

A REFUTATION OF PHILOSOPHY BY A MEDIEVAL ARABIC AUTHOR: IBN AL-JAWZI (d. 1201)*

1. Foreword.

It is common knowledge that Islamic philosophy reached its highest flourishing in the Middle Ages —having come in contact with Greek and Persian refined speculations— and it was able to gather the heritage of these two civilizations in a quite original synthesis. In particular, Greek thought played a great role in the spread of philosophy all over the Islamic World. In the first centuries since the birth of Islam, Arabic scholars were deeply engaged in translating and discussing many of the main works of the ancient thinkers¹. The very center of this intellectual Arabic movement was the “House of Wisdom”, founded in Baghdad by the caliph al-Ma'mun, in the year 832. Greek ideas greatly affected men of science and philosophers, like al-Kindi (d. ca. 850), al-Farabi (d. 950), Avicenna (d. 1037) and Averroes (d. 1198), whose books may be regarded as a successful attempt to harmonize their own philosophical systems with Islam. Faith in God is naturally one of the chief objects of Islamic reflection in philosophical matters. For this reason, Muslim philosophers generally maintain that the science of God (theology) and metaphysical meditation (in Arabic *ilahiyat* = study of divine things) are often one and the same. For their having gained the pure knowledge of the Supreme-Being, also the three major figures of classical Greek tradition —Socrates, Plato and Aristoteles— have been sometimes considered as prophets and theologians *ante litteram*².

2. Reason and revelation.

From a theoretical point of view, reason and revelation are not in con-

* In this article, all the dates refer to the Christian calendar.

1. On this subject see: De Lacy O'LEARY, *How Greek science passed to the Arabs*, London 1957, (III ed.); R. WALZER, *Greek into Arabic*, Oxford, 1962; C.A. BADAWI, *La transmission de la philosophie grecque au monde arabe*, Paris, 1968; P.E. PETERS, *Aristoteles arabus. The Oriental translations and commentaries on the Aristotelian Corpus*, Leiden, 1968; IDEM, *Aristotle and the Arabs. The Aristotelian tradition in Islam*, New York - London, 1968.

2. C. BAFFIONI, *Sulle tracce di Sofia. Tre divini nella Grecia classica*, Naples, 1990, pp. 32-33.



tention in Islam. The truths of revelation, that are contained in the Koran, are perfectly intellegible to the human being, and the reason (*ʿaql*) is but the instrument whereby man acquires knowledge of God. Nevertheless, philosophical speculation, whose influence has deeply permeated Arabic medieval culture, was fiercely withstood by the orthodox *milieux* of Sunni Islam, inasmuch as it could happen to be a serious threat to the very basis of religion. In a merely dogmatic outlook, the potential “danger” of philosophy consists in postulating the independence of reason from revelation—in the field of faith—and reducing, as a consequence, the universal worth of Muhammad’s prophetic message. In order to understand the real nature of this medieval quarrel between religion and philosophy, it is necessary to know that, for Islam, the Koran is the word of God, uncreated³ as well as everlasting, and the multiple assertions which are comprised in it must be accepted as they are. Theological reasoning (*kalam*) is not excluded *a priori*, provided it is strictly limited to the due interpretation of the Holy Book.

3. Ibn al-Jawzi and the hanbali criticism of philosophy.

Counting of what so far mentioned, we may realize why the study of the practical application of Koranic statements is so important for Muslims and the religious Law (*shariʿa*), whose main sources are Koran and Traditions, occupies a prominent position among the Islamic sciences. Of the juridical and theological schools admitted by Islam⁴, the Hanbali one, more than the others, has always strongly opposed philosophy. Criticism against the “dangerous innovations” (*bidaʿ*) or heresies also introduced by the followers of Greek philosophy, was one of the polemical motifs of the Hanbali’s writings. Abu al-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzi is one of the outstanding exponents of this school. Born in 1116, he spent his whole life in Baghdad, serving as a preacher in the Court of the last abbasid caliphs⁵. It was a very tumultuous period for the

3. The only theological school admitting that Koran is “created” is the muʿtazili one, partly adopted by the Shiʿites.

4. In Islam there are four orthodox schools of jurisprudence: Hanafi, Shafiʿi, Maliki, Hanbali. The two later support a more rigourist view and restrict the use of personal opinion on legal matters. The Hanbali is also a theological school that supports a literal interpretation of the Koran and is often accused of having an anthropomorphic concept of God.

