

Research Article
Araştırma Makalesi

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What is Wrong with Concurrentism?

Abstract

Concurrentism and occasionalism are two principal theistic approaches to the nature of divine causality. Whereas the former affirms the causal efficacy of created beings along with the continuous action of God, the latter explicitly denies any causality to finite beings and considers God to be the only genuine causal agent. In “What is Wrong with Occasionalism?” Katherin A. Rogers examines the implications of these theories in relation to the following topics: our knowledge about the external world, the intelligibility of core ontological concepts and human free will together with moral responsibility. What she concludes from her analysis is that occasionalism has problematic implications with respect to these three points and concurrentism is superior to occasionalism in responding to the problems occasionalism faces in this context. In this paper, contrary to Rogers’, I argue that Rogers’ criticisms of occasionalism are in principle applicable to concurrentism and when they are applied, this theory faces more troubles than occasionalism has faced.

Keywords

Katherin Rogers, Divine Causality, Continuous Creation, Knowledge, Substantiality, Free Will, Moral Responsibility, Occasionalism.

I. Introduction

There has been a revived interest in understanding the nature of divine causality. The Medieval theories such as mere conservationism, concurrentism and occasionalism have come to the fore of the discussion. The last two theories, which were the most popular ones among the Muslim and Christian theists in the Middle Ages, emphasize God's constant and immediate causal activity on earth; however, they differ in formulating the nature of this divine activity. On the one hand, occasionalism claims that God is the sole cause and finite beings have no causal powers to act upon something. On the other hand, concurrentism rejects occasionalism's denial of secondary causality and ascribes causal powers to finite beings, which are given to them by God. So, according to concurrentism, a certain effect is caused both by God and by some finite beings.

Katherin A. Rogers argues that occasionalism has problematic implications if it is examined in relation to the following three issues: our knowledge about the external world, the intelligibility of core ontological concepts and human free will together with moral responsibility. In addition, she maintains that concurrentism is superior to occasionalism in responding to the problems occasionalism faces in this context (Rogers 2001). However, in this paper, I propose to show that concurrentism is inferior to occasionalism in its implications with respect to these three issues. I argue that Roger's criticisms of occasionalism are in principle applicable to concurrentism and when they are applied to concurrentism, this theory faces more troubles than occasionalism has faced. In what follows, I start with a clarification of what occasionalism and concurrentism amount to say and then move to analyze their philosophical implications by considering Rogers' criticisms directed against occasionalism.

II. Definitions

Before dealing with the criticisms directed against occasionalism and concurrentism, I first discuss what these theories actually say. I see some problems in Roger's characterizations of them.

II. A. Occasionalism

Rogers presents occasionalism as the view that "God keeps each created thing with all its properties in being from moment to moment, and that there are no secondary causes" (Rogers 2001: 345). This characterization of occasionalism might be misleading; the following points should be kept in mind when we consider occasionalism. First, according to occasionalism, it is logically impossible that there are secondary causes. Rogers' characterization as "there are no secondary causes" seems to be a weaker position because it seems to reject secondary causes in this actual world. However, in the view of occasionalism, it is not possible to find a finite being as a cause of another finite being in any possible world. The intuitions of this modal claim can be found in many occasionalists. For instance, in Nicolas Malebranche's view, a "true cause" is defined in a way that effects logically depend on it. Furthermore, for him, only

a being with infinite power can be the true cause. Thus, according to Malebranche, only an omnipotent being is the true cause of any effect in any possible case (Malebranche, 1963, vol. 2: 316 & Malebranche, 1997: 448-450). The impossibility of secondary causation becomes a logical truth if we understand the concept of “cause” in this way. Moreover, this point is also related to the scope of divine power. If we follow the insights of al-Ghazālī and Malebranche,¹ we should answer this question negatively and we cannot allow any such cases within the created realm because, for them, logical contradictions are excluded from the extension of divine power.

As a second point regarding Rogers’ characterization of occasionalism, she says: “God keeps each created thing with all its properties in being from moment to moment.” Here, it is not clear what she means by “properties.” According to occasionalism, only God can cause whatever falls within the scope of divine power. Individuals, their properties and any other ontological item that fall under the scope of divine power are created and sustained by God if they really exist at all. However, the issue is to determine what falls within the scope of this infinite power, as I indicated above. There are some occasionalists within the Islamic tradition who made a distinction between real facts (*wujūd kharijī*) and relational states (*amr ‘itibārī*).² According to them, creation or divine power applies to real facts but not to relational states. To clarify what they mean by “relational states” let us take into account the following words: “right and left,” “above and under.” Their referents have no definite external existence (*wujūd kharijī*). We cannot mention their existence in the same sense as the existence of concrete entities such as a stone or a tree. They are relational states and depend solely on the objects that have a definite external existence. If these objects did not exist, these relations would not occur. So the existence of my pencil and my book are real facts but my pencil’s being on the left of my book is a relational state. If Rogers’ “properties” include relational states when they are exemplified in some individuals, then she is not correctly describing occasionalism because occasionalism is compatible with postulating relational states which do not fall under the scope of divine power. If she restricts “properties” to real facts, then she gives an impression as if occasionalism does nothing to do with relational states. It should be emphasized that occasionalism is compatible with postulating non-created relational states even though this is not a direct implication of this theory.

