Kashf* in this study will be to this edition.

¹⁸ Geoffroy, “À Propos de l’almodhadisme d’Averroès,” 886-894 (Arabic text); the Arabic text indicates additions in bold and places deletions between two short vertical lines in a smaller font. Marc Geoffroy, “Ibn Ruṣd et la théologie almohadiste: une version inconnue du *Kitāb al-kaṣf ‘an manāḥij al-adilla* dans deux manuscrits d’Istanbul,” *Medioevo* 26 (2001): 327-356, provides a detailed introduction to MS Istanbul, Köprülü 1601 and a later Istanbul witness to the second version of *Kashf*. Extending the work of Geoffroy, Silvia Di Donato, “Le *Kitāb al-kaṣf ‘an manāḥij al-adilla* d’Averroès: Les phases de la rédaction dans les discours sur l’existence de Dieu et sur la direction, d’après l’original arabe et la traduction hébraïque,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 25 (2015): 105-133, studies an anonymous Hebrew translation of *Kashf* that includes additions to the first Arabic version, especially in the early part of the treatise on the existence of God. These additions are then for the most part included in the second Arabic version along with further additions and modifications. The Hebrew translation does not include revisions of passages undermining Almohad doctrine, and Di Donato argues that it probably derives from a lost revision of the first Arabic text that was then further revised as the second Arabic version to placate Almohad orthodoxy.

¹⁹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar’*, 10:248-300; Frank Griffel, “Ibn Tūmart’s Rational Proof for God’s Existence and Unity, and His Connection to the Nizāmiyya Madrasa in Baghdad,” in: *Los Almohades: problemas y perspectivas*, 2:753-813 (795 n 127), also notes Ibn Taymiyya’s inclusion of a revised version of the *Kashf* chapter on God and corporeality into *Dar’* and translates two of its key additions (797, 800).

²⁰ Geoffroy, “À Propos de l’almodhadisme d’Averroès,” 861.

²¹ Going beyond the chapter on God and body in *Kashf* studied by Geoffroy, Di Donato, “Le *Kitāb al-kaṣf*,” 128-130, examines an addition to the chapter on God and location (*jiha*) mentioning Ibn Tūmart. Ibn Taymiyya’s quotation of this passage in *Bayān*, 1:162, does not include this addition, which further confirms that he is quoting the first version of the Arabic text. He also does not include this addition when quoting the same passage in *Dar’* 6:216, which means that he quotes from both versions of *Kashf* within *Dar’*.

may be that he knew only the first version when writing *Bayān*, but it is also possible that he was by then already acquainted with both versions but chose not to use the latter because, as we will see below, its call for even the general public to affirm God's incorporeality did not serve his purposes.

As is evident from Geoffroy's remarks, knowledge of Ibn Taymiyya's interest in Ibn Rushd is not new to modern scholarship. When Ibn Rushd's *Kashf* and *Faṣl al-maqāl* were published together in Cairo in the early twentieth century, Ibn Taymiyya's comments in *Dar'* on the first two chapters of *Kashf* and a brief part of the third chapter were compiled and added as an appendix.²² Additionally, a number of studies, mostly in Arabic, have examined Ibn Taymiyya's relation to Ibn Rushd. This research shows that, despite shared interests in reconciling reason and revelation, Ibn Taymiyya is scathingly critical of Ibn Rushd for his division of humanity into the learned elite who can access the truth through logical demonstration (*burhān*) and the general public who are limited to the realm of rhetoric, and for positing revelation as a presentation of religion appropriate to the level of the general public but something different from the rational truth accessible to the elite. Despite this, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Rushd concur to a great extent on what the plain senses (*ẓāhir*) of the revealed texts mean. They agree that the texts do not deny corporeality of God, and thus they reject Ash'arī *kalām* proofs for God's incorporeality. They also agree that the revelation supports God's continuous creation of the world from eternity, and they therefore reject the emanation metaphysics of Ibn Sīnā and *kalām* proofs for the existence of God based on the temporal origination of the world. Yet, while Ibn Taymiyya makes use of Ibn Rushd's arguments to refute the *kalām* theologians and Ibn Sīnā, he insists that the plain sense of the revealed text is true for everyone, not just the general public. For Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Rushd at the level of the general public treats the revelation as tantamount to falsehood and at the level

²² Ibn Rushd, *Kitāb falsafat al-qādī al-fādīl Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rushd al-Andalusī al-mushtamil 'alā kitābayn jalīlayn, al-awwal* Faṣl al-maqāl fī-mā bayna al-sharī'a wa al-ḥikma min al-ittiṣāl wa Dhaylihi, wa al-thānī al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla fī 'aqā'id al-milla [*wa-yalīhimā*] al-Radd 'alā falsafat Ibn Rushd al-ḥafīd ta'līf Taqī al-Dīn ibn Taymiyya, 2d printing (Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-jammāliyya, 1328/1910); Ibn Taymiyya's quoted comments on the first chapter of *Kashf* dealing with God's existence are from *Dar'* 9:72-73, 78, 79-80, 80-81, 82-84, 89-90, 110-112, 113, 123-124, 126, 128-129, 131, 132-133, 324, 330-331; his comments on the second chapter dealing with God's unity are from *Dar'* 9:338, 348-349, 350-351, 354, 371-373, 382-383; and his brief comment on God's attribute of will in the third chapter is from *Dar'* 10:198-199. Ibn Taymiyya also comments on further parts of *Kashf* in *Dar'*, but these passages are not included in the appendix. Dominique Urvoys, *Averroès: Les ambitions d'un intellectuel musulman* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), 215 n 1, reports two other Cairene editions of *Faṣl al-maqāl* and *Kashf* including Ibn Taymiyya's texts as an appendix, the first printed by al-Maṭba'a al-sharqiyya dated 1321/1903, and the second an undated printing by Maḥmūd 'Alī Subayh. I was not able to inspect these editions, but they were apparently printed under the title *Falsafat Ibn Rushd*. The edition, *Falsafat Ibn Rushd* (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-maḥmūdiyya al-tijāriyya, 1388/1968), includes Ibn Taymiyya's passages from *Dar'* in the footnotes.