5. Further biographical information on Ibn al-Jawzi in: H. LAOUST, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. III, p. 751; Merlin L. SWARTZ, *Ibn al-Jawzi’s Kitab al-Qussas wa l-mudhakkirin, Including a Critical Edition, Annotated Translation and Introduction*, Beirut, 1971; A. HARTMANN, “Les ambivalences d’un sermonnaire hanbalite. Ibn al-Gawzi, sa carrière et son ouvrage autographe, le Kitab al-Khawatim” in *Annales Islamologiques, IFAO*, 1986, vol. 22, pp. 13-115.



Islamic Empire, Seljukids Turks having occupied a large part on the territory and consequently imposed their authority of the caliph himself. The power of the later was restrained within the narrow walls of the Capital, Baghdad. In order to strengthen their position and win the favours of the population, divided by political-religious factions, the caliphs used to avail themselves of the influence of some preachers like Ibn al-Jawzi. Ibn al-Jawzi was esteemed as an extremely learned man, particularly versed in the study of Koranic sciences and traditions. We are furthermore informed by the biographical sources that he was also charged to supervise the *mihna* (a sort of religious and political Court of Inquisition), that was properly directed to repress the heretical movements in the city. As a writer, hundreds of works on the most various subjects were attributed to him⁶. We do want in these short few lines, to point out one of his books, a part of which is especially dedicated to the refutation of several philosophical schools, under the expressive title of *Talbis Iblis*, or “The Devil’s Delusion”. We consider that to furnish some views of Ibn al-Jawzi on this subject may be quite interesting for the reader, since they reflect the positions of a great part of Islamic orthodoxy and considerably influenced the eminent hanbali thinker Ibn Taymiya⁷.

4. The *Talbis Iblis*⁸.

Currently used in the popular religious literature, *Iblis* is the Koranic term for “Devil” and it is probably derived by the phonetical deformation of the Greek word Διάβολος. The meaning of the title is thus to be understood as it follows: according to the author, the Devil (*Iblis*) is perpetually engaged in deluding (*Talbis*) human beings, through false opinions and heretical beliefs. A vivid description of the satanical artifices is given by Ibn al-Jawzi at the beginning of the fourth chapter: “The heart is like a fortress surrounded with a wall, which has gates and breaches... the demons ceaselessly go round

6. Nowadays we only possess about a hundred books by Ibn al-Jawzi, some of which are not yet published.

7. Ahmad IBN TAYMIYA (d. 1328), polemist and jurist, wrote a manifest against philosophy: *Kitab al-radd ʿala l-mantiqiyyin* (Refutation of logicians). On Ibn Taymiya’s thought see: A *history of Muslim philosophy*, ed. M.M. Sharif, Wiesbaden, 1963/1966, vol. II, pp. 799-819; R. BRUNSCHVIG, “Pour ou contre la logique grecque chez les théologiens-juristes de l’Islam: Ibn Hazm, al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiya”, in *Oriente e Occidente nel Medioevo: Filosofia e scienza*, Convegno Internazionale, 9-15 april 1969, Rome, 1971.

8. The book has been partly translated by D.S. MARGOLIOUTH and published on different issues, starting from 1935, in the review *Islamic Culture* (vol. IX-XII), which we quote as *IC*. By *Talbis* we refer to the arabic text published in Cairo, 1990.



and round the fortress, looking out for a time when the watcher is off guard and they can pass in by a breach”⁹.