II. B Concurrentism

Rogers defines concurrentism as the view that “God does cause all created things with all their properties to exist from moment to moment, but there is secondary causality.” According to this theory, the effect is produced by both God and the created

¹ See the following references where al-Ghazālī and Malebranche proclaim that logical contradictions do not fall within the scope of divine power (and will), and eternal truths are not subject to change. (Al-Ghazālī, 1997: 179 & Malebranche, 1964, vol. 3: 136 & Malebranche, 1997: 618).

² Ṣadr al-Sharī‘a is a significant figure who made such a distinction. For detailed information about this distinction and its application to the problem of free will see (Seyyid, 2011: 108).

cause (Rogers, 2001, 349). That is to say, God and finite beings with their causal powers are immediate causes in bringing about an effect. In characterizing concurrentism, she criticizes William Vallicella's point that both God and the natural cause are necessary to produce a unitary effect, according to this doctrine. She thinks this characterization leads to accepting that "God needs the secondary causes to produce an effect" (a. e., 350). However, according to Rogers, concurrentism does not deny that the effect can be produced by God alone. She exemplifies her point by allowing the possibility of a piece of cotton's being burnt without the causal contribution of fire. She adds that, according to concurrentism, an occasionalist universe is possible. If an occasionalist universe is possible, then she allows the possibility that God can create a piece of burnt cotton while creating fire near it and that fire does not burn the cotton while remaining as fire. However, her acceptance of this possibility seems to contradict what she later says about the intelligibility of the notions of fire and cotton. She commits herself to a theory of meaning that treats causal necessity as a species of logical necessity. She mainly relies on the remarks of Sydney Shoemaker, a contemporary proponent of this doctrine. According to this theory, an object is defined by its nature, the causal powers it has. For instance, fire has the active causal power to burn, flesh has the passive causal power to be burnt in contact with fire. As Rogers rightly expresses, according to this theory, "fire is not fire if does not burn, and flesh is not flesh if it is not burnt in contact with fire" (a. e., 360). Note that, eliminating causal powers from something changes its definition. Fire cannot be regarded as fire anymore if it ceases to burn flesh. It is something else however much it resembles fire apparently. This is a contention about the meaning of fire and requires it to have the causal power of burning appropriate things in all possible worlds where it exists. That is to say, it is impossible to accept any possible case where fire exists but does not burn, say, flesh while remaining as fire. Similarly, it is impossible that cotton is burnt and reduced to ash without any proper secondary causal agent such as fire acting on it. However, Rogers explicitly accepts the possibility of occasionalism within concurrentism, and says that God "could simply reduce the cotton to ash without fire" (a. e., 350). If she were faithful to the meaning theory she accepted, she would not call the ash "the ash of cotton." So the theory of meaning she advocates is not compatible with her characterization of concurrentism.

Rogers attempts to be consistent with her earlier remarks on concurrentism by adding the following point. God may choose to create without secondary causality as occasionalism requires as well as He can choose to create with secondary causality as concurrentism describes. However, she says, "if He wants to create a world of objects external to the perceiving mind, He needs secondary causality" (a. e., 351). In other words, in her opinion, it is not necessary that God concurs with secondary causality in His manner of creation, but He must allow secondary causality to have an external world outside our minds. Nevertheless, the issue cannot be resolved so simply because her remarks are essentially about the meaning of objects rather than their external existence outside the mind. If God were assumed to create without secondary causality, then she would be forced to say the following: we could not assign meaning to any object because they do not have any causal power. So everything would become meaningless. In fact, according to Rogers, this is what concurrentism as a theory allows.

As a result, her formulation of concurrentism together with the meaning theory she holds implies the possibility of meaningless talk.

With respect to the question of how God can concur with secondary causes in producing an effect, by relying on Francisco Suarez's interpretation, Rogers points out that they are not partial causes. As she quotes from him, God and secondary causes are "two causes of different orders, each one is complete in its own order" (a. e., 350). She gives an analogy to clarify this point. Think of the fictive characters and objects in the novel *The Wizard of Oz* and its author L. Frank Baum. Consider the fact that the tornado in the novel blows Dorothy's house to Oz. Here, the author is first thinking of these characters and the relations among them. In a sense, the existence and continuance of these fictive characters and objects totally depend on the author. However, in another sense, the tornado causes the mentioned effect within the novel. Rogers points out that Baum causes that effect as an author in his order, and the tornado causes it in its own order. Thus, we should distinguish these two different causal orders (a. e., 351). The relation between the tornado and the author in this analogy clarify to a certain extent how she sees the relation between God and the secondary causes. To repeat, Rogers' point is that they belong to two different causal orders. Note that, the analogue of secondary causes in concurrentism is "occasional causes" in occasionalism. While concurrentism ascribes genuine causal powers to secondary finite causes, occasionalism denies any genuine causal power to finite beings but postulates occasional causes as indicators of God's manner of creation in the universe (Malebranche, 1963, vol. 2: 316 & Malebranche, 1997: 448).

