

**THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL**

A Study Of Avicenna's Concept Of The Soul In  
Relation To Those Of Aristotle And Plotinus

**being a Thesis Submitted for the Degree of  
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*by*

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## SUMMARY

### A STUDY OF AVICENNA'S CONCEPT OF THE SOUL IN RELATION TO THOSE OF ARISTOTLE AND PLOTINUS

*by*

**Md. Golam Dastagir**

Avicenna's psychological accounts begin with the Aristotelian definition of the soul. With Aristotle he seems to accept the *entelecheia* view of the soul, which holds that the soul has no activity independently of the body. But he also accepts the immortality of the soul, which seems to be a non-Aristotelian trait. These two views seem to be divergent and contrary. Since Avicenna seems to accept these two apparently contrary views, it is a concern whether he maintains consistency in his system.

In order to explore this, we shall take up a reconciliation methodology. The thesis investigates how Avicenna understands and applies Aristotle's *entelecheia* doctrine, and distinguishes his accounts of the non-rational souls (plant and animal) from those of the rational soul (human). Avicenna is seen to have understood the Aristotelian *entelecheia* doctrine in two different senses in order to hold two different views of the soul—as form and as substance. This thesis examines how he begins with the Aristotelian definition and framework of the soul and slips away from the fundamental themes of Aristotelianism, and accepts certain elements of neo-Platonism by tracing as many divergences and analogies as possible between Avicenna's concepts and those of Aristotle and Plotinus.

The thesis also explores whether Avicenna, by modifying the Aristotelian sense of the *entelecheia* doctrine, can derive substantial arguments for the immortality of the soul from the Aristotelian tradition. We endeavour to show that Avicenna, although he modifies the *entelecheia* doctrine in order to accommodate the immortality view of the rational soul and attributes it to some extent to Aristotle's philosophy, does not, indeed, find convincing argumentation in the Peripatetic tradition; rather, his arguments are derived from neo-Platonism, mainly from Plotinus. This involves him in reconciling both views, selecting the elements that best suit his overall position.

## **Dedication**

**To my late father, who passed away when I was an 18-month old baby,  
my mother who raised me, and my brother Mostafizar Rahman,  
who shouldered my upbringing**

*A Church, a Temple, or a Ka'ba stone,*

*The Qur'aan, the Bible, or a martyr's bone,*

*All these and more my heart can tolerate,*

*Since my religion now is LOVE alone (Abul Ala).*

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## ABSTRACT

Initially attracted to Aristotelianism, Avicenna touched on almost all aspects of Aristotle's philosophy. One of them is the problem of the soul (*nafs*), of which his accounts reflect both Aristotle's and Plotinus's views. Avicenna's psychological accounts begin with the Aristotelian definition of the soul. With Aristotle he seems to accept the *entelecheia* view of the soul, which holds that the soul is an actualisation of the body having life in it, that the soul has no activity independently of the body. But he also accepts the immortality of the soul, which seems to be a non-Aristotelian trait. These two views seem to be divergent and contrary. Since Avicenna seems to accept these two apparently contrary views, it is a concern whether he maintains consistency in his system.

In order to explore this, we shall take up a reconciliation methodology, focusing on the hypothesis that he combines aspects or elements from the two divergent philosophical systems so as to produce an overall position which can be regarded as consistent. Like Aristotle, Avicenna, while talking about the vegetative and animal souls, holds a functionalist view of the soul, that the soul acts in association with the body; thus properly using the Aristotelian *entelecheia* formula. But he also holds the immortality of the rational soul, which he sees as a substance capable of subsisting by itself and functioning independently of the body, which suggests he cannot properly apply here the *entelecheia* doctrine. The thesis investigates how Avicenna understands and applies Aristotle's *entelecheia* doctrine, and distinguishes his accounts of the non-rational souls (plant and animal) from those of the rational soul (human). Avicenna is seen to have understood the Aristotelian *entelecheia* doctrine in two different senses in order to hold two different views of the soul—as form and as substance. This thesis examines how he begins with the Aristotelian definition and framework of the soul and slips away from the fundamental themes of Aristotelianism, and accepts certain elements of neo-Platonism by tracing as many divergences and analogies as possible between Avicenna's concepts and those of Aristotle and Plotinus.

The thesis also explores whether Avicenna, by modifying the Aristotelian sense of the *entelecheia* doctrine, can derive substantial arguments for the immortality of the soul from the Aristotelian tradition. We endeavour to show that although there is a tendency to attribute the view of the immortality of the soul to Aristotle, it is inconsistent, given the orthodox Aristotelian platform of the *entelecheia* doctrine, to hold the two views, which are in fact divergent. Avicenna, although he modifies the *entelecheia* doctrine in order to accommodate the immortality view of the rational soul and attributes it to some extent to Aristotle's philosophy, does not, indeed, find convincing argumentation in the Peripatetic tradition; rather, his arguments, we shall show, are derived from neo-Platonism, mainly from Plotinus. This involves him in reconciling both views, selecting the elements that best suit his overall position, and evidently in doing so he sets himself astray from the mainstreams of both Aristotelianism and neo-Platonism.

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## PREFACE

Of Avicenna's major works *Kitab an-Najat* is translated into English by Rahman as *Avicenna's Psychology* (Oxford, 1952) and *Danish Nama-i Ala-i* by Morewedge as *The Metaphysica of Avicenna* (Routledge, 1973). In consulting Avicenna's original Arabic and Persian works, I have taken help from these translations and cited them as *Psychology* and *Metaphysica* respectively. The two works are also cited by translators' names as Rahman and Morewedge followed by the publication dates, while citing their commentaries or notes. In transliterating Arabic terms the Arabic definite article *al* has carefully been transliterated in accordance with the Sun Letters and the Moon Letters. Thus I have transliterated *ash-Shifa*, *an-Nafs*, instead of *al-Shifa*, *al-Nafs*, which is a serious error in Arabic grammar. However, due to the unavailability of an Arabic font, I have not been able to use Arabic terms in this thesis, but wherever necessary and important, I have transliterated them in English. Another shortcoming in terms of transliteration is that instead of using the circumflex or the macron to represent long vowels, I have used the vowels in duplicate, such as two A's (e.g. *Qur'aan*) in most of the important cases.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### Avicenna

<i>Ahwal</i>	<i>Ahwal an-Nafs</i> , 1952a
<i>Psychology</i>	<i>Avicenna's Psychology</i> , 1952b
<i>DNA (Ilahiyyat)</i>	<i>Danish Nama-i Ala-i Ilahiyyat</i> , 1952c
<i>DNA (Tabi'yyat)</i>	<i>Danish Nama-i Ala-i: Tabi'yyat</i> , 1952d
<i>ash-Shifa: Ilahiyyat</i>	<i>Kitab ash-Shifa: Ilahiyyat</i> , 1960a
<i>an-Nafs</i>	<i>ash-Shifa: an-Nafs</i> , 1975
<i>Av.De.An.</i>	<i>Avicenna's De Anima (Arabic Text)</i> , 1959
<i>Metaphysica</i>	<i>The Metaphysica of Avicenna (Ibn Sina)</i> , 1973
<i>Compendium</i>	<i>A Compendium on the Soul</i> , 1906
<i>an-Najat</i>	<i>Kitab an-Najat</i> , 1938
<i>Isharat</i> , 1960	<i>Kitab al-Isharat wa l-tanbihat</i> , 4 vols., 1960b
<i>Isharat</i> , 1892	<i>Kitab al-Isharat wa l-tanbihat</i> , 1892

### Aristotle

<i>DA</i>	<i>De Anima</i>
<i>NE</i>	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
<i>EE</i>	<i>Eudemian Ethics</i>
<i>Met.</i>	<i>Metaphysics</i>
<i>Cat.</i>	<i>Categories</i>
<i>De gen. ani.</i>	<i>De Generatione Animalium</i>
<i>De Mem.</i>	<i>De Memoria et Reminiscentia</i>
<i>DPA</i>	<i>De Partibus Animalium</i>

### Plotinus

Unless cited from other's translation, all references to Plotinus are made from the *Enneads*, mentioning the *Ennead* number and tractate number, followed by chapter number; for example, V.4.1 refers to the fifth *Ennead*, fourth Tractate, and first Chapter.

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# **INTRODUCTION**

## **PART I**

### ***THE GENERAL BACKGROUND***

#### **I.1 THE TRANSMISSION OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY AMONGST THE ARABS**

Although the history of Islamic philosophy is too long and too intricate to understand properly, it is widely claimed that the active participation of the Syrians, the Arabs, the Persians, the Turks, the Berbers, and others contributed to its history, one significant development in which was bound up with the advent of the Abbasid dynasty in the middle of the eighth century. But the interference of the state with the growth of Islam among the Arabs took different forms, as the Caliphs differed vehemently from one another, particularly in their political and in their fundamental theological views. As a result of the interference of the Caliphs there occurred serious jeopardy to freedom of thought. In these circumstances, the introduction of Greek ideas played a great role in the intellectual development of Islam, releasing it from the shackles of dogma. We should note that Greek civilisation owed much to the Egyptian and Assyrian civilisations, on which Jewish thought depends and Christianity and Islam evolved from Jewish thought. So the history of Islamic philosophy is closely linked with Egyptian, Assyrian, Greek, Jewish, and Christian thought. Before we concentrate on the concept of the soul, it is thus essential to examine



how foreign thought about the soul entered into, and developed within, Islamic philosophy.

The Syrian, Egyptian, and Persian civilisations are the main sources through which Greek philosophy came to the Arabs. During the time of Umar, Syria was defeated by the Muslims in the battle of Yermuk in A.D. 634 (Muslehuddin, 1974, 10). Similarly, the Romans were defeated in this battle and were utterly crushed in A.D. 641, the year in which Alexandria,<sup>1</sup> the last refuge for the study of Greek philosophy and theology and the most important centre of Hellenic and Egyptian culture in Egypt, fell to the Arab general 'Amr b. al-'As' (Fakhry, 1983, 1). As Greek culture had flourished in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq<sup>2</sup> since the time of Alexander the Great, it is plausible to argue that the Syrians and the Egyptians were imbued with Greek ideas and the Greek spirit during the long course of their history, and that this was one of the ways in which the Muslims came into contact with Greek thought. Harran in northern Syria and Jundishapur in Iraq (near Baghdad) were two other institutions of Greek learning in the seventh century. During the Abbasid period, the Sabaeans (*al-Sabi'ah*), the sect of Syrian star-worshippers at Harran in northern Syria, came to the Arabs after the battle of Kadessia in A.D. 636, with their Hellenistic, Gnostic, and Hermetic influences. After the closing down of the School of Athens by the injunction of the Emperor Justinian in 529 A.D., Greek

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<sup>1</sup>According to Stace, Alexandria was the centre for oriental mysticism. 'Men of all races,' says Stace, 'met here, and, in particular, it was here that East and West joined hands, and the fusion of thought which resulted was Neo-Platonism' (Stace, 1965, 368).

<sup>2</sup>In Syria and Iraq, Greek was studied as early as the fourth century. Antioch, Harran, Edessa, and Quinnesrin in northern Syria, and Nisibis and Ras'aina in upper Iraq were the main centres for Greek philosophy. Professor Majid Fakhry claims 'some of these centres were still flourishing when the Arab armies marched into Syria and Iraq' (Fakhry, 1983, 2).

teachers entered Persia where they were warmly welcomed and free to pursue philosophy. Greek philosophy found a congenial seat in Persian culture and developed under Islamic patronage. As Sharif puts it: 'Greek philosophy was being consumed by its own unhealthy and wasting tendencies and perhaps would have gradually perished by itself, but the Emperor's intolerance drove it to the East, where it regained its health and vigour and enhanced glory' (Sharif, 1953, 106).

Around the middle of the ninth century A.D., the influence of Greek philosophy in Islamic culture flourished with the translation of Greek works into Arabic, beginning in early Abbasid times (about A.D. 800) and continuing until about A.D. 1000 (Walzer, 1962, 6). The patronage of the Caliph's court for the translators, in particular, during the reigns of Harun al-Rashid (A.D. 786-833) and Al-Mu'tasim (A.D. 833-42), expedited the translation of Greek works. Great was the sway of Al-Ma'mun, who in 830 founded a school, namely the House of Wisdom (*Baital-Hikman*), an official centre for research and translation, the first head of which was the Nestorian Hunain b. Ishaq (809-873), the foremost figure in the work on Greek philosophy and science. Hunain is said to have made numerous translations of much of the medical works of Galen;<sup>3</sup> while under his supervision, his son Ishaq, his nephew Hubaish, and his disciple 'Isa b. Yahia translated 'almost the whole Aristotelian corpus, as well as a series of Platonic and Peripatetic works.'<sup>4</sup> Amongst some other great

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<sup>3</sup>Hunain and his disciple Isa b. Yahia are credited with the works *Treatise on Demonstration*, *Hypothetical Syllogisms*, *Ethics*, and paraphrases of Plato, *Sophist*, *Parmenides*, *Cryatylus*, *Euthydemus*, *Timaeus*, *Statesman*, *Republic*, and *Laws*.

<sup>4</sup>Ishaq is believed to have excelled in the translation of the *Categories*, the *Hermeneutica*, *De Generatione et Corruptione*, the *Physica*, the *Ethica* in Porphyry's Commentary, parts of the *Metaphysica*, Plato's *Sophist*, parts of *Timaeus*, and finally the spurious *De Plantis*.

translators,<sup>5</sup> Qusta b. Luqa (d. 900), born in Lebanon, appears to have excelled not only in philosophy but also in geometry and astronomy, and his philosophical writings include *The Sayings of the Philosophers*, *The Difference between Soul and Spirit*, *A Treatise on the Atom*, *An Introduction to Logic*, and so on.

With very few exceptions, the translators were Nestorian and Jacobite Christians. In the tenth century, the Nestorian Abu Bishr Matta, who was a friend of the philosopher Al-Farabi (A.D. 870-950) and Al-Farabi's pupil, the Jacobite Christian Yahya Ibn Adi (A.D. 893-974) were the best known scholars who contributed to the translation and exposition of Aristotle and Plato; in particular, Matta is credited with commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories*, *Hermeneutica*, *Analytica Priora*, and *Analytica Posteriora*, while Adi is credited with Aristotle's *Poetica*, *Sophistica*, *Topica*, *Metaphysica*, *De Generatione*, etc. and Plato's *Laws*. It is worth mentioning that in the history of translations from Greek into Syriac and Syriac into Arabic, what appeared in the Christian Syriac civilisation was a vigorous repetition of the translations of the Greek and Islamic culture—a result of which was a revival in the development of Jewish Philosophy in the eleventh and twelfth century, which was greatly indebted to Philo, the Jew, who lived at Alexandria between 30 B.C. and 50 A.D. and believed in the verbal inspiration of the *Old Testament*. Philo, who regarded Plato and Aristotle as followers of Moses, in the attempt to fuse Jewish theology and Greek philosophy thought that 'Greek philosophy was a dimmer

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<sup>5</sup>Ibn Na'imah al-Himsi (d. 835), Abu Bishr Matta (d. 940), Yahia b. Adi (d. 974), Qusta b. Luqa (d. 900), Abu 'Uthman al-Dimashqi (d. 900), Abu Ali b. Zura (d. 1008), and so on.

revelation of those truths which were more perfectly manifested in the sacred books of his own race' (Stace, 1965, 370).<sup>6</sup>

Having sketched the possible means of *how* foreign ideas, especially Greek ideas were transmitted to the Arabs, it is necessary to explain *what* kinds of philosophical ideas the Islamic philosophers absorbed from their predecessors, although it is difficult to appreciate how closely Islamic philosophy is linked up with Greek thought. It is equally difficult to say whether the philosophy that was accepted by the Arabs was exclusively Platonic, or Aristotelian, or a mixture of both, as there has always been disagreement about the nature of Islamic philosophy in its earliest phase of development. However, it seems reasonable to claim that the Muslims tried to reconcile their religious thoughts with the Greek philosophical religion that Greek philosophy provided, since Greek 'natural theology' touched the right chord in the temperament and individual inclinations of the Arabs. It is widely claimed that the metaphysical tradition that reached the Arabs was definitely a neo-Platonic form and that this neo-Platonic theology found its way to the Arabs not through the *Metaphysica* of Aristotle, but rather through the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Theologia Aristotelis* (ed. Dieterici, Leipzig, 1882), whose Greek author is claimed to be Aristotle by Al-Farabi. It is considered to be the same work as *Elements of Theology*, which is credited to Diodochus Proclus (d. 485), one of the great exponents of neo-Platonism and the last of pagan Greek thought—the work on which St. Thomas and St. Albert the Great commented

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<sup>6</sup>Stace adds, 'And just as Egyptian priests, out of national vanity, made out that Greek philosophy came from Egypt, just as orientals now pretend that it came from India, so Philo declared that the origin of all that was great in Greek philosophy was to be found in Judea. Plato and Aristotle, he was certain, were followers of Moses, used the *Old Testament*, and gained their wisdom therefrom.' (*Ibid.*, 370).

under the rubric of *Liber de Causis* (Arabic, *Fi'l Khair al-Mahd*), translated into Arabic for Al-Kindi (d. 873), who is the first systematic philosophical Arab writer. The *Theologia Aristotelis* (*Theology of Aristotle*) reflects its neo-Platonism in the paraphrase of books IV, V, and VI of the *Enneads* of Plotinus (205-270 A.D.), the founder of neo-Platonism, the last phase of Hellenic thought, who is known as *Plotinus* in Arabic, and who is sometimes referred to as *ash-Shaykh al-Yunani* or 'the Greek Sage.' Avicenna wrote a commentary on the so-called *Theology of Aristotle* (Badawi, ed., 1947). The fundamental subject-matter of both the *Theologia* and *De Causis* is the doctrine of emanation—a doctrine of Plotinus that describes the derivation of all things from the One, the First Cause—the material world from the Soul (ψυχή), the Soul from the Divine Intellect (νοῦς), and the Intellect from the World-Soul, the One. So, the soul is believed to be the proximate cause of the world. We can therefore claim that the problem of the Soul, the emanationist world-view, the Plotinian tetrad of the One, Reason, Intellect, and so on are the basic philosophical issues that interested the Muslim philosophers.

## **I.2 AVICENNA IN THE GRAECO-ARABIC TRADITION**

As we noted earlier, although the development of philosophy and theology in Islam began with the translation movement, it was the Abbasid dynasty in the middle of the eighth century, which took a dynamic step in the promotion of Islamic theology by welcoming Greek elements, without distorting the complete picture of Islamic dogma. But the Greek influence in Islamic thought, as was said earlier, is believed to have reached its zenith in the ninth century, with the

diffusion of Greek philosophical texts. The champion of the introduction of the Greek and Indian corpus in this century was Al-Kindi (Abu Yusuf Yaqub b. Ishaq al-Kindi) the first creative or systematic philosophical writer in Islam, who awakened Islamic theology from its dogmatism, followed by Ibn al-Rawandi and al-Razi, who instituted Islamic naturalism. Faithful mainly to the Peripatetic philosophy, al-Kindi also valued neo-Platonic philosophy in which he found the marriage of philosophy to Islamic dogma.

The development of neo-Platonic philosophy, which was implicit in the philosophy of al-Kindi and al-Razi, was expedited in the tenth and eleventh centuries in a fully-fledged form by the first two great Muslim philosophers—Al-Farabi (879-950), known as Alfarabius to the West, and Ibn Sina (980-1037), commonly known as Avicenna (whose full name is Abu Ali al-Husain ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn Sina)—the two philosophers who might be credited with having established Islamic neo-Platonism. Although considered as the pioneer of Islamic neo-Platonism, Ibn Sina owes a great deal to Al-Farabi, whose commentary helped him to understand Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* upon which he built ‘an Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmological substructure a neo-Platonic edifice, in which the emanationist scale of being has been thoroughly incorporated’ (Fakhry, 1983, 153). Known as the ‘Prince of Eastern Philosophers’, Avicenna made an extensive study of Greek philosophy and presented ancient Greek thought in a modern and intelligible form (Gai, 1956, 15). Still celebrated as a most eminent international figure in Islamic countries, the Persian philosopher, and the most influential of the philosopher-scientists of Islam, Ibn Sina also codified the medical teachings of Hippocrates and Galen

and ‘both in the spheres of philosophy and medicine exercised a predominating influence over Oriental and European thought and played an important role in the recovery of Aristotelian philosophy and the Greek medical science to the West’ (Gai, 1956, 15-19). According to Al-Juzjani, a disciple of Avicenna, to whom he dictated a part of his autobiography, Ibn Sina composed a large number of works, two of the most famous of which are *Kitab ash-Shifa* (*The Book of Healing*), probably the largest work of its kind ever written by one man, and *al-Qanun fi at-tibb* (*The Canon of Medicine*), the most remarkable single book in the history of medicine in both East and West.<sup>7</sup> Upon request from Juzjani to complete the *Kitab ash-Shifa*, Avicenna, as Juzjani mentions in the introduction to *ash-Shifa*, finished *Metaphysics* and *Physics* in twenty days ‘without having available any book to consult, but by relying upon his natural talents’ (Gutas, 1988, 41). Although starting off with a succinct account of Aristotelian, neo-Platonic, and Stoic notions of logic, *ash-Shifa* deals at great length with the natural sciences, including psychology, the *quadrivium* (geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, and music) and metaphysics, in which works Ibn Sina’s thought owes a great deal to Aristotle and other Greek influences, neo-Platonism in particular.

Avicenna found himself basically belonging to the Peripatetic tradition, which he regarded with great importance. The reason why he attached so much interest and importance to this tradition was his conviction of the validity of this system’s derivation of truths by means of syllogisms. Philosophy reached pinnacle in Aristotle, according to Avicenna, since in Aristotle’s philosophy he

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<sup>7</sup>For the life and works of Ibn Sina see Anawati, 1950; Juzjani, 1952; Wickens (ed.), 1952; Naficy, 1954; Mahdavi, 1954; Afnan, 1958; Gohlman, 1974; and so on.

found perfection of all the previous philosophical tendencies. Thus Aristotle was treated in his works as ‘the Philosopher’ (*al-faylasuuf*), later ‘The First Teacher’ (*al-mu’allim al-awwal*) [*Isharat*, 1960b, I, 329] and the teacher’s works as ‘the first teaching’ (*at-ta’lim*). In *Metaphysica*, Avicenna, while talking about the great pleasure (*khwushi*) to be found in union (*paiwand*) with the Necessary Existent, claimed that the concepts of happiness and pain are wonderfully expressed by Aristotle, whom he regarded as ‘the leader of the wise and the guide and teacher of philosophers’ (*Metaphysica*, 76). The respect Avicenna showed for the First Teacher evidently shows how much attention he paid to Aristotle. By the same token, he also accorded much importance to the major commentators in the Aristotelian tradition. The concept of the soul is one of the major philosophical problems which Avicenna, as his early writings show, inherited from this tradition. He traced his psychological accounts not only to Aristotle, but also to the commentators of Aristotle. The framework of the soul is Aristotelian. He follows the definition of the soul and the life-principle in the Aristotelian manner. His defence of the substantiality and immortality of the soul is inherited from the argumentation of both Aristotle’s Greek commentators, like Philoponus and Themistius, and the neo-Platonic tradition. This reflects his shift of attitude from the Aristotelian tradition to the neo-Platonic one, and later to his own method of systematisation, which is a system developed from the Graeco-Arabic philosophical tradition.

Avicenna’s works on psychology include the *De Anima* of his *ash-Shifa*, *Kitab an-Najat*, which is the abridgement of the psychology part of the *ash-Shifa*, *Kitab al-Isharat wa t-tanbihat*, and many other treatises on the subject.



His psychological theme is directed from Aristotle's fundamental thesis of *De Anima* towards neo-Platonic currents of thought, especially those in the *Enneads* of Plotinus. He found Plato's esoteric teachings of 'creation', 'soul', and so forth closer to revealed doctrines than the views of Aristotle; in particular, he regarded Plotinus's views of the soul as useful in harmonising Aristotle's views with revealed doctrines.

However, Ibn Sina is also noted for his allegorical and mystical works, known as 'esoteric' in that in these works he expressed his own personal views cast in an imaginative and symbolic form. Avicenna also excelled in his poetical works and is reported to have composed as many as 22 poems, some of which are long and some are very short. In his last major philosophical opus *Kitab al-Isharat wa t-tanbihat* (*Book of Directives and Remarks*), which is known as the most personal testament of his thought, Ibn Sina illustrated how mystics can make a spiritual journey to God from the beginning of faith. The mysticism of Ibn Sina is known in the history of Islam as philosophical or rational mysticism, in which he is a key figure; the other two principal figures are Al-Farabi and Ibn Bajjah (Fakhry, 1971, 193-207). This form of mysticism does not exhibit the essential similarities to the neo-Platonic mysticism of Plotinus and Proclus in which the Supreme Being is the One and it is the One with which Plotinus, out of his discursive habits of thought, seeks union. Although it is widely claimed that Ibn Sina has explained some basic aspects of Islam on the basis of extensive exegesis of the *Qur'aan* and the *Hadith*, he along with Al-Farabi is bitterly attacked by some Islamic philosophers for the inclusion of neo-Platonism in his system, especially by Al-Ghazali, who made a

serious effort to refute neo-Platonic elements in Islam. However, Islamic philosophy at that time must have incorporated many factors that are still unknown to us and it is clear that the understanding of Islamic philosophy, especially Islamic psychology, leads us to the study of Greek philosophy and theology—Christian theology and the contemporary civilisation of Byzantium.

Having briefly considered some of the interactions between Syrian, Egyptian, Greek, Christian, and Islamic cultures in terms of the transmission of philosophical ideas, we shall now try to clarify how the terminology for what in English we call the ‘soul’ varies from one society to another, without changing fundamentally the sense in which it has been used.

### **I.3 THE VARIATIONS IN TERMINOLOGY OF THE CONCEPT OF ‘SOUL’**

In the primitive Greek myths, there existed a belief in a ‘phantasm’ or ‘ghost-soul’, an incorporeal substance that could separate from the corporeal body at death. Great variations are to be found in the primitive notions of the soul—shadow, breath, permeating power, flowing blood, etc. It may be pointed out that the concept of phantasm emerged from some personal experiences of primitive people—dreams, visions, memory images, for instance. However, when we compare the concept of the soul with that of the ‘life principle’ we see that the term has been defined and understood in different societies from the perspectives of thinkers, who were either close to the traditional doctrines of their religious beliefs, or divorced from them.

The *Upanishads*, roughly dated to 900 B.C. at the earliest, talked about the Absolute, the Unmoved Mover of everything, in relation to the essence of man, *atman*, the Sanskrit term, literally meaning ‘*myself*’ as a reflexive pronoun. In the *Vedas*, the term *atman* is used to mean ‘*indriya*’, ‘*pranah*’, or ‘*chit*’. In the *Upanishads*, especially in the interpretations (*bhasya*) of Sankara, we find a non-dualist attempt at the reconciliation of individual soul (*atman*) and universal soul (*Brahman*). However, the term *atman* is also used in Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu texts (also almost similarly in the Pali text as *attam*) to mean ‘spiritual vitality’ of the body, without making any sharp difference between ‘life’ and ‘psychic functions’. Similarly, to the Indian philosophical view of the *atman*, according to which the original soul became distinguished by name and shape when it entered into the body, some societies hold that ‘breath soul’ develops into a unitary soul (Parrinder, 1973, 39). This process can be traced in the development of the Athapascan *nezac*, Estonian *hing*, Finnish *henki*, Russian *dusa*, and Wogulian *lili* (Bremmer, 1983, 23). Likewise, the Latin *anima* is of particular interest.

The Greek word for the English term ‘soul’ is *psyche* (ψυχή), with a range of meanings from the early Homeric to Plotinian concept of the soul. The concept of *psyche* in Greek philosophy, which we designate as ‘the soul’, is the concept of a ‘vital principle’. The ‘ghost-soul’ in the pre-Homeric period influenced the Homeric concept of the *psyche* to mean that substance of the body which during swoons leaves the body for *Hades*.<sup>8</sup> The Stoics introduced the word *pneuma* (πνεῦμα) to denote what we know as spirit. Later, the

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<sup>8</sup>*Hades* is the abode of the dead in ancient Greek mythology.

Platonic-Aristotelian tradition exerted an enormous influence in the development of the concept; in particular, in neo-Platonism, the terms *nous* (νοῦς), *menos* (μένος), and *thumos* (θυμός) attracted much attention among Western thinkers, while the Platonic principle of the incorporeal character of the Spirit (*pneuma*) has had a great influence on the Islamic doctrines of the soul (*an-nafs*) and the spirit (*ar-ruh*). In particular, the renowned Muslim philosophers responded to Greek psychology, but tried to retain the traditional views of the nature of the soul. The neo-Platonic psychology also suited to some extent to the Sufi interpretation of the soul.

