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Chapter 5: Comparative Study of Ibn Sina and Edwards's Shared Views on Philosophy

Introduction

Avicenna (Ibn Sina) (980–1037 AD), the Persian (Iranian) philosopher and physician, has been regarded as the greatest of the medieval Islamic philosophers. He served as court physician for the Sultan of Bukhara.

Avicenna was deeply influenced by Aristotle, yet, maintained a Muslim faith. He was best known for his distinction between essence and existence, in which the essence of an existing thing had to be explained by their existing cause (s), whose reality was higher than the philosophical and theological perspective (Pojman, 2003).

Avicenna as a Persian philosopher, scientist and physician, was widely called 'The Supreme Master'. He held an unsurpassed position in Islamic philosophy. His works, including the Canon of Medicine, that were cited throughout most Medieval Latin philosophical and medical texts, had been subject of more commentaries, explanations, and reviews than any other Islamic philosopher. They inspired generations of thinkers, including many Persian poets.

His philosophical work especially – Healing: Directives and Remarks and Deliverance – defined Islamic peripatetic philosophy, one of the three dominant schools of Islamic philosophy. His contribution to science and philosophy was extraordinary in scope. It was thought that he was the first logician to define temporal modalities in prepositions. He contributed to diagnosis and identification of many diseases, and the use of specific number of pulse beats in making diagnosis (Honderich, 2005).

His autobiography described him as an intuitive student of philosophy and other Greek Sciences, who could not see the point of Aristotle's Metaphysics, until he read a tiny essay by al-Farabi (870-950 AD), which showed him what it meant to seek the nature of 'Being' as such. It was in metaphysics that

Avicenna made his greatest contributions to philosophy, brilliantly synthesizing the rival approaches of the Aristotelian–Neo–Platonic tradition with the creationist monotheism of Islamic dialectical theology (*Kalam*).

Aristotle sought and found 'Being' in its fullest sense in that which was changeless in nature (above all, in the cosmos as a whole). *Kalam* understood 'Being' as the immediately given, allowing no inference beyond a single contingent datum to any necessary properties, correlatives, continuators, or successor. The result was a stringent atomist occasionalism resting ultimately on an early version of logical atomism.

Avicenna preserved Aristotlean naturalism alongside the idea from scriptures of the world that arguably states that any finite being which although could be a chance event in itself, was a necessary output of its cause. He adapted al–Farabi's Neoplatonic emanationism to this schematization. He naturalized his own distinctive version of the *kalam* argument from contingency in philosophy, which stated that any being must be the necessary 'Being', and it was therefore simply the ultimate cause of all other things. Avicenna found refuge at the court of one '*Alaal–Dawla*', who bravely resisted the military pressures of Mahmud against his lands around Isfahan. He made the philosopher and savant his vizier. Avicenna completed his famous philosophic work the 'Shifa' (known in Latin as the Sufficientia) and his 'Qanun fi Tibb' – the Galenic Canon here. The latter remained in use as a medical textbook until finally it was brought down by the weight of criticisms during the Renaissance.

Avicenna's philosophy was the central target of the polemic critique of the Muslim theologian al–Ghazali (1058 –1111 AD) in his 'Incoherence of the Philosophers', mainly on the ground that the philosopher's retention of the Aristotelian doctrine of the eternity of the world was inconsistent with his claim that God was the author of the world.

Al-Ghazali argued that Avicenna's affirmations about causation being necessary and that God's knowledge was universal made miracles impossible and divine governance too impersonal to deserve the name. Yet, Avicenna's philosophic works (numbering over a hundred in Arabic and Persian) continued to exercise a major influence on Muslim and Jewish philosophers and (through Latin translations) on philosophers in the West (Audi, 2001).

One of his arguments concerning the nature of the soul postulated that if a fully grown man suddenly came into existence while remaining suspended in empty space, with eyes covered and limbs separated – this 'flying man' would have no sensation, but nevertheless he would be aware of his own being and his self. The argument anticipated the cogito of Descartes.