III. Rogers' criticisms

III. A Rogers' first criticism: The Problem of Skepticism

Rogers thinks that occasionalism leads to a radical skepticism about the existence of the external world and its continuity with the same general patterns. She points out the following two objections al-Ghazālī considered against occasionalism. First, if there is no real causal connection between our experience and created things, how can we be sure that there is an external world corresponding to our experience? As al-Ghazālī admitted, there might be "ferocious beasts and lofty mountains" in front of us while God does not created for us the sight of them (a. e., 353). Second, what guarantee is there to expect that the usual course of nature will continue in the way we have observed so far? (a. e., 352). If everything is constantly created by God and there is no other causal agent, for instance, He may change His manner of creation and may create the sun as rising from the west tomorrow.

As far as the first criticism is concerned, we should first clarify what we mean by the "external world?" To what is the world external? The first option might be that the world is external to the conscious self. Then even the mental realm can be regarded as a part of the external world. We perceive houses, books, streets, airplanes which are not in control of our free will. We perceive them whether we want or not. These perceptions might be regarded as external to our conscious selves. An example of such an external world is Berkeley's idealist world. We may move one step further and define the

external world as the world that is external to the mind. Then, the external world in this sense consists of the material objects or physical events that correspond to our mental perceptions or ideas. Now, this is the external world of Malebranche.

Occasionalism, by presupposing the notion of finite beings as caused or created ontological items, implies the existence of the external world at least in the sense of Berkeley's idealist world. This type of external world is self-evident and does not lead to skepticism. However, occasionalism does not imply the existence of Malebranche's external world. Neither does it deny it. That is to say, occasionalism is compatible with such an external world. To accept the existence of a material world corresponding to our experience, an occasionalist needs a further argument. The objection of skepticism is successful when there is no such argument for the existence of the material world.

However, concurrentism is open to the same objection in a worse way. Recall that concurrentism takes for granted the existence of objects with natures or causal powers. Thus concurrentism presupposes the existence of a material world external to the mind. It might sound astonishing how a theory which already presumed the existence of the material world is open to skepticism. Do not forget that the criticism initially posed by Rogers is about our ability to know the external world. By assuming the external world, nobody can get rid of the worry about whether we know it or not. Assumption does not give us knowledge. If we seek knowledge about the external world, then we must ask how we know it according to concurrentism. After that point, concurrentism must face the skeptical arguments given by al-Ghazālī and David Hume about the reality of causal relations between events or objects. As their arguments go, we can neither logically infer nor can we observe such causal relations. That is to say, there is no way to justify causality in nature. Concurrentism is open to skeptical arguments of this kind against the existence of external world understood as populated with natures and causal powers. What is worse, concurrentism only presumes such an external world due to its approval of real secondary causality. So those who defend concurrentism must face the skeptical worries indicated above and show us what justification they have for such a presumption. Conversely, those who defend occasionalism can easily get rid of the skeptical worry about the external world by considering it to be Berkeley's idealist world. Occasionalism is not as rigid as concurrentism and has the flexibility to interpret the external world in different ways. That is to say, the most primitive version of occasionalism, namely Berkeley's idealist interpretation, is not the target of skeptical doubts about the external world. However, concurrentism has a rigid interpretation of external world, which is subject to skepticism in a much stronger way.

As far as the second criticism is concerned, occasionalists admit that God may change His manner of creation. Nonetheless, this is just a possibility without being a high probability. Let us consider the rise of the sun from the east everyday as a working example. The fact that it has risen regularly from the east in the mornings so far gives us a habit in passing judgments that it will rise in the same manner tomorrow. This observed regularity increases our expectations about the rise of the sun from the east tomorrow, but does not give absolute guarantee. This kind of epistemic approach to the regularities in nature is more in line with contemporary scientific understanding. Scientific research in the micro-world illuminated that the behavior of micro-particles is

best depicted by statistical rather than deterministic laws. Scientists refer only to the probabilities in describing quantum phenomena. Concurrentism has difficulties in explaining the probable behaviors of particles. If there are certain natures and causal powers in particles why do not they behave always in the same manner, as these natures require. Consider the decay of a radioactive element, e.g. radium. A piece of matter consisting of radium atoms alone loses its half in 1602 years during which the half of the matter is transformed into a different element. However, in that process, some radium atoms decay and some others do not even though the conditions of each atom are basically the same. As a statistical fact, what we usually observe is that the half of any piece of radium has decayed in 1602 years. Why do some atoms decay and some do not if they have the same nature and causal powers? In comparison to concurrentism, occasionalism is in a better position again with its flexibility to accommodate such statistical regularities.

III. B Rogers' second criticism: The Problem of Objects

In this criticism, Rogers focuses on the intelligibility of objective existence. What does it mean for something to exist objectively? According to Rogers, something cannot exist objectively without having its own causal powers. She commits herself to a theory of meaning stating that we cannot conceptualize an object without ascribing to it some causal powers. Let me repeat her example. Fire is not fire anymore if it does not burn proper objects. Since occasionalism denies any causal powers within finite created objects, it leads to the conclusion that concepts of finite beings are not really intelligible and it is impossible for an object to exist objectively (a. e., 359).

In response to these objections, first I would like to emphasize that the theory of meaning Rogers presents has previously mentioned problematic implications for concurrentism. Second, occasionalism is a “no-nature theory”³ as she points out; it denies any causal power within the created realm. Thus, it is impossible that an occasionalist accepts a theory of meaning that depends on natures and causal powers ascribed to objects. However, occasionalism does not reject essential properties and the distinction between substances and accidents.

