

Religious Assent and Philosophy in Averroes' *Fasl al-maqal**

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Abstract: An original work of Averroes, the *Fasl al-maqal* is remarkable for its controversial character. Composed as a juridical statement, one of its main goals is to analyze the role of philosophy in the Islamic Law by investigating which attitude must be adopted by those aware of the works of the Greek antiquity. Facing a problematic scenario, in which the legitimacy of philosophy is challenged, the diagnosis and solution proposed by Averroes emphasizes a unique interpretation of the Law guided by Philosophy, devised as a required element to achieve community welfare. This article intends to analyze that interpretation, in which three points concerning the relationship between philosophy and revelation arise: (1) the assurance of the individual possibility of religious assent; (2) the maintenance of common welfare, associated to (3) the possibility of asserting the legitimacy of an interpreter who is able to assure the correct assent to common believers.

Keywords: Averroes, *Fals al-Maqal*, Shari'a, Falsafa, Philosopher Believer, Common Believer.

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The reception and appropriation of the ancient philosophy by the *Falsafa*¹ was constituted as a period of intense intellectual activity among these peoples. In approximately six centuries, this work of reception gave rise to a long list of commentaries and authorial texts that faced philosophical problems derived from Antiquity and that also deepened, from this contact, many issues related to the conceptual background of Islam. It is important to emphasize that the contact established between the conceptual heritage of Antiquity and the political-religious context in which the *Falsafa* is developed does not take place without great disturbance. Even if one argues, in this context, that Antiquity had been taken only as a paradigmatic horizon of questions, several incompatibilities will be faced by those who not only sought to investigate the knowledge developed by this Greek heritage, but who also seemed to have taken the responsibility for continuing its science. It is possible to find records of this self-declared call throughout the Arabic Philosophy, which consider fundamental the reception and continuity of the study of what had been developed by Antiquity as image of a progressive development of humanity towards knowledge.

When, though, the little which each one of them who has acquired the truth is collected, something of great worth is assembled from this. It is proper that our gratitude be great to those who have contributed even a little of the truth, let alone who those who have contributed much truth, since they have shared with us the fruits of their thought and facilitated our approaches to the truth. (Al-Kindi, 1974, p. 57).

The passage quoted above was extracted from Al-Kindi's *First Philosophy*, which manifests one of the first records of what can be comprehended as an attempt of elaborating answers to questions proper to his religious context by mobilizing categories of Greek Antiquity, mainly the works of Aristotle and Neoplatonism². Due to this approach of the issues, Al-Kindi can be considered the first of the *Falasifah*, so that it is possible to note the mentioned character of continuity that the reception of ancient philosophy acquires to this author, whose expression of this premise can be explicitly observed in his works (Cf. FAKHRY, 1968, p. 78-79).

Some centuries later, Averroes will also be directly involved in this continuing task of which our brief mention of the first of the *falasifah* seek to illustrate (Cf. FAKHRY, 1968, p. 82). It is possible to bring closer this inclination between the two authors, once several moments of their work enable us to notice that the presence of Antiquity manifests in Averroes as source of investigative premises from which the wise or anyone who seeks wisdom must see themselves as successors.

From this it has become evident that reflection upon the books of the Ancients is obligatory according to the Law, for their aim and intention in their books is the very intention to which the Law urges us. (AVERROES, 2001, p. 5)

¹ In short, between the VIII and XII centuries A.C., in which the territories controlled by Islam get in touch with authors and works of Greek antiquity. The term *falsafa* is the translation of the Greek word "philosophy" into Arabic. It specifically refers to the kind of science practiced by the Greeks.

² It is important to mention that an apocryphal text called "Aristotle's Theology" is one of the main sources, especially for Al-Kindi, of this neoplatonic presence (Cf. PSEUDO-ARISTÓTELES, 2012).



Perhaps the most famous example of this attempt of continuity can be read in the *Kitab Fals al-maqal wa taqrir ma bayn ash-shari'a wal-hikma min al-ittisal*³, one of his most polemic and known texts. This *fatwa*⁴ investigates what its long title highlights: “The Decisive Discourse in which the Connection between the Revelation and Philosophy is Established”. Besides that, the relation declared in the title seems sufficient to state the amplitude of the issue that Averroes faces in this work, that is, thinking the horizon of philosophy in its relation with the Islam of his time. According to Geoffroy, this context had never faced such issue from the point of view of its legitimacy (Cf. GEOFFROY, 1999, p. 10).

It is worth remembering that this work is produced in a political context in which antagonistic positions take place with respect to the theoretical and practical orderings of Islam, as well as with regard to the very investigations on the nature of men and on everything which they develop as their own activity. The approach of these points by Averroes will lead to the practice of philosophy to the center of the discussion, pointing it out as fundamental element to the adequate ordering of these issues. One of the most direct consequences of his analysis is that the philosopher's position in his community becomes necessary and fundamental to the proper maintenance of its structure (Cf. MAKKI, 1993, p. 20).

The individual orientation to actions practiced by men seems to play a central role in Averroes' study, not only the general orientation of the community to which they belong. These two aspects are fundamental to what is called “general well-being” in its relation to the Divine Law (BUTTERWORTH, 2007, p. 190). For this reason, it is also important to understand how his thought develops in the midst of conflicting positions in relation to the religious domain, since he seems to have in mind two fundamental aspects related to the Islamic Law (*figh*): (1) a consensus building as a way of popular support of an issue of the religious orthodoxy; (2) and the identification of the elements that guarantee the effectiveness of the individual assent.

These two points can be disputed in the following manner: (2) whether it is possible to state that the divine omnipotence is a principle that cannot be denied by a believer; (2) which makes also necessary to consider that there is much divergence in relation to its nature, which can be modified by conflicting interpretations. Philosophy seems to be placed exactly between the two mentioned elements; (2) as a guarantee to the possibility of individual religious assent by extending the demonstration to the solution of conflicts among the interpretations, (1) and by also assuring that the popular consent is in accordance with the results of the demonstration. In other words, what seems to be at play is individual salvation and political stability. (Cf. BELO, 2016, p. 37).