of the elite posits an incorporeal God stripped of attributes, especially His attributes of action, and so characterizes God as nothing more than an Aristotelian unmoved mover.²³

Research on Ibn Taymiyya's relation to Ibn Rushd to this point has been based on *Dar*' and discussions found in a number of other treatises, but no attention has been given to his interaction with Ibn Rushd in his early tome *Bayān*. This study will focus on Ibn Taymiyya's use of Ibn Rushd's *Kashf* in *Bayān* on the interconnected questions of God's relation to body (*jism*) and direction or location (*jihā*) and God's visibility in the hereafter.²⁴ This will show that Ibn Taymiyya's attitude toward Ibn Rushd in *Bayān* is much the same as that found by earlier research on his other works. However, this study will also begin asking more forthrightly than previous studies what it is about the philosopher that Ibn Taymiyya finds useful for his own purposes, particularly on the questions of God and corporeality that are here in view. Ibn Taymiyya's discussions of Ibn Rushd in *Bayān* fall within the first two volumes of the eight volume edition, and it here becomes apparent that quoting and commenting on Ibn Rushd is not simply a matter of critiquing the philosopher. Instead, Ibn Taymiyya puts Ibn Rushd to work marginalizing his opponent Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī from his self-proclaimed position as a mainstream rationalist theologian and refuting his arguments. There are in fact points in *Bayān* where Ibn Taymiyya simply lets Ibn Rushd do the hard work of making the rational argument for him, and this suggests that Ibn Taymiyya may have found

²³ See especially Anke von Kügelgen, "Dialogpartner im Widerspruch: Ibn Rushd und Ibn Taymīya über die „Einheit der Wahrheit“,“ in: *In Words, Texts and Concepts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea: Studies on the Sources, Contents and Influences of Islamic Civilization and Arabic Philosophy and Science Dedicated to Gerhard Endress on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. R. Arnzen and J. Thielmann (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 455-481, which examines Ibn Taymiyya's discussion of Ibn Rushd in *Dar*', focusing especially on his criticism of Ibn Rushd's elitism and the question of divine corporeality; and 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Ammārī, *Manāḥī naqd Ibn Taymiyya li-Ibn Rushd* (Beirut: Jadāwīl li-l-nashr wa-al-tawzī', 2013), which provides a systematic exposition of Ibn Taymiyya's views on Ibn Rushd from a wide range of sources apart from *Bayān*. Other studies include 'Abd al-Majīd al-Saghīr, "Mawāqif rushdiyya li-Taḳī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya? Mulāḥazāt awwaliyya", in: *Dirāsāt maghribiyya muhdāt ilā al-mufakkir al-maghribī Muḥammad 'Azīz al-Hbābī* 1st ed. (Rabat: 1985), 93-117; 2nd ed. (Rabat: Al-Markaz al-thaqāfī; al-'arabī, 1987), 164-182; al-Ṭablāwī Maḥmūd Sa'd, *Mawqif Ibn Taymiyya min falsafat Ibn Rushd: Fī al-'aqīda wa-'ilm al-kalām wa al-falsafa* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-amāna, 1409/1989); and 'Abd al-Raḥmān Talīlī, "Athar Ibn Rushd fī al-Mashriq al-'arabī: Tabī'at al-radd al-Taymī 'alā falsafat Ibn Rushd," *Al-Mishkāt* 3 (2005): 55-70 (I am grateful to Nadjet Zouggar for sending me this article). See also Yahya J. Michot, "A Mamlūk Theologian's Commentary on Avicenna's *Risāla Adḥawiyya*: Being a Translation of a Part of the *Dar' al-Ta'arūf* of Ibn Taymiyya, with Introduction, Annotation, and Appendices," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14.2 (2003): 149-203 (Part I) and 14.3 (2003): 309-363 (Part II), at pp. 168-172 of Part I, on Ibn Taymiyya's criticism of Ibn Rushd's esotericism; and Jon Hoover, "Perpetual Creativity in the Perfection of God: Ibn Taymiyya's Hadith Commentary on God's Creation of This World," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 15.3 (2004): 287-329 (290-291, 295), for comments on the similarity between Ibn Rushd and Ibn Taymiyya regarding continuous creation. Richard Taylor, "Averroes: God and the Noble Lie," in: *Laudemus Viros Gloriosos: Essays in Honor of Armand Maurer*, CSB (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 38-59, sorts through various western understandings of Ibn Rushd and then provides an analysis of his view of revealed religion as a "noble lie" that parallels Ibn Taymiyya's reading of the Andalusian philosopher as distinguishing demonstrative truth for the elite from rhetoric for the general public.

²⁴ Ibn Taymiyya in *Bayān* also quotes from *Kashf* and *Faṣl al-maqāl* when discussing proofs for God's existence, God's creation of the world, and the interpretation of God's attributes, but these discussions will be left aside in the interest of keeping the study to a manageable size.

difficulty defending his views rationally on his own and that he is perhaps learning from Ibn Rushd how to substantiate the argument.