Many occasionalists such as the Ash'arites and Malebranche analyzed objects in terms of the substance-accident distinction. For instance, the Ash'arites identified substances with indivisible particles (atom). According to the early Ash'arites, atoms

³ Rogers takes the phrase “no-nature theory” from Alfred Freddoso. Freddoso thinks that there might be three versions of occasionalism. He calls the first version “no-action theory” according to which objects have essential causal powers that are never exercised. He calls the second version “no-essence theory” according to which objects have causal powers that are not essential to the objects. The third version is the “no-nature theory” according to which there are no causal powers at all. Freddoso thinks that the third version is the most valuable version to advocate for an occasionalist. For further information see, (Freddoso, 1988: 74-118). However, I do not consider even the first two theories to be some versions of occasionalism. As I pointed out earlier, occasionalism makes a modal claim about the impossibility of secondary causes or natures or finite causal powers.

are not extended particles, but later ones abandoned this idea and considered atoms to be extended. Nonetheless, in both views, atoms are homogeneous, and the diversity in the world appears as a result of the heterogeneity of accidents inhered in these substance-atoms. Accidents are considered to be perishable by their nature. No accident can endure but perishes in the second-instant of its coming to be if God does not recreate it in its substance (Fakhry, 1958: 38-48). However, Descartes rejected the idea of atoms because he believed that matter is something essentially extended and thus infinitely divisible. Nevertheless, he also analyzed matter in terms of the substance-accident/mode distinction (Descartes, 1897, vol. VIII A: 51 & Descartes, 1985, vol. 1: 231). Both the Ash'arites and Cartesian occasionalists abstained from defining substances as entities having causal powers.

In my opinion, the idea of substance is intelligible if it is understood in comparison to the idea of properties or accidents. Individuals (substances) are logically distinct from the properties that inhere in them (accidents, modes). Whiteness is logically distinct from the computer that is white. We do not need to ascribe causal powers to a computer to be able to consider it to be a substance. It is enough to conceive it in relation to some properties to see that it is a substance.

Insofar as the essential properties are concerned, it is not necessary to regard essential properties as causal powers. They may be conceived as defining features without having causal powers. Hugh J. McCann and Jonathan L. Kvanvig presented an occasionalist metaphysics according to which objects are analyzed in terms of essential properties (McCann and Kvanvig, 1991). For instance, if we consider human beings to be essentially rational animals, beings falling short of these properties would not be human beings in any possible world. It would not be correct to say that this contention puts limitation to divine power because God can create beings without these properties but we do not call them "human beings." He can create rational beings that are not animals, and animals that are not rational. Their names would be different. Alfred Freddoso calls these essential properties as "passive causal powers" because he thinks that these properties limit the causal activity of agents who act upon the patients (Freddoso, 1988: 78, 84). However, God as the only causal agent does not act on preexisting objects, He constantly creates them out of nothing. Thus, it would not be quite right to call the essential properties "powers" even though they are depicted as passive. In my opinion, they are just defining features; their essentiality does not derive from something in the objects like the natures. Their being essential is only conceptual, and serves to define and categorize objects in a logical manner.

Although occasionalism is compatible with postulating essences as explained above, it is not a necessary implication of this theory. In fact, most occasionalists denied the authenticity of conceiving objects through fixed essences. For instance, al-Ghazālī underlines the Ash'arite point that fire may not burn a piece of cotton at the contact with the cotton but can remain still fire. We can conceive a case where fire and cotton exist together but cotton was not burnt. According to him, this way of conceiving things shows that they are logically distinct ontological items (Al-Ghazālī, 1997, 170). This argument relies on a premise, which considers conceivability to be a proper way that leads to possibility. There is a philosophical strand that rejects this premise because proponents of this strand think that possibility depends on the natures and causal powers

of objects rather than on our ability to conceive them differently.⁴ These are two different approaches to the nature of possibility. Al-Ghazālī's approach cannot be rejected just because there is an alternative to it. However, Rogers seems to reject the former approach by presenting the latter. Moreover, al-Ghazālī's approach is shared by many philosophers today. In this regard, I will just point to Wittgenstein's family resemblances. According to Wittgenstein, there are no fixed essences shared by objects. For instance, he says, when we try to define "game," we cannot find any fixed property that is exemplified by all types of games. However, there are common properties between two types of games, there are some other common properties between other types of games, and so on. Games resemble each other but there is no essential property common to all types (Wittgenstein, 1968: §65-71). In my opinion, this flexible approach to possibility and meaning is more useful in terms of scientific activity. An essentialist approach to meaning does not improve scientific research, by contrast, undermines it. Consider Aristotelian essences. Aristotle defines a human being as a "rational animal." If scientists began their research with a conviction that this is the absolute truth which cannot be violated, then they must have classified some people who have certain mental illnesses not as human beings. However, these patients need to be treated as human beings and get some treatment. In daily life and science, we face some vague cases, which pose a difficulty in judging whether they really fit the essentialist definitions or not. What should be done in such cases? Should we disregard them on behalf of preserving fixed definitions? Even a single case may be quite important to illuminate the mechanism behind natural phenomena. If one sincerely aims to understand natural phenomena, he or she should be always open-minded. There might appear a special context to which well-established generalizations do not apply. Scientists should respect this possibility and have context sensitivity in their research programs.

