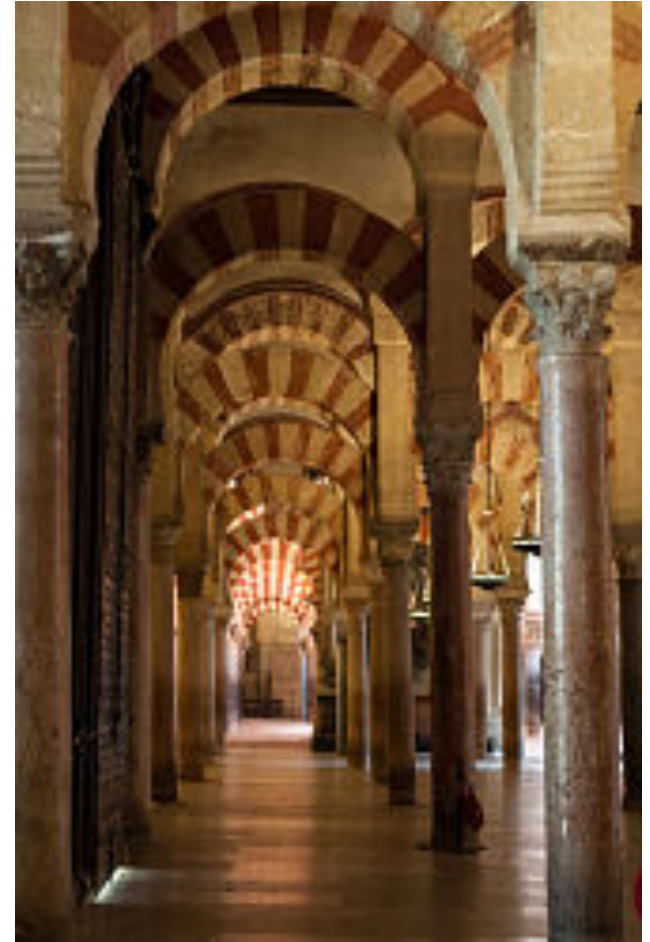


*Taqlīd* تقلید

**Authority and the Intellectual  
Elite in the Islamic World**

# Three medieval traditions



# *Taqlīd vs Ijtihād*

- *Taqlīd* تقلید
- “Uncritical acceptance of authority”
- Related etymologically to *qallada*, “bind”
- Adherent is a *muqallid*
- *Ijtihād* اجتهاد
- “Effortful exertion”
- Related etymologically to *jihād*, “struggle”
- Adherent is a *mujtahid*

# *Falsafa* فلسفة

From Greek  
*philosophia*

Adherents  
are called  
*falāsifa* (sing.  
*faylasūf*)



al-Fārābī d.950

Ibn Sīna d.1037  
(Avicenna)