Avicenna believed that 'Being' was an accident of essence, and that contingent beings required a necessary cause to sustain their existence. Aquinas accepted this version of cosmological argument to explain existence. Neo-Platonism surfaced in Avicenna's work in the theological context of considering concepts such as the kinds of intelligence (Blackburn, 2005)

Considering his knowledge regarding man and belief that man's attributes and habits could be changed, Avicenna put forward some ideas about ethics. He stated some issues of ethics and morality in his philosophical and social discussions, through which he perhaps wanted to show that morality was a virtue, which should be considered in all such affairs and discussions.

Avicenna appointed religion as foundation for one of his theories. He emphasized that it was important to ensure every individual's perfection and happiness in this world and in the hereafter through their moral education in society.

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758 AD) was an American philosopher and theologian (Audi 2001, p. 253 & Blackburn 2005, p. 110). He could be said to be the most eminent American philosopher of his time (Mautner 2005, p. 179) and perhaps the foremost of puritan theologians and philosophers (Honderich, 2005).

Edwards was considered by many to be the greatest philosopher–theologian yet to grace the American scene (Miller 1957; cited in Talbot 2004, p. 13). He deeply influenced congregational and Presbyterian theology in America for over a century (Audi 2001, p. 253).

He was also considered a Saint, Pastor, Polymath, Theologian, Metaphysician, Apologist, and Educator (Packer 2004, p. 82), who was characterized by his wide–ranging intellect, penetrating analysis, and philosophical power (Lachs & Talisse, 2008, P.215).

Edward's influence on the development of American Christianity, theology and philosophy had been evidenced by his influence on contemporaries like Samuel Hopkins and Nathaniel Emmons, and controversies that arose between luminaries such as Edwards A. Park and Charles Hodge (Lachs & Talisse 2008, p. 215).

On the other hand, Edwards was also described as God-centered, God-focused, God-intoxicated and God-entranced. So indeed he was (Parker 2004, p. 86). Edwards was educated at Yale, preached in New York in 1729 AD, and assumed a congregational Pastorate in Northampton, Massachusetts, where he became a leader in the Great Awakening.

In 1750 AD, he was forced to leave this Parish because of a dispute with his parishioners over qualifications for communion. In 1751 AD he took charge of the congregation in Stockbridge, a frontier town sixty miles to the west. He was selected third president of Princeton in 1757 AD but died shortly after inauguration (Audi 2001, p. 253).

Ontology

Avicenna

Avicenna introduced God as the prime or ultimate cause of all things (Kemal, 1998). He maintained that God, the principle of all existence, was pure intellect, from whom other existing things such as minds,

bodies and other objects all emanated. Therefore all that existed was necessarily related to God.

That necessity, once fully understood, was rational and allowed all that existed to be inferred from each other hand and ultimately from God (ibid). Avicenna believed that the highest point above the active intellect was – God, the pure intellect. God also remained the highest object of human knowledge. This was because the highest and purest intellect – God – was the source of all that existed in the world (ibid).

According to Avicenna, essence existed in supra-human intelligence and also in the human mind (ibid). Entire nexus of causes and effects needed to have a first cause, which existed necessarily for itself; this was God. Avicenna went on to explain how the world and its order emanated from God (ibid).

Edwards

Edwards believed that God was the complete cause of everything that occurred, including human volition itself. Edwards was also an occasionalist, idealist and mental phenomenalist. For him, God was the only real cause of events. Human volition and 'natural causes' were further 'occasions' through which God produced appropriate effects (Routledge concise Dictionary of Philosophy 2000, p. 233).

According to Edwards, the 'vulgarly' called causal relations were more constant conjunctions. True causes necessitated their effects. Since God alone would meet this condition, God remained the only true cause. He also was the only true substance. Physical objects were collections of ideas of color, shape, and other 'corporeal' qualities. As the only true cause and the only real substance, God was in general the 'Being' and the objects were His own effect (Audi 2001, p. 253).

