A study of Averroes (Ibn Rushd)s ideas on education

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ABSTRACT: Nowadays, more than ever feel the need to revise the Islamic heritage is to solve existing problems. The philosophy of Averroes is very important in his special status in the Islamic world. Averroes also trying to communicate with otherscience, religion has done, can cover a variety of issues, and most notably in the area of education is. Averroes looks to human and imagination from special perspective. Among Islamic philosophers, Averroes, the founder of transcendent philosophy, has many ideas that can be translated into educational implications for the development of science. This study is to investigate the ideas of Averroes dealt with education.

This article reviews the ideas of Averroes Andalusia and its educational implications. For the purpose of this paper is the analytical method.

Keywords: Averroes, education, science

INTRODUCTION

Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Rushd, better known in the Latin West as Averroes, lived during a unique period in Western intellectual history, in which interest in philosophy and theology was waning in the Muslim world and just beginning to flourish in Latin Christendom. Just fifteen years before his birth, the great critic of Islamic philosophy, al-Ghazzali (1058-1111), had died after striking a blow against Muslim Neoplatonic philosophy (Glasner, 2009), particularly against the work of the philosopher Ibn Sina (Avicenna). From such bleak circumstances emerged the Spanish-Muslim philosophers, of which the jurist and physician Ibn Rushd came to be regarded as the final and most influential Muslim philosopher, especially to those who inherited the tradition of Muslim philosophy in the West (Averroes, 2001).

His influential commentaries and unique interpretations on Aristotle revived Western scholarly interest in ancient Greek philosophy, whose works for the most part had been neglected since the sixth century. He critically examined the alleged tension between philosophy and religion in the Decisive Treatise, and he challenged the anti-philosophical sentiments within the Sunni tradition sparked by al-Ghazzali. This critique ignited a similar re-examination within the Christian tradition, influencing a line of scholars who would come to be identified as the “Averroists.” (Averroes, 1998)

Ibn Rushd contended that the claim of many Muslim theologians that philosophers were outside the fold of Islam had no base in scripture. His novel exegesis of seminal Quranic verses made the case for three valid “paths” of arriving at religious truths, and that philosophy was one if not the best of them, therefore its study should not be prohibited. He also challenged Asharite, Mutazilite, Sufi, and “literalist” conceptions of God’s attributes and actions, noting the philosophical issues that arise out of their notions of occasionalism, divine speech, and explanations of the origin of the world. Ibn Rushd strived to demonstrate that without engaging religion critically and philosophically, deeper meanings of the tradition can be lost, ultimately leading to deviant and incorrect understandings of the divine (Averroes, 2001).

As Ibn Rushd did not have access to any text of Aristotle’s Politics. As a substitute for this, he commented on Plato’s The Republic, arguing that the ideal state there described was the same as the original constitution of the Arab Caliphate, as well as the Almohad state of Ibn Tumart (Baffioni, 2004).

Ibn Rushd also claimed that women were equal to men in all respects and possessed equal capacities to shine in peace and in war, citing examples of female warriors among the Arabs, Greeks and Africans to support his case. In Muslim history, examples of notable female Muslims who fought as soldiers or generals included Nusaybah Bint k’ab Al Maziniyyah, Aisha, Kahula and Wafeira, and Um Umarah.
**Medicine**

Averroes wrote a medical encyclopedia called Kulliyat ("Generalities", i.e. general medicine), known in its Latin translation as Colliget. He also made a compilation of the works of Galen, and wrote a commentary on the Canon of Medicine (Qanun fi 't-tibb) of Avicenna (Ibn Sina) (980-1037) (Glasner, 2009).

**Physics**

Averroes also authored three books on physics namely: Short Commentary on the Physics, Middle Commentary on the Physics and Long Commentary on the Physics. Averroes defined and measured force as "the rate at which work is done in changing the kinetic condition of a material body" and correctly argued "that the effect and measure of force is change in the kinetic condition of a materially resistant mass". He took a particular and keen interest in the understanding of "motor force" (Averroes, 2005).

