



abadi. Sebaliknya, Ibnu Rushd menafsirkan jiwa dalam kesinambungan yang ketat dengan naturalisme Aristoteles, menekankan ketidakterpisahannya dari tubuh sebagai bentuk dan aktualitasnya. Baginya, kesempurnaan manusia diwujudkan bukan dalam transendensi metafisika, melainkan dalam kebajikan sipil, keterlibatan rasional, dan pengembangan intelektual dalam kehidupan empiris. Artikel ini menerapkan empat sebab Aristoteles pada modelnya masing-masing, mengeksplorasi implikasi ontologis, epistemologis, dan etis dari masing-masing kerangka kerja. Lebih lanjut, artikel ini menempatkan perspektif mereka dalam perdebatan yang lebih luas tentang kesadaran, kepribadian, dan tanggung jawab moral, serta menyoroti relevansi abadi dari wawasan mereka. Studi ini berargumen bahwa penelaahan ulang terhadap filsafat-filsafat Islam klasik ini memberikan sumber daya berharga bagi diskusi kontemporer dalam filsafat pikiran, etika, dan metafisika.

**Kata-kata Kunci:** *Empat Sebab, Filsafat Islam, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sīnā, Jiwa.*

## Introduction

Before turning to the four central hypotheses, it is essential to outline the academic problem that frames this inquiry—namely, the philosophical tension between *das Sein* (what is) and *das Sollen* (what ought to be) in conceptualizing the human soul. This tension reflects a broader metaphysical and ethical dilemma: whether the soul is to be regarded as a descriptive ontological entity, subject to naturalistic explanation, or as a normative, purposive principle directed toward transcendence, perfection, and moral responsibility. Aristotelian philosophy, as transmitted into Islamic thought, occupies an ambivalent position: it describes the soul in natural terms while also implying a teleology that bears normative weight. Within this horizon, Ibn Sīnā elevates the soul beyond its empirical conditions, aligning its essence with immateriality and its destiny with metaphysical fulfillment (Gutas 2014, 112; McGinnis 2010, 78).

Ibn Rushd, by contrast, embeds the soul within the structures of nature and civic life, rejecting transcendentalist readings in favor of functional actualization (Davidson 1992, 45; Leaman 1998, 88). Highlighting this *Sein–Sollen* dynamic from the outset clarifies not only the divergence between these two philosophers but also the broader significance of their debate for contemporary discussions in philosophy of mind, ethics, and human purpose (Rahman 1952, 56; Wisnovsky 2003, 134).

The human soul (*al-nafs al-insānī*) occupies a central place in both Greek and Islamic philosophical traditions. Within the Islamic intellectual milieu, no theme has inspired more sustained debate than the ontological and epistemological status of the soul. The question of whether the soul is an independent substance, the form of the body, or a transitory faculty carries profound implications for metaphysics, theology, ethics, psychology, and cosmology. This article interrogates and compares the soul theories of two major representatives of the Islamic Peripatetic tradition: Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, d. 1037) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes, d. 1198),

using Aristotle's doctrine of the four causes as its analytical framework (Fakhry 1958, 13–35).

While both thinkers remain deeply rooted in Aristotelian metaphysics, their divergent readings produce sharply different theories. Ibn Sīnā, influenced by Neoplatonism and the speculative concerns of *kalām*, posits a soul that is immaterial, self-subsistent, and capable of surviving bodily death (Bertolacci 2006, 101; Lizzini 2013, 172). Ibn Rushd, in contrast, interprets the soul as the formal actuality of the body and denies the possibility of individual immortality (Davidson 1992, 45; Leaman 1998, 88). These divergent models reflect broader orientations: transcendentalist idealism in Ibn Sīnā and Aristotelian naturalism in Ibn Rushd.