The Hebrew word *nefesh* (or *nephesh*) that stands for 'breath' is associated with the term *soul* in English and ψυχή in Greek.<sup>9</sup> The Hebrew *nefesh* adds up to something more than the life-soul, *thumos*. Closely connected to this term is *ruah*, which means 'wind', 'breath', 'spirit', similar to the Greek *pneuma* (πνεῦμα). In the Pauline Epistles, there is a difference of meaning between ψυχή and πνεῦμα—the former to mean the principle of life of the natural man and the latter the principle of supernatural life, but in the Gospels they are used synonymously throughout the range of their meaning (Hastings, 1909, 668). As to the faculty of the soul, the Gospels (Jn 10:28) use ψυχή rather than πνεῦμα to stand for the rational faculty, analogous to the Greek *logos* (λόγος) or *nous* (νοῦς). So, *psyche* seems to be closer to meaning individual personality than *pneuma* (Ac 27:37), and it seems that according to the Christian concepts, to speak of salvation or loss of the *psyche* is more

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<sup>9</sup>Akester claims that the word *nephesh*, which we usually translate as soul, occurs in the *Old Testament* 752 times, and is translated in 44 different ways, whilst in the *New Testament* the equivalent word is translated only in 7 different ways (Akester, 1882, 4).

meaningful than of the *pneuma* (Mt 6:25, 10:39, 16:25 & 26, Mk 9:24, Jn 12:25). Sometimes *pneuma* is also used in connection with salvation, as it is not, in its strict sense, an impersonal term. Both *psyche* and *pneuma* are used to mean disembodied soul; for example, God is said to possess a *psyche* (Mt 12:18) and to be *pneuma* (Jn 4:24)—a belief also held by the Islamic doctrines.

Closely parallel to the Christian concept of the *nephesh* is the Arabic (*al*) *nafs*, which is used in Islamic philosophy, although it has different connotations ranging from the traditional to the mystical (Sufism). Etymologically, the term *nafs* derives from the term *nafas*, meaning ‘breathing’. Some of the meanings of the Arabo-Persian term *an-nafs*, as Javad Nurbakhsh observes, include living soul, psyche, spirit, mind, animate being, person, individual desire, personal identity, or self, etc. (Nurbakhsh, 1992, viii). Although it has many uses and meanings, we can restrict the uses to two. In the *Qur’aan*, the term *nafs* (and its plural *anfus* and *nufus*) refers to the individual self, or ego when the term is used as a reflexive pronoun; contrarily, it also refers to the human soul.

Although the terms *nafs* and *ruh* are used almost equivalently to mean almost anything connected with ‘life’ (*hayat*), Islamic scholars have used them in different senses. With the passage of time, the new rationalistic interpretations of the scriptural verses replaced the esoteric interpretations, but no attempt to define or describe the terms appears to be adequate for they have neither genus nor *proprium*. In addition to its original meaning, to the *ruh* have been added some meanings by the interpreters of the Islamic doctrines. For example, in the poetry of the Ummayyad period the term *ruh* was used for the first time for the human soul. It has so many implications that Duncan Black

Macdonald asserted that ‘the whole history of philosophy could be built up round its uses and implications’ (Macdonald, 1932, 153-168).

According to some commentators, in the *Qur'aan nafs* and *ruh* have been distinguished from each other. In his analysis of the Quranic verses, Ibn Abbas designates a clear distinction between *nafs* and *ruh*. As Smith cites:

...the *nafs* is that which has intelligence [*aq'l*] and the ability to distinguish [*tamyiz*] and the *ruh* is that which has breath and movement. And when the servant sleeps God seizes his *nafs* and does not seize his *ruh*.<sup>10</sup>

This interpretation was accepted by most of the commentators, especially Al-Zamakhshari (1075-1144), whose attempt to make a distinction between the two terms in the discussion of sleep and death interested the common believers. According to him, ‘the soul taken at death is that which has life (*al-hayat*) and the soul taken during sleep is that which has the power of distinguishing (*al-tamyiz*)—the difference between them is breathing (*nafas*), which continues with the sleeper and ceases at death’ (Smith, 1979, 151-162). It may be relevant to point out that by *nafs*, as we understand it in Islam, is meant not only ‘life’ or ‘vital force’ of the body, but also ‘animal psychology’, the human soul endowed with psychological faculties. Similarly, the term *ruh*, which refers to physical breath or wind, is related to the spirit that proceeds from God, and thus by *ruh* is meant God’s Spirit or the command (*amr*) of God (*The Qur'aan*: 16:2; 17:85; 40:15; 42:52) and as such it refers also to the human spirit. Thus, although the English word ‘soul’ is used to mean almost the same as the Arabic *nafs* possessing psychological connotations, the latter unlike the former, does not clearly express whether or not it denotes the vitality of the body. Although the

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<sup>10</sup>Cited by Smith, 1979, 151-162; also cited by Mohammed, Ovey N. S. J., 1993, 37-55.

*Qur'aan* does not explicitly state any equivalence of life and soul, it does talk about vegetable and animal life. Animals have *ruh* but no soul; man has both but his *ruh* is superior to that of an animal. The body is alive by *ruh* but man is man by the soul. Here, man is identified with soul, for without it he is not man (Abu'l-Hayyan, 1929, 181). The concept of the soul is broader than that of the *ruh*. The term 'soul' integrates *ruh* denoting the life-principle and *aql* as the intellect.

## **I.4 THE FRAMEWORKS OF THE FACULTIES OF THE SOUL**

### **I.4.1 The Attribution of Soul to Plants, Animals, and Humans: The Greek and Avicennan Agreements**

Like the ancient Greek thinkers, Plato ascribes a soul to plants, and thinks that even plants have sensation and desire (*Timaeus*, 77a-b). In the *Phaedo* (105c-d) Plato asserts that whenever the soul takes possession of a body, it brings life with it. So, all living things are occupied by souls, and this extends to plants and animals too.<sup>11</sup> Aristotle does not find any difficulty in accepting the view that plants have souls, but he denies sensation and desire to plants (*DA* 413<sup>b</sup>1-5). If the *psyche* causes life, as for Aristotle it does, and life is defined as 'self-nourishment, growth, and decay,' then all living things possess life and as such a soul—a nutritive soul. So, life is an essential property of the soul. In other words, if any of the three functions is discerned in a living thing, we are to claim

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<sup>11</sup>See for details Bostock, 1986, 189, where he points out that Plato ascribes a soul to aphids, jellyfish, and cabbage too.

that it has life. All plants, animals, and humans share the common faculty of nutrition, and thus they all have life, although there are other faculties that mark off one from another; for example, sensation primarily distinguishes animals from plants.<sup>12</sup> Aristotle does not encounter any trouble in applying the general definition of the soul to plants, animals, and humans (*DA* 412<sup>b</sup>4-6), but the general definition does not state the peculiar characteristics of the different types of souls, and he thus feels it necessary to give an account of the specific kinds of soul—the soul of plant, animal, and man (*DA* 414<sup>b</sup>32-33).

In the Platonic and Aristotelian fashions, Plotinus assumes that the soul possesses life of itself (IV.7.2), and that the soul is the cause of growth itself (IV.7.5). He divides living or organic bodies into plant, animal, and human (VI.3.9), and assigns respectively to these bodies the vegetative, the sensory, and the intellectual forms of life (VI.3.7). Life is a common property of all souls, and furthermore a property of Intellect. Likewise substance or essence (soul's being) is a common property of the soul (VI.2.7). Plotinus also follows Aristotle in elaborating the properties of the soul in relation to its specific psychic or living functions. And as to the discussion of various powers of the soul, he regards the vegetative element (φύτικον) [IV.4.20] as the very lowest phase of the irrational soul. This vegetative element 'is present in all living things from plants to humans, and is responsible for growth, nutrition, and propagation' (Rich, 1963, 1-15). Plotinus agrees with Plato but differs from Aristotle in regard to desire and sensation which are attributed to the vegetative phase of the soul (IV.4.21-22).

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<sup>12</sup>See for details *De Anima* (412<sup>b</sup>4-7, 412<sup>a</sup>2-27, 413<sup>a</sup>22-414<sup>b</sup>19, 415<sup>a</sup>24-26).



Having laid out the constitutions of the body in his writings on medicine, Avicenna treats the life-principle (*ruh*) ‘as an animal power, a source of faculties on which movements and bodily actions depend’ (Gruner, 1970, 121). This account of the life-principle should not be confused with his philosophical conception of the soul (*nafs*) in *an-Najat*, where the soul is designated as the source of all functions including understanding and willing. First of all, Avicenna strenuously holds that, given the conception of the soul as life, it is important to note that plants do not have life in the same sense as animals have. As ‘they do not live in the same way,’ as Goodman puts it, ‘they are not alive in the same sense’ (Goodman, 1992, 152-53). This is why the definition of the soul as the first *entelecheia* is different in each case of plants, animals, and human beings. That ‘life’ does not refer to a single form is of Aristotelian origin. For Aristotle ‘life’ is one thing for animal and another for plants (*DA* 413<sup>a</sup>25-413<sup>b</sup>10, 414<sup>b</sup>32-33, 415<sup>a</sup>12-13, *Top.* 148<sup>a</sup>29-31). This argument is based on the idea that the soul is the form (εἶδος). In the Aristotelian manner, Ibn Sina here understands by soul that which makes possible the activities of life—growth and reproduction (in the case of plants), sensation (in the case of animals), and rationality (in the case of humans).

Avicenna’s division of the soul is not peculiar to his psychology; rather, following the Greek psychological doctrine, he states in the *ash-Shifa* that the soul is a single genus but is divided into three species or parts—the vegetative soul (*an-nafs an-nabatiyah*), the animal soul (*an-nafs al-hayawaniyah*), and the human soul (*an-nafs an-natiqah*), each of which has different faculties (*quwwa*).

## I.4.2 Avicenna on the Divisions of the Faculties of the Soul

In the Aristotelian manner, Avicenna holds that the vegetative soul (*nafs-e nabatiya*) has three powers<sup>13</sup>—nutrition (*ghadhiyah*), growth (*namiyah*), and reproduction (*muwallidah*) [Avicenna, 1952e, 14].

In addition to the powers (*quwwa*) of the vegetable soul, the animal soul primarily possesses the faculties (*quwwa*) of motion (*muharikah*) and perception (*mudrikah*) [Avicenna, 1951, 344-45]. The former is further divided into two faculties (*quwwa*)—appetitive (*shawqiyah*) or impulsive (*ba'itha*) and motion of body (*naqilah*) or active (*fa'il*). The appetitive or impulsive faculty consists of two sub-faculties—the faculty of desire (*quwwa shahwah* or *shawq*) and that of anger (*quwaa ghadab*). Furthermore, for Avicenna the perceptive faculty (*quwwa mudrikah*) is of two kinds: five external (*hiss*) senses<sup>14</sup> and five internal senses (*quwwa mudrika*).<sup>15</sup> Sight (*basira*), hearing (*sami'a*), smell (*shamma*), taste (*dha'iqah*), and touch (*lamisa*) are the five external senses, whereas the internal senses comprise Common Sense or *sensus communis* (*al-hiss al-mushtarak*), representation (*musawwirah*), imagination (*takhayyul*), apprehension or estimation (*wahm*), and memory (*hafizah*). All these faculties mark the animal kingdom off from the vegetable, but it must be emphasised that the faculties do not develop in equal degrees in all animals. However, by virtue

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<sup>13</sup>*Wa an-nafs Nabatiya Quwwa Thulth: (Av.De.An., 40).*

<sup>14</sup>It is often argued that Avicenna enumerates eight, not five, external senses, for touch comprises four pairs of contraries—hot and cold, dry and moist, hard and soft, smooth and rough. But it is noticeable that they are merely contraries of the sense of touch and therefore cannot be counted as separate senses, equivalent to five senses. More generally, the four pairs of contraries of touch are simple sensibles, and in this sense all other senses have only one pair of simple sensibles.

<sup>15</sup>Fazlur Rahman claims that the five internal senses of Avicenna are nothing but a differentiation of Aristotle's *phantasia* (*Psychology*, 3).

of their faculties animals are higher than minerals and vegetables in the scale of being. According to Avicenna, human beings are higher than vegetables and animals, and so it is legitimate for him to argue that the human soul possesses higher faculties. More generally, for Avicenna in addition to all the faculties of the vegetative and the animal souls, the rational soul (*al-'aql an-nafs*) possesses some higher faculties, peculiar to the human soul. It is the rational soul that marks off human beings from animals, for the animal soul can perceive only sensibles while the rational soul receives intelligence. In the Aristotelian manner, Avicenna divides the rational soul primarily into a practical intellect (*al-'aql al-'amali*) and a theoretical intellect (*al-'aql an-nazari*). Both the faculties of the rational soul are called intellect (*al-'aql*). The latter has a scale of functions and accordingly it has four stages of intellect or reason—the potential or material (*al-hayulaani*), the actualised (*bi-l-fi'l*), the habitual (*al-malaki*), and the acquired (*al-mustafaad*) intellects. The highest stage of reason is the acquired intellect and attained only by prophets, and it is thus called the holy intellect or reason (*al-'aql al-qudsi*).

### I.4.3 Avicenna's Absorption of the Greek Frameworks of the Soul

Since all living things live by virtue of the principle of self-nourishment, it is deemed to be a common function of all living things—from plants to humans.<sup>16</sup> But for Aristotle the life of plants is different from that of animals or humans, and to the plant life he attributes only the nutritive faculty (*DA* 413<sup>a</sup>31-33, 414<sup>a</sup>32). Animals, in addition to this faculty, have sensations that mark them off from the plant kingdom. At *DA* 416<sup>a</sup>19 Aristotle says that it is the same faculty that is nutritive and reproductive. Avicenna, following Aristotle, attributes three faculties to the plant soul, but unlike Aristotle he considers reproduction as a separate faculty possessing a separate function. Plotinus considers plant life as the lowest form of life (I.4.I.18), and thus the vegetative faculty (τὸ φύτικον) is the lowest faculty of the soul. Plotinus indeed nowhere gives a clear idea of the faculties of the soul. Instead, he does not deny the Aristotelian concept of the nutritive faculty as the principle of life function. At IV.9.3.21 & 23, we come across the terms vegetative (τὸ φύτικον) and nutritive (θρεπτικόν) being used interchangeably to mean the lowest soul, whereas elsewhere in the *Enneads* we find the term 'nutritive' as a separate faculty of the lowest level of the soul. Plotinus points out two types of soul—a higher or rational soul and a lower or irrational soul. But in terms of different faculties and functions of the soul, he seems to suggest three phases of the soul—the irrational, the discursive, and the

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<sup>16</sup>The idea that nutrition is the common faculty for all living things is also clearly stated by Galen in his *On the Natural Faculties*. See for details Book 1, Chs. 7 and 10 1. However, for Galen feeling and voluntary motion are peculiar to animals, whilst growth and nutrition are common to plants as well, and thus he regards the former as effects of the soul and the latter as effects of the nature (Galen, *On the Natural Faculties*, Book 1, Ch. 1).

intellectual phases. In the irrational or the lowest phase of the World-Soul, the vegetative element (φυτικόν) is concerned with the faculties of growth (αύξητικόν), nutrition (θρεπτικόν), and reproduction (γέννητικόν) [IV.4.20]. In addition to these faculties, Plotinus further talks about sensation, desire, pleasure, pain and so on which he assigns to this vegetative (φυτικόν) soul (VI.4.15) because, according to him, the principle that can cause nourishment and growth must have sensation. Here, he seems to agree with Plato rather than Aristotle. But Plotinus follows Aristotle's method in understanding the soul's various functions in relation to body. For example, the division of *phantasia* into the sensible imagination and the intellectual imagination indicates a clear Aristotelian influence, with respect to animals and humans respectively. Mainly because of that the Platonic concept of the trichotomy of the soul, which Aristotle endorses, is obscure in the *Enneads*.

Avicenna's division of the animal soul into locomotive and perceptive faculties resembles Aristotle's division of the animal faculties into cognitive and locomotive (*DA* 432<sup>a</sup>15). Locomotion presupposes sensation (*aisthesis*) and, if sensation, then also appetite (ὄρεξις). Appetite is of three kinds (*DA* 414<sup>b</sup>2): desire (ἐπιθυμία), anger or passion (θυμός), and will (βούλησις). Of these three kinds of appetite only the first two belong to animals, while humans possess all of them. Thus the wish or will denoted here is the rational will. Like Aristotle, Avicenna incorporates the faculties of desire and anger or passion in appetite. Apart from these faculties, Aristotle mentions the rational faculty, which along with *nous*, is confined to mankind and any superior being to mankind, if any exists (*DA* 414<sup>b</sup>18-19). This faculty is referred to by Aristotle

under two subdivisions—calculation (λογισμός) and discursive reasoning (διανόια).

With regard to the external senses, Ibn Sina accepts Aristotle's five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch.<sup>17</sup> Avicenna's account of sight reflects Aristotle's view which is made in refutation of Plato's belief that sight is the consequence of fire or light streaming from the eye (*Timaeus*, 45b-d). Aristotle does not find any difficulty in accepting the importance of fire or light in the case of sight, as he says that the object of sight is the visible, and what is visible is colour (*DA* 418<sup>a</sup>26) and colour is not visible without light (*DA* <sup>b</sup>2-4). But after a long discussion on this point he finally refutes the Platonic view that light issues from the eye and holds that the air acts on the organ of sight (*DA* 435<sup>a</sup>5-9). Avicenna tries to prove the absurdity of the view that light issues from the eye in a long discourse in the *Najat* and concludes that sight cannot be due to something issuing from us toward objects; rather it is due to something coming towards us from objects (*an-Najat*, 259-261; *Psychology*, 27-29). Avicenna fathers this view on Aristotle. As for the sense of hearing, both Aristotle and Avicenna share the view that the collision of solid objects with one another in the presence of the air is the cause of sound; that is to say the air is struck quickly and forcibly by solid bodies when sound is produced.<sup>18</sup> The importance of the air is observed in the case of smell. Aristotle also adds water to air as the medium for the transmission of smell (*DA* 421<sup>b</sup>9). Avicenna's view is the same, as he says that when the odour, which is mixed with the moisture in

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<sup>17</sup>For Aristotle see *De Anima*, 424<sup>b</sup>22-24; for Avicenna see *an-Nafs*, 33-34; *an-Najat*, 198-200

<sup>18</sup>For Aristotle see *De Anima*, 419<sup>b</sup>21-24, also see 419<sup>b</sup>35 for the view that the air is the cause of hearing; for Avicenna see *an-Najat*, 259

the air, is inhaled we perceive a smell. The senses of taste and touch in Avicenna are in the same way Aristotelian. Aristotle claims that touch is the common faculty in all animals (*DA* 413<sup>b</sup>3-10). The sense of touch is essential for all living things because without touch nourishment is not possible and thus where there is sensation there is touch; so while some animals have all other senses some have only one sense (*DA* 414<sup>a</sup>2). Again, there is a question as to whether touch is a single sense or several senses (*DA* 422<sup>b</sup>19). His argument in this case does not provide any definite answer, although he discusses this issue at length; but what appears clearly is that he mentions five senses, and no other sense (*DA* 424<sup>b</sup>22).<sup>19</sup> Avicenna agrees completely with Aristotle saying that every animal must have the sense of touch. In addition, he adds, the sense of taste (*Psychology*, 31). Aristotle, on the other hand, holds that taste is a modification of touch and touch is at its most accurate in man (*DA* 421<sup>a</sup>18-20). As we have said earlier, touch has four pairs of simple sensibles while each of the other four senses has only one pair and this view reflects Aristotle's (*Compendium*, 56). So there are eight pairs of simple sensibles from which all other sensibles are made up.<sup>20</sup> However, Ibn Sina treats the entire skin and flesh as the organ of the sense of touch, while in Aristotle flesh is the medium, not the organ, of touch (*DA* 422<sup>b</sup>34-423<sup>a</sup>8).

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<sup>19</sup>Aristotle asserts that every sense appears to apprehend one contrary, for example, sight senses white and black; hearing, high and low pitch; taste, bitter and sweet. But in touch, however, we find several opposites: hot and cold, dry and moist, hard and soft, and so on (*DA* 422<sup>b</sup>24-28).

<sup>20</sup>These sensibles are: 1. Touch—heat and cold, moisture and dryness, roughness and smoothness, hardness and softness; 2. Smell—pleasant odour and unpleasant odour; 3. Taste—sweet and bitter; 4. Hearing—heavy sound and sharp sound; 5. Sight—white and black. (For details see *Compendium*, 56-60)

We have already mentioned that for Aristotle, a living thing, which has the faculty of sensation, has also appetite; similarly, it should also have *phantasia* (φαντασία), or imagination (*DA* 413<sup>b</sup>21-22) to use the English term.<sup>21</sup> Aristotle suggests that it falls between sensation and reason. *Phantasia* primarily refers to visualisation or retention of past sensations. So it is not exactly what Aristotle means by sensations, but it depends to some extent on sensations. However, *phantasia* or imagination has two levels—sensitive imagination (αἰσθητικῆ) and rational imagination (βουλευτικῆ), the former which is imagination of sense belongs to animals and the latter or the deliberative imagination to humans (see also *DA* 434<sup>a</sup>5). As we saw, Avicenna's position is the same on this point as Aristotle's. Apart from a similar division of Aristotle's *phantasia*, Ibn Sina applies the term to *sensus communis* (*al-takhayyul*), just as Aristotle does.<sup>22</sup> Avicenna uses the terms *matkhayal* to represent the Aristotelian term *aisthetike* (αἰσθητικῆ) for sensitive imagination and *mafkeer* to represent Aristotle's *bouleutike* (βουλευτικῆ) for rational imagination. But what makes Avicenna distinct from Aristotle is that whereas for Aristotle *phantasia* involves a variety of functions, for example, imagination and memory, which are also functions of *sensus communis*, Avicenna regards each function as a separate faculty, for example, imagination (*al-takhayyul*) and apprehension (*wahm*).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup>The term 'phantasia' is introduced by Plato in his *Sophist* (264 A-B) to describe a mental process or state.

<sup>22</sup>For Avicenna see *Psychology*, 31; for Aristotle see, *De Mem.* I.450<sup>a</sup>10.

<sup>23</sup>Plato discusses the relation between *phantasia* and *doxa* in his *Sophist* (206e).





An important point in terms of the concept of the soul as it developed from ancient society to the medieval Islamic period is that by soul is meant not only the animating force or vitality in human beings, but also it applies to all living beings. Islam recognises, apart from the human *psyche*, the living principle of plants and animals. However, we have observed that the concept of the soul, although it denotes ‘vapour’, ‘vital force’, ‘wind’, ‘breath’ and so on, has many eschatological and psychological connotations. Talk about the soul also demands its close association with the body, the abode of the soul, in order to be meaningful. The soul, although described as incorporeal or immortal, can be known to us through its activities in the physical body—a view commonly held by philosophical and theosophical traditions including neo-Platonism and Sufism.

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## PART II

### *THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THE THESIS*

#### II.1 THE PROBLEM OF THIS THESIS

For the neo-Platonists and Islamic philosophers, Aristotelianism made its primary contributions with its accounts of such typical notions as substance, accidents, and properties in logic; matter and form, the four causes, time, place and the prime mover in physics; the soul (*psyche*) and its faculties in psychology; being, essence and existence, potentiality and actuality in metaphysics, etc. The Platonic and neo-Platonic currents of thought also played an important role for Islamic philosophers, such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina in the cases of emanation of matter and soul, specially the soul's substantiality and immortality, fitting their interest that grew from the inheritance of Islam. Avicenna defines the soul in the Aristotelian manner as 'the first actuality (perfection or complete actualisation: *kamaal*) of an organic body,' but he also accepts the immortality of the soul, which seems to be contrary to Aristotle's *entelecheia* doctrine. There is a notorious passage in the *De Anima* (DA 430<sup>a</sup>23) in which Aristotle appears to believe that a part of the human *psyche* (the active or productive intellect) is separable and immortal. At DA 408<sup>b</sup>18 there is a long and notorious discussion of the intellect which Aristotle considers being immortal, imperishable, and divine. *Prima facie*, these remarks are inconsistent with Aristotle's view of the *psyche* as the form of the body. Avicenna's problem here is two-fold: on the one hand, he attempts to define the soul in the Aristotelian functionalist manner, on the other, he accepts the immortality view,

which does not seem to fit the Aristotelian *entelecheia* formula. The pivotal question arises: how can the *entelecheia* doctrine and the immortality of the soul be entertained in a single philosophical system? And, can Avicenna succeed in pursuing the *entelecheia* doctrine and the immortality of the soul in the Aristotelian tradition? This is Avicenna's problem of the soul. This thesis is an inquiry into this problem.

## **II.2 THE SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE THESIS**

In pursuance of this study, I take three possibilities into consideration.

(a) The *entelecheia* doctrine and the immortality of the soul are after all not contrary, and Avicenna by holding the two views is not inconsistent in his system.

(b) The two views are contrary, and Avicenna by adopting them without any compromise falls into inconsistency in his system.

(c) The two views are contrary, but Avicenna combines aspects, or elements, of both views so as to make an overall position which can be consistent.

Considered in general, Avicenna understands Aristotle's *entelecheia* doctrine in two broad and fundamental senses—in terms of form and substance. He applies the *entelecheia* doctrine to all three kinds of soul. In the cases of plants and animals, he says *entelecheiai* are merely forms, as animating the organic bodies, but in the case of humans, *entelecheia* is more than a form; it is an *entelecheia* or perfection of the body without being its form but by being substance separate from the body.

The *entelecheia* doctrine of the soul and the immortality of the soul seem to be divergent and contrary. So I abandon the first option. We have seen that Avicenna, in the case of humans, changes the Aristotelian sense of the *entelecheia* formula. So I also reject the second option. We, therefore, take the last option, and since this study involves both the Aristotelian and neo-Platonic traditions, the methodology undertaken here is a reconciliation, focusing on the following points.

(a) We must define Aristotle's *entelecheia* doctrine and distinguish it from Avicenna's doctrine of *kamaal*—a term used in Arabic to denote the Greek term *entelecheia*.

(b) We shall show that in the case of the rational soul Avicenna applies the Aristotelian *entelecheia* formula in a different sense, intending to lead himself to the immortality of the soul, which is preconditioned upon the substantiality of the soul.

(c) We endeavour to show that Avicenna substantially distinguishes between the accounts of the non-rational souls (plants and animals) and those of the rational soul; with regard to the former he does not fundamentally differ from Aristotle, but with regard to the latter he diverges from the Aristotelian tradition.

In emphasising the above main points, we shall attempt to show that the accounts of the rational soul, which Avicenna offers, are found explicitly in the Plotinian psychology, though he uses Aristotle's vocabulary and attempts to find the Aristotelian argumentation in several places. Avicenna's presupposition of the rational soul as a substance, which leads him to the immortality of the soul,

forces him to alter the Aristotelian *entelecheia* formula in the case of the rational soul, while in the cases of the non-rational souls he still adheres to the Aristotelian sense of the *entelecheia* doctrine that the soul is inseparably related to the body as form to matter. Since Avicenna offers two divergent accounts of the non-rational and rational souls, it is a concern, which we must deal with, whether he maintains the unity of the parts of the soul, as held by his Greek counterparts. This thesis will show by tracing as many divergences and analogies as possible between Avicenna's concepts and those of Aristotle and Plotinus that Avicenna, in reconciling two divergent views of the soul, though by combining the best elements of each, accepts merely the basic Aristotelian framework, but finds himself slipping away from the mainstreams of Aristotelianism and turns out to be more an Islamic neo-Platonic philosopher than an Aristotelian commentator, and that his argumentation for the immortality of the soul can substantially be derived only from neo-Platonism, not from Aristotelianism.

### **II.3 CHAPTERISATION**

In **Chapter One**, we discuss the basic concepts of the soul, body, form, and matter in the perspectives of both Greek and Avicennan philosophy. This chapter mainly focuses on the definition of the soul in terms of Aristotle's *entelecheia* and shows how Avicenna grasps it and applies the formula to the three phases of the soul, modifying it in the case of humans, so that he could lead himself to the immortality view. Avicenna slides here from the Aristotelian tradition.

**Chapter Two** deals with the origin of the soul in Greek and in Avicenna's psychology. Avicenna shares with his Greek counterparts the view that soul is not formed out of material elements. Although he agrees with Aristotle in defining 'life' in functional terms, he distances himself and joins Plotinus to defend his presupposed Islamic view that the soul containing life-form comes from God, which again makes him slip away from Aristotelianism.

In **Chapter Three**, we have seen how Avicenna, within the Aristotelian framework of the soul, offers his accounts of the non-rational souls in functional terms, denying immortality to them logically without violating any fundamental thesis of Aristotle, but violating the Plotinian thesis of immortality to the lower souls, and thus digressing from neo-Platonism.

The rational soul is dealt with in **Chapter Four**. Avicenna borrows the framework of the rational soul from Alexander and Al-Farabi, but on the issues of intellect, the Active Intellect, intelligible forms, and soul's activity his arguments are closer to Plotinus's than Aristotle's. The rational soul's activity independently of the body in acquiring knowledge from the Active Intellect is a total rejection of what Aristotle says in this regard. Unlike Aristotle's, Avicenna's Active Intellect is not a part of the human soul.