Edwards argued from an unthinkable perspective the notion of absolute nothingness being the nature of existence of the eternal 'Being'. This necessary Eternal, which began before time began, had to be infinite and omnipresent and it could not be solid. It could only be space, or God (Crittenden, 2005). Since absolute nothingness was impossible, a beginning was necessary. This beginning had to be identical with God (Mautner 2005, p. 179).

Edwards said that God's understanding and power were infinite. God being infinite in power and knowledge must be self-sufficient and all-sufficient (Piper 2004, p. 23). The whole was of God, in God, to God, and God was the beginning, middle and end in this affair (Piper 2004, p. 23).

Nothing existed without Him creating it (ibid, P.24). As George Marsden observed, "The Key to Edwards' thought was that everything was related because everything was related to God" (Nicholas 2004, p. 51–52). Edwards advocated for a God–centeredness that was achieved through a dependence on Him. It was worth nothing that Edwards emphasized God dependence over self–dependence as well. Edwards saw man as helpless, standing entirely empty–handed before God (Nicholas 2004, p. 52).

Edwards believed that father, mother, husband, wife, or children or the company of earthly friends -

were nothing but shadows of God as the substance. These were but scattered beams, and God was the sun. These were but streams, and God was the ocean (Taylor 2004, p. 14).

Edwards asserted that the enjoyment of God was the only happiness, which could satisfy our souls. To go to heaven to fully to enjoy God was seen as being infinitely better than living in the most pleasant accommodation here (Taylor 2004, p. 14). Human happiness lay in union with God. The more the happiness experienced, the greater was the union. The union would become more and more strict and perfect as this happiness increased towards eternity, (Parker 2004, p. 94).

Nothing was separated from God through spatial or temporal distance. Furthermore, His activity was a necessary and fully sufficient condition for any spatio-temporal effect to occur. Finally, God's will was necessary and effective. This will was the true cause. Nothing else met these conditions. Hence, God was the only real cause (Wainwright, 1998). As the only true substance and only true cause, God was the 'Being in general – He remained the sum of all; everything was in Him and He was all'.

God was the 'properly' and 'necessarily existing', 'intelligent willing agent' like our souls, only it was without our imperfections, and was not some inconceivable, unintelligent, necessary agent'. Edwards believed that 'degree of existence' was a function of 'greater capacity and power'. He identified God's perfect activity with His out flowing love and Holy will. As God's power and consciousness were unlimited, so too was His 'Being'.

Edwards asserted that finite beings were totally dependent on God for their existence and attributes. Because He was the only true substance and cause, created beings were no more than God's 'images' or 'shadows'. God was the 'Head' of the system of beings, its 'Chief', an absolute sovereign whose being, power and perfection were so great 'that the whole system of created beings was like light dust of the balance in comparison to Him'.

'Being in general' thus referred to a system of beings – related principally to God but to 'particular beings' as well in so far as they depended and reflected upon Him (Wainwright, 1998). According to Edwards, God's goals for the creation was – to exercise God's perfection to produce a proper effect, manifestation of His internal glory to create understanding, communication of the infinite fullness of God – the Creator, and creature's high esteem, love for God, finding complacence and joy in God, proper exercise of will and expression of Him as themselves (Wainwright, 1998).

Anthropology

Avicenna

Avicenna considered man as a truth that consisted of body and soul with characteristics and properties such as intellect that bestowed a particular position for him in the universe, and distinguished him from other creatures.

Man's soul was spiritual and abstract, in spite of possessing diverse faculties belonging to both plant and animal kingdom. Their reasoning and differences in nutrition, growth, reproduction, feeling, voluntary movement, intellect – had a single and unique truth, which was not annihilated when body was separated from the soul, rather the soul continued its eternal life (Howzeh–University Co–operation center 1998, p. 242).

From Avicenna's point of view, the existence of the soul in body was not the existence of a accident in its subject. Rather, the soul could be realized without the body. However, the body could not continue its existence without the soul (ibid, p. 246). Thus, soul was an essence.

