

The Relationship between Religion and Politics in Ibn Rushd's Philosophy

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Abstract: *This study examines the relationship between religion and politics in Ibn Rushd's philosophy as a response to perspectives that separate the two into mutually opposed domains. It employs a qualitative method based on library research and Gadamerian hermeneutic analysis. The primary data are drawn from Ibn Rushd's works, especially *Faṣl al-Maqāl fī mā Bayna al-Ḥikmah wa al-Sharī'ah min al-Ittiṣāl* and *al-Ḍarūrī fī al-Siyāsah*. The study shows that the relationship between religion and politics in Ibn Rushd's thought unfolds across three dimensions: ontological, epistemological, and axiological. Ontologically, religion and politics are rooted in the same source of truth, namely God as the First Cause and the Ultimate End. Epistemologically, religion provides the foundation of knowledge and morality, while politics actualizes these values in communal life. Axiologically, both are oriented toward the realization of justice, happiness, and human perfection. These findings affirm that Ibn Rushd's thought offers a rational, ethical, and relevant paradigm for understanding the relationship between religion and politics in national and civic life.*

Keywords: Ibn Rushd; Islamic Philosophy; Politics; Religion; Political Ethics.

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini mengkaji hubungan antara agama dan politik dalam filsafat Ibn Rusyd sebagai respons terhadap pandangan yang memisahkan keduanya ke dalam ranah yang saling bertentangan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif berbasis studi kepustakaan dan analisis hermeneutika Gadamerian. Data utama diperoleh dari karya-karya Ibn Rusyd, terutama *Faṣl al-Maqāl fī mā Bayna al-Ḥikmah wa al-Sharī'ah min al-Ittiṣāl* dan *al-Ḍarūrī fī al-Siyāsah*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa hubungan antara agama dan politik dalam pemikiran Ibn Rusyd terbentang dalam tiga dimensi, yaitu ontologis, epistemologis, dan aksiologis. Secara ontologis, agama dan politik berakar pada sumber kebenaran yang sama, yakni Tuhan sebagai Sebab Pertama dan Tujuan Akhir. Secara epistemologis, agama memberikan dasar bagi pengetahuan dan moralitas, sedangkan politik mengaktualisasikan nilai-nilai tersebut dalam kehidupan*

bersama. Secara aksiologis, keduanya berorientasi pada terwujudnya keadilan, kebahagiaan, dan kesempurnaan manusia. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pemikiran Ibn Rusyd menawarkan paradigma yang rasional, etis, dan relevan untuk memahami hubungan antara agama dan politik dalam kehidupan berbangsa dan bermasyarakat.

Kata Kunci: *Agama; Ibn Rusyd; Etika Politik; Politik; Filsafat Islam.*

Introduction

From Greek civilization to Islamic civilization, the relationship between religion and politics has frequently become a central subject of philosophical discourse. This is because both religion and politics are inseparable from human reflection. Socrates, for example, introduced dialectics as a way of examining justice, virtue, truth, and knowledge in depth.¹ Although these concepts do not explicitly mention religion, they point toward concerns that are also central to religious teaching. Religion, in an explicit sense, has two aims: as knowledge, it teaches human beings true understanding; as action, it guides them to act rightly.² These aims enable human beings to discover happiness in life. This view is also strengthened by Ludwig Feuerbach, the well-known German philosopher, who in his influential work *Das Wesen des Christentums*, as cited by Wasisto Raharjo, regards religion as a projection of human light that helps human beings see and attain happiness in a proper and meaningful way.³

In addition to religion, politics also has an essential role in the life of the state. Politics is predicated on every human individual; for this reason, Aristotle described human beings as political animals (*zoon politikon*).⁴ In relation to politics, Ibn Rusyd, the renowned Muslim philosopher from Cordoba, likewise explains that the attainment of goodness and perfection requires free actions performed by human individuals, and this is what is called politics.⁵ Politics, therefore, may be understood as one of the instruments through which human beings pursue the virtues of life. From this theoretical description, there is no necessary contradiction between religion and politics that would require the two to proceed separately.