³ It is worth mentioning the great number of translations in many languages of this text. We stress Charles Butterworth's (2008) and Georges Hourani's (1976) translations to English; Manuel Alonso's (1947), Vera Yamumi Tabuch's (1996), and Rafael Ramón Guerrero's (1998) Spanish versions; Marc Geoffroy's (1996) translation to French; Massimo Campanini's (1994) translation to Italian; Frank Griffel's (2010) German version; Márcia Valéria's (2005) and Catarina Belo's (2006) translations to Portuguese. We make use of Márcia Valéria's (AVERROES, 2005) text, compared with Marc Geoffroy's (GEOFFROY, 1998), George Hourani's (HOURANI, 2012) and Charles Butterworth's (BUTTERWORTH, 2001) versions. This work is part of an ensemble that, according to Fakhry, represents what is fundamental to the comprehension of what can be called Averroes' independent thought. The other works are: *Kitab al-Kashf'an manahij al-adilla*, or “The Development of Demonstration Methods of the Dogmas of the Islamic Religion”; *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, or “The Incoherence of Incoherence” (Cf. FAKHRY, 1968, p. 78).

⁴ A *fatwa* is a legal report that has the objective of announcing the judge's report with regard to a particular matter, in this case the relation between the revelation and philosophy (NANJI, 2008, p. 87).

In this regard, we notice that Averroes seems to indicate that one of the great sources of conflicting interpretations is centered in al-Ghazali's figure.⁵ Which can also lead us to a third question, for the most immediate question is also on the control of the city, or rather, on the manner through which this control will be conducted. Who will be the interpreter authorized by the Scriptures, in the absence of the prophet, to conduct men correctly in accordance with their assent and religious practices? For Mensia, what will motivate the writing of the *Fasl al-maqal*, as well as of the *Kash an manahij* and of the *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, is precisely the conflict propelled by al-Chazali's work (Cf. MENSIA, 2019, p. 41)

In this article we bear in mind the analysis of the solution to these questions provided by Averroes in the *Fasl al-maqal*, which seem to be more directly implicated in the thesis on the connection between philosophy and revelation presented in the title of the work. In short, we will analyze his solution to the apparent conflict between philosophy and revelation, taking into account the need of guaranteeing individual religious assent, the maintenance of social well-being, and the choice of a legit interpreter of the Sacred Book.

Justifying Philosophy

One of the initial premises of the *Fasl al-maqal* is the analysis of the status occupied by philosophy in the lives of men and the investigation of whether its practice is in accordance with that which the Religious Law (*Shari'a*)⁶ authorizes or whether this exercise moves men away from the path of religion.

Now, the goal of this statement is for us to investigate, from the perspective of Law-based reflection, whether reflection upon philosophy and the sciences of logic is permitted, prohibited, or commanded – and this as a recommendation or as an obligation – by the Law. (AVERROES, 2001, p. 1)

It is in this regard that he will analyze the status of the authorization or prohibition of the access to demonstration books (*kitab al-burhan*) and the practice of this science by men. Marc Geoffroy points out that this passage corresponds to the domain of the five qualifications that the Islamic Law (*fiqh*) establishes with respect to human actions (Cf. GEOFFROY, 1996, p. 175)⁷. The passage quoted above seems to aim the emphasis to three aspects, the prohibition (*haram*), the recommendation (*mandub 'ilay-hi*), and the obligation (*wajib*). What seems to be at play in the discussion is firstly the prohibition; the advocacy of philosophy presented in the first part of the text has the aim of removing this qualification, which would interdict completely its practice. Furthermore, once the prohibition thesis is removed, one will need to comprehend the nature of its practice, whether it is recommended for any believer who has the conditions to follow it or whether it is an obligation with which everybody must comply (Cf. TAYLOR, 2014, p. 458).

For Averroes, prohibiting capable men the access to the Sacred Book brings serious consequences because it prevents these men from the possibility of rightly achieving their religious assent (*tasdiq*), that is, of accomplishing their internal movement of acknowledging religion (Cf. BELO, 2016, p. 38). By understanding that every man can make use of his own means to get closer to the knowledge of God

⁵ Al-Ghazali's work was very popular in Averroes' time. It is also worth mentioning his rejection of philosophy. Averroes is contrary to him in several works, having dedicated one, the *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, to refute him on basis of al-Ghazali's own work, the *Tahafut al-falasifah* (WOHLMAN, 2010). In his work *Les deux facettes de l'unique vérité. Révélation Coranique et 'excellence humaine' selon Averroès*, the author affirms that the *Fasl al-maqal* would be one of Averroes' reactions to the disturbance provoked by Al-Ghazali (Cf. WOHLMAN, 2004, p. 582).

⁶ The fundamental point of the Shari'a are the Koran and the Sunna. However, the divergences are investigated through the establishment of the consent (*Lyma*) and analogy (*Qyias*) (Cf. MAKKI, 1993, p. 21).

⁷ The classification of human acts is divided into five categories: the ones recommended by the Law, the obligatory ones, the condemnable ones, and the prohibited ones. The Islamic Law prescribes the levels of punishment and reward of human actions based on this classification.



through the conditions he is in possession to reflect, what seems to be at play is the establishment of a dynamic way to the assent, for every man will be able to get closer to the knowledge of God in accordance with what is proper to himself, be it by means of a superficial individual image or through a demonstrative syllogism. The point at issue is that any practice which involves the calculating part of the soul will be subject to mistakes, precisely because of its inaccuracy, which does not mean that these mistakes are sufficient to sustain the prohibition of the practice of this science (Cf. MAKKI, 1993, p. 25-26).

Averroes clarifies that this mistake was caused by an occasional misunderstanding derived from the limited comprehension of the formulations which constitute reasoning, which would lead men to wrong conclusions about religion. For him, the practice of the demonstrative science is necessary so that men can get closer to the comprehension of aspects relative to the divine causality, which, in turn, would suppress this superficial mistake by finding its universal purpose, which is not bad. In this regard, true evil is in the hands of men who have a dialectical interpretation of the dogmas of religion and who would try to conduct the masses by affirming themselves as endowed with a universal knowledge they do not possess. (Cf. BUTTERWORTH, 1972, p. 900).

Dialectics is not an evil in itself and the only objection to it is the fact that its premises are derived from opinion, which makes its results lack the precision that can be reached from demonstration (Cf. BUTTERWORTH, 1972, p. 895). Two important considerations can be extracted from these points: the first, that the demonstrative science seems to be necessary to the religious assent of certain men; the second, that, through this knowledge, men get rightly closer to their religious assent. This also seems to condition the one who intends to get closer to the Creator by searching for knowledge of His work.