Averroes also developed the notion that bodies have a (non-gravitational) inherent resistance to motion into physics. This idea in particular was adopted by Thomas Aquinas and subsequently by Johannes Kepler, who referred to this fact as "Inertia".

In Optics Averroes followed Alhazen's incorrect explanation that a Rainbow is due to reflection, not refraction.

**Astronomy**

Regarding his studies in astronomy, Averroes argued for a strictly concentric model of the universe, and explained sunspots and scientific reasoning regarding the occasional opaque colors of the moon. He also worked on the description of the spheres, and movement of the spheres (Leaman, 2002).

**Psychology**

Averroes also made some studies regarding Active intellect and Passive intellect, both of the following were formerly regarded subjects of Psychology (Genequand, 2001).

**Music theory**

As an Arabic music theorist, Ibn Rushd contributed to music theory with his commentary on Aristotle's On the Soul, where Ibn Rushd dealt perspicuously with the theory of sound. This text was translated into Latin by Michael Scot (d. 1232)(Averroes, 2005).

**Celestial mechanics**

In celestial mechanics, while discussing the celestial spheres, Averroes rejected John Philoponus' 'anti-Aristotelian' solution to his refutation of Aristotelian celestial dynamics, and instead restored Aristotle's law of motion by adopting the 'hidden variable' approach to resolving apparent refutations of parametric laws that posits a previously unaccounted variable and its value(s) for some parameter, thereby modifying the predicted value of the subject variable. For, he posited a non-gravitational, previously unaccounted, inherent resistance to motion, as hidden within the celestial spheres. This was a non-gravitational inherent resistance to motion of superlunary quintessential matter, whereby $R > 0$ even when there is neither any gravitational, nor any media resistance, to motion. Hence, in refuting the prediction of Aristotelian celestial dynamics:

\[
\begin{align*}
& (i) \ F > 0 \ & \& \& \& \& \& \& \& \& \& \& \& \& (ii) \ F > 0 \ & \& \& \& \& \& \& \& \& \& \& \& (iii) \ R = 0 \\
& \text{entail } v \text{ is infinite}
\end{align*}
\]

The alternative logic of Averroes' solution was to reject its third premise "$R = 0$" instead of rejecting its first premise as Philoponus had (Davidson, 1992).

Thus Averroes most significantly revised Aristotle's law of motion "$v \ a \ F/R\" into "$v \ a \ F/M\” for the case of celestial motion with his auxiliary theory of what may be called celestial inertia $M$, whereby $R = M > 0$.

But Averroes restricted inertia to celestial bodies and denied sublunar bodies have any inherent resistance to motion other than their gravitational (or levitational) inherent resistance to violent motion, just as in Aristotle's original sublunar physics.

**Philosophy**

**The Tradition of Islamic Philosophy**

Averroes furthered the tradition of Greek philosophy in the Islamic world (falsafa). His commentaries removed the neo-Platonic bias of his predecessors. Criticizing al-Farabi's attempt to merge Plato and Aristotle's ideas, Averroes argued that Aristotle's philosophy diverged in significant ways from Plato's. Averroes rejected Avicenna's Neoplatonism which was partly based on the works of neo-Platonic philosophers, Plotinus and Proclus, that were mistakenly attributed to Aristotle (Black, 2003).

In metaphysics, or more exactly ontology, Averroes rejects the view advanced by Avicenna that existence is merely accidental. Avicenna holds that "essence is ontologically prior to existence". The accidental, i.e. attributes that are not essential, are additional contingent characteristics. Averroes, following Aristotle,
holds that individual existing substances are primary. One may separate them mentally; however, ontologically speaking, existence and essence are one.

