

Al-Ghazali's Attack on the Philosophers and Ibn-i Rushd's Response

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Conflict between philosophy and theology has continued to surface throughout Islamic history. The battle between Ghazali and Ibn-i Rushd, the focus of this research, was a part of that conflict. Ghazali was impressed by the passion and vigour of the faith of sufis, therefore, he tried to reconcile orthodox Islam with mystical teachings and succeeded in giving sufism an assured place within orthodox Islam.¹ Ibn-i Rushd, on the other hand, tried to reconcile philosophy with the teachings of Islam. The latter says that philosophy is recommended by religion because the function of philosophy is nothing more than speculating on the beings and considering them in so far as they lead to the knowledge of the Creator.²

Al-Ghazali's critical examination of the methods and doctrines of the philosophers is one of the most exiting and intellectually significant intellectual undertaking in the history of philosophy.³ Before starting to write against the philosophers, he attained a firm grasp of philosophy, its methods and its problems. Then, he attacked the philosophers on their own grounds, arguing philosophically that their main theses were inconsistent on logical grounds.⁴

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1. Margret Smith, *Al-Ghazali: The Mystic* (Lahore: Hijrah International Publishers, 1983), 225.
2. M. M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. i (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1983), 545.
3. *Ibid.*, 593.
4. Oliver Leaman, *An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 15.

Al-Ghazali's *Tahafut al-Falasifah* is a polemical work. In this book, he tried to destroy the philosophical edifice constructed by the Muslim philosophers. He was of the view that philosophy is not a good yardstick to measure the basis of religion, as religion is derived from revelation, intuition and inner experiences of human beings.⁵ He lists twenty points in his book on which Islam and philosophy cannot get along well. On following of these points, Al-Ghazali charges the philosophers with infidelity:⁶

- 1) Eternity of the world.
- 2) Denial of God's knowledge of particulars.
- 3) Denial of bodily resurrection.

Al-Ghazali's attack on philosophy was counter attacked by Ibn-i Rushd (Averroes). He defended philosophy against the charges of Ghazali, who had sought to demonstrate that Islam and philosophy were incompatible.⁷ In his book, *Tahafut al-Tahafut*, Ibn-i Rushd quotes almost all of Al-Ghazali's *Tahafut*, commenting on it paragraph by paragraph. Although his main criticism is directed against al-Ghazali, at times he criticises Ibn-i Sina, particularly for his Neoplatonism.⁸ Ibn-i Rushd's *Tahafut* is a "sober work of criticism that tracks down ambiguities, draws distinctions, reformulates positions, corrects misunderstandings and offer analysis".⁹ The discussion between them is divided into eight categories in order to make the study easier. All the related discussions are put into the same category.

Eternity of the world

The Muslim philosophers al-Farabi and Ibn-i Sina argue that the world must have a cause because every effect has a cause. This cause cannot be a physical as none yet existed. This cause may be the will of God according to the religion. But God's will must have been caused by an external cause. But none was existed at that time, therefore, the world

5. *Ibid.*, 16.

6. W. M. Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of Al-Ghazali*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1963), 26.

7. Leaman, 39-40.

8. *Encyclopaedia of Religion*, vol. v, article "Falsafah" (M. E. Marmura), 267.

9. M. Saeed Sheikh, *Studies in Muslim Philosophy*, (Lahore: Sheikh_Mohammad Ashraf, 1974), 132.

is eternal.¹⁰ Al-Ghazali replies that none of the assumptions¹¹ of the philosophers have logical necessity which means what is otherwise impossible. He argues that it is possible that God has no external cause or His will may have "delayed effect".¹² Ibn-i Rushd's argument is that Divine will is not like human will. God must have created the world eternally, and the question of the eternity of the world cannot be solved considering the divine will, because the nature of that will cannot be known.¹³

The second argument of the philosophers revolves around Aristotelian assumption that time is the measure of movement, so if it is proved that time is eternal, it would follow that the moving being, the world, is also eternal.¹⁴ Apparently, al-Ghazali accepts Aristotelian assumption. But he says that there is no evidence, that our world is infinite, therefore, any extension of time beyond this world is imaginary. He refutes the argument in another way. Space is finite because it is an attribute of body, which is finite, therefore, time is finite because it is an attribute of finite movement.¹⁵ In response to the second argument, Ibn-i Rushd repeats the Aristotelian dictum that what has no beginning has no end, therefore there is never an end of time.¹⁶

The next argument of the philosophers is that the world was possible that's why it came to existence. Al-Ghazali refutes this argument by saying that possibility is mere a concept and it does not mean if the world was eternally possible, then it is eternal actually.¹⁷ The philosophers say that possibility relates to matter in the world. The world is continually changing. Change means the combination of fresh forms in matter. Every new combination was eternally possible but it requires matter in which the

10. G. F. Hourani, "Al-Ghazali and the Philosophers on the Origin of the World", *The Muslim World*, vol. xlvii, No. 3 (1958), 183-91.