In contemporary life, however, the ways in which religion and politics are understood and practiced increasingly reveal serious distortions. Political actors often treat religion as the quickest and most effective vehicle for gaining power. At the same time, many religious adherents have developed the stigma that politics is inherently dirty,

¹ Chantika Marsa Julianti et al., "Socrates Ke Islam: Pengaruh Filsafat Yunani Pada Pemikir Muslim," *EL-FIKR: Jurnal Aqidah Dan Filsafat Islam* 6, no. 1 (2025): 76-91, 79.

² Ibn Rusyd, *Fashl Al-Maqal Fi Ma Bayna Al-Hikmah Wa Al-Syari'ah Min Al-Ittishal* (Darul Ma'arif, 1178), 54.

³ Wasisti R. J., "Agama dan Politik: Teologi Pembebasan sebagai Arena Profetisasi Agama," *Walisongo* 22, no. 1 (2014): 133-156, <https://journal.walisongo.ac.id/index.php/walisongo/article/view/262>.

⁴ Majid Fakhry, *Ibn Rusyd: Lentera Dua Peradaban* (Jakarta: Sadra Press, 2018), 148.

⁵ Fakhry, *Ibn Rusyd*, 148.

even a domain inhabited by evil. Religion and politics now often appear to move as two separate segments, each pulling the other into its own interests.⁶

This condition indicates that the relationship between religion and politics is experiencing a significant disharmony. Divergent views regarding these two domains not only shape public perception but also generate social practices that distance religion and politics from their respective normative functions. In such a context, religion risks losing its ethical authority in the public sphere, while politics becomes increasingly detached from the moral values that should serve as its foundation.

Furthermore, political culture in Indonesia tends to operate through patronage, namely individualized networks of relations both within ruling circles and among society at large.⁷ Berenschot and Aspinall, in *Democracy for Sale*, explain that patronage refers to an informal political practice that operates through transactional politics, treats money as the most effective political instrument for securing victory, and turns public offices into commodities to be traded.⁸

Such a political culture has widened the gap between religion and politics, causing many noble values that should function as the primary orientation of public life to be neglected and submerged. Departing from these phenomena, this study raises the theme of the relationship between religion and politics in Ibn Rushd's philosophy, with the aim of exploring both concepts more holistically and comprehensively. In this study, several works of Ibn Rushd are used as the main references for formulating his view of the relationship between religion and politics. Additional literature related to the topic is also used to enrich the discussion.

This study offers an integrative reading of the relationship between religion and politics through three layers of philosophical analysis: ontological, epistemological, and axiological. Through this framework, the study argues that politics in Ibn Rushd's philosophy cannot be understood merely as the practice of power or the administration of the state. Rather, politics is the social actualization of true knowledge (*right knowledge*) and right action (*right action*) as taught by religion. Thus, this research presents a new conceptual model that positions religion as the ontological and epistemological foundation of politics, while politics is understood as the practical sphere in which moral and rational values are realized for the sake of justice, happiness, and human perfection.

Method

This study is a library research project, meaning that the data used in the research are derived from written sources, including books, journal articles, and other relevant scholarly materials. The approach employed is Gadamerian hermeneutics, particularly the concept of the fusion of horizons introduced by Hans-Georg Gadamer, the German

⁶ Syarifudin, "Agama dan Politik: Apa yang Tuhan Perbuat dengannya?" *JIS* 2, no. 2 (2022): 295-298, <http://dx.doi.org/10.15575/jis.v2i1.16877>.

⁷ Sahya Anggara, *Sistem Politik Indonesia* (Bandung: CV Pustaka Setia, 2013), 127.