**Averroes' defense of philosophy**

His own first work is on General Medicine (Kulliyat, Latin Colliget), written between 1162 and 1169. Only a few of his legal writings and none of his theological writings are preserved. Undoubtedly his most important writings are three closely connected religious-philosophical polemical treatises, composed in the years 1179 and 1180: the Fasl with its Appendix: Manahij; and Tahafut at-Tahafut in defense of philosophy. In the two first named Averroès stakes a bold claim: only the metaphysician employing certain proof (syllogism) is capable and competent (as well as obliged) to interpret the doctrines contained in the prophetically revealed law (Shar‘ or Shar‘i‘ah), and not the Muslim mutakallimun (dialectic theologians), who rely on dialectical arguments. To establish the true, inner meaning of religious beliefs and convictions is the aim of philosophy in its quest for truth (Averroes, 2005).

This inner meaning must not be divulged to the masses, who must accept the plain, external meaning of Scripture contained in stories, similes, and metaphors. Averroès applied Aristotle’s three arguments (demonstrative, dialectical, and persuasive—i.e., rhetorical and poetical) to the philosophers, the theologians, and the masses. The third work is devoted to a defense of philosophy against his predecessor al-Ghazali’s telling attack directed against Avicenna and al-Farabi in particular. Spirited and successful as Averroès’ defense was, it could not restore philosophy to its former position, quite apart from the fact that the atmosphere in Muslim Spain and North Africa was most unfavourable to the unhindered pursuit of speculation. As a result of the reforming activity of Ibn Tumart (c. 1078-1130), aimed at restoring pure monotheism, power was wrested from the ruling Almoravids, and the new Berber dynasty of the Almohads was founded, under whom Averroès served. In jurisprudence the emphasis then shifted from the practical application of Muslim law by appeal to previous authority to an equal stress on the study of its principles and the revival of independent legal decision on the basis of Ibn Tumart’s teaching. Of perhaps even more far-reaching significance was Ibn Tumart’s idea of instructing the heretofore ignorant masses in the plain meaning of the Shar‘i‘ah so that practice would be informed with knowledge. These developments were accompanied by the encouragement of the falasifah—"those who," according to Averroès’ Fasl, “follow the way of speculation and are eager for a knowledge of the truth”—to apply demonstrative arguments to the interpretation of the theological teaching of the Shar‘i‘ah. But with the hands of both jurists and theologians thus strengthened, Averroès’ defense of philosophy continued to be conducted within an unfavourable atmosphere (Averroes, 2001).

Averroès himself acknowledged the support of Abu Ya‘qub, to whom he dedicated his Commentary on Plato’s Republic. Yet Averroès pursued his philosophical quest in the face of strong opposition from the mutakallimun, who, together with the jurists, occupied a position of eminence and of great influence over the fanatical masses. This may explain why he suddenly fell from grace when Abu Yusuf—on the occasion of a jihad (holy war) against Christian Spain—dismissed him from high office and banished him to Lucena in 1195. To appease the theologians in this way at a time when the caliph needed the undivided loyalty and support of the people seems a more convincing reason than what the Arabic sources tell us (attacks on Averroès by the mob, probably at the instigation of jurists and theologians). But Averroès’ disgrace was only short-lived—though long enough to cause him acute suffering—since the caliph recalled Averroès to his presence after his return to Marrakesh. After his death, Averroès was first buried at Marrakesh, and later his body was transferred to the family tomb at Cordoba (Lapidus, 1988).

