

Some Reflections on *The Incoherence of The Philosophers* by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī

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Submitted: 2024.09.25 | Accepted: 2024.11.24

Abstract

This article, an expanded version of the introduction to the authors' critical edition of the Arabic text of *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*) and its Turkish translation, re-examines Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's (d. 1111) seminal work, moving beyond its function as a mere critique of philosophical thought. By situating the text within the broader context of intellectual encounters between "native" Islamic traditions and "foreign" philosophical ideas, this study highlights the multifaceted nature of Ghazālī's intellectual inquiry. Focusing on Ghazālī's critique of al-Fārābī (d. 950) and Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), the article analyzes his complex dialectical strategies, revealing both the strengths and inconsistencies within his arguments. While he forcefully condemns those embracing Greek philosophy as abandoning authentic Islamic beliefs, Ghazālī's reliance on philosophical tools and terminology reveals a deep familiarity with the very system he seeks to dismantle. The article further explores the enduring impact of *The Incoherence* on Islamic intellectual history. By examining the diverse responses to Ghazālī's critique, as seen in the works of Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210), and Suhrawardī (1191), this study demonstrates how *The Incoherence* served as a catalyst for philosophical reflection, methodological refinement, and the development of new intellectual frameworks within Islamic thought. Ghazālī's legacy, therefore, lies not only in his critique of philosophy but also in his profound influence on its subsequent trajectory.

Keywords: Islamic philosophy, theology, reason, revelation, intellectual history

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1. Introduction

Every intellectual tradition grapples with a constant tension: upholding inherited beliefs and embracing potentially transformative "foreign" ideas arriving from distant lands and cultures. Does true intellectual integrity demand unwavering fidelity to the familiar, or does it reside in those who challenge long-held "truths" and embrace the allure of the new?

The reality is likely more complex than either extreme suggests. History demonstrates that uncritical loyalty and a slavish devotion to novelty, regardless of an idea's merit, can serve pre-existing agendas of power and control. Yet, seeking intellectual honesty compels us to ask: how can those pursuing knowledge meaningfully and with integrity grapple with this ongoing encounter between the native and the foreign? While this question is fundamental for everyone, those entrusted with shaping minds—"intellectuals"—bear a unique responsibility at this crossroads.

2. Grappling with Native and Foreign: A Question of Intellectual Integrity

Who are the true intellectuals, those who truly grasp what matters? Is it those who blindly embrace and defend everything "native" while rejecting and condemning anything "foreign"? Does clinging to the familiar mark an enlightened mind? Or, in a complete reversal, should we only consider those who spurn native values as truly enlightened, those who see everything foreign as dazzling and worthy of admiration? Is a disdain for the familiar, coupled with an adoration of the exotic, a prerequisite for a true intellectual?

Looking at this from a human perspective, we are naturally drawn to both the familiar and the foreign. We cherish things simply because they belong to us, to our identity. Yet, we are also attracted to novelty, to the allure of the unknown. What is intriguing is that we also harbor a natural distrust, sometimes even hostility, towards the unfamiliar. Sometimes, what is ours becomes synonymous with banality and mediocrity. Both of these tendencies can be easily exploited and manipulated, and they often have been.

Throughout history, the "foreign" has been associated with exploitation and colonialism in all its forms—intellectual, economic, cultural, and military. On the other hand, the "native" has often been portrayed as synonymous with intellectual and political freedom, a banner for "national identity." But there is another side to this story: the roles of the foreign and the native can easily be reversed. Nativism can

become, and often has been, a tool for political and economic elites to further their own interests. The injustices of the powerful, economic exploitation, lawlessness, and even slavery can be justified under the guise of supporting the native. The masses still suffer, but this time, the oppressors are not outsiders, but those claiming to act in the name of the familiar.

In this ongoing dialogue between the native and the foreign, intellectuals play a critical role. They hold a vital position, and their actions can have profound consequences. Intellectuals may choose to align themselves with powerful interest groups, and often have. This can manifest either as an effort to preserve the status quo or to dismantle it, paving the way for new players to take the stage. What is crucial here is not which side the intellectual chooses but whether that choice is driven by self-interest. Therefore, neither "nativism" nor "foreignness" inherently embodies justice or exploitation. Rather, these concepts can coexist with, clash against, and even corrupt one another.

Assuming then, that our intellectual is both honest and sincere, how should they truly approach the native and the foreign? Should they, as we first wondered, simply embrace all that is familiar for its own sake and reject the unfamiliar just because it is different? Or must they instead scorn and belittle what is theirs while placing the foreign on a pedestal?

This question, in truth, is one we all must grapple with. But it is a question particularly relevant to the intellectual, for we assume they possess a certain objectivity when navigating the tension between the native and the foreign. Unlike the masses, the intellectual understands both; they see not only the merits but also the shortcomings of each. We expect their judgment to be measured, their stance devoid of emotional fervor and blind enthusiasm. This demands a third position, one that is neither blindly loyal to the native nor uncritically enamored by the foreign.

In pondering this dichotomy, other questions arise: Are there criteria for defining the "native" and the "foreign?" If so, what are they? Does an idea, a belief, once categorized as foreign, remain forever outside the sphere of acceptance, or can it, over time, become woven into the fabric of the familiar? Conversely, can what was once considered inherently "native" become alien in a different era? In essence, can the lines between the "native" and the "foreign" shift and blur? We must also acknowledge this: Those who readily label others as outsiders or not "native" enough often find themselves subject to the very same judgments they so freely levied on others.

3. Entering the Battleground: An Overview of *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*

It is with this interplay between the native and the foreign that we begin our reflections on Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. We do so because Ghazālī, renowned as an Islamic thinker, owes much of his acclaim to his masterful defense of the "native" against the "foreign." Indeed, this work stands as a potent testament to this very struggle. That Ghazālī championed the familiar against the unfamiliar within these pages is a historical fact. What remains debated is the extent to which his critique of the foreign and his defense of the native were truly fair and impartial.

Two further reasons guided our choice to begin this study with this very discussion. Firstly, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* represents arguably the most renowned and consequential clash of native and foreign in the annals of classical Islamic thought. Secondly, and most pertinent to this study, Ghazālī himself viewed and presented his work through this very lens. He framed the entire text with a preface and four introductions, meticulously outlining his objectives, the book's content, and his chosen methodology. Following this, he delved into the twenty core issues upon which his critique rests, culminating in a concluding section where he accuses the philosophers of outright unbelief (*kufir*) on three points and charges them with heresy for the remaining seventeen.