11. The philosophers' assumptions are, (i) Every effect has a cause. (ii) The cause must be the action of some external force other than the effect. (iii) The cause or an act of will when executed must immediately lead to the effect.

12. Al-Ghazali, *Tahafut al Falasifah*, English trans. Sabih Ahmad Kamali (Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1958), 16-34.

13. Hourani, 183-91.

14. Leaman, 47.

15. *Ibid.*, 48-50.

16. Hourani, 183-91.

17. *Ibid.*, 188.

changes take place, therefore, matter must be eternal.¹⁸ Al-Ghazali refutes this argument, that if possibility needs matter to be related, then impossibility also needs something to be related to. Thus possibility and impossibility are mere concepts.¹⁹

The philosophers show the incorruptibility of the world by the example of the sun. After thousands of years, there is no sign of decay in it. That means it does not suffer corruption.²⁰ Al-Ghazali refutes the argument by saying that the sun is hundred and seventy times bigger than our earth and its decay cannot be perceptible to our eyes.²¹ Concluding the discussion, Al-Ghazali says that creation and annihilation takes place by the will of God, Who is absolutely powerful and can do whatever He wishes.²² Ibn-i Rushd points out that extinction and annihilation are synonymous. If God cannot create annihilation, He cannot create extinction either. He clarifies that a thing becomes non-existent when it changes from actual being to potential being. In this way non-existent is related to the Agent.²³ Ibn-i Rushd does not deny the creation of the world, but offers an explanation different from that of the theologians. He makes a distinction between the eternity of the world and eternity of God. God is eternal without a cause but the world is eternal with a cause.²⁴

The Creator of the world

According to the philosophers, the world emanates from God (The First Principle) necessarily, just as the effect emanates from the cause or light from the sun. Ghazali says that an agent must have 'knowledge', 'free choice' and 'will', therefore God is the Agent Who has these attributes.²⁵ Ghazali refutes philosophers' thesis that every cause is an agent and every effect is an agendum. Ghazali objects that then there

18. *Ibid.*, 190.

19. *Ibid.*, 191.

20. Al-Ghazali, 54.

21. *Ibid.*, 55.

22. *Ibid.*, 60.

23. Saeed Shaikh, 196.

24. Leaman, 39-40.

25. M. Yousof Hussain, *Ibn-i Rushd's Response to Al-Ghazali's Refutations of the Philosophers' Conception of The Agent in the Theory of Emanation*, (Hamdard Islamicus, vol. xvi, No. 2, 1982), 26.

would be no difference between the animate and inanimate beings.²⁶ He says that cause is an agent due to its volitional and un-volitional act. For example a man throws a person into the fire, and fire burns him. Here the person is the agent who willingly threw that person into the fire. But the philosophers say that it is fire that is the agent.²⁷

Ibn-i Rushd offers a basic clarification with two main points. First, the agent is one who brings something from potency to actuality and from non-existent to existence. Secondly, he insists that an agent is separated from his action.²⁸ He explains that bringing something from potentiality to actuality and non-existent to existence may take place either by deliberation, choice or by nature. For example, the shadow of a man cannot be treated as an action of an agent since the shadow cannot be separated from the man himself, therefore God cannot be a natural cause. The act of God proceeds from Him through knowledge. He is necessarily endowed with 'will' and 'choice' in the highest form.²⁹

In response to Al-Ghazali's claim that an inanimate thing cannot be an agent, he takes the example of fire, which is an inanimate being, has one power in itself to actualise when anything warm and dry are put together. Then there are natural powers in the bodies of animals, which make the food a part of the animal. Thus he concludes that if a thing actualises another's potency, it is really an agent in the full meaning of the word.³⁰

Al-Ghazali points out that The First Principle does not know anything other than itself, whereas the First intelligence, which emanates from the First Principle, knows its cause, itself and three effects, the second intelligence, the soul of the highest sphere and the body of the sphere, which proceed from it. Al-Ghazali points out that in this way, the philosophers make the first intelligence superior to the First Principle. They have limited God's knowledge to self-knowledge, thus reducing Him to the status of dead.³¹

26. *Ibid.*, 29.