This paper, therefore, addresses the following core research question: How do Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd mobilize Aristotle's four causes—material, formal, efficient, and final—in constructing their respective theories of the soul, and what do these constructions reveal about their underlying metaphysical, epistemological, and theological commitments? (López-Farjeat 2015, 131–41). To address this question, the study develops four guiding hypotheses: (1) Ibn Sīnā expands Aristotle's framework, especially the formal and final causes, into a theory of the soul rooted in Neoplatonic emanation and intellectual teleology; (2) Ibn Rushd purifies Aristotle's psychology of Neoplatonic elements, interpreting the soul as inseparable from the body and denying personal immortality; (3) these divergent accounts reflect competing paradigms of transcendence and immanence within Islamic philosophy; and (4) revisiting these models illuminates contemporary debates in philosophy of mind, ethics, and metaphysics.

### **Efficient and Final Cause Divergence**

The greatest divergence between the two philosophers lies in their interpretations of the efficient and final causes of the soul. Ibn Sīnā situates both in the realm of the Active Intellect, through which the soul originates and toward which it ultimately ascends (Gutas 2014, 112; McGinnis 2010, 78). Ibn Rushd, by contrast, grounds both causes in the biological structure of the body, identifying natural generation and rational activity within civic life as the efficient and final determinants of human existence (Davidson 1992, 45; Leaman 1998, 88). Although both employ the same Aristotelian vocabulary, their uses of the four causes reveal fundamentally different ontological assumptions. For each, Aristotle's doctrine functions less as a fixed taxonomy than as a hermeneutic tool, refracted through the interpreter's philosophical orientation (Wisnovsky 2003, 134).

Two supplementary hypotheses also frame this study. First, Ibn Sīnā's affirmation of personal immortality depends on the metaphysical individuation of the rational soul through its union with the Active

Intellect (Rahman 1952, 56; Lizzini 2013, 172). Second, Ibn Rushd's denial of individual survival underscores his commitment to Aristotelian naturalism and the universality of the intellect (Davidson 1992, 47). The methodology adopted here is comparative-analytical, combining historical-contextual interpretation with conceptual analysis. Primary texts include Ibn Sīnā's *al-Shifā': Kitāb al-Nafs* and *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, alongside Ibn Rushd's *Tafsīr Kitāb al-Nafs* and *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*. Aristotelian sources such as *De Anima*, *Physics*, and *Metaphysics* provide the foundational framework (Fakhry 1958, 20).

The four-cause schema is thus approached not as a rigid scholastic classification but as a philosophical model adaptable to diverse metaphysical commitments. The research proceeds by reconstructing each thinker's system to test hypotheses against textual evidence, supported by authoritative secondary literature such as Gutas (2014, 115), Davidson (1992, 46), McGinnis (2010, 79), and Wisnovsky (2003, 138). In this way, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd are situated within the historical trajectory of Aristotelianism in the Islamic world, representing distinct phases in the appropriation and transformation of Greek philosophy (Hyman 1965, 390).

### **Philosophical Foundations: Aristotle's Doctrine of the Four Causes**

Aristotle's doctrine of the four causes (*αἰτίαι*) constitutes a distinctive explanatory system in the history of philosophy, integrating material, formal, efficient, and final principles into one account of natural beings. Unlike the Presocratics, who emphasized a single *archē* or metaphysical substance (e.g., water for Thales, air for Anaximenes), Aristotle argued that full causal knowledge requires multiple explanatory dimensions. His model asks four questions: What is it made of? (Material cause) What is it? (Formal cause) How did it come to be? (Efficient cause) And why does it exist? (Final cause) (Charles 2001, 45). This framework is articulated in *Physics* II.3 and *Metaphysics* V.2 and applied directly to the soul in *De Anima*, where the soul is defined as the *entelechy* of the body—a union of actuality and purpose (Aristotle 1993; Annas 1982, 320; Reece 2024, 1–27).

In this model, the material cause of the human being is the physical body; the formal cause is the soul as its essence; the efficient cause is the parents or natural generators; and the final cause is the telos of life, namely rational activity and the fulfillment of human potential (Barnes 1984, 210). Yet ambiguities remain. *De Anima* III.5 introduces the notion of a separate *nous* capable of subsisting independently—an interpretive tension that Islamic philosophers either integrated or rejected according to their metaphysical orientations (McGinnis 2010, 82; Wisnovsky 2003, 139).