Invoking Ibn Rushd to subvert al-Rāzī's claim to the rational mainstream

As noted above, Ibn Taymiyya's *Bayān* is a refutation of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's work *Ta'sīs al-taqdīs*, which constitutes in turn al-Rāzī's refutation of theological anthropomorphism. In *Ta'sīs* al-Rāzī argues at length that God is not perceptible to the human senses, that God is independent of space and location, and that God is neither in the world nor distinct from the world in any particular direction. Thus, revealed texts suggesting that God has a body or is located above the heavens may not be interpreted according to their plain senses. Their meanings must be either reinterpreted to mean something else (*ta'wīl*) or delegated to God and given no further investigation (*tafwīd*).²⁵

To Ibn Taymiyya, a God imperceptible to the senses that exists neither inside nor outside the world does not exist at all. He retorts in *Bayān* that God is in fact perceptible to human senses such as sight and hearing.²⁶ He refutes al-Rāzī's arguments against qualifying God with body, space, and location, and he defends the plain senses of texts indicating God's aboveness (*fawqīyya*) and overness (*'ulūw*) and God's sitting on the Throne (*al-istiwā'* *'alā al-'arsh*). He explains further that God's sitting on the Throne is a report-based attribute (*ṣifa khabariyya*), which is known only by revealed tradition, whereas God's being above the world is also known by reason and the human natural constitution (*fiṭra*).²⁷ Through extensive rational argumentation, Ibn Taymiyya carves out conceptual space for the corporeality of God, but he does not explicitly affirm that God has a body. However, he does not deny it either, and he asserts that neither affirming nor denying was the view of the early Muslims (*salaf*).²⁸ Lest he be accused of crass anthropomorphism, Ibn Taymiyya also stresses God's uniqueness: while the plain senses of the revealed texts are known, there is no similarity between God and creatures, and the modality (*kayfiyya*) of God's attributes is not known. This draws Ibn Taymiyya into a theological double perspective. On the one hand, there is no likeness between God and creatures, but, on the other, God is described with names and attributes that carry meanings in human language that are known and must be explained in a way that is fitting and worthy of God.²⁹ Ibn Taymiyya's arguments discussed in the rest of

²⁵ Al-Rāzī, *Ta'sīs*, 46 (al-Rāzī's opening propositions), 227-228 (rule of *ta'wīl*).

²⁶ See for example Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 2:353-355

²⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:54, 94, 2:454.

²⁸ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:289-290; 8:536-546

²⁹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 2:347-350.

this study operate within this latter perspective of the linguistic meanings of terms applied to God. The former perspective of God's unlikeness lies in the background.

Ibn Taymiyya brings Ibn Rushd into play first in *Bayān* to undermine and marginalize al-Rāzī's pretension to speak for the rational mainstream of Islamic theology. Al-Rāzī positions himself as an advocate of prevailing rationality with two claims. Al-Rāzī's first claim, which appears at the very beginning of *Ta'sīs*, is that "the great majority of rational and respectable people" are agreed that God is not spatially extended (*mutaḥayyiz*), that God is not subject to location (*jiha*), and that God neither dwells in the world nor is distinct from it. Al-Rāzī's "great majority" includes the philosophers who "have agreed on affirming existents that are not spatially extended and do not dwell in something spatially extended, like intellects, souls, and matter."³⁰ The second thing that al-Rāzī claims is that his opponents are the Karrāmīs and the Ḥanbalīs. He argues that they must, contrary to their own doctrine, acknowledge an existent that is not accessible to the senses. Otherwise, God would be divisible and made up of parts.³¹

Ibn Taymiyya uses Ibn Rushd to confound both of al-Rāzī's claims. As for the first, Ibn Taymiyya opposes al-Rāzī's claim to majority belief by citing respected scholarly authorities who affirm that God is located in the direction "above." These include Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795), the student of Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) Abū Muḥī' al-Balkhī (d. 199/814), Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), the Ḥanbalī scholars Abū Ya'lā al-Farrā' (d. 458/1066) and Ibn Qudāma (d. 620/1223), and early *kalām* theologians such as Ibn Kullāb (d. ca. 240/855) and al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935).³² Along the way, Ibn Taymiyya observes, "The best of the philosophers (*falāsifa*), like Abū Walīd ibn Rushd, report that the doctrine of the philosophers (*ḥukamā'*) is affirming [God's] overness above created things (*ithbāt al-'ulūw fawq al-makhlūqāt*)."³³ A little later, Ibn Taymiyya introduces Ibn Rushd more fully as a commentator on Aristotle and the author of the *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* refuting al-Ghazālī. He criticizes Ibn Rushd for alleging that the elite have superior knowledge through demonstration that is not accessible to the general public. Yet, he is pleased to report that Ibn Rushd "transmitted affirmation of location [for God] from the philosophers and firmly established that by means

³⁰ Al-Rāzī, *Ta'sīs*, 47; Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:59; Ibn Taymiyya also notes al-Rāzī's claim briefly in *Dar'*, 6:246.

³¹ Al-Rāzī, *Ta'sīs*, 50; Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:230-231. Ibn Taymiyya also alludes to al-Rāzī's claim briefly in *Dar'*, 6:245: "...whoever says that the dispute about [God's overness (*'uluw*)] is only with the Karrāmīs and the Ḥanbalīs..."

³² Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:61-217.