As a result, the meaning theory Rogers presents has problems with her own characterization of concurrentism. In addition, it is not the only plausible theory of meaning. Even though this theory of meaning is incompatible with occasionalism, occasionalism is compatible with many other theories of meaning including essentialist ones. However, the value of occasionalism lies in the fact that it is open to embrace a more flexible meaning theory like that of Wittgenstein which motivates scientific research activities in a better way than Rogers' theory of meaning.

III. C Rogers' third criticism: The Problem of Morality

In this criticism, Rogers argues for the incompatibility of human freedom with occasionalism. If human beings are constantly created by God and do not have causal powers of their own, it seems that their actions are totally controlled by God without any role ascribed to human beings. Thus, occasionalism cannot account for the moral responsibility of humans (Rogers, 2001: 362). Rogers assumes that human beings must have their own causal powers to be able to make free choices. For this reason, she disregards Malebranche's account of human will, which does not ascribe causal power to human beings in their free choices. Instead, she takes Berkeley's account as a model

⁴ This philosophical strand can be traced to Aristotle.

of human freedom in a “limited occasionalism” (a. e., 364-365). While affirming the causal inertness of the physical world, Berkeley ascribes causal efficacy to spirits and bases human freedom on this efficacy. Nevertheless, Rogers still considers this limited form of occasionalism to be problematic. She gives an analogy to make her point clear. Think of a scenario where there is a bowling ball coming from the house of my neighbor down whenever I open my mailbox. I do not know why this happens, but it happens regularly in this way. Now, I want a person to die without actually engaging in killing him. When he walks around my neighborhood, I go near my mailbox and open it when he stands in a position to get a bowling ball. As a result, he dies due to the bowling ball when I open the mailbox (a. e., 365). Similarly, God established a system where He creates everything in accordance with my choices, according to occasionalism. I choose to shoot someone with an intention to kill him, but the rest is done by God (a. e., 366). In such a context, Rogers thinks that I am not responsible for the death of the person as my neighbor is responsible for killing the person in the imaginary scenario –even it is assumed that my neighbor is a free agent. In conclusion, for Rogers, since God creates shooting, God is the responsible agent here.

As a response, first it is questionable that morally significant freedom requires ascribing causal powers to an agent. Rogers is ignorant of al-Ghazālī’s view on this issue, as we understand from her remark that he did not discuss it (a. e., 362). However, al-Ghazālī accepts the Ash‘arite doctrine of acquisition (*kasb*) according to which humans acquire their deeds and God creates these actions. Although al-Ghazālī does not give a detailed account about the nature of human acquisition, some later scholars (especially the Māturīdites) explicated it in a very detailed way. For instance, according to a common view held by the Māturīdite scholars, human choice is a relational state (*amr itibārī*) that appears between the inclination and the action.⁵ It is not a real fact. For instance, assume that I have a desire to drink water. I choose to drink it and then take a glass of water and perform the action. My choice is a relational state between my desire to drink water and the act of drinking it. Choice belongs to me, as a conscious self, but the rest is created by God. Relations are not things that have definite existence. For that reason, they are not genuine objects to which divine power is applicable. In other words, human choice as a relational state does not fall within the scope of divine power, as round squares do not. As a result, it would be a category mistake to say that God could or could not create human choices.

Human freedom consists in choosing between alternatives. Humans do not cause their choices because as I said causation is inapplicable to the category of relational states that also includes choices. Creation takes place in accordance with human choices, in the large part. I say “in the large part,” because God does not always create what we choose. From time to times, we cannot walk or perform our daily actions due to some illnesses however much we want to do them.

Nonetheless, Rogers’ objection has a deeper level. She treats God rather than human beings as morally responsible for what God creates even though this creation is

⁵ For a detailed discussion of such an occasionalist account of human free will, see my paper: (Muhtaroglu, 2010).

in accordance with human choices. Her reason for considering God to be fully responsible is that He is causing or creating the activities that we regard as morally significant. He is causing death, for instance. I think she is mistaken in focusing on who is causing morally significant activities rather than on the intentions behind them. Even a concurrentist would reject Rogers' assumption. Think of a case where I killed somebody with a sword. Do we treat the sword as responsible because it has the causal capacity to kill the person in question? No, we look at the intention of the person who holds the sword. Rogers may remind us that God is a free agent, not a natural entity. Ok, then we would all agree that the issue is not just causing these actions. Subsequently, it is not absurd to hold that God creates in accordance with human choices. In fact, there is a plausible reason. For some monotheistic religions including Islam, this world is a place of examination. This temporary world is a place where human beings are free to behave in a good or bad way. After death, they will be judged in the other world for their choices and intentions. If we consider this world to be such a place of examination, then it is plausible to interpret why God creates everything in an order and takes human choices into consideration. Who is morally responsible is the person who wants to kill somebody not God. God only realizes the intentions of people and will treat them as morally responsible for their intentions in the other world. In addition, in evaluating this point, keep in mind that it is logically impossible that any being other than God can realize the intentions of human beings. According to occasionalism, God is the only genuine causal agent. Logically speaking, there is no agent other than God who can realize human intentions. Even human beings cannot actualize their intentions on their own.