The literary sources of *Talbis Iblis*, in matters of philosophy, are, in chronological order, the books of: 1. Yahya b. Bishr al-Nihawandi (VIII-IX century); 2. Muhammad b. ʿIsa al-Nazzam (d. 835?); 3. Muhammad b. Musa al-Nawbakhti (d. 912); 4. Abu I-Wafa’ Ibn ʿAqil (d. 1119). The first, Nihawandi, was a scientist who composed treatises on astronomy and mathematics. Heresyographical works, on the contrary, are ascribed to Nazzam and Nawbakhti, each of which belongs to different theological schools; the latter, Ibn ʿAqil, is the very famous author of a large *summa* of medieval hanbalism¹⁰. Therefore, Ibn al-Jawzi makes no use of first hand’s philosophical texts. He is not a philosopher: his unique goal is to fight heresy in all its shapes. In a way, he actually does not distinguish between heretical tendencies and philosophical theories: to him, whatever interpretation of world and faith averse from the traditional Islamic one, is in every respect, a form of misbelieving. The book also deals, though concisely, with other kinds of false beliefs, like magic and other religious faiths (especially Hebraism and Christianity). We must state beforehand that Ibn al-Jawzi’s confutation of philosophy, was not, of course, the first in time. About a century before, the famous master and theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111) —known to the medieval Western scholars by the name of *Algazel*— drew up a very wide tract against the so-called *falasifa*. The book in question exactly deals with the presumed “incoherence of philosophers”¹¹. According to al-Ghazali, philosophical knowledge, in its essence, is devoid of the necessary “infallible certitude” (*ʿilm al-yaqin*) which, on the contrary, is accorded to the mystical searchers of God¹². Ibn al-Jawzi takes up again the polemic against philosophy but, at the same time, he refuses the conclusions of al-Ghazali. Unlike his forerunner, he also blames irrational trends of mysticism and mystics, whose excesses go far beyond islamic context. The author’s interests are natu-

9. *IC*, vol. IX, p. 7; *Talbis*, p. 40.

10. The title of the book is *Kitab al-Funum* (the book of Arts), ed. by G. Makdisi, Beirut, 1970.

11. In Arabic *Tahafut al-falasifa*. In reply to al-Ghazali’s theses, AVERROES wrote the famous *Tahafut al-Tahafut* (The incoherence of incoherence). There is an English translation of this book by George F. HOURANI, *Ibn Rushd (Averroes) on the Harmony of religion and philosophy*, London, 1962.

12. Al-Ghazali refers to the islamic mystics’ concept of *maʿrifa*, intuitive knowledge, produced by immediate experience or vision, in contrast with the science derived from the use of intellectual processes (*ʿilm*).

rally limited to metaphysical demands such as the origin of the Universe, its eternity or finiteness, the existence of a primary Cause etc. The principal schools considered by him are the Sophists, the Materialists, the Physicists and the Dualists (i.e. *the Manichees*). The following passage is excerpted from the chapter consacrated to the *Sophists*: “These are people called after a man named Sofista; they hold that things have no reality, and that what we witness may be as we witness it or otherwise than as we witness it. Men of learning traversed this by saying to them: Has this assertion of yours reality, or not? If you say it has no reality, and so allow that it may be false, how can you want people to accept that which has no reality? You seem by this statement to confess that your statement cannot be accepted... Many metaphysicians have committed a serious mistake in the matter of these people. They argue and debate with them, and endeavour to refute them by pleading and discussion; but, as they do not admit reality, or accept the evidence of the senses, how can you talk to one who says: ‘I do not know whether you are talking to me or not’, and how can you argue with one who states that he does not know whether he exists or not, and how can you address one who professes that addressing is no more expressive than silence, and that the unsound is on a level with the sound? ... Discussion can only be conducted with one who admits necessity, or confesses to something, so that what he confesses may be made a reason for proving the truth of what he denies. If a man does not admit that, arguing with him is a waste of time”¹³.

According to Ibn al-Jawzi, the utmost limits of sophistical philosophy proceed from its gnosiological relativism, that deprives knowledge of any objective foundation. If knowledge is a merely subjective state and if we can say that anything is true and false at the same time, any investigation comes out useless: “...(they) hold that things have no essential reality, but that their reality is relative to people’s beliefs about them. For, they say, one with yellow bile finds honey bitter, whereas others find it sweet. So, likewise, they say, the world is eternal with those who believe in its eternity, freshly created with those who believe that it is so... If we were to fancy that there were no believers, things would stop existing with the existence of some believer”¹⁴.

Strictly linked to relativist theories is the idea which holds the Real as a flux of being and not being, the otherwise said πάντα ρεῖ of Heraclitus. This

13. *IC*, 1935, vol. IX, pp. 8-9; *Talbis*, p. 41.

14. The translation here is a bit different from Margoliouth’s one, see *IC*, p. 10; *Talbis*, p. 43.

argument is easily gainsaid with the objection usually resorted to in this respect: "... to this group belong those who assert that the world is in a state of flux, and that a man cannot ponder on one thing twice, owing to things constantly changing. You can ask them: How is this known, when you deny the persistence of what can produce knowledge? Possibly the one who gives the reply may be different from the person questioned"¹⁵.