³³ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:148-149.

of their rational methods, which they call demonstrations.”³⁴ Ibn Taymiyya then proceeds to quote the entire section on God and location (*jiha*) from Ibn Rushd’s *Kashf*.³⁵

In this section on *jiha*, Ibn Rushd first reports that the early Muslims affirmed location of God up until the time when the Mu‘tazilīs and later Ash‘arīs such as al-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085) and his followers negated it. He then establishes the textual foundation of the doctrine and asserts its universality. He writes, “The plain senses of the whole revelation (*ẓawāhir al-shar‘ kulluhā*) require affirming location,” and he supports this with Qur’ānic proof texts such as, “The All-Merciful sat on the Throne” (Q. 20:5), “Eight [angels] will carry the Throne of your Lord above them on that day” (Q. 69:17), and, “The angels and the Spirit will ascend to Him” (Q. 70:4).³⁶ Ibn Rushd states as well that religious prescriptions are based on God being in heaven because it is from heaven that the revelation descended. Moreover, Ibn Rushd asserts, “All of the philosophers (*ḥukamā’*) are agreed that God and the angels are in heaven just as all the revelations are agreed on that.”³⁷

Ibn Rushd then addresses the Mu‘tazilī and later Ash‘arī charge that affirming location of God necessarily implies that God is in a place (*makān*) and thus has a body (*jism*). Ibn Rushd denies this, and to circumvent it, he elaborates an Aristotelian cosmology that breaks the implication between location and place. He explains that the six directions or locations indicated by the outer surfaces of a body do not constitute its place. Only the surface of another body surrounding that body constitutes its place, like the air surrounding a human being is the human being’s place, or like the celestial sphere surrounding the air is the place of the air. Then, when it comes to the outermost sphere of the universe, it has no place because there is no body beyond it that encompasses it. There can be no further body or bodies beyond the outermost sphere because that would entail a sequence of bodies without end. The outer surface of the outermost sphere is not a place at all because it cannot contain another body. Moreover, Ibn Rushd in his Aristotelianism denies the possibility of void space and thereby rules out the existence of a void beyond the outermost sphere. Beyond the outermost sphere, there are no dimensions.

Ibn Rushd then explains that the ancients spoke of the outermost sphere as the abode of spirits, that is, the realm of God and the angels, which is outside time and place.³⁸ Ibn

³⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:156.

³⁵ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:158-166; Ibn Rushd, *Kashf*, 145-149; Averroes, *Faith and Reason*, 62-67.

³⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:158-159; Ibn Rushd, *Kashf*, 145; Averroes, *Faith and Reason*, 62-63 (my translations of passages from Ibn Rushd, *Kashf*, do not follow those of Averroes, *Faith and Reason*).

³⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:159; Ibn Rushd, *Kashf*, 145; Averroes, *Faith and Reason*, 63.

³⁸ For further analysis of Ibn Rushd’s argument on location and its thoroughly Aristotelian character, see Barbara Canova, “Aristote et le Coran dans le *Kitāb al-kašf ‘an manāhiġ al-adilla* d’Averroès,” in *Averroes et la averroïsmes juif et latin: Actes du colloque international (Paris, 16-18 juin 2005)*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Brenet

Rushd concludes, “Establishing location is necessary according to revelation and reason,”³⁹ which is to say that both revelation and reason affirm that God is above the world but is not in a place and is not corporeal. However, Ibn Rushd clarifies, it is difficult to affirm location and deny corporeality together because this has no parallel in the visible world. It is for this reason that revelation does not deny body of God explicitly. The truth of the matter is known only to the elite, the philosophers, while the general public are either forbidden from seeking knowledge about it or they are given some kind of representation of it from the visible world. Ibn Rushd wraps up his section on location in *Kashf* with a discussion of the elite, the general public, and those in between who are subject to doubts, a disparaging reference to *kalām* theologians.⁴⁰

After quoting Ibn Rushd’s text, Ibn Taymiyya offers no comment on its Aristotelian character nor any of its other substantive aspects. His purpose is simply to show that philosophers affirm that God is in the location above, contrary to what al-Rāzī claims, and he continues on citing other scholarly authorities to show that al-Rāzī’s theological views are marginal. He expresses no embarrassment whatsoever that Ibn Rushd is his one and only example of a philosopher supporting his views against al-Rāzī. Somewhat later in *Bayān*, Ibn Taymiyya invokes the section on location in *Kashf* again and quotes parts of it to remake the point against al-Rāzī that the philosophers uphold location.⁴¹ Ibn Taymiyya is again spare with his comments, but he does highlight Aristotle as Ibn Rushd’s unmentioned source for his concept of place: “According to Aristotle, place (*makān*) is the inner surface of the body encompassing and in contact with the outer surface of the body encompassed.”⁴²

Even though Ibn Taymiyya has little to say about Ibn Rushd’s Aristotelian notions of place and space at this early point in *Bayān*, he does use them later in the work to build a rational argument against al-Rāzī. Al-Rāzī in *Ta’sīs* conceives of space as self-subsisting.

(Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007), 193-213 (196-208). For clarification of Ibn Rushd’s thought on the void, see Miklós Maróth, “Averroes on the Void,” in *La lumière de l’intellect: La pensée scientifique et philosophique d’Averroès dans son temps*, ed. Ahmad Hasnawi (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 11-22.

³⁹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:162; Ibn Rushd, *Kashf*, 147; Averroes, *Faith and Reason*, 64.

⁴⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:159-166; Ibn Rushd, *Kashf*, 145-149; Averroes, *Faith and Reason*, 63-67.

⁴¹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:403-406.

⁴² Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:405. Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar’* 6:5-7:140, discusses God and location at length including critiques of texts by Ibn Sīnā and al-Rāzī. Within this discussion, Ibn Taymiyya, *Dar’*, 6:212-237, quotes Ibn Rushd, *Kashf*, 145-159 (Averroes, *Faith and Reason*, 62-77) on location, textual interpretation, and the vision of God, to again make the point that the philosophers, apart from Ibn Sīnā and his followers, affirm that God is above the universe. Ibn Taymiyya’s accompanying discussion here (*Dar’* 6:210-212, 237-249) is much fuller and more lucid than that of *Bayān*, and he again highlights Aristotle as the source of Ibn Rushd’s notion of place, but he does not add anything substantially new. Also, Ibn Taymiyya is here quoting from the first Arabic version of *Kashf* identified by Geoffroy and not the second that he quotes later in *Dar’* when discussing God and body. As shown in Di Donato, “*Le Kitāb al-kašf*,” 128-130, Ibn Rushd’s discussion of location in the second version includes an addition expressing deference to Ibn Tūmart’s denial of location even if not complete acceptance. This is of no use to Ibn Taymiyya’s argument, and, assuming that he had read this part of the second version of *Kashf*, it is understandable that he preferred to ignore it and keep to the wording of the first version.

