Ibn Taymiyya’s use of Ibn Rushd to refute the incorporealism of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī

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

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1 The research for this publication was funded by a Leverhulme Trust Fellowship. All translations from the Qurʾān and other Arabic texts are my own.
2 This statement is found in both the first and last editions of Ernest Renan, Averroès et l’averroïsme: essai historique, 1st ed. (Paris, A. Durand, 1852), 1; and 4th ed. (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1882), 2.
especially when no one else in the medieval Islamic east seems to have shown much concern for him. This, too, requires explanation. Why was Ibn Rushd of interest to Ibn Taymiyya and not to others?

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

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9 Editions of Ibn Rushd’s al-Kashf ‘an manāḥij al-adilla will be discussed below. Further reference to Faṣl al-maṣqāl will be to Averroès, Decision Treateise & Epistle Dedicatory [Arabic and English], trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2001), 1-33; an earlier English translation is found in Ibn Rushd (Averroes), On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy: A Translation, with Introduction and Notes, of Ibn Rushd’s Kitāb faṣl al-maṣqāl, with Its Appendix (Dāmīma) and an Extract from Kitāb al-kashf ‘an manāḥij al-adilla (London: Luzac, 1961). For a recent analysis of Faṣl al-maṣqāl, see Caterina Belo, Averroes and Hegel on Philosophy and Religion (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013), 21-47. For references to and quotations from Ibn
tome Dar’ comes to ten volumes in the edition of Rashād Sālim and dates to 713/1313 or later.\(^10\) In Dar’ Ibn Taymiyya argues that there is no contradiction between reason and revelation, and he quotes several selections from Ibn Rushd’s Kashf and the latter’s Tahāfut al-tahāfut\(^11\) refuting the Tahāfut al-falāsifā\(^12\) of al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), as well as nearly the whole of his short Ǧamīma.\(^13\)

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

The first version of Kashf is preserved in MS Escurial 632, fol. 20v–74r, which is the sole source for the first modern edition, by Müller in 1859,\(^15\) and the primary source for the

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Rushd in Ibn Taymiyya’s Bayān, see the index entries in Bayān, 10:210 (Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Rushd), 10:256-257 (Faṣl al-maqaṭl), and 10:260 ([al-Kashf ān] manāḥīj al-adillā).


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


\(^15\) Marcus Joseph Müller, Philosophie und Theologie von Averroes (Munich: G. Franz, 1859), 27-127 (Arabic), 26-118 (German).
later editions of Qāsim (1964)\textsuperscript{16} and al-Jābi\textibre (1998).\textsuperscript{17} Qāsim also consulted MS Taymūriyya, ḥikma 129 located in Dār al-kutub in Cairo and noted that it contained various additions, but he did not include these in his edition, nor recognize that it contained the significance of the revised text.

Geoffroy has now identified MS Istanbul, Köprülü 1601, fols. 117v – 194v, as a better witness to this same revised text. This manuscript contains additions mentioning Ibn Tūmart and affirming Almohad doctrines and deletions of material offending orthodox Almohad sensibilities. Geoffroy provides an edition of the chapter on God and body from the later version of Kashf and translates key passages to illustrate Ibn Rushd’s retraction of his earlier views.\textsuperscript{18}

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


\textsuperscript{17} Ibn Rushd, Al-Kashf an manāhīj al-adilla fi ‘aqqā’id al-milla, ed. Muḥammad Ṭābul al-Jābi\textibre (Beirut: Markaz dirāsāt al-waḥda ‘arabiyya, 1998); subsequent references to Kashf in this study will be to this edition.

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

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

\textsuperscript{20} Geoffroy, “À Propos de l’almodhadisme d’Averroès,” 861.

\textsuperscript{21} Going beyond the chapter on God and body in Kashf studied by Geoffroy, Di Donato, “Le Kitāb al-kasf,” 128-130, examines an addition to the chapter on God and location (jiha) mentioning Ibn Tūmart. Ibn Taymiyya’s quotation of this passage in Bayān, 1:162, does not include this addition, which further confirms that he is quoting the first version of the Arabic text. He also does not include this addition when quoting the same passage in Dar’ 6:216, which means that he quotes from both versions of Kashf within Dar’.
may be that he knew the first version when writing Bayān, but it is also possible that he was by then already acquainted with both versions but chose not to use the latter because, as we will see below, its call for even the general public to affirm God’s incorporeality did not serve his purposes.

