

Soul-Body Relationship in Medieval Islamic Thought - Analysis of Avicenna's Psychology and Medicine with Implication to Mental Health

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Abstract : The present study focuses on the science of the "Soul" in Islamic Medieval Psychology. The main objective of the current essay is to analyze the concept of the "soul" in relation to "mental" disorders, in the philosophical psychology and medicinal treatise of Ibn Sina, a Muslim Persian physician-philosopher (known as Avicenna in the Western world) (981-1037 CE). The examination will concentrate on the nature of the soul, and the relationship of the soul to the body, as well as the manifestation of health and sickness in soul and body. The analysis draws on Avicenna's Psychology (Kitab al-Najat or The Book of Salvation), Remarks and Admonitions (Al-isharat wa al-tanbihat), and the medical treatise - The Canon of Medicine (al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb). Avicenna's psychology of the soul is primarily based on Aristotelian and Neo-platonic paradigms. For Avicenna, soul is a metaphysical, independent substance, which in modern terms implies independence of human consciousness from the material body. The soul however, is linked to the body and controls all its' faculties or functions. It is suggested that in the specific case study of schizophrenia, it is a disorder pertained to both, soul and body and can be characterized as a multi-faceted neurobiological, physiological, psychological and metaphysical spiritual phenomenon.

Keywords : Avicenna, canon of the medicine, mental disorders, psychology, schizophrenia, soul-body

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