The method Ghazālī employed can be summarized in two key points. He chose to confront the philosophers using their own intellectual tools and, more strategically, he opted to focus solely on disproving their arguments, refraining from offering detailed proof for his own position. By embracing the latter, Ghazālī considerably lightened his own burden of proof. Most notably, in the three instances where he levels the accusation of "unbelief," he makes no attempt to establish that his view represents true Islam. Instead, he presents it as a pre-established, self-evident truth, a core belief held universally by all Muslims.

To grasp the work more profoundly and to position it effectively within our minds, we want to highlight several compelling features that run through its entirety, illuminating the path to its deeper understanding. From the outset of his preface, Ghazālī's very language betrays his stance toward philosophy and those engaged in it; he wastes no time in establishing their position within his intellectual landscape.

He begins by singling out a specific group within his own society, emphasizing three defining traits¹:

1. Delusions of Grandeur: They view themselves as highly intelligent and discerning, setting them apart from and above their peers. Their intellect, they believe, is a mark of superiority.
2. Religious Dereliction: These individuals neglect the obligatory practices of Islam, notably prayer. They disregard religious prohibitions, showing little concern for transgressing the divinely ordained boundaries set by Islamic Law (*sharia*). They are, in essence, living in defiance of the tenets of their faith.
3. Borrowed Unbelief: Most alarmingly, they dismiss the entirety of Islam based on mere conjecture—and not even their own. They are intellectual parrots, mimicking the skepticism they've absorbed from external sources.

Ghazālī (2000, 2–3) attributes their "unbelief"—a term he uses explicitly, labeling them as *kuffār* (disbelievers)—to three primary causes:

1. Misguided Mimicry: The primary cause is imitation rooted in tradition and habit, akin to that practiced by Jews and Christians. On the other hand, Ghazālī does not categorically dismiss imitation as a method in this context; rather, he considers imitation unacceptable only when it leads to the acceptance of "erroneous philosophical viewpoints," or to embracing beliefs that he considers both false and foreign—namely, those of Christianity and Judaism. In contrast, he sees no issue with adopting the true and native Islamic faith—or rather, his own interpretation of it—through imitation.
2. Superficial Inquiry: Their unbelief, he argues, is fueled by a particular type of intellectual exploration—one that, in his view, leads them astray. This mode of investigation pursues dubious lines of inquiry, akin to chasing after mirages and becoming captivated by illusions. In Ghazālī's estimation, they are engaged in a "wrong path" intellectualism.
3. The Allure of Snobbery: Ghazālī identifies this as the most insidious cause: exposure to the so-called "great" philosophers—Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle. The followers of these thinkers have, in Ghazālī's telling, created an intoxicating aura around their intellectual heroes, extolling their mental prowess, the beauty of their principles, and their mastery of various disciplines—from geometry to metaphysics. But most seductive is the way these disciples depict their philosophical predecessors as figures who, despite their sharp minds and virtuous character, rejected the shackles of religion, viewing it as a collection of fabricated rules and manipulative tricks. It is this narrative, argues Ghazālī, that proves irresistible to those within the Islamic community already susceptible to a sense of intellectual superiority. They readily don the garb of unbelief, seeing it as their

ticket to an exclusive club of enlightened minds. By mimicking this perceived intellectual elite, they break free from the constraints of their own tradition and, by extension, the masses trapped within it. This, Ghazālī suggests, stems from a deep-seated need to appear intelligent by aligning themselves with those who cast aside faith and to view any shift in allegiance, even from one flawed idea to another, as a sign of feeble-mindedness.

While this third cause might seem somewhat convoluted, we can understand it in more straightforward terms as an act of social climbing rooted in intellectual vanity; essentially, Ghazālī sees it as plain snobbery.

To encapsulate, Ghazālī argues that within his contemporary Islamic society, a segment of individuals has strayed from the core tenets and practices of Islam due to their dalliance with philosophy. He characterizes this alienation, culminating in outright disbelief, as spurred by blind imitation, superficial investigation, and, most crucially, a desire to appear intellectually superior. It is a path paved with egotism, and it leads them, in Ghazālī's eyes, away from the light of authentic faith. Philosophy, as manifested in Ghazālī's time and context, has become a haven for intellectual snobs (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 3).

However, Ghazālī's assertions in this context are riddled with contradictions. On the one hand, he suggests that these individuals, with their inclinations towards superficiality and social climbing, exploit philosophy for their own ends. On the other hand, he claims that the four aforementioned philosophers he specifically names have led their followers astray and announces his intention to write a refutation of their positions on metaphysical matters.

The crux of this contradiction lies in the concluding sentences of his preface, which we find particularly jarring and incongruous with both the stated objective and the tone of the work:

My aim is to present the philosophers' views as they are so that those who have abandoned religion out of blind imitation might clearly understand these points:

1. Eminent thinkers, past and present, have unanimously agreed upon belief in God and the Day of Judgment.
2. Any disagreements that exist between them pertain solely to matters of detail beyond these two fundamental tenets—belief in God and the Day of Judgment—tenets upheld and disseminated by divinely-appointed prophets who came bearing miracles as proof.
3. Only an insignificant minority, comprised of contrarians and those intellectually incapable of sound judgment, have attempted to deny these fundamental beliefs in God and the Day of Judgment. No one of merit pays any attention to these

dissenters; they are but a band of misguided souls, fools and ignoramuses. Another goal I have in presenting the philosophers' arguments as they are is to disabuse those who, having adorned themselves with a faith rooted in mere mimicry, now harbor the delusion that such a stance speaks to the profundity of their intellect and testifies to their remarkable understanding and intelligence. These individuals will see clearly that the very philosophers they try so desperately to emulate—those they see as their intellectual leaders and guiding lights—were far removed from the perilous error of denying religion. They will see that these philosophers, too, believed in God and affirmed the truth of His messengers. However, these figures erred and strayed from the path on certain finer points of doctrine, stumbling in their attempts to grasp these subtleties, thereby leading others astray as well. We will expose the various fallacies and delusions they fell prey to, revealing them for the empty pronouncements they truly are. (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 3)

In essence, Ghazālī states two goals for his work, both related to presenting the arguments of the philosophers authentically: 1) To expose the fallacious and inconsistent nature of their views; 2) To demonstrate that leading philosophers have been unanimous in affirming the existence of God and the Day of Judgment, disagreeing only on less central matters.