On the other hand, concurrentism faces more problems in accounting for human free will. Concurrentism ascribes causal power to human beings as a ground of their free choices and actions. For Rogers, the existence of such a power in human beings is so self-evident that she says "I find it almost indubitable that it is I who move my arm when I choose to do so" (Rogers, 2001: 352). This is a very courageous claim though it is not justified. First, it is not self-evident that we are causing the movement of our arms when we choose to do so. What we experience are certain feelings and the correlated movements of our arms in that process. Our will is correlated with this activity, but we do not observe any causal link between them. Rogers interprets correlation as causation and considers this interpretation to be self-evident. Second, if humans are assumed to cause their bodily movements, why do they not cause the same movements whenever they will? For instance, I cannot even walk when I get terribly sick however much I want to do that. What exactly is this power that grounds human actions? If we consider human personality to be identical with the Cartesian conscious mind, certainly we do not observe any such power in the mind. Even if we assume that there are such powers, Rogers' concurrentism cannot even explain why we get sick and lose power because, from this perspective, causal powers are essential to human beings. If human beings lose their causal powers, they are not human beings anymore according to the meaning theory Rogers advocates. If human beings are conceived as biological organisms with consciousness and the power they have appears as a result of the proper functioning of the parts of their body, then the case is worse than that of the former. In the latter case, many natural agents (parts and particles in the body) are integrated into a self. So we do

not have one personal agent but many agents in hand. Who (or what) is morally responsible? It seems that concurrentism faces more serious problems than occasionalism in accounting for moral responsibility.

IV. Conclusion

Rogers' attempt to show the weaknesses of occasionalism in terms of three points of epistemology, meaning and morality actually opens a way to apply her criticisms to concurrentism. What I have shown is why her thesis that concurrentism is superior to occasionalism in terms of these three issues is implausible. I indicated the ways how concurrentism might be regarded as inferior to occasionalism with respect to these three topics. Nonetheless, I did not consider any criticism that might be directed against the theistic implications of these theories because they both presuppose theism.

Konkurentizmin Nesi Yanlış?

Özet

Konkurentizm (concurrentism) ve okazyonalizm (occasionalism) teorileri, tanrının kainatla olan ilişkisi bağlamında fiilini nasıl icra ettiğini açıklayan iki temel yaklaşım tarzı sunmaktadır. Konkurentizm, tanrının daimi olarak kainatı yaratmaya devam ettiğini savunmakla beraber yaratılan varlıkların da kendilerine ait bir etkenlik sahibi bir güç taşıdığını kabul eder. Okazyonalizm ise tam tersine tek etken gücün sadece tanrıya ait olabileceğini iddia eder. ‘Okazyonalizmin Nesi Yanlış?’ adlı makalesinde Katherine Rogers bu iki teorinin sonuçlarını şu üç mesele bağlamında incelemektedir: dış dünya hakkındaki bilgimiz, temel ontoloji kavramlarımızın anlamlılığı ile insan özgürlüğü ve ahlaki sorumluluğu. Analizinin sonucu olarak da Rogers, bu üç mesele bağlamında okazyonalizmin ciddi problemlerle karşılaştığını, konkurentizmin ise bu problemlere verebileceği makul cevaplardan dolayı okazyonalizmden daha mükemmel bir teori olduğunu savunur. Ben ise bu makalede, Rogers’ın tam tersine okazyonalizm için dile getirilen eleştirilerin daha kuvvetli bir şekilde konkurentizm için getirilebileceğini, bu yüzden de konkurentizmin okazyonalizmden daha problemli olduğunu göstermeye çalıştım.

Bu makale, Katherine Rogers’a bir reddiye olarak tasarlanmıştır. Bu çalışmada, öncelikle Rogers’ın konkurentizm ve okazyonalizm teorilerini sunumundaki problemlere değinip, sonra da okazyonalizme diğer teori lehine yönelttiği eleştirilerin geçersizliğini, üstelik konkurentizmin bu eleştirilere karşı çok daha açık olduğunu göstermeyi amaçladım.

Rogers, okazyonalizmi Tanrı’nın her an her şeyi yaratmakta olması ve dünyadaki varlıkların kendilerine ait bir tesir ve etki sahibi nedensellikleri olmadığı şeklinde tanımlar. Bu tanım doğru olmakla beraber eksiktir. Bu tanıma şu iki yönüyle beraber dikkate alındığında gelecek eleştirilere karşı direnci daha iyi anlaşılacaktır: 1-Okazyonalizm Tanrı’nın tek güç sahibi varlık olduğunu ve eşyanın kendine ait bir etkenliği olmadığını sadece mevcut bir durumun tasviri olarak kabul etmez. Aynı zamanda bunun bütün mümkün durumlar için geçerli, dolayısıyla zorunlu bir hüküm olduğunu kabul eder. 2- Okazyonalizm, Tanrı’nın kudretinin sonsuz bir taalluk alanı olmasına rağmen, her şeye taalluk etmediğini savunur. Mesela, ilahi kudret çelişik, dolayısıyla imkansız senaryolara ve itibari hallere (sağ ve sol gibi izafi ve itibari haller) taalluk etmez. Bu gibi hallerin yaratılması söz konusu edilmez.