In Neoplatonic interpretations, particularly those of Plotinus and

Proclus, the soul is conceived as an immaterial emanation from the One, descending into matter yet retaining its divine essence (*Enneads* V.1). This reading profoundly influenced Ibn Sīnā, who integrated emanationist cosmology into his psychology (Lizzini 2013, 172; Hennig 2022, 186). Ibn Rushd, however, rejected Neoplatonic overlays, insisting on a naturalistic reading of Aristotle and denying personal immortality. For him, intellect's universality precludes individual survival, and the soul must be understood as the inseparable actuality of the living body (Davidson 1992, 48; Leaman 1998, 88). His interpretation of *De Anima* aimed to restore the biological coherence of Aristotle's thought against what he viewed as excessive metaphysical abstraction.

### **Material Cause: The Ontological Ground of the Soul**

The material cause, in Aristotelian terms, refers to the substratum out of which something comes to be. Applied to the human being, this cause is associated with the corporeal composition—flesh, blood, bones, and organic systems. Yet when applied to the soul, which is often conceived as immaterial, the concept becomes problematic. Both Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd grapple with this tension, though in sharply divergent ways (Wisnovsky 2003, 134).

### **Ibn Sīnā: The Soul as Immaterial Substance Appearing Through Matter**

For Ibn Sīnā, the soul is an immaterial substance manifesting through the body. In *al-Shifā'* and *al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, he distinguishes the faculties of the soul into vegetative, animal, and rational. While the vegetative and animal faculties depend on bodily organs, the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqā*) transcends corporeality (Rahman 1952, 56; Gutas 2014, 112). His famous "Flying Man" thought experiment demonstrates this point: a person created fully formed, suspended in air and deprived of sensory input, would still affirm self-awareness—indicating the soul's independence from the body (Adamson and Benevich 2018, 150; Kaukua 2020, 285–96). Thus, the soul is a self-subsisting essence (*jawhar*) whose awareness is immediate and non-material.

Nevertheless, Ibn Sīnā maintains the body as the "vehicle" (*markab*) of the soul. Faculties such as sensation and imagination require bodily organs for operation, even if the rational essence transcends them (McGinnis 2010, 78; Bertolacci 2006, 101). The emergence of the soul coincides with the body's completion, but its essence derives from the Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'āl*), reflecting Ibn Sīnā's Neoplatonic emanationism (Langermann 2009, 66; Richardson 2013, 225).

## **Ibn Rushd: The Soul as the Actualization of Bodily Potential**

Ibn Rushd, faithful to Aristotle's naturalism, rejects the idea of the soul as a separate substance. In *Tafsīr Kitāb al-Nafs*, he critiques Ibn Sīnā's abstraction and reasserts the Aristotelian view that the soul is the form of the body, inseparable from its material potential (Rushd 1954; Davidson 1992, 45; Leaman 1998, 88). The faculties of perception, imagination, and memory are tied to organs, and even rational activity is embedded within the organism's potentiality–actuality structure. For Ibn Rushd, the body is not merely a vessel but the very condition for the soul's realization.

His theory of intellect further clarifies this stance. He distinguishes between material intellect (*al-'aql al-hayūlānī*), actual intellect (*al-'aql bil-fi'l*), and active intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'āl*). While acknowledging a universal intellect, he denies it as part of the personal soul, thereby rejecting individual immortality (Hyman 1965, 390; Ivry 1979, 77; Salabi 2021, 58–59; Maulana 2024, 148).

The divergence between Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd on the material cause epitomizes broader metaphysical tensions in Islamic philosophy. Ibn Sīnā, influenced by Neoplatonic metaphysics, treats the soul as ontologically distinct from the body, though correlated with it. Ibn Rushd, conversely, interprets the soul as the body's actuality, resisting dualism in favor of organic unity (Lizzini 2013, 172; Wisnovsky 2003, 136). This divergence extends to epistemology: Ibn Sīnā locates knowledge in the rational soul's abstraction and eventual union with the Active Intellect, while Ibn Rushd roots cognition in sensory input and the gradual development of the intellect (McGinnis 2010, 79). Thus, Ibn Sīnā envisions the soul as a transcendent essence, while Ibn Rushd understands it as immanent in the living body.