**Chapter Five** deals with the main issues that clearly set Avicenna apart from Aristotle. Avicenna's arguments, as he presents them on his view of the separability of the soul from the body and the body's being merely an instrument for the soul, reflect Plotinus's philosophy. Though Avicenna refers to Aristotle at times, he does not convince us that his view of the soul-body separability is

part of the Aristotelian tradition; rather, as we shall see, it is neo-Platonism from which he inherits his themes.

**Chapter Six** shows how Avicenna is led to the substantiality of the soul from soul-body dualism. Although Avicenna subscribes to the Aristotelian notion of substance, the way in which he proves the substantiality of the rational soul is different from Aristotle's philosophy. However, though Avicenna distinguishes between the accounts of the non-rational souls and those of the rational soul, he attempts to show us how he maintains the unity of the soul, avoiding fragmentation between its rational and non-rational parts.

We shall see in **Chapter Seven** how Avicenna proves the immortality of the soul in the neo-Platonic and Islamic fashions. Avicenna's commentary is seen to have claimed Aristotle as holding the separability and as such immortality of the soul, but we show that Aristotle does not engage himself in doing so, and his system does not allow him to do so either. Since Avicenna is committed himself to the immortality of the soul he encounters numerous problems which are also discussed in this chapter.

Since Avicenna's soul comes from above, he also believes in its return journey. In **Chapter Eight** we shall see that, holding a spiritualist view of man and his soul, Avicenna entirely sets himself apart from the mainstream of Aristotle's psychology and identifies himself as a rational mystic by setting himself against radical or unitary mysticism held by neo-Platonism and Sufism.

Avicenna is allegedly accused of having diverged from the main path of Islam, especially on the issue of the creation of the world. In the **Appendix**, we shall compare his theory of emanation with the Islamic doctrine of creation and

see how closely his can be related to the latter. We find no fundamental difference between the Christian and Islamic views of creation, but it is not surprising that Avicenna does not entirely subscribe to such a view, for in that case he would have violated the logic he had already followed in reconciling Greek emanation theory and his own thought.

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# CHAPTER 1

## *ON THE DEFINITION AND RELATION OF THE BODY AND THE SOUL*

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of the soul is such a problem in Greek and Islamic psychology that it cannot be understood without the aid of other concepts, for example, that of the body. Similarly, the concept of the body is so closely connected to the concept of the soul in the Platonic, Aristotelian, neo-Platonic, and Avicennan psychology that it is difficult to define the concept of the body independently without relating it to its counterpart—although a dividing-line between them is drawn in these philosophical systems. The soul and body are correlatives, and thus the soul is defined in terms of the body. As Avicenna puts it: ‘the body will be taken into account in the definition of ‘soul’, just as the building is taken into account in defining ‘builder’, though it does not apply to define the individual *qua man*’ (*Av.De.An.*, 10-11).<sup>1</sup> This sort of expression regarding the soul-body relationship is intended for general readers, while in the *Miraj Nama* Avicenna adopts a metaphorical way of defining them in a religious tone for highly educated scholars. Aristotle’s account of the body-soul relationship surpasses that of all his predecessors. Indeed, he does not appear to define *psyche* (ψυχή) without referring to body (σῶμα). In many places in the *De Anima* Aristotle

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<sup>1</sup> *Fadhaleka yukhezu l-badn fi had-haa, kema yukhezu masalan al-banahe fi haddel baani, wa in kaana laa yukhezu fi hadhi min hysa huwa insaan.*

mentions a close relationship between the body and the soul, and it is often argued that due to their relationship the one acts and the other is acted upon, that the one moves and the other is moved (*DA* 407<sup>b</sup>18-20). The *hylomorphic* doctrine forces him to lay claim to the soul and the body as one, since form and matter are one (*Met.* 1045<sup>b</sup>16-24), and thus it is unnecessary for him to enquire further whether or not they are one, just as it is unnecessary to enquire whether wax and its shape are one. Although Aristotle (*DA* 407<sup>b</sup>9) agrees with the view of Plato's *Phaedrus* (245e ff.) that the soul gives movement to the body, and that the soul and the body are intimately related, he accuses Plato and others of failing to determine properly why this is so and what the condition of the body is (*DA* 407<sup>b</sup>15-16). Although Plotinus lays much importance on the relation of the soul to the body, he does not envisage it in Aristotelian terms; rather, he remains closer to Plato than Aristotle. Body is necessary to soul, for it is the only 'place,' he says, appropriate for the soul's occupation (*Enneads*: IV: 3.9). Both body and soul, for Plotinus, are alike descended from the primal Absolute or the One; each represents a different stage in the evolution of plurality from unity: soul is an earlier stage, body, a later (IV: 3.9). As for the body, Plotinus and Avicenna follow the Aristotelian account, but for the soul, they differ from each other. While Plotinus accepts Platonic dualism but rejects Aristotle's *entelecheia*, Avicenna endeavours to harmonise both Plato's and Aristotle's accounts. On the one hand, he defines the soul in terms of Aristotle's '*entelecheia*'; on the other, he goes beyond Aristotle and argues for the separability and the substantiality of the rational soul in the Platonic and Plotinian fashion. Although he says that soul is *form* in the Aristotelian sense, it

is ‘quasi-form’ and ‘quasi-perfection’ (*Av.De.An.*, 18). Indeed, the soul, according to him, is a spiritual substance—no matter whether or not we know the body or any bodily organs as extant—a view which parallels Platonism and neo-Platonism.

## **1.2 ON THE CONCEPTS OF BODY AND SOUL**

Aristotle begins his account of the soul in the *De Anima* by confuting two ancient views—the Pythagorean and the Empedoclean. Against the Pythagorean view that any soul, taken at random, can pass into any body, Aristotle says that it is absurd in the sense that each body has its own distinctive form or shape. Similarly, as opposed to the harmony view, which he claims to be Empedoclean (*DA* 408<sup>a</sup>15-16), Aristotle says that it is equally absurd to regard the soul as the proportion determining the mixture, for the elements are not mixed in the same proportion in flesh as in bone. What, then, is the soul? In the *De Anima*, Aristotle repeats three times over: the soul is the first *entelecheia* of a natural body having life potentially in it, that is of an organised body (*DA* 412<sup>a</sup>19-21, 412<sup>a</sup>27-28, 412<sup>b</sup>5-6).

According to Plotinus, bodies are ‘masses’ or ‘lumps’ that can have size, weight, and occupy places (O’Meara, 1985, 247-262). In the sixth *Ennead* (VI.3.9), Plotinus classifies bodies as light, heavy, and intermediate. How can the bodies be distinguished from each other? Plotinus says that body can be known through three distinguishable characteristics—the pseudo-substance, the quantity, and the quality (VI.2.4). Avicenna accepts the divisibility of the body. Bodies have three dimensions, by virtue of which they can be distinguished

from each other. The dimensions or magnitudes are: length (*daraza* in Persian, *tul* in Arabic), width (*pahna* in Persian, *ard* in Arabic), and depth (*sitabri* in Persian, *umq* in Arabic). These delimited dimensions are the material form of the body, and are merely concomitants, not constituents. The concomitants may change with a change in form. Bodies differ with respect to length, width, and depth, as the three material forms ‘exist at all times potentially and at times actually in a body’ (*Metaphysica*, 17).

Plotinus says bodies can be divided characteristically into material and organic bodies: the material bodies comprise four Aristotelian elements—fire, air, earth, and water—which are themselves constituted of matter and form; ‘the organic are the bodies of plants and animals, these in turn admitting of formal differentiation’ (VI.3.9). It is, thus, plausible for Plotinus to argue that that which has soul is an organic body, or organic substratum, which is what Plotinus means by ‘living body’, ‘luminous body’, ‘ensouled body’. The Soul as a substance cannot enter into another (V.8.3), as it exists ‘in itself’, and therefore the soul in this sense must be present to the substratum without being *in it*, but *in itself*.

Ibn Sina distinguishes bodies in the classical Aristotelian manner and comes closer to Aristotle than Plotinus in this vein. Like Aristotle he thinks of bodies as natural bodies, for example, stones, and organised bodies, for example, ‘living being’. In addition, Avicenna divides bodies into simple and composite bodies—the former is constituted of nothing but substratum-matter and form, while the latter embraces sub-lunary bodies. By ‘substratum-matter’ Ibn Sina means an entity, which is known only by conceptual abstraction since it

cannot exist without a form. Simple bodies can be divided into two subclasses—heavenly bodies and those receptive to composition. The composites of the latter are the Aristotelian four elements—fire, air, water, and earth.<sup>2</sup> In the *Metaphysica* (Avicenna, 1973, Chs. 43-45), Ibn Sina repeatedly asserts that the bodies which are not capable of composition are heavenly bodies whose forms are fixed to their material substratum, while the bodies which are capable of composition are constantly receptive to motion or change (*junbish*). In this way, Avicenna succinctly states that bodies are extended and thus divisible; by contrast, souls (and intelligences) are not extended, and thus, are not receptive to division. The treatment of the soul and the body as contrasted to each other is originally traced back to the Platonic account of psychology.

Ibn Sina holds that a body cannot be simple because it possesses contrary qualities (*Isharat*, II, 1960, 168-173). This view is reflected in Platonic and neo-Platonic philosophy. In his *Phaedo* (79<sup>c</sup>8), Plato, in the discussion of *psyche* and body dualism, holds that the body is of opposite qualities: it is constantly changing, perishable, composite, inaccessible to thought but visible. Conversely, he gives some characterisations of the *psyche*, calling it invisible, divine, immortal, and wise (*Phaedo* 81<sup>a</sup>3). This view is reflected in the Plotinian account of the soul-body relation; as for Plotinus, the body is manifold, composite, and diversified; and on the contrary, the soul is single, continuous, without extension, and of the greatest simplicity (VI.2.4). So the soul, from the Plotinian point of view, is non-composite and has no size or

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<sup>2</sup>For Aristotle's view, see *De Generatione et Corruptione*, bk. ii., ch. 1, see also *De Caelo*, 268<sup>a</sup>28, 270<sup>b</sup>30; in the *Physics* of the *Danish Nama-i (Tabi'yyat)*, Avicenna expounds upon the four Aristotelian elements.

mass, as the body is and has. Plotinus' view can be explicitly put with reference to *human being*, which, as he understands substance or reality (ουσια), consists of *a human body* and *a human soul*—the former being the sensible substance, the latter insensible. In addition, *a human body* comprises four elements—air, water, fire, earth—which are constituted of matter and form. However, a material body or sensible body is susceptible to change and motion; for example, a body can be either warm or cold, hard or soft, liquid or solid, black or white, and so on through all the qualities by which one is different from another (IV.7.8). What Plotinus has to say here lies in the claim that the concept of the body can only be recognised as contrary to that of the soul. Avicenna is of a similar view to Plotinus in respect of bodily change. Bodies—no matter whether terrestrial or heavenly—are susceptible to primary contrary qualities: hot and cold, moist and dry, because of the fineness of the four elements. For Avicenna, the four elements, called simple compositable bodies, can be transformed into one another. So we find no difficulty in claiming that for both Plotinus and Avicenna, body is a complex entity (IV.7.1), even the simple body in so far as it consists of both matter and form (V.9.3).

### **1.3 ON THE DOCTRINE OF HYLOMORPHISM**

#### **1.3.1 Aristotle's Concepts of Matter and Form**

Aristotle's *hylomorphism* holds that the relation of the soul to the body is that of form to matter. In illustrating the distinction between them, we say that, if we

understand a statue with its bronze and a shape, and an axe with its iron and axeity (the capacity to chop), then we should call bronze and iron matter, and shape and axeity form. In the former case, form is simply a shape (of a statue), in the latter, form is complex, since it is considered as capacity (to perform a function). Again, from the above two illustrations, it may be legitimate to argue that matter and form are contingently related, since matter can have different forms (say, of shape, axeity, etc.) and the form can be found in different types of matter (say, bronze, iron, etc.). Now, applying this theory to the soul-body relationship, Aristotle holds that the *psyche* is a form, that is, a (complex in the sense of the second illustration) form of the natural body (potentially having life in it). For Aristotle, form has no separate existence apart from matter; similarly the soul is inseparable from the body. The existence of the *psyche* is realised only through its functions in relation to the body.

### **1.3.2 Plotinus's and Avicenna's Responses to Hylomorphism**

As in other medieval Islamic philosophy, the *hylomorphic* doctrine is accepted by Avicenna. His definition of the soul (*nafs*) is proceeded following Aristotle's *entelecheia* doctrine. The doctrine of form and matter is thus presupposed in his natural philosophy, though his way of understanding it does not completely resemble that of Aristotle. By 'form' Avicenna means 'that quiddity (*maahiyah*) in virtue of which a body (*jism*) is what it is,' whereas 'matter is that which exists by form, and for the sake of form' (Avicenna, 1937, 48; Nasr, 1978, 218). Form is the principle of matter; without form matter has no existence, in that form brings about matter into its existence in act. Avicenna

does not accept Aristotle's view that matter and form have their own reality; for him there is ontological inequality between the two (Nasr, 1978, 220). His emanation theory describes matter as being an effusion from God. In fact, matter is brought into existence by the form from the Intelligence (Active Intellect) of the tenth sphere which governs the sublunary region comprising elements receptive to generation and corruption. It suggests that matter needs causes for its existence in act.

Aristotle's definition of the *psyche* does not directly tell us what exactly a body is or what exactly a soul is, but it does explicitly say, of course, that the soul is the form of that organised body endowed with the capacity of life. Not every body has the potentiality of life, and therefore, the body which Aristotle talks about is certainly a 'living body' of which the soul is the actuality. Conversely, a 'living body,' in Aristotelian terms, like all separately existing substance, is a composite of 'natural body possessed of life' and 'form' (*DA* 412<sup>a</sup>15-16). Form here is analogous to soul, or alternatively, soul is a special case of form, whereas body is its matter. The soul is thus chiefly characterised as *Form* and *Entelecheia*. Matter represents the potentiality of a thing, and form, its actuality, as the latter gives a thing its character (*DA* 412<sup>a</sup>5).

Both Plotinus and Avicenna concur with the Aristotelian view of the body that the body, or more specifically, the 'living body' is a composite of matter and form,<sup>3</sup> but as to the soul, while Avicenna grants Aristotle's definition of the soul as the first *kamaal*<sup>4</sup> (perfection) of a natural body possessing organs,<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>For Plotinus' view see *Enneads* (IV.7.1.8-10), for Avicenna's view see his *Metaphysica*, ch. 4, trans. Morewedge, Parviz, 1973, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup>The term *kamaal* of Avicenna is commonly translated by scholars as *entelecheia* to equate it with Aristotle's doctrine.



Plotinus strenuously refutes this theory and sets out his own view, which is closer to Plato's, in the context of soul-body relation. Plotinus argues in the *Enneads* that body is not merely a body: a living being is the product of both body and soul, but it should not be understood that the compound of body and soul is an entity in which the two are transformed. Indeed, Plotinus says that the two are united in partnership, and that a living being is not such a thing that can be the result of the mixture of both in such a way that the *psyche* exists only potentially in the body (IV.3.26). So, by itself the body is not corporeal, i.e., is not merely a body, as the body does not consist of merely matter, but is a composite of both matter and form, 'only pure matter is completely devoid of any of the form which all sensible substances have' (II.4.5) [Blumenthal, 1971, 9]. Matter here is an indeterminate something. It can be described as a mere receptacle of form, a pure potentiality of all things without any potency. In the Plotinian sense, matter is created by the soul but not in time, and thus it is lowest in the scale of existence, and least in the scale of value. His concept of matter has no resemblance to the modern concept of matter as substance consisting of elements. According to Plotinus, matter is void of all quality and hence it is incorporeal, and in like manner simple (II.4.8). In another sense, matter is incorporeal because body exists after it; matter is one of the two components of body. In describing the nature of matter, Plotinus says, matter is not soul, nor intellect, nor life, nor form, nor reason, and has no limit or bound since it is mere indetermination (III.6.7). It has no being, and thus can be said to be Not-Being ( $\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\nu$ ), so that it can be best understood as nothing but the image

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<sup>5</sup>*Fan-nafs ul-lati nahoddoha hiya kamaal un-'awwalun le jesmin tabi'ean (Av.De.An., 12; DA 412<sup>a</sup>27-28).*

and phantasm of mass (III.6.7). Plotinus's sense of matter is actually a reflection of Plato's sense that matter is absolute not-being, an opinion opposed to what we understand by it in modern times. Matter has no quality, no form, no feature.

Following Aristotle and Plotinus, Avicenna, in his attempt to define the soul at large, holds that every natural body is compounded of *hyle*—matter, and of *suwra*—form (*Compendium*, 27). Body, when in act, possesses a corporeal form; and, it is in potentiality inasmuch as it is capable of receiving a form. In this sense, a body has both actuality and potentiality—the former is its form, the latter its matter (Nasr, 1978, 219). As for matter, a natural body is affected, or acted upon, in its very self, by the form—for example, the sword does not cut by means of its iron, but by means of its sharpness, which is its form; whereas it gets jagged, not because of its form, but because of its iron, which is its matter (*Compendium*, 27). In the Aristotelian manner, he explains that the characteristics which peculiarly belong to natural bodies are not due to the 'hyle' or matter (*Compendium*, 27); rather, it is the form that is responsible for the actualisation. As for the form, through it natural bodies perform their actions, since the sword cuts through the sharpness of its iron. Ibn Sina thus decisively concludes that it is the form, in virtue of which a natural body is what it is, i.e., bodies get their being through forms. For example, a man gets his being (his humanity) through his form, not through his matter, which is of the four elements.

That matter is not *qua* matter passive is reminiscent of the Aristotelian notion of matter. Matter, according to Aristotle, is potentiality (δύναμις) in the

sense of its possibility; form, by contrast, is the actuality. Ibn Sina shares this view. Of the two components of body, matter is potentiality (*quwwa*), while form is actuality (*fi'l*). Both logically and ontologically actuality is prior to potentiality, or form to matter, so in the scale of existence form is superior to matter. Form is that which has the capability of giving unity to a portion of matter and matter has power to receive this form. So, matter cannot be the cause of form (Afnan, 1958, 111). Here, Avicenna remains closer to Aristotelian influence.

## **1.4 ON THE DOCTRINE OF ENTELECHEIA**

### **1.4.1 Aristotle's Doctrine of *Entelecheia***

While both Plotinus and Ibn Sina agree with the Peripatetic conception of the living body as comprising matter and form, with regard to the definition of the soul, Avicenna distances himself from Plotinus as to the Aristotelian *entelecheia* (ἐντελέχεια) view. *Entelecheia* is an ambiguous term in Aristotle's philosophy. By the term '*entelecheia*' in the Aristotelian definition of the soul is meant very often 'capacity', 'activity', 'action', 'actuality,' 'perfection', and so on. Aristotle uses *entelecheia* in two senses. He uses *episteme* (ἐπιστήμη) and *theorein* (θεωρεῖν) to illustrate the two senses of *entelecheia*—the former (knowledge) illustrates 'capacity for action,' the latter (contemplation), 'action,' (DA 412<sup>a</sup>22). Aristotle here seems to take the *psyche* to be an *entelecheia* in the first sense; for the soul is present in sleep, but does not act, and, if an

instrument, an axe, for instance, were a natural body, its capacity of cutting would be its soul (*DA* 412<sup>b</sup>12-13). Aristotle also says *entelecheia* can mean ‘actuality’, or ‘perfection of a capacity’. In this sense acting would be its second *entelecheia*. To corroborate his definition of the soul in relation to the body, he compares the relationship to that of sight to the eye (*DA* 412<sup>b</sup>17-413<sup>a</sup>3). If the eye were an animal, he says, its sight would be its soul. The cutting of the axe or the seeing of the eye is actuality. So the soul is actuality in the same sense as eye-sight and the capacity of the instrument (*DA* 413<sup>a</sup>1-3). In so far as the form is the perfected end or actuality of the matter, Aristotle describes the *psyche* as the *entelecheia* of the natural body. Viewed from the standpoint of causation or process, matter can be labelled as the material cause, while the form as the formal or final cause. In this sense, the *psyche* can be described as the actuality or actualisation, to use a rough English translation of *energeia* (ἐνέργεια). Bergh observes that ‘the fundamental meaning of the term *entelecheia* seems to be a teleological one, a perfecting, the purpose of nature which lies in action’ (Bergh, 1972, 27-33). That the term *entelecheia* can mean ‘perfection of a capacity’ is also clearly stated by Aristotle in his *Physics* (202<sup>a</sup>24).<sup>6</sup> Now, what is the difference between ‘actualisation’ and ‘perfection’? Fundamentally nothing, as the terms are used synonymously to understand the Greek term *entelecheia*, and thus in the consideration of the soul-body relationship he seems to feel comfortable in defining the soul as a certain type of actuality (*entelecheia*) and defining principle (*logos*) of that (natural organised body) which has the capacity (*dunamis*) for life (*DA* 414<sup>a</sup>27-28). In the above

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<sup>6</sup>Aristotle here says the *entelecheia* is that which perfects the potentiality of a thing. So it is the completed state of a thing.

illustration of Aristotle's '*entelecheia*' (actuality) in two senses—'knowledge' (*episteme*) and 'exercise of knowledge' (*theorein*), sleep is analogous to knowledge, whilst waking is analogous to exercise of knowledge. In both cases the presence of a soul is evident. Viewing the term *entelecheia* as an 'actuality' or 'completed realisation', to use another phrase, the qualification 'first' is referred by Aristotle to the distinction between two senses of actualisation.

From Simplicius onward, different commentators have engaged their thought in explaining the implications of 'first' in the Aristotelian definition of the soul. According to Simplicius, Aristotle uses two senses of *entelecheia*. The notion of 'first' appears to refer to the first sense of *entelecheia* and the term *entelecheia* appears to mean 'perfect'; and this meaning seems to be closer to what Aristotle originally meant. The term *entelecheia* seems to derive from the adjective *enteles* (ἐντελής), meaning 'perfect', or 'complete'. Simplicius interprets the Aristotelian *entelecheia* in two transcendental senses, for there is a contradiction in the meaning of the term. If the body, which is moved by the soul, is an *organised body*, and the organised body receives its form from the soul, it means that the organised body is already 'ensouled', i.e., the same soul will be mover and moved—a view which Aristotle cannot accept. The soul as a mover is therefore a second *entelecheia* according to Simplicius. A ship, thus, has two *entelecheiai*—one by which it is a ship, and the other by which it is moved, namely a pilot (*Psychology*, 7-8). It may be argued that Simplicius's view does not seem to present a defensible interpretation of Aristotle: a pilot cannot be the *entelecheia* of his ship on the ground that he does not stand to it as form to matter. Rather, in opposing the Aristotelian

*entelecheia* he formulates a doctrine which says that, though the actions of the soul which are related to the body are not separable from the body, the soul in its substance is separable, just as the pilot is separable from the ship, though his actions are not separable (Simplicius, 1882, 17, 35-36 ff.). Philoponus, another interpreter of Aristotle's *De Anima*, holds the same pilot-ship analogy as separable, that is, with Simplicius he agrees that the soul as an entire substance is separable from the body (Philoponus, 1897, 48, 2 ff.).

#### **1.4.2 Avicenna's Kamaal and His Understanding of the Entelecheia Doctrine**

Ibn Sina defines the *nafs* in terms of Aristotle's *entelecheia*, meaning 'perfection' or *kamaal* (as he uses the term throughout his psychological account) of the organised body. For Ibn Sina, as he understands matter and form, 'the soul is a form, and forms are realised perfections (*entelecheiai*), since through them the features (identities, characteristics) of things become perfect' (*Compendium*, 28). Moreover, Avicenna argues that the meaning of *kamaal* is that by the existence of which a being becomes actual; say, a plant becomes an actual functioning plant, an animal becomes an actual functioning animal (*Av.De.An.*, 8). He thus argues that the soul is a perfection or realised identity. Avicenna also follows Aristotle's two divisions of *entelecheia* and uses the term 'first' to refer to his definition of the soul. But unlike Aristotle, he does not mean by the two senses of *entelecheia*, what Aristotle calls *episteme* and *theoria*. He says perfection (*kamaal*) comes under two divisions—the first of which is 'the principle underlying the doings and their effects', whereas the

second one is ‘the very doings and effects themselves’ (*Compendium*, 28). The first division is what he calls ‘principle’ or ‘source and origin’, while the second one is ‘the doings and the effect’ or ‘trace’. Referring to the *nafs*, he in this sense holds that ‘the soul is a first perfection, or prime actuality, for it is a principle (source), not an outcome of a principle (source)’ [*Compendium*, 29]. Having made a clear distinction between artificial and natural bodies, he goes on to say that the *nafs* is ‘a prime perfection attaching to a natural body having a life potentially’ (*Compendium*, 30)—a view which corresponds to the Aristotelian definition. Like Aristotle, Avicenna takes pains to find whether there is a single definition that applies to all types of souls. Since both Aristotle and Avicenna treat the soul as a single, unitary substance, they tend to apply ‘first *entelecheia*’ to mean the universal, absolute, generic soul, but since they both argue that different kinds of souls have different faculties, it seems that they wish to assign different *entelecheiai* to different kinds of bodies.<sup>7</sup> For Avicenna, different bodies have different receptive capacities, and as such, the soul is the *entelecheia*, not of the *same body* while we talk about plant, animal, and human souls, but of *different bodies* to which the *entelecheia* is related. Affirming the soul as a single genus, but with three species, Avicenna exclusively defines the soul in the *an-Najat* with reference to three natural bodies, thus referring to three species of a single genus. The *first* part is called the *vegetative soul* (*an-nafs an-nabatiyah*), defined as the first *kamaal* (perfection) of such a natural body that possesses organs in regard to reproduction (*muwallidah*), growth (*namiyah*), and nutrition (*ghadhiyah*). The

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<sup>7</sup>For Aristotle’s discussion see *De Anima*, Bk, ii, Ch. ii; for Avicenna’s points see *Psychology*, Chs. 1-2.

second part, known as the *animal soul* (*an-nafs al-hayawaniyah*), is the first *kamaal* of such a natural body that possesses organs in regard to perceiving individual things and moving by volition. *Thirdly*, there is the *human soul* (*an-nafs al-insaniya*), which is the first *kamaal* of such a natural body that possesses organs in regard to performing actions deriving from rational choice and deduction through opinion, and also in regard to perceiving universal matters (*an-Najat*, 197; *Psychology*, 25). Like the body, ‘*kamaal*’ (*entelecheia*) is also elaborated in Avicennan psychology.

In fact, in the *Kitab ash-Shifa*, Ibn Sina is seen to deal with the *nafs* in terms of three concepts—forms (*suwra*), perfection or *entelecheia* (*kamaal*), and substance (*jauhar*). As Simplicius understands *entelecheia* in two different ways, so does Ibn Sina as to the notion of *kamaal* (*entelecheia*) which is of two kinds—first *kamaal* (*kamaal-un-’awwalun*) and second *kamaal* (*kamaal-un-’athanin*) [*Av.De.An.*, 11]. In an endeavour to differentiate between form and *kamaal* (*entelecheia*), Ibn Sina illustrates that, since the soul perfects the living body as it is, it is plausible to claim that the soul is ‘form’ means the soul is a *kamaal* or an ‘*entelecheia*’. This is the first or primary *kamaal* or *entelecheia*, for example, shape in the case of swords. By the second or secondary *entelecheia* Ibn Sina means an activity or disposition which exists in members of the species; for instance, cutting in the case of swords (*Av.De.An.*, 11). What Avicenna focuses on is that *kamaal* is more than what is meant merely by ‘form’, for a *kamaal* or an ‘*entelecheia*’ may be related to a certain body so as to perfect the body without being inherent in the body as form (*suwra*); rather, as a substance (*jauhar*) it is separable from the body, for example, a pilot of a ship—



a view which he seems to have taken from Simplicius and Philoponus. In this vein, Ibn Sina argues that each form (*suwra*) is *entelecheia* (*kamaal*), but not every *entelecheia* (*kamaal*) is a form (*suwra*).<sup>8</sup> As he states:

A king is *kamaal* or *entelecheia* of his state, and similarly, a pilot, of his ship; but neither of them (king or pilot) is the form (*suwra*) of state, or of ship.<sup>9</sup>

Now, can we postulate something in which *entelecheia* can be called a form?

Ibn Sina lays emphasis on the point that form relates only to matter, but *entelecheia* to the being as a whole. For only insofar as it exists in matter can the soul be a form (*Av.De.An.*, 7). Moreover, according to Ibn Sina, some souls, i.e. human souls, are not forms subsisting in matter; thus, it is better to render the definition of the soul as the first perfection (*kamaal-un-'awwalun*), rather than as 'form' (*suwra*). He thus defines the *nafs*, in general: *thus the nafs is the first perfection (kamaal-un-'awwalun) of a natural body (jism tabi'i), organised in such a way that it is capable of receiving the function of life.*<sup>10</sup> It covers all types of souls, including the human soul. This is the generic definition of the soul. From this point of view, both rational and non-rational souls are treated as *kamaal* or *entelecheiai*, but we draw the line between Aristotle and Avicenna on the understanding of *entelecheia*. Avicenna goes farther than Aristotle's meaning of the *entelecheia* as an actualisation of the natural body having life in it potentially; that the rational soul is an *entelecheia*, means it is a substance subsisting in matter, but is separable from it. At *DA* 413<sup>a</sup>6-7, Aristotle says that

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<sup>8</sup> *Thumma Kullu Sourtin Kamaalun Wa Leisa Kullu Kamaalin Sourtun* (*Av.De.An.*, 6).