If the activity of philosophy is nothing more than reflection upon existing things and consideration of them insofar as they are an indication of the Artisan – I mean insofar as they are artifacts, for existing things indicate the Artisan only through cognizance of the art in them, and the more complete cognizance of the Artisan – and if the Law has recommended and urged consideration of existing things, then it is evident that what this name indicates is either obligatory or recommended by the Law. (AVERROES, 2001, p.1)⁸

The use of demonstration does not hurt the orthodoxy of the religious law, even if its use is not predicted by the Koran or the tradition. As justification for the prohibition of philosophy, the argument that its use is a reprehensible innovation (*bi'da*) is grounded on the idea that there is no Koranic indication that justifies it. Averroes points out that the legal use of the syllogism was not originally associated to Islam either, for it was later rediscovered and incorporated by the tradition.

That is why it is fundamental to make use of what was analyzed by Antiquity: “the Ancients in the most complete manner – therefore, we ought perhaps to seize their books in our hands and reflect upon what they have said about that. And if it is all correct, we will accept it from them. Whereas, if there is anything not correct in it, we will alert [people] to it” (Averroes, 2001, p. 4). Science unfolds progressively, it is the heritage of human activity that reflects the practice of rationality as a whole, in its existence beside humanity. What was left by the Ancients must be resumed in the name of the continuity of science (Cf. BELO, 2016, p. 26).

Obviously, because it is a science, it is very natural that men make mistakes in their development. Legal science in Islam, which was the first to make use of the syllogism as analysis method, would have made

⁸ Marc Geoffroy (1996, p. 103, footnote 3), in the translation of this passage, fully exposes the link Averroes tries to establish between the nature of the knowledge of beings, which is manifested through the demonstration, and the postulate of the Koran, which obliges every believer to assent to the necessity of the divine existence, based on the acknowledgement of his very condition of creature. Márcia Valéria Aguiar's translation (2005, p. 3, footnote 3) also mentions the verses of the Koran that can support this passage.



many mistakes, not due to its method or the use of the syllogism, but because it was created by flawed men, who were dedicated to mundane issues and who harm the correct development of this science.

To how many jurists has jurisprudence been a cause of diminished devoutness and immersion in this world! Indeed, we find most jurists to be like this, yet what their art requires in essence is practical virtue. Therefore, it is not strange that there occurs, with respect to the art requiring scientific virtue, what occurs with respect to the art requiring practical virtue. (AVERROES, 2001, p.6)

For him, the same conclusion can be reached in the case of philosophy because justifying that its study is prohibited, due to the bad use some men made of it, is also a mistake. In this case, who prohibits it makes a bigger mistake because he incurs in a fault of essential nature, whereas the man who makes a mistake in the practice of a science fails only accidentally. Thus, it is worse that this science is prohibited than the fact that some men can be misled by the use they made of it: “It is not obligatory to renounce to something useful in its nature and essence because of something harmful existing in it by accident” (AVERROES, 2001, p. 5). It seems to be a fundamental mistake prohibiting men from having their nature focused on the study of philosophy and from developing such science, for it means preventing their noblest and most essential characteristic to be unfolded, so that they seek their full actualization (Cf. BELO, 2016, p. 38).

In this regard, it is important to mention that the interpretation developed by Averroes in relation to the practice of philosophy is not consensual among his contemporaries. For some of these, philosophy is understood as an investigative practice, whose critical final balance has to rely on the distancing from the social structure for the achievement of a universal comprehension of the world. The philosopher would have to move away, to a certain extent, from everyday life in order to have his privileged comprehension of the universe.

In the same direction, this seems to be more directly related to the obstacle of religious nature, which by considering that such practice would lead men to a sort of truth not dependent on the revelation – or, rather, that it would subvert it to their interests –, finds great problems in the investigative practice of philosophy. For Hourani (1978, p. 24), Averroes’ fall would have been motivated by the disturbance among the citizens of Cordoba, caused by his defense of philosophy, because the general orientation seemed to indicate that philosophers considered religion as a tool for control, destined to individuals who are not capable of reaching knowledge of philosophical nature. The latter, who know a science closer to the truth, would be exempted from the vulgar religious comprehension, being able to get more freely closer to the divine.

It is worth remembering that due to the nature of his knowledge, the understanding that the philosopher becomes a man separated from the world has been a relatively popular idea since Antiquity (Cf. GIOVANNI, 2019, p. 09). Cordoba, the city where Averroes spent a large part of his life, had already known two thinkers whose works seem to indicate such inclination. Ibn Bajja (Avempace) and Ibn Tufayl, famous compatriots of our author, wrote works which indicated that the approximation of a state of wisdom has as one of its implications a certain distancing from mundane life.⁹ The position defended by Averroes is opposed to this view and it indicates that the role of the philosopher is integrated with the community. Besides that, life in the community is what enables individuals to achieve a certain degree of perfection.

Furthermore, it is important to notice that political interests, directed to the adhesion of the masses, could have in mind the legitimization of control mechanisms (Cf. BELO, 2016, p. 23). In this regard, it is also possible to understand the interpretation that states that philosophy represents a threat to the

⁹Two works are worth emphasizing: Ibn Bajja’s “*The Loner’s Regime*” and Ibn Tufayl’s “*The Autodidact Philosopher*”. In short, we can say that both works understand philosophy as a path to the divine, which has the progressive distancing from the world as a consequence.



compliance with the religious law, for apparently dispersing men in an individual investigative practice, which does not represent the necessary consent for the establishment of an order.

The dispute between philosophy and religion is known for a long time by researchers of Medieval Philosophy, a dispute which in the horizon of the *falsafa* expresses itself in a different way in relation to the manner which it was widely known in Christianity. Philosophy seems to have never been truly institutionalized by the Arabians and its debate was kept in the limits of its validity before the revealed text. Facing several anti-philosophical manifestations¹⁰, their effort to converge had as aim the possibility of institutionalization of philosophy, that is, of putting it at the service of revelation as a central element, although complementary and non-obligatory to salvation. It seems fundamental that, for Averroes, manifestations of faith can be obtained through different sources and they guarantee all men the possibility of religious assent. To simple men, the guarantee of assent is given through images and allegories, whereas to practitioners of the demonstrative science, the possibility of transcending images is related to how much they advance in the demonstrative knowledge (Cf. BELO, 2016, p. 34).

It is not a matter of dispensing men from religious practice, but of not considering that a certain vulgar comprehension of religion, an imagistic one, does not fit them. Averroes does not seem to agree with any of the positions mainly because he does not see them as opposed, but as complementary. The role of religion cannot be disregarded even by men of demonstration, for it is for the sake of improving their assent that them is given the permission of carrying out investigative procedures (CAMPANINI, 2007, p. 217). Science is nothing but a proof of God's existence, and the one named by Averroes as "the artisan's proof" is one of the investigative premises of the *Fasl al-maqal*. How can God not want that men use their noblest capacity, that is, reason? And what is the function of the rational capacity but guiding men to the knowledge of the Creator from the knowledge of his creation?