Rogers konkurentizmi, Tanrı’nın her an her şeye müdahalesinin yanında yaratıklara ait ikincil bir nedenselliğin de kabulü şeklinde tanımlamaktadır. Bu tanıma göre, Tanrı bir olayı yaratırken diğer yaratıkların da o olayın ortaya çıkışına bir etkisi vardır. Rogers’a göre konkurentizm, Tanrı’nın isterse –aynen okazyonalizmin savunduğu gibi- bir şeyi aracısız, tamamen kendi kudretiyle yaratabileceğini de kabul eder. Ancak böyle bir durumda var edilen şey zihnin dışında var olan gerçek bir töz (cevher, substance) olarak addedilemeyecektir. Rogers’ın bu görüşlerine töz-eleştiriye daha ayrıntılı değineceğim.

Rogers’ın okazyonalizm eleştirisi üç temel noktada şekillenmektedir. Bu noktaları ayrı ayrı ele alıp her bir eleştirinin okazyonalizm açısından nasıl cevaplanacağını ve bu eleştirilerin konkurentizme de nasıl uygulanacağını özetlemeye çalışayım:

1-Skeptisizm problemi: Bu eleştiriye göre, okazyonalizm her şeyin sadece Tanrı tarafından var edildiğini kabul etmekle hem dış dünyanın varlığı hem de onun

gözlemediğimiz düzende devamı noktasında bir şüpheciliğe yol açmaktadır. Rogers'ın bu eleştiriyi dayandırdığı gerekçeler şöyledir:

a. Okazyonalizme göre duyularımızla elde ettiğimiz algılar ile dış dünya arasında nedensel bir bağ yoktur, her ikisini de Tanrı yaratır. Dış dünya algılarımıza sebep olmadığından Tanrı'nın hakikaten duyu verilerimize mutabık bir dış dünya yaratıp yaratmadığından hiç bir zaman emin olamayız.

b. Okazyonalizme göre, Tanrı bu kainattaki düzeni isterse yarın değiştirebilir, dolayısıyla yarın bambaşka bir kainatla karşılaşabiliriz. Bu da geleceğe dair güvenilir tahmin yapabilmemizin ve neticede bilimsel eylemin altını oyar.

Rogers'ın bu eleştirilerine karşı öncelikli olarak şu söylenebilir: Bahsettiği skeptik problem sadece okazyonalizm için değil bütün düşünce sistemleri için geçerlidir. Duyu verilerimizin dış dünyaya tekabül edip etmediği, geleceğin bugün ile aynı düzende devam edip edemeyeceği olumsal (contingent) durumlar olduğundan mantıksal olarak devamlı tartışmaya açık noktalar. David Hume'un bu konudaki yorumları hatırlanmalıdır. Konkürentizm dış dünyanın ve içindekilerin varlığını, zorunlu ilişkilerle birbirlerine bağlı olduğunu ve duyularımıza etkilediklerini sadece varsaymakla bu problemden kurtulmuş olamaz çünkü bu varsayımın gerekçesini belirtmek zorundadır. Aynı skeptik sorular bu varsayım için de geçerlidir. Ancak Rogers'ın sunumunda konkürentist yaklaşım bu konuda hiçbir gerekçe ileri sunmamakta sadece bir varsayıma dayalı olarak dış dünyayı kurgulamaktadır. Okazyonalistler ise bu skeptik problemin farkında olarak dış dünyanın varlığı ve devamı noktasında argüman ileri sürmektedirler. Bu konuda dile getirilen en yaygın argüman Tanrı'nın yaratmayı keyfi bir şekilde sürdürmediği, yaratmasında belli bir adet (Adetullah) takip ettiği. Bu adeti gereği, duyu verilerimiz dış dünyaya, dış dünyadaki düzen de gelecekte devam edecektir. Bunun istisnası mucizeler gibi cüz'î ve belli özel maksatlara hizmet eden durumlardır.

2-Töz/Cevher Problemi: Rogers'a göre, bir şeyin obje (töz, cevher) olarak anlamlandırılabilmesi için belli bir doğaya (nature) sahip olması gerekir. Belli bir doğaya sahip olan şey ise belli bir takım nedensel kapasitelere sahiptir ve bu kapasitelerin harekete geçmesi durumunda ortaya çıkacak sonuçlar zorunludur. Mesela ateşin yakıcılık içeren bir doğası vardır. Ateş pamuk gibi uygun bir madde ile yanyana gelince pamuğu doğası gereği yakması zorunludur. Eğer ateş pamuğu yakmazsa o ateş değildir. Burda Tanrı'nın ateşin ateş kaldığı müddetçe yakıcılığını ekarte edememesi, kendi kudretine bir sınırlama veya eksiklik getirmez, çünkü ateşin tanımı yakıcılığı içerir. Bunun zıddı muhal olduğundan kudret-i ilahi muhale taalluk etmeyecektir.

Rogers bu eleştirisinde kökü Aristo'ya kadar giden bir cevher tanımını varsaymaktadır. Bu tanıma göre, konkürentizm de problemleri bir teori olmaktadır. Şöyle ki, Rogers konkürentizmin Tanrı'nın herşeyi aracısız bizzatli kendisinin yaratabileceği bir durumu mümkün saydığını ifade etmişti. Yani Tanrı ateşin yanında ateşin tesirini ekarte ederek de pamuğu yakabilir. Bu durumda Rogers'ın ateşi töz olarak kabul edememesi gerekir. Yani konkürentizm de aynı eleştiriyi açıktır.