The incompatibility of these objectives is striking. On the one hand, Ghazālī suggests that the views held by the philosophers their "imitators" seek to emulate are inconsistent and false, prompting him to undertake a detailed refutation. On the other hand, he claims that true philosophers believed in God and the Day of Judgment, differing only in matters of detail. This begs the question: Who, then, are these rightly-guided philosophers? Do they exist at all? This question is especially pertinent considering his prior characterization of Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato, and Aristotle as the very "leaders of error." Furthermore, if their "imitators" cling to a misguided understanding of philosophy, while those they imitate remain on the correct path, then why does Ghazālī condemn the very figures these "imitators" seek to emulate as heretics and unbelievers?

Let us be clear: When Ghazālī speaks of "belief" in God and the Day of Judgment, he is not referencing abstract concepts. By "God," he means the Creator who brought the universe into being ex nihilo, from utter nothingness (Al-Ghazālī 2000, "The First Discussion", 12ff.). By the "Day of Judgment," he refers to the bodily resurrection of humanity (Al-Ghazālī 2000, "Twentieth Discussion", 208ff). Indeed, these two tenets form the bedrock of his critique as his confrontations with the philosophers in the pages to follow will make abundantly clear.

Following this introduction, Ghazālī presents four further introductory sections (*muqaddimāt*). In the first of these, he clarifies the scope of his work. He deems it unnecessary to address the viewpoints of all philosophical schools due to their vast number and diversity of opinion. Instead, he opts for a more pragmatic approach, choosing to focus solely on the work of Aristotle, widely regarded as the leading figure in philosophical thought, whom Ghazālī refers to using the honorific title "The First Teacher." However, he will critique Aristotle (d. 322 BC) not directly through his original works, but rather through the writings of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, for Ghazālī views these two as the most faithful and accurate expositors of Aristotle's philosophy in the Islamic world. It is in this context that Ghazālī relays an anecdote about Aristotle's rejection and refutation of his philosophical predecessors, including even his teacher, Plato (d. 348 BC):

Aristotle opposed everyone who came before him, even his teacher known as "the Divine Plato." It is said that when criticized for contradicting his teacher, he retorted: "Plato is my friend; truth is my friend. But Truth is a dearer friend to me than Plato." (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 4)

Anyone reading Ghazālī's words for the first time might expect, given his opening critique of those within the Islamic community who engage with philosophy as driven by imitation and "snobbery," to find praise for Aristotle's stance here as an example of independent, critical thinking. However, Ghazālī, as if anticipating this very reaction, feels compelled to clarify his purpose in relaying this anecdote:

We share this anecdote to illustrate the following points:

1. There is no established truth or consistency to be found in the views of the philosophers.
2. The philosophers base their pronouncements on mere conjecture and supposition, not on the certainty derived from meticulous investigation.
3. They exploit the clarity and demonstrability inherent in mathematical and logical reasoning, misleading those less intellectually equipped to grasp the flaws underlying their supposedly true metaphysical assertions. If their metaphysical positions were as demonstrably sound as their positions in mathematics—positions rooted in evidence, free from speculation and conjecture—then they would surely find themselves in agreement regarding metaphysics, just as they find themselves in agreement in their mathematical assertions. (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 4)

Thus, much like his Christian predecessors had done before him, Ghazālī uses the disagreement between Aristotle and Plato as a lever to pry open the very question of

philosophy's claim to truth. Notably, the renowned philosopher al-Fārābī penned his famous work *al-Jam' bayn al-Ra'yay al-Ḥakīmayn: The Reconciliation of the Views of the Two Sages* (referring to Plato and Aristotle) precisely to demonstrate that no true disagreement existed between them, attributing their apparent differences solely to misinterpretations and inconsistencies in terminology.

In his second introduction (*muqaddima*), Ghazālī further narrows his focus, dividing points of contention between philosophers and what he terms "other groups"—a group in which he includes himself along with the theologians—into three distinct categories.

He identifies three areas where philosophers find themselves at odds with their theological counterparts: disputes over terminology; disagreements on matters of pure science that do not contradict religious tenets; and, finally, disagreements on matters central to religious doctrine. As an example of the first category, Ghazālī cites the differing ways in which theologians and philosophers define the term "substance" (*jawhar*), pointing out that due to this terminological discrepancy, philosophers deemed it permissible to apply the term to God, while theologians (or, more precisely, legal scholars) viewed this as impermissible. Ghazālī (2000, 5) considers such disagreements trivial, even going so far as to characterize this particular issue as a matter of jurisprudence rather than a true theological concern.

The second area of disagreement consists of purely scientific questions. Here, Ghazālī offers as an example the philosophers' explanation of solar and lunar eclipses. He views it as both mistaken and detrimental to challenge this explanation based on religious arguments, primarily because, according to him, such an explanation is not inherently a religious matter and challenging it based on faith might harm the position of religion due to the demonstrable accuracy of the philosophers' explanation in these domains (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 5–6).

This raises the question: Does Ghazālī truly believe challenging the philosophers on such scientific matters is fundamentally incorrect, or is he suggesting that such challenges are merely strategically unsound? The following statement offers some clarification:

"We shall not attempt to refute these purely scientific claims because such an endeavor lies beyond the scope of our objective. Moreover, for someone to involve themselves in debates intended to invalidate these positions while claiming religious motivation would be tantamount to committing an offense against religion and jeopardizing its very standing. After all, such scientific explanations are based on geometrical and mathematical proofs that are not open to doubt. Were someone who

has attained mastery in these sciences, diligently studied the proofs and attained the ability to predict with precision the timings, duration, and extent of solar and lunar eclipses to be told that his explanation contradicts the tenets of his religion, this individual would not, as a result, question the veracity of his own demonstrably sound understanding. Instead, this individual would be driven to question the very validity of the religion itself. Truly, those who would defend religion in an inept and clumsy manner cause far more harm to its cause than those who skillfully launch critiques against it. Their predicament calls to mind the adage, "A wise enemy is preferable to a foolish friend" (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 6).