⁸ Alfisahrin, *Budaya Politik Patronase Kiyai dalam Demokrasi Lokal di Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Barat* (Makassar: UNHAS, 2021), 45.

philosopher.⁹ According to Gadamer's hermeneutics, a text is not understood merely in a reproductive sense, that is, by simply repeating the author's original intention. It may also be understood productively, allowing new meanings to emerge in ways that remain relevant to the context of contemporary readers. For Gadamer, therefore, a text is always open to interpretation and cannot be rigidly confined to the author's intention alone.¹⁰

The application of the fusion of horizons in this study proceeds through three stages of analysis. *First*, the study identifies the historical horizon of Ibn Rushd's texts by examining key concepts concerning religion, politics, practical philosophy (*al-siyāsah al-madaniyyah*), moral virtue, and the purpose of human life as presented in his works. This stage aims to understand the structure of Ibn Rushd's thought within its philosophical and historical context.

Second, the study identifies the horizon of the contemporary reader, namely the political reality of Indonesia, which is marked by the weakening of moral orientation in political practice, the strengthening of patronage and transactional politics, the tendency to instrumentalize religion in the contest for power, and a crisis of ethical leadership that increasingly distances politics from the ideals of public virtue.

Third, the two horizons are brought into a hermeneutical dialogue in order to generate a new and contextual understanding. This dialogical process is carried out by connecting: (1) the concept of religion as the teaching of true knowledge and right action with the need to restore moral orientation in modern politics; (2) the concept of politics as part of practical philosophy, or civic science, with the problems of patronage, transactional politics, and the instrumentalization of religion in Indonesia; (3) the concept of the ideal leader who possesses rational wisdom as well as moral virtue with the crisis of ethical leadership in contemporary democracy; and (4) the shared aim of religion and politics, namely happiness (*al-sa'ādah*) and human perfection, with the need to reconstruct public political ethics oriented toward justice, public benefit, and citizens' welfare.

Through this process of the fusion of horizons, the study does not merely reconstruct Ibn Rushd's thought historically. It also produces a philosophical interpretation that is relevant for explaining the relationship between religion and politics in contemporary Indonesia. Gadamerian hermeneutics thus functions as an analytical method that links classical meaning with present-day socio-political problems, rather than merely serving as a conceptual framework.

Discussion

A. Biography of Ibn Rushd

Ibn Rushd (520-595 AH/1126-1198 CE), known in the West as Averroes, was born in Cordoba, Andalusia, into a family of scholars and judges affiliated with the Maliki school of law.¹¹ The intellectual environment of twelfth-century Andalusia was one of

⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum, 1975), 389-390.

¹⁰ M. Amin Abdullah, *Antologi Studi Islam: Teori Dan Metodologi* (Yogyakarta: Sunan Kalijaga Press, 2000).

¹¹ Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, *'Uyūn al-Anbā' fī Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā'*, ed. Nizār Riḍā (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāh, 1965), 527-531.

the major centers of Islamic learning, bringing together religious traditions, Greek philosophy, and Islamic culture.¹² The Maliki legal tradition inherited from his family formed Ibn Rushd's scholarly foundation in jurisprudence and legal theory, while his interest in philosophy, medicine, and the rational sciences made him one of the greatest thinkers in the history of Islamic philosophy.¹³

Ibn Rushd's intellectual career developed during the Almohad dynasty, when he received support from Caliph Abu Ya'qub Yusuf and later Abu Yusuf Ya'qub al-Mansur.¹⁴ Due to his scholarly reputation, he was appointed as a judge (*qāḍī*) in Seville and later served as a judge in Cordoba.¹⁵ His position as both judge and philosopher shows that intellectual activity, the enforcement of the Sharia, and the administration of government were not regarded as mutually contradictory fields. Within the political context of the Almohads, who sought to integrate religious legitimacy with rational governance, Ibn Rushd developed the view that philosophy helps illuminate the purposes of the Sharia and provides a rational basis for political life.¹⁶