That the Law calls for consideration of existing things by means of the intellect and for pursuing cognizance of them by means of it is evident from various verses in the Book of God (may He be blessed and exalted). There is His statement (may he be exalted), "Consider, you who have sight" [59:2] this is a text for the obligation of using both intellectual and Law-based syllogistic reasoning. And there is His statement (may he be exalted), "Have they reflected upon the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what things God has created?" [7:185]. This is a text urging reflection upon all existing things. (AVERROES, 2001, p. 1).

This attempt of harmoniously converging revelation and philosophical practice has as main point the establishment, through this connection, of a regime in which philosophy is positively integrated to the scope of human life, which seems to be the solution to this alleged dilemma that philosophers distanced themselves from religion. As methodological procedure, one can notice that Averroes' investigation in the commentary on the Stagirite is focused on the procedures carried out by men regarding human knowledge, whereas the analysis of works, such as the *Fals al-maqal*, seem to incline to the comprehension of these processes in a wider manner, integrated to the horizon of everyday life or in their greater purpose, which refers to revelation. (Cf. FARJEAT, 2014, p. 104). The legal character of this work is not limited to a regulative or normative procedure by legally establishing the formal limits of the possibility of relation manifested in the title. Despite its epistolary and brief nature, the structure of the text has many remarks with respect to a broader and integrative comprehension of the revelation as fundamental orientation, not only of simple men, but of the philosopher himself and his activity.

Understanding the status of philosophy, be it as obligation, recommendation, or even as prohibition, classifications proper to the Islamic Law, has also the objective of establishing a *shari'a* that is truly closer to religion. If the Sacred Book can be understood as a guide for the conduction of men, the religious practice

¹⁰ As the already mentioned work of Al-Ghazali.

means the adoption of this guidance, and understanding it is fundamental to anyone who has as aim the true practice (Cf. FARLEAT, 2014, p. 102).

The Philosopher as Guide

The great challenge is to demonstrate that rationality has also the necessary elements for the apprehension, through its development, of part of the truth, beyond what is manifested in revelation. It is not a matter of abandoning religion towards a kind of philosophical religion, or of a belief in the independency of reason, but of an effort to show that rationality, the manifestation of the divine in men, is also a Creator's tool so that men can understand the creation (Cf. SARRIÓ, 2015, p. 60).

The extension of the actualization of the rational capacity will be directly related to the perception of what is expressed in the relation, justifying it in a deeper way than in men who do not practice this science. For Averroes, the true philosopher, who accomplishes more excellently the ideal of rationality, is the one who makes use of his science as a way to improve his religious assent, not to move away from it (CAMPANINI, 2007, p. 219). The true philosopher is also a passionate believer because he finds through philosophy the universal elements to make his faith more solid than the faith of other men.

This effort to find assent cannot be prevented. For this reason, these men cannot be prohibited from studying the demonstrative science because the Creator would not endow men with such capacity if its use was prohibitive or sinful (Cf. BELO, 2016, p. 32). True philosophical investigation is a path to religious assent. This direction confers a new status to demonstration (*al-Burhân*), which is not only recommended but obligatory to the cases in which the religious assent depends on it.

[...] is like the one who prevents thirsty people from drinking cool, fresh water until they die of thirst because some people choked on it and died. For dying of choking on water is an accidental matter, whereas [dying] by thirst is an essential, necessary matter. (AVERROES, 2001, p. 6).

Perhaps the more imposing dispute in this context is the one related to the interpreter of the sacred text. The great dispute on the legitimacy of philosophy is also guided by the role of its legitimacy in religious context. For the accusation made towards philosophers, in this context, is of appealing to philosophical practice in order to divert from the need of religion (FARJEAT, 2014, p. 110). In other words, the accusation of intending, through non-pious explanations, to clarify what is already contained in revelation, leading men to error with regard to the religious assent and, thus, condemning them. He understands that men can have access to philosophy because it does not extend to all of them¹¹.

This seems to concern a certain organic comprehension of the city, which Averroes inherited from Al-Farabi or which had been oriented by the reading of Plato's *Republic*, the only work commented by him (Cf. MENSIA, 2019, p. 42). In this regard, it is important to note that harmony and justice in the city will be found in the just fulfilment of the citizens' functions. This presupposes a certain levelling of functions, but also imposes a certain freedom in characterization, once every individual has before themselves an investigative horizon that fits them.¹²

¹¹ According to BOU AKL (2019, p. 62), Averroes' position actually reduces the space for interpretation, it does not expand its possibilities. Other readings, such as GIOVANNI's (2019, p. 16) and BELO's (2016, p. 30), understand that Averroes' purpose is broader in the sense that he relates philosophical practice to an activity naturally developed by men.

¹² This propaedeutic aspect of life in community can also be observed in his commentary to Plato's *Republic*: "It has also been explained that it is either impossible for one person to be distinguished in all these virtues or, if it were possible, that he would be hard to find. Rather is it possible that it exists mostly in many individuals (together). It is likewise seen to be impossible for one person to make (even) one of these virtues his own without the help of other persons; man is in need of others in acquiring his virtue. Therefore, he is a political being by nature" (AVERROES, 1969, 369a, p. 113).



In this regard, the Revealed Law is a guide to all men, but a beacon that leads every man to his own path. Both the imposition of an orthodoxy marked by a strict literalism and of a regime that imposes a philosophical orientation to the masses seem extreme positions because they disrespect the meaning expressed in the sacred text, that is, that any man assents in the best way possible. According to him, one must be careful with this procedure because the interdiction of the texts of demonstrative nature must be directed to individuals who do not present the necessary skill: “what is obligatory for the Imams of the Muslims is that they ban those of these books that contain science from all but those adept in science.” (AVERROES, 2001, p. 17)

Even a man experimented in the demonstrative science can make a mistake, once the revelation has passages that remain mysterious even to these men. For instance, the issue of future life, which is controversial for apparently not providing a possible interpretation of its nature, but only of the obligation of its belief. For Averroes, the belief in future life is the perfect example of a subject matter whose investigative access must be restricted to men of demonstrative science, whereas common men must conform to the interpretation of imagery. Since the understanding of its obligation is one of the principles of Islam, it is evident that a believer cannot deny it in their assent; because this does not occur and their interpretation does not incline to a sort of condemnable innovation, it is totally acceptable that it is constituted by images.