It is important to note that while Ghazālī states he will not concern himself with refuting those philosophical views that do not contradict religious principles, he nonetheless dedicates at least three of his twenty discussions to topics that he himself explicitly identifies as not clashing with Islamic doctrine. Even in these instances, he critiques both the philosophers' positions and the proofs they offer in support of those positions. This tactic, initiated by Ghazālī—challenging seemingly non-religious philosophical claims, with the ultimate aim of weakening the philosophers' positions and undermining their credibility—would later be further developed, even weaponized, by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Critiquing philosophical viewpoints, even on ostensibly secular topics, became a fruitful proving ground for Muslim theologians to sharpen their intellectual and argumentative skills².

Take, for example, Ghazālī's treatment of the philosophers' explanation for solar and lunar eclipses. He disagrees with those who argue that the empirically verifiable explanation provided by the philosophers—namely, that a lunar eclipse occurs when the Earth passes between the sun and the moon, casting a shadow over the lunar surface, and that a solar eclipse occurs when the moon passes between the sun and an observer on Earth—contradicts the following hadith:

The sun and the moon are two of Allah's signs. They are not eclipsed on account of the death of anyone or his life. So when you see them, then remember Allah and pray.
(Al-Ghazālī 2000, 6)

Ghazālī asserts that there is nothing in this hadith that directly contradicts the scientific explanation offered by the philosophers. After all, the hadith merely states that eclipses are not caused by the death or birth of any person and that one should pray upon witnessing such an event. If the religious law mandates prayer when the sun is at its zenith, and again when it sets and rises, then there is nothing strange about a similar directive regarding a supererogatory prayer to be offered when an eclipse occurs.

However, some have argued that the hadith in question includes an additional clause that seems to complicate matters: "Verily, when Allah manifests Himself to something, it humbles itself before Him." This addition, they argue, implies that eclipses do indeed signify a humbling submission in response to a divine manifestation—contrary to the explanations provided by the philosophers (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 6).

Ghazālī's rebuttal is startling in its bluntness: He simply declares that this addendum to the hadith is not part of its authentic transmission and that those who narrate it have committed an error. The true narration, according to him, consists only of the portion quoted earlier (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 7). The following words of Ghazālī are of paramount importance:

It must be this way. For, even if the additional clause were indeed part of the authentic narration, it is far more appropriate to interpret it metaphorically than it is to deny demonstrably true realities. After all, consider how many other scriptural passages, whose literal meanings appear straightforward, have been subjected to metaphorical interpretation based on proofs far less clear than this! (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 7)

We hold that this statement is arguably the most crucial sentence in Ghazālī's entire treatise, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. Sadly, the latter part of this statement, particularly the clause "after all, consider how many other scriptural passages, whose literal meanings appear straightforward, have been subjected to metaphorical interpretation based on proofs far less clear than this," has been translated poorly in many languages.

With this statement, Ghazālī establishes two crucial principles. Firstly, he suggests that truths definitively proven using the demonstrative method of the philosophers should not be challenged, even when they appear to conflict with scripture. Instead, the seemingly contradictory scriptural passages (nass) should be reinterpreted metaphorically, moving away from their apparent literal meaning. Secondly, Ghazālī makes what can only be understood as a subtle admission: Many scriptural passages, whose literal meanings might appear straightforward, have been subjected to allegorical and metaphorical interpretation based on far weaker proof than that supporting the philosophers' claims regarding the nature and causes of solar and lunar eclipses.

The third category of disagreements Ghazālī identifies encompasses those instances where a disagreement touches upon a fundamental tenet of religious doctrine. As examples of such tenets, Ghazālī cites the createdness of the world, the

attributes of the Creator, and the affirmation of the bodily resurrection of humanity. According to Ghazālī, the philosophers categorically reject each of these core beliefs. It is, therefore, on issues such as these, he argues, that the erroneous nature of the philosophers' positions must be brought to light (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 7).

We wish to emphasize here that the three aforementioned principles Ghazālī accuses the philosophers of rejecting—the createdness of the world, the attributes of the Creator, and the bodily resurrection—form the very bedrock of his accusation of "unbelief" levelled against them. However, he makes no attempt to prove that these three principles are, in fact, foundational to Islamic belief and that the Muslim community (or *umma*) unanimously understands them, through consensus (*ijma'*), in the specific way he interprets them. He simply takes this for granted. It is notable that Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198), in his *Faṣl al-Maqāl: Decisive Treatise*, addresses this very issue in some detail³.

To summarize, Ghazālī, in his preface, outlines the objective for composing this work. In the first and second introductory sections, he demarcates the scope and boundaries of his engagement. In his third introductory section, he unveils his chosen methodology. He clarifies that in confronting the philosophers, he will not adopt the approach of those who seek to establish and prove their own claims, but rather that of one whose goal is to interrogate, challenge, and ultimately disrupt the positions held as demonstrably true by the philosophers (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 7).

He reiterates his adoption of this methodology in the sixth of his twenty discussions, in which he aims to debunk the philosophers' denial of the divine attributes, drawing attention to how his chosen title for the book reflects this very method:

Our approach in this book is not that of someone attempting to construct a proof. Instead, we have opted for the method employed by those who seek to dismantle and challenge pre-existing views. Hence, we have titled this work not "*The Establishment of Truth (Tamhīd al-Ḥaqq)*," but rather "*The Incoherence of the Philosophers (Tahāfut al-Falāsifa)*." (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 106)

In the fourth and final introduction (*muqaddima*), Ghazālī unveils a further methodological principle guiding his critique. He identifies a common rhetorical strategy among philosophers: when confronted with a seemingly insurmountable objection, they claim that metaphysical matters are inherently complex, requiring mastery of logic and mathematics for proper understanding. Ghazālī then describes how those who uncritically accept the philosophers' positions respond to such objections:

The philosophers, with their superior understanding, undoubtedly possess an answer to this difficulty. However, my own understanding is limited. I have yet to fully grasp the intricacies of logic, nor have I completely mastered mathematics; their explanations remain elusive to me. (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 8)

This response, according to Ghazālī, reveals the limitations of blindly accepting philosophical claims without a thorough investigation.