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

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22 Ibn Rushd, Kitāb falsafat al-qādī al-fādıl Muḥammad ibn Ahmad Ibn Rushd al-Andalusi al-mushtamīl ‘alā kitāb al-maṣālīl, 2d printing (Cairo: al-Maṭba’a al-jamālīyya, 1328/1910); Ibn Taymiyya’s quoted comments on the first chapter of Kashf dealing with God’s existence are from Darʾ 9:72-73, 78, 79-80, 80-81, 82-84, 89-90, 110-112, 113, 123-124, 126, 128-129, 131, 132-133, 324, 330-331; his comments on the second chapter dealing with God’s unity are from Darʾ 9:338, 348-349, 350-351, 354, 371-373, 382-383; and his brief comment on God’s attribute of will in the third chapter is from Darʾ 10:198-199. Ibn Taymiyya also comments on further parts of Kashf in Darʾ, but these passages are not included in the appendix. Dominique Urvoy, Averroès: Les ambitions d’un intellectual musulman (Paris: Flammarion, 1998), 215 n 1, reports two other Cairene editions of Faṣl al-maṣālīl and Kashf including Ibn Taymiyya’s texts as an appendix, the first printed by al-Maṭba’a al-sharqiyya dated 1321/1903, and the second an undated printing by Maḥmūd ‘Alī Subayh. I was not able to inspect these editions, but they were apparently printed under the title Falsafat Ibn Rushd. The edition, Falsafat Ibn Rushd (Cairo: al-Maktaba al-maḥmūdiyya al-tijāriyya, 1388/1968), includes Ibn Taymiyya’s passages from Darʾ in the footnotes.
of the elite posits an incorporeal God stripped of attributes, especially His attributes of action, and so characterizes God as nothing more than an Aristotelian unmoved mover.\textsuperscript{23}

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

There are in fact points in \textit{Bayān} where Ibn Taymiyya simply lets Ibn Rushd do the hard work of making the rational argument for him, and this suggests that Ibn Taymiyya may have found

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\textsuperscript{24} Ibn Taymiyya in \textit{Bayān} also quotes from \textit{Kashf} and \textit{Faṣl al-maqāl} when discussing proofs for God’s existence, God’s creation of the world, and the interpretation of God’s attributes, but these discussions will be left aside in the interest of keeping the study to a manageable size.
difficulty defending his views rationally on his own and that he is perhaps learning from Ibn Rushd how to substantiate the argument.

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

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

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

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25 Al-Rāzī, *Taʾsīs*, 46 (al-Rāzī’s opening propositions), 227-228 (rule of *taʾwil*).
26 See for example Ibn Taymiyya, *Bayān*, 2:353-355
this study operate within this latter perspective of the linguistic meanings of terms applied to God. The former perspective of God’s unlikeness lies in the background.

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

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

30 Al-Rāzī, Taʿṣīs, 47; Ibn Taymiyya, Bayān, 1:59; Ibn Taymiyya also notes al-Rāzī’s claim briefly in Darʾ, 6:246.
31 Al-Rāzī, Taʿṣīs, 50; Ibn Taymiyya, Bayān, 1:230-231. Ibn Taymiyya also alludes to al-Rāzī’s claim briefly in Darʾ, 6:245: “…whoever says that the dispute about [God’s overness (ʿulūw)] is only with the Karrāmīs and the Ḥanbalīs...”
32 Ibn Taymiyya, Bayān, 1:61-217.
33 Ibn Taymiyya, Bayān, 1:148-149.
of their rational methods, which they call demonstrations."34 Ibn Taymiyya then proceeds to quote the entire section on God and location (jiha) from Ibn Rushd’s Kashf.35

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

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

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

34 Ibn Taymiyya, Bayān, 1:156.
37 Ibn Taymiyya, Bayān, 1:159; Ibn Rushd, Kashf, 145; Averroes, Faith and Reason, 63.
Rushd concludes, “Establishing location is necessary according to revelation and reason,” which is to say that both revelation and reason affirm that God is above the world but is not in a place and is not corporeal. However, Ibn Rushd clarifies, it is difficult to affirm location and deny corporeality together because this has no parallel in the visible world. It is for this reason that revelation does not deny body of God explicitly. The truth of the matter is known only to the elite, the philosophers, while the general public are either forbidden from seeking knowledge about it or they are given some kind of representation of it from the visible world. Ibn Rushd wraps up his section on location in Kashf with a discussion of the elite, the general public, and those in between who are subject to doubts, a disparaging reference to kalām theologians.