The author also criticizes *Materialists* for their radical denying the existence of God as well as of a Maker of the Universe. They assert that it is impossible to perceive Him by sensation or, though admitting His existence generally, to perceive Him particularly: "The atheist flounders because he seeks Him by the avenue of sensation... Had such a person exercised his thought, he would have known that we have things only generally perceived, such as the soul and the reason, yet no one would decline to assert their existence. And is our purpose more than to assert creation generally? And how can one ask, How is He or What is He, seeing that He has neither mode (*kayfiya*) nor quiddity (*mahiya*)?"¹⁶. Contingency of the world is a convincing proof of God's existence. Creation cannot subsist of his own, being in need of a Cause. In order to demonstrate this, the author introduces the problem of relation between matter and form: "Just as the Artifice must have an Artificer (*saniʿ*), so the form which is impressed by the Artificer must have matter on which the form can be impressed, such as wood for the form of a door or iron for the form of an axe. So the argument whereby you establish the Maker involves the eternity of the world. — Our reply is that we do not require matter; on the contrary, we assert that the Maker *created* things. For we know that the form and the figures which confine themselves in bodies, e.g., that of horses, have no matter; God created them, and they must have a former. So we have shown you a form, which is a thing, that has come from nothing whereas you cannot show us an Artifice which has come without an Artificer"¹⁷.

On their side, *Physicists* profess that creation is the work of nature and that creatures themselves are but the outcome of the coming together of the four Aristotelian elements: the hot, the cold, the dry and the moist: "In reply to this we say: the coming together of the natures is proof of their existence, not of their action; further it is established that the natures only act by coming together and intermingling; this is contrary to their nature and indicates

15. *IC*, vol. IX, p. 11; *Talbis*, p. 43.

16. *IC*, vol. IX, p. 12; *Talbis*, p. 44.

17. *IC*, vol. IX, p. 11; *Talbis*, p. 44.



that they are coerced. Further they admit that the natures are not alive nor knowing nor powerful, and it is known that continuous and orderly action can only proceed from a being that is knowing and wise; how then can one who is neither knowing nor powerful act?"¹⁸.

In the previous assertion, Ibn al-Jawzi refers to the islamic view that "action" is predominantly a divine prerogative. God acts directly or indirectly in each and every natural and human event, since He is the utmost Artificer of everything. In opposition to this purely monotheistic concept of divinity, Manichees or *Dualists* do repute that there are two Gods: the Doer of Good (Light) and the Doer of Evil (Darkness), both eternal and mighty, but different as to their essence and form. The substance of the first is excellent, beautiful, luminous, pure, clean, sweet-smelling and from him come good, pleasure, joy prosperity. Contrariwise, the substance of the second is foul, deficient, ugly, illsmelling and from him are evil and corruption. The Islamic community bitterly censured this sect and the word *zindiq*, originally used for indicating the followers of this religious and cosmological vision, became the usual Arabic term for "heterodox" or, more precisely, "heretic whose teaching becomes a danger to the state"¹⁹. It was under the charge of *zindiq* that the renowned mystic ^cAbd al-Salam al-Jili²⁰ was imprisoned upon Ibn al-Jawzi's personal suggestion. On the pretended existence of two Gods, the following considerations are added: "If He were two, those two would either be both powerful or both weak or one of them powerful and the other weak. Both could not be weak, since weakness would prevent the ascription of divinity, neither could one of the two be weak; it remains that both must be supposed to be powerful, and we must imagine that one of the two may wish to move this body at a time when the other wishes to keep it still. The wishes of the two could not then possibly be fulfilled"²¹.

In the description of the Manichees' creed, historical elements are jumbled with odd fancies, like, for instance, the popular belief according to which they used to strangle people in order to let the "Light" get out of their bodies. The section hinged on philosophy ends up with a short examination of some peculiar problems raised by Aristoteles' thought. A short paragraph on the Aristotelian idea of world's co-eternity with the Primary Cause (an

18. *IC*, vol. IX, p. 12; *Talbis*, p. 45.

19. L. MASSIGNON, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. "zindiq".

20. ^cAbd al-Salam al-Jili (d. 1214), an ascetic and a deeply learned man, nephew of ^cAbd al-Qadir al-Jili, founder of the "qadiriya" brotherhood. See: A. HARTMANN, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.