<sup>9</sup> This is clearly stated by Ibn Sina in his *De Anima*, as he says: *Fa Ennal Maleka Kamaalul Madinate Wa Frabaanu Kamaalu Safeenate Wa Leisaa Besouraateine Lelmadinate Wa ssteenate* (*Av.De.An.*, 6).

<sup>10</sup> *Fan-nafs ul-leti nahoddoha hiya kamaal un-'awwalun le jesmin tabi'ean aali'iyen lahu an ya-fa'ala af-aalal hayati.* (*Av.De.An.*, 12; *an-Najat*, 162).

it is not clear whether any parts of the soul are actualities of the body, and therefore become separable; similarly, it is not clear whether the soul is the actuality of the body in the way the pilot is of the ship. Here, Avicenna seems to take up Simplicius's view. For in the case of the rational soul, Avicenna clearly states that the soul is the perfection (*kamaal*) of the body in the way the pilot is of the ship, suggesting that the rational soul is not an *entelecheia* in the Aristotelian sense. Rather, it is separable from the body, just as the pilot is related to the ship. It may be worth mentioning that in the cases of plant and animal souls, Avicenna does not admit the soul–body relationship as that of the pilot-ship, and here he seems to be an Aristotelian. It is understandable that Aristotle is not committed to the view that the soul is separable from the body as the pilot is from the ship. But Avicenna is committed to the view that in the case of the rational soul it is separable from the body as the pilot is from the ship, and here he is a Plotinian, rather than Aristotelian. He understands Aristotle's *entelecheia* in a different way, for his *kamaal* means that which has its own being and thus cannot be a form existing in matter. And his understanding or misunderstanding of Aristotle's *entelecheia* as *perfection* leads him to say that the rational soul is a substance. As he claims in the *Risalah fi n-nafs an-natiqa* (*Treatise on the Rational Soul*):

This rational soul is a substance subsisting in itself, and is imprinted neither in a human body nor in any other corporeal entity. On the contrary, it is separable and abstracted from material and corporeal entities. It has a certain association with the human body as long as the person is alive, but this association is not like the relation of a thing to its receptacle; it is, rather, like the relation of a wielder of an instrument to the instrument.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Translated by Gutas, 1988, 74, from the edition of Ahwani, *Ahwal an-nafs*.

The above quotation of Avicenna envisages a several problems of the soul, viz. the soul is

- (i) a substance,
- (ii) not imprinted in the body,
- (iii) separable from the body, and
- (iv) related to the body as a wielder to his instrument.

In fact, the whole theory of the rational soul is based on the above points. In the following chapters we shall deal with the above mentioned problems of the soul and examine whether Ibn Sina remains on the Aristotelian track or shifts from it and incorporates Plotinian doctrines of the soul.

## **1.5 CONCLUSION**

What is noticeable from the above is that, although Avicenna accommodates the Greek concepts of matter and form in his psychological accounts, he does not entirely agree with what Aristotle and Plotinus mean by them. The Greek idea that body is a composite of matter and form is accepted in full by Avicenna. But the crucial point to be noted here is that, although Avicenna defines the soul in terms of the Aristotelian notion of *entelecheia*, he does not apply it in the Aristotelian sense to all three phases of the soul. For him, that the rational soul is an *entelecheia* means more than what the Aristotelian concept suggests. Does it mean that he fails to realise Aristotle's concept, or is it that his presupposition of the rational soul as a substance does not allow him to state the rational soul as an *entelecheia* in the Aristotelian sense? We have seen that while Aristotle does not make clear his position as to whether or not any parts of the soul are

*entelecheiai* in the way as the pilot is of the ship, Avicenna precisely and categorically holds that the rational soul is related to the body as the pilot is to the ship, which he includes in his psychology following Simplicius and Philoponus, who included the Platonic view of the separability of the soul in the Aristotelian tradition, intending probably that the Platonic and Aristotelian views of the soul are not fundamentally different (Philoponus, 1897, 12). Now, does Aristotle think of the soul and the *entelecheia* doctrine in this way? We cannot answer this question on the basis of the definition of the soul. We have yet to enquire what kinds of accounts of the soul the two philosophers offer. However, although the definition, as expressed above, does not say what the soul is or what it does, it is clear that for Aristotle, it is merely a form of the body, whereas for Avicenna, it is more than that. If that is so, then Avicenna is forced to show how the soul is different from being merely a form of the body. This prompts us to investigate into the origin of the soul. If Avicenna's rational soul is a spiritual substance, as he suggests, then it is consistent to believe that it originates from a spiritual realm caused by another spiritual substance. Moreover, the fundamental concept with which the concept of the soul is intimately related is 'life', and very often the 'soul' is synonymously used with 'life', as 'life' includes the vital activities of the living body, and it is through behaviour that we identify a soul in a body. So, some questions that are involved in the accounts of the soul in Avicenna's psychology are: what life is and how it is related to the soul, whether the soul is a constitution of the material elements, whether the soul is a state of the material body, etc. In the next chapter, we shall, therefore, deal with these problems.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### ***ON THE GENERATION OF THE SOUL AND THE CONCEPT OF LIFE-PRINCIPLE***

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In Avicenna's hierarchical scheme, the Necessary Existent is the highest in rank and all possible or particular beings the lowest; just as we find in Plotinus, the Absolute as the highest and matter as the lowest in degree. Now, the process by which particular beings, such as the universe and our souls, are brought into existence is that which Avicenna in the neo-Platonic fashion calls emanation. Although Avicenna endorses the neo-Platonic doctrine of emanation, he modifies it in his own way. The religious doctrine of creation cannot accept this, because if matter is eternal, as the emanation theory suggests, then there is no question of its creation in time *ex nihilo*.

Both Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina follow the neo-Platonic doctrine of emanation with regard to the origin of the universe and the soul. Both of them identify God with the neo-Platonic One, and to some extent, Aristotle's divine thought thinking itself, though not in the sense of extreme religious connotations, rather in the philosophical sense of Supreme Being. Following Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina holds that the Active Intellect gives natural forms to the sublunary matter. It is the Form Giver of plant, animal, and human bodies, and at the same time, produces human knowledge. Avicenna here tends to integrate

the neo-Platonic philosophical scheme and Islamic doctrine, and in so doing he seems to digress from orthodox Islamic tenets.

We shall see in this chapter that for Aristotle, Plotinus and Avicenna the life-principle does not originate from fundamental matter, nor is it a mixture of the four basic elements, but rather that the concept of the soul integrates the life conception. The cardinal point that distances Aristotle from Plotinus and Avicenna is that in the Aristotelian accounts, the *psyche* is considered as the completion of the organised body *sustaining* the life-principle. Plotinus and Avicenna, although they differ from each other on this issue, hold that the soul is *containing* the life-principle, which emanates from God—a view which corresponds with the traditional religious view, also traced back to Plato.

## **2.2 ON THE REJECTION OF THE HARMONY VIEW OF THE SOUL: A MEETING POINT OF THE PERIPATETIC, NEO-PLATONIC, AND AVICENNAN PSYCHOLOGY**

Fully truthful to Plato's *Phaedo* as an orthodox Platonist in respect of the soul-body relationship in the *Eudemus*, Aristotle also follows the *Phaedo* in its criticism of the doctrine that the soul is the 'harmony' (ἁρμονία) of the body, a view which he labels an Empedoclean one (*DA* 407<sup>b</sup>7-408<sup>a</sup>30). The Sicilian school of physicians equates soul with the harmony of the body (Peursen, 1966, 35). If the harmony breaks down, man becomes sick and disordered. The harmony (soul), although superior in worth to mere wood and strings (body), can never exist by itself. Plato, in the *Phaedo*, strongly opposes this

materialistic view. The harmony is obliged to comply with the instrument of music, but the soul does not always follow the body; rather it can go against the body (e.g. to feel hungry and yet not to eat) and thus can take over bodily control. In the *De Anima*, having explained harmony as blending (κρᾶσις), a combination (σύνθεσις), or mixture (μῖξις)—terms which Aristotle uses interchangeably—of elements, Aristotle holds that it is absurd to consider the soul as the proportion determining the mixture, for we see that the elements are not mixed in the same proportion in flesh as in bone (*DA* 408<sup>a</sup>15-16). Aristotle appears to contend that harmony is a blending and conjunction of opposites, out of which the body is composed, but the *psyche* cannot be described in these terms (*DA* 407<sup>b</sup>31-33).

Aristotle examines the four basic elements—air, water, fire, earth, for the possibility of their being a cause of life. In Aristotle's understanding, each of these elements has a natural motion, and for each natural motion there is an opposite motion, which is unnatural motion (*DA* 406<sup>a</sup>25-30). For Aristotle, motion is of four species: change of place or locomotion, change of quality or alteration, diminution, and augmentation (*DA* 406<sup>a</sup>12-13). Now if the soul were identified with one or more of the elements, then with the change of motion or locomotion the soul would have to move. But for Aristotle, that the soul can engage in locomotion is a *reductio ad absurdum*. He denies locomotion to the soul because if the soul has motion in space just as the body has, then the soul might conceivably leave the body and re-enter, which gives rise to the question that dead animals may rise again (*DA* 406<sup>b</sup>1-5). This is absurd. Similarly, for Aristotle, the soul cannot be a combination or blend of the four material

elements, because if it were so, then it would be an attribute of the body, and if it were an attribute of the body, then the same difficulty applies, i.e., the soul moves by virtue of bodily movement. That the soul is not a collocation or arrangement of the four material substances is well defended in his refutation of the harmony view of the soul.

Movement, Aristotle adds, is not a property which can be predicated of a harmony, but it can be attributed to the soul (*DA* 408<sup>a</sup>3-4). Aristotle holds that the term harmony denotes first *adjustment* of the parts of the body possessed of movement and position, secondly it is applied to the *ratio* which holds between things that are compounded (*DA* 408<sup>a</sup>6-10). The *psyche*, Aristotle thus concludes, can never be regarded as harmony in the above two senses. Like Plato, Aristotle also uses 'health and sickness' with regard to his criticism against the harmony view of the soul.

Plotinus also takes into his account whether the soul is a harmony or accord of the constituents of the body—a view which he regards as the Pythagorean one. In the *Enneads* (IV.7.8<sup>4</sup>), Plotinus for the first time defends his views of the substantiality of the soul. As opposed to the harmony theory, Plotinus points out that the soul is a prior (to the body), whereas harmony is secondary to the lyre. The soul, according to him, rules, guides, and often combats the body, but the harmony cannot do these, because it depends upon the bodily constitution. So the soul is a real being, which is to say, substance, in its own right, but harmony is merely an accidental *occurrence* (*pathima*: πάθημα).

Avicenna, like the Peripatetic and neo-Platonic thinkers, rejects the harmony theory of the soul. In the *Psychology*, he begins the discussion of the



*nafs* with this consideration. Ibn Sina does not oppose the view that the soul's existence presupposes a mixture or combination of the elements in a certain proportion (*Psychology*, 24), but it does not mean that this mixture produces the soul in the material body. The soul is something distinct from the body. Now, what is this 'something'? Although, for Avicenna, living beings come into existence only when the elements are mixed in a harmonious way, he also adds that the souls come into being due to the powers of the heavenly bodies. So, for Ibn Sina, souls are brought into existence by the heavenly powers, and the souls of plants, animals, and human bodies are preconditioned upon the organic nature of the bodies and the preparation for receiving the psychical faculties brought by heavenly powers. The Active Intellect of the tenth sphere brings forms to matter and the Active Intellect is an emanation from the First Cause, the Necessary Existent. So the Necessary Existent is the 'Giver of Forms' (*Wahib al-suwar*) to matter. Hence, when we say that the soul comes from above we mean that the form comes from the Active Intellect, and in this sense Al-Farabi calls it in the last resort God Himself. However, the forms given to matter depend upon the mixture of the material elements. In the case of inorganic bodies, the mixture of the elements is not as balanced as the bodies need, to be able to receive the psychical faculties. The first and the preliminary stage of the balanced mixture of the elements is found in plant bodies, after which come animals, and then human beings.

## **2.3 ON THE GENERATION OF THE SOUL**

### **2.3.1 The Greek Views of the Origin of the Soul**

Avicenna's view of the origin of the soul owes much to the Greek neo-Platonist doctrine of emanation, implicitly found in Alexander's thought. Alexander identified Aristotle's active intellect with the First Cause of the Universe. But while Aristotle envisages a First Cause only of the universe's motion (Davidson, 1987, 281-82), Alexander surpasses him in designating the First Cause as both the cause of human thought and the principle of the existence of all other things (Alexander, 1887, 89), which means that it is a cause, not only of the motion of the universe, but also of the existence of beings that stand above the physical universe. Aristotle considers matter as eternal. Matter is not created, but exists eternally like God. His ultimate being is God (*Theos*), who is an eternal substance. So for him both God and matter are eternal and thus independent of the world. The generation of all possible beings in this world is caused by substances with the same form. He thus opposes Avicenna's view that a material body can emanate from an immaterial substance, i.e., the Active Intellect. Aristotle's view cannot be called an emanation theory at all. He presupposes the first principle of motion and the Prime Mover. He holds that there is a Prime Mover which makes things change from something to something, and that that which is potentially X becomes actually X by receiving the form of X. Matter, for him, is thus not created by God, nor does it emanate

from God, but is caused by God to change from one state into another. Like God, the world is eternal, and therefore, not made. This theory can be called the co-eternal doctrine of matter and God.

In Plotinus's version of emanation theory, the physical world derives from the One, the Ultimate source, through the intermediary stages of the intellect and the soul. So both the intellect and the soul are responsible, though not directly, for the existence of the physical world. More generally, the soul is the cause of the world. Plotinus, like Plato and Aristotle, accepts that the world is eternal, since it derives from eternity, the One. Matter is thus a co-eternal principle for Plotinus, though it is not co-absolute with the One, since the One might exist without matter, but not the *vice versa*. Matter owes its being to the One, since the One is the source of the process of emanation through which it descends. So although the world derives from the One, it is the soul which is the direct cause of the world, just as the divine intellect is the cause of the soul. In the *Timaeus* (28a-29b), Plato introduces a divine artisan (*demiurge*) that fashions the world by the forms provided by the Ideas or Forms. According to Plato, Ideas are the Absolute Being from which the existent universe, that is, our world of sense arises. The objects of sense, for Plato, are copies of Ideas; when the image of Ideas is impressed upon matter, then there derive objects of sense. In the production of objects of sense it is not thought that Ideas are the cause of this process, for if Ideas produce objects they must also undergo changes, but Ideas, being Absolute Being, cannot be thought of this way. So Plato, in this case, imagines a designer, a creator. God, as we can put it, is the creator who with his two tools—Ideas and matter, creates the World-Soul, which is bisected

into inner and outer circles, the former of which is destined to become the planets' sphere, the latter stars'. God, the world-designer, binds matter into elements from which he creates the empty framework of the World-Soul. This is what we know as Plato's mythical opinion of creation, found in his *Timaeus*. Plotinus's order of generation resembles that of Plato, which makes no novelty in Plato's philosophy, since it is an explanation of an earlier account (V.1.8). As he explains Plato's account, Plotinus says that for Plato there is a creator, an author of the Cause, i.e., of the Intellect. This author is the Good, which transcends the intellect and from which the generation begins—from the Good, the Intellect; from the Intellect, the Soul; and from the Soul, the World (V.1.8).

### **2.3.2 Avicenna's Rejection of Aristotle's View and Acceptance of Plotinus's Doctrine of Emanation**

Avicenna, as opposed to Aristotle, agrees with Plotinus (also Proclus)<sup>1</sup> regarding the universe and all other possible beings as derived from the Ultimate Being, who is the One for Plotinus, and the Necessary Existent (*wajib al-wujud*) for Avicenna. For Ibn Sina the Necessary Existent is the Ultimate Being, which is conscious of Itself (*Isharat*, III, 1960, 279), and positing the formula that 'from one only one can proceed' (*ash-Shifa : Ilahiyyat*, 405), he postulates that the Necessary Existent is one and is what we call God.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Proclus shares with Plotinus that the soul immediately emanates from the Divine Intellect (Proclus, 1963, 169), just as Avicenna modifies it as that the substratum-matter and three forms of souls directly derive from the Active Intellect.

<sup>2</sup>One of the disputed aspects of Ibn Sina's philosophy is whether he means by the Necessary Existent that which we call God, or more specifically the Islamic God, Allah. Gardet claims Ibn Sina's Necessary Existent to be God (*Dieu*) (See Gardet, 1951, 45). Professor Nasr seems to understand the Necessary Being as God, since he uses the terms interchangeably (see Nasr, 1978, 198). Afnan also claims that Avicenna's Necessary Existent from which the emanation procedure proceeds is God (see Afnan, 1958, 116). While discussing the distinction and relation between the Necessary Existent and possible beings, he remarks, 'God is the

But to deal with the problem of how a plural universe can derive from one, Ibn Sina develops his view in the neo-Platonic fashion. The One, the Necessary Existent, by an act of pure reflection on Itself, emanates only one entity, called the first intelligence (*al-'aql al awwal*),<sup>3</sup> the first cause (*al-ma'lul*

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Necessary Existent.' (*idem.*, 1958, 125). Parviz Morewedge attempts to show that Ibn Sina's concept of the Necessary Existent does not resemble an Islamic God, separated from the world; rather, It resembles the notion of the principle of Sufficient Reason, that results in the nature of God (see Morewedge, 1970, 54/2, 234-249). Considering the Necessary Existent as highly paradoxical, Morewedge argues that It can be characterised as 'the cause of the completion of persons' or 'the cause' of the world (see *idem.*, 1972a, 92/1, 1-18, esp. p. 15). For a detailed discussion of this matter see *idem.*, 1972b, 4, 49-73; Macierowski, 1988, 79-87. Like Morewedge, Marmura shows that Ibn Sina's Necessary Existent does not possess the attributes that are ascribed to the Islamic God. Ibn Sina's God, he argues, lacks knowledge, and also the quality of knowledge, of particulars that are capable of generation and corruption (see for details Marmura, 1962, 82/3, 299-312). It is important to note that Ibn Sina in his *ash-Shifa* frequently uses the term 'Allah' to denote a supernatural, Supreme Being, which means that he depicts a concept of God in his philosophical system. Delineating the Necessary Existent as 'the First', Ibn Sina portrays Its nature as something which has no parallel, no contrary, no genus, no differentia; It can only be understood as the pure mystical intelligence (*bi-sarih al-irfan al-aqli*) [see his *al-Isharat wa-t-tanbihat*, III., 1960, 53]. The Necessary Existent for Avicenna is that from which the world (and our souls) comes into existence and in this consideration Its functions are seen to be analogous to some extent to those of God, but as the critics raise arguments that there is ample evidence that his Necessary Existent does not correspond to the religious connotation of God or Allah, for example, his doctrine of emanation in the neo-Platonic fashion cannot equate with the creation theory in the *Qur'aan*, there are also points which prove that his 'Necessary Existent' is a substitute for the Islamic God. The Necessary Existent contains no parts, each standing with a unit, and there is no multiplicity in It. In the same way he argues that the Necessary Existent is not subject to change, because whatever is subject to change (*gardish*) is also receptive to a cause but the Necessary Existent has no cause, and is not receptive to divisibility [*DNA (Ilahiyyat)*, chap. 23]. It is neither a substance (*jauhar*), nor an accident (*araḍ*), since It does not subsist in anything, nor does It relate to the existence of other things (*ibid.*, chap. 25). It is thus evident that Avicenna's Necessary Existent has neither genus (*jins*), nor species (*nau*), neither opposites, nor resemblance (*ibid.*, chap. 25). It is the primary (*awwal*) cause, just like the God of Islam, all the contingent (*mumkin*) beings (*wujud*) spring from It, and Its existence is necessary, and due to Itself (*ibid.*, chap. 28). All things in the sublunary world exist due to It in the same manner as the light of the Sun is due to itself (*ibid.*, chap. 28). If we know the nature of the Necessary Existent as Ibn Sina has stated above, then we do not find any difficulty in claiming that Avicenna's Necessary Existent represents the Islamic God. The only difference we see between It and Allah rests on the process by which the world and all particular beings are brought into existence. Allah is said to have created the world, i.e. matter first, and on matter He commanded in order to create other things including human beings. Avicenna's Necessary Existent, which is of almost the same kind in nature and degree, first creates the Intelligence from which other intellects and the material world, including human beings, come into existence. Thus, there is no fundamental difference between the Islamic God and Avicenna's Necessary Existent on the point that the world proceeds from God. How does it proceed? According to Avicenna, the world proceeds from God, the Necessary Existent as a concomitant of the divine essence, of His goodness, and He is aware of His essence, since He is Pure Intelligence (Goichon, 1937, 207). Goichon thinks that the most irreducible gap between these two concepts lies in the fact that while the procedure by which everything proceeds from God is intended or willed by the Islamic God, Avicenna's view is that everything proceeds from the Necessary Existent according to the way of 'concomitance' (*ibid.*, 207). We shall soon see that Avicenna's Necessary Existent is conscious of Itself and upon Its reflection or self-thought He emanated the First Intellect from which others emanate, which means that the emanation of possible beings is not a mere concomitance, rather Necessary Existent's will, action, or self-reflection.

<sup>3</sup>To maintain the cogency of his argument for the existence of only one God as a Necessary Being, Ibn Sina postulates that since a Necessary Being's act 'is the vestiges of the Perfection of His Essence,' and that His Essence is one, it follows that His first act is one. So from Him, it is

*al-awwal*), which is a pure intelligence, since it is a form that is not in matter. The First Intellect reflects upon itself, and consequently produces the first cause in Ibn Sina's scheme. But this intellect contains two aspects—one of necessity in respect to its source (Necessary Being) and the other of contingency in respect to itself (essence). In so far as the First Intellect is necessary, the soul of the outermost sphere<sup>4</sup> emanates from it. On the other hand, considered from the aspect of contingency, the first intellect emanates the body of the outermost sphere. The first intellect possesses both possibility and necessity, since it relates to itself as well as to God. It is a pure intellect, but not a pure unity, since it has dual relationship. Multiplicity arises in this situation, and the cause of this multiplicity is the two-fold feature of the first intelligence (Afnan, 1958, 133). The first intelligence is thus one, and, at the same time, multiple, in the sense that it possesses both necessity and possibility. While from the Necessary

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logically rendered, there emanates only one act; for two acts of emanation from Him would mean duality in His Essence, in which case He would be an agent of duality and could no longer be One or Unity, rather a compound, which Avicenna cannot consistently accommodate in his metaphysical scheme. Furthermore, the first act of emanation cannot be anything other than the First Intellect, for example, a body, for a body is a compound of matter and form, which again amounts to two causes or two aspects of one single cause. So the first thing emanated from God should be an abstract substance, and this being so, Avicenna names it the First Intelligence which he confirms by the Prophet's saying, 'The first thing God created was Intelligence.'

<sup>4</sup>Ibn Sina, like Al-Farabi, but unlike Aristotle who believes in fifty or more orbs, holds that the translunary region consists of nine celestial spheres (*ash-Shifa: Ilahiyat*, 401)—the outermost sphere or the First Heaven, the sphere of the fixed stars (Zodiac) or the second heaven, and the seven spheres—Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, and Moon. Each sphere is generated by an incorporeal intellect, and there follows a series of emanations in the spheres in conjunction with the Intellects. The following chart shows how the celestial spheres are related to their generating intellects (Nasr, 1978, 204):

Celestial Spheres	Generating Intellects
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Outermost	1
Fixed Stars	2
Saturn	3
Jupiter	4
Mars	5
Sun	6
Venus	7
Mercury	8
Moon	9

Existent only one proceeds, because if It produces multiplicity It breaks the divine simplicity; the first intellect, by contrast, produces many because it has plurality in its essence. The first intelligence, put simply, emanates the outermost sphere together with a soul and a body. In the same way, and by the same process of emanation, in Avicenna's scheme, a second intelligence and heavenly bodies emanate from the first intelligence (*Isharat*, III, 1960, 229-30), since the first intelligence has the First Cause as the object of its thought. So, we can assert that in the process of emanation, the first intelligence generates three things—the soul, which is the form of the first intelligence, the body, which is the matter of the first intelligence, and the second intelligence. The same process of emanation occurs in the case of the second intelligence. It emanates, like the first intelligence, three things—a third intelligence, the soul of the second sphere (the sphere of the fixed stars), and the body of the second sphere. Avicenna contends that the same process of emanation continues in succession until the ninth heaven and the tenth intellect is generated (*Isharat*, III, 1960, 214); and this last heavenly intellect is what we call the Active Intellect,<sup>5</sup> from which our souls emanate (*an-Najat*, 256).

The Active Intellect, the last incorporeal Intellect in the series of emanations, is such that its power cannot emanate any heavenly body, but it

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<sup>5</sup>The question arises: Why does the process of emanation of the incorporeal intelligences terminate at a certain stage, i.e., with the emanation of the Active Intellect from which no other heavenly body can emanate? The Ibn Sinan answer is couched on the idea of the finitude of the world; the world requires no more intelligence after the emanation of the active intellect, which emanates the substratum-matter and governs the sublunary region comprising substance susceptible to generation and corruption in addition to the intellect of the rational soul. Another reason why the process stops at a certain stage can be explained in terms of a hierarchical scheme. This argument runs: In the hierarchical manner, one intellect comes into existence posterior to another, and the latter of the two does not possess the same kind of power as the former. The first is higher than the second, so the first intellect is more powerful than the second one; and similarly, the second intellect is more powerful than the third intellect. The Active Intellect, thus, in the succession of emanation, reaches a stage in which its power is insufficient to generate any heavenly beings.

emanates the substratum-matter and forms for the sublunary world.<sup>6</sup> The Active Intellect emanates the prime matter (*hayula*) or the substratum-matter with four forms of simple bodies (fire, air, water, and earth) imprinted on it and the three kinds of the soul. Before it emanates from the Active Intellect, the prime matter undergoes different movements of the heavenly bodies causing 'different temperaments and abilities in prime matter,' as a result of which 'the four forms of fire, air, water, and earth are attributed to it' (Avicenna, 1973, 143).<sup>7</sup>

### **2.3.3 The Formation of the three Phases of Soul**

The Active Intellect emanates sublunary matter, sublunary forms, and intelligible thought. But not all the forms are the same, since the forms which matter receives depend upon the composition of the elements. And hence we see the variety of the forms received by plant, animal, and human bodies. At the mineral level, the mixture of the four elements prevents them from receiving life. The plant kingdom is the first in which the combination of the four fundamental elements (*anaasir*) reaches such a degree of perfection that plant bodies become capable of receiving life, a specific kind of form according to the type of the vehicle. Similarly, in the animal kingdom, the mixture of the four elements is more symmetrical and more perfect than in the vegetable kingdom

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<sup>6</sup>This emanation theory is accepted by St. Thomas Aquinas. See his *De Pontentia*, 3.16.

<sup>7</sup>Avicenna's four forms of simple bodies (fire, water, air, and earth) are analogous to Aristotle's four fundamental material elements. But unlike Aristotle, Avicenna holds that these simple bodies which are imprinted on the prime matter (*hayula*) while they emanate from above are caused by the Active Intellect. Moreover, for Ibn Sina, the materials for all these four simple bodies are common, but they differ from each other with respect to their forms. Hence, one body, for example, earth, differs from another, for example, water not through its matter, but through its form (*Compendium*, 27).



but less harmonious and less perfect than in human beings. So its reception power is higher than in plants but lower than in humans; accordingly, the animal body is capable of receiving only the animal soul, not the human soul. For Avicenna, although the four principles constitute the human body, the mixture of the four elements reaches its perfection and equilibrium in human beings; the human body, therefore, is the most suitable vehicle to possess the rational soul, as the elements are mixed in the correct proportion in man (*Av.De.An.*, 261). The more harmonious the mixture the more perfect the result, the vehicle of the soul. The soul has a hierarchy of being; the animal soul falls between the vegetative and the human souls, the latter stands between the earthly and the heavenly worlds. The plant, the animal, and the human souls emanate from the Active Intellect, and it is not possible for any other soul to emanate from It after the rational soul (*Isharat*, III, 1960, 233).<sup>8</sup> The important point to be remembered is that for Avicenna the mixture, no matter how pure or perfect, cannot produce or originate life or the soul-principle. Only when the mixture is at a certain state to receive the form of life, then is a soul, suitable for that body, 'added to it *ab extra* by way of a nexus by the World Soul' (Nasr, 1964, 38). In this sense, each of the souls is considered a faculty of the World Soul. The human soul stands at the highest level of the hierarchical order; its relation to the Active Intellect can be compared with that of the soul of each sphere to the heavenly intellect. The Active Intellect is the cause of the human soul, just as the heavenly intellect of each sphere is the cause of the existence of both the

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<sup>8</sup>This idea obviously reflects the Qur'aanic view that man is the highest creature in the world. But the Sufi poet and philosopher Rumi strays from this view, as he considers man to be evolved in the process of evolution through minerals, plants, animals, and thus he (man) can become higher, i.e., superhuman in the next step of development, since man has never become less by dying.

sphere's soul and body (*an-Najat*, 273). The souls of the heavenly spheres do not produce the human soul, for one sphere's soul cannot produce another sphere's soul (*an-Najat*, 278). Furthermore, as has already been stated, the Necessary Existent which produces a single effect cannot *directly* bring about the multiple human souls.