This view is reflected in Ibn Rushd's major works, which serve as the primary references for this study. In *Faṣl al-Maqāl fī mā Bayna al-Ḥikmah wa al-Sharī'ah min al-Ittiṣāl*, he affirms that philosophy and the Sharia originate from the same source of truth and therefore cannot contradict each other when properly understood through the demonstrative method (*burhān*).¹⁷ In *al-Ḍarūrī fī al-Siyāsah*, his summary and interpretation of Plato's *Republic*, Ibn Rushd explains politics as a branch of practical philosophy that aims to form a just and virtuous society.¹⁸ Meanwhile, *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid wa Nihāyat al-Muqtaṣid* demonstrates the breadth of his legal methodology through a comparative approach to various schools of Islamic law.¹⁹ These three works show the continuity among philosophy, Sharia, and politics that forms the main foundation of Ibn Rushd's political thought and the basis of the analysis in this study.²⁰

B. The Relationship between Religion and Politics in Ibn Rushd's Philosophy

1. Ontological Relationship

The relationship between religion and politics in Ibn Rushd's thought must be understood from the broader structure of his metaphysics of being (*al-wujūd*), causality,

¹² Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 315-317.

¹³ Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 317-320.

¹⁴ Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 320-322.

¹⁵ Abdelghani Tbakhi and Samir S. Amr, "Ibn Rushd (Averroes): Prince of Science," *Annals of Saudi Medicine* 28, no. 2 (2008): 145-148.

¹⁶ Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, "The Place of Politics in the Philosophy of Ibn Rushd," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 15, no. 2 (1953): 246-249.

¹⁷ Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-Maqāl fī mā Bayna al-Ḥikmah wa al-Sharī'ah min al-Ittiṣāl*, ed. Muḥammad 'Imārah (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1972), 19-26, 54-60.

¹⁸ Ibn Rushd, *al-Ḍarūrī fī al-Siyāsah: Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Siyāsah li-Aflāṭūn*, ed. Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-'Arabīyyah, 1998), 46-75.

¹⁹ Ibn Rushd, *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid wa Nihāyat al-Muqtaṣid*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2004), 1:3-15.

²⁰ Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 322-325; Oliver Leaman, *Averroes and His Philosophy*, rev. ed. (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998), 87-105.

and purpose (*ghāyah*). In *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, Ibn Rushd explains that the Sharia itself commands human beings to engage in *naẓar*, or rational reflection, upon all of God's creation. This command shows that philosophical inquiry into nature is not an activity opposed to religion. On the contrary, it is a consequence of the demands of the Sharia. By observing the order of creation, human beings are directed to know the Creator as the First Cause (*al-sabab al-awwal*) of all existence.²¹

Unlike theological traditions that prove the existence of God through kalam arguments, Ibn Rushd builds his proof through two main arguments: *dalīl al-'ināyah* (the argument from providence or order) and *dalīl al-ikhtirā'* (the argument from creation). The order of the universe shows that all reality is rationally arranged and directed toward a particular good. Nature does not operate by chance; rather, it reveals an order that proceeds from a single First Cause and at the same time points toward the final purpose of all cosmic motion.²²

Thus, the relationship between religion and God in Ibn Rushd's philosophy is not merely dogmatic, but ontological. God is the ground of all existence, while the Sharia functions as the medium that guides human beings to understand the structure of reality through revelation and reason together. Within this framework, religion is not only a set of ritual norms. It is also a path that directs human beings to live in harmony with the order of being created by God.²³

Nevertheless, Ibn Rushd never explicitly states that politics is directly "derived" from the ontology of God. Such a statement is the result of a hermeneutical reading of his philosophical system as a whole. What Ibn Rushd explicitly explains is that political life must be directed toward the same aim as human life itself, namely the attainment of happiness (*al-sa'ādah*) through the realization of virtue (*al-faḍīlah*) in communal life.²⁴

The relationship between ontology and politics becomes clear when Ibn Rushd explains the function of the state in *al-Ḍarūrī fī al-Siyāsah*. Human beings cannot attain perfection alone, because different virtues are distributed among different individuals. For this reason, civic life, or the city (*al-madīnah*), is needed as a space of cooperation that enables each human potential to develop toward perfection. The city is not merely an administrative organization; it is a social form that makes it possible for the natural purpose of human beings to be realized collectively.²⁵

At this point, the teleology of the cosmos is translated into political teleology. Just as every entity in nature moves toward the end determined by its First Cause, so too must society be directed toward its natural end: a life that is just, virtuous, and happy. Politics is therefore not understood as a technique for acquiring power, but as the art of ordering communal life in accordance with the natural purpose of human beings. In this way, the

²¹ Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-Maqāl fī mā bayna al-Ḥikmah wa al-Sharī'ah min al-Ittiṣāl*, ed. Muḥammad 'Imārah (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1972), 27-31.

²² Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 296-301.

²³ Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, 31-35.

²⁴ Ibn Rushd, *Al-Ḍarūrī fī al-Siyāsah: Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Siyāsah li-Aflāṭūn*, ed. Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1998), 74-78.

²⁵ Ibn Rushd, *Al-Ḍarūrī fī al-Siyāsah*, 75-83.

teleological structure of nature takes on its practical form in the organization of political life.²⁶

2. Epistemological Relationship

In Ibn Rushd's philosophy, politics belongs to civic science (*al-'ilm al-madani*), a branch of practical philosophy (*al-hikmah al-'amaliyyah*) that studies human action in communal life. Unlike theoretical philosophy, which is oriented toward knowledge of reality, practical philosophy focuses on actions that arise from human free will in order to realize the common good. Accordingly, the object of politics is not simply the state as an institution, but social life as directed toward collective perfection (*al-kamāl*) and happiness (*al-sa'ādah*).²⁷

The epistemological foundation of practical philosophy is ethics, or the science of character (*'ilm al-akhlāq*). Ibn Rushd places ethics at the foundation of politics because politics is, in essence, the governance of human actions based on will, habit, and moral virtue. The quality of a political order therefore depends on the moral quality of the individuals who constitute it. Politics is not built first and foremost upon techniques of gaining power, but upon the formation of character and virtue that allows communal life to proceed justly.²⁸

This framework shows that religion and philosophy share the same epistemological orientation. In *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, Ibn Rushd explains that the Sharia aims to teach true knowledge (*al-'ilm al-ḥaqq*) and right action (*al-'amal al-ḥaqq*).²⁹ True knowledge includes the recognition of God, the nature of reality, and the final purpose of human beings, while right action is the actualization of such knowledge in moral conduct that leads human beings toward happiness. Thus, religion and philosophy do not contradict one another; rather, they strengthen one another because both guide human beings toward intellectual truth and practical virtue.³⁰

According to Ibn Rushd, the process of attaining true knowledge takes place through two stages: *taṣawwur* (conceptualization) and *taṣdīq* (assent or judgment). Assent may be achieved through three methods according to the intellectual capacities of human beings: the demonstrative (*al-burhāniyyah*), the dialectical (*al-jadaliyyah*), and the rhetorical (*al-khiṭābiyyah*). These different methods do not indicate different truths; they indicate the various ways in which human beings understand and receive the same truth.³¹

On the basis of this epistemological framework, politics occupies the position of a collective sphere in which true knowledge and right action are actualized. If religion

²⁶ Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, "The Place of Politics in the Philosophy of Ibn Rushd," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 15, no. 2 (1953): 246-249.

²⁷ Ibn Rusyd, *Al-Ḍarūrī fī al-Siyāsah: Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Siyāsah li-Aflāṭūn*, ed. Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1998), 72-75.

²⁸ Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, "Muqaddimah," in Ibn Rusyd, *Al-Ḍarūrī fī al-Siyāsah: Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Siyāsah li-Aflāṭūn* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1998), 46-48.

²⁹ Ibn Rusyd, *Faṣl al-Maqāl fī mā Bayna al-Ḥikmah wa al-Sharī'ah min al-Ittiṣāl* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1178 H), 54-55.

³⁰ Oliver Leaman, *Averroes and His Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998), 93-100.

³¹ Ibn Rusyd, *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, 55-58; see also Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 306-311.

provides normative orientation through revelation and philosophy offers a rational explanation of it, then politics is tasked with translating both into social life through law, education, and public governance. The epistemological relationship between religion and politics in Ibn Rushd's philosophy is therefore integrative: religion forms knowledge and morality, philosophy clarifies them rationally, and politics realizes these values in communal life for the sake of justice, happiness, and human perfection.