It seems that the learned person who commits an error with respect to this question is to be excused and the one who hits the mark is to be thanked or rewarded – that is, if he acknowledges the existence [of the next life] and gives a manner of interpretation of it not leading to the disavowal of its existence. (AVERROES, 2001, p. 16)

Furthermore, Averroes understands that a big part of the investigative procedure with respect to this issue is structured in the sense of providing an adequate interpretation of it. It is in this sense that the role of the interpreter who knows the demonstrative science takes place. His private interpretation in search of his own assent will enable him to access the dialectic premises and images, with which he will be able to build rhetorical and dialectical tools for men who do not have the capacity of accessing the demonstrative science: “For anyone not adept in science, it is obligatory to take them [the descriptions of the next life] in their apparent sense. For him, it is unbelief to interpret them because it leads to unbelief.” (AVERROES, 2001, p. 16).

Since having the medium term enables the investigator of the demonstration to indicate images that are more in accordance with the issue to be explained, the function of philosophy seems to complement the function of revelation in the sense that it expands the possibility of clarification both for whom is already conformed with the rhetorical or dialectical explanation and for individuals who will only quiet their souls in the investigation of the medium term. As Mensia states (2019, p. 31), this is a logic that has multiple layers, some of them evident, others not. This procedure is fundamental because the gratuity of the revelation is only complete in the accomplishment of what men have as possibility. The effect of the revelation is only complete when the man also converts his capacity into a positive disposition and, subsequently, into act.

It is important to investigate the relation between assent and the actuality of the soul because the interpretation is not only an accessory image and it is not expected that it replaces the truth apparently inaccessible to certain men, but which, without the image, will not enable men to become believers. The symbol provided by the philosopher will not be something different from the truth, that is why the interpreter needs to get closer to the demonstrative meaning, which would manifest what Averroes calls “hidden meaning” (AVERROES, 2005, p. 47) and which refers to the comprehension of the two conditions which the scientific syllogism must satisfy, that is, necessity and causality. This hidden meaning would be related to a broader comprehension of the creation, oriented by a universal perspective.

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Yet the harm befalling people from demonstrative books is lighter, because for the most part only those with superior innate dispositions take up demonstrative books. And this sort [of people] is misled only through a lack of practical virtue, reading in a disorderly manner, and turning to them without a teacher. (AVERROES, 2001, p. 17).

This responsibility is of great importance, once the access of unprepared men to the demonstration will not only lead them to errors. The problem pointed out by Averroes also refers to the fact that many men, supposed knowers of the hidden meaning of revelation, are devoted to leading men, and that the mistakes in the interpretation are transmitted to other men, which compromises not only their salvation. For Averroes, the demonstration books must have their access limited by these conditions. Preventing these capable men from the access to the demonstration constitutes a grave fault. “[...] because it is a wrong to the best sort of people and to the best sort of existing things. For justice with respect to the best sort of existing things is for them to be cognized to their utmost degree by those prepared to be cognizant of them to their utmost degree, and these are the best sort of people.” (AVERROES, 2001, p. 17)

This seems to be one of Averroes’ ways to show that philosophy has a fundamental role in the very constitution of what man is, and it is an unavoidable part of the scope of what constitutes rationality. The study of philosophy is more than a simple recommendation. In some cases, it is necessary for the assent of certain men. According to Averroes, the invitation is made by revelation itself, which calls men to the knowledge of the Creator.

In this context, the philosopher is placed in a central position, playing a fundamental role for men whose comprehension is limited (BRENET, 2015, p. 05). But his role as guide has a sort of dubious character because he shows simple men the possibility of assent through a common manner, symbolically clear and in conformity with the truth. But he also fits the position of a guardian who hides the treasure from the hands of those who are not in condition of contemplating its light. This seems to place the philosopher in the exact center of public life, from which he will not be able to distance himself, even if his universal comprehension of what men only partially know is not enough to guide them out of this material world through them alone.

It is also vital to understand that the man who has the religious obligation of orienting other men, from his knowledge of the obscure aspects of the revelation, cannot deny the public life. On the contrary, he must play his role in the city as the legit interpreter of the sacred text. This is the kind of life that seems to fit men more properly: the kind that enables them to fulfill their nature inside the city (Cf. GIOVANNI, 2019, p. 16).

The function of conducting the mass of simple men will keep existing, but in conformity with the investigative role of the practitioners of the demonstrative science, who will guide men in accordance with the results obtained in their investigation. For Mensia (2019, p. 31), arguments are presented as inferential paths which believers must follow in their own reflection towards religious adhesion. What changes in this relation is that the interpretation provided by the philosopher will be in conformity with the result of a demonstrative syllogism, not of a dialectical premise which, due to its imprecise characteristic, may bring dangerous imprecisions. The demonstration has the necessary accuracy so that its derived objects, images, and dialectical formulations can be observed by all individuals equally, only distinct in the degree of accuracy, but in conformity with the truth of the investigated object. It is the philosopher’s job to complete the assent of simple men, whose investigation of the images provided will lead to their religious assent in conformity with the truth. Still according to Mensia (2019, p. 31): “In their construction, the Lawgiver proves to be not only an insightful pedagogue but also a fine logician.”



The Individual Religious Assent (*Tasdiq*)

The comprehension of a blurred path to the assent, which enables both the approximation of simple men and the guarantee of the specificity of the assent proper to philosophers, results in a series of methodological problems that need to be addressed in the context of this debate.

This also seems to indicate that improving the comprehension for religious assent is directly related to the degree of approximation each individual achieves. The assent is open to all men insofar as the Creator's work shows the effects of His cause in all beings. What seems to be oriented to the same gratuity is the nature of the assent, which, in accordance with what we said above, can be established in several ways, maintaining the gratuity of the assent, but not its quality. An objection of the kind may seem irrelevant since one may think that what is fundamental is reaching assent. However, the characterization presented by Averroes aims not only to the access of simple men of an approximation to the divine, but he also takes into consideration that an individual who reaches assent by means of the demonstrative science will not be able to assent in another way anymore. Preventing him from following such path is also blocking his access to the comprehension of the revelation in a satisfactory way (THOM, 2019, p. 81).