## **2.4 THE SOUL AND ITS RELATION TO THE LIFE-PRINCIPLE**

### **2.4.1 Aristotle's Life-Principle**

Having explained how the soul is generated, we shall now concentrate on how it is related to the life-principle. The term life-principle (ζωήν) plays a significant role in the Aristotelian conception of the *psyche*, as Aristotle precisely includes life-principle in the capacity of the organised body, of which the soul is an *entelecheia*. Our central concern here is to inquire whether bodies contain life in themselves, or life as something constituted by the four fundamental elements, or whether it is the *psyche* or something else that brings life from outside to the body, or whether life is a blending of both the body and the *psyche*. What do we mean by 'life'? Aristotle consistently asserts it is that which distinguishes the animate from the inanimate (*DA* 413<sup>a</sup>21-22). But the term 'life' is used in various senses in terms of animate beings. It is that which has power to make beings reproduce, grow, move, self-nourish, decay. As he states: Some natural bodies possess life and some do not: where by 'life' we mean the power of nourishment, growth, and decay (*DA* 412<sup>a</sup>12-15). Every

living being shares these basic characteristics, and thus, for Aristotle, life is that principle by virtue of which all living things live, whether animals or plants (413<sup>b</sup>1-3). Aristotle assigns different forms of life to different beings, mainly because the faculty of the soul differs from one kind of being to another: the faculty of plant souls is different from that of animals or humans. So, Aristotle understands the word 'life' in such a way that it does not refer to a single form: life is one thing for plants and another for animals (*DA* 414<sup>a</sup>32-33). It is not the case, for Aristotle, that when the faculties of living beings are not in full activity, for example, in sleep, the beings do not possess life. In the same context, he continues that in sleep the presence of the soul cannot be denied, as he asserts that the presence of the soul applies to both sleeping and waking states (*DA* 412<sup>a</sup>25-27).<sup>9</sup> Does it mean that the *psyche* incorporates the life-principle or *vice-versa*? This point has yet to be explored.

As an anti-dualistic approach to the Platonic body-soul problem, Aristotle sets himself against Plato's view of a material body to which immaterial *psyche* brings life, and in which the *psyche* resides. Aristotle's view stems from the criticism of Platonic and Pythagorean accounts that bodies are simply inert stuffs, to which the *psyche* brings life and motion. So, although both Plato and Aristotle treat the *psyche* as the principle of life, they have quite different conceptions of *psyche* in terms of life-principle. While for Plato *psyche* brings life to the material body, and is separable (χωριστός) from the material body, for Aristotle the defining life functions of plants (*DA* 413<sup>a</sup>25-31) and those of animals (*DA* 413<sup>b</sup>1-4) are the functions of an appropriate sort of

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<sup>9</sup>These are Aristotle's two senses of the term 'actuality' (ἐντελέχεια)—sleeping is analogous to 'knowledge' (ἐπιστήμη), while waking is 'exercise of knowledge' (θεωρεῖν).

body (*DA* 413<sup>b</sup>27-29). So although, for Aristotle, life functions that living beings possess are due to the *psyche*, ‘these functions are also the functions of an appropriate sort of body’ (*DA* 414<sup>a</sup>19-25).

### **2.4.2 Plotinus’s *Psyche* and Life-Principle**

Like Aristotle, Plotinus tends to examine the life-principle in terms of body and the four bodily components. According to him, there are no other sorts of bodies, other than these four, but none of these four elements have life of themselves (IV.7.2.7-15). For him it is impossible that life comes about by bringing the material elements together, since they are not life-giving (IV.7.2). On this understanding, Plotinus is inclined to the conviction that it must be the *psyche* which is the cause of life: life is inherent in *psyche*, in other words, *psyche* must have life ingrained within it (IV.7.2.5-6). Evidently, Plotinus rejects Aristotle’s view that the *psyche* is the completion of the organised body *sustaining*, not *containing*, life, rather his view suits traditional religious and Platonic belief that the body is corporeal matter upon which the incorporeal *psyche* bestows life (IV.7.15-18). A careful examination of the nature of the *psyche* shows that not only does the Aristotelian view of life-principle go against Plotinus, but also the Epicurean and the Stoic view, which holds that life is ‘a series of temporary groupings of atoms’ (IV.7.1-6).

### **2.4.3 Avicenna's Soul and Life-Principle**

Avicenna explains the life-principle in terms of the Aristotelian functionalist view. Considering the four Aristotelian elements of the bodies, Ibn Sina agrees with Plotinus that they are not themselves living, but adds that the mingling of the elements 'accounts for their ability to be the vehicle of life' (Zedler, 1977-78, 165-77). All the elements are necessary for the constitution of the body—fire and air, for example, enter into the formation of breath, the earthy elements hold the parts of the body together into a compacted form, the aqueous elements keep the body moist with fluids. So, each of the four elements has its special qualities (e.g., water is cold and moist) and when a mutual interaction of the qualities reaches a certain state of equilibrium it produces 'the temperament'. This argument emerges from his analysis of the nature of man in terms of the bodily components and temperament of them. In addition, our organs have temperament. In his *Poem on Medicine*, Avicenna suggests that we are susceptible to various modes of temperament because the qualities that characterise man's organs in the individual person vary—some of the qualities are more dominant than the others—for example, some are hotter, others are colder (Avicenna, 1963, 16).

Although each material element is of opposite nature, the combination of elements causes a vital possibility, because the admixture and combination of elements of different qualities, break opposition and mutual repulsion, while the constituents produce homogeneity. There is a middle state in reality between opposites called temperament, which is devoid of opposite. When the homogeneity and composition reaches a certain state, i.e., the equilibrium in a

compound, can there be a chance of developing vital potentiality in perfection (Latif, 1956, 245-54). So 'life' rests upon temperament or equilibrium. As to the question whether the soul is analogous to 'life', Ibn Sina argues that in living bodies there occur some known activities or behaviours which are the crucial factors on which we can claim that living bodies are actually alive, and Avicenna does not oppose this. But what he objects to is that 'what is commonly understood by "life" as predicated of living things is either a state of being such that the subject exhibits this behaviour, or else the fitness of the body to carry out the life functions' (Goodman, 1969b, 555-62). Neither the former nor the latter is known as the 'soul', for the soul and the aptitude to show the activities of life are not the same (*Av.De.An.*, 15). Ibn Sina is thus content to say that if by 'life' we mean what is commonly meant then the concept of life and that of soul are not the same, but "if by 'life' we mean something such that the term is synonymous with 'soul' in the sense of primary *entelecheia*, then there is no argument" (Goodman, 1969b, 555-62). He thus leaves the discussion of the point that in the latter case 'life' is simply understood by the primary *entelecheia* or *kamaal*. *Entelecheia* in this context is meant here as merely form, which animates the natural body having life potentially in it. The concepts of soul, *kamaal* or primary *entelecheia*, natural body, and life-functions are intimately connected in the philosophical accounts of Aristotle and Avicenna. But they differ from each other on the origin of the soul. Avicenna's soul, emanated from the divine sphere, the Active Intellect, is a spiritual substance, which is related to the living body as perfection; and 'perfection' here does not designate what Aristotle means by '*entelecheia*'. If the soul is an Aristotelian *entelecheia*

incapable of being separable from the body, it is incoherent to state that it is a self-subsistent substance, emanated from above, or God. The idea that a soul-principle is given by the Giver of Form (the Active Intellect) at a certain state of the mixture of the elements shows that the soul is an entity capable of being separate from the body, which it uses for individuation.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

The Active Intellect is not only the emanating cause of matter in the sublunary world, but also the cause of human thought. Here, Avicenna deliberately departs from Aristotle, who accepts no cause for matter or the world. Furthermore, the Active Intellect is the emanating cause (or the remote cause) of the plant, animal, and human souls. In reconciling Avicenna's view with Plotinus's (and Proclus's) we should point out that both of them presuppose the Ultimate Being as the one and only Being from which the emanating process begins. For Plotinus this being is the One ( $\tau\acute{o} \acute{\eta}\epsilon\nu$ ), for Avicenna the Necessary Existent (*wajib al-wujud*), or God. Avicenna's emanation theory is the process of emanation as thought, as it is found in the neo-Platonist philosophy. Although for Plotinus the intellect is the immediate cause of bringing the soul into existence, there is no inconsistency in saying that the soul is sent down by God, for the final results must refer to the starting-point even across many intermediary stages (IV.8.5). The same truth is found in Avicenna. His concept of the Necessary Existent is such that It is the source of all existence, and as such It emanates the intellect; moreover, for Avicenna, the Necessary Existent is absolutely separated from the substratum, Its essence is neither hidden from

Itself, nor separated from Itself, and therefore It is both a Knower and a Known [DNA (*Ilahiyyat*), chap. 29]. It must be considered as a conscious Being in Itself (*Isharat*, III, 1960, 279), the evidence of Its being self-conscious and self-reflected is determined in Its role with regard to the emanation of the universe and the soul. The Necessary Existent's act is an act of self-reflection. In *al-Risalat al-'Arshiya*, he portrays God as Knowledge, Knowing, and Known: 'His Knowledge, His Being Known and His Knowing are one and the same thing.'<sup>10</sup> In that the Necessary Existent (*wajib al-wujud*) is self-conscious, it resembles Aristotle's God. According to Aristotle, the Ultimate Being, God (*theos*) reflects upon Himself, which means It is self-conscious. By contrast, we find Plotinus objecting to Aristotle for claiming the self-thinking intellect to be the first principle of the universe (V.1.9), which means that for Plotinus the One (*to hen*) has no self-intellection. Referring to the One as the Good, he thinks that It has no intellection of Itself, no consciousness of Itself (III.9.9).<sup>11</sup> Although Avicenna agrees with Aristotle and disagrees with Plotinus on the nature of God as being self-conscious, he accepts Plotinus and distances from Aristotle on the emanation doctrine. As stated above, Aristotle's self-thinking mind, i.e., the Active Intellect is the First Cause of the universe. In the *De Anima*, Book II and

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<sup>10</sup>Extracted and Translated by Arberry, A. J, titled 'On the Nature of God,' in Arberry, 1951, 33.

<sup>11</sup>Plotinus reasons that the act of intellection is itself the Primal Act, so there is no need to place an earlier one. Since the One projects this act of intellection, It transcends this act. Again, the Good needs no consciousness—either of existent Good or of non-existent Good. If it is considered that It has consciousness of existence, it follows that the Good exists before without having any consciousness; secondly, if it is considered that an act of consciousness produces the Good, then it follows that the Good was not previously in existence. His point is based on the argument that all that can have self-intellection and self-consciousness should be derivative. Since the One or the Good is the Primal Cause, It cannot be thought of having those attributes which are applied to Its derivations.



*Metaphysics*, Book xii, he assumes it as the First, incorporeal, and self-thinking cause of both the human intellect and the universe, but it is not the emanating cause. At *Met.* 1075<sup>b</sup>35, he says one substance cannot be the emanating cause of another one, say, a body. His active intellect looks like the Prime Mover, identified as God, though it is controversial. Plotinus's and Avicenna's Active Intellect, on the contrary, does not identify with God. The Absolute Being for Plotinus is the Ultimate Cause, identified as God, and is the cause of the existence of the universe, and this view is supported by Avicenna in his cosmogony with a few conceptual amendments.

Avicenna also rejects Aristotle's view that what we call God is an eternal unmovable substance (*Met.* Book XII, chap. 6), for Avicenna's God, the Necessary Existent is not a substance [*DNA (Illahiyyat)*, chap. 25], as we have noted earlier in the footnote. God is a substance (οὐσίᾱ) for Aristotle in the sense that it is an entity, more generally, a non-sensible eternal entity (*Met.* 1069<sup>a</sup>30). Besides there are two other types of entities: sensible perishable (e.g., sublunary bodies) and sensible eternal (e.g., heavenly bodies). Avicenna denies the notion of substance (*jauhar*) to the Necessary Existent on the ground that It has no genus (and consequently, no *differentia*) whereas a 'substance is the genus of those things which are substances' [*DNA (Illahiyyat)*, chap. 25]. However, both Aristotle and Avicenna discard the neo-Platonic way of identifying the Ultimate Being with the Good.

The traditional religions are concerned with creation. The religious doctrine of creation of the universe *ex nihilo* found mostly in Christianity and

Islam cannot be traced in Greek Philosophy.<sup>12</sup> Unlike Aristotle, Avicenna believes that matter needs a cause, which is ontological rather than temporal, and in this view does differ from Aristotle in this matter. The Active Intellect as the ‘giver of forms’ (*wahib al-suwar*), [*ash-Shifa : Ilahiyyat*, 413; *an-Najat*, 283] emanates all the natural forms as an eternal and necessary expression of its own essence (*an-Najat*, 284). Furthermore, Ibn Sina agrees with Plotinus that emanation is a continuous and homogeneous process; the generation of the universe occurs not in time, but in eternity. Does it imply that Avicenna here endorses Aristotle’s view that the material world is eternal? The eternal must be understood here in its correct context. In a sense, the material world is eternal for Avicenna in that it has no origin in time, but it is not eternal in the same sense that God is eternal because God is necessity and the world is contingency. Therefore, matter possesses a completely different ontological status from God.<sup>13</sup> As we shall see in the appendix, Avicenna does not seem to be an enemy of the Islamic doctrine of creation, rather his emanation theory, clothed in neo-Platonic fabric, finds a marked affinity with the ‘theistic evolutionary’ theory formulated in the Qur’aanic perspective.<sup>14</sup>

A crucial point on which Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and Avicenna agree is that, although we recognise a living being by the bodily functions or some

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<sup>12</sup>For a comparative discussion of the creation-emanation problem see Appendix.

<sup>13</sup>I am indebted to Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr for this point. In my personal correspondence with him, he sent me a fax clarifying this point.

<sup>14</sup>Among those who hold that Avicenna in fact adheres to the Islamic doctrine of creation is Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who refers to Avicenna’s four terms (*ihdath, ibdah, khalq, takwin*) used to designate what Nasr calls the creation or the generation of the universe (see Nasr, 1978, 112-113; see also Nasr’s sources of reference Gardet, 1951, 65; and Goichon, 1937, 249-255). Morewedge criticises Nasr’s position and holds that Avicenna’s doctrine conflicts with the theory of Islam (see for a detailed discussion Morewedge, 1972a, 92/1, 1-18, esp. see pp. 2-3).

known types of behaviour (e.g., growth, nutrition, etc.), we should state that it is in virtue of being animated by the soul that the body functions. Aristotle explicitly asserts that the '*psyche* is that whereby primarily we live, perceive, and understand' (*DA* 414<sup>a</sup>11-13). This implies that Aristotle refers to the human soul, and Plotinus and Avicenna do not seem to disagree with this point. Aristotle's point originally goes back to the Platonic and the Pythagorean view that the human soul is the principle of life and in so far as we perceive and understand, it is the seat of consciousness (Mansion, 1978, 1-20). So the *psyche* contains two ideas—the principle of life and the principle of consciousness. And this view does not conflict in Ibn Sina, since he considers the soul as the power from which issue the life functions, though the soul is understood in terms of *kamaal*. Moreover, the concept of the soul includes understanding and willing, and this is what Avicenna delineates by the soul in his philosophy.

Plotinus remains closer to Plato. In his opinion, the *psyche* has two phases—the lower and the higher. The former is the principle of the physiological life, while the latter is the principle of the life above it. So for Plotinus 'life' is contained in the *psyche*. The concept of soul is meaningless without the notion of life. Plotinus makes it clear that since none of the four elements contains 'life' the collocation of the four elements cannot beget life. The most common viewpoint in which Peripatetic, neo-Platonic, and Avicennan conceptions of life concur is the rejection of the Empedoclean view that the soul is a compounded mixture of the material elements, and each of the elements is also a soul (Hammond, 1902, 13). Throughout their psychology the term 'life' (ζωή) represents the idea of the *psyche*. But it should be noted that, although

Plotinus assigns the life-principle to the *psyche*, he places it in the realm of the Universal Soul, which gives life to individual things—a view which is of Platonic origin and which Aristotle did not like (Inge, 1929, 218). On the neo-Platonic account, the miracle of life is the imparting of spirit (*pneuma*) from above. Avicenna finds the origin of the soul in the Islamic God and, as preoccupied with Islamic doctrine, he shares the neo-Platonic view that life-principle (*ruh*), which is dependent upon the soul (*nafs*), derives from above.<sup>15</sup> So not from inanimate physicality, but from the realm of spirit does the soul originate. In the *Canon of Medicine* Avicenna reiterates that life-form comes from God (Avicenna, 1608, 334), and this view is reflected in his theory of emanation in the *De Anima*. The life-principle and the soul are not two different entities; but it is very important to note that although life-principle is itself dependent upon the soul, they are not identical. So, both Avicenna and Plotinus go beyond Aristotle and believe that life comes from the realm of spirit—God for Avicenna, and Universal Soul for Plotinus.

In fine, both Plotinus and Avicenna concur with Aristotle that the four basic elements constitute the material body, and that the soul is not a mixture or collocation of these elements, since they do not possess the life-principle, but the soul does. What is important from their discussion is that for Ibn Sina the genesis of the soul is due to heavenly powers, and that although this genesis is preconditioned by a harmonious blending of the elements, the soul, in terms of its psychical functions, is itself distinct from and above the simple mixture.

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<sup>15</sup>There are many references in the *Qur'an* to the issue that Life comes from Allah. Quoting from the *Surah An Najm* (Stars): 'But to Allah belong the Life to Come and the Present Life' (53:25), 'It is God who gives Death and Life' (53:44).

Further, for Avicenna, of the three phases of the soul, the rational soul stands as the highest in the hierarchical order. Avicenna's counterparts Aristotle and Plotinus do not appear to have considered the harmony theory in terms of psychological functions. Plotinus and his predecessors hold that the body is formed out of material elements, but the soul, which is closely connected with the body, cannot be of any of those elements. Avicenna does not deny this view, but he claims that a harmonious mixture of the elements, which form the body, has an effect on the different phases of the soul. He thus surpasses, from this point of view, both Aristotle and Plotinus.

It is noticeable from the two chapters that the soul designates a cluster of concepts, such as growth, decay, reproduction, sensation, intellect, imagination, memory, and so on. There is no doubt that the concept of the soul is understood in terms of what it does, rather than what it is. Its activities in the living body are the only evidence of its existence in our bodies. Pleasure, pain, memory, and so forth are characterised as the functions of the faculties of the soul. Of the three souls, the plant and the animal souls stand in the lower level than the rational soul, and only when their functions are described, can we prove how Avicenna makes a distinction between the corporeal (plant and animal) and the incorporeal (rational) souls. We shall, therefore, in the next chapter, focus on these functions and see how Avicenna follows Aristotle in dealing with the concept of the vegetative and animal souls in functional terms.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### ***ON THE FUNCTIONS AND CORRUPTION OF THE CORPOREAL SOULS***

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the Platonic, Aristotelian, neo-Platonic, and Avicennan psychology the concept of the soul has been understood in terms of faculties and functions. Aristotle understands ensoulment ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ) in functional terms. In ancient Greek philosophy the soul is attributed not only to humans but also to plants and animals, but humans possess all three species of the soul—the plant, the animal, and the rational soul, and they differ from each other in their hierarchical order. This view is reflected in Plato in a systematic form, but Aristotle outlines the three parts of the soul and their faculties in terms of the living body. He considers the heart as the seat of the soul and it influences both Plotinus and Avicenna in their accounts of different powers of the soul in relation to different parts of the body. Desire, anger, fear, pleasure or pain and so on are the affections of the body and thus the body is believed to be associated with what is known as the function of the powers of the soul. In the *Timaeus* (69c-71a), Plato concentrates on the interaction of the body and the soul by attributing the soul-functions to different parts of the body. Both Plotinus and Avicenna maintain a definite scheme of faculties, mostly found in Aristotle's faculties of the soul. Avicenna makes a clear distinction between the rational soul and the non-rational or corporeal souls and it leads him to the view that the functionalist

thesis of the vegetative and the animal souls contrasts with the dualistic approach of the soul–body relation to the rational soul. In this chapter we shall see how Avicenna offers his accounts of the non-rational or corporeal souls (i.e., plant and animal souls) in relation to the Aristotelian and the Plotinian divisions of the soul and the faculties, and locates the functions of them in the body, suggesting soul's (corporeal) inseparability from the body.

## **3.2 THE FUNCTIONS OF THE FACULTIES OF THE CORPOREAL SOULS**

### **3.2.1 The External Senses of the Animal Soul**

Avicenna affirms, like Aristotle but unlike Plotinus, that animals, being able to move themselves at will, are sentient beings possessing the perceptual faculty, since sensation without motion is useless, and the five external senses make direct contact with the external world. The senses of touch and taste are both useful and necessary for animal life while hearing, sight, and smell are useful, but not necessary. Plotinus accepts Aristotle's five external senses with their own organs, except for the sense of touch which is localised only in the part of the body connected with nerves (IV.3.23). Considering sensation as an activity (ἐνέργεια) of the soul in the living body, Plotinus explains how the five sense organs participate in the activities of the soul to perform certain distinctive functions. Thus when we say we see something, it is not the eye which sees it but the seeing faculty of the soul. Plotinus therefore holds that sensation is an active process, 'a kind of force' (ἰσχυρὸς τίς) of the soul, which perceives Forms

(τύποι) known as spiritual things (νοήτα). The activity of the soul, when it penetrates the body, is characterised by sensation. It is such an active force that it impresses form on matter. Plotinus, however, points out that the basis of the process of sensation is the *sympatheia* (συμπαθεία) that pervades, in various degrees, the sensible world. *Sympatheia* emerges from the activities of the soul, which are movements in Plotinus, and hence sensation is a common characteristic of all living things.

Avicenna's account of sensation derives from his understanding of the Aristotelian notion of *aisthesis*, implicit in Plato's philosophy. Avicenna follows Aristotle in denying sensation to plants and hence for both Aristotle and Avicenna the capacity to feel pain and pleasure does not apply to them. Both Aristotle and Avicenna agree that although all animals have sensation, which is of five senses—touch, smell, taste, hearing, and sight, not all animals possess all of these. Some of them have only one, others have more than one, which is why animals differ from one another (*DA* 413<sup>b</sup>32-35). Avicenna appears to agree with Aristotle's account which considers sensation as a passive process (*DA* 424<sup>a</sup>18-<sup>b</sup>6) 'in which the sense-organs are qualitatively changed by the objects' (Afnan, 1958, 137). The five external senses of the perceptive faculty perceive sensibles of the forms of external existents which transmit their images to the organs.

In regard to the sensitive soul, Plotinus distinguishes between the perception of external objects and internal perception (IV.8.8). Following Aristotle he admits that the five external senses and the common sense (κοινῆ αἰσθήσις), being the activities of the sensitive soul, each have a separate



function (IV.3.3). The Common Sense, he argues, combines the information that is perceived by the various external senses. Plotinus insists that at the level of common sense the sensitive faculty works as a whole because it deals with the sense-data provided by the various senses (I.1.9). Even the rational faculty transmits its information to the common sense and only if the impression is passed to it by the rational faculty can the common sense be capable of making correct forms. He then, in his understanding of the faculties of the soul, talks about the representative faculty, of which, of course, he does not provide a clear explanation in his *Enneads*. The faculty, Plotinus argues, represents the intellect (νοῦς) in order to distinguish various impressions transmitted by the external senses (V.3.3). In the fourth *Ennead* (IV.4.17), he goes on to describe in detail this faculty, saying that the representative faculty, upon which various images are formed, distinguishes them according to their origin and acting point.

### **3.2.2 THE INTERNAL SENSES OF THE ANIMAL SOUL**

#### **3.2.2(a) Common Sense**

This view does not involve a sharp difference from what Ibn Sina understands by the faculties of the soul. The sensibles perceived by the five external senses are the raw materials for the internal senses, some of which are capable of perceiving directly while others are capable of doing so indirectly. Further, some of them are active as they both perceive and act while others are passive as they only perceive but cannot act (*an-Nafs*, 35). The Common Sense (*sensus*

*communis*) among the five internal senses is the first recipient of the forms of sensibles provided by the five external senses. Being capable of both perceiving and acting, this faculty co-ordinates, organises, and operates on the sense-data perceived by the external senses so that ‘it represents correctly the physical entities of the external world’ (Heath, 1992, 62). To cite Ibn Sina’s example, it is the sheep’s external senses which perceive forms; for example, the shape, form, and colour of the wolf, and these forms of empirical sensibles then are transmitted to the *sensus communis*. But the Common Sense, although capable of receiving and apprehending the sensibles, is incapable of retaining them, and it thus transmits them to the *representation (musawwira)*, the next internal faculty, which preserves images formed by the common sense and perceived by the five external senses. The function of preservation of the *representative* faculty, Avicenna holds, is precisely different from that of the reception of the Common Sense and that of the perception of the five external senses.

### **3.2.2(b) Imagination and Representation**

Another faculty assigned to the sensitive soul by Plotinus is what is in English termed *imagination* (φαντασία), which is closely related to memory (μνήμη), and is dealt with in the First and the Fourth *Ennead*. In the former, imagination is defined as ‘the impact from outside on the lower or irrational soul’ (I.8.15),<sup>1</sup> known as the ‘sensible imagination’, whereas in the latter, he mentions the ‘intellectual imagination’, a higher imagination, attached to the rational soul (IV.3.30). Imagination acts as a bridge between sensation and reasoning, and in

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<sup>1</sup>Translated and cited by Inge, 1929, 230-231; also see Shariff, 1953.

its higher stage it passes on images received by the senses into opinion (δόξα)' [V.3.2]. So imagination receives both the images of sensible objects and those of our thought, in the form of *logoi* (IV.3.30). Plotinus's view of imagination is reflected in Aristotle's definition of imagination. Imagination, in Aristotle's view, is that in virtue of which past images arise. His definition lies in offering the view that imagination is something different from both sensation and reasoning or thought (*DA* 427<sup>b</sup>14-15). In fact, the essence of his view is that it is mid-way between the two powers—sensation and reasoning. The two types of imagination of Plotinus are of Aristotelian origin. Aristotle maintains that imagination relies on sensation in the sense that without the perception of sensible forms images cannot be formed; on the other hand, the intellect is dependent on the imagination for imagination plays a key role in thought-formation and a thought arises when the mind unites several images.<sup>2</sup> In the *De Anima* (433<sup>b</sup>29), Aristotle regards imagination (φαντασία) as sensible and deliberative or rational, the former being shared by the other animals, since all animals possess the images of sense, while the latter is found in humans, since only they are capable of reasoning (*DA* 434<sup>a</sup>5-7).<sup>3</sup>

Ibn Sina accepts Aristotle's and Plotinus's accounts of the imagination as one of the internal senses. This faculty, Ibn Sina argues in accord with

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<sup>2</sup>Aristotle, *Analytica Posteriora*, 100<sup>a</sup>15-16. See for details Portelli, 1982, 122-34.

<sup>3</sup>In Plato's philosophy *phantasiai* is the term which is used frequently to mean images. The term imagination can be linked with 'the image-making faculty' (*Timaeus*, 71). He introduces *phantasia* in the *Theaetetus* (152 A—C) and *Sophist* (264 A—B) in terms of mental states as the noun corresponding to the verb *phainesthai*, 'to appear', which stands for the appearance of the mental act, occurred by means of perception, and Plato thus calls 'appearing' a blend of perception and judgment. Aristotle expounds upon this 'appearing' view and cites a case where we may experience a false 'appearance' concerning things of which we hold at the same time a true supposition; for example, the sun appears a foot across, but we are convinced that it is bigger than the inhabited world (*DA* 428<sup>b</sup>1-4).