3. Axiological Relationship

In its axiological dimension, the relationship between religion and politics in Ibn Rushd's philosophy does not stop at the formation of individual morality. It is directed toward the formation of a political order that enables the attainment of *al-sa'ādah* (happiness) as the ultimate end of human life. Politics has value insofar as it becomes a means for realizing the aims of the Sharia: the establishment of a just and orderly life that enables human beings to develop all of their intellectual and moral potential. Political value is therefore not measured by success in preserving power, but by the extent to which politics leads society toward a virtuous life (*al-ḥayāh al-fāḍilah*).³²

This conception is clearly visible in *al-Ḍarūrī fī al-Siyāsah*, where Ibn Rushd provides a summary and reinterpretation of Plato's *Republic*. Ibn Rushd, however, does not merely translate Plato's ideas. He undertakes a philosophical Islamization of the theory of the ideal state. If Plato constructs the virtuous state on the basis of pure philosophy, Ibn Rushd integrates it with the principles of the Sharia, thereby understanding philosophy and religion as two paths directed toward the same truth.³³ The ideal state according to Ibn Rushd is therefore not simply an ordered political community. It is a community whose educational system, law, and leadership are all oriented toward the formation of the virtuous human being (*al-insān al-fāḍil*).³⁴

This idea gives rise to the concept of *al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*, the virtuous city or virtuous society, which is built upon the cooperation of all citizens in realizing the common good. Unlike a state that seeks only security or material prosperity, *al-madīnah al-fāḍilah* aims to guide human beings toward intellectual and moral perfection. For that reason, law, education, and political institutions must be directed toward the formation of citizens' character so that they can actualize virtue collectively. Politics in this sense becomes a means of moral education for society, or civic virtue, rather than merely a mechanism for distributing power.³⁵

Within this framework, Ibn Rushd gives a highly important position to the philosopher-ruler. Following Plato, but adapting the idea to the Islamic tradition, he argues that the ideal ruler is an individual who masters demonstrative knowledge (*al-burhān*) and at the same time understands the purposes of the Sharia. A ruler is not sufficient merely by memorizing religious texts; he must be able to interpret religious

³² Ibn Rushd, *Al-Ḍarūrī fī al-Siyāsah: Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Siyāsah li-Aflāṭūn*, ed. Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-'Arabīyyah, 1998), 74-77.

³³ Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri, "Muqaddimah," in Ibn Rushd, *Al-Ḍarūrī fī al-Siyāsah*, 15-39.

³⁴ Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, "The Place of Politics in the Philosophy of Ibn Rushd," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 15, no. 2 (1953): 246-249.

³⁵ Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 311-316.

values rationally so that they can be properly applied in public policy. Since the majority of people understand religion through rhetorical (*al-khiṭābah*) and dialectical (*al-jadal*) methods, while only a few are able to attain demonstrative knowledge, the responsibility of the philosopher-ruler is to mediate philosophical truth through religious language that can be understood by the wider public without damaging the substance of truth itself.³⁶

The consequence is that Ibn Rushd clearly distinguishes ethical politics from politics that is oriented merely toward power. Ethical politics is conducted in order to realize justice (*al-'adl*), the common good (*al-maṣlaḥah al-'āmmah*), and collective happiness (*al-sa'ādah al-mushtarakah*). By contrast, politics that pursues only domination, wealth, popularity, or group interest represents a deviation from the true purpose of politics. Power has legitimacy only when it is used as an instrument to uphold virtue. When power becomes an end in itself, politics loses its moral and philosophical foundation. Religion thus functions to safeguard the normative orientation of power, while philosophy ensures that this orientation is realized through rational deliberation rather than fanaticism or the manipulation of religious symbols.³⁷

