

# *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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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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.<sup>5</sup> 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:<sup>6</sup>

- 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> Ibn-i Rushd's *Tahafut* is a "sober work of criticism that tracks down ambiguities, draws distinctions, reformulates positions, corrects misunderstandings and offer analysis".<sup>9</sup> 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

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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.