What is the religious assent (*tasdiq*)? It is one of the foundational acts of the belief that every follower of Islam, which is marked by a movement of assent in which the believer is subjected to the revelation of the Koran, which he takes as rule and fundamental orientation to his existence (Cf. SARRIÓ, 2015, p. 51). Such movement of conversion is not at all simple, since it is involved which a set of elements on which depends its full accomplishment and which may compromise it in many cases.

We understand that achieving the assent implies a double movement, in which the universal and objective revelation is harmonized with the individual structure of human reason and which transforms individuals whose souls are in conformity with this rule, for having accepted it as truth (Cf. BELO, 2016, . 38). What Averroes seems to understand is that the reasons through which individuals choose to assent are many, some of them more complex and elaborated, reached with much effort and difficulty, but which produce a more profound assent from their ground, whereas other ways of assent are milder due to their superficial presentation, being more easily produced, and also more prone to deviations as result from their inaccuracy.

Rational capacity is what provides the possibility for assent, for it is through it that men find before themselves the horizon of freedom which enables them to make that choice. It is also for this reason that there are different levels of assent, for rationality, as the individual realization of the essential capacity of men, will guide the degree of the assent. Thus, Averroes does not find a reasonable justification for separating the philosophical and religious domains, except a reason for their complementary and harmonious characterization (Cf. BELO, 2016, p. 37), insofar as the effectiveness of rationality is also the expansion of the possibility of a deeper religious assent, both of who investigates and of who is oriented by the result of another's investigation. Philosophy cannot be denied to men because it is the very expression of this capacity of assent, which can be developed (Cf. TAYLOR, 2014, p. 458).

The result of the religious assent is happiness, and the more effective the first, the more complete is the latter. The instruction of simple men has the intention of producing this relation. And the difference between the assent in the simple and in learned men concerns the degree that their conclusions reach. Common men receive sufficient orientation for their individual demands, so that it produces the assent which conforms with them sufficiently. In other words, its degree is expressed in a sufficient manner in order to quiet the disturbance in their spirits, nothing more than that.

And that because he commanded people to the knowledge of God – may He be exalted – through a median path, beyond the low level of imitative conformism and behind the Eristic of dialectical theologians; and warn the elite

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towards the need of radical commitment to the rational exam of the Principle of the Law. (AVERROES, 1996, p.171, our translation).¹³

Sufficiency is not the philosopher's only aim, but he also aims to reach an optimal state in which the searched answer is shown in a necessary and comprehensive way, proper to the demonstrative investigation. For common men, only the sufficient answer for their demands is possible, whereas men of science are authorized to search for completeness (WOHLMAN, 2004, p. 589). What changes is only the degree of depth? Averroes differentiates theoretical and practical virtues in levels, placing the first ones in the regency of the others. The amplitude of the theoretical knowledge places the practical orientation under its governance. In fact, practice is many times oriented towards the individual and the scope of the demands of existence. These are aspects from which the theoretical virtue moves away due to its disengagement from individuality and from occasion.

Similarly, it is important to consider the distancing which this gradation causes between these elements. Because a virtue of practical nature is something that Averroes understands as proper to the service of human needs, which have to be attended only in conformity with their need, whereas the theoretical virtue has a greater objective, more complete when compared with the sheer satisfaction of a demand. For Averroes, theoretical sciences prepare men to practice, precisely because they contemplate the peculiar situations pertaining the practical domain.

The example of the doctor presupposes that he has two inclinations in the practice of his science, the first of the two is healing his patients. In order to heal an individual, the doctor gives them a prophylaxis with the aim of reaching a state of balance of the corporal functions or, in other words, a prophylaxis that aims the recovery of a condition of sufficiency. Thus, it is not possible to cure them excessively, but only in conformity with the measure of health.

In fact, the correspondence is exact because the doctor's relation with the health of the bodies is identical with the Legislator's relation with the health of the souls: the doctor is the one who seeks the preservation of the bodies insofar as there is health, or their recovery insofar as there is not [health] anymore; and the Legislator is the one who aspires to the same regarding the health of the souls. (AVERROES, 1996, p.163, our translation).¹⁴

On the other hand, the doctor also has the inclination for his practice as a science, which not only turns him into a "sufficient" doctor, but also for achieving the plenitude of this science. In the first case, the inclination serves the necessary sufficiency for the recovery of balance, whereas the second inclination seeks to overcome this insufficiency. They are two degrees of the same conceptual orientation. Averroes seems to understand that it is not possible to conceive them separately, except for didactic purposes. For the accomplishment of both takes place in the concreteness of existence as proof of the continuity of both inclinations, which also point out to the continuity between practice and theory.

That is why the philosopher's duty is to guide men who are not capable of reaching this theoretical level. The intellectual assistance provided actualizes this potential state in their souls, increasing, although superficially, their individual disposition to knowledge. It is worth remembering that, for Averroes, science

¹³This can also be read in the *Tahafut al-Tahafut*: "The masses must learn that the human knowledge is not enough to deal with these issues, and they must seek for what the teachings of the Sacred Law brings in its texts, for these are teachings in which all can participate and they are sufficient to achieve happiness." (AVERROIS, 1954, p. 359).

¹⁴Averroes resorts to this kind of example in other works, as we can see in the *Tahafut al-Tahafut*: "And just as the doctor investigates the measure of health which is in accordance with the healthy for the preservation of their health, and with the sick for the cure of their illness, the man of the Sacred Law instructs the masses only in the necessary measure for the acquisition of their happiness." (AVERROES, 1954, p. 258).



has the role of presenting the effects of the creation to men and to reveal, indirectly, the presence of the Creator in it. Those who reach this comprehension have the task of trying to also produce it in the souls of men who do not actualize this capacity.

This distinction of classes of men also means the distinction of the possible levels through which men can comprehend the sacred text, as well as of the deep of levels of religious assent that can be reached by them. The scripture perfectly manifests the truth and reaches all men; the distinction of these forms concerns the limitations proper to composed beings and, despite the fact that the science of an individual can be perfectly developed in act, it encompasses only a limited perspective of the revelation, which boils down to the very condition of assent. It is through this diffuse way that the Sacred Book serves all men as revelation, as can be read in the passage: “That is because, when this divine Law of yours called to people be means of these three methods, assent to it was extended to every human being – except to the one who denies it obstinately in speech of for whom no methods have been determined in it for summoning to God (may He be exalted) due to his own neglect of that” (Averroes, 2001, p. 6).