Ghazālī, in the subsequent passage, sets out to demonstrate the irrelevance of mathematics—specifically, its two primary branches: arithmetic and geometry—to the proper understanding of metaphysical questions. While he agrees with the philosophers regarding the importance of studying logic, he nevertheless emphasizes that logic is not a discipline unique to philosophical inquiry. Instead, he argues, logic forms a core component of the theological tradition in which he situates himself, specifically within the field of Islamic legal theory known as "*Uṣūl al-Fiqh*." He argues that theologians refer to this study of logic as "*Kitāb al-Nazar: The Book of Theoretical Investigation*," and that philosophers, to elevate their own status, merely replaced this traditional terminology with the fancier term, "*Manṭiq: Logic*". He further points out that theologians utilize various terms when referring to logic, including "*Kitāb al-Jadal: The Book of Disputation*," or "*Madārik al-'Uqūl: The Paths Leading the Intellect to Knowledge*." However, Ghazālī quips, when a self-proclaimed intellectual lightweight encounters the term "logic," they automatically assume they have stumbled upon an exotic art, foreign to theologians and accessible solely to the philosophers (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 9).

Ghazālī thus declares his intention to avoid the terminology employed by theologians and legal theorists precisely to "dispel such absurdities and tear down the deceptive strategies employed by those seeking to mislead." He insists that throughout this book, he will utilize solely the tools and terminologies of logic, engaging with the philosophers in their language on their own terms. He ends his fourth and final introduction by pointing out that the very philosophers who establish elaborate and intricate criteria in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* for proving the validity of categorical syllogisms, criteria that govern the soundness of analogical reasoning and who so carefully delineate logical principles in *Categories* and *Isagogy*, two foundational works forming part of what came to be known as *The Organon*—these very philosophers, Ghazālī laments, consistently fail to adhere to their own meticulously constructed rules and methodologies when venturing into the realm of metaphysics.

Following this preface and the four introductions, Ghazālī presents a list of the twenty philosophical doctrines he will scrutinize. This list, in effect, functions as a detailed table of contents for the entirety of the work. Rather than dissecting each of these twenty issues individually here, we feel it is more instructive at this juncture to offer some general observations that might assist readers in navigating the intricate landscape of Ghazālī's critique.

Out of the twenty discussions, thirteen center around refutations of the philosophers' viewpoints (discussions 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20). Three focus on demonstrating the philosophers' inability to definitively *prove* their own claims (discussions 4, 5, and 9), one exposes what Ghazālī deems to be the philosophers' carefully concealed true positions (discussion 3), one examines positions to which he believes the philosophers are ineluctably driven by the internal logic of their own viewpoints (discussion 10), and two center around arguments the philosophers themselves avoid entirely due to constraints inherent within their own frameworks (discussions 11 and 12).

Ghazālī levels the charge of "unbelief" (*kufr*) regarding the philosophers' stance on three of the twenty doctrines he analyzes while considering the remaining seventeen as instances of "innovation" (*bid'a*)—a term signifying, within this context, a departure from orthodox Islamic belief, typically associated with holding heretical views. The three doctrines on which he accuses the philosophers of outright unbelief are: 1) the eternity of the world; 2) God's supposed inability to have knowledge of particulars; and 3) the assertion that the afterlife will be purely spiritual, devoid of bodily resurrection. Of the twenty issues, the most substantial and crucial to Ghazālī's critique is undoubtedly the first: the eternity of the world. It is here that the longest and most complex philosophical discussions and arguments unfold, for this is the very bedrock upon which his subsequent arguments are constructed. One might go so far as to say that a proper grasp of the remaining issues is predicated on first understanding Ghazālī's stance regarding the first.

4. Deconstructing Reason: Ghazālī's Dialectical Strategies

We can broadly categorize the argumentative strategies Ghazālī deploys throughout these twenty discussions as follows:

1. Exposing Internal Contradictions: The philosophers posit as axiomatic that any concept deemed impossible by reason must, by definition, be false and worthy of rejection. Based on this very principle, they proceed to reject those elements within the religious worldview concerning God, the cosmos, and humanity, deeming them

to be irrational. Ghazālī argues that the philosophers selectively apply their "principle of contradiction" solely to undermine religious positions, refusing to subject their *own* philosophical principles to the same rigorous scrutiny. This, for Ghazālī, lays bare their hypocrisy.

He draws attention to this inconsistency repeatedly, and one of the most striking examples surfaces within the very first discussion, in which the philosophers posit the eternity of the world. In their view, the mere possibility of the world coming into being—the notion that even though all the necessary conditions for its existence were present, it might have nevertheless remained latent for an unspecified duration before finally manifesting—is intellectually untenable and therefore worthy of rejection (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 13–16). Ghazālī points out that here, too, the philosophers wield the weaponized "impossibility" of their opponents' positions. Yet, they themselves routinely embrace notions Ghazālī considers demonstrably absurd when such acceptance aligns conveniently with their preconceived worldview (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 17).

One such instance is the contradiction he perceives in the philosophers affirming both the absolute oneness of God alongside the multiplicity inherent in the various forms of knowledge purportedly subsisting within God. Another example Ghazālī highlights is the self-contradictory position he claims philosophers adopt in maintaining that while the universe, taken in its totality, is eternal and therefore uncreated, the celestial spheres comprising it are, nonetheless, inherently finite and therefore limited. Ghazālī finds a further contradiction in the philosophers' view that while the universe itself is eternal, the celestial spheres comprising this universe are, by necessity, finite in terms of the total number of rotations they could have completed. This, Ghazālī (2000, 18) argues, is another instance where they embrace a position inherently flawed due to its internal contradictions: If the universe truly has no beginning in time, then how can its constituents be limited to a finite number of movements?

2. The Inverted Lens of Possibility: This is a reverse way of stating the first point: Philosophers deem certain notions possible within their own framework while they consider them impossible within the framework of religious belief. For instance, they readily accept the distinction between human and divine knowledge as possible, yet resist applying a similar distinction to human will and divine will, or to human action and divine action. They posit the pre-eternity of matter on the basis of the notion of possibility, but they accept the soul as possible, though it is immaterial. They declare it impossible to conceive of a fullness or emptiness

beyond space itself but see no issue with pondering a time before time. They embrace a determined state without a determiner when it comes to the current configuration of the universe, including the position of celestial bodies, yet regarding the moment of the world's creation, they refuse to accept this and demand a specific cause. The simultaneous existence of sequentially ordered infinite things they declare impossible when discussing cosmic cycles, yet entirely possible when addressing the simultaneous existence of souls (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 19).