Aristotle and Plotinus, deals with the sensible images which are preserved by the *representation* (*musawwira*), separating and combining them in accordance with its imagining, and thus this power is named as the conjecturing or the surmising faculty (*Compendium*, 63). All the imaginary figures we create fall within the function of this faculty and although the figures, for example, ‘unicorn’ are independent, their accidents and attributes are based on sensible images and thus an imagined thing resembles to some extent an individual thing (*an-Najat*, 209). He divides imagination (*takhayyul*) into ‘sensible or compositive imagination’ (*mutakhayyila*) and ‘rational or cognitive imagination’ (*mufakkira*)—the former refers to animals, while the latter refers to humans (*an-Nafs*, 36; *an-Najat*, 201). It tempts us to claim that this division of imagination is of Aristotelian origin.<sup>4</sup>

### **3.2.2(c) Avicenna’s *Wahm* and the Greek View of *Phantasia***

Next in the hierarchical order of the internal senses (*hawass batinah*), as Ibn Sina explicates Aristotle’s functions of *phantasia*, is what he calls the apprehension (*al-Wahm* or *al-quwah al-Wahmiyah*), a faculty, which Avicenna treats as the chief judgmental power, since this faculty can perceive ‘intentions’ inherent in sensibles (*an-Nafs*, 167). Intentions, which can exist both in matter and apart from it, are different from forms of the sensibles (*an-Nafs*, 200). The apprehension has the capability of apprehending whether the intention of a wolf

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<sup>4</sup>Fazlur Rahman repeatedly claims that this distinction of imagination is that of Aristotle and the faculty of imagination of Avicenna is a differentiation of Aristotle’s *phantasia*, like the rest of internal senses. Professor Portelli challenges Rahman and shows copious arguments to prove that Avicenna’s faculty of imagination is an original and significant development of Aristotle’s concept of *phantasia*. For a detailed discussion of this matter see Portelli, 1982, 122-34.

is to harm or to make friendship. This is why Avicenna regards this faculty as the judgmental power of the animal soul. Some of the properties of intentions are friendliness, hostility, pleasantness, painfulness, etc. It is that faculty of the internal senses of animals and humans which judges, according to Avicenna, that a wolf is to be avoided and a child is to be treated with love (*an-Nafs*, 166; *Psychology*, 31). The relation between sensitive imagination and apprehension is that while imagination helps to differentiate a human baby from a wolf, that is to say, the forms of sensibles (for example, the presence of a physical form of a wolf or a human baby), the apprehension faculty perceives the intentions of the two and evaluates and judges which of the two is more preferable and less harmful. However, this apprehension faculty does not figure directly in Aristotelian and Plotinian accounts of psychology, although there are some references there, to which, critics argue, Avicenna's term *Wahm* can be linked.<sup>5</sup>

Aristotle carefully distinguishes 'imagination ( $\phi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\alpha$ ) from 'opinion' ( $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha$ ), just as he does sensation from imagination, though the latter two are closely related (*DA* 428<sup>a</sup>5-15). Although sensation cannot arise without external objects, with imagination we do not need external objects, as we can make an 'imaginary' figure with our eyes shut without any reference to any external object. Imagination, thus, is possessed by highly organised animals, whereas, as he understands sensation, all animals have some sort of sensation.

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<sup>5</sup>Professor Rahman notes that according to Landauer (Landauer, 1875, 401), *wahm* represents the *doxa* of Aristotle, while Wolfson (Wolfson, 1935, 90) thinks that what Aristotle calls *phusis* is later developed into a faculty called *wahm* by Avicenna. Rahman criticises both the views and holds that the *wahm* is a differentiation of Aristotle's *phantasia* like the other internal senses. For details of this discussion see Rahman, F., *Avicenna's Psychology*, (his notes, pp. 79-83). Black shares this view with Rahman. See Black, 1993, 219-58. But Portelli shows that Avicenna's division of internal senses including the *Wahm* is a development of Aristotelian pattern and *wahm* is not a reproduction of *phantasia*, just as he claims about Avicenna's concept of imagination (see Portelli, 1982, 122-34).

Opinion (*doxa*) is different from imagination (*phantasia*) in the sense that opinion is attended by conviction or belief (πίστις), which is an act of thought and reason, for conviction implies persuasion, and persuasion implies reason (DA 428<sup>a</sup>18-23). In this context, Aristotle tends to posit that ‘imagination’ belongs to highly organised animals, while ‘opinion’ belongs only to humans, not animals, regardless of how organised they are. Avicenna, on the contrary, attributes ‘apprehension’ (*wahm*), by and large, to both animals and humans, since it co-ordinates the activities of the internal senses and both animals and humans possess these senses. Of course, in relation to humans, Avicenna insists that ‘the human estimation (*wahm*) is sufficiently autonomous as a cognitive power to necessitate its distinction from both imagination and intellect’ (Black, 1993, 219-58, see 228).

Plotinus thinks that ‘imagination’ (φαντασία), ‘opinion’ (δόξα), and ‘reasoning’ (διανοία) form an hierarchical order in an ascending scale. In the discourse of affection (παθήματα), disturbance (ταραχή), etc., he says that the higher form of imagination, that is, the primary act of imagination, which is opinion (δόξα), is attached to the rational soul; similarly also the secondary act of imagination, a product of images, is in the lower part of the organism, which he calls ‘a sort of faint opinion and unexamined mental picture’ (ἀμύδρα οἶον δόξα καὶ ἀνεπικριτοῦ φαντασία), confined to the body (III.6.4).<sup>6</sup> The latter is the imageless activity in Nature, as the Stoics hold.<sup>7</sup> So for Plotinus, ‘while the images are in the soul, their product is a disturbance in the body, namely the

<sup>6</sup>Translated and cited by Blumenthal, 1971, 54 & 93.

<sup>7</sup>What Plotinus suggests by this is that the soul is not affected by events in the body, for example, trembling, pallor, inability to speak, etc. (III.6.3).

physical sign of fear' (Blumenthal, 1971, 54). This seems to lead Plotinus to argue that opinion is the superior form of imagination, as the latter is midway between sensation and reasoning (Inge, 1929, 231).

One of the basic functions of the faculty of the *wahm*, for Ibn Sina, is the judgement of pleasure and pain that occur in accordance with agreeableness or disagreeableness of the images of objects. Aristotle, on the contrary, credits *phantasia* with the judgement of pleasure and pain; for him, perceiving a sense of pleasure or pain involves a perception of mental images which are judged by the soul as good or bad, pleasure or pain. So while Aristotle does not appear to distinguish between the perception of images and the sensation of pleasure or pain on the ground that they are operations of the same faculties, that is, desire (*ὄρεξις*) and imagination (*φαντασία*), Avicenna does distinguish the two. He says that 'an image *qua* image is neither painful nor pleasant', and therefore the judgement of pleasure or pain cannot be an operation of the perception of the image itself (*Psychology*, 82). Plotinus's account of pleasure and pain suggests an analysis of the separate functions of the soul and the body. He regards pain as our perception deprived of the images of the sensitive soul, and pleasure as the perception being realised that the image of the soul has restored in harmonious relation to the compound of the body and the soul (IV.4.19). Plotinus implies that this perception, of which the sensitive soul is aware, is an affection (*πάθη*) of the living body, not the soul, as it is the body, not the soul, which is affected by pleasure or pain. He further argues that if the soul experienced pain, pain would be felt all over the body because the soul is omnipresent in the body, but we localise pain in certain parts of the body

(IV.4.19). However, Plotinus makes it clear that it is not the lifeless body that suffers, rather the living body, i.e., the ensouled body, a sort of compound (κοινόν or συναμφότερον) that is the subject of pleasure and pain (IV.4.18). Since the affection of pain and pleasure takes place in the body, by pain and pleasure we mean physical pain and pleasure. As we have said before, for Avicenna, intentions as the objects of the *wahm* are non-material and non-sensible, and for some sorts of intentions related to appetite and affection, such as pleasantness and painfulness, it seems that, to take a straightforward example in which someone enjoys a meal or suffers pain from an injury, the former type of case is Avicennan, and the latter is relevant to Plotinus.

What the above discussion shows is that from Plotinus's point of view, it is the sensitive soul or the higher soul that perceives the affection of the body. It resembles Aristotle's and Avicenna's view that the animal soul, or the higher soul is concerned with pain and pleasure. But while Aristotle refers this affection to the *phantasia* and Avicenna attributes this function to *wahm* in terms of images, Plotinus tends to portray this affection as perceived by the sensitive soul in juxtaposition to the body. Plotinus's reference to the compound (κοινόν) in this regard shows a unity of the soul and the body with reference to various affections, which is similar, as we have seen, to his position on anger. But, at the same time, his understanding of the ensouled body in which the affection of pleasure or pain takes place enables him to argue for the soul-body dualism, because the soul, although it perceives this affection, is never affected by it. Avicenna's view is almost the same here. He, insofar as he is concerned with the faculties of the animal soul, considers whether it can act



by itself. He consistently argues that intentions are perceived directly by the soul, while forms are perceived first by the external senses and then by the internal senses, for example, *sensus communis*. Now, the intentions, which the soul directly perceives, are the functions for which the faculty of the *wahm* (of the internal senses) is to act on the objects of the external senses. This is the reason why Avicenna considers the *wahm* as the chief governing faculty of the animal soul. For instance, that the wolf is an enemy to the sheep is an intention perceived directly by the soul, but what appears at first to the sheep is the form of the wolf perceived by the external senses. The sensible images of past experience help the soul to judge the ulterior intention of the wolf. Even when the sheep is faced by a wolf for the first time, the sheep, by its instinctive judgement of images, can still ascertain the intention of the wolf (*an-Nafs*, 36-38). Thus, the body is always present for the functions of the animal soul. In this way, he proves that the animal soul cannot act by itself; rather, it acts through the body.

### **3.2.2(d)      Retention and Recollection**

The judgement of pleasure or pain by the *wahm* involves past experiences which are preserved by the faculty of memory, the last faculty, in order, of the animal soul. Avicenna calls it the faculty of retention and recollection. It is so named because its function is to preserve or retain outward forms or intentions perceived for the estimative faculty, just as retentive imagination perceives images for *sensus communis*, and again memory is called the recollective faculty (*quwwa dharika*) because it can recall inward intention conceived for the

estimative faculty when animals and humans are in need of estimation or judgements of intentions (Avicenna, 1986, 83; *an-Nafs*, 37). In the case of animals, the apprehension faculty makes use of intention with the help of recollection, while for humans the recollective faculty serves both apprehension and intellect. Plotinus, who, like Aristotle, closely connects memory (*μνήμη*) with imagination (*φαντασία*) [IV.3.31], envisages memory as the first psychic activity, which means that it belongs to the *psyche* or discursive reason (*διάνοια*). He reasons that memory always relates to time, as it is some experience of the past that is remembered (IV.3.31). Here Plotinus further adopts Aristotle's view, as he suggests that those who have a sense of time are capable of possessing memory (*DA* 429<sup>b</sup>28-30). Avicenna does not seem to be denying that consciousness of past experience is the basis for memory. But he disagrees with both Aristotle and Plotinus on the distinction between memory (*μνήμη*) and recollection (*ἀναμνησίς*). For Avicenna, recollection is the same faculty of memory. Aristotle observes that some activities of animals are very similar to those of humans, like remembering, and learning, and in this sense memory can be ascribed to both animals and humans (Cf. *HA* 488<sup>b</sup>24-26). But, he insists, humans possess more intellectual recollection than animals are capable of. Aristotle elaborates his distinction between memory and recollection by repeatedly arguing that recollection is an activity or deliberate performance, involving inference, investigation, thinking, reasoning, and hence belongs to even lower animals as it requires only a sense of time (*IIA* 488<sup>b</sup>20-22). Following Aristotle, Plotinus holds that the higher and the lower souls have memories of their own, and thus both animals and humans share memory, but

recollection is restricted to the rational soul because it demands intellectual activity, association of ideas, which only the human soul possesses (IV.3.32). For Avicenna, recollection is a power or function of the faculty of memory. Memory retrieves or recalls forms for both the animal and the rational souls, but the estimation faculty in the case of the animal soul can deal with these forms, while for the rational soul they take a more intellectual shape, as they are dealt with not only by the apprehension but also by the intellect. So recollection is a common function for both animals and humans.

### **3.3 THE LOCALISATION OF THE POWERS OF THE CORPOREAL SOULS IN THE BODY: THE HEART AND THE BRAIN**

#### **3.3.1 Aristotle: Heart — Seat of Soul — Common Sensorium**

The functions of the different faculties of the vegetative and the animal souls are referred to in association with bodily organs. We know that Plato posits a Gnostic trichotomy of soul—the rational, the spirited, and the appetitive, which in terms of their functions can be characterised as the logical, the irascible, and the appetitive respectively. He ascribes these parts to different locations in the body—the logical function is seated in the head, the irascible in the heart, and the appetitive in the liver (*Timaeus*, 69-70).<sup>8</sup> Aristotle lays stress on the heart,

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<sup>8</sup>It is believed that in primitive religious thinking the brain, the heart, the liver, etc. act, representing different notions of the soul. Apart from the souls named after the bodily organs (for example, brain-soul, heart-soul), in the primitive culture we observe the notions of the beneficial soul, the dangerous soul (the Mbua of the Rio Branco territory in Brazil), the external soul (Kongo of Africa), and so on.

The plurality of souls is also to be found in Egyptian and ancient Greek thought. Homer's concept of the free soul or *psyche*, which represents individual personality and is located in an unspecified part of the body, is one in number in the case of a person, but Homer also conceived of the body-souls—*thumos*, *menos*, and *nous*, which endow the body with life and consciousness. There appeared also the idea of the soul of the dead in ancient Greece. Like the ancient Egyptians, the Greeks believed in the continuation of the soul of the dead—

which he regards as the central sense organ, functioning with the blood or liquid distributed in the body (*De Somniis* 461<sup>b</sup>2; Cf. 461<sup>a</sup>14-25). Ross, in his *Dawes Hicks Lectures* (1957, 65), agrees with Nuyens (*L'evolution de la psychologie d'Aristotle*, 1949) that Aristotle is committed to two substances—the soul and the body, and that the ‘instrumentalist’ conception leads him to treat the soul as a distinct entity which has its seat in a particular organ, the heart. Except for the *De Generatione*, all the biological works of Aristotle testify to this doctrine. In the *De Partibus Animalium*, the heart is described as the governing part in animals, a hearth which holds the kindling fire (*DPA* III.7.670<sup>a</sup>23-26). In the same treatise he believes that the first organ to be created to which the soul is

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*psychai* (ψυχαί). In Homer the exact place of the *psyche* is in the head, while in North Eurasia, the free soul can be located throughout the body, or in the heart, the lungs, or the kidneys (Paulson, 1958, 274-76). In Jain philosophy in India there appeared a belief in countless individual souls, spreading all over the body, ‘from the tips of the hairs to the end of the toe-nails, so that it could feel all sensations’ (Parrinder, 1973, 29).

According to the Hindu view of the soul, in the beginning there was nothing, except Soul, which first identified itself by saying, ‘I am’. But being alone, it needed a partner, ‘so it made that soul fall into two parts, becoming husband and wife (*Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad*, I.4.7; I.4.3), a myth, which is almost similar to that of an original man-woman in Plato’s *Symposium* (189c). In the Sankara’s non-dualist Vedanta, the *atman* (soul) is identified with the *Brahman*, the individual soul with the World-Soul. The *Sankhya* philosophy contends that both Spirit (*purusha*: person) and Nature (*prakriti*) are co-eternal, but the *purusha* was assisted by Nature (*prakriti*), together creating the material world. Especially interesting is that the soul is believed to be within the heart, in which dwells the lord and king of all, being unaffected by good and bad actions (*Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad*, II.5.14-15).

As opposed to the Jain view the Non-dualist (*Advaita*) Vedanta philosophy, Christianity, and Islam believe in the non-duality of the soul. In the three monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—the spirit, life, and soul are thought to be created by God, although to some mystic philosophers of Islam, for example, Rumi, the soul is the Ultimate Reality and eternal like God, and thus cannot be created by God, rather it emanates from the One, the World-Soul—a view corresponding with philosophy. But as to the question whether the Spirit, the Soul, and life are identical, immortal, or immaterial there appear to be many sects in Islam with different views.

The concept of *nafs* in Sufism implies that when we speak of different characteristics of the *nafs*, we do not mean that a human being has different souls; rather, they are the characteristics of one and the same human soul. The idea that all souls are one in their origin, but they are different in different bodies, is a view closer to Judaism and Christianity. Why are the souls different when they were made initially equal without one being superior to another? The monotheist religions seem to agree on the point that through the journey of the souls from heaven to earth there came some influences of the spheres and stars on them, and they lost their originality and thus became distorted (Goldziher, 1907, 58; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, 1906, 144; Razi, 1925, ii, 391). As for the locus of the different phases of the *nafs* (soul), the Sufi philosophers ascribe that to different parts of the body, for example, *ruh* is located in the right chest just under the breast, *sirr* (inner-consciousness) in the left chest just above the breast, *khafi* right chest just above the breast, *akhfa* at the centre of two breasts, and *nafs* (in the sense of ‘self’ or ‘ego’) in the middle of forehead. In like manner, the different faculties of senses are ascribed to different locations of the body—sight in the concave nerve, smell in the two protuberances of the front part of the brain, and so on (Afnan, 1958, 136-37).

attached and in which life takes birth is the heart (III.4.665<sup>b</sup>18, see also 665<sup>a</sup>10-13). In the *De Motu Animalium* (703<sup>a</sup>28-b2), Aristotle reiterates the same view that the soul does not need to be seated all over the body; rather, there is a central governing place in the body (ἐν τίνι ἄρχῇ τοῦ σώματος), the heart, in which the soul resides and from which it governs all the remaining parts of the body. There is no trace of this doctrine in the *De Anima*, as his *hylomorphic* doctrine of the soul-body relationship does not fit this view of the soul, and hence we find no trace of *entelecheia* doctrine outside *De Anima*. In the *De Anima*, his mature view is that the cause of bodily movement lies in the faculty of desire, which depends upon imagination (*DA* 433<sup>b</sup>28-9), and imagination is based on the images ‘produced by sense-perceptions in the central organ of sense, the heart’ (Hardie, 1964, 53-72). Here, Aristotle seems to imply that the central seat of life is connected with the central organ of the body, which he considers to be the heart, as is shown in his reference with respect to animal movement (*DA* 433<sup>b</sup>21-29), ‘that which causes movement but does not move itself,’ or ‘that which moves itself and causes movement.’ But in the next line he clearly raises the point of the appetitive faculty, that he thinks causes movement in the animal soul. However, if the location of the appetitive faculty is regarded as being in the heart then Aristotle does not contrast his view in the biological works that heart is the citadel of the soul with his *hylomorphic* doctrine in the *De Anima*.<sup>9</sup> He attributes the nutritive and the sensitive souls to the heart (*DPA* 672<sup>b</sup>13-22, 678<sup>b</sup>2-4).

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<sup>9</sup>But surely there still remains a vast difference between the *hylomorphic* view of the *De Anima* and the (earlier) two substance view of the soul-body relationship.

### **3.3.2 Plotinus: Heart — Blood, Brain — Sensory Activities**

The heart (*qalb* in Arabic) has been regarded as being of great importance in these contexts by both Plotinus and Avicenna, and also their mystic followers,<sup>10</sup> for example, Sufi thinkers in Islam.<sup>11</sup> Earlier we have seen that Plotinus regards the liver as the source of desire, which involves the operation of the vegetative soul (IV.3.23). Avicenna does not seem to distance himself from Plotinus, since he attributes all the operations of the nutritive faculty of the vegetative soul to the liver. The liver regulates digestion, repulsion, attraction, retention, etc. With regard to anger, Plotinus unequivocally asserts that it stems from the heart, as the heart is the seat and centre of that portion of the blood that impels the body to undergo passion (IV.4.28). This view is found in Aristotle, who, with reference to a physicist's examination, says that anger for a physicist is a boiling of the blood surrounding the heart (*DA* 403<sup>a</sup>3-b9). We turn red in anger and

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<sup>10</sup>For details of the discussion of the heart in the mystical perspective see Lings, 1981, 45-62; Nurbakhsh, 1992, 71-109; Khan, 1973, 261-287.

<sup>11</sup>The Sufi thinkers regard the heart as one of the five spiritual substances (*latâif*), the others are spirit (*ruh*), consciousness (*sirr*), inner consciousness (*khâfi*), and innermost consciousness (*akhfa*). The heart for the Sufis is not a physical heart situated in the breast; rather, it is an incorporeal luminous substance situated between the spirit (*ruh*) and soul. The heart, being a spiritual substance, is that substance (*latîfa*) through which our humanity is formed. It is capable of grasping spiritual knowledge and thus is related to divine illumination. The spiritual heart is called in Arabic the *qalb* (revolution) because 'it is the site of the manifestation of different aspects of God, revealing a different aspect at every moment, turning (*monqaleb*) from Attribute to Attribute' (Nurbakhsh, 1992, 76). The heart is hindered by the individual self or ego (*nafs*). The Sufi thus distinguishes between them: The *nafs*, associated with the *qalb*, possesses opposite qualities of the *qalb*. The *nafs* desires multiplicity, while the *qalb* seeks for unity; the *qalb* loves God, while the *nafs* prevents it from doing it; the *nafs* is attached to the material world, contrarily the *qalb* with the spiritual world; the *nafs* is absent from God, while the *qalb* is present with God. So the *nafs* hinders the *qalb* to achieve the divine illumination (*tajalli*). But the Sufis' desideratum is to attain the divine illumination, so the first and foremost business for them is to go through the different stages of the *nafs* and to awaken the *qalb* from dark to light, as the *qalb* is the gateway to reach the *akhfa*, where the Sufi (radical Sufi) seeks union with God (*tawhid*). Vision is thus attributed not to the eyes, but to the hearts, according to a mystical doctrine (see the *Qur'aan*: XXII:46). The Sufi seeks his God not through the eyes, but through the heart, the centre of the soul. In the poem of Sufi Hallaj we thus find:

I saw my Lord with the Eye of the Heart. I said: "Who art thou?" He answered: "Thou" (Lings, 1981, 49).

pale in fear because our body's motion is caused by the blood. Further, he suggests that with passion, joy, fear, pity, and so on, there is a concurrent affection of the body (*DA* 403<sup>a</sup>16-19). That the heart is the vehicle for passion is a view shared by Avicenna who also treats it as the primary organ in which life takes birth (Arberry, 1951, 51), a possibility which Aristotle raises in the *De Partibus Animalium* (III.4.665<sup>b</sup>18), as opposed to Plato. Like Aristotle and Plotinus, Avicenna describes the heart as the seat of the appetitive faculty since it is the heart that is concerned with appetite and anger, just as the liver is connected with attraction, repulsion, etc. He also claims in Aristotelian fashion that the heart is the source of imagination and movement (Arberry, 1951, 51). Considering the desiring faculty as an element of the vegetative soul, and the faculty of anger as that of the animal soul, it is clear that Plotinus and Avicenna share the view that the physical element is implanted in the liver, whereas the animal element is in the heart.

Plotinus believes that the functions of the vegetative soul are found all over the body and these functions of growth, nourishment, and decay involve blood, connecting with the liver. Ibn Sina's view that the liver is the seat of the functions of digestion, attraction, and so on does not conflict with Plotinus's view. The vegetal principle, according to him, is the common principle of all living things because by virtue of this principle living things maintain growth and nourishment. Furthermore, growth and nourishment are maintained by means of the blood which is contained in the veins (IV.3.23), and the veins and the blood derive from the liver. But Plotinus also talks about the heart in terms of the blood. The heart is the vehicle of pure, light blood. The animal spirit is

related to the heart, a place where pure, light, subtle blood is sifted into being, and therefore is the centre of the ebullience of the passions (IV.3.23). Plotinus thus seems to suggest that the liver is the acting point of the vegetal principle and the main starting point of desire, while the heart is the seat of the passions. Plotinus, however, disagrees with Aristotle over whether the heart is the seat of the soul. For him, the blood and bile may seem to be acting as vehicles of life on the ground that they produce anger, emotions, etc., and the blood is contained in the heart, but the heart cannot be considered as the seat of the soul since trees have souls, but no blood and bile, so therefore they do not possess hearts; the heart is merely the centre for only a certain portion of blood that causes passion.

### **3.3.3 Avicenna: Heart — Breath, Brain — Nerves — Sensory Activities**

Ibn Sina is over confident in holding that the faculties of the animal soul as a whole depend directly or indirectly upon the heart for their operations. This sounds closer to Aristotle's doctrine of the heart as the central seat of the soul. The five external senses, although located in different places of the body, maintain a relation with the heart organ. The first of the senses in the order of usefulness in the body is touch, which is distributed over the skin and flesh of the body. The nerves of the body act as the instruments for this faculty. In his works on medicine (such as *Qanun*), especially on heart-drugs, Avicenna broadly discusses the importance and various functions of the heart. Put simply, Avicenna, from the medical point of view, identifies three forces in man—the vital (*hayawaaniyah*), the natural (*tabi'iyah*), and the animal (*nafsaaniyah*).



These three forces are three faculties of the living body and from these forces all the functions of the bodily organs originate. The vital faculty or force is responsible for breath and thus its function is located in the heart; the natural force governs the nutritive and the reproductive powers, and is located in the liver; and the animal force, which is located in the brain (*demaaghe*), is concerned with rational powers.<sup>12</sup> This biological analysis leads Avicenna to believe that the heart is the primary organ in the living body and thus is the source of all these functions (Gruner, 1930, 111).<sup>13</sup> The reason why he attaches so much importance to the biological functions of the heart (*qalb*) lies in the fact that the heart (*qalb*) is the organ that not only is the source of breath,<sup>14</sup> which develops from the rarefied particles of the humours (*akhlaat*),<sup>15</sup> but also is the preserver of it. In his medical accounts, Avicenna elucidates how anger, anxiety, pain, pleasure and other feelings affect the heart. In terms of smell, one

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<sup>12</sup>There is a parallel to this view in Al-Ghazali's philosophy (Al-Ghazali, 1927, 330), but Avicenna's view is reflected in Ghazali's contemporary Hugh of St. Victor (died in A.D. 1141, some 30 years after Al-Ghazali, and 104 years after Ibn Sina). Like Ibn Sina, Hugh classifies the vital, the natural, and the animal forces in man, and assigns their locations and functions to the heart, the liver, and the brain. For details see Sweetman, 1967, 274.

<sup>13</sup>The same is found in his psychological account. In the *De Anima*, Ibn Sina says: *Wa laakin yakoono al-qalbu howa al-mabdaa ul 'awal al-ladhi awal taalooqohoo behee, wa menhoo yoonafadhu elaa ghairheeh, wa yakoono alfe' fee aaDDen ukhrra (Av.De.An., 264).*

<sup>14</sup>Comparing the breath with a ray of light, Avicenna believes, in the Islamic perspective, that it is a luminous substance created by God, as his proposition can be related to the *Qur'aanic* passage:

And He (God) originated the creation of man out of clay,  
then He fashioned his progeny of an extraction of mean water,  
then He shaped him, and breathed His spirit in him (*Qur'aan* 32.8-9).

He also believes that there is only one single breath from which all other breaths originate in the heart. And it is the man's breath that suits the perfect mixture of the elements so that human intellect can manifest itself. The breath is identified with the Spirit (*ruh*), an airy subtle substance (*latifa*) that circulates in the blood (a view, also shared by physicians) and was blown by God when He created human beings.

<sup>15</sup>The humours for Avicenna are bodily fluids produced from the intake of nutrients. He identified four principal humours, each with contrary qualities—blood (hot and cold), phlegm (humid and cold), yellow bile (hot and dry), and black bile (cold and dry). The four humours are the results of the combination of Aristotle's four elements. Fire represents blood, water—phlegm, air—yellow bile, and earth—black bile. The physical and mental health of man depends on how the humours are intermixed in our body; the proportionate relationship of the humours determines a man's good health and sound mentality. See for details Gruner, 1930, 32-34.

of the external senses, he believes that the animal soul which is located in the heart can be attracted by sweet smells, while the vegetative soul located in the liver, by sweetness, because refined essences can assimilate odours, while thick ones can absorb sweetness.<sup>16</sup> This suggestion means that he treats the heart as the refined substance but the liver as the gross recipient and it also suggests that fragrant smells can have a good effect on the soul, and sweetness on the body. From this point of view, Avicenna is believed to argue that the heart, where the animal soul is located, can be a source of the nourishment for the animal soul, but the liver, for the body. As for the sense of touch, Avicenna's view that the skin and flesh is the organ of this sense can be linked with Plotinus's argument that touch is present throughout the body and in this respect the entire body acts as an instrument in the service of the soul. He also says that the nerves are the vehicles of this faculty (IV.3.23). The sense of taste, Avicenna believes, is distributed in the nerves of the tongue. Then there is smell, located in the two protuberances of the front part of the brain. The fourth is sight, a faculty which acts through the eyes, and is located in the concave nerve. Finally there is the faculty of hearing, which acts through the ears, and is located in the nerves that are found on the surface of the ear hole. Like the external senses, the internal senses, Avicenna goes on to argue, are located in various parts of the body. *Sensus Communis*, the first of the five internal senses, is located in the forepart of the front ventricle of the brain (*an-Nafs*, 36; Avicenna, 1892, 380-81), a belief that contradicts that of Aristotle, who places this sense in the heart. In the rear part of the front ventricle of the brain lies, Avicenna says, the faculty of

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<sup>16</sup>For a detailed examination of this doctrine see Latif, 1956, 245-254.