It is not rare in the history of Islam that the rulers’ private attachment to philosophy and their friendship with philosophers goes hand in hand with official disapproval of philosophy and persecution of its adherents, accompanied by the burning of their philosophical writings and the prohibition of the study of secular sciences other than those required for the observance of the religious law. Without caliphal encouragement Averroès could hardly have persisted all his life in his fight for philosophy against the theologians, as reflected in his Commentary on Plato’s Republic, in such works as the Fasl and Tahafut at-Tahafut, and in original philosophical treatises (e.g., the union of the active intellect with the human intellect). It is likely that the gradual estrangement of his two masters and patrons from Ibn Tumart’s theology and their preoccupation with Islamic law also helped him. That Averroès found it difficult to pursue his philosophical studies alongside the conscientious performance of his official duties he himself reveals in a few remarks scattered over his commentaries; e.g., in that on Aristotle’s De partibus animalium (Averroes, 1973).
not see any real conflict between philosophy and religion, or philosophical texts (Aristotle) and religious texts (Qur'an), "philosophy has always existed among the adepts of revelation, i.e. the prophets, peace be on them." Truth may be discovered by philosophers through logic, but it may also be revealed figuratively, as it is in scriptures. "All that is wanted in an inquiry into philosophical reasoning has already been perfectly examined by the Ancients. All that is required of us is that we should go back to their books and see what they have said in this connection. If all that they say be true, we should accept it and if there be something wrong, we should be warned by it" (Averroes, 2001).

Averroes’ attempt to harmonize religion and philosophy led to accusations of accepting the doctrine of "double truth," that a thing can be true in philosophy or according to reason while its opposite is true in theology or according to faith. He also believed that the intellect is universal and immortal. The relationship between the Active Intellect and the material intellect is what form is to matter; the Active Intellect is a "power of in the soul" and common to all mankind and eternal. According to Averroes, all generable and corruptible entities are made up of matter and form; soul is the the form or first perfection of a natural body. For these thoughts he was condemned for not believing in the immortality of the individual soul. In popular myth he was regarded as an atheist refuted by St. Thomas Aquinas (Genequand, 2001).

Origin of the World

Turning from the attributes of God to the actions of God, where he delineates his view of creation, Ibn Rushd in his Tahafut al-Tahafut clearly deals with the charge against the philosopher’s doctrine on the eternity of the physical universe in his polemic against al-Ghazzali. Ghazzali perceived that the philosophers had misunderstood the relationship between God and the world, especially since the Qur’an is clear on divine creation. Ghazzali, sustaining the Asharite emphasis on divine power, questioned why God, being the ultimate agent, could not simply create the world ex nihilo and then destroy it in some future point in time? Why did there need to be some obstacle to explain a delay in God’s creative action? In response to this, Ghazzali offered a number of lengthy proofs to challenge the philosopher’s assertions (Averroes, 1982).

Ibn Rushd, who often labeled Ghazzali's arguments dialectical, sophistical or feeble, merely replied that the eternal works differently than the temporal. As humans, we can willfully decide to perform some action and then wait a period of time before completing it. For God, on the other hand, there can be no gap between decision and action; for what differentiates one time from another in God’s mind? Also, what physical limits can restrict God from acting? Ibn Rushd, in the first discussion, writes about how Ghazzali confused the definition of eternal and human will, making them univocal. For humans, the will is the faculty to choose between two options, and it is desire that compels the will to choose. For God, however, this definition of will is meaningless. God cannot have desire because that would entail change within the eternal when the object of desire was fulfilled. Furthermore, the creation of the world is not simply the choice between two equal alternatives, but a choice of existence or non-existence. Finally, if all the conditions for action were fulfilled, there would not be any reason for God not to act. God, therefore, being omniscient and omnipotent would have known from the eternal past what he had planned to create, and without limit to his power, there would no condition to stop the creation from occurring (Averroes, 2005).

Psychology

Like Aristotle, Ibn Rushd views the study of the psyche as a part of physics, since it is related specifically to the generable and corruptible union of form and matter found in the physical world and passed from generation to generation through the seed and natural heat. Ibn Rushd’s views on psychology are most fully discussed in his Talkbis Kitab al-Nafs (Aristotle on the Soul). Here Ibn Rushd, as M. Fakhry comments, divided the soul into five faculties: the nutritive, the sensitive, the imaginative, the appetitive and the rational. The primary psychological faculty of all plants and animals is the nutritive or vegetative faculty, passed on through sexual generation, as noted above. The remaining four higher faculties are dependent on the nutritive faculty and are really perfections of this faculty, the product of a nature urging to move higher and higher (Averroes, 2001).

