

Ibn Rushd's Philosophy on God and the World; A Comprehensive View

DR. AJAJ AHMAD

Dept. of Philosophy, AMU, Aligarh

Abstract

Ibn Rushd is one of the medieval Muslim philosophers with an evergreen reputation in the history of philosophy. He occupied a unique position and was given the title of Averroes by the western. He was a well known jurist, physician and philosopher. In this paper, I will throw light on his concept of God and the world.

Key Words: Philosopher, Treatise, Automation, Creator

Introduction

Ibn Rushd popularly known in west as Averroes was a great Muslim philosopher, a scholar in many disciplines, including Islamic religion, law and medicine. Ibn Rushd dedicated a whole treatise to the connection between philosophy (science) and religion. God according to him produces all and embraces all. He is the ultimate principle of creation. He is the original form and the primary cause of the world. He is the ultimate aim and the crux of all things. He maintains the order of the universe. The world according to Ibn Rushd is inter-mingled system of objects. The whole universe is inter-woven with a causal connection. As such both matter and form can be separated only in thought.

Everything whatever exists in the universe is causally connected with each other and there is no providence in it. Universe is an act of God. It happened not through chance but providentially. It is well ordered. It works perfectly, regularly, and automation, which indicates that the world is the outcome of a wise creator, a perfect being without imperfections. This world is a causal world. According to him, nothing happens without a cause. As such this world is itself a big cause of the prime mover, the God himself. God the creator of this world is the prime cause of it. According to Ibn Rushd, "He who, in the artificial things, denies or cannot understand the caused resulting from causes would have no knowledge of the arts or the artisan; similarly, he who

denies the existence in this world of the dependence of effects on causes would deny the wise Maker.”¹

The world according to him has a logical structure, because knowledge of God can be attained through the observation of nature. The eternal harmony of existence in the world and its laws bears witness to the perfect nature of the Being who manifested it.

Three great heresies set the system according to Ibn Rushd in opposition to the theology of the three world-religions of his time: Such as: “The eternity of the material world and of the spirits that move it and The necessary causal relation in all that happens in the world so that no place is left for providence, miracle and the like; The last one is the perishable nature of all that is individual by which theory individual immortality is also taken away.”²The world according to him is the eternal process of “becoming”. It is a necessary unity eternally without any possibility of its going out of existence. Matter and Form can only be separated in thought. “God is the ultimate principle of creation. He is the original form, the ultimate aim and the goal of all things. He maintains the order of the universals and in his being all oppositions, contradictions and negations are reconciled. Hence in the end all beings of this world with their mutual differences and oppositions will be one in Him.”³ Ibn Rushd’s put forward the following arguments as:

1. Something is eternal if and only if it has no beginning.
2. If something has no beginning, it must be eternal.
3. Anything that is eternal is unchanging.
4. Anything that terminates has undergone a kind of change.
5. Likewise, anything that is unchanging cannot terminate.
6. Therefore, anything without a beginning will never terminate,
7. And anything that terminates must have a beginning.”⁴

Ibn Rushd’s therefore argues that God cannot create the world in time unless He is in time, which the theologians denied.

¹ Sharif M. M, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Low price publications, New Delhi, (1961) Vol. 1, Pp.549-550

² Sharif Mohammad and Anwar Mohammad, *Muslim philosophy and philosophers*, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, (1994) p.93

³ Rahman Syedur, *An introduction to Islamic culture and philosophy*, Mullick brothers, Dacca, (1970) p. 94

⁴ Saei Joseph Eric, *Religion and scientific duality of thought: How Ibn Rushd and Al-Ghazali set the agenda for medieval scholastic debates*, Vol 8, (2009).

Man is bestowed by the reason which is the most excellent gift from God. For Ibn Rushd, the rational power is given to humans only so that they may reach their goal of ultimate moral and intellectual perfection. Humanity was granted this rational power to create and understand the world in which man is living to live according to the ethical standards. The soul is to the body as form is to matter. Thus they can be separate in thought only, nevertheless in reality they exist as an organic whole: their relationship is inseparable. Ibn-Rushd's is opposed to idea of so many individual immortal souls. He says the soul and the body are invariably connected.

Ibn Rushd's preferred an active and vigorous life in the society. He believes that inactive and idle life is of no use. He is opposed to canon-laws in his ethical teachings. Good and bad cannot be determined by the will of God, but everything derives its moral character from Nature and in conformity with reason. An action which is done by reason and understanding is moral. Good and bad is innate and not an attribute to the things by the *Shari'ah*. It is not, however, the reason that looks to the good of the self, but the reason that aspires after the welfare of the state or community. Religion has a moral purpose. Morality according to him, in the true sense can be attained by reason alone. God is the Maker and destroyer of the world. This process of 'composition' or 'conjunction' may be supposed to be continuous or discontinuous. According to Ibn Rushd, there can be no question about 'continuous production but he calls it the *Tahafut*, is worthy of the omnipotent and eternal Maker of the universe.

Ibn Rushd explains "that the philosophers do not deny that God Knows the multitude of created particulars, but only that His mode of knowledge is analogous to ours. They maintain, instead, that God's knowledge is the cause of these particulars, whereas ours is the effect of the objects known (*ma lum*). In other words, in the very act of knowing them, God causes them to come into being, while our own knowledge is dependent upon their coming into being and is conditioned by it."⁵

Works Cited

- Deboer T. J, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, Dover Publications New York, (1967).
- Fakhry Majid, *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism*, one world Oxford, (1997).

⁵ Fakhry Majid, *Islamic philosophy, theology and mysticism*, one world, Oxford (1997) Pp.97-98

- Fakhry Majid, *Averroes (Ibn Rushd) His Life, Works and Influence*, One world Oxford, (2001).
- Genequand Charles, *A translation with Introduction of Ibn Rushd's Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Leaden-E. J. Brill (1986).
- Hai Abdul Saiyed, *Muslim Philosophy, Islamic foundation*, Bangladesh (1982).
- Kazmi Latif, *Studies in Islamic Philosophy* (Part one) Aligarh (2012-13).
- Netton Richard, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, Rout ledge London and New York (2007).
- Othman Ali. Issa, *The concept of Man in Islam*, Cairo (1960).
- Rahman Syedur, *An Introduction to Islamic Culture and Philosophy*, Mullick Brothers: Dacca. Fourth Edition: March, (1970).
- Sharif M.M, *A History of Muslim Philosophy* Vol. 1 Delhi (1961).
- Saei Joseph Eric, *Religion and scientific duality of thought: How Ibn Rushd and Al-Ghazali set the agenda for Medieval Scholastic debates*, (2009).
- Sharif Mohammad and Anwar Mohammad, *Muslim philosophy and philosophers*, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, (1994) p.93