Space exists on its own apart from the objects within it. Al-Rāzī then argues that a spatially extended and located God would be in need of the space and location that He occupies within that wider expanse of self-subsisting space.⁴³ Ibn Taymiyya is diffident about speaking of God using the non-scriptural term spatial extension (*tahayyuz*), but he provides a counter argument anyway to preclude al-Rāzī's alleged errors. He denies the existence of any free-standing space that God might be thought to occupy. Space does not exist apart from spatially extended objects. Rather, the space that a spatially extended God might be said to occupy derives from God himself. It does not exist apart from God, and God in no way depends upon it for His existence.⁴⁴ For Ibn Taymiyya then, in this argument against al-Rāzī at least, God is tantamount to a vast spatial extension encompassing the world. Put another way, it could perhaps be said that Ibn Taymiyya builds on Ibn Rushd's Aristotelian cosmology by adding another sphere above the outermost sphere, with this additional sphere being God.

Al-Rāzī's second claim about his position within the world of Islamic theology is that the Ḥanbalīs and the Karrāmīs are his opponents, and he assumes that their view that God is accessible to the senses leads to affirming composition and corporeality in God. Ibn Taymiyya denies that this is so. He allows that al-Rāzī's polemic might apply to some Ḥanbalīs in Khurasān, but he says that it does not apply to the best of the Ḥanbalīs, nor to all Karrāmīs. Rather, Ibn Taymiyya argues, it is al-Rāzī who is opposed by all the prophets, the first three generations of the *salaf*, all the great leaders of the Muslim community, *kalām* theologians like al-Ash'arī and al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), and even by "the intelligent among the philosophers" (*ḥudhdhāq al-falāsifa*). Again, his only example of a philosopher is Ibn Rushd.⁴⁵ When introducing Ibn Rushd here, Ibn Taymiyya mentions his *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, *Faṣl al-maqāl* (called *Taqrīr al-maqāl*), and *Kashf* (identified as *Manāhij al-adilla*), and he turns especially to *Kashf* where Ibn Rushd maintains that it is incorrect to deny God's corporeality at the exoteric level (*fī al-zāhir*) of the general public even if the learned elite deny it at the esoteric level (*fī al-bāṭin*). Ibn Taymiyya characterizes *Kashf* as follows:

This book includes elucidation of the creed (*i'tiqād*) that the revelation (*sharī'a*) set forth and the obligation to present it to the general public just as the revelation set it forth, and elucidation of the part of that [creed] which has been furnished with demonstrative proof (*burhān*) for the learned, similar to what is supported by what compels assent for the general public. In it he mentioned what, according to

⁴³ Al-Rāzī, *Ta'sīs*, 86-89.

⁴⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 3:590-675.

⁴⁵ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:231-235 (235).

his method, must not be stated openly to the general public, and in it he mentioned what is necessary among the things that have been furnished with demonstrative proof according to the method of those who employ it. Also, he mentioned that it is not appropriate at the level of revelation to say that God is a body or is not a body, even though he does say that God is not a body at the esoteric level. Despite this, he affirms location esoterically and exoterically, and he mentions that this is the view of the philosophers.⁴⁶

Immediately after this introduction, Ibn Taymiyya quotes Ibn Rushd's entire discussion of God and body (*jism*) from *Kashf* to undermine al-Rāzī's unrelenting incorporealism. The quotation is from the first version of *Kashf* and not the later version in which Ibn Rushd makes concessions to Ibn Tūmart.⁴⁷ The essentials of Ibn Rushd's argument are as follows. Revelation is silent on whether God is corporeal. The revelation does mention God's face and hands, but it does not explicitly affirm that God has a body. However, the revelation also does not deny body of God, and the general public, following revelation, should not deny body of God either. This, according to Ibn Rushd, is for three reasons. First, the *kalām* proofs for God's incorporeality are not demonstrative, and the fact that *kalām* theologians describe God as an essence with attributes added to that essence actually entails corporeality in God. Second, the general public cannot imagine something that is beyond sense perception. So, denying that God has a body would lead them to conclude that God does not exist at all. Third, explicitly denying corporeality of God could sow doubts among the general public about what the revelation reports concerning the hereafter and the vision of God. This is to be avoided so as not to undermine religious adherence. Ibn Rushd then compares the revelation's silence on God's corporeality to its reserve in speaking about the soul (*nafs*). Revelation does not define the soul because of "the difficulty in furnishing a demonstrative proof for the general public for the existence of a self-subsisting existent that is not a body."⁴⁸ Ibn Rushd then raises the question of how the general public should think of God if body is to be neither affirmed nor denied of Him. He responds that they should think of God as light since the Qur'ān says, "God is the light of the heavens and the earth" (Q. 24:35). Light can also be

⁴⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:235-236.

⁴⁷ As noted above, Ibn Taymiyya does quote the later version of Ibn Rushd's *Kashf* discussion of God and body, which includes additions speaking of Ibn Tūmart, into *Dar'*, 10:248-300 (quotations interspersed with Ibn Taymiyya's commentary and refutation). In *Dar'* Ibn Taymiyya's concern in discussing this text is to criticize Ibn Rushd and Ibn Tūmart's views directly, and not to use the text to undermine the likes of al-Rāzī. The later version of *Kashf* thus serves Ibn Taymiyya's purposes in *Dar'* better than the first version which is closer to his own views.