27. *Ibid.*, 32.

28. Ibn-i Rushd, 89-90.

29. Yousof Hussain, 27.

30. Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 253.

31. Sseed Shaikh, 151-52.

Ibn-i Rushd explains that the act of God proceeds from Him through knowledge. He is necessarily endowed with 'will' and 'choice' in the highest form. The philosophers' only concern is that these attributes without denying the 'divine attributes of perfection' should not be applied to God and the creature alike. He admits that the mode of divine knowledge is entirely transcendent and can only be known by God as the Divine Agent Himself.³²

The philosophers' main argument is that the infinite regress of causes is impossible. There must be an uncaused cause of the series of effects. Ghazali concludes that the philosophers' theory regarding the eternity of the world is self-contradictory, as the philosophers believe the world to be eternal and still attribute a Creator to it.³³ The contradiction is that on the one hand, they consider the body of the world as eternal which means they have no cause and on the other hand, they are advocating an uncaused cause of the series of effects. Therefore, he challenges that the philosophers cannot prove the regress of causes with an argument.³⁴

In response to the above argument, Ibn-i Rushd says that there are two kinds of agents. Firstly, when the object after its potentiality to actuality does not need its agent, for instance, the coming into existence of a house through the builders. Secondly, an object which offers its actualisation needs and entirely depends on the agent. Thus the philosophers believe that the world has come into being from an eternal agent having an eternal act, without beginning or end, which does not mean that the world is eternal itself.³⁵

The unity of the God

The philosophers argue that if there were two gods, each would be called necessary being. But necessary being called necessary if it's existence is essential to it. Ghazali objects that this does not mean that if a necessary being is uncaused and necessary, the other being cannot possess the attribute of necessity. He further says that divine things cannot be proved by intellectual investigation, as God said "think over His product

32. Yousof Hussain, 27.

33. Ibn-i Rushd, 69.

34. Al-Ghazali, 16-34.

35. Ibn-i Rushd, 156.

and not His essence".³⁶ Ibn-i Rushd explains that if there were two existents, then it was possible that both were numerically different, then they would agree in species. Secondly, both must have specific difference, then they would agree in genus. In both cases, the necessary existent would have to be composite. In the third case, necessary existent would have to be one and will be the cause of all separate existents. The third case, which necessitates the absolute uniqueness of the necessary existent, is the true one.³⁷ Ibn-i Rushd further explains that the essential attributes of essences are not additional to their essence. He says that Ghazali has based his discussion on the doctrine of Ibn-i Sina. The latter is rejected by Ibn-i Rushd because Ibn-i Sina believed that existent is something additional to the essence outside the soul, and is like an accident of the essence.³⁸

Divine knowledge

Ibn-i Sina understands the universe as the action of God, Who, therefore is an agent. Thus he must have knowledge about it. Ghazali points out that an agent should have knowledge about his action, if his action is voluntary. But philosophers believe that God's action is like light from sun which is an un-voluntary act. Therefore, God cannot have knowledge about universe, as sun does not know itself.³⁹ Ibn-i Rushd explains that the philosophers' real belief is that existents proceed from God in a way superior to nature and to human will. Both ways are imperfect.⁴⁰

Ibn-i Sina's contention is that particular event takes place at particular time and changes with the passage of time. Change in object means change in the subject. But God is changeless, therefore, perception of a particular event is not possible for Him. God's knowledge is not perceptual, it is conceptual or universal in nature.⁴¹ Al-Ghazali's argument is that it is not possible for the agent to be unaffected by its objects, which has so much multiplicity and diversity. When God is the agent, He must suffer change due to His object. He says that the philosophers' arguments

36. Al-Ghazali, 130.

37. Ibn-i Rushd, 173-74.

38. *Ibid.* 177-85.