Nevertheless, Ibn Rushd's political model is often regarded as elitist because it grants the highest interpretive authority to philosophers. In the classical perspective, this elitism does not arise from social status, but from the different intellectual capacities through which human beings understand truth. When read in the context of modern politics, however, Ibn Rushd's elitism need not be interpreted as a form of political aristocracy that closes off public participation. Rather, it may be understood as a demand that those who administer the state possess scholarly competence, moral integrity, and rational ability in formulating public policy. With such a reading, Ibn Rushd's philosopher-ruler is closer to the idea of epistemic leadership than to oligarchic rule. Political legitimacy is not determined by lineage or by the domination of a particular group, but by intellectual quality, moral virtue, and commitment to the common good.³⁸

Through this axiological perspective, the relationship between religion and politics in Ibn Rushd's philosophy displays an integrative character. Religion provides the orientation of values, while politics becomes the rational instrument for realizing those values in communal life. The final value of politics is not power, but the realization of a virtuous society (*al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*) that enables human beings to attain justice, happiness, and perfection as shared goals.

The Relevance of Ibn Rushd for Contemporary Political Ethics

Through Hans-Georg Gadamer's fusion of horizons, Ibn Rushd's thought is not understood merely as an intellectual product of twelfth-century Andalusia. It is also treated as a philosophical horizon capable of entering into dialogue with contemporary political problems. Such a dialogue shows that Ibn Rushd's account of the relationship

³⁶ Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-Maqāl fī mā Bayna al-Hikmah wa al-Sharī'ah min al-Ittiṣāl* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1972), 31-38.

³⁷ Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 154-166.

³⁸ Charles E. Butterworth, "The Political Teaching of Averroes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 266-286.

between religion and politics still possesses explanatory power in relation to modern political ethics, especially with regard to crises of leadership, patronage politics, the instrumentalization of religion, and the weakening of orientation toward the common good.³⁹

First, Ibn Rushd rejects the reduction of religion to a mere instrument for legitimizing power. In *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, religion is understood as a path toward true knowledge (*al-ilm al-ḥaqq*) and right action (*al-amal al-ḥaqq*), not as a symbol that can be exploited for practical political interests. Therefore, the use of religious identity to gain electoral support without commitment to justice, honesty, and public benefit contradicts the purposes of the Sharia as understood by Ibn Rushd. Religion functions to correct power, not to serve as an instrument for preserving it.⁴⁰

Second, politics must not be separated from ethics and knowledge. Ibn Rushd places politics within practical philosophy (*al-ḥikmah al-amaliyyah*), which is rooted in ethics. Consequently, the quality of politics is not determined merely by the ability to obtain power, but by the ability to realize public virtue through policies grounded in rational knowledge. This perspective differs from pragmatic politics, which measures success solely through electoral victory, stability of power, or the advantage of a particular group. In Ibn Rushd's view, politics loses its philosophical legitimacy when it is detached from moral and rational orientation.⁴¹

Third, Ibn Rushd's concept of the ideal leader provides a critique of the crisis of leadership in modern democracy. A leader does not obtain sufficient legitimacy merely through political procedure; he must also possess rational wisdom (*ḥikmah*), moral integrity, and the ability to understand the purposes of the Sharia substantively. The idea of the philosopher-ruler developed by Ibn Rushd is not a justification for intellectual authoritarianism, but an affirmation that public leadership must rest upon competence, wisdom, and moral responsibility. In the contemporary context, this concept may be read as a demand for ethical leadership and evidence-based policymaking, namely leadership that combines ethical integrity with scientific consideration in public decision-making.⁴²

Fourth, the practice of political patronage that has developed in many developing countries, including Indonesia, fundamentally contradicts Ibn Rushd's political orientation. Patronage places personal relations, economic transactions, and the distribution of benefits at the center of political relations, whereas Ibn Rushd views the purpose of politics as the realization of *al-maṣlaḥah al-āmmah* (the common good) and *al-sa'ādah* (shared happiness). When public office is treated as a political commodity, the function of the state shifts from being a means of realizing virtue into an arena for distributing group interests. From Ibn Rushd's perspective, this condition reflects a

³⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Continuum, 2004), 305-341.

