



# Exchange of Thought between Persians and Andalusians



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**Exchange of Philosophical and Theological Thoughts  
between Persian and Andalusian Scholars  
(711 - 1492)**

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## Introduction

- The rapid expansion of Islam in North Africa, West-Mediterranean and Iberian Peninsula was one of the most important cultural and religious development in the region.
- Tariq Ibn Ziyad conquered Iberia Peninsula in 711 during the Umayyad.
- Many Muslim scholars emigrated from the East Islamic world to Andalusia in order to promulgate Islamic teachings. Likewise, a large number of those interested in learning Islamic studies as well as natives newly converted to Islam set out for regions in the East, especially Bagdad, Basra, Isfahan, Nishabour and Herat (Persian Cultural Area), so as to receive education in Islamic studies.
- Various currents of thought such as Philosophy, Sufism and Islamic Theology that were started in the east quickly reflected on the Mediterranean west. The main currents of Islamic thought could be classified in: Quran and Hadith, Philosophy and Theology.

## Hadith Advocates

- In early Islamic period the Quran and Hadith science were popular among Muslims but later on due to interpretation of the main sources many schools of thought emerged.
- The Hadith advocates began to oppose the school of thought using rational methods associated with Mutazeleh. Later on the Hadith advocates regarded philosophy and Islamic theology (Kalam) as forbidden and irreligious knowledge.

## Philosophy of Muslims

- Islamic philosophy or philosophy of Muslims is a discipline 'refer to questions such as existence, the creation of the universe, nature, man and the Creator.
- Greek philosophy especially the Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism had a great impact on Islamic philosophy.
- The current of philosophical thoughts, in Islamic-world, got started by:
  - Yaghoub Ibn Ishaq al-Kendi (866);
  - Abu Nasr Mohammad Farabi (950)
  - Avicenna (1037).

## Islamic Theology

- The interpretation of Islamic knowledge and philosophy gradually gave rise to the Islamic theology.
- Va'sel Ibn Ata (died in 131 H) was the first scholar to understand and defend Islamic beliefs by rational method. He established Islamic theology (Kalam) and the **Mutazeleh School** of thought. He was born in Madinah in 699 and was brought up in Basra.
- Abul Hassan Ashari was against using logical-philosophical reasoning in religious beliefs. His thoughts gave rise to the **Ashari School** of thought.

## The impact of Politics on Philosophy

- In General backing any of the above mentioned currents has had a major impact not only on scholars but on society too.
- the Umayyad rulers supported the Ashari School.
- Abbasid and Fatimid supported philosophy and Mutazeleh school. However after the rise of Saljuoks, they first aligned themselves with Abbasids and Mutazeleh scholars; but later when they declared independence and captured Baghdad, broke with Mutazeleh scholars ideologically and joined the opposite side, i.e. Hadith advocates (Ahle Hadith), Ashari School and supported them.
- Two renowned Abu Ha'med Ghazali and Mohammad Ibn Omar Fakhr Razi strongly criticized philosophers.
- With the downfall of the Fatimid rule in the year 557 H. and the rise of Salah al-Ddin Ayyoubi (532-589 H) in Egypt, little room was left for the activities of Muslim philosophers.
- Andalusia always ruled by anti philosophy and Sufism. Ideologically they were independent and kept distance from Abbasid, Seljuk and Fatimid.
- Therefore, the Ashari school of thought prevailed across the Muslim world.

## Exchange of thoughts between the East and West Mediterranean

- Ibn Tomert (522 or 524) travelled to Baghdad, learned the Ashari school of thought from Abu Ha'med Ghazali and upon return to Andalusia, he began promoting the Ashari thought. After him, his successors known as Muwahheduon (a political movement) followed him.
- Other than direct contact; philosophical books written by eastern scholars were available too. Sometimes scholars from east and west Mediterranean strongly criticize each-other. Ibn Rushd (520-595) is a renowned philosopher, who wrote 'Tahafatul-Tahafa and criticized Ghazali's Tahafatul-Falasefah.
- Andalusians produce some prominent and world known scholars such as Ibn Rushd and Ibn Arabi.
- Motahari: if Ibn Rushd Qurtubi had not written the book Tahafatul-Tahafa in response to Ghazali's work, and if Khawaja Nasir al-Din Tousi (597-672) had not emerged in Persia and not responded to objections by Fakhr Razi, philosophy would have likely been removed from the Muslim world.
- Imam Khomeini as an expert in Islamic philosophy and mysticism in his message to Gorbachov (the last Soviet leader) praised Ibn Arabi and invited him to study Ibn Arabi's works and thoughts.

## Conclusion

- Many of the Persian philosophers and Sufis promoted Islamic thoughts in mosques and schools in the Eastern and Western parts of the Muslim world and trained numerous scholars from various part of Muslim world. Those interested to learn Islamic studies would travel from Andalusia to the eastern cities to consult well-known madrasahs, libraries and would sometimes stay there for several years to attend the philosophy and Sufi classes.
- However, philosophy and Sufism had their ups and downs in the history of Muslims. While the Umayyad confronted philosophers the Abbasid and Fatimid supported them.
- Andalusia's rulers in general never welcome philosophy and Sufism, but there were many scholars who showed interest and became prominent philosophers and sufi.
- More than a century after the emergence of Islam, Philosophers and Mutazelah followers in particular made their presence felt in the ideological arena, but just after two centuries they surrendered to their rivals, Ashari advocates.
- From Ibn Rushd till today Sunni Muslims did not produce any important philosopher like him and their schools do not welcome philosophy. However, many Sufi schools have lot of followers among them.