

**LE SENS DE LA VIE
EN ANDALOUS**

**THE MEANING OF LIFE
IN ANDALUSIA**



CORDOBA

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The meaning of Life in Andalusia

Averroes

Please... Master tell us... Master!... Explain...

—Averroes: ...medicine, astronomy, all sciences... they want me to explain to them everything Aristotle has said about the knowledge of the things of the earth.

You never formulate the final questions: Where do we come from? Where are we going? The creation, and most of all, the end and sense of life and the history?

—A disciple: Master, today...

—Averroes: Today, as ever, our philosophy would serve for nothing if it were not able to link three things, which I have tried to join in my "Harmony of science and religion".

A Science, founded on experience and logic, to discover reasons.

A Wisdom, which reflects on the purpose of every scientific research so that it serves to make our life more beautiful.

A Revelation, that of our Koran, as it is only through Revelation that we know the final purposes of our life and our history.

—A Woman: But for us, women...

—Averroes: Women have the same final purposes as men... The Koran only distinguishes between those, men or women, who look for the Law of God, and those who do not worry about it. There is no other hierarchy among human beings...

But you, men, regard women as plants, which are only considered useful for their fruit in procreation. And you make them separate, servants. These are your traditions. They have nothing to do with Islam.

—Another student: but our kings...?

—Averroes: The Prophet taught us that there is no holier cause than speaking the truth to an unjust leader. The tyrant is the most slavish of men.

...he is delivered up to his passions by his courtesans and to his terrors because he is afraid of his people.

—Another student: But then, which is the best society?

—Averroes: That where every woman, every child and every man is given the means of developing the possibilities God has given to each of them.

—Another one: Which power will establish it?

—Averroes: It will not be a theocracy, like that of the Christians of Europe, a power of religious accomplices of tyrants: God, says the Koran, "has breathed in man His spirit". Let us make Him live in every man!

—Another one: What are the conditions of such a society?

—Averroes: A society will be free and pleasing to God, when none acts either out of fear of the Prince or of hell, nor the wish of a reward from a courtesan or of paradise, and when no-one says: This is mine.

—Another one: Master, yet a word...

—Averroes: I have had enough of your questions. First of all, I am not a "Master"; God is the only Master, and the most frequent teaching of His Koran is that we must make an effort of reflection by ourselves.

Maimonides

Maimonides at the Synagogue, before the Thora he comments:

"On what he has said about the terrestrial sciences, Aristotle remains our master, but beyond, all these words seem more or less to be conjectures".

If for Ibn Raschd, the Holy Book is not our Thora but the Koran, we both agree about the contributions of reason and of revelation. There are two manifestations of one same divine truth. There is only a

contradiction when one is faithful to a literal reading of the scriptures, forgetting about their eternal meaning.

In my "Guide of the Lost Ones", I have given the rules for this allegorical reading, which takes history into account.

Our historical problems must be solved as from eternal principles: there is no opposition between the absolute and history.

These eternal principles, my experience as a jurist has taught me, were reduced to four, which will be found in my "Commentary of the Mishna" of our Jewish tradition:

- 1) The individual can only develop in a healthy society, where duties come before rights.
- 2) The purpose of every society faithful to God is the growth of men and not of wealth. Man becomes great when he develops within himself reason in its plenitude: a reason which is conscious of its limits and of its postulates. Such a reason bears witness to the presence of God in man.
- 3) Man's reason is just a participation in the divine reason, which surpasses us infinitely, and only realizes itself within the biblical prophecy.
- 4) A new cycle of history begins only when a Prophet, like Moses, descends towards the people to propose a new law to them.

Psalm 11, David

Why these vain thoughts among the people?

Why have the kings of the earth risen up against the Eternal and His anointed?

Let us break their bonds

Let us divest ourselves of their chains.

Alfonso the Wise

I am but the shadow of a king who was once called Alfonso X, the Wise; but the Pope and my own vassals deposed me in 1282.

Perhaps my dreams were too great for the century? And yet we were on the brink of a great awakening.

I had the good luck to grow up in Toledo, where Bishop Raymond, with his Christian and Jewish translators, had taught me about the culture of Islam. I had the Koran and the Talmud translated into Latin.

You see here what was the most glorious act of my reign: to have created at Murcia, with the Muslim philosopher, Muhammad Al Riquiti, the first school in the world where Christians, Jews and Muslims taught together.

At Seville, I insisted that both Arabic and Latin be taught, as they were the languages of the two cultures in my day.

Listen to one of my pages singing one of my canticles:

“Oh my Christ,
You who can welcome
Christian, Jew and Muslim,
As long as their faith
Is directed towards God”.

In my laws, as in my prayers, I have never forgotten that miscreants are of the same blood and have the same nature as us.

My legislators can be proud of reading my codes to you:

“As the synagogue is the house where the Lord's name is glorified, let us forbid any Christian to dare destroy it or to carry away anything from it by force”.

And this is what I said about the Muslims:

“Let the Moors live among the Christians and keep their faith without insulting ours”.

Yes, under my reign, thanks to the efforts of wise men of the three religions, Thirteenth Century Spain could awaken in all of Europe a true Renaissance: that which could take place not against God, but with God.

Ibn Arabi

"This is forbidden! That is permitted!" The jurists tell us. But never: You are responsible for yourselves. Think for yourselves. As the Koran reminds you on every page. To hear them, the only relationship between God and man is that of master and slave. Faith and philosophy begin where this arid jurisprudence ends.

The Koran tells us: "God will cause the raising of the man who He will love and who will love Him". And also: "If you love God, God will love you".

God is unity. The unity of love, of the lover and the beloved. Every love is a wish for union. Every love consciously or unconsciously is a love for God.

There is a natural love in which you think you seek only the satisfaction of your own desire; but this love makes you feel you are not sufficient unto yourself. Even in the union of bodies, where you wish to find ecstasy, you feel nostalgia and a need for something outside yourself.

There is a spiritual love, when you love the beloved only for its own sake. You only live by going beyond yourself, preferring the beloved's happiness and wellbeing to your own. Such a love teaches you self-sacrifice.

Then there is a divine love, the highest: you love in all things He who has created them, and you love God for his own sake, without fear of punishment or hope of rewards.

This love you feel for God is a reflection of the love God feels for you. You cannot identify yourself with God, but must act according to the goal He has revealed to you through his messenger.

The prophet has said: "When God loves you, He is the ear through which you hear, the eye through which you see, the step through which you walk, the hand through which you work."

God has "breathed His spirit into man". Bear witness to this presence of God within yourself, of God's creation, which never ceases. The act is the exterior manifestation of faith.

You make the indivisible visible every time you surpass yourself.

—artist, when you express the beauty that God loves.

—lover, when you see and serve God in what you love.

—scholar, when you discover new truths.

—leader, when you create for all the conditions of their fulfillment.

To see in each being the act which created it is to submit one's whole life to the will of that Creator. It is He who unites all men of faith.

Every man is called by God. Do not despise those who, in seeking Him, think they see Him in what is not Him.

Islam recognizes all the Prophets as messengers of the same God.

Learn to discover in each man the seed of a desire for God, even if his belief is still dim and sometimes idolatrous. Help to lead him towards the fullest Light.

I once wrote in a love poem:

My heart has grown capable of taking on all forms

A pasture for gazelles, a convent for Christians

A temple for idols, a Kaba for the pilgrim,

A table for the Torah, a book of the Koran.

My religion is love:

Whichever the route love's caravan shall take,
that path shall be the path of my faith.