*representation*, whereas in the middle ventricle of the brain resides *imagination* (*an-Nafs*, 35; *an-Najat*, 201)—this latter opinion differs from Aristotle’s belief that the heart is the seat of imagination and memory. The *estimative* faculty resides in the far end of the middle ventricle of the brain (*an-Najat*, 202); on the other hand, in the back ventricle of the brain lies the faculty of retention and recollection (*an-Najat*, 203).

It is clear from the above that Avicenna assigns the external senses to the nerves of the body, and in the case of the internal senses, he emphasises the role of the brain. Ibn Sina thus says in the *De Anima* that the nerves start from the brain and that they flow ‘from the brain towards the heart, not from the heart towards the brain.’<sup>17</sup> All the nerves in the body are closely connected to the brain, although Avicenna points out that the fountainhead of the external senses is the heart (Arberry, 1951, 51). He is to some degree close to Plotinus in this regard, as Plotinus stresses that the nerves originate from the brain. So the source of sensation is found in the brain, since all the nerves transmit the tactile sensations and motor impulses to the brain. From this point of view, the brain is the central organ of certain psychological functions; it is considered to be that principle which determines feelings and impulses and thus the instruments are found to be linked with the brain (IV.3.23). What he implies lies in his conviction that the rational faculty does not need any physical organ to perform its actions because it is independent of the body. The crucial point on which Ibn Sina and Plotinus differ from Aristotle is the fact that while Aristotle believes in the heart being the common sensorium, which is the central organ for all

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<sup>17</sup>*Mena D-demaaghe Elai Qalbe, Laa Menal Qalbe Ela Demaaghe (Av.De.An., 266).*

conscious activities, Avicenna and Plotinus identify the brain as the operative agent behind all sensory activities, a view that Ibn Rushd (Averroes, 1954, 333) shares and modern psychologists endorse.

### **3.4 THE DESTRUCTIBILITY OF THE SENSES OF THE CORPOREAL SOULS**

Avicenna's framework of the faculties of the non-rational or corporeal souls reveals that only when the matter is present, can the external senses perceive sensations. The body is a must for sensory perception. Perception cannot occur without affection of the organs of the body, as he argues (*Av.De.An.*, 62). Avicenna rejects Democritus's view that the sensibles are figures of atoms (*Av.De.An.*, 63) by claiming that sensibles require organs or media to be able to be perceptible. Of the external senses, touch is the most important sense which perceives common sensibles, and the whole skin is tactually sentient. Avicenna assigns the heart as sentient without the medium of nerves, which is the case with regard to the brain. Again, he claims that the heart's sense of touch can be stronger than that of the brain (*Av.De.An.*, 267).

All the animal faculties, though more rational and stronger than animals', use a physical organ, and hence destructible. The cognitive imaginative faculty of the human soul needs the physical brain in cognition and it too is corruptible, by implication, since the brain in which imaginative forms are imprinted, is destructible. Imagination (*takkayyul*), although it abstracts forms from matter, cannot disentangle the forms from material attachments, and not all the members of a species can participate in imaginative actions. It plays

an important role in both dream and in waking life, argues Avicenna, as we shall see in the next chapter, in attaining the prophetic visions and religious experiences (*Av.De.An.*, 170). The most important function of this faculty, as we shall see in the next chapter, is to serve the rational soul with the prophetic dispositions in receiving revelation (*w-h-y*) [*Av.De.An.*, 177], while the lowest in terms of physiological conditions, if compared with highest truth, is its production of sexual appetite (*Av.De.An.*, 179). It also produces apparitions in dreams. This faculty can receive influence from the faculty of the intellect in man, and without the conjunction with the intellect it cannot know infinity of objects. But like all other internal senses, it resides in the brain (*Av.De.An.*, 268), and hence cannot survive bodily death. Likewise, estimation (*Wahm*), and memory (*hafizah*) are physical senses located in the brain, and hence destructible. The faculty of estimation or apprehension perceives love, hate, etc., which are immaterial intuitions. Although regarded as the highest judging faculty, the judgement of the *wahm* is not rational; rather, its actions are imaginative since it acts in connection with the imaginative faculty (*Av.De.An.*, 167). Like the imagination faculty, this faculty is also related to remembrance (*dhikr*) in using memory images (*Av.De.An.*, 165). Avicenna further extends his argument that in the case of human beings, this faculty can become influenced by the intellect. However, the ideas with which it is associated, are not rational, but rather irrational. As a principle of irrational association of ideas it performs and knows non-sensibles and unsensed things in two ways—by instinct, such as an infant's sucking its mother's milk, and by a quasi-empiricism, such as a dog's running away at the sight of a stick by which he has previously beaten

(*Av.De.An.*, 185). However, this faculty, like other internal senses, is subject to bodily impairment, since it uses a bodily organ. Its activities are suspended or weakened with the decay and debility of the body, as opposed to the intellectual faculty, which is not affected by the bodily disturbance, since its activity does not depend upon any bodily organ.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter we have seen how Plotinus and Avicenna responded to Aristotle's account of the faculties of the soul. Avicenna's hierarchical order of the faculties shows that he is more settled in the Aristotelian scheme of the soul's activities. Avicenna has clearly shown in the discussion of the two souls (vegetative and animal) that plants and animals possess that kind of soul which is dependent on the living body, since without the body the functions of the powers of their souls could not be defined. All the different functions or powers of the faculties are involved with different organs in the body, and it is obvious that it is these organs that are localised, not the powers. This provides evidence that the vegetative and the animal faculties of the soul are corrupt and thus perishable as their functions depend on the perishable physical body. So for Avicenna, the vegetative and the animal phases of the soul are physical, and hence it makes sense for him to claim that the vegetative and the animal souls cannot survive death.. On the other hand, the rational soul is spiritual since it receives its forms (intelligibles), not from the lower souls (vegetable and animal), but from above, from God, the Necessary Existent. The view that the rational faculty does not reside in any parts of the physical body is also found in

Plotinus, and in this sense both he and Avicenna disagree with Plato who in the *Timaeus* (69c-71a) assigns the discursive phase of the soul to the head, though he takes a different view in the *Phaedo*. However, Plotinus's and Avicenna's arguments for assigning the various functions of the animal soul to the brain rely on the fact that the brain is the central organ for the animal body where the functions of the animal soul are situated, and thus it would not be any exaggeration to say that the brain is the seat of the animal soul. This view greatly influenced Descartes and modern philosophy, as he holds that the soul or the mind exercises its functions, not in the heart, but in the innermost part of the brain, i.e., in the *conarion* or the pineal gland (Cottingham, *et.al.*, 1985, 340).

Now critics may raise objections as to how Avicenna maintains consistency between the localisation of the heart-brain in the physical body and the substantiality of the rational soul. What we understand from Aristotle's *De Anima* (Book I, Chap. 1) is that his concept of form and matter applies to the affections of the soul. Psychological states are not peculiar to the soul, as all the mental states necessarily involve bodily states. Imagination, emotion, recollection and so on are mental processes in association with the corresponding bodily states and processes. This suggests that he rejects the substantiality of the soul. Psychological phenomena, for Aristotle, are essentially psycho-physical, if the doctrine of *entelecheia* is applied to emotional states. Moreover, since for Aristotle the soul and the body are not two different entities, but rather one thing presenting two distinct aspects, it does not make sense to claim that the soul has peculiar functions without any aid from the body. In Avicenna's ascription of the senses to different parts of the body, he

seems, apparently, to violate his view of the substantiality of the soul. Since humans possess animal souls as well, the functions of the rational soul include, in addition to the intellect, all the functions of the lower souls, that is, the plant and the animal souls. In referring to the brain as the seat of the rational soul, Ibn Sina in fact includes the various functions pertaining to the faculties of the animal soul. In the *De Anima* (p. 268) we see him locating the cogitative (*mufakkira*) or the cognitive imaginative faculty in the brain. So Avicenna, while saying that the human soul is located in the brain, does not mean that the intellect differentiating humans from animals, is situated in the physical meat of the head. What is clear is that all the five internal senses belonging to both animals and humans operate their functions through different parts of the brain. Both man and animal possess the five internal senses which work in different parts of the physical body. So our internal senses are dependent on our body to operate their function. But we shall see in the next chapter that Avicenna attributes no physical organ to the intellect for its functions. Our intellect receives intelligible forms from the celestial intelligences, especially from the Active Intellect, and it needs no physical organ to function. 'The heart is the primary organ of the soul' means for Avicenna that the heart is the organ in the body to which the soul as the vital or the activating principle of life is attached. This view is Aristotelian. However, he does not provide any evidence that the sensory activities originate from the heart, or are controlled by it. The hollow of the heart created by God is the storehouse of the breath, the life-principle, commonly referred to as the spirit or *ruh* in Islamic theology. So by rendering the heart as the seat or the citadel of the soul, the heart, wherein is the breath,



that is, the vital force for living bodies, is thus treated as the central organ. All the five internal senses of animal and man are physical, since they operate their various functions through the physical organ, the brain. The internal senses can perceive sensibles abstracted from matter, while the rational soul receives intelligibles from God, and in the latter case Avicenna finds no location in the human body where this recipient can be located. This chapter is all about the functions of the vegetative and the animal souls. Avicenna's account of the rational soul is ultimately different from those of its two lower phases, and its functions demand an extensive explanation in Avicenna's psychology and also differ a great deal from the present discussion. We shall therefore focus on the rational soul in the next chapter.

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## **CHAPTER 4**

### ***ON THE FUNCTIONS OF THE RATIONAL SOUL AND INTELLECTUAL KNOWLEDGE***

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The cardinal issue in this chapter is the human intellect, which, Aristotle establishes, marks off humans from other living beings. The same truth is well-elaborated by his commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias, followed by Plotinus, the pioneer neo-Platonist and his Muslim successors, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, and so on. Analogously to matter and form, intellect is divided into two states—potential and actual. The existence of the Active Intellect that plays a key role in philosophical accounts of the universe and the soul is a common view for all of them. But Alexander exceeds Aristotle, and so does the Islamic Aristotelian, Al-Farabi, to whom Ibn Sina is greatly indebted for his ideas on the different states of the human intellect. Avicenna is seen to have developed his thesis on the states of the human intellect, especially the acquired intellect, which is believed to be the highest rank of all states, on the basis of Alexander and Al-Farabi's frameworks and accounts of the functions of the rational soul. This chapter focuses on how Avicenna offers his accounts of the rational soul as independent of the body, and how his views differ from those of Aristotle, though Avicenna's division of the rational soul is Aristotelian.

## 4.2 THE DEFINITION AND THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN INTELLECT

### 4.2.1 The Greek Antecedents of the Intellect

Aristotle assumes intellect ( $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ) as an aspect of the rational soul. By 'intellect' he means that part of the soul which has no other nature in itself than the power of thinking, a capacity peculiar to the rational soul (*DA* 429<sup>a</sup>21-23), in virtue of which we are *rational* animals. So, as the part of the soul, the intellect is, argues Aristotle, 'that whereby the soul thinks and conceives' (*DA* 429<sup>a</sup>23).<sup>1</sup> He lays importance on an agent or a cause ( $\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\iota\kappa\acute{o}\nu$ ) which actualises 'matter' ( $\acute{\upsilon}\lambda\eta$ ) in 'the physical universe' ( $\phi\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ) from potentiality to actuality; similarly, he accepts an operation of an agent with regard to the soul (*DA* 430<sup>a</sup>10-14).<sup>2</sup> An example of the latter's operation can be compared with light, which makes potential colours actual (*DA* 430<sup>a</sup>15-17). The intellect in the soul acts as a cause or agent in order to bring about the actualisation of its potentialities.<sup>3</sup> Now, extending the analysis of the intellect, Aristotle suggests that 'there is an intellect which is of this kind by becoming all things,' but he also adds that 'there is another which is so by producing all things' (*DA* 430<sup>a</sup>10-

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<sup>1</sup>As he says: λέγω δὲ νοῦν ᾧ διανοεῖται καὶ ὑπολαμβάνει ἡ ψυχὴ (*DA* 429<sup>a</sup>23).

<sup>2</sup>The dichotomy of 'matter' and 'cause' is found not only in Aristotle's physics but in his psychology as well. In a metaphysical way, he hints a dichotomy of potentiality and actuality.

<sup>3</sup>Aristotle here envisages an efficient cause, since, for him, an efficient cause is necessary for the transition of the intellect from matter to form, i.e., from potentiality to actuality (*Met.* 1045<sup>a</sup>30).

15)—the former is known as *potential intellect* (νοῦς δυνάμει) or *material intellect* (νοῦς ὑλικός) and the latter, *active intellect* (νοῦς ποιητικός).<sup>4</sup>

Material intellect is the initial stage of the human intellect as it is the least developed intellectual faculty in the human soul.<sup>5</sup> This intellect is merely the latent capacity of thought, that is, a capacity of the intellect which cannot start functioning without the active intellect. So the active intellect is the positive activity of thought. In other words, the potential intellect is a capacity which is affected by the intelligibles and thus becomes actualised by the active intellect. So the one acts, and the other is acted upon, and that which acts is always superior to that which is acted upon (*DA* 430<sup>a</sup>18). In this vein, Aristotle seems to indicate the separability of the active intellect,<sup>6</sup> which is a moot point for us and one on which we shall cast some light on the concern over immortality.<sup>7</sup>

What Plotinus thinks of as the divine intellect resembles Aristotle's concept of the active intellect, the cause of actual human thought. Divine intellect for him is the second hypostasis,<sup>8</sup> reflecting Aristotle's concept of the active intellect; the functions of the divine intellect are almost similar to those of Aristotle's active intellect. Like Aristotle, he thus admits that the divine

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<sup>4</sup>Commentators use different terms for Aristotle's two aspects of intellect. Some translate the potential intellect as passive intellect or passive reason and the active intellect as active agent, active mind, active reason, and so on.

<sup>5</sup>This view was fostered by Alexander of Aphrodisias (Alexander, 1887, 81).

<sup>6</sup>See for the drift of this theme *DA* 430<sup>a</sup>13 and 430<sup>a</sup>16-18.

<sup>7</sup>It is for this reason the controversy arises on the point whether Aristotle has any intention of believing in the immortality of the active intellect.

<sup>8</sup>The first hypostasis is the One or the Absolute in Plotinus account of the cosmic hierarchy, and the intellect which emanates from the One is the second, whereas the soul that comes from the intellect is the third hypostasis.

intellect is the cause or agent which brings the materiality of human thought into actuality, since potentiality cannot come to actuality without an effective principle (divine intellect) to induce the actualisation (V.9.4). The nature of the divine intellect is such that it is already in actuality and also in eternity, and thus is able to bring about actual thought in the soul. Alexander (of Aphrodisias) follows closely Aristotle and posits that there should be a distinction between matter and agent and the same distinction applies to the human intellect. Since material intellect exists, there must be active intellect (Alexander, 1887, 88).

#### **4.2.2 Avicenna's Reconciliation of the Aristotelian & Al-Farabian Views of the Intellect**

Avicenna owes a great deal to Alexander (of Aphrodisias) and Al-Farabi on the basis of whose works he offers his doctrine of the human intellect. Referring to the term 'aql for the Greek term *nous*, Avicenna contends that man, in addition to containing the natures of minerals, plants, and animals, contains the intellect ('aql) as the unique and inner principle of his being. In the treatise *On the Rational Soul*, he holds that this faculty which is called the intellect (*al 'aql*), or the rational soul (*an-nafs al-natiq*)<sup>9</sup> is capable of grasping the intelligibles, and exists in every single human being, regardless of age and bodily condition.<sup>10</sup> This raises the question whether all humans possess an equal capacity of grasping the forms of the intelligibles, as it is not convincing to say that a baby is as rational as an adult. Being aware of this fact, Ibn Sina introduces a series

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<sup>9</sup>Avicenna sometimes calls it Sacred Soul (*an-nafs al-qudsi*), or Sacred Spirit (*ar-ruh al-qudsi*), since this soul emanates from the divine source.

<sup>10</sup>Ibn Sina, 'On the Rational Soul,' translated into English by Gutas, 1988, 72-73.

of stages of the human intellect, the first of which is recognised in the Aristotelian manner as the ‘material intellect’ (*al-’aql hayulaani*), or *intellectus materialis*, the lowest level, which is devoid of the forms of the intelligibles. Avicenna calls it so, because he relates it to primary matter, which has no forms, but is the substratum of all forms (*Psychology*, 34). When a human baby is born, he comes with this state of intellect. Although called ‘the thinking part’ of the rational soul, the material intellect is an undeveloped capacity, argues Avicenna like Aristotle. This is why it is called a state of complete potentiality or absolute potentiality, which is yet to be actualised, or acted upon, by an agent. In like manner, he says this faculty is apt to receive the quiddities abstracted from matter (*Av.De.An.*, 61). Apart from the aptitude for receiving forms of intelligible objects, there are two other things that the state of material intellect needs to step up from potentiality to actuality. There should be a source of intelligibles, and an agent is required to induce the material potentiality to move from potentiality into the actual possession of forms. Since it is understandable from Aristotle’s *De Anima* that to change a thing from its potency to act needs a being which is already in act, it follows that the human intellect is caused to achieve actuality from the state of potentiality by an intellect in act. Avicenna follows Aristotle in discerning the role of the Active Intellect (*al’aqilu’l fa’aal*), which not only provides intelligibles,<sup>11</sup> but also causes our intellect to bring actuality from its potentiality (*an-Nafs*, 209; *an-Najat*, 231). Furthermore, Avicenna stresses the need for the Active Intellect in that it is the agent which is

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<sup>11</sup>Avicenna will show later that the Active Intellect is not the only source of intelligibles for our intellect. There should be essences, which are separate species like ten celestial spheres, which can provide forms for the intellect (*Ahwal*, 113).

itself actually intellect possessing the principles of the abstract intelligible forms, which our souls require (Avicenna, 1968, 127).

### **4.3 THE ACTIVE INTELLECT AND THE SOURCE OF INTELLIGIBLES: A CRUCIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ARISTOTLE & AVICENNA**

The Active Intellect for Avicenna is the storehouse of, or *thesaurus* for, the intelligibles for our intellect, though it is not the only source of intelligibles. The role which the Active Intellect plays in actualising the material potentiality can be illustrated, in the Aristotelian manner (*DA* 430<sup>a</sup>15-17), by light. Aristotle posits that it is light that causes the transition from darkness to light, i.e., from potentiality to actuality. Without the Sun, there is no light, and without light, the transition is impossible. In the state of darkness the colours exist in potentiality, but they become actual in the state of light.<sup>12</sup> The Active Intellect is like the Sun which brings about light in darkness. Just as the Sun has its own essence in act, and thus its light can illuminate in actuality, so the Active Intellect by its own nature produces abstract forms for our soul (*Av.De.An.*, 235). Avicenna regards it as a substantial form (*jawhar suwri*), free from all encumbrance with matter, and as such an independent and transcendent principle. The actuality that is brought about to the human material intellect by the Active Intellect is called the intelligible forms. So the Active Intellect in its essence contains the intelligible forms. It is related to our potential human intellect, just as the Sun is related to our eyes, which are potential percipients

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<sup>12</sup>The dark-light analogy is also adopted by Alexander of Aphrodisias. See his *De Anima: Mantissa*, 107, 31; Parallel to this is Avicenna's *Avicenna's De Anima*, 93.

(*Psychology*, 69). Just as the ray of light flows from the Sun, intelligible thoughts flow from the Active Intellect. And just as the ray of the Sun reaches the potential objects of sight, enabling them to become actual perceptibles, and the eye an actual percipient, similarly, the power emanated from the Active Intellect enters into the objects of imagination (which are potential intelligibles) in order to make 'them actual intelligibles and the potential intellect an actual intellect' (*an-Najat*, 193; *Psychology*, 69).

Avicenna's analogy of light corresponds not only to that of Aristotle, but also to his Greek and Muslim predecessors who expounded Aristotle's analogy in order to understand what Aristotle intended by referring to it. Describing the Active Intellect in the Aristotelian manner as an 'intellect in actuality,' Alexander (of Aphrodisias) compares its activity with that of light (Alexander, 1887, 107). Al-Kindi also maintains that there exists a supernatural being, an agent, that makes communications with intellect and produces human thought, and this agent he calls First Intellect, rather than Active Intellect (Al-Kindi, 1950, 356). The First Intellect for him is a transcendent thinking being. Kindi's notion of the First Intellect<sup>13</sup> as *universal intellect* can be compared to what Plotinus understands as the Divine Intellect. Concurring with Aristotle, he describes the First Intellect as the cause of the human thought, and similarly, using the light–sun analogy, he comments that the human soul is related to the Creator, just as the light of the sun to the sun (Al-Kindi, 1950, 273). The implication of this idea that the soul is analogous to light or ray has a parallel in

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<sup>13</sup>For an elaborated discussion of Al-Kindi's concept of Intellect see the English translation of his treatise *On Intellect* as translated by R. McCarthy, 'Al-Kindi's Treatise on the Intellect,' in *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 3, 1964.



the view of light in Islamic mysticism in which the soul is closely related to light.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>In the Persian terminology, by the term '*Ruh*' is meant '*Nur*'—in English terminology it could be likened to 'Light' or 'Fire'. These three terms—*Nur*, Light, and Fire—are commonly used in different texts, but almost in the same sense. In Islam *Nur* is preferred. In Arabic it is called *Nur*, light, from which the Sanskrit words '*Nar*'—man, and '*Naari*'—woman, are derived. In Christianity 'Light' is considered to be a sacred thing comprising the essence similar to that of God, Jesus Christ, and '*Atman*' in Sanskrit in Hinduism and in Indian Philosophy. So 'Fire' has both philosophical and theological significance. Let us consider how it bears numinous connotations in the popular religious traditions.

In almost every religion fire seems to be the sacred embalming of the Divine, and thus has been worshipped or venerated. In the ancient Vedic scripture, *Agni*, the god of fire, is regarded as the messenger between man and his gods. In Zoroastrianism fire is regarded as the central tenet and its followers are seen to be worshipping it as the most powerful and sacred power. So exalted is Fire that it can purify a thing. Gold is purified in fire. 'In Hinduism, *Brahman* is Fire. The Jews worshipped their God as a pillar of fire. The Christians declare that their God is a consuming fire. Fire symbolises the brilliance of the Lord. In the Bible it is said 'God is Light'. Fire stands for effulgence, illumination and purity' (Shah, Ashwin, J., 1990, 124). In Islam, fire-worship has not been described; in fact nothing except God is to be worshipped in Islam. But it is a sacred energy or essence existing in every soul, considered to have been presented to the *qalb* (the Heart) and kindled by Allah. When the Prophet Muhammad (sm) was asked, 'What is the Soul?', he answered in two words, 'Amr-e Allah', meaning 'an activity of God'. It is like power. It resides in the *qalb* but there is no physical object from which it emits all heat, all light, despite the fact that we feel warmth all over the body. When it leaves the *qalb*, the body temperature drops and everything remains aborted, useless. This is a great mystery, according to mysticism: how and from where fire enters the body and where it goes to.

I think it is pertinent here to bring one of the fundamental concepts of religion to light; '*Nur*' or 'fire' remains as inscrutable a concept as ever before, both in philosophy and religion. In the holy *Qur'aan* '*Nur*' or 'light' bears a divine characteristic. The *Qur'aan* says: '*Nur*' and the '*Qitab*' (Scripture) have been brought to you (man) by Allah to guide you (*Qur'aan*: 5:15-16). '*Nur-e-Muhammadi*' (Light of Muhammad) stands for *Nur* of Prophet Muhammad (sm). The Prophet declared that Allah had created the *Nur* of Muhammad (sm) first before He created all the creatures in *Asman* (sky) and *Zamin* (under the earth). It has been unanimously claimed that Allah first created *Nur-e-Muhammadi*, and then the *Nur* of other apostles or messengers. The Sheikh Inayat Khan compares the Soul with a ray of the Sun, and as such all Souls including those of angels and apostles are made up of *Nur* or light that derives from God. As he insists:

*Nur* is specially that light which comes from the divine Sun, the spirit of God. All Souls are made of that essence which is the essence of the whole manifestation; and the quality of that essence is that it absorbs all that is around it, and in time develops so that it will emerge into its own element, which is the divine (Khan, 1960, 117).

This '*Nur*' or 'fire', as discussed, is an essence of the Soul, and is similar to *Ruh* (spirit) in Sufism. It must not be forgotten that Allah created the spirits of all men together at one time, from which it is claimed that the spiritual age of all men is the same though one has been brought to this world prior to another. It is thus legitimate to regard our Soul as having had a common substance created by Allah, namely, *Nur*. If one dies, his *Nur* or *Ruh* ceases. This is the spiritual entity which is lost after death, and what is abandoned is physical, namely, eyes, hands, legs, flesh, blood, which are useless without *Ruh*. It returns to Allah by whom it is created after one ceases one's life. Radhakrishnan pointed out in this regard: 'The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord' (Radhakrishnan, 1988, 81).

Now let us turn our attention to the philosophical significance of fire as philosophers have engaged their thought in this crucial philosophical issue. Zeno held that 'originally there was only fire' as the ultimate reality, 'then the other elements—air, water, earth, in that order—gradually emerged' (Russell, 1961, 261). Empedocles declared these four elements in his cosmology. To Heraclitus, fire was the fundamental substance of the world. Russell comments: 'He (Heraclitus) regards the Soul as a mixture of fire and water, the fire being noble and the water ignoble. The Soul that has most fire he calls 'dry'. The dry Soul is the wisest and best' (*idem.*, 1961, 60). In the philosophy of Heraclitus, fire is an essential part of Soul and the Sufi concept of enlightened soul might be compared to the 'dry Soul' of Heraclitus. According to Thilly, Heraclitus called it sometimes 'vapour or breath—which is regarded by him as the vital principle in the organism and the essence of the Soul' (Thilly, 1989, 32-33). Interestingly

Plotinus says the Intellect provides intelligible forms for the rational soul inasmuch as the latter can receive them (I.3.5). He compares the rational soul metaphorically with a mirror, in which our intelligible forms are reflected (IV.5.7). It serves just like a mirror to catch images of forms (IV.3.11). The analogy of the 'mirror', in addition to that of 'light', has a trace in Avicenna's thought. Like Plotinus, Avicenna holds that the human intellect, when actualised, is like a mirror upon which the Active Intellect reflects its forms (*Isharat*, 1892, 129). He further draws an analogy with the eye in connection with the function of the Active Intellect. Just as the eye, if treated well, can acquire the ability to see, similarly the intellect upon training, can advance forward to a stage in which it communicates with the Active Intellect. Avicenna thus evokes both Aristotle's and Plotinus's basic concepts with a view to fitting his thoughts with theirs.

As has been stated above, the Active Intellect is the cause of the existence of the human material intellect. It causes man to acquire intellectual knowledge, so the intellect can develop from one step to another developed

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enough, according to Heraclitus all material substances are material *processes* of which fire is 'the best and the most powerful and the purest (and also finest)' [Popper, 1979, 160]. In Pythagorean philosophy, the sun is considered as the 'central fire', which is known as 'the house of Zeus', or 'the Mother of the gods' (Russell, 1961, 222). Influenced by Heraclitus, Democritus, in his thesis on atomic physics considered the soul to be a collection of smallest atoms, the same atoms as those of fire. The soul is also likened to Fire (or breath as air) in the Homeric literature. In both ancient Greek Philosophy and mythology, fire has been venerated or worshipped greatly. Plato and Aristotle also assumed the four elements, including fire, to be essential parts in the creation of the world.

It may be important to note that fire, or *Nur* as it is used in the Qur'aanic verses, is our vital force, generally considered to be the same term in almost every religion or philosophy, and has been deemed to be sacred and numinous in both philosophy and religion—living and dead. All of our life, commonly referred to as the soul, is designed for the love of Allah or God, and contains the same essence—*Ruh* or spirit comprising fire, returns to the same Divine Creator by whom it is kindled. Angels are characterised as fire. According to Moses, the Angel of God appeared to him as a flame of fire, which he is believed to have seen in the burning bush (Exodus: 3:2-6). In Islam, the Angel, who used to appear to Muhammad (sm) with the messages (*w-h-y*) of God is known as Gabriel (*Jibril*), and this appearance can be likened to the appearance of fire or *nur*. The way Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina delineate the Active Intellect leads us to believe that it is characterised as the Angel Gabriel of Allah.

stage. The Aristotelian doctrine that there must be a cause or agent that brings materiality to actuality is reflected in Avicenna,<sup>15</sup> and he designates this cause the Active Intellect (*an-Najat*, 193). Since the Active Intellect is the source of intelligible forms, it must contain in itself the forms, that is to say, it provides the intelligible thought from its own substance (*an-Najat*, 192), just as Plotinus regards it as self-complete (V.9.4). The crucial difference between Avicenna and Aristotle lies in the fact that for the former the Active Intellect is a transcendental substance from which our intellect receives intelligibles; by contrast, for Aristotle it is part of the human soul. Another crucial point is that for Avicenna, intelligible forms are received from above, the Active Intellect which makes the human potential intellect actual, whereas for Aristotle our intellect in activity is identical with its objects.<sup>16</sup> Since it emanates from the incorporeal realm, for both Plotinus and Avicenna, the Active Intellect is a self-subsistent and transcendent entity, but it is a moot point whether Aristotle claims it to be an incorporeal substance.