⁴⁸ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:241; Ibn Rushd, *Kashf*, 141; Averroes, *Faith and Reason*, 60.

perceived by the senses, which is important to the general public. Yet, light has no body, which means that people of demonstration should also think of God as light.⁴⁹

After completing the quote from Ibn Rushd's discussion of God and body, Ibn Taymiyya comments,

It becomes plain in this passage that [Ibn Rushd] on the esoteric level takes the view of the philosophers, which is that the soul is not a body, and the Creator is likewise [not a body]. However, he does not allow the general public to be told about this because it is, to their minds, impossible. Thus, he gave them the best and nearest of similitudes by mentioning the term "light." This is the view of the leaders of the philosophers in matters similar to it like belief in God and the Last Day. He made plain by clear arguments that the denial mentioned by the *kalām* theologians opposes revelation, and he is correct about that at both the esoteric and exoteric levels. He made plain that the *kalām* theologians' denial of body of God is based on weak arguments, and he made the corruption [of those arguments] plain. He mentioned that [God's incorporeality] is known only if it is known that the soul is not a body. Now, it is known that what he and his philosopher colleagues point to [here] is weaker than that for which he faults the *kalām* theologians. In fact, the *kalām* theologians have shown that [the philosophers'] arguments are corrupt. [The *kalām* arguments] are better than [the arguments] that the [philosophers] use to show that the arguments of the *kalām* theologians are corrupt. Analysis of both groups shows that the arguments of both groups for negating body [of God] are invalid. It is apparent that the philosophers' claim that the soul is not a body and that it is qualified with neither motion nor rest and neither entering nor exiting and that it only senses by means of the imagination (*taṣawwur*) is invalid. It is likewise with their view of the angels. The invalidity of the view of these [philosophers] is more apparent than the invalidity of the view of the *kalām* theologians in matters like this regarding the Lord.⁵⁰

Ibn Taymiyya rejects Ibn Rushd's arguments for the incorporeality of God on the esoteric level as even weaker than the arguments of the *kalām* theologians. He is happy to let the

⁴⁹ Ibn Rushd, *Kashf*, 138-145; Averroes, *Faith and Reason*, 56-62.

⁵⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:247-248. Following this commentary, Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 1:248-249, quotes the first portion of Ibn Rushd's discussion of God and location (*Kashf*, 145; Averroes, *Faith and Reason*, 62-63) that immediately follows the section on God and body in *Kashf*.

kalām theologians and the philosophers demolish each other's arguments because it leaves standing his own view—and the view of Ibn Rushd on the exoteric level—that corporeality is neither affirmed nor denied of God. Ibn Taymiyya does not build a rational case of his own for this view. Instead, he allows Ibn Rushd to speak unimpeded, and he leans on the philosopher to make the rational case for the general public's approach to revelation. That aside, Ibn Taymiyya's stated purpose for quoting these passages on body and location from Ibn Rushd's *Kashf* is no more than to refute al-Rāzī's claims that the philosophers agree with him and that his only opponents are Ḥanbalīs and Karrāmīs. Ibn Taymiyya insists that Ibn Rushd represents the philosophical mainstream and that al-Rāzī faces stiff opposition not only from Ḥanbalīs and Karrāmīs but from the philosophers as well. Ibn Taymiyya's contention is of course disingenuous. Al-Rāzī was not aware of Ibn Rushd so far as we know. The two scholars were twelfth-century contemporaries living at opposite ends of the Islamic world—al-Rāzī in the east and Ibn Rushd in the west.

Despite his audacity and ingenuity in invoking Ibn Rushd to supplant Ibn Sīnā and marginalize al-Rāzī, Ibn Taymiyya does not regard the Andalusian philosopher an unequivocal ally, particularly on the question of God and location. A bit later in *Bayān*, Ibn Taymiyya quotes a passage from *Faṣl al-maqāl* in which Ibn Rushd distinguishes between two categories of plain senses in the revelation with regard to the question of reinterpretation (*ta'wīl*). One category of plain sense may not be reinterpreted by anyone, whereas the second category must be reinterpreted by the elite, the people of demonstration, lest they become unbelievers. Under this latter category fall revealed texts affirming God's sitting and descending. Those capable of demonstration must reinterpret these texts, but those incapable of demonstration may imagine them in their corporeal senses.⁵¹ Ibn Taymiyya takes this to be a straight contradiction with what Ibn Rushd affirms in *Kashf*. In *Kashf*, the plain sense of revealed texts indicating location do not need to be reinterpreted, neither by the general public nor by the elite, since in Ibn Rushd's Aristotelian universe God and the angels are located in the outer sphere, the abode of spiritual entities.⁵²

Calling on Ibn Rushd to argue for the vision of God

Ibn Taymiyya's last use of Ibn Rushd in *Bayān* occurs about one-quarter way into the work. This is a clear instance of Ibn Taymiyya calling on Ibn Rushd to provide the rational argument, in this case against Ash'arī efforts to affirm the vision of God in the hereafter. Ibn Taymiyya's discussion falls within a long refutation of al-Rāzī's assertion that God is neither

⁵¹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 2:90-93; Averroës, *Decisive Treatise*, 19-20.