For Avicenna, the soul was incorporeal. This also implied that it was immortal. The decay and destruction of the body did not affect the soul. The body was not a cause for the soul in any of the four senses of cause. Both were substances – corporeal and incorporeal. Therefore, as substances they had to be independent of each other.

Destruction of the soul could not be caused by anything. While composite objects that existed were subject to destruction; by contrast, the soul as a simple incorporeal being was not subject to destruction (Kemal, 1998).

Edwards

According to Edwards the chief end of man was to glorify God and enjoy Him forever (Packer 2004, p. 92). Edwards's purpose was to clearly to address a 'prevailing' concept of human freedom that was thought to be the foundation of moral accountability (Storms 2004, p. 201).

Choices could be entirely predestined by God and nevertheless the agent was not prevented from carrying them out, he was free. Indeed Edwards could reconcile freedom with not only Calvinism but with Newtonian science, which saw nature as entirely determined (Crittenden, 2005).

The faculties of will and intellect in man – being both passive – did not have the power of self–determination, which was specific to God (Mautner 2005, p. 179). Edwards believed that indeterminism was incompatible with our dependence on God and hence with His sovereignty. If our responses to God's grace were contra–causally free, then our salvation partly depended on ourselves and God's sovereignty was not absolute and universal (Wainwright, 1998).

Edwards maintained that physical objects were collections of sensible 'ideas' of colour, shape, solidity, and so on, and finite minds were collections of 'thoughts' or 'perceptions' (Routledge Concise Dictionary of philosophy 2000, p. 233).

Edwards agreed with the view often attributed to Locke that secondary qualities such as colour and taste did not exist in objects but in the mind. But Edwards held that primary qualities had a similar existence; solidity was just resistance, shape was the termination of resistance, and motion was the communication

of resistance from space to space (Crittenden, 2005).

Epistemology

Avicenna

Avicenna divided perception into two kinds: sensory and intellectual. Sensory perception was a manifestation of forms that could be sensed by one's senses and intellectual perception was a manifestation of forms that were intelligible through reason.

Sensory perception remained the first step of cognition (1998, p. 258 – 259; cited in Howzeh–University Co–operation Center, 1998). In regard to intellectual perception, Avicenna classified reason (intellect) into two categories – practical and speculative.

Practical reason was explained to be the faculty that originated physical movements towards practical deeds. Speculative reason was the faculty, which distinguished the general forms from abstract aspects of matter. If these forms were not intrinsically abstract, the reason (intellect) made them abstract and separated them from material concerns (ibid, p. 265–266).

According to Avicenna, knowledge began with abstraction. Sensory perception, being a property of mind, was derived from the object that was perceived. Sensory perception responded to the particular object with its given material form. As an event of mind, it perceived form of the object rather than the object itself. Perception of that particular object then occurred.

We must retain both the images obtained through senses and abstract particulars perceived by the intellect. Disintegration of parts of these percepts, their manipulation and re-alignment according to their form and other attributes were achieved through sensory organs and intellect. This response was to help analyze and classify form and abstract aspects of the perceived object.

However, this manipulation and correlation of attributes were distinct epistemological functions, and could not depend on the same psychological faculty. So, Avicenna distinguished faculties of manipulation and correlation as appropriate to those diverse epistemological functions.

Avicenna identified the faculty of retention as 'representation' and charged imagination with the task of reproducing and manipulating images. To conceptualize our experience and to order it according to its qualities, we must be able to revoke images of what we have experienced earlier, but is now absent. For this we needed sensation and representation at least, in addition, to order and classify the content of representation. We need to be able to discriminate, separate and recombine parts of images. Therefore we must possess both imagination and reason.

To think about a black surface we must be able to analyze its color, separate this quality from other, or its part in the image from other images, and classify it with other black things, thereby showing that the

concept of black was applied to all such objects and their images. Imagination carried out this manipulation. It allowed us to produce images of objects we had not seen, out of the images of things that we had already experienced. There also thereby generated images for intelligible concepts and prophecies (Kemal, 1998).