For each kind of person there is an assent. Averroes distinguishes three modes of assent, which relate to the three natures of people. The first relates to those who find their assent through rhetorical arguments, these are people who do not have much development in knowledge and they are limited almost exclusively to the level of sensible images with regard to their individual knowledge (BUTTERWORTH, 1972, p. 900). These are people who many times depend on more instructed men who provide them with the religious orientation to complete their assent. The second kind of assent is produced in people who find themselves on a level above rhetoric, but who still have their assent provisionally grounded in dialectical arguments and although they are able to formulate hypotheses on religious matters, their conclusions are harmed by the contingent character of their hypotheses. Usually, they resort to generalizations of the common sense and reach some premises adequate to an investigation, however, they lack the precision that the demonstrative syllogism gives to its conclusions. The third kind of assent is produced in people who practice the demonstrative science. For Averroes, these people have the capacity to make correct judgements relate to issues of religious nature.

In fact, there is the diversification of human natures with regard to the assent: there are the ones who assent through the demonstrations; there are others who assent through dialectical arguments, similar to the assent to the demonstration because their natures do not provide them with more than that; and there are the ones who assent through rhetorical arguments, similar to the ones who assent to the demonstration through demonstrative arguments (AVERROES, 2005, p. 19).

All men are equally created by God and have the same rational capacity. Nonetheless, despite the fact that they possess the same capacity, the assent will be characterized by a volitional matter, and what Averroes points out as a mistake made by theologians (*Mutakallimun*)¹⁵ is also related to that. Common men assent through rhetorical arguments, and theologians endeavor to produce such structures that lead to this assent.

Their mistake would result from dialectical propositions and from incomplete conclusions which create conceptual problems, as the very idea that the demonstration and the sacred text are incompatible. For Averroes, this incompatibility pointed out by these men is the result of their superficial comprehension of the sacred text and it makes them reputed scholars, responsible for the bad use of science in the conduction of the assent of simple men, so that they try to match the message of the revelation, equating it in accordance to their own comprehension. These people are in a problematic position with regard to their assent and they do not reach the comprehension of the demonstrative knowledge, which they are not able to know

¹⁵A *mutakallim* is a scholar of the *Kalam*.

clearly because their arguments are dialectically oriented. These would be the responsible for confounding simple men through their own incomprehension (Cf. BELO, 2016, p. 45).

For Averroes, the insertion of such limitation constitutes the error that moves men away from the religious assent, once the revelation contains the necessary amplitude for the levels to be equally valid so that all men can assent more adequately. On this matter, Averroes quotes the Koran to justify that his exhortation is only what is already manifested in the Sacred Book: “Call (*yda'au*) to the path of your Lord by wisdom, fine preaching, and arguing with them by means of what is finest.” (AVERROES, 2001, p.06).¹⁶

A consequence of this perspective is that the assent, as the effect inside the soul of individuals, remains the same in all classes of people, but the degree of depth and knowledge is what becomes proper to each person.

we therefore say: given that the purpose of revelation is to teach true science and true practice; since the operations on which teaching rests are of two kinds: [the production of] representation and [the production of] assent, as the logicians have explained; and that the methods of production of assent presented to men are three in number - demonstrative, dialectical and rhetorical -, and the methods of production of representation, two in number - representation of the thing itself, or of its symbol; given that all men are not disposed by their nature to apprehend demonstrations - nor even dialectical arguments, then a fortiori demonstrative arguments! -, in addition to the difficulty of learning demonstrative arguments and the very long time that this requires [even] on the part of those who are suitable for it; and that the purpose of revelation is none other than to teach all men, the revealed text necessarily had to include all types of methods of producing assent and representation. (AVERROES, 1996, pp.151-153, our translation).¹⁷

This seems to be in accordance with what is proposed by him as the interpretative orientation mentioned above, that is, that the level of proximity of each believer with the salvation will depend exclusively on their efforts and choices, whereas revelation, the link of all people with the Creator, source of truth, is freely assured to all. Rationality is a capacity inherent to all human beings; its accomplishment as positive disposition is what depends on individual inclinations (Cf. BELO, 2016, p. 31).

We should also consider that this relation can be one of the possible ways to relate Averroes' reading of Aristotle with the Islamic eschatology, insofar as this is one of the problems which the discussion regarding the legitimacy of philosophy in the face of the revelation will be ascribed to the *falasifah*, that is, the problem of conducting men to a parallel comprehension of the truth, distanced from the one oriented by the revealed text. Averroes seems to seek in these elements the possibility of integrating two perspectives, the religious and the philosophical.

And this also concerns the question of how the practice of philosophy, that is, speculation guided by demonstration, will be able to be associated and – why not? – incorporated to practical life. It is interesting to note that the term “harmony”, expressed in the *Fasl al-maqal*, does not seem to be oriented by a simple possibility of relating both perspectives, but of thinking their natural continuity or, in other words, that what is expressed by the term “harmony”. Turning this orientation into a practical guide to life will also lead to a regime which determines and guides towards the acquisition and characterization of the religious assent, correctly oriented to what the revelation determines. In this regard, the characterization of the conjunction proposed by Averroes has as one of its consequences this practical orientation, which places the philosophical practice in the center of society and which also elevates simple men to a more effective participation in the flourishing of their own intellectual capacity.

¹⁶Surata 16, ayat 125.

¹⁷Something similar can be read in the *Tahafut al-Tahafut*: “And once the existence of the enlightened class can only be improved and achieve ultimate happiness through the participation in the class of the masses, the general doctrine is also obligatory for the existence and the life of this special class, both in youth and adulthood (no one doubts it) and when they reach excellency, which is their distinctive characteristic.” (AVERRÓIS, 1954, p. 360).



Furthermore, the discourse on the assent will be strongly associated with the individual movement of will as motor of individual actions, oriented by images, in the case of simple men, and also by the demonstrative science, in the case of the practitioners of this science. We should also consider here that this blurred characteristic, which guides the paths to the assent, has a direct relation with the maintenance of the path each individual must follow. For people must assent in conformity with their own nature, an assent individually marked by the path to be followed by each person. The impulse of their own nature will determine the kind of assent proper to each individual (TAYLOR, 2014, p. 457).

Averroes states that there are men who have an innate capacity to philosophy. It is important to consider this aspect in the horizon of our thesis, for affirming that each person will assent in a specific manner leads us to thinking that Averroes understands that all men are equal, and that which can be considered as a possibility of choice is maybe completely oriented by nature. In fact, due to their composed nature, stated in their very definition, all men are equal. However, in the revelation there seems to be a different inclination to certain men, and for prophets and common men such inclination is already determined. This is what seems to guide Averroes' discourse with regard to the different natures of people, and also to what seems to gauge the affirmation that some men are naturally inclined to philosophy (TAYLOR, 2014, p. 458).