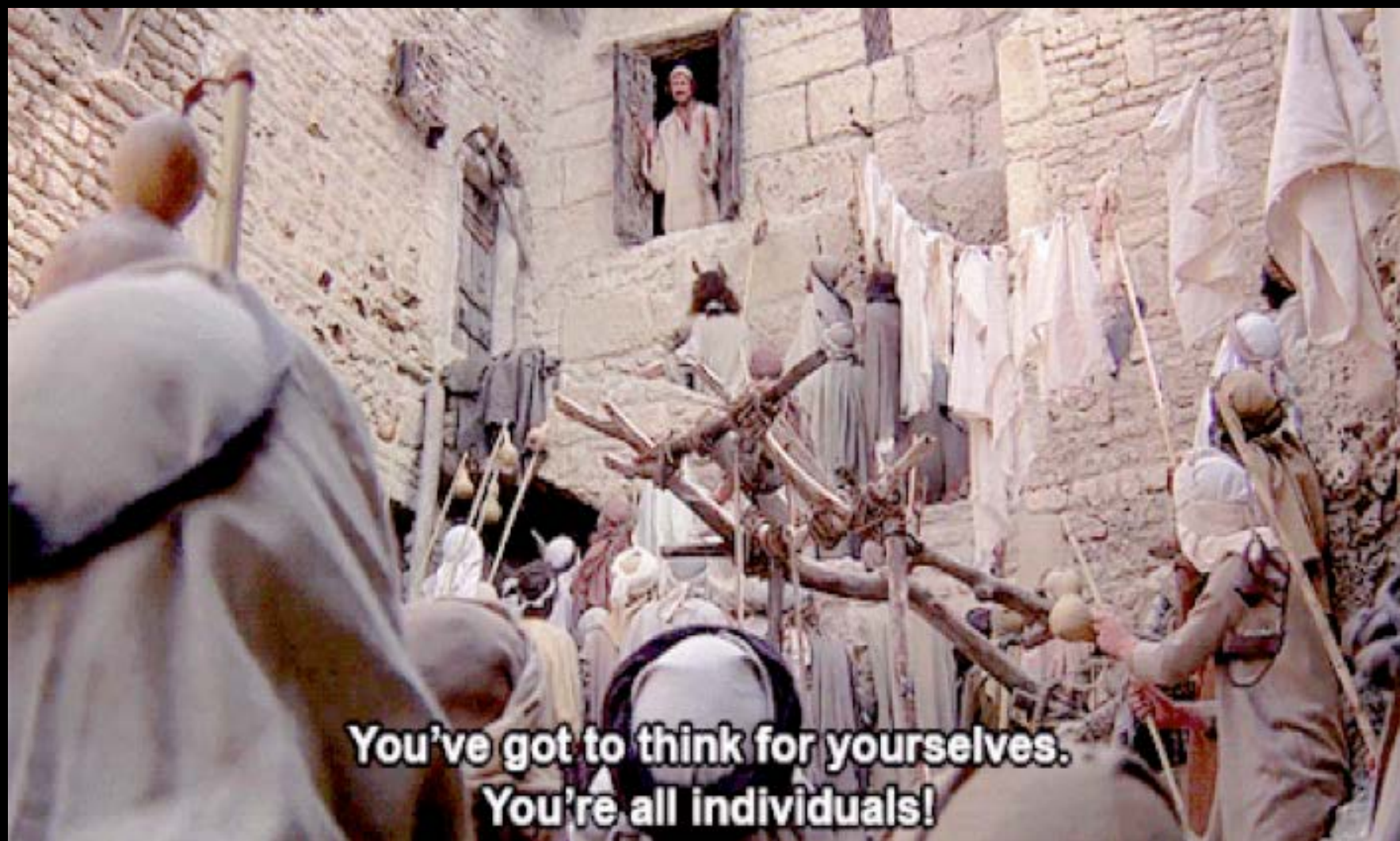


Ibn Rushd d.1198  
(Averroes)

# al-Shāfi'ī d.820

- Defense of independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) and legal opinion (*ra'y*)
- For example use of analogical reasoning





**You've got to think for yourselves.  
You're all individuals!**

# Definition of *taqlīd*

- Already in the early tenth century it was defined as “accepting a position without evidence” (*qubūl qawl bi-lā ḥujja*).

# The hierarchy of *ijithād*

- Pure *mujtahid*: independent legal reasoning
- *Ijtihād* within a school
- Pure *muqallid*: follows judgment of others

“It is incumbent on the ordinary person to act by *taqlīd* if he is incapable of *ijtihād*.”



# كلام *Kalām*

Rational or  
speculative  
theology

Adherents  
are called the  
*mutakallimūn*

“Whoever is capable of knowledge of God becomes an unbeliever if he does not apply knowledge to know God, regardless of whether he abandons knowledge to pursue imitation (*taqlīd*), doubt, conjecture (*ẓann*), or ignorance.”

# al-Kaʿbī d.931

- Whereas theologians should independently pursue knowledge of God, most people “are morally obligated to apply *taqlīd* and conjecture: these are the laypeople (*al-ʿawāmm*), the slaves, and many women.”

# al-Ash‘arī d.935

- He assumes that arguments (*adilla*) derivable from scripture “are probative and complete on the grounds of theoretical reason alone, for if they are not so, then the Prophet’s claim to authority cannot be reasonably accepted.”

- Richard M. Frank

# Qur'ān 21:24

- “Most of them do not know the truth, so they turn away.”
- This “shows that to accept *taqlīd* is wrong and that one must carry out the proofs and demonstrations... they lack knowledge because they turn away from reasoning.”



# al-Isfarā' īnī d.1027

“One consists of people who are not wholly lacking in a kind of reasoning, even if it is imperfect in its expression and its grounding. Such people are truly believers and in the proper sense, know (‘*ārif*). The second consists of people who are completely unenlightened in this respect and have no real knowledge, rather, since they believe through *taqlīd*, their belief lacks integrity and not one of them is free of uncertainty and doubt.”



# Abū l-Qāsim al-Anṣārī d.1072

Those who lack knowledge have only “belief founded on conjecture and opinion; if they are right in what they believe, they believe by an unreflected acquiescence to the truth, and if they fail to grasp the truth, they are in error and deviate from the truth.”

# al-Juwaynī d.1085

Ordinary believers have “knowledge” in an extended sense. Requiring them to do *ijithād* is “imposing an obligation that cannot be fulfilled,” so that “they are required only to have correct belief. That is free from doubt and uncertainty, and they are not required to know.”

# al-Dawwānī d.1501

I said to myself: “oh soul which has these beliefs, do you take them to be true and accurate on the basis of intellect or pure *taqlīd*?” The soul replied: “even though they are *taqlīd*, still they arise from something true and from the discernment of intellect. Therefore my beliefs are all true.” Even though this proof has been constructed in a perfect arrangement, still when I placed the argument on the scales of intellect it had no weight. So I debated with myself anew and asked my soul, “what do you believe about the truth of the *mujahhid*? Could it be that there is an error among his beliefs, or not?” ...