21. *IC*, vol. IX, p. 15; *Talbis*, p. 46.



idea that —by the way— was adopted by Averroes), is worth quoting: “Ni-hawandi states that Aristotle and his School assert that the earth is a star in the middle of this sphere, and that there are worlds in all the stars similar to what is on this earth, with rivers and trees. They deny the Creator, though most of them hold that the world has a primal cause: Further he asserted the eternity of the world, which had always existed with God, being indeed caused by Him, but consequent not later than Him in time, just as the caused is consequent to the cause and the light to the sun in essence and in order, not in time. It may be said to them: Why do you deny that the world may have come into existence by a pre-existent will which caused it to come into being at the time when it came? If they say: This would involve a period of time between the existence of Creator and the creatures, we reply: Time is a creature, and there was no time before time...”²².

Having postulated the existence of God, the first consequence, for Ibn al-Jawzi, is that He is Almighty and nothing can limit His power or His will: “(He) could have made the altitude of the upper sphere a cubit more or a cubit less than it is. If they say He could not, that is declaring Him impotent, and if a thing cannot be greater, or smaller than it is, its being in its state is necessary not contingent...”²³. The principal obstacle to the acceptance of philosophy by a rigorist Muslim like Ibn al-Jawzi is in the Islamic conception of God as the freest Being, self-sufficient and completely without necessity. He created the world by an act of will, but His creating work goes on unceasingly: God creates and destroys everything moment after moment. Creation then is not a necessary act, as the philosophers claim, but a wholly free and arbitrary one. As it is stated by the Koran: “Seest thou not that God created the heavens and the earth in truth? If He so will, can He remove you and put (in your place) another creation?”²⁴. At first sight, cosmological creationism or “atomism”²⁵, as Muslims call it, seems to shake physical laws, since God

22. *IC*, vol. IX, p. 16; *Talbis*, p. 47.

23. *IC*, vol. IX, p. 16; *Talbis*, p. 47.

24. Kor. XIV, 19; trans. by Yusuf ^cALI, *The Glorious Kuran*, Beirut, s.d.

25. Islamic theology maintains that the basis of all manifestation, mental and physical, is a multitude of monads. “Each (of these monads) has certain qualities; but has extension neither in space nor in time. They have simply position, not bulk and do not touch one another. Between them is absolute void... Just as space is only in a series of atoms, so time is only in a succession of untouching moments... The Muslims monads are, and again are not; all change and action in the world are produced by their entering into existence and dropping out again, not by any change in themselves”. D.A. MACDONALD, *Development of Muslim theology*, London, 1903, p. 201.



could change them at any moment. As a matter of fact, the necessary link between the effect and its cause subsists in a “moral” way: it is “God’s habit” (*sunnat Allah*) to repeat His creative act according to precise laws. Ibn al-Jawzi’s conclusion is that philosophers’ metaphysics without revelation have no ground at all, but they simply generate “deceit” and “confusion”. The reason of this is that “human abilities do not apprehend the sciences save generally, and recourse must be had therein to the (religious) Codes”²⁶. According to this, reason can exclusively devote itself to the study of pure science, based on objective unopinable data. At the end of this section, Ibn al-Jawzi asserts that philosophers gained excellent result in the field of natural sciences, logic and mechanics, but they failed in metaphysics: “...these persons certainly possessed attainments in mechanics, logic, and natural science, and by their sagacity they discovered hidden things. Only when they talked of theology they mixed things up, and so differed on this subject, whereas they did not differ about things of the senses and mechanics”²⁷.

At the opposite pole of Ibn al-Jawzi’s heretical evaluation we find ascetics. If philosophers are blamed for their haughty claim to substitute revelation with their rationalistical systems, ascetics must be condemned for the contrary reason. Religious pity leads some of them to consider studying an earthly activity. The author’s opinion is that the Devil’s ability consists mainly in deceiving his victims by the same instruments which they use: intelligence with philosophers and pity with ascetics: “You should know that the devil’s first mode of deluding men is to divert them from knowledge, since knowledge is light, and when he has extinguished their lamps, he makes them flounder in darkness as much as he chooses”²⁸. Therefore, study is essential for Ibn al-Jawzi, but what kind of knowledge does he refer to? According to him, science is, above all, the science of Islam —i.e. Koran and the Islamic Law— as it is asserted in several passages: “If they understood the rank of the learned in memorizing the Code, and that it is the rank of prophets, they would regard themselves as dumb brutes by the side of correct speakers and blind by the side of the seeing”²⁹. Ibn al-Jawzi draws, however, a distinction between ascetics and mystic of *sufi*. The first ones are believers who go far beyond the due devotion, meanwhile the second ones are those who elaborate new doctrines and are in an intermediate state between believers and heretics.