The nutritive faculty uses natural heat to convert nutrients from potentiality to actuality, which are essential for basic survival, growth and reproduction of the living organism. This faculty is an active power which is moved by the heavenly body (Active Intellect). Meanwhile, the sensitive faculty is a passive power divided into two aspects, the proximate and the ultimate, in which the former is moved within the embryo by the heavenly body and the latter is moved by sensible objects. The sensitive faculty in infinite, in that it is passive, mutable, related to sensible forms and dependent upon the animal’s physical senses (e.g. touch or vision). A part of these senses, notes Fakhry, is the sensus communis, a sort of sixth sense that perceives common sensibles (i.e. objects that require more than one sense to observe), discriminates among these sensibles, and comprehends that it perceives. Benmakhlouf notes that the imaginative faculty is dependent on the sensitive faculty, in that its forms result from the sensible forms, which Fakhry contends are stored in sensus communis. It differs from the sensitive faculty, however, by the fact that it "apprehends objects which are no longer
present...its apprehensions are often false or fictitious," and it can unite individual images of objects perceived separately. Imagination is not opinion or reasoning, since it can conceive of unfalsified things and its objects are particular not universal, and may be finite because it is mutable (moving from potentiality to actuality by the forms stored in the sensus communis). The imaginative faculty stimulates the appetitive faculty, which is understood as desire, since it imagines desirable objects. Fakhry adds that the imaginative and appetitive faculties are essentially related, in that it is the former that moves the latter to desire or reject any pleasurable or repulsive object (Davidson, 1992).

Elsewhere, Ibn Rushd maintains that it is the Muslim doctrine of the afterlife that best motivates people to an ethical life. The Christian and Jewish doctrines, he notes, are too focused upon the spiritual elements of the afterlife, while the Muslim description of the physical pleasures are more enticing. Of course, Ibn Rushd does not ultimately reject the idea of a physical afterlife, but for him it is unlikely (Urvoy, 2001).

A number of other problems remain in Ibn Rushd’s doctrine of the soul and intellect. For instance, if the material intellect is one and eternal for all humans, how is it divided and individualized? His immediate reply was that division can only occur within material forms, thus it is the human body that divides and individualizes the material intellect. Nevertheless, aside from this and other problems raised, on some of which Aquinas takes him to task, Ibn Rushd succeeded in providing an explanation of the human soul and intellect that did not involve an immediate transcendental agent. This opposed the explanations found among the Neoplatonists, allowing a further argument for rejecting Neoplatonic emanation theories. Even so, notes Davidson, Ibn Rushd’s theory of the material intellect was something foreign to Aristotle.

CONCLUSION

The events surrounding Ibn Rushd towards the end of his life, including his banishment, signaled a broader cultural shift in the Islamic world. Interest in philosophy was primarily among the elite: scholars, royal patrons and civil servants. Nevertheless, its presence among the ruling elite spoke of the diversity of what it meant to be “Muslim.” As interest in philosophy waned in the Muslim world after Ibn Rushd, his writings found new existence and intellectual vigor in the work of Christian and Jewish philosophers. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw an intellectual revival in the Latin West, with the first great universities being established in Italy, France and England. Within the walls of the University of Paris, a group of philosophers came to identify themselves with the Aristotelian philosophy presented by Ibn Rushd, particularly certain elements of its relation to religion. Later known as the “Averroists,” these Christian philosophers sparked a controversy within the Roman Catholic Church about the involvement of philosophy with theology. Averroists, their accusers charged, had promoted the doctrines of one intellect for all humans, denial of the immortality of the soul, claimed that happiness can be found in this life and promoted the innovative doctrine of “double truth”. Double truth, the idea that there are two kinds of truth, religious and philosophical, was not held by Ibn Rushd himself but was an innovation of the Averroists.

REFERENCES