## **Formal Cause: The Soul as Essence and Form**

The formal cause (*causa formalis*) refers to the essence or defining structure of a thing—what it is in its most complete ontological sense. In Aristotle's psychology, this corresponds to the soul itself: the actuality of a body that has life potentially. Both Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd accept this definition but interpret it in significantly different ways, shaped by their broader metaphysical orientations (Davidson 1992, 45; Wisnovsky 2003, 134).

## **Ibn Sīnā: The Soul as an Independent Formal Essence**

Ibn Sīnā defines the soul as the essential form of the human being, but diverges from Aristotle by attributing to it a degree of ontological independence. In *al-Shifā': Kitāb al-Nafs*, he maintains that the soul is not merely the actuality of a material body but a substance with its own essence and causal powers (Sīnā 1975; Gutas 2014, 112). While the soul

functions as the body's form, it is also capable of existing independently once it actualizes its rational potential. His division of the soul into vegetative, animal, and rational levels reflects this stratification, with the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqā*) grasping universals and communing with the Active Intellect (Rahman 1952, 56; McGinnis 2010, 78).

This framework leads Ibn Sīnā to argue for the individuation of souls beyond matter, an innovation that departs from Aristotle and introduces a metaphysical dualism. The rational soul thus possesses a unique formal identity distinct from the species-level form found in animals (Wisnovsky 2003, 136). By linking human form to the cosmic order of intellects, Ibn Sīnā integrates Neoplatonic metaphysics into Aristotelian psychology (Lizzini 2013, 172).

### **Ibn Rushd: The Soul as Inseparable Formal Actuality of the Body**

Ibn Rushd, in contrast, adheres to a stricter Aristotelian reading. In *Tafsīr Kitāb al-Nafs*, he insists that the soul is not an independent entity but the essential form of the living body, actualized through its functions (Leaman 1998, 88; Davidson 1992, 47). While distinguishing faculties such as perception and rationality, he rejects the idea that these are separate substances. For him, the rational soul is not an immaterial essence but the form of a specific human body, distinguished from animals by degree rather than kind. He criticizes Ibn Sīnā's claim that the soul subsists independently, regarding it as an untenable dualism undermining the unity of human nature (Hyman 1965, 390).

For Ibn Rushd, the formal essence of the soul is inseparable from the biological and functional organization of the human being. There is no form apart from matter; human life is constituted by the composite unity of body and soul (Ivry 1979, 77).

The divergence between Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd on the formal cause highlights two radically different interpretations of human essence. Ibn Sīnā conceives of the soul as grounded in an immaterial rational principle transcending the body, thus supporting doctrines of personal immortality and metaphysical ascent (Richardson 2013, 225). Ibn Rushd, conversely, locates the soul entirely within the natural and civic life of the human organism, emphasizing biological integrity and the denial of individual immortality (Leaman 1998, 90; Davidson 1992, 48).

In both frameworks, the formal cause explains the internal principle of organization and function that defines human life. Yet where Ibn Sīnā posits a metaphysical identity beyond corporeality, Ibn Rushd insists on the inseparability of form and life-function. These competing models reflect the broader intellectual tensions in Islamic philosophy between Neoplatonic transcendence and Aristotelian immanence (Wisnovsky 2003, 139; Lizzini 2013, 175).

### **Ibn Sīnā: The Active Intellect as the Metaphysical Generator**

For Ibn Sīnā, the soul is not generated solely through natural processes but through an ontological relationship with the Active Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'āl*). In *al-Shifā': Kitāb al-Nafs*, he explains that once the body reaches a sufficient level of organization and perfection, the rational soul is emanated from the Active Intellect—not as a material form, but as an intellectual essence suited to that body (Davidson 1992, 46). The Active Intellect, the tenth in the Neoplatonic hierarchy of intelligences, governs the sublunary realm and functions as the efficient cause of both intelligible knowledge and the rational soul. Its causal role is metaphysical rather than mechanical: it emanates intelligible forms that the human intellect receives through abstraction and illumination (Gutas 2014, 115). Thus, the efficient cause of the soul is dual-layered: the body provides the material conditions, while the true creative agent is the Active Intellect (Wisnovsky 2003, 134).