# al-Dawwānī

... My soul chose the first option. So I said to it, “on that assumption, the major [premise] of the proof, which you built to prove your beliefs, is false. For whoever errs cannot be given confidence such that all his beliefs are certain to be true and accurate. And this argument has as its conclusion that not all the beliefs of the *muqallid* are true. Furthermore, if the aforementioned assumption of the proof were true, then it would follow that the beliefs of the *muqallid* of every religion and creed would be true, by the same reasoning. And then the soul could not respond.”

# al-Sanūsī d.1490 and Muḥammad al-Wālī al-Mālikī fl.1688





# al-Ghazālī d.1111

For him, “in the case of the ordinary people, *taqlīd* is not only tolerated but welcomed, since an acquaintance with independent thinking would run the risk of having this group of people fall into unbelief.”

- Frank Griffel

# al-Ghazālī vs Averroes

- Al-Ghazālī writes *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, charging Avicenna with three heretical beliefs:
  - Universe is eternal
  - God doesn't know particulars
  - No bodily afterlife
- Averroes responds in *Incoherence of the Incoherence* and the *Decisive Treatise*.

# al-Fārābī

He “requires merely that the jurist hold correct *beliefs* and possess the virtues of his religion.”

- Ferial Bouhafa

In his *Book of Religion* he writes:

“All the excellent laws fall under the universals of practical philosophy, while the theoretical beliefs in the religion have their demonstrations in theoretical philosophy.”

# al-Fārābī

Dialectic provides strongly held opinion concerning the things for which demonstration provides certainty, or most of them. Rhetoric persuades about most of the things that are not such as to be demonstrated or the subject of dialectical inquiry. The excellent religion does not, then, belong only to philosophers, or to those who are in a position to understand things that are only discussed in a philosophical way. Rather, most of those who are taught and instructed in the beliefs of the religion, and accept its [prescribed] actions, are not in that position, whether this is by nature or because they are too busy for it. These people are not unable to understand commonly accepted (*mashhūr* cf. Gk. *endoxon*) or [merely] persuasive things.

# The hierarchy of *ijithād*, according to Averroes' grandfather

- The *mujtahid* who can reason independently and issue novel opinions.
- Those who reason within guidelines of the school.
- Those who repeat doctrines of Mālikī school.



# Averroes

When the jurist deduces from [God's] statement, "reflect, you who have vision" (Q. 59:2), the obligation to know juridical argument, how much more worthy and appropriate is it for someone who understands God to deduce from this [verse] the obligation to know intellectual argument!

Which judge is greater than the one who makes judgments about being?

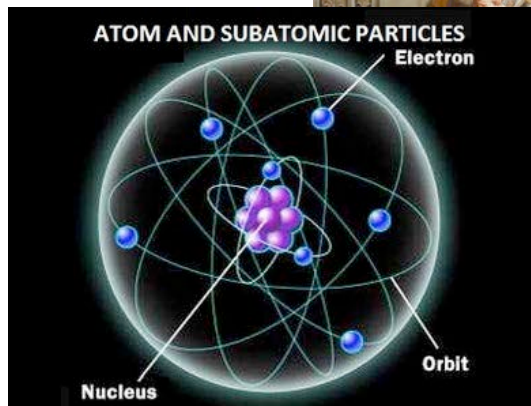
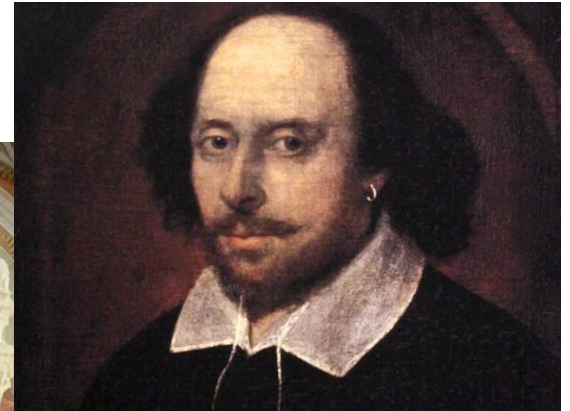
# Averroes

The dialectical premise is an accepted statement (*mashhūr*)... it may be accepted by all, for instance the statement that God exists; or accepted by most people without being rejected by the rest; or accepted by the scholars and the philosophers (*falāsifa*) without being rejected by the masses.

The most adequate rank of the art of *kalām* is dialectical, not demonstrative, wisdom.

# What have we learned?

*Taqlīd* is unavoidable



# What have we learned?

Perhaps *ijtihād* should be limited to the most important issues?

Epistemic modesty: can the many really be corrected by a single person?

Example of the direction for facing Mecca



# Wise words from Mary Beard

The recognition of complexity and difficulty is not an admission of defeat; it is treating a complex problem with the respect it deserves.