Avicenna held that it was important to gain knowledge. Grouping of intelligible concepts determined the fate of rational soul in the hereafter, and therefore was crucial to human activity. When human intellect grasped these intelligible concepts, it came into contact with the – active intellect – a level of being that ultimately emanated from God and received a 'divine effluence' (ibid).

Axiology

Avicenna

Avicenna maintained that evil was usually an accidental result of things that would otherwise produce good. God produced more good than evil when he produced this sublunary world. That He would abandon an overwhelmingly good practice because of a 'rare evil' would be a privation of good.

God generated a world that contained good, evil and the agent – the soul, which acted in this world. The rewards and punishment it gained in its existence beyond this world was a result of its choices in this world. There could be both destiny and punishment because the world and its order was precisely what gave souls a choice between good and evil (Kemal, 1998).

Changeability of Morality

Moral dispositions, good or bad, were all acquired. One could acquire a disposition not yet obtained, or he could change his disposition through his free will and create its opposite in his soul (Abd al–Amir 1998, p. 373).

Avicenna (Ibn Sina 1404, AH) defined morality as 'a permanent disposition through which, some deeds were easily done without any doubt by the man's soul'. Avicenna, like previous thinkers, deemed 'habit' as the origin of creation of a disposition in the soul. He defined 'habit' was a frequent repetition of an action over a long period and in equal conditions (ibid).

Standard of Virtue, and Principle of Virtues and Vices

According to Avicenna (Ibn Sina 1404, AH), the standard of virtue and vice for one's disposition was 'moderation'. This word was applied to a disposition that was between two opposite dispositions, i.e. immoderation (the two extremes). Simply doing an action with due attention to moderation was not considered virtue or vice; rather, it had to become a permanent disposition in one's soul. The permanent disposition of 'moderation' was necessary to exist in both with regards to animal–like faculties and the faculty of speech (rational faculty).

Avicenna believed that the principles of morality for virtues were – chastity, wisdom, courage, and justice. Chastity was moderation in faculties that triggered passion for pleasures such as marriage, food, and clothes. Courage was a moderation in irascible faculties such as fear, anger, grief, animosity, and jealousy. Wisdom was moderation in faculty for discernment, i.e. practical wisdom. Justice was the perfection in each of these three faculties and achieving moderation in them. Therefore, it can be said that a man's faculties could be amorous, irascible, discernment, and they corresponded with three virtues: chastity, courage, and wisdom. A fourth virtue called 'justice' was a comprehensive faculty that included all the three virtues (ibid, p. 455).

The subdivisions of virtues were either types of these principles or combinations of them. For example, generosity, contentment, loyalty, ambitiousness, and humility were related to chastity and moderation in the appetitive faculty; endurance, patience, and grace are related to courage and moderation in irascible faculty; and prudence, truthfulness, modesty, and perspicacity were related to wisdom and moderation in the discernment faculty (ibid).

Pleasure and Pain

Pleasure was considered to be achieving what was perfect and virtuous for a person, and pain was achieving what was vice (Ibn Sina, 1403 AH). Mere achievement of a pleasurable thing could not be considered as pleasure or pain if the person experiencing it did not consider it to be perfection or vice. The standard of perfection and virtue was in the person himself and not in the related thing. This virtue (goodness) or vice (evil) was related to the person and differed from real virtue and vice.

Superiority of Inner Pleasures to Sensory Pleasures

According to Avicenna (Ibn Sina 1403 AH), human beings, and even some animals, desisted from sensory pleasures even if they were not intellectual, and this was the reason for the superiority of intrinsic pleasures over sensory pleasures.

Intellectual and Sensory Pleasures

Avicenna (Ibn Sina 1403 AH) asserted that an intellectual soul had its own particular perfection – the manifestation of the first truth in it so far as it was possible, followed by the manifestation of the certain ordered effects of the exalted God, i.e. all existence as it existed in that intellectual soul.