### **Ibn Rushd: Biological Generation and the Universal Intellect**

Ibn Rushd rejects Ibn Sīnā's emanationist cosmology and locates the efficient cause of the soul within nature itself. In his commentary on *De Anima*, he affirms that the rational soul arises through natural generation, governed by species form and biological processes (Leaman 1998, 90). While he acknowledges the existence of a universal Active Intellect, he interprets it not as an agent bestowing individual souls but as the universal condition of intelligibility, enabling cognition for all rational beings (McGinnis 2010, 79). For him, efficient causality is grounded in reproduction, organic maturation, and natural continuity, not transcendent emanation (Belo 2023, 410).

The divergence between Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd on efficient causality reflects two cosmological paradigms. Ibn Sīnā situates the soul's origin in a vertical hierarchy of metaphysical agents, reinforcing a dualism between body and intellect (Lizzini 2013, 172). Ibn Rushd, by contrast, collapses this hierarchy into a naturalistic system where the soul emerges organically from the body. His model anticipates a more secular conception of nature that privileges empirical explanation over metaphysical postulation (Gallagher 2023, 12).

### **Final Cause: Teleology and the Soul's Purpose**

The final cause (*causa finalis*) concerns the purpose for which a thing exists. Applied to the soul, it asks: what is the telos of human life? For Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd, this reveals their contrasting theological and ethical orientations (Davidson 1992, 47).

## **Ibn Sīnā: The Soul's Perfection Through Intellectual Union**

For Ibn Sīnā, the final cause of the soul is union with the Active Intellect through perfection of rational faculties. The rational soul exists not for mere biological survival but to ascend toward intelligible truth. This ascent culminates in *ma'rifa* (intellectual knowledge) and *ittiṣāl* (union) with the Active Intellect (Gutas 2014, 118; Lala and Alwazzan 2023, 8–9). Ethical purification is thus preparatory for the soul's ultimate return; morality functions as a means toward intellectual felicity (Davidson 1992, 48; Ramin 2024, 7). In this view, immortality is secured because what emanates from the intellect must return to it if actualized properly.

## **Ibn Rushd: Fulfillment of Natural Function**

Ibn Rushd interprets the final cause of the soul within the limits of empirical life. The purpose of the soul is the realization of rational activity in civic and intellectual domains. Felicity (*sa'āda*) lies not in metaphysical union but in virtuous action, moderation, and the cultivation of reason in community (Leaman 1998, 92; Richardson 2013, 225). For him, there is no posthumous perfection; the soul's telos is exhausted in fulfilling natural functions during life (Belo 2023, 412).

Ibn Sīnā's teleology is transcendent, positing an eternal destiny for the rational soul beyond material life. Ibn Rushd's is immanent, grounding human purpose in social, ethical, and intellectual flourishing. Their contrasting models not only reflect divergent readings of Aristotle but also illustrate the tension between Neoplatonic transcendence and Aristotelian naturalism within Islamic philosophy (Wisnovsky 2003, 138; Lizzini 2013, 175).

## **Ibn Rushd: Fulfillment of Natural Function in Civic and Intellectual Life**

Ibn Rushd, consistent with Aristotelian naturalism, situates the soul's final cause within empirical human life. The soul exists for the fulfillment of its natural functions—chiefly rational activity in both practical and theoretical domains. Its purpose is not metaphysical reunion but excellence (*faḍīla*) in life through reason (Leaman 1998, 92). For him, the highest function of the soul is intellectual understanding (*ta'aqqul*) and moral action within society. Human beings achieve their telos by developing rational faculties in harmony with civic responsibility and philosophical inquiry. This interpretation aligns with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, both of which Ibn Rushd commented on extensively (Davidson 1992, 48; Belo 2023, 410).

