

2017 Research Week Proposal

Title - Differentiating Averroes' Accounts of the Metaphysics of Human Epistemology in his *Middle* and *Long* Commentaries on Aristotle's *De Anima*

Program of Study – B.A. in Philosophy

Presentation Type - PowerPoint

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Category - Textual or Investigative

Abstract: Averroes (sometimes called Ibn Rushd) was a prominent Islamic, Andalusian philosopher and jurist in the 12th century. His commentaries on Aristotle shaped the course of western philosophical thought, exercising a significant influence on St. Thomas Aquinas, among others. Several of his works, most prominently his three commentaries on Aristotle's *De Anima*, discuss the metaphysics of human epistemology in an attempt to explain how finite, particular minds interact with universal, eternal intelligibles. Current scholarship focuses on the two longer commentaries, the *Middle Commentary* and the *Long Commentary*, but there is no consensus regarding which of these presents Averroes' final articulation of the metaphysics of human epistemology. Those who maintain that Averroes wrote the *Middle Commentary* last tend to minimize the differences between the two accounts, claiming that they are superficial and the result of socio-political pressure rather than intellectual development.

This paper does not take a position on the chronology of Averroes' works. Rather, it seeks to demonstrate that, even if Averroes wrote the *Middle Commentary* last, it is evident that the accounts of the metaphysics of human epistemology in the *Middle* and *Long* commentaries differ substantively. In this effort, the *Middle* and *Long* commentaries will be surveyed separately and

then compared and contrasted. Once the differences have been identified, they will be examined in light of Averroes socio-political environment and evaluated in light of his dialectic with the religiously conservative thinker al-Ghazali. The conclusion of this analysis is that Averroes' socio-political environment serves to highlight, rather than explain away, the differences between his accounts in the *Middle* and *Long* commentaries.