Final Remarks

It would be hasty to affirm that Averroes is exclusively defending Aristotle's philosophy as the manner, *par excellence*, of practicing science. It is in this regard that his arguments seem to indicate that the demonstrative analysis is the science capable of getting closer to a true knowledge regarding its object. And such men would be the legit interpreters of the revealed text.

Still, totally forbidding [demonstrative books] means to bars access to something that Revelation calls to practice; why it is the most perfect class of humans, and the most perfect class of beings, to commit an injustice. For it is a good thing that this is known as it is by those who are willing to know it as it is: men of the most perfect class. (AVERROES, 1996, p.149, our translation).

It is worth emphasizing that the error in this matter will be caused by an accident both in the handling of the premises and in the image used for such. The error is an aspect of the investigative horizon which cannot be abandoned by the investigator, insofar as it is not in the demonstration itself, but in the individual who incurs in it. It is vital that the demonstrative science is kept under the governance of capable men, for it is, then, possible to avoid or, at least, decrease the possibility of error.

Among the enemies of the philosophical position the most notable one is perhaps al-Ghazali, who accuses philosophers of introducing elements not traditionally accepted by the interpretation. By doing this, these men would introduce "condemnable innovations" (*bid'a*), *i.e.*, elements or practices which do not have the support of the Revealed Law or the tradition, resulting in an alteration in the structure of religion. A condemnable innovation is a crime subject to punishment.

This definition of philosophy is a clear invitation of the Sacred Book to place the former as a central element of a certain of proof of God's existence. This seems to assure that the philosophical investigation remains valid and necessary, without displacing religion from its primary position. Philosophical practice is one of the elements inscribed in the rational capacity, which has the function of bringing men closer to God.

Since therefore this Revelation is the truth, and calls for the practice of rational examination which ensures the knowledge of the truth, then we Muslims know for sure that the examination [of beings] by demonstration will not lead to no contradiction with the teachings brought by the revealed text: because the truth cannot be contrary to the truth, but agrees with it and testifies in its favor. (AVERROES, 1996, p.119, our translation)



We understand that the demonstration is not only a science that has as function the knowledge of beings in their necessary relations, but the tool par excellence that grounds the religious belief and supports people's religious assent. This naturalizes the role of philosophical knowledge as the source of the knowledge of the Creator.

Religion is proper to rational beings, that is why its manifestation must be equally shared with all mankind, which is nothing more than the manifestation of truth available to all rational beings as their potency for being. Every individual who moves away from this purpose does it by introducing limitations to the manifestations of the truth, by pointing out the contradictions inherent to its search, and by reducing it to a single method for its obtention.

It is nothing more than a control mechanism, which hinders the manifestation of plenitude proper to revelation. For Averroes, the Koran itself induce men in the search of knowledge and in the practice of reason. And this does not only represent a definite guide to the truth, but also includes an evident pedagogical aspect, that is, an invitation to rational practice. If we can say that the object of revelation is open to all men, its message is primarily related to the conduction of the majority of people, that is why the signs of men of the demonstrative science are hidden and need to be investigated. For Averroes, the practitioners of this science are the intellectual elite because they are capable of tracking these hidden signs of the revelation.

We need to understand that the purpose of the Law is exactly this: to teach true science and true practice. True science is the knowledge of God – may He be blessed and exalted – and of the set of existing beings as they are – specially of the most honored among them – and the knowledge of the beatitude and torments of the other life. And the true practice consists in the compliance with the acts that guarantee the beatitude and in avoiding acts that lead to torments. The knowledge of these acts is called practical science. (AVERROES, 1996, p.151, our translation).

Simple men would be limited by a sort of inclination, and their development in knowledge would remain in an intermediary stage, that is, in the production of individual images. They would not have access to the intelligibles because their knowledge is limited, with regard to the process of its construction, to the horizon of sensation, imagination, and cogitation, and, therefore, it does not reach intellect as such. Without accomplishing this process adequately, simple men would not be able to produce speculative intelligibles, which constitute the transformation of the capacity of knowing into a positive disposition to such activity, insofar as the human knowledge is constituted by the successive acquisition of forms, progressively increasing in complexity of universality, in a process which has as orientation a gradual mirroring with the activity of the agent intellect. This comprehension is reached through a meaning which, due to its nobleness, cannot be captured immediately, once it is not something evident. The literal, immediate knowledge sufficiently reveals that which the sacred text manifests and provides the basic conditions for assent. But the hidden meaning, which is not immediate, is only obtained through the practice of the demonstrative science, which is capable of apprehending the whole matter and encompassing both meanings (Cf. WOHLMAN, 2004, p. 593).

The case used as example, the immortality of the soul, is an issue whose problematic reinforces this educative aspect of the philosopher's position regarding the interpretation of the sacred text. The meaning of future life is not clearly understood by simple men and, in this case, it is desirable that the interpreter of the scripture can make use of images to explain this fundament: "For the best sort of people, however, it is mandatory to interpret this kind or argument, while is mandatory for the crowd to attach to the obvious meaning" (AVERROES, 1996, p.155, our translation)

Some passages of the sacred text are addressed to the intellectual elite because only these men are able to know when to correctly use both meanings. In the face of a possible contradiction, the literal meaning is always preferable because certain passages in the text are of difficult comprehension even for investigators of the demonstration, as in the case of the future life, a topic that is not a matter of doubt amongst believers, but



we also know that its description varies considerably in its particularities. Aiming at the literal meaning of the scripture means protecting its primary immediate meaning. In addition, the apparent incomprehension of some passages in the text and the return to its literality indicate a practical horizon, so that although reflection is postponed due to incomprehension, the literal meaning will present a practical way out – still intermediary, but sufficient for a believer to be guided to revelation (Cf. TAYLOR, 2000, p. 11).

In short, it does not matter which way is taken to the assent, the sacred text will fit two purposes, revealing the knowledge of God to men and guiding them to the practical virtue related to Him. In conclusion, true science is the true practice. The first of these purposes is the one Averroes relates directly with the philosophical practice, for it concerns the knowledge of the Creator through His work. Practice is implied in the possible paths to religious assent, guiding men to their identification with God. These two instances complete the domain of activities that are proper to rational animals: understanding and action. If the doctor works to maintain health, the one who legislates on the religious law is focused on the health of the soul. Leading men to a blessed state is what Averroes understands as the source of happiness in this existence and in the horizon of future life.

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