He does not deny that the soul has a telos but redefines it as immanent rather than transcendent. The Active Intellect facilitates intelligibility but is not the personal destiny of each soul. Immortality, in the strict personal

sense, is excluded; the final cause is realized in the full actualization of rational capacity during earthly life (McGinnis 2010, 80).

The contrast in teleological thinking between Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd is stark. For Ibn Sīnā, the final cause is anchored in metaphysical return—a cosmic ascent wherein the soul reunites with the Active Intellect. His framework affirms immortality and personal transcendence, casting philosophy as a salvific path (Gutas 2014, 118; Ramin 2024, 6). Ibn Rushd, by contrast, grounds the soul's telos in civic virtue, rational moderation, and intellectual cultivation. There is no posthumous fulfillment, only the realization of reason within social and natural life (Richardson 2013, 225; Belo 2023, 412). These contrasting teleologies reveal a fundamental divide between Neoplatonic transcendence and Aristotelian immanence in Islamic philosophy.

### **Epistemological Consequences: Knowledge, Soul, and Cognition**

The epistemological implications of these models are profound. Since both philosophers define the soul by its rational capacity, their views on cognition and intellection are directly shaped by their metaphysical commitments (Wisnovsky 2003, 136).

#### **Ibn Sīnā: Cognitive Ascent and the Active Intellect**

Ibn Sīnā structures cognition hierarchically: sense perception (*ḥiss*), imagination (*takhayyul*), estimation (*wahm*), memory (*ḥifẓ*), and intellection (*'aql*). In *al-Shifā'*, he argues that cognition progresses from the senses upward to the rational soul, which abstracts universals and receives illumination from the Active Intellect (Gutas 2014, 116; Arroisi and Da'i 2019, 269).

The rational soul's ability to know universals depends on its connection with the Active Intellect, which functions both as the efficient and formal cause of intelligible knowledge. Through purification and abstraction, the soul achieves eternal truths (*yaqīniyyāt*) (Davidson 1992, 43).

Knowledge, for Ibn Sīnā, is salvific, enabling the soul's ascent toward its metaphysical essence (Adamson and Benevich 2018, 150). Imagination mediates this process, retaining and combining sensory data as a bridge between empirical perception and pure intellect. Yet ultimate cognition culminates only in relation to the Active Intellect (Belo 2023, 415).

#### **Ibn Rushd: Rational Actualization Through Empirical Abstraction**

Ibn Rushd, by contrast, grounds knowledge in empirical realism. In *Tafsīr Kitāb al-Nafs* and *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, he rejects mystical or illuminationist accounts. Cognition begins with sense data, proceeds through imagination and memory, and culminates in abstraction by the material intellect (*al-'aql al-hayūlānī*), actualized through habitual engagement with intelligible forms (Averroes 1987; McGinnis 2010, 82;

Taufik et al. 2023, 73). The Active Intellect does not infuse knowledge but makes abstraction possible—like light enabling vision without determining its content (Ivry 1979, 77). For him, knowledge is acquired through disciplined inquiry, not divine bestowal (Elzamzamy et al. 2024, 12).

Ibn Sīnā's epistemology integrates metaphysical illumination with hierarchical faculties, aligning knowledge with salvation. Ibn Rushd, however, advances a naturalistic epistemology in which truth is accessible to all rational beings through empirical abstraction and civic engagement. This contrast underscores their broader divergence: Ibn Sīnā prioritizes transcendence, Ibn Rushd immanence (Wisnovsky 2003, 139; Gallagher 2023, 9).