⁵² Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 2:93-94.

inside the world nor outside it.⁵³ Ibn Taymiyya argues that God must be an existent accessible to the senses because God would otherwise be nothing at all. He asserts, “The People of the Sunna and the Community (*ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā‘a*) confess that God—Exalted is He—is seen, and they are agreed that what cannot be known by any of the senses is nothing but a non-existent, not an existent.”⁵⁴ Thus, Ibn Taymiyya explains, al-Rāzī’s understanding of God who is inaccessible to the senses is tantamount to a non-existent even though al-Rāzī affirms that God is a self-subsisting reality with properties distinguishing Him from other realities.⁵⁵

Turning to the vision of God in the hereafter, Ibn Taymiyya notes that the Mu‘tazilīs and the philosophers deny the vision because it would require God to be a spatially extended body and would situate Him in a particular direction or location (*jiha*) relative to the person who sees Him. Ibn Taymiyya himself affirms that God will indeed be seen in the hereafter and that God will be situated in a location relative to those seeing Him.⁵⁶ He notes, however, that some Ash‘arīs and the Ḥanbalī theologian Abū Ya‘lā affirm that God will be seen without location. Moreover, he claims that some later Ash‘arīs like al-Ghazālī and al-Rāzī come close to the Mu‘tazilīs by interpreting the vision as an increase in knowledge.⁵⁷ Others say that God will be seen but “not above the one seeing [Him], neither to his right nor his left, and not in any of his [other] directions.”⁵⁸ Ibn Taymiyya condemns these views as denials of the vision, and he claims that such a denials are opposed by revelation, reason, and the human natural constitution (*fiṭra*). He then quotes the full discussion of the vision of God from *Kashf* in order to let Ibn Rushd do the difficult work of demolishing the Ash‘arī arguments that an incorporeal God may be seen.⁵⁹

Ibn Rushd first observes that the Mu‘tazilīs deny both corporeality and location of God, and thus the vision of God as well, since everything seen is situated in a location relative to the one who sees it. Ibn Rushd then notes that Ash‘arīs have difficulty combining God’s incorporeality with the possibility of seeing something that has no body. Thus, Ibn Rushd

⁵³ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 2:325-455. For an overview of the vision in the early Islamic tradition, see Claude Gilliot, “La vision de Dieu dans l’au-delà: Exégèse, tradition et théologie en islam,” in: *Pensée grecque et sagesse d’orient hommage à Michel Tardieu*, ed. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, et al. (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2009), 237-269.

⁵⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 2:341.

⁵⁵ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 2:363-365.

⁵⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 2:392-433.

⁵⁷ For a discussion of al-Rāzī’s arguments on the vision of God, see Yasin Ceylan, *Theology and Tafsīr in the Major Works of Fakhr Al-Dīn Al-Rāzī* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1996), 146-154. For the views of al-Ash‘arī and other early *kalām* theologians, see Daniel Gimaret, *La doctrine d’al-Ash‘arī* (Paris: Cerf, 1990), 329-344.

⁵⁸ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 2:433-435 (435).

⁵⁹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 2:436-450; Ibn Rushd, *Kashf*, 185-191; Averroes, *Faith and Reason*, 71-77.

claims, they resort to sophistic arguments. These are of two kinds: those directed against the Mu'tazilīs and those designed to prove the possibility of the Ash'arī view.

Concerning the first kind, Ibn Rushd explains that the Ash'arīs oppose the Mu'tazilīs by arguing that not every object seen needs to be situated in a location relative to the one seeing it because that principle applies only in the visible world, not the invisible. No location is required if the human sees without eyes. Ibn Rushd rejects this as confusing the intellect, which perceives things not situated in a location or place, with the power of sight. Sight depends on the object seen being located in a specific place, and it requires light, a transparent intermediary body, and color in the object seen. For Ibn Rushd, only objects that are colored can be seen.

The second kind of argument made by the Ash'arīs seeks to prove the possibility of seeing a God who has no body. Within this kind, Ibn Rushd reports two arguments. The first proceeds as follows. Something may be seen by virtue of its being either colored, or corporeal, or a color, or an existent. Now difficulties follow from saying that something is seen by virtue of its being colored, corporeal, or simply a color. Thus, the Ash'arīs argue, a thing is most certainly seen by virtue of its being an existent. Ibn Rushd rejects the possibility of seeing something without color, and he adds that, if something could be seen merely by virtue of being an existent, then sounds could be seen as well. Other such absurdities would also result. The second argument is attributed by Ibn Rushd to the Ash'arī theologian al-Juwaynī. According to this argument, the senses perceive things in themselves and not by virtue of the states that distinguish one thing from another because those states are not things existing in themselves. Ibn Rushd rejects this as invalid because sight would not be able to distinguish things on the basis of color if things could not be distinguished by their states.

According to Ibn Rushd, the cause of the Ash'arī difficulties on the vision of God is their open denial of divine corporeality among the general public in direct contravention of revelation. The revelation did not permit denying body of God. This is because the general public has difficulty believing that one can see something incorporeal. The minds of the general public are confined to what they can imagine, and the revelation would have stated clearly that God had no body if it had intended to do so. Instead, as Ibn Rushd noted earlier in his discussion of God and body, the revelation likens God to light, the most highly exalted of existents accessible to the senses and the imagination, and then it indicates as well that people will see God in the hereafter as they see the sun, all of which does not subject the general public to doubt. Such images are also fitting for the learned elite who know by demonstration that the vision is in reality an increase in knowledge. From this, Ibn Rushd concludes that the

vision should be taken in its plain sense and without openly denying or affirming that God has a body.

After quoting the entirety of Ibn Rushd's section on the vision in *Kashf*, Ibn Taymiyya provides a vigorous response, which is translated here in full.

It is known that this man [Ibn Rushd] adopts the view of the philosophers and [the view] that most of the things that the messengers reported concerning belief in God and the Last Day are similitudes (*amthāl*) propounded [for the general public]. This is the most corrupt of views, and it is the view of the clever among the irreligious hypocrites. They might know that it is hypocrisy (*nifāq*) and irreligion (*zandaqa*), but they still consider it to be the perfection of truth and knowledge just as these philosophers consider it to be that. This is not the place to elucidate this. The point is simply that even though he adopts the view of the philosophers and the Mu'tazilīs concerning the vision [of God] at the esoteric level—that it is an increase in knowledge, as a group of the later Ash'arīs similarly think—he indeed knows that it is not possible [that the Ash'arīs] affirm the vision that the lawgiver reported while denying that they say He is a body, and that, on the contrary, affirming it necessarily entails that they say that He is a body and a location. It has become plain that combining these two things opposes what is perceived by reason and the senses. This is what he has made plain by proof, and it is accepted from him.