⁴⁰ Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-Maqāl fī mā Bayna al-Ḥikmah wa al-Sharī'ah min al-Ittiṣāl*, ed. Muḥammad 'Imārah (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1972), 54-60.

⁴¹ Ibn Rushd, *Al-Ḍarūrī fī al-Siyāsah: Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Siyāsah li-Aflāṭūn*, ed. Muhammad Abid al-Jabiri (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-'Arabiyyah, 1998), 46-75.

⁴² Charles E. Butterworth, "The Political Teaching of Averroes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 266-286.

teleological deviation, because politics is no longer directed toward the natural purpose of human beings as rational and moral creatures.⁴³

Fifth, the state according to Ibn Rushd is not simply an organization of power, but a sphere for actualizing the common good. The concept of *al-madīnah al-fāḍilah* shows that the state has the responsibility to create conditions that allow citizens to develop intellectually, morally, and socially. Education, the enforcement of law, the distribution of justice, and the protection of the public interest are concrete forms of this aim. Thus, the success of the state is not measured only by economic growth or political stability, but also by its capacity to establish justice, strengthen public virtue, and create a shared life that enables each citizen to attain personal perfection.⁴⁴

Through this hermeneutical reading, Ibn Rushd's thought demonstrates strong relevance for contemporary political ethics. The integration of religion, reason, and politics that he offers provides an alternative paradigm to two extreme tendencies present today: the politicization of religion on the one hand, and the secularization of politics that neglects ethical dimensions on the other. For Ibn Rushd, politics derives its legitimacy not from force, majority power, or religious symbols, but from its ability to realize justice, the common good, and shared happiness as the ultimate ends of political life.

Conclusion

This study shows that the relationship between religion and politics in Ibn Rushd's philosophy is not dichotomous, but integrative through three philosophical dimensions: ontological, epistemological, and axiological. Ontologically, religion and politics are rooted in the same source of truth, namely God as the First Cause (*al-sabab al-awwal*) and the final end (*al-ghāyah*) of all reality. Politics is not understood as an activity that stands independently, but as the actualization of the teleology of human life toward virtue (*al-faḍīlah*) and happiness (*al-sa'ādah*) in communal existence. Epistemologically, Ibn Rushd places religion, philosophy, and politics in a mutually complementary relationship.

Religion provides normative orientation through revelation; philosophy explains these values rationally through the demonstrative method (*al-burhān*); and politics becomes the practical sphere for realizing true knowledge and right action (*al-'ilm al-ḥaqq* and *al-'amal al-ḥaqq*) in social life. Thus, politics derives its legitimacy not merely from power, but from its ability to realize the moral and rational values taught by religion.

In the axiological dimension, this study shows that politics according to Ibn Rushd is an ethical instrument directed toward building *al-madīnah al-fāḍilah*, the virtuous society oriented toward justice, the common good, and human perfection. Through his reinterpretation of Plato's *Republic* in *al-Darūrī fī al-Siyāsah*, Ibn Rushd develops the concept of the philosopher-ruler who combines rational wisdom, moral integrity, and an understanding of the purposes of the Sharia. This perspective also distinguishes ethical politics oriented toward common virtue from power politics that pursues only domination and group interest.

⁴³ Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 154-166.

⁴⁴ Majid Fakhry, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 311-320.

Through Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, this study also shows that Ibn Rushd's thought remains highly relevant to contemporary political ethics. His ideas provide a critique of the politicization of religion, patronage politics, the pragmatism of power, and the crisis of ethical leadership that continue to shape modern political practice. For Ibn Rushd, politics must not be separated from ethics, knowledge, and public welfare, while religion must not be reduced to an instrument for legitimizing power.

The novelty of this study therefore lies in the formulation of a conceptual model of the relationship between religion and politics based on three philosophical dimensions—ontological, epistemological, and axiological—which demonstrates the integration of revelation, reason, and political praxis in Ibn Rushd's thought. This model not only enriches the field of Islamic political philosophy, but also offers a normative paradigm relevant to the development of political ethics and just governance in contemporary society.

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