39. Al-Ghazali, 147.

40. Ibn-i Rushd, 270-72.

41. M.M. Sharif, 609.

are against the very essence of Islam. It has created a gulf between men and God. It means that God is not listening to the prayers of men and He is not aware of His creature.⁴²

Ibn-i Rushd believes that God's knowledge is timeless and eternal. He rejects Ibn-i Sina's thesis and says that 'universal' and 'particular' are the categories of human and not of divine knowledge. In fact, the mode of God's knowledge, being entirely transcendent, can only be known by God Himself. Yet, he does not give up the attempt to rationalise the divine knowledge and in particular to show its relation to the Divine essence as self thinking thought, in knowing Himself. God knows all things, which exists due to Him. He further clarifies that since God is not body, He cannot have senses or sense knowledge. Al-Quran ascribes hearing and seeing to God to remind us that God is not deprived of any kind of knowledge and understanding. The masses cannot grasp the meaning except by these terms.⁴³

The heaven and its motive power

The philosophers say that Heaven is living and moving. The purpose of its movement is the worship of God. Its movement is volitional movement. Ghazali objects that it is possible that the movement of Heaven is constrained by God. He claims that the eternal will causes the movement in things everlastingly and that this movement is not implanted in the nature of the thing. He considers philosophers' arguments as mere speculations which can prove nothing. Only prophets can discover the secrets of Heaven by inspired wisdom, not by rational methods.⁴⁴

Ibn-i Rushd replies that if Ghazali's argument is accepted, then things would have no nature, no real essence, no definition at all. He says that a stone moves downwards and fire upwards through a quality created in them. He further clarifies that a thing which moves by nature moves only in one direction, but a thing which moves with two contrary movements at the same time towards east and west has a soul. A thing moved is not in search of any place but only seeks the circular movement

42. Saeed Shaikh, 141.

43. Majid Fakhry, 137-38.

44. Al-Ghazali, 163-69.

itself. It is movement itself which is aimed by Heaven and imparts life to this world.⁴⁵

Ibn-i Sina divides the angels into two groups, one superior to the other. The superiors are called intelligences. From these intelligences particular forms descend upon the souls of the Heaven. The impression of particular events of the world upon the souls of the Heaven is like the impression of the memorables on the faculty of memory. He argues that the celestial souls are free from greed, desire, malice, envy, hunger and pain, therefore, there is no distraction in their way in knowing everything. Ghazali says that these things cannot be proved by reasoning because their source of knowledge is revelation. He mentions that the worship of God can distract their attention and prevent them from knowing the particulars of the world.⁴⁶ Here Ibn-i-Rushd agrees with Ghazali in refuting Ibn-i Sina's thesis.⁴⁷

The necessity of a causal nexus

The philosophers argue that a cause must succeed by an effect, but in Ghazali's view that the relation between the two is not of logical necessity. Objects succeed one another, but this proves succession, not causation. For example, fire, the inanimate thing, cannot burn. Only observation shows that one is with the other. The effect happens with the cause and not through it. It is when something happens again and again that it is impressed upon mind. Ghazali concludes that cause act only through the power and agency of God. The only will is the absolute free will of God that works unconstrained.⁴⁸

According to Ibn-i Rushd it is self evident that things have essences and attributes, which determine the special functions of each thing and through which the essences and names of things are differentiated. Intelligence is the perception of things with their causes. Effects can be studied more accurately through knowledge of their causes. Denial of cause implies denial of knowledge and denial of knowledge implies that nothing in this world can be really known.⁴⁹

45. Ibn-i Rushd, 289-92.

46. Al-Ghazali, 170-79.

47. Ibn-i Rushd, 292-94.

48. M.M. Sharif, 615.

49. Ibn-i Rushd, 318-19.

In short, Ibn-i Rushd is trying to convey that if every thing happens with the absolute will of God, no rational pattern can be traced in this creation. This will also deny the existence of a wise creator. On this view it is no longer possible to prove the Existence of God from the beauty of order, which we observe in this world. Such a thesis is incompatible with the teachings of the philosophers and is also contrary to the expressive pronouncements of al-Quran, which describes the world as a perfect workshop of God.⁵⁰

Ghazali points out that the philosophers do not believe in miracles. He challenges that they should prove that miracles are logically impossible.⁵¹ Ibn-i Rushd explains that the philosophers have deliberately avoided to discuss the miracles because these are the principles of religion. He admits that the religious principles are divine things, which surpass human understanding. They must be acknowledged although their causes are unknown.⁵²

The immortality of the soul

According to the philosophers, the bodies are constantly dissolving. For example, a child changes in manhood and old age but, inspite of, physical change, he carries his cognition with him. This shows that the soul is its instrument. Ghazali points out that plants and animals do change with the passage of time. But it cannot be said that they have being other than physical one. Ghazali further says that the soul comes into existence with the body, so it is possible that it perishes with the body as well and resurrected by God as it is in al-Quran.⁵³ Ibn-i Rushd argues that the soul is distinguished from the intellect. Intellect in man is the faculty through which he knows the eternal truths without the media of sense organs. Active intellect is the source and origin of intellect. During its temporary abode in the body, the intellect of man suffers separation from Active Intellect. After the body had perished at death, it goes back to be merged once again into the active intellect to live there in eternity along with other intellects. Thus the immortality of the intellect is not individual but collective. This, however, is not the case with human soul. Soul is a kind of energy, which gives life to matter. Ibn-i Rushd says that the soul