As for his claim that [the vision] at the esoteric level is an increase in knowledge, he did not mention any argument as proof for it, and it has become plain from the preceding that he has no argument for the principle behind that, which is the denial that He is a body, except to affirm that the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqā*) is not a body. He made plain the corruption of the *kalām* theologians' arguments that God is not a body with clear arguments. Now, it is known that the principle upon which he built [his own] denial, that is, the matter of the soul, is weaker by far and that the great majority of rational people laugh at what these [philosophers] say about the soul in regard to the negative attributes [e.g. incorporeality] more than they laugh at those who affirm seeing something that does not—in their terminology—have a body and is not [situated] in a location. We have made this plain elsewhere.

As for his allegation and the allegation of others among the Jahmīs, the Mu‘tazilīs, and those who are like them that the vision that the Messenger reported is an increase in knowledge, anyone who pays attention to the texts knows necessarily that the Messenger reported the vision of something that will be seen. Moreover, clear rational proofs permit this vision, even though the methods that he mentions are not to be used to show that. Those weak methods are weak because those who use them only establish the vision of something that is neither in a location, nor spatially extended (*mutaḥayyiz*), nor dwelling in something spatially extended. On account of this, they argue for divesting the vision of the preconditions required for it to take place because they believe that those preconditions are impossible with regard to God.

If it is said that it is correct that everything subsisting in itself is seen, as commonly understood, and if it is made a precondition that what is seen be [situated] in a location relative to the one who sees and that it be spatially extended and subsisting in something spatially extended, then it is not possible for rational people to dispute the possibility of proofs for the possibility of that vision. Those who deny it only deny it because they think that God—Exalted is He—is not above the world and that He—in their terminology—is not a body, not spatially extended, not dwelling in something spatially extended, and such like among the negative attributes that they have innovated, not to mention their opposition to authentic tradition and clear reason.

The point here is that those disputing the author [al-Rāzī] say to him: We affirm that the vision of the Lord is possible by the Book, the Sunna, and consensus, and by clear rational proofs. We affirm by necessity and by rational inquiry that only that which—in their terminology—is in a location, is spatially extended, or dwells in something spatially extended is seen. If it is established that only that which is spatially extended or dwells in something spatially extended is seen, and that what makes this possible is existence and its perfection, it has been established that there are no existents that are not spatially extended or not dwelling in something spatially extended. On the contrary, it has been established that it is impossible for that to exist. This preserves this attribute [of visibility] for the soul, for the angels, and for the Lord—Glory be to Him, Exalted is He.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 2:450-453.

In this discussion of Ibn Rushd's comments on the vision of God in *Kashf*, Ibn Taymiyya first criticizes Ibn Rushd for his esotericism but then gratefully accepts the philosopher's rational arguments against the Ash'arīs: it is indeed not possible to affirm the vision of God and deny corporeality of God simultaneously. Ibn Taymiyya goes on to reject Ibn Rushd's interpretation of the vision as an increase in knowledge, and he explains that Ibn Rushd's foundation for this is his argument earlier in *Kashf* for the incorporeality of God from the alleged incorporeality of the soul. Ibn Taymiyya dismisses this argument as obviously weaker than the arguments of even the Ash'arīs. With the field now cleared for his own view, Ibn Taymiyya explains that the vision of God is reported from the Messenger and that it is rationally possible and rationally defensible. Moreover, if one must speak in terms of *kalām* theology, the only existents that actually exist and can be seen are those that involve spatial extension. The implication, which Ibn Taymiyya does not quite draw out explicitly, is that God himself is spatially extended. Otherwise, God could not be seen in the hereafter. The work that Ibn Rushd performs for Ibn Taymiyya on the vision of God is rational refutation of the Ash'arī position. This paves the way for Ibn Taymiyya to affirm that believers will see God in the hereafter in a particular location. This is the position that Ibn Rushd himself prescribes for the general public.

Conclusion

To conclude, we return to the question with which we began: why was Ibn Rushd of interest to Ibn Taymiyya specifically? It is not just that Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Rushd often agree on what the plain senses of the theological content of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth mean. It is also that Ibn Rushd in *Kashf* supports his interpretations with sophisticated rationalizations and provides rational arguments against opponents. Ibn Taymiyya recognizes this, turns it to his purposes, and perhaps even learns from it as he works out his own theology. Ibn Taymiyya has no sympathy for Ibn Rushd's esotericism and explicit incorporealism at the level of the learned elite, but, as we have seen in this study of *Bayān*, he does welcome the philosopher's Aristotelian rationalization of God's location above the world, his defense of revelation's silence on whether God has a body at the level of the general public, and his refutation of Ash'arī arguments for the possibility of seeing an incorporeal God. Ibn Rushd provides Ibn Taymiyya rational resources to resist and marginalize al-Rāzī's incorporealism and to affirm that God is indeed located above the heavens without resort to incorporealist reinterpretation. It was the incorporealism of the likes of al-Rāzī that predominated in the later Ash'arī tradition, as well as in the Sunnī and Shī'ī

theological traditions more broadly. At this stage of our knowledge, it appears that Ibn Taymiyya was the foremost and perhaps only medieval advocate of Ibn Rushd's ideas, or at least some of them, in the eastern lands of Islam. Ibn Taymiyya was no Averroist philosopher, but he did put Ibn Rushd to use for his own traditionalist ends.

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