Okazyonalistler ise büsbütün farklı bir cevher anlayışını kabul ederler. Cevher üstünde arazların var olabildiği ontolojik yapıdır. Cevherin arazlara tesir etmesi gerekmez. Mesela, beyaz bir masa düşünelim. Beyazlık arazi masa cevherinin bir özelliğidir. Beyazlık tek başına var olmadığından masa gibi bir cevherde yaratılır, ama masayı da beyazlığını da sadece Tanrı yaratmaktadır. Dolayısıyla okazyonalizm cevhere sabit ve zorunlu bir doğa atfetmeyen ontolojilerle

uyumludur. Cevherin illa maddi olması da gerekmez. Mesela, Berkeley'in felsefesinde olduğu gibi cevherler tamamen zihni veya ruhani de olabilir. Dolayısıyla okazyonalizm, Kartezyenlerin maddi cevherlerini de Berkeley'in ruhani cevherlerini de bu cevherlere nedensellik verilmemesi şartıyla kabul eder. Son olarak da okazyonalistler, Tanrı'nın kudretinin muhale taalluk etmeyeceğini kabul ederler. Ne var ki genel felsefi eğilim çerçevesinde kainattaki yaratıkları ve hadiseleri olumsal olarak kabul ettiklerinden bunların aralarındaki ilişkileri zorunlu kabul etmezler. Bu sebeple, ateşin yakıcılığı zorunlu bir sonuç değildir ve bunun zıttı da muhal değildir. Dolayısıyla Tanrı ateşi pamukla beraber pamuğu yakarak da yaratabilir, yakmayarak da.

3-Özgür İrade ve Ahlaki Sorumluluk Problemi: Rogers insanın eylemlerinden sorumlu olabilmesi için özgürce bu eylemlere tesir edebilecek bir güce sahip olması gerektiğini kabul eder. Okazyonalizmde insan dahil herbir yaratık kendisine ait bir gücün yoksun olduğu için ne özgürlüğü ne de ahlaki sorumluluğu temellendirilebilir.

Öncelikle Rogers insan özgürlüğünü nedenselliğe bağlamakla konkurentist yaklaşımı zora sokmaktadır. Çünkü insanda eyleme sebep olan şey nedir: organların hareketi kaslara, kasların hareketi sinirlere, sinirlerin hareketi beyindeki nörofizyolojik etkileşimlerdeki nedenselliğe verilince binlerce hücre bir elin kalkması için beraberce çalışmak durumunda kalır. Binlerce hücrenin tek bir eyleme ortak etkisi olmadan o el kalkmaz. O halde elin kalkmasından sadece 'el kalsın' emrini veren ruh değil onunla beraber bir sürü hücrenin de sorumlu olması gerekir şu onlar da bu eyleme nedensel bir katkıda bulunurlar. Fakat biz hiçbir zaman insanın eyleminden bütün bu hücrelerini sorumlu tutmayız. Daha kötüsü, Rogers'ın yaklaşımına göre elin kalkması gibi basit bir olayın sorumlusu tek bir fail olamaz. Yani bundan 'ben' dediğimiz öznenin dışında daha başka bir sürü varlıklar (yani biyolojik bedenin bir sürü parçası ve hücreler) sorumlu olmak durumundadır. Bu ise yağmurdan kaçarken doluya tutulmaktır, çünkü Rogers eylemden sadece insanı sorumlu tutmaya çalışırken bir sürü şuursuz varlığı sorumlu tutar hale gelmiştir.

Okazyonalistler ise bu probleme insana etken bir güç vermeden, aynı zamanda Tanrı'nın da tek hakiki etken fail olduğu kabulünü reddetmeden bir çözüm geliştirmeye çalışmışlardır. Mesela Maturidi gelenek emr-i itibari kavramını bu probleme uygulayarak insan iradesini temellendirecek farklı bir ontolojik alan açmamaya çalışmıştır. Yani, insan iradesi, insanın iç dünyasındaki istek ve düşüncelerini fiillerine bağlayan bir itibar olarak kabul edilir. Aynen alt ve üst, sağ ve sol kavramlarının mahlukat arasındaki ilişkileri betimlemesi gibi. Bu ilişkilerin hakiki anlamda bir varlığı yoktur, ama büsbütün yok olarak da kabul edilmezler. İnsan iradesi de mesela bir şey içme isteği içimizde belirledikten sonra bu istek üzerinde yapılan bir seçimden ibarettir ki neticede ya fiili durum olarak içme eylemi yaratılır yahut yaratılmaz. Tanrı yaptığımız tercihlere göre fiillerimizi yaratır. Bir şeyler içme isteği ve düşüncesi, fiil gibi mahluktur. Ancak bu isteği fiile bağlayan tercihimiz, itibari bir durum olduğu için mahluk olarak kabul edilmez, ve Tanrı'nın kudretinin taalluk alanına girmez. İşte insan sadece bu ara durumda özgürdür.

Ahahtar Sözcükler

Konkurentizm, Okazyonalizm, Daimi yaratılış, Katherine Rogers, Skeptisizm, Cevher, Özgür İrade.

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