50. Majid Fakhry, 319.

51. M.M. Sharif, 616.

52. Ibn-i Rushd, 322.

53. Al-Ghazali, 211-16.

forms the body, therefore, it does not entirely depend upon it. Thus the destruction of the soul cannot be established from that of the body. He concludes the soul is independent of the body in an individual capacity, but a convincing proof for the immortality of human soul cannot be given merely through philosophical arguments.⁵⁴

Resurrection of bodies

The philosophers are sceptical about the physical resurrection in the hereafter. They deny physical pain and pleasure, and the existence of paradise and the hell in the physical sense. They insist that life hereafter is purely spiritual and that paradise and hell are the states of one's soul and not localities. They do acknowledge that many passages of al-Quran speak of the life hereafter in the physical sense but maintain that the language of these passages is symbolic and metaphorical which is for common man to understand everything. Ghazali says that the philosophers seek naturalistic explanations for all things, more precisely, in terms of cause and effect.⁵⁵ All their arguments also stand openly refuted by al-Quran, which states:

They also say 'when we are turned bones and dust, shall we be restored as a new creation? Say, you shall, whether you turn to stone or iron, or any other substance, which you think unlikely to be given life,' they will ask: 'Who will restore us?' say He that created you first.⁵⁶

Ibn-i- Rushd does not deny the resurrection of bodies, but he gives an interpretation and exposition of the dogma in a manner different from that of theologians. According to him, the body we shall have in the next world will not be the same as our body now, for what has passed away is not reborn in its identity. It can at best appear as something similar. Life hereafter is not mere an end, but a perpetual growth and continuation of this very life. The life hereafter will be of a higher kind than this life and bodies will be more perfect than they are in their earthly form.⁵⁷

54. Saeed Sheikh, 198-99.

55. *Ibid.*, 151-52.

56. I have used Muhammad Y. Zaid's translation, *The Quran*, xvii, 49-51.

57. Ibn-i Rushd, 360-62.

Conclusion

After considering the long discussion of Al-Ghazali and Ibn-i Rushd, it is obvious that it is sometimes more the formula than the essence of things which divides them. Both believe that al-Quran contains the highest truth. Both affirm that God creates or has created the earth. Both apply to God the theory that His will and knowledge differ from human will and knowledge in that they are creative principles and essentially beyond understanding. Both admit that Divine cannot be measured by the standards of man. Both believe in God's ultimate unity.⁵⁸

If Ghazali's other works are considered, then the resemblance between the two becomes still greater. For instance, he too believes in the spirituality of the soul. Not with standing the arguments he gives against it in the *Tahafut al- Falasifah*, he too sometimes teaches the fundamental theory of the philosophers, which he tries to refute in *Tahafut*, the theory that from the one Supreme Agent, as the ultimate source, all things ultimately derive. He himself expresses this idea, in his *Kimiya-i-Sa'adat* and slightly differently in his *Ihya'ulum al-din*.⁵⁹

Emotionally the differences between the two are very deep. Ibn-i Rushd is a philosopher and a proud believer in reason. There is much wavering and hesitation in his ideas, still his faith in reason remains unshaken. He reproaches the theologians for having made God an immortal man but God for him is a dehumanised principle.⁶⁰ Ibn-i Rushd accuses Al-Ghazali of hypocrisy and insincerity by saying that his polemics against the philosophers are merely to win the favour of the orthodox. According to him, Al-Ghazali's teachings are sometimes detrimental to religion and sometimes to philosophy and sometimes to both.⁶¹

Al-Ghazali was the first ever theologian who attacked the entire system of philosophy after an indepth study. His attack on *falsafah* put him on the defensive and help theology to come out triumphant of the controversy between theology and philosophy. In order to refute the *falsafah*, he explained the complicated doctrines of philosophers and in

58. Van Den Bergh, *Averroes' Tahafut al Tahafut, (The incoherence of the incoherence)*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), iv.

59. *Ibid.*, xxxv-vi.

60. *Ibid.*, xxxviii.