3. Questioning the Basis of Philosophical Assertions: After presenting a given philosophical viewpoint, Ghazālī poses this question: "Did they arrive at this view based upon logical necessity or mere speculative reasoning?" He does so repeatedly throughout his work. By "logical necessity," he intends something akin to self-evident truths. Were this the case, Ghazālī reasons, he too would necessarily assent to these philosophical positions, given his own rationality. Since he does not, he concludes that their views cannot be logically necessary but are rather based on "speculative reasoning," which he categorizes as deduction, induction, and analogy. Ghazālī then proceeds to deconstruct several of their deductive arguments by exposing inherent flaws within their syllogisms, and he criticizes them elsewhere for their reliance on inductive reasoning, as is seen, for example, in his discussion of their position on the world's eternity⁴.
4. Exposing Sophistry Through Redefinition: To expose the sophistry in the philosophers' use of ambiguous or multi-vocal terms, Ghazālī often redefines these terms outright. He redefines, for example, "necessary" as "that which has no cause." He then argues that, given this definition, the philosophers' definition of a "necessary being"—"that which requires no cause to have no cause"—becomes a tautology (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 84).
5. Looking Beyond Problematic Terminology: In his treatment of the sixth issue, Ghazālī explicitly warns his supporters not to be misled by the philosophers' deliberate use of offensive terminology to frame certain theological concepts. He argues that philosophers intentionally use such language to provoke disgust towards the views in question. Ghazālī illustrates this with two pointed examples: the philosophers' labeling of God's pre-eternal attributes as "*kathra* / plurality" and their choice of the term "*tanāsukh* / transmigration" to describe the reality of bodily resurrection—a principle Ghazālī vehemently defends (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 220).

6. Delineating Imagination from Reality: Ghazālī frequently draws a clear distinction between reason and imagination. He argues that a concept's conceivability does not prove its actuality. In refuting the philosophers' argument for the pre-eternity of time, for instance, he argues that simply because one might posit a "something" existing between the moment God alone existed and when He created the cosmos, labeling it "time," in no way proves that this thing actually exists. This is just an illusion conjured by the estimative faculty (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 31). He utilizes the same logic when discussing time by comparing it to space: If we accept that nothing can exist "beyond" or "above" space itself, then we must also accept that there can be no "before" in relation to time. If positing a "before" based solely on imagination renders time infinite, positing a "beyond" would render space infinite, as well. Yet, the philosophers accept the former and reject the latter (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 33). Ghazālī offers an additional example from his fifth discussion: while we perceive "color" as distinct from both "black" and "white," in actuality no independent "color" exists that is neither of these (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 44). One may point out that Suhrawardī makes this very same argument in his *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* (Suhrawardī 1996c, 2: 79; 1996b, 1: 12–14).
7. Unveiling Hidden Incompatibilities: Another common technique employed by Ghazālī is to highlight those instances where philosophical positions that are openly endorsed or refuted preclude other views they hold, rendering them incompatible. While this too might fall under his critiques related to inconsistency, the inconsistencies here operate at a deeper, less readily apparent level. As an example, we might consider the question of whether matter can pass out of existence and the very existence of a Creator. When addressing the philosophers' position regarding the universe's pre-eternity in the second issue, Ghazālī claims that if—as the philosophers themselves acknowledge—accidents are subject to cessation, then this principle must apply as well to matter. He further argues in his treatment of the third issue that their attempt to present themselves as believing in a Creator is intellectually dishonest given their contention that the cosmos is pre-eternal. Since they claim the cosmos to be pre-eternal, he argues, it becomes impossible for them to claim that God possesses any will (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 55). Indeed, according to Ghazālī, their position regarding the pre-eternity of the universe requires them to deny that God has any knowledge—of either Himself or of anything other than Himself. He later points out in his ninth discussion that since they do not believe that the world was temporally originated, they cannot possibly know that the Creator is not a material thing (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 119).

8. The Limits of Speculative Reason: In the final portion of the third issue, as well as within his treatment of the sixth, Ghazālī states unequivocally that the truth regarding metaphysical questions cannot be ascertained through the speculative methods of the philosophers, even going so far as to cite the prophetic tradition, “Ponder God’s creation, and do not ponder God Himself!” (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 77, 106).
9. The Paradox of Causation: When refuting the principle of causality in his seventeenth discussion, Ghazālī distinguishes between mere correlation—the simultaneous occurrence of cause and effect—and true causation, where one thing necessarily brings another into existence (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 166). However, Ghazālī’s denial of causation throws his own objective for composing *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* into question. After all, he explicitly states in the preface that some individuals strayed from Islam as a result of their engagement with philosophy (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 2). But if, as Ghazālī claims elsewhere, causation is an illusion, how can he be so certain that engaging with philosophy leads to apostasy? Perhaps, it was not philosophy that led them astray but rather, to follow Ghazālī’s logic here, God directly or perhaps even an angel acting on God’s command! Additionally, if causation is nothing more than simultaneous occurrence, then how can he claim that it is necessarily philosophy and not something else entirely that leads to this negative outcome? It seems that his position here leaves open the very real possibility that God could bring about unbelief in a person even without them ever having encountered philosophy—and vice versa!

One might rightfully question the extent to which Ghazālī truly abides by his own stated methodological principles throughout this book. Despite this, one cannot but acknowledge his impressive mastery of his subject, a mastery that allows him not only to engage with, but at times, to seemingly inhabit the philosophical world he seeks to dismantle. While one might question the overall efficacy of his arguments, the depth of his engagement with philosophical principles is evident.

To our knowledge, he presents the philosophical positions he tackles with remarkable accuracy and without misrepresentation, the only potential exception being the manner in which he conflates the common sense with imagination when outlining the various faculties of the soul at the beginning of his eighteenth discussion (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 178-79). This error, while significant, does not figure largely within his critique and should not detract from his generally sound understanding and presentation of the philosophical arguments he chooses to address. Beyond this one example, we have not found any instances where Ghazālī, at least within our limited

understanding, misrepresents the views of those philosophers whose work he seeks to refute.