26. *IC*, vol. IX, p. 19; *Talbis*, p. 50.

27. *IC*, vol. IX, p. 19; *Talbis*, p. 50.

28. *IC*, vol. XI, p. 398; *Talbis*, p. 290.

29. *IC*, vol. X, p. 348; *Talbis*, p. 153.



Ibn al-Jawzi does not examine closely the different theories of the mystics, but limits himself to criticize their conduct, when it contradicts Islamic tradition. He also blames those statements regarded as aberrant by Muslims, like the idea of a presumed “inner” or “esoteric knowledge”, possessed by the mystics, in opposition to the “outer” or “exoteric knowledge” of the Law, suited for the masses: “Many of the Sufis make a distinction between the Code and the Truth. This is an ignorant assertion, since the Code is in its entirety a body of truths”³⁰. Furthermore he criticizes the concept of the *unio mystica* with God that, according to some sufi, turns into a sort of “inhabitation”³¹ of divinity in the believer. These two ideas are totally unacceptable to him, God being in Islam one and transcendent, indivisible and totally different from men, He can’t get parted and man can’t join with Him. Ibn al-Jawzi expresses here the utmost view of the Hanbalism, attached to the literal meaning of the Koran and the outer interpretation of the Law; in a word, he places a long distance between himself and sufism³². Speaking about sufis’ theories goes beyond the aim of this article, but we only want to point out the contamination existent in Islam, more than in other worldly religions, between philosophy and mystical thought. Avicenna himself, towards the end of his life, departed from Aristotelian philosophy to elaborate his so-called “oriental philosophy”, a mystic theosophy in which the philosopher is also the prophet of the inspired science. It was in the mystic sphere that philosophy found its new followers and original thinkers like the great master Muhyi l-Din Ibn al-ʿArabi.

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30. *IC*, vol. XI, p. 402; *Talbis*, p. 294.

31. In Arabic “hulul”. This is the term adopted by the sufi al-Hallaj (d. 922) to indicate the presence of God in him. For this and other statements, he was charged with heresy and sentenced to death. Ibn al-Jawzi refers here some witnesses about al-Hallaj’s heretical conduct and relates the trial celebrated against him; *Islamic Culture*, vol. XI, pp. 364-365. On the life of al-Hallaj, see the complete study of Louis MASSIGNON, *La Passion d’al-Hosayn-ibn-Mansour al-Hallaj, martyr mystique de l’Islam*, Paris, 1922.

32. As a matter of fact, there were mystics also within the Hanbali school, like the same ʿAbd el-Qadir al-Jili (see *supra* n. 20).



ΑΝΑΣΚΕΥΗ ΤΗΣ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΑΣ ΑΠΟ ΕΝΑ ΑΡΑΒΑ
ΣΥΓΓΡΑΦΕΑ ΤΟΥ ΜΕΣΑΙΩΝΟΣ: ABU L-FARAJ IBN AL JAWZI

Περίληψη

Ὁ Abu l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzi, διαπρεπὴς ἀντιπρόσωπος τοῦ πιὸ ριζοσπαστικοῦ ρεύματος τῆς Ἰσλαμικῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας τοῦ XII αἰώνα, ἀφιερώνει ἓνα μεγάλο μέρος τοῦ πιὸ γνωστοῦ ἔργου του, *Talbis Iblis* στὴν ἀπόρριψη τῆς φιλοσοφίας, ποὺ θεωρεῖ μιὰ ἄλλη μορφή αἵρέσεως καὶ προτίθεται νὰ καταπολεμήσει.