The cognitive models of Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd reveal fundamental differences in their philosophies of mind. Ibn Sīnā's model is hierarchical and culminates in metaphysical contact with the Active Intellect, while Ibn Rushd's model is developmental and grounded in empirical training. The former leans toward illuminationist mysticism, the latter toward Aristotelian naturalism (Davidson 1992, 45; Wisnovsky 2003, 134). These differences also affect their views on certainty, prophecy, and philosophical method. Ibn Sīnā accommodates intuitive and supra-rational forms of knowledge, opening the way for a philosophical understanding of prophecy. Ibn Rushd, by contrast, privileges logic, syllogism, and demonstrative reasoning (*burhān*) as the sole means of acquiring truth (Richardson 2013, 226; Gallagher 2023, 11; Batak 2024, 15).

### **Ethical and Theological Implications of the Soul's Nature**

Because the soul is not only a psychological faculty but also the locus of moral agency, its metaphysical interpretation directly shapes ideas of human dignity, moral responsibility, and divine justice (Saruhan 2002, 550).

### **Ibn Sīnā: The Soul as a Moral Agent in a Teleological Cosmos**

For Ibn Sīnā, ethical development mirrors the soul's ascent within a cosmic hierarchy. Since the rational soul is immaterial and eternal, it carries a moral duty to purify itself from bodily distractions. Felicity (*sa'āda*) is achieved through intellectual perfection and eventual union with the Active Intellect (Gutas 2014, 118). Virtue—justice, temperance, wisdom—is both socially beneficial and spiritually redemptive. Ethical progress parallels epistemic ascent: to know the good is to become good (Rahman 1952, 59; Lizzini 2013, 172). Theologically, Ibn Sīnā interprets reward and punishment allegorically: heaven and hell are intellectual states of proximity to, or alienation from, divine truth (McGinnis 2010, 81).

## **Ibn Rushd: Moral Realism and the Fulfillment of Human Nature**

Ibn Rushd grounds ethics in natural function. Since the soul is inseparable from the body, virtue must be realized in earthly life through habituation, moderation, and civic participation. Ethical excellence (*faḍīla*) is achieved through rational activity and practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), echoing Aristotle (Leaman 1998, 92; Belo 2023, 411). Ethical life is inseparable from political life: education, law, and institutions cultivate virtue within the polis. For him, there is no eschatological judgment; divine justice is embedded in the natural consequences of rational or irrational action (Adamson 2019, 205; Bertolacci 2007, 72).

The divergence between Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd reflects their intellectual environments. Ibn Rushd, shaped by the rationalist climate of twelfth-century Andalusia—marked by interreligious scholarship and empirical science—emphasized clarity, demonstration, and civic ethics (Harvey 2019, 172). Ibn Sīnā, by contrast, flourished in the Persianate East, where Neoplatonism, *kalām*, and mysticism encouraged the development of speculative metaphysics (Kılıç 2017, 45; Elzamzamy et al. 2024, 9). These contexts explain why Ibn Sīnā’s theory highlights immaterial immortality and metaphysical ascent, while Ibn Rushd’s resists dualism in favor of embodied rationality.

### **Divergence Within Unity**

The ethical and theological systems of Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd mirror their metaphysical commitments. Ibn Sīnā’s transcendent soul grounds a metaphysical ethics in preparation for union with the divine. Ibn Rushd’s embodied soul grounds a civic and naturalistic ethics aimed at the flourishing of rational life in society. Both remain influential: Ibn Sīnā’s legacy speaks to traditions of spiritual moral formation, while Ibn Rushd’s supports rationalist ethics and civic philosophy (Ramin 2024, 6; Gallagher 2023, 12).

### **Causal Frameworks: Vertical vs. Horizontal Interpretations**

While both thinkers employ Aristotle’s four causes as interpretive tools, their integration reflects distinct trajectories. Ibn Sīnā reads causality through a Neoplatonic lens, emphasizing emanation, metaphysical hierarchy, and the soul’s return to its origin. For him, efficient and final causes transcend nature, residing in the realm of the Active Intellect (Gutas 2014, 116; Davidson 1992, 47). Ibn Rushd, by contrast, adheres to the immanent structure of Aristotelian naturalism. The soul’s efficient cause is biological generation, while its final cause lies in rational and ethical fulfillment within civic life (Leaman 1998, 92; Belo 2023, 410).