We wish to make one final point: that although Ghazālī ultimately accuses the philosophers of outright unbelief or apostasy regarding their positions on three of the twenty issues discussed—a claim with undoubtedly profound consequences for the reception and status of philosophy in the Islamic world for centuries after this work’s initial appearance—reading Ghazālī’s text with an open mind and a commitment to intellectual honesty nevertheless reveals him to be a philosophical mind of the highest caliber and someone whose carefully crafted arguments are immensely difficult, and in some cases, we believe, impossible to definitively refute. This holds true from both sociological and academic perspectives. From a sociological perspective, it is undeniable that it was the philosophers, not Ghazālī, who initiated this conflict when they sought to explain—and indeed to subsume entirely within philosophical frameworks—matters considered by the religious community as belonging solely to the realm of revealed truth, issues such as the existence of God and the veracity of prophetic revelation, the very reality of miracles, the nature of the afterlife, and even the existence and nature of the divine attributes themselves. Viewed through this lens, Ghazālī’s decision to address these philosophers head-on can hardly be viewed as unwarranted or without cause.

Second, from a purely academic perspective, while Ghazālī deserves immense credit for both the insightfulness and rigor of his critiques of philosophical arguments, we believe it is also important to recognize the role that certain intrinsic weaknesses in the philosophical systems he targets might play here as well. In other words, it is difficult to deny that philosophical claims regarding metaphysical realities are, to a large degree, rooted not in demonstrably verifiable scientific principles but rather on a foundation far more speculative. Stated another way, the verifiable claims of the philosophers and the advancements they made in domains like physics pale in comparison to their grandiose assertions about the true nature of reality itself.

It is within this very context that Ghazālī’s oft-repeated contention that the arguments proffered by philosophers are categorically different from their rigorously demonstrated truths regarding the nature of mathematics or logic rings most true. No clearer example of this discrepancy can be found than in the philosophers’ claim that heavenly bodies possess a specific kind of “soul,” a notion based, ultimately, on associating intentional movement with the observed circular motion of celestial objects, an idea Ghazālī thoroughly dismantles (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 144ff). Here, we find Ghazālī, who identifies himself as belonging to the opposing theological (Kalām) camp,

criticizing, on entirely solid ground, a foundational philosophical principle belonging to what can rightly be termed physics! This failure, or rather inability, to adequately defend their more speculative conclusions stems from their overreliance on thought experiments and purely logical reasoning—what Ghazālī frequently calls “speculative reasoning”—at the expense of observation and experimentation in both the physical and metaphysical realms. And so, in the face of carefully crafted, precise, and devastating critiques offered by an intellect as sharp as Ghazālī’s, it should perhaps come as no surprise that the foundations of the philosophical edifice, foundations far more shaky than they might first appear, crumble under their own weight.

5. The Consequence of Critique: Ghazālī’s Lasting Legacy

The implications of Ghazālī’s *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* extend far beyond a mere cataloging of problematic philosophical positions and undoubtedly played a major role in shaping the nature and defining the role philosophy itself would come to occupy within the Islamic intellectual landscape. In our estimation, Ghazālī’s critique directly or indirectly led to three distinct responses to the very enterprise of philosophy within the Islamic world. These distinct responses, each, in a sense, a direct descendant of Ghazālī’s own project can be seen most clearly in the works of Ibn Rushd, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and Suhrawardī.

Ibn Rushd’s response, we believe, is best represented not only in his voluminous commentaries on the works of Aristotle, but perhaps even more significantly in two texts—*The Incoherence of the Incoherence* and *Decisive Treatise*, the first being a direct rebuttal of Ghazālī’s *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. Ibn Rushd ultimately rejects almost all of Ghazālī’s criticisms, championing a return to pure Greek philosophy—or rather, to its most pristine form, meaning an unadulterated Aristotelianism. Ibn Rushd ultimately concludes that scripture must be reinterpreted, when necessary, through the lens of this uncompromised philosophical framework. He establishes this primacy by assigning the three distinct approaches to knowledge—demonstrative, dialectical, and rhetorical—a specific hierarchical relationship, placing the demonstrative—a method employed most effectively by philosophers, in his estimation—at the pinnacle (Ibn Rushd 1997, 116ff).

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī exemplifies a different approach, one more akin to sharpening those very tools Ghazālī first employed. This second response can best be described as taking seriously Ghazālī’s claim that some areas of philosophical inquiry, those dealing with seemingly non-religious matters—for instance, his criticisms regarding the philosophers’ understanding of how and why solar and lunar eclipses occur—should

not be dismissed out of hand. Rather, Rāzī maintains, even these philosophical forays deserve scrutiny and should not be granted immunity from those committed to defending the tenets of Islam. This tendency is clearly demonstrable in Rāzī 's compelling (and rather scathing) criticisms found in his two commentaries on works of Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt: Remarks* and *ʿUyūn al-Ḥikma: Sources of Wisdom*. We can also see it clearly at play in his monumental commentary on the Quran where, for example, he criticizes in detail those philosophical views in the field of physics, either by pitting them against relevant Quranic verses or using these verses to directly refute them⁵.

Finally, we find in Suhrawardī both as a person and within the details of his Illuminationist philosophy a distinct—one is tempted to say “illuminated!”—response to Ghazālī's critique. Unlike Ibn Rushd's rather forceful defense of a pristine Aristotelianism and Rāzī 's extension and in some ways weaponization of Ghazālī's own methodology for debunking philosophical claims, Suhrawardī seems to stand as a figure who, deeply impacted by the implications of Ghazālī's devastating critique, sought to reconstruct philosophy itself—or at least that philosophical tradition emanating from Persia—on entirely different foundations. As evidence for this, we might point to the pivotal role that direct experiential knowledge of God (al-ʿilm al-ḥudūrī) plays in Illuminationism, specifically the central role such experiential knowledge plays in establishing God's direct knowledge of even the most seemingly insignificant particulars in creation and how his concept of an “Imaginal Realm” (*ʿālam al-mithāl*), acting as intermediary between the purely spiritual and wholly material, functions as a way to establish both the possibility and indeed the *necessity* of bodily resurrection (Suhrawardī 1996c, 2: 231–32). He further reinforces the unique position of the Illuminationist system by expanding on Ibn Sīnā's cosmological scheme by increasing the number of “intellects,” spiritual beings responsible, ultimately, for bringing the cosmos into existence and maintaining its order, adding the novel idea of “horizontal lights,” a kind of intermediary spiritual entity designed specifically to address the ontological gulf between the level of pure, transcendent intellects and the world of material existence (Suhrawardī 1996c, 2: 139–148). He ultimately reconfigures philosophy itself, with its elaborate epistemological and metaphysical frameworks as the very ground out of which one can—indeed *must*—cultivate the inner dispositions required to walk the path of spiritual purification, a path culminating ultimately in direct experiential knowledge of the Divine (Suhrawardī 1996c, 2: 156–58; 1996a, 1: 460).