61. F. Rehman, *Prophecy in Islam*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), 112.

this way made philosophy intelligible for the common people. Therefore, he legitimised and popularised the study of Ibn-i Sina's logic and this made Greek modes of thinking accessible to the more traditional Muslims.⁶²

Ibn-i Rushd's reply to Al-Ghazali's attack made little impact on the Muslim world as a whole, but it completes the picture of the full range of contemporary thought with its extreme opposites of theology and philosophy.⁶³ According to Majid Fakhry:

Ibn-i-Rusd's defense of philosophers is as subtle and vigorous as is Al-Ghazali's attack on them. He indeed handles the arguments with accomplished understanding and ingenious skill, yet in the considered opinion of those who are competent to judge, Al-Ghazali's arguments are in the final analysis more telling than those of his adversary.⁶⁴

Several critics have accused Ghazali of being responsible for the decline of Muslim interest in philosophy and science. It is alleged that his emphasis on spiritualism initiated a movement in Muslim thought that killed all zest for philosophic inquiry and scientific reflection. Therefore, when the Muslims followed Al-Ghazali and neglected little by little the study of philosophy and science, their once great civilization faded. On the other hand, Ibn-i Rushd defended philosophy and science and medieval Europe followed the way prescribed by him, which led to the rise of European science.⁶⁵

The anti-intellectualism and anti-liberalism of the Muslim community is a highly complex sociological phenomena and its causes must be explored in a great many areas. It would be a simplification of facts to ascribe it to a single name, however great that name may be. Al-Ghazali never left philosophy altogether and he himself was very well acquainted with the scientific knowledge of this day, most of which, he accepted as true.⁶⁶

62. M. L. Jummah, *Ta'rikh-i Falsafah-i Islam*, (Urdu trans.), Mir Wali-ud-Din (Karachi: 1964), 92-93.

63. Titus Burckhardt, *Moorish Culture in Spain*, (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), 143.

64. Majid Fakhry, *Islamic Occasionalism*, (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1958), 103.

65. M.M. Sharif, 622.

66. *Ibid.*, 623-24.

Philosophy was generally considered an enemy to Islam and was hated by the people. So, the majority of the rulers preferred to win the favour of 'ulama' and the people by suppressing it. Therefore privately in the courts, the few, who were considered capable, were patronised but publicly intellectual speculation was discouraged. Thus *falsafah* never gained much popular acceptance in the Muslim world.⁶⁷

By the end of the twelfth century, the movement against philosophy took momentum in the Muslim world and in Baghdad all the books of philosophy were burned because of the fear of the 'ulama'. Philosophy as a subject ceased to be taught and the philosophers kept their views secret. Ibn-i Rushd survived as long as his royal patrons protected him but as soon as his views were known and opposed by the orthodox, he was disgraced and exiled. All his books were burnt. Renan laments that there was the end of philosophy in the Muslim world after Ibn-i Rushd.⁶⁸ Some other western writers ascribe the decline of philosophy to the destruction of Baghdad in 1258, which cast a gloom of night on the Muslim world and stooped all kinds of progress of the Muslims. To some extent, the explanation of the lack of interest of the Muslims in philosophy lies rather in the extraordinary burgeoning of mysticism in the twelfth century, which reached its peak with Ibn-i-Arabi. Philosophy was not defeated but it drowned in the ocean of sufi contemplation of God.⁶⁹

The function of philosophy is to analyse. The object of Islamic theology is to build a world view on the basis of al-Quran with the help of intellectual tools, in other words with the assistance of philosophy. Therefore philosophy is not a rival of theology. Certain views may create tensions with certain theological doctrines but that is not an excuse for banning philosophy. Difference of opinion have to be assigned a highly positive value, for it is only through confrontation of different and opposing views that truth gradually emerges. As the Prophet Muhammad

67. M. G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. ii (Chicago: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 319.

68. P. M. Holt, et al., (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 2B (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 319.

69. R.N. Frye, et al., (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. iv (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 421.

(salallahu alayhe wssalam) had said, "difference of opinion is blessing for our community".⁷⁰

Philosophy, therefore, is a perennial intellectual need and has to be allowed to flourish both for its own sake and for the sake of other disciplines. It inculcates a much needed analytical and critical spirit and generates new ideas that become important intellectual tools for other sciences, not least for religion and theology. Fazlur Rehman has warned that "a people, who deprive themselves of philosophy commit intellectual suicide."⁷¹

70. F. Rehman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 158.

71. *Ibid.*