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

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

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

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

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43 Al-Rāzī, Taʾsīs, 86-89.
44 Ibn Taymiyya, Bayān, 3:590-675.
his method, must not be stated openly to the general public, and in it he mentioned what is necessary among the things that have been furnished with demonstrative proof according to the method of those who employ it. Also, he mentioned that it is not appropriate at the level of revelation to say that God is a body or is not a body, even though he does say that God is not a body at the esoteric level. Despite this, he affirms location esoterically and exoterically, and he mentions that this is the view of the philosophers.46

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

46 Ibn Taymiyya, Bayān, 1:235-236.
47 As noted above, Ibn Taymiyya does quote the later version of Ibn Rushd’s Kashf discussion of God and body, which includes additions speaking of Ibn Tūmart, into Darʾ, 10:248-300 (quotations interspersed with Ibn Taymiyya’s commentary and refutation). In Darʾ Ibn Taymiyya’s concern in discussing this text is to criticize Ibn Rushd and Ibn Tūmart’s views directly, and not to use the text to undermine the likes of al-Rāzī. The later version of Kashf thus serves Ibn Taymiyya’s purposes in Darʾ better than the first version which is closer to his own views.
48 Ibn Taymiyya, Bayān, 1:241; Ibn Rushd, Kashf, 141; Averroes, Faith and Reason, 60.
perceived by the senses, which is important to the general public. Yet, light has no body, which means that people of demonstration should also think of God as light.49

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

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

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

50 Ibn Taymiyya, Bayān, 1:247-248. Following this commentary, Ibn Taymiyya, Bayān, 1:248-249, requotes the first portion of Ibn Rushd’s discussion of God and location (Kashf, 145; Averroes, Faith and Reason, 62-63) that immediately follows the section on God and body in Kashf.
kalām theologians and the philosophers demolish each other’s arguments because it leaves standing his own view—and the view of Ibn Rushd on the exoteric level—that corporeality is neither affirmed nor denied of God. Ibn Taymiyya does not build a rational case of his own for this view. Instead, he allows Ibn Rushd to speak unimpeded, and he leans on the philosopher to make the rational case for the general public’s approach to revelation. That aside, Ibn Taymiyya’s stated purpose for quoting these passages on body and location from Ibn Rushd’s *Kashf* is no more than to refute al-Rāzī’s claims that the philosophers agree with him and that his only opponents are Ḥanbalīs and Karrāmīs. Ibn Taymiyya insists that Ibn Rushd represents the philosophical mainstream and that al-Rāzī faces stiff opposition not only from Ḥanbalīs and Karrāmīs but from the philosophers as well. Ibn Taymiyya’s contention is of course disingenuous. Al-Rāzī was not aware of Ibn Rushd so far as we know. The two scholars were twelfth-century contemporaries living at opposite ends of the Islamic world—al-Rāzī in the east and Ibn Rushd in the west.

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

**Calling on Ibn Rushd to argue for the vision of God**

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

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Ibn Taymiyya argues that God must be an existent accessible to the senses because God would otherwise be nothing at all. He asserts, “The People of the Sunna and the Community (ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamāʿa) confess that God—Exalted is He—is seen, and they are agreed that what cannot be known by any of the senses is nothing but a non-existent, not an existent.” Thus, Ibn Taymiyya explains, al-Rāzī’s understanding of God who is inaccessible to the senses is tantamount to a non-existent even though al-Rāzī affirms that God is a self-subsisting reality with properties distinguishing Him from other realities.

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

Ibn Rushd first observes that the Muʿtazilīs deny both corporeality and location of God, and thus the vision of God as well, since everything seen is situated in a location relative to the one who sees it. Ibn Rushd then notes that Ashʿarīs have difficulty combining God’s incorporeality with the possibility of seeing something that has no body. Thus, Ibn Rushd...
claims, they resort to sophistic arguments. These are of two kinds: those directed against the Muʿtazilīs and those designed to prove the possibility of the Ashʿarī view.

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

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

According to Ibn Rushd, the cause of the Ashʿarī difficulties on the vision of God is their open denial of divine corporeality among the general public in direct contravention of revelation. The revelation did not permit denying body of God. This is because the general public has difficulty believing that one can see something incorporeal. The minds of the general public are confined to what they can imagine, and the revelation would have stated clearly that God had no body if it had intended to do so. Instead, as Ibn Rushd noted earlier in his discussion of God and body, the revelation likens God to light, the most highly exalted of existents accessible to the senses and the imagination, and then it indicates as well that people will see God in the hereafter as they see the sun, all of which does not subject the general public to doubt. Such images are also fitting for the learned elite who know by demonstration that the vision is in reality an increase in knowledge. From this, Ibn Rushd concludes that the
vision should be taken in its plain sense and without openly denying or affirming that God has a body.