6. Ghazālī's Problematic Conclusion: A Methodological Paradox

Finally, we wish to call attention to a potentially problematic discrepancy within Ghazālī's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. Throughout the twenty discussions that form the central portion of his text, Ghazālī's tone and method are remarkably different from those he utilizes in the preface, the four introductory sections, and the concluding remarks. He states quite clearly in the preface that his objective for composing this critique is twofold: to reveal those internal inconsistencies that plague the philosophers' views while simultaneously dispelling those feelings of respect and admiration members of the Muslim community often harbor towards philosophers, especially a certain "group of imitators," as he refers to them (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 2). True to his stated aim, the entirety of his meticulous dissection of their twenty problematic principles centers precisely around revealing these internal contradictions.

In the concluding section of his critique—a conclusion we found somewhat surprising—the author ultimately accuses the philosophers not merely of internal inconsistencies, but of outright unbelief, even apostasy, on three specific points. Our purpose here is not to refute this accusation, nor to offer a counter-critique, but rather to highlight a methodological disparity between the analytical techniques employed throughout the preceding twenty discussions and the severity of the religious judgment rendered in the conclusion. Had the author remained true to the stated aims of his project, a more appropriate outcome would have been to enumerate the various methodological and substantive flaws in the philosophical positions he analyzes, perhaps concluding that such flawed arguments lack intellectual merit and should not be considered credible alternatives to a proper understanding of Islamic belief and practice. Put simply, the charge of "unbelief," if used at all, should be reserved for something more than demonstrably illogical claims. Rejecting a core principle like God's Oneness, for instance, is a categorically different error than one arising from a faulty syllogism.

Were one to convincingly argue that the philosophical positions Ghazālī so thoroughly dismantles do indeed constitute a rejection of core Islamic beliefs (and it is important to emphasize here that this is precisely the point on which there is the least agreement), one would be obligated, at least according to Ghazālī's own standards, first to articulate clearly what the Islamic position actually *is*. This articulation would necessarily involve appealing to such evidentiary sources as verses from the Quran, relevant Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīths*), statements by leading scholars, and any evidence for communal consensus (*ijmā'*) that might exist. It is only after such a

demonstrably Islamic perspective had been convincingly articulated that one could then highlight precisely how and where those who fall outside this orthodox view depart from correct belief and practice, demonstrating in detail precisely which aspects of their deviation render their position one of "unbelief" as opposed to, for example, mere "innovation" (*bid'a*).

Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 1328) meticulous critiques of various philosophical schools, theological systems (*kalam*), and even certain Sufi metaphysical positions, for example, carefully establish "correct" Islamic doctrine by appealing to foundational texts before proceeding to unpack the nature and degree of deviation inherent in those he seeks to refute⁶—precisely the methodology absent in Ghazālī's approach. However, nowhere in Ghazālī's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* do we find him undertaking a rigorous articulation of Islamic doctrine. And yet, it is upon these rather shaky and unsupported accusations of doctrinal deviation—claims, it should be emphasized, based solely on Ghazālī's own interpretations—that he confidently rests his concluding and highly consequential condemnation of those very thinkers whose flawed reasoning he has, to the dismay of many within the philosophical camp, exposed with such devastating effectiveness.

7. Re-Imagining Philosophy: Beyond *The Incoherence*

The resounding echoes of Ghazālī's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, reverberating throughout centuries of intellectual engagement in the Islamic world—from Ibn Rushd's forceful rejection of Ghazālī's core critiques to Suhrawardī's audacious reconstruction of philosophy itself—reveals a text whose relevance far exceeds its initial target. The intellectual debates ignited, the critiques offered, and, perhaps most significantly, the attempts to create wholly new ways of knowing rooted in both revelation and reason, demonstrate how Ghazālī's text remains relevant.

While readers might ultimately disagree with his forceful assertion that philosophical engagement inevitably leads to intellectual, even spiritual ruin, and while his heavy-handed condemnation of his intellectual adversaries likely strikes modern readers as excessive—if not downright intolerant—it is hard to deny the meticulous nature of his argumentation, the sharpness of his insights, and the ultimately irresistible appeal of his call to those within the philosophical camp—to reevaluate those very foundations upon which their systems are built and to explore possibilities beyond those accessible solely through the limited instruments of sense perception and unaided human intellect.

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Notes

1. Because my critical edition of *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* is forthcoming, I will be citing the Arabic edition by Michael E. Marmara (2000).
2. For more information, see Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī's interpretations of the *kawnī* Qur'anic verses, i.e. those related to the cosmos and cosmic phenomena (Rāzī n.d).
3. For more information, see Ibn Rushd (1997, 97ff.).
4. For example, “اِسْتِحَالَةُ اِرَادَةِ قَدِيْمَةٍ مُتَعَلِّقَةٍ بِاِحْدَاثِ شَيْءٍ، اَمْ يَشِيءُ كَانْ، تَعْرِفُوْنَهُ بِضُرُوْرَةِ الْعَقْلِ اَوْ نَظَرِهِ؟ وَعَلَى لُغَتِكُمْ فِي الْمَنْطِقِ، ”
”تَعْرِفُوْنَهُ اِلْتِقَاءَ بَيْنَ هَذَيْنِ الْحَدِيْنِ بِحَدِّ اَوْسَطٍ اَوْ مِنْ غَيْرِ حَدِّ اَوْسَطٍ؟” Do you know the impossibility of an eternal will relating to the temporal origination of a thing—whatever thing that may be—by the necessity of reason or its reflection?²⁵ According to your position in logic, do you know the connection between the two terms ["eternal will" and "temporal origination"] with or without a middle term? (Al-Ghazālī 2000, 17).
5. For more information, see Rāzī (n.d.), especially his interpretations of the *kawnī* Qur'anic verses, those related to the cosmos and cosmic phenomena.
6. For more information, see Toktaş (2013).