He mentioned two points regarding the comparison of the intellectual and sensory pleasures. Intellectual perception was much higher than sensory perception from a qualitative point of view. When quality was being considered in intellectual perception, the depth of the object being perceived was comprehended; while in sensory perception, only the surface and appearance of things were comprehended. The more powerful and pure the perception was, the stronger was the pleasure related to it.

When considering quantity, details perceived by intellect were infinite in contrast to data from sensory

perception. There was a great difference between intellectual and sensory perception from the 'percept' point of view. Since the difference between pleasures from a quality point of view was related to the difference of the perception and percept, it was beyond just sensory perception of the percept. Intellectual perception remained the highest of perceptions.

Sensory pleasures and worldly chairmanships were not pure, perfect, and pain–free pleasures. All sensory pleasures were mixed with elements of adversities, deficiencies, pain and disasters, while the intellectual pleasures were pure from deficiencies and sorrows. According to Avicenna (Ibn Sina 1400 AH), these deficiencies and sorrows were as follows:

- Sensory pleasure was accomplished whenever annoyance was afflicted upon a man before that pleasure; for example, the pleasure of eating and drinking came after a painful desire from hunger or thirst.
- None of the sensory pleasures were pure; rather, they were accompanied pain and adversity.
- All sensory pleasures were fleeting and not durable for more than a moment.
- Involvement in sensory pleasures causes discontinuance of divine bounty because such a person was unable to receive spiritual bounty.
- Relinquishing sensory pleasures did not cause a defect in one's humanity and did not bar one from other worldly happiness.

Suffering of the Soul from Ignorance

Each faculty was interested in reaching its inherent perfection and suffered from creation of the opposite of those perfections in itself. For example, the faculty of sight aspired for light and detested darkness.

Intelligence was a perfection of the soul's intellect. Lack of enthusiasm and suffering from ignorance was related to us, not to the faculty of intellect. The reason for lack of enthusiasm in acquisition of ability to perceive with intellect was that the soul was involved in the sensory experience, which prevented it from paying attention to intellect. In such circumstance enthusiasm was unlikely to be created for the perception of intellect. As a result, no eagerness will be demonstrated to exercise this faculty.

The reason for lack of suffering due to ignorance, which was opposite in outcome as regards to exercise of intellect was that while it was always in some people's souls, it did not stimulate perception so that a man involved in other things would fail to comprehend it and would suffer from it (ibid).

After separation of the soul from body, the obstacles of comprehension and enthusiasm for attaining perfection were removed. It was when the soul paid attention to its separation from perfection, it suffered from being hindered from acquisition of happiness (Ibn Sina, 1404 AH).

Happiness

According to Avicenna (1953), some people thought that happiness was achieved through sensory pleasures and worldly chairmanships, but a real researcher knew that none of sensory pleasures were considered to be happiness because all of them were accompanied by different deficiencies and adversities.

Avicenna believed that real happiness was a thing that was desirable and had been chosen for its own privileges. It had been evident to him that a thing that was desirable or made other things desirable would be superior to any other thing that was sought for sake of other things (ibid, p. 260–261).

Happiness was the highest thing that a human being could search for. Guiding people to their happiness was also the highest kind of guidance because the superiority of guidance was dependent upon the kind of aims toward which they led (ibid). The great happiness was found in 'nearness to the First Truth, i.e. God. Other desirable objects were worthless in its comparison. The divine interest to attain such happiness involved more than attaining bodily happiness (Ibn Sina, 1404 AH).

The Way of Acquisition of Happiness

Real happiness occurred when one achieved the perfection of the speculative and practical faculties. The one who observed moderation in the appetitive, irascible, and discernment faculties and as a result possessed the virtues of chastity, courage and wisdom (which are inclusive of other virtues) will be adorned with justice, which is the comprehensive faculty of these three virtues, and this was the perfection of practical faculty. The perfection of speculative faculty happened when the complete and perfect form and the intellectual system manifested in a human being and they transformed into a world of reason (ibid. p. 423, 455 & 1985, p. 328).