## **Knowledge and Intellect: Illumination vs. Abstraction**

Epistemologically, the two diverge in their account of rational fulfillment. Ibn Sīnā's model culminates in an illuminationist theory wherein the purified soul receives intelligible forms from the Active Intellect (Wisnovsky 2003, 136; Adamson and Benevich 2018, 150). Ibn Rushd denies any mystical infusion of knowledge, affirming instead a rationalist epistemology grounded in empirical abstraction and the actualization of cognitive potential (McGinnis 2010, 82; Ivry 1979, 77). Both begin with sensory perception, but Ibn Sīnā's trajectory ends in metaphysical ascent, while Ibn Rushd's remains within empirical reason.

## **Ethics and Teleology: Transcendence vs. Immanence**

Their ethical systems mirror these metaphysical and epistemological differences. Ibn Sīnā grounds ethics in the soul's teleological journey toward metaphysical reunion, where moral action purifies the rational faculty and enables eternal felicity (Rahman 1952, 59; Ramin 2024, 7). Ibn Rushd, conversely, conceives ethics as the realization of human function within the polis. There is no eschatological reward or punishment—only the flourishing of reason and virtue in civic life (Richardson 2013, 225; Belo 2023, 412). Theology, for Ibn Sīnā, involves metaphysical judgment; for Ibn Rushd, it operates through natural causality.

## **Shared Commitments and Philosophical Integrity**

Despite their divergences, both philosophers uphold key shared premises: the rational order of the cosmos, the dignity of human reason, and the possibility of harmonizing philosophy with religion. Neither transmits Aristotle passively; both acts as creative interpreters who adapt Greek categories to Islamic cosmology, theology, and anthropology (Lizzini 2013, 172; Gallagher 2023, 9).

## **The Broader Significance**

Their divergence exemplifies the richness of Islamic philosophy. Rather than simple opposition, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd define two enduring paradigms: one aspiring toward metaphysical transcendence, the other affirming natural and civic immanence. This tension—between idealism and realism, transcendence and immanence—remains central not only to Islamic philosophy but to the broader human intellectual enterprise (Bertolacci 2007, 78; Elzamzamy et al. 2024, 11).

Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd offer coherent but rival visions of the soul: one grounded in a metaphysical cosmology of ascent, the other in a rational anthropology of earthly excellence. Their dialogue continues to inform contemporary debates in philosophy of mind, ethics, theology, and the human sciences (Wisnovsky 2003, 139; Ramin 2024, 8).

## **Conclusion**

This study has undertaken a comparative analysis of Ibn Sīnā's and Ibn Rushd's theories of the soul through Aristotle's four causes. While both philosophers draw upon Aristotelian psychology, their interpretations are shaped by divergent metaphysical orientations. Ibn Sīnā, influenced by Neoplatonic cosmology, treats the soul as an immaterial, self-subsisting essence whose telos is union with the Active Intellect. Ibn Rushd, by contrast, situates the soul entirely within the Aristotelian framework of nature, defining it as the inseparable form of the body whose perfection is realized in rational and civic life.

These contrasting views yield profound differences in epistemology, ethics, and theology. Ibn Sīnā's illuminationist epistemology and soteriological ethics envision knowledge and virtue as steps toward metaphysical ascent and eternal felicity. Ibn Rushd, conversely, grounds knowledge in empirical abstraction and ethics in the cultivation of virtue within the polis. Theologically, Ibn Sīnā affirms personal immortality and metaphysical judgment, whereas Ibn Rushd denies individual afterlife, locating divine justice within the natural order. These differences demonstrate how Aristotelian categories, when filtered through distinct ontological assumptions, generate rival but coherent philosophical systems.

The broader significance of this comparison lies in highlighting the pluralism of Islamic philosophy. Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd represent two enduring paradigms—one oriented toward transcendence, the other toward immanence—that continue to inform debates on consciousness, moral responsibility, and the meaning of human life. Their dialogue illustrates the interpretive flexibility of Aristotelian causality and its capacity to address questions that remain central to both historical scholarship and contemporary philosophy of mind and ethics.

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