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

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

As for his claim that [the vision] at the esoteric level is an increase in knowledge, he did not mention any argument as proof for it, and it has become plain from the preceding that he has no argument for the principle behind that, which is the denial that He is a body, except to affirm that the rational soul (al-nafs al-nāṭiqah) is not a body. He made plain the corruption of the kalām theologians’ arguments that God is not a body with clear arguments. Now, it is known that the principle upon which he built [his own] denial, that is, the matter of the soul, is weaker by far and that the great majority of rational people laugh at what these [philosophers] say about the soul in regard to the negative attributes [e.g. incorporeality] more than they laugh at those who affirm seeing something that does not—in their terminology—have a body and is not [situated] in a location. We have made this plain elsewhere.
As for his allegation and the allegation of others among the Jahmīs, the Muʿtazilīs, and those who are like them that the vision that the Messenger reported is an increase in knowledge, anyone who pays attention to the texts knows necessarily that the Messenger reported the vision of something that will be seen. Moreover, clear rational proofs permit this vision, even though the methods that he mentions are not to be used to show that. Those weak methods are weak because those who use them only establish the vision of something that is neither in a location, nor spatially extended (mutahayyīz), nor dwelling in something spatially extended. On account of this, they argue for divesting the vision of the preconditions required for it to take place because they believe that those preconditions are impossible with regard to God.

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

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

\textsuperscript{60} Ibn Taymiyya, \textit{Bayān}, 2:450-453.
In this discussion of Ibn Rushd’s comments on the vision of God in *Kashf*, Ibn Taymiyya first criticizes Ibn Rushd for his esotericism but then gratefully accepts the philosopher’s rational arguments against the Ashʿarīs: it is indeed not possible to affirm the vision of God and deny corporeality of God simultaneously. Ibn Taymiyya goes on to reject Ibn Rushd’s interpretation of the vision as an increase in knowledge, and he explains that Ibn Rushd’s foundation for this is his argument earlier in *Kashf* for the incorporeality of God from the alleged incorporeality of the soul. Ibn Taymiyya dismisses this argument as obviously weaker than the arguments of even the Ashʿarīs. With the field now cleared for his own view, Ibn Taymiyya explains that the vision of God is reported from the Messenger and that it is rationally possible and rationally defensible. Moreover, if one must speak in terms of *kalām* theology, the only existents that actually exist and can be seen are those that involve spatial extension. The implication, which Ibn Taymiyya does not quite draw out explicitly, is that God himself is spatially extended. Otherwise, God could not be seen in the hereafter. The work that Ibn Rushd performs for Ibn Taymiyya on the vision of God is rational refutation of the Ashʿarī position. This paves the way for Ibn Taymiyya to affirm that believers will see God in the hereafter in a particular location. This is the position that Ibn Rushd himself prescribes for the general public.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, we return to the question with which we began: why was Ibn Rushd of interest to Ibn Taymiyya specifically? It is not just that Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Rushd often agree on what the plain senses of the theological content of the Qurʾān and the Ḥadīth mean. It is also that Ibn Rushd in *Kashf* supports his interpretations with sophisticated rationalizations and provides rational arguments against opponents. Ibn Taymiyya recognizes this, turns it to his purposes, and perhaps even learns from it as he works out his own theology. Ibn Taymiyya has no sympathy for Ibn Rushd’s esotericism and explicit incorporealist at the level of the learned elite, but, as we have seen in this study of *Bayān*, he does welcome the philosopher’s Aristotelian rationalization of God’s location above the world, his defense of revelation’s silence on whether God has a body at the level of the general public, and his refutation of Ashʿarī arguments for the possibility of seeing an incorporeal God. Ibn Rushd provides Ibn Taymiyya rational resources to resist and marginalize al-Rāzī’s incorporealism and to affirm that God is indeed located above the heavens without resort to incorporealist reinterpretation. It was the incorporealism of the likes of al-Rāzī that predominated in the later Ashʿarī tradition, as well as in the Sunnī and Shīʿī
theological traditions more broadly. At this stage of our knowledge, it appears that Ibn Taymiyya was the foremost and perhaps only medieval advocate of Ibn Rushd’s ideas, or at least some of them, in the eastern lands of Islam. Ibn Taymiyya was no Averroist philosopher, but he did put Ibn Rushd to use for his own traditionalist ends.

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