Thus, the way to acquire happiness was to attain perfection in the two speculative and practical faculties. Avicenna (Ibn Sina1400 AH) recommended that all people should try to acquire real happiness.

Rank of those who have attained happiness

Happiness was attained from intellectual happiness, and since intellectual pleasure had different ranks from quality and quality points of view, happiness would also have different ranks. These ranks indicated that those who had attained happiness would not all have the same rank. Avicenna (Ibn Sina 1403 AH, p. 350, 354, 355) divided them into the following groups:

- Exonerated mystics: Avicenna referred to the perfection of the speculative faculty using the word 'mystics'. He referred to the perfection of practical faculty, i.e. purification from physical or bodily interests, using the word 'exonerated.' He believed that this group had the highest pleasure and that happiness was not restricted to the hereafter; rather, they also possessed a high rank of pleasure and happiness in this world.

- Sound souls: this group relied on their innate nature. Truth (divine knowledge and Sciences) had not been imprinted on their souls, nor they have been involved with beliefs against truth. They show enthusiasm and spiritual pleasure, and astonishment was created in them when hearing a divine word because of the harmony of their souls with the world of abstractions.
- The dumb: these were those souls that were free from both perfection and the opposite of perfection. These souls might reach finally happiness.

Rank of the Atrocious

The soul might not achieve perfection due to two factors: deficiency of reason and the existence of affairs opposite to perfection in the soul (Ibn Sina, 1403 AH p. 350).

Avicenna called those souls that could not reach perfection due to deficiency or a 'dumb' attitude, and he believed that these souls will not be tormented because doom will be for a soul that had enthusiasm for raising performance and this enthusiasm occurred when they became aware of the perfections. The dumb ones were unable to acquire awareness of these perfections (ibid, p. 352). The second group included those ones who would be tormented because of lack of acquisition of the perfection towards which they had enthusiasm (ibid, p. 350).

Edwards

The beauty or splendor of God's holiness was the principal theme of Edwards' later works: End of creation and True virtue. The first argued that God's creation was the external manifestation of His internal splendor. That splendor primarily consisted in His holiness and its most perfect external expression was the holiness of the saints, which mirrored and depended upon it.

True Virtue defined holiness as 'true benevolence' or the love of 'being in general'. It distinguished it from such counterfeits as rational self-love, instincts like parental affection, pity, and natural conscience. Since beauty was defined as 'agreement' or 'consent' and since true benevolence alone was truly beautiful, natural beauty and the beauty of art were merely its image. Only those with truly benevolent hearts, however, could discern this beauty (Routledge Concise Dictionary of Philosophy, 2000, p. 233).

In ethical matters Edwards retained the view that any virtue people acquired was through a free gift of God, and that no unaided effort could improve the fallen condition of humanity (Blackburn, 2005, P.110).

According to Edwards, moral judgments were based on sentiment and not on reason – one perceived the beauty of heart, or a virtuous motive in a virtuous act through a sense of beauty. There were two kinds of beauty – there was benevolence or love of being in general, which was the only true, spiritual, or divine beauty. This was relished by a divine sense that was activated by God in only a few people whom He had elected for heaven.

The other kind of beauty consisted of harmony, proportion, and uniformity and in variety. This was a secondary, natural, inferior beauty perceived by a natural sense (Crittenden, 2005). Edwards puts forth the thesis that 'as heaven was a world of love, so the way to heaven was the way of love' (Nicholas 2004, p. 45).

Edwards admonished that our desires 'must be taken off the pleasure of this world'. This was not deprivation. Edwards simply did not want our desires to be so small as to cause us to miss the true happiness and pleasure of what God had for us – both now and in the world to come. For him, sometimes happiness came at times of triumph. Sometimes it came to him on the anvil of suffering, conflict and hardship (Nicholas 2004, p. 53).

True virtue's aim was the general good. Those who love the general good, however, also prized the disposition that promoted it. Truly benevolent people thus loved two things – 'being' and benevolence. But truly virtuous people not only valued benevolence because it promoted the being in general; they also relished it for its own sake. Hence, while virtue 'most essentially consist in benevolence but also a delight or 'complacence' in benevolence's intrinsic excellence or beauty.