Ὅπως εἶναι γνωστὸ ἀπὸ τὶς ἀρχές τοῦ δεύτερου μέρους τοῦ VIII αἰώνα, οἱ Ἀραβες εἶχαν ἀρχίσει νὰ μεταφράζουν τὰ κείμενα τῆς ἐλληνικῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ νὰ ἀφομοιώνουν τὰ περιεχόμενά τους μέσα ἀπὸ τὴ νέα ὀπτική τοῦ ἰσλαμικοῦ πολιτισμοῦ. Ἡ ἀντίδραση τῶν πιὸ συντηρητικῶν κύκλων τῆς ἰσλαμικῆς ὀρθοδοξίας δὲν ἄργησε νὰ φανεῖ. Ἡ φιλοσοφικὴ θεώρηση καὶ μελέτη, μὲ τὴ διεκδίκηση τοῦ δικαιώματός της γιὰ πλήρη ἀνεξαρτησία ἀπὸ τὴν ἀποκαλυπτικὴ θρησκεία, ἐκπροσωποῦσε μιὰ δυναμικὴ ἀπειλὴ ἐνάντια στὰ πρωταρχικὰ δόγματα τοῦ Ἰσλαμισμού, ἓναν ἄμεσο κίνδυνο γιὰ τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς ἰσλαμικῆς κοινότητας.

Ὁ Abū l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzi ἀναλαμβάνει μὲ τὸ ἔργο του τὴν εὐθύνη νὰ θέσει κάτω ἀπὸ ἔλεγχον αὐτὴν τὴ διαμάχη, ἀποκρούοντας τὶς ἀκόλουθες σχολές τῆς φιλοσοφικῆς θεώρησης: τὴ σοφιστικὴ, τὸν ὕλισμό, τὴ φυσιοκρατία καὶ τὸ μανιχαϊσμό. Ἡ προσοχὴ τοῦ συγγραφέα στρέφεται ἀναπόδραστα στὸ μεταφυσικὸ πρόβλημα. Ἐπιχειρεῖ, ἐπομένως, μιὰ ἀνάλυση τῶν θέσεων ποὺ κάθε σχολὴ υἱοθετεῖ σὲ σχέση μὲ τὸ ζήτημα τῆς ὕπαρξης τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τῆς οὐσίας τῆς δημιουργίας. Ἡ μέθοδος ποὺ ἀκολουθεῖ στὴν ἀνασκευή αὐτὴ ταυτίζεται μὲ τὴ λογικὴ φιλοσοφικὴ μέθοδο ἀλλὰ ἐπιδιώκει νὰ τονίσει τὶς ἐσωτερικὲς ἀντιθέσεις τοῦ ἐκάστοτε φιλοσοφικοῦ συστήματος. Ὑστερὰ ἀπὸ μιὰ σύντομὴ ἔρευνα τῶν φιλοσοφικῶν αὐτῶν συστημάτων, φθάνει στὸ συμπέρασμα ὅτι σὲ ὅ,τι ἀφορᾷ τὴ μεταφυσικὴ, ἡ φιλοσοφία περιφέρεται ἄσκοπα στὸ σκοτάδι καὶ πέφτει σὲ ἀνέφικτες ἀντιφάσεις. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος ποτὲ δὲν θὰ εἶναι σὲ θέση, μὲ τὰ ἐλάχιστα μέσα τῆς λογικῆς ποὺ διαθέτει, νὰ δώσει μιὰ τελειωτικὴ καὶ ἱκανοποιητικὴ ἀπάντηση στὰ οὐσιαστικὰ ζητήματα τῆς μεταφυσικῆς, ἐπομένως ἀναγκαστικὰ θὰ στραφεῖ στὰ κείμενα τῆς Ἀποκάλυψης. Ὁ θεωρητικὸς στοχασμὸς δὲν εἶναι ἀπόλυτα ἀβάσιμος, ἀλλὰ θὰ πρέπει νὰ περιοριστεῖ στὴ λογικὴ ἔρευνα, στὴ μηχανικὴ καὶ στὶς ἄλλες φυσικὲς ἐπιστῆμες.

Ἡ αὐστηρὴ αὐτὴ θέση ποὺ παίρνει ὁ Ibn al-Jawzi ἀπέναντι στὸ ρόλο τῆς φιλοσοφίας θὰ ἔχει βαθειὰ ἀπήχηση σὲ μερικοὺς ἀπὸ τοὺς πιὸ σημαντικοὺς Ἰσλαμιστές, ὅπως ὁ Ibn Taymiya, ποὺ μὲ τὰ ἔργα του ἀσκεῖ ἀκόμη ἰσχυρὴ ἐπίδραση στὸν ἀραβο-ἰσλαμικὸ κόσμον.

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