It was God who was 'infinitely the greatest being' and 'infinitely the most beautiful and excellent'. True virtue thus principally consisted 'in a supreme love to God, both of benevolence and complacence' (Wainwright, 1998). Only God's was perfect. Hence, God alone was (truly) beautiful without qualification.

The fitness of God's dispensations, the harmony of His providential design, and so on, also exhibited the highest degree of secondary beauty. God, therefore was infinitely the most beautiful and excellent. God was also the 'foundation and fountain...of all beauty'. 'All the beauty was to be found throughout the whole creation which is excellent. The reflection of the diffused beams of the Being who hath an infinite fullness of brightness and glory' (Wainwright, 1998).

Conclusion

Avicenna believed that God was the prime or ultimate cause of all things. God was the source of all the existent things in the world. The world and its other forms emanated from God. He was the first cause, which was the nexus of causes and effects and existed necessarily for it.

In this regard, Jonathan Edwards believed that God was the complete and the only real and true cause of everything that existed. Nothing existed without His creating it. Finite beings were totally dependent on God for their existing and properties.

Avicenna maintained that God was the pure intellect to whom other existing things – even the highest and purest of intellect were all necessarily related. Edwards maintained that God was the only real substance. Everything was related to God. God was 'Being in general'. He was 'the sum of all being and there was no being without His Being. All things were in Him and He was all. The whole was of God, and

in God, and to God, and God was the beginning, middle and end in this affair. God being infinite in power and knowledge, He had to be self-sufficient and all sufficient.

Avicenna asserted that man consisted of body and soul. Man's soul was spiritual and abstract, and was incorporeal and immortal, and was not annihilated when separated from the body but it continued its eternal life. However, the body could not continue its existence without the soul.

Man was a truth that had such attributes such as intellect. He had the power of nutrition, growth, reproduction, feeling, and voluntary movement. Mankind had a free will with which he could decide. Edwards believed in this regard that indeterminism was incompatible with our dependence on God and hence with his sovereignty. Choices could be entirely predestined by God and yet the agent, who was not prevented from carrying them out, was free. The faculties of will and intellect in man were both passive.

Avicenna asserted that the first step of cognition was sensory perception. Knowledge was associated with abstraction. Sensory perception, being already in the mind, was from the object perceived. We had to retain the images given by sensation and also manipulate them by dissembling parts and then aligning them according to their form and other attributes. Therefore it could be concluded that a real world with its objects existed. Edwards said that physical objects were a collection of sensory 'ideas' of colour, shape, solidity, and so on, and finite minds were collections of 'thoughts' or 'perceptions'.

Avicenna maintained that evil was the privation of good, therefore was not created by God. According to him, the standard of virtue or vice in one's disposition was 'moderation'. The principles of morality for virtues were: chastity, wisdom, courage, and justice.

Avicenna asserted that pleasure was achieving of what was perfection and virtue for a person, and pain was achieving what was vice. The standards of perfection and virtue were in the person and not in the related things. Inner or sensory pleasure was superior to sensory pleasures. Intellectual pleasures were higher in worth than sensory pleasures.

An intellectual soul had its own particular perfection: the manifestation of the first truth (God) in it so for as it was possible, followed by the manifestation of the certain ordered effects of the exalted God, i.e. all existence as it were. The great happiness was 'nearness to God'.

Real happiness occurred when one achieved the perfection of the speculative and practical faculties. Edwards admonished that our desires must be taken off the pleasures of this world. This was not deprivation. He simply did not want our desires to be so small as to cause us to miss the true happiness.

It was God who was infinitely the greatest being and infinitely the most beautiful and excellent. True virtue thus principally was a supreme love for God, both of His benevolence and complacence. Only God's benevolence was perfect. Hence, God alone was truly beautiful without qualification. God also was the foundation and fountain of all beauty.

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