#### **4.4 INTELLECTUAL PERCEPTION IN THE STAGES OF THE HUMAN INTELLECT: AVICENNA'S DEBTS TO ALEXANDER (OF APHRODISIAS) & AL-FARABI**

Just as Avicenna agrees with Aristotle's division of the animal soul primarily into locomotive and perceptive faculties, so does he in the division of the

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<sup>15</sup>For Aristotle see *DA* 430<sup>a</sup>10-15, for Avicenna see Marmura, 1968, 44.

<sup>16</sup>In the *De Anima* Aristotle claims that the object of the intellect is form or essence as received from physical objects. Although the intellect is actually nothing before it thinks, it is in a way potentially the object of thought (*DA* 429<sup>b</sup>29). So it is itself an object of thought, i.e. 'that which thinks and that which is thought are the same'—a view which is entirely ruled out by Avicenna. The intellect and intelligible, for Avicenna, are two completely different things—one is recipient, and the other is that which is received.

rational soul. Aristotle means by intelligence (νοῦς) both practical (πρᾶκτικός) intellect (*DA* 407<sup>a</sup>23 ff.), which calculates the means to an end, and theoretical (θεωρητικός) intellect (*DA* 430<sup>a</sup>4, 433<sup>a</sup>15 ff.) which finds its end in itself (*DA* 433<sup>a</sup>14-15; *NE* vi ff.). Avicenna, like Aristotle, holds that the human intellect has two aspects—the practical intellect (*al-'aql al-'amali*) and the speculative or theoretical intellect (*al-'aql al-nazari*) [*Av.De.An.*, 46]. The practical intellect is that principle of the human soul which deliberately and purposively brings about certain actions in the human body. It is analogous to the animal faculties in two ways—desire, and imagination and apprehension. In its relationship to the animal faculty of desire, there arise certain states in it by which it is disposed to certain emotional actions and passions, such as shame, laughter, weeping; and in its relationship to the animal faculty of imagination and apprehension, it uses the animal faculty to deduce transitory activities and human arts (*an-Najat*, 202; *Psychology*, 32). The practical intellect, in other words, helps rational soul to distinguish the rational premises from irrational ones, and in so doing it needs the assistance of the theoretical intellect. Speaking briefly, Avicenna's practical intellect deals with human behaviour. This proposition leads him to postulate the practical intellect as that faculty which in association with the theoretical faculty, governs the faculties of the lower souls, since if the dominating activities of the plant and the animal souls persist in the rational soul, the moral tendencies in man must decline [*DNA (Tabi'yat)*, 101-102]. This aspect of Avicenna's philosophical thought seems to have an implication for the Sufi concept of *nafs*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Avicenna lays claim to the human soul possessing two planes—lower and higher, whereas the practical intellect is concerned with the former, the theoretical intellect with the latter. The practical intellect leads us to the acts of bodily nature, desire, while the theoretical intellect

The theoretical intellect, on the contrary, receives universals, or the intelligibles from above. What are the sources of the intelligibles? As we have noted, for Avicenna, the intellect receives the intelligible forms not only from the Active Intellect but also from other celestial intelligences. Since the Active Intellect is the last (and the tenth) of the series of the celestial intelligences and the Necessary Existent is the Prime Cause of all the intelligences, the theoretical intellect receives intelligibles from above, 'beginning with the Active Intellect, ascending through the other celestial Intelligences, culminating with the

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acquires knowledge from above for us: one thus turns towards the bodily requirements, the other towards the higher principles—one looks downwards, the other upwards. Aristotle's understanding of the difference between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge is worth noting here. Since philosophy, he believes, should be called knowledge of truth, it is the theoretical intellect whose end is to seek truth, whereas the practical intellect is confined to relative knowledge, i.e., actions that do not involve the eternal, rather those relative to and in the present. Plotinus's argument lies in the same line. The function of our soul is contemplation in its emphatically reasoning phase, but it has another phase by which we can understand the distinction of the Intellect in our soul. It thus has two planes—it looks towards its higher aspect and attains its peculiar being which is its intellection, and also it looks towards its lower aspect and thereby controls or governs our bodily actions (IV.8.3). If the practical intellect, according to Ibn Sina, cannot function appropriately with the aid of the theoretical faculty, the faculties of the lower planes dominate, just as in Sufism, if the lower *nafs* (the commanding *nafs* or individual self) dominates our morality declines and we tend to engage in the activities of sin, avarice, etc. To act morally, we must act rationally, i.e., in accordance with the knowledge received from the celestial intelligences. The practical intellect, which deals with this behaviour, i.e., our moral conduct, must govern the other bodily faculties. The Sufi thinkers find a parallel here to their notion of *nafs*. Khwaja Enayetpuri, a renowned Sufi in Bangladesh, preached all through his life that the most important goal of human life is to awaken his latent soul and destroy his egocentric *nafs* (self) so as to attain the compassion of God (Dastagir, 1996, 23-25). The *nafs* gradually leads one towards the path of sin, and finally veils one's real *qalb*. The five sense-organs are widely deemed as the weapons of the *nafs* that cause man to cling to the worldly things. The *nafs* activates itself through these five organs. It has a similarity with the Buddhist twelve links or '*Dwadas Nidans*'. The six organs—the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the skin and the mind are considered to be the means of attachment to worldly things in Buddhism. The *nafs*, however, has three stages:

- (i) *Nafs-e Ammara*, the commanding *Nafs*,
- (ii) *Nafs-e Lawwama*, the blaming *Nafs*, and
- (iii) *Nafs-e Motmainna*, *Nafs-at-rest*.

The commanding *nafs* (*Nafs-e-Ammara*), believed to be the lowest *nafs*, is engaged in lust, pleasure, attachment, aversion, etc. that bind a man with the material world. This *nafs* of a man always commands us to commit sin. On the other hand, man can attain, argue the Sufis, a slightly higher stage of the *nafs* by performing some essential rites, such as giving up lying, abuse, slander, covetousness, hatred, and practising virtues like charity, patience, meditation, purity of thought, etc. that will lead him to become free from committing sins, to be patient and to be able to control his will or self. This stage of the *nafs* is called blaming *nafs* (*Nafs-e Lawwama*). It is so named because it blames the *nafs-e ammara* for diverting from the spiritual path. It at times ties one down to this world, and may protect one from committing wrong. This *nafs* is the gateway to reach the *nafs-at rest* (*nafs-e motmainna*). The *Nafs-e Motmainna*, the highest stage of the *nafs*, is achieved by only the Sheikh or the Prophet.

Necessary Existent.’<sup>18</sup> As can be traced in Aristotelian philosophy, as opposed to the practical intellect, which derives particulars from the material world, the theoretical intellect receives the universal forms abstracted from matter<sup>19</sup>—it simply receives them if they are already abstract, ‘if not, it makes them immaterial by abstraction, leaving no trace of material attachments in them’ (*an-Najat*, 203; *Psychology*, 33).

The function of abstraction of the theoretical intellect is performed in different stages, for which it is divided into different levels, the framework of which can be traced originally back to Alexander of Aphrodisias’s and Al-Farabi’s philosophy. The stage of intellect with which human babies are born is the absolute potential or material intellect in which nothing has yet become actual, but which requires an agent to actualise it. As human babies grow up, the absolute potentiality develops and intellect passes from one stage to another. For Avicenna the absolute potential theoretical intellect has three stages—material, habitual, and actual; in addition, there is another different level of intellect, called *acquired*, designated as the highest level of human intellectual development. So the intellectual development takes place in a series of powers, step by step.

The first stage, the *material intellect* (*‘aql hayulani*) is a stage in which no forms have been imprinted; it is an empty potentiality, but it has an aptitude to receive the forms given by the Form Giver or *Dator Formarum*. As soon as

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<sup>18</sup>*an-Nafs*, 38-39, quoted from the translation of Heath, 1992, 64.

<sup>19</sup>In the *Nicomachean Ethics* (book VI, chap. 1), Aristotle, when speaking of the virtues of the soul, divides the soul into two parts—the rational principle and the irrational principle. A similar distinction is drawn within the rational part—one by which we contemplate invariable things, and the other by which we contemplate variable things. The former can be called scientific, the latter calculative. According to him, only the scientific part can grasp intelligible forms.

the material intellect receives first intelligibles it becomes relatively potential, a stage where a man learns the first principles of thought, but does not act accordingly, and this stage is called *habitual intellect* (*'aql bi-l-malaka*) or *intellectus in habitu*, the Greek reference to which is found in Alexander's work (Alexander, 1887, 85-86). This stage is so called, because the action of the Active Intellect becomes habituated to abstracting the intelligibles from sense impressions (Sweetman, 1967, 264). Again, man goes farther. His intellect progresses to the level where he becomes able to generate his own intellectual activity. This stage is called *actual intellect* (*'aql bi-l-fi'il*) or *intellectus in actu*, a stage of fully actualised potentiality, where he attains the knowledge of using both primary and secondary intelligibles.<sup>20</sup> It is a further stage of potentiality, and this is called 'complete potentiality'. In addition to the three stages of potentiality for thought, there is another level of intellect, which is considered to be the highest stage of intellectual development, where a person is not only actively engaged in intellectual activity, but also is present to the intelligible world. Al-Farabi characterises the acquired intellect as the highest stage the intellect at which level the human intellectual development culminates, since at this man perfects his intellect with all intelligibles (Al-Farabi, 1895, 58). Avicenna, following al-Farabi, calls this stage of intellect *acquired intellect* (*'aql mustafaad*) or *intellectus adeptus*.<sup>21</sup> In this stage man possesses

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<sup>20</sup>The intelligibles received from the Active Intellect are of two kinds—primary and secondary. The former, being self-evident, can be acquired directly by all men, while the latter by few only who possess strong power of intuition. Furthermore, some of those who acquire secondary intelligibles can acquire them directly, while others can acquire them through the operations of sensation, imagination, estimation and cogitation. The prophets, for Avicenna, acquire both the primary and secondary intelligibles directly from the Active Intellect without undergoing any process of sensation, imagination, etc.

<sup>21</sup>Bogoutdinov claims that Avicenna's framework of the powers of the intellect in steps influenced the Spanish philosopher Juan Uarte from whom subsequently Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, and so on developed their philosophy of mind (see Bogoutdinov, 1950, 25-39).

intelligible forms and does not acquire them from an external source. The above argument implies that the material intellect is present in every individual human being, since all babies are born with this; the acquired intellect, by contrast, is shared by a few only, since this stage, being the highest of all, is difficult for us to attain.

Avicenna cites here a fine illustration to clarify the aforesaid four levels of the theoretical intellect. Comparing a child's art of learning with those four levels, he postulates that a child, born with the innate capacity (or potentiality) for writing, but unable to write because he is completely unaware of the art of writing, is in a stage, which can be called absolute potentiality. With further progress he learns the rudimentary rules of writing—for example, he recognises pen, pencil, ink-pot, paper, etc.—but still he is unable to write; he is in the state of relative potentiality or possible potentiality. Then in his further development of intellect, he achieves the writing skill, but does not write, or if he does, is not aware that he is writing. This stage of the perfection of this potentiality can be called the stage of relative actuality. And finally, when he takes part in writing actively being aware that he is writing, this is the stage which can be analogous to that of the acquired intellect (*an-Najat*, 205).



#### **4.5 THE MODES AND ACQUISITION OF INTELLECTUAL KNOWLEDGE: AVICENNA FOLLOWS ARISTOTLE'S LOGIC**

Having shown that we receive intelligible forms from the celestial intelligences, Ibn Sina draws our attention to the question why, if the Active Intellect is itself in act and is the Form Giver, we sometimes fail to understand while some other people do not. His answer focuses on the point that it is the recipient of the forms on which depends how the Active Intellect would work. To receive the forms of the Active Intellect the rational soul must be prepared for it, and how much influence it will receive depends upon how much it is disposed to receive. He argues that the procedure by which our soul can acquire intelligibles or abstract concepts can be divided into three steps—rational cogitation (*al-fiqri*), intellect in *habitu* (*al-'aql al-malaka*), and intuition (*al-hads*); so our intellectual knowledge is of three modes—discursive knowledge (*al 'ilm al-nafsani*), possible potential knowledge, and creative knowledge (*al 'ilm al-basit*) [*Av.De.An.*, 243]. The rational cogitation is such that our intellect engages in grasping the intelligibles step by step in a logical process of syllogism, and the faculty which helps here is rational imagination or cognitive imagination.

The cognitive or cogitative imaginative faculty (*al-quwwa-l-mufakkira*) prepares our intellect to receive the forms from the Active Intellect, since this faculty presents images to our intellect. Our knowledge is thus a response to the stimuli of imagination, belonging to both man and animal. Referring this faculty to man as the cognitive imagination, Ibn Sina states that its function is to separate and combine the images stored in the retentive imagination. Like all

other animal faculties, this physical faculty operates through a physical body, and thus cannot survive death (*Av.De.An.*, 243). The role the cognitive imagination plays here is, as Ibn Sina outlines, to make the necessary arrangement for the Active Intellect (*Av.De.An.*, 247), and its function can be said to what Avicenna terms the intellect in *habitu*, preparing the intellect to attain other higher stages. Secondly, in addition to the function stated above, the cognitive imaginative faculty deals in a syllogistic way with the forms which emanate from the Active Intellect, as Avicenna presupposes that differentiation of the middle terms of syllogisms in our thought is the precondition of rational knowledge. This faculty engages in differentiating the middle terms of syllogisms, so that the differentiated concepts can be combined to form a conclusion (Badawi, 1947, 199).

However, that a middle term is necessary for our reason to formulate a scientific conclusion of a syllogism Avicenna owes to Aristotle. Aristotle in *Posterior Analytics* (Book 1, Chap. 6) says that the conclusion must be developed from necessary premises. We cannot acquire scientific knowledge unless the middle term is necessarily connected with the other terms of a syllogism. For example, if we suppose a syllogism in which though A necessarily inheres in C, yet B, the middle term, is not necessarily connected with A and C, then, we cannot claim that we have acquired rational knowledge. For in the above demonstration, though the conclusion is necessary, the middle term is contingent. He emphasises that if the conclusion necessarily depends upon the middle term, then the demonstration provides us proper rational knowledge (book 1, chap. 6, 75<sup>a</sup>11-15).

Adopting Aristotle's logic, Ibn Sina further argues that the function of the cognitive imaginative faculty here is to seek the images by which the intellect can prepare itself for the emanation of the abstract concepts from the Active Intellect. But he is aware of the fact that this faculty can mislead us, since, as we have seen in the previous chapter, this faculty, being located in the brain, is a physical or animal faculty susceptible to corruption and deception. In these circumstances, Avicenna speaks of intuition (*al-hads*) which is a mental act by means of which the mind explores (*yastabitu*) the middle term of a syllogism by itself. Some people have greater capacity for forming concepts (*tasawwur*) than others, argues Ibn Sina, because their predisposition (of material intellect) which precedes that (of the intellect in *habitu*) is the most powerful.<sup>22</sup> In some people the material intellect is so strong that they do not need much training and instruction in order to make contact with the Active Intellect, while some people need others' instruction. In the latter case, the middle term is obtained through instruction by teachers, who first explore the middle terms by their intuition. So in both ways, the middle term is obtained by intuition, which is why Avicenna claims it as the ultimate source of the middle terms of all syllogisms (*Av.De.An.*, 167), and those who possess the highest degree of insight are believed to have the Divine Power. Avicenna follows an Aristotelian argument that keenness of mind or acumen (*dhaka*) is the power of intuition (*Av.De.An.*, 249). And by means of this power the mind (*dhin*) spontaneously tracks down the middle term. He further adds: 'intuition is a movement with a view to hitting upon the middle term in the case where it is

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<sup>22</sup>Ibn Sina, *an-Najat*, 1938, 272-73, translated by Gutas, 1988, 161.

unknown or hitting upon the major term in the case when the middle term is already acquired' (Avicenna, 1947, 232). This argument is also grounded on Aristotle's logic, as we see him at the end of book I of the *Posterior Analytics* (chap. 34, 89<sup>b</sup>10) casting light on acumen or quick-wit (ἀγχινοῖα) as a faculty of hitting upon the middle term instantaneously. Put simply, Avicenna bases his argument on Aristotle's basic argument, but develops it into the theory of prophecy.

In fine, for Avicenna intuition in contrast with cognitive imagination, is what makes the perfect disposition for the Active Intellect to produce the middle terms of syllogisms instantaneously out of the emanation. It does not, unlike cognitive imagination, have recourse to images, since its power spontaneously brings forth the concepts. Our intelligibles thus do not originate from images, rather they are brought by intuition from the Active Intellect (*Av.De.An.*, 235). Though the cognitive imagination draws the conclusion, it fails to differentiate out of the emanation the middle terms leading to the knowledge of what is unknown. Moreover, as a physical faculty it often errs. Intuition, by contrast, draws both the middle terms and the conclusions of a syllogism from the Active Intellect and thus it is genuine scientific knowledge (*Av.De.An.*, 250). Avicenna's suggestion of the power of intuition as the Divine Power implies the prophetic knowledge, i.e., Divine Knowledge of the highest degree, which is acquired by this power. We ordinary men do not possess the highest degree of intuitive power. Nor do we all have intuition of the same degree. Some people find the middle terms of syllogisms more quickly than others. Again, some people find the truth within themselves without any teachers, while others

depend upon the instructions of those sages who receive the truth from above by virtue of their own efforts.<sup>23</sup> The prophets are those who do not need any teachers, since they achieve both the primary and the secondary intelligibles

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<sup>23</sup>With this thesis in the *ash-Shifa* Avicenna develops what Al-Farabi formulated, namely, the theory of prophecy, which is one of the basic tenets of Islam. The pioneer work of Avicenna on this subject is found in the treatise "On the Proof of Prophecies" (*Fi Ithbaat al-Nubuwwaat*), which defends the prophethood of Muhammad (sm). More receptive and keener-witted than other ordinary people, the prophets, though they reside in this world of generation and corruption like others, have greater insight into the meaning of the great mysteries of the world. (For an interesting discussion of this theory see Rahman, 1958; Marmura, 1964, 159-178; *idem.*, 1963, 49-56). The nature of the knowledge that the prophets are believed to acquire, in Avicenna's account, is closely analogous to that of the Sheikhs (*pirs*) in Sufism. 'Pir' is a Persian term meaning 'enlightened one', like the term the *Buddha*. In the West, the preceptor is called the *Sheikh*; in the Indian subcontinent, the *Pir* or the *Murshid*, and the disciple the *Murid*. According to the *Holy Traditions*, those who were associated with the Prophet were called Companions (*Al-Sahabah*), and those who associated with the companions were called followers (*Tabeyin*). Later on the followers (*Tabeyin*) had followers of the followers (*tab'al-tabeyin*), who dedicated their lives to the recollection and remembrance of God, the love of God, God being the only object of their love. These followers were later called the Sufis, and their heads are *Pirs*. So the first and the most celebrated Sheikh is the Prophet Muhammad (sm). It is admitted that the *Pir* is needed for the common people who intend to achieve success in the spiritual life since he is believed, according to the *Qur'aan*, to have attained the knowledge of the spiritual reality and to have been free from worldly desires. Thus the *Pir* is acclaimed as a guide to the true path towards mystic life. Allah says in the *Qur'aan*: "Some of My men are those who show the true path in association with truth." In a sense man's ultimate end should be to become a Representative or Caliph of Allah, since He says in the *Qur'aan*, '*Inni Jayeloon Fil Arde Khalefa*,' meaning 'man has been sent to this world as a Caliph or Representative.' It is man's fortune that he has been dignified with such characteristics and as such, only the *Pir* or the right leadership is the right way of achieving these attributes. There are a good many verses in the *Qur'aan* concerned with revealing the fact that real Representatives (*Oyaresatul Ambia*) of the Prophet will be coming into the world in different places and in different ages. The *Qur'aan* says only real spiritualists enriched with the highest faculty of intuition can realise the exact meaning of its verses; these men are called the *Awli* or the *Pir*. The saints are chosen friends of Allah and their teachings are to be followed and pilgrimage is to be performed to their shrine (*Mazar*) since in many religions it is widely believed that saints do not die but are conquerors of their souls, as seen in the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (sm), '*Ala Inna Awli Allehe La Ya Muto*' meaning 'the *Awlis* (*Murshids*) of Allah never die'.

It is believed that romanticists, pragmatists, and mystics proclaim the incapacity of science and logic to deal with Absolute Being. Conceptual thinking at bottom does not help in this matter. Spinoza, Bradley, and Bergson in the West and Dr. G. C. Dev, Sankara, and Vivekananda in the East are in agreement that an appeal to intuition apart from intellect can lead to the knowledge of God. According to Bergson, 'Life and consciousness cannot be treated mathematically, scientifically or logically; the scientist who studies and analyses them in the ordinary mathematical and physical ways destroys them, and misses their meaning. Intuition is life, real and immediate—life envisaging itself' (Thilly, 1989, 580). Like Bergson, Kant, Fichte, Bradley also stress the importance of intuition.

Although we find an affinity in terms of intuition between Avicenna's account and that of Sufism and Western philosophy, there are some fundamental differences between their thoughts. The Prophets cannot be identified with, or compared with, the *Pirs*. Though Prophets and the *Pirs* possess intuitive knowledge, and as such are endowed with the 'holy intellect' (*al-'aql al-qudsi*), the *Pirs*, unlike the Prophets, do not bring holy scriptures. Avicenna believes in the intellectual and imaginative revelation of the prophets (Marmura, 1963, 49-56) and since they are capable of receiving the highest number of intelligibles in the quickest time from the celestial realm, their depth of intuitive knowledge enables them to apprehend the messages of God. The *Pirs* in Sufism need spiritual training or instructions from their spiritual masters and this chain (*silsilla*) of *pirism* is a must. The prophets, by contrast, as we understand from Islam, receive revelation directly without any teachers or leaders. However, that both the prophets and the *pirs* possess the highest human faculty cannot be denied.

directly from the Active Intellect, while others do so indirectly, since before they receive the intelligibles they need to prepare the intellect through imagination, apprehension, and so on. So the prophets' knowledge is immediate, while ours is mediate; ours thus varies both qualitatively and quantitatively. And on this basis, Avicenna seems to show adequately that one person's knowledge differs from another's, and even it changes in ourselves.

#### **4.6 THE RATIONAL SOUL'S ACTIVITY INDEPENDENT OF THE BODY: PLOTINUS'S & AVICENNA'S CONFLICT WITH ARISTOTLE**

What follows from the above is that for Avicenna the rational soul knows through itself, by itself, not through any physical organs. He emphasises that the intellect does not use any physical organ. Now, it is plausible to argue that the soul is not conceived of as naked, capable of acting without being referred to the body. For example, the activities of growth, decay, reproduction, which are caused by the soul, can be explicable only when they are conceived of in terms of the body. Must we not, then, argue that the soul ceases its activity, or at least, its activities are damaged, with the bodily discord, severe illness, for example? Avicenna did not leave such a supposition unexamined. Having examined it carefully, he rejects it as unnecessary and untrue, for he reiterates that the soul does not need bodily use, that the soul thinks by itself, that 'the soul is active by itself, and that it nevertheless gives up its activity with the illness of the body and ceases to function' (*Psychology*, 53). In this circumstance, Ibn Sina appears to hold two categories of activities of the soul—'an activity in relation to the

body which is its government and control, and an activity in relation to itself and its principle, which is intellection' (*Psychology*, 53). The functions in relation to the body are sensation, imagination, hunger, anger, fear, sorrow, and pain. On the other hand, intellectual activities, for example, self-knowledge, self-consciousness, are the activities of the soul in relation to itself and its principles. There is no evidence of mutual interaction between these two kinds of activities: one is opposed to the other, and when the soul is preoccupied with the one, the other would be suspended. For example, fear diverts the soul from hunger. It is widely argued that during bodily illness our intellectual activities cease to function. According to Avicenna's account, this is not because the intellect is dependent on the body, but because the soul, during illness, is preoccupied with the body, and is diverted from the intellect, without the intellect being impaired. As he states: 'sensation prevents the soul from intellectual activity, for when the soul is engrossed in the sensible, it is diverted from the intelligible, without the intellect itself or the intellectual organ being in any way impaired' (*Psychology*, 54). During illness or old age intellectual activities do not deviate from intellection; rather, they are diverted to something else, and the intellect takes the help of the imagination, which uses an organ, liable to fatigue (*an-Najat*, 295). As opposed to the sensible, the intelligible gets maturity and gains strength, while the sensible gets debilitated, after a certain time, especially in old age. But why do we experience obliviousness in old age? He contends that 'it is only increased cares for the needs of the body that distracts the souls of the elderly or ill from intellectual functions' (Goodman, 1992, 161; *Psychology*, 51-4). Avicenna thinks that the faculties which use organs are subject to fatigue

and old age, and these faculties cannot know themselves, nor their organs (*Av.De.An.*, 218). The distinctive point hinted in the above is that in the case of the soul's functions in relation to the body, for example, sensation, imagination, the soul employs the body or bodily organs, as opposed to the intellect, which acts by itself. So the rational soul (*nafs-e aqlani*) does not use a physical organ. This is why Avicenna argues that the faculties of sensation and imagination perceive through a bodily organ, and therefore cannot know their own organs, nor their activities, nor themselves (*an-Najat*, 293). A peculiar parallel to this view is traced back to Aristotle's *De Anima* (417<sup>a</sup>2-6).<sup>24</sup> But the opacity of the Aristotelian notion lies in the fact that, on the one hand, he holds that sensation exists only in potentiality, not in actuality, and it becomes actual by sensible objects, on the other, he assigns sensible objects to be potential, and they become actual only by the act of sensation (*DA* 417<sup>a</sup>3-13). If a sensible object is itself potential, it is difficult to understand, how it can bring another potentiality (sensation) to actuality. Avicenna, on the contrary, does not accept Aristotle's two ambiguous meanings of sensation; and it seems that his theory of the sense's employment of bodily organs becomes more reasonable.

Avicenna is closer to Plotinus here, as there is clear evidence in the fourth *Ennead* that the latter accepts the soul's cognition of sensible objects through the instrumentality of the body (IV.7.8.2-4). Avicenna's account of the soul's activities in relation to the body reflects Plotinus's view that bodily organs are necessary for sensation and that the soul, if isolated from the body,

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<sup>24</sup>Aristotle says that 'there is no sensation of the sense themselves: that is why they produce no sensation apart from external sensibles, though the sense contains fire, earth and the other elements, which are the objects of sensation either in themselves or through their attributes' (*DA* 417<sup>a</sup>2-<sup>a</sup>5).



can have no sense-perception (IV.4.24.2-3), that is, ‘perception of things of sense belongs to the embodied soul and takes place through the body’ (IV.4.23). Both Plotinus and Avicenna oppose sensation to intellection—the former is a function of the living body in which case the soul plays the role of craftsman, and the body, of his tool, on the other hand, the latter is the exclusive function of the soul.<sup>25</sup> As Plotinus places consciousness in the soul, Avicenna contends that the rational soul is the subject of consciousness. Both Plotinus and Avicenna argue on the issue of Pure Thought that intellection, as the affection or attribution of the soul alone, would be impossible if the soul were the body, or dependent on the body.

Another contrasting point between Plotinus and Avicenna is that for the former *nous* is the separating agent in the soul, while for the latter the Active Intellect is a source of conceptual thought for the rational soul. There is a passage in Aristotle’s *De Anima* which attributes to the active intellect (νοῦς ποιητικός) the impassivity and indestructibility at old age or in the illness of the body (*DA* 408<sup>b</sup>18-26).<sup>26</sup> But Avicenna’s position is close to the traditional religious view. While Aristotle appears to fail, in his description of the functionalist view, to assign any particular attribute exclusively to the soul, Avicenna surpasses Aristotle and argues for intellectual activities, independent of the body. Aristotle leaves it open that thinking (νοεῖν) seems to be peculiar (ἴδιον) to the soul, but suggests that even it cannot exist independently of the

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<sup>25</sup>In *Republic* (517b-c), we find Plato’s attempt to make a distinction between sensation and intellection, but this attempt is merely a part of the cave allegory and it does not appropriately echo the Avicennan distinction.

<sup>26</sup>Aristotle argues that senility occurs in the body and it affects the body, not the soul, just as disease is the affection of the body, not the soul. So what is important for Aristotle is that body and bodily conditions change, but the intellect remains unchanged, and so does the soul.

body, though it be a species of the imagination (φανασία) [DA 403<sup>a</sup>3-10]. Aristotle raises the point that if there is any attribute of the soul (παθῆ τῆς ψυχῆς), peculiar (ἴδιον) to it, but not common to the body, then the *psyche* can exist apart from the body; conversely if there is nothing peculiar to the soul, it is not capable of separating itself from the body. Comparing this case with the straight line, he says that the soul is inseparable from the body, since the attributes are always conjoined with the body (DA 403<sup>a</sup>10-20). Aristotle makes no commitment that the intellect be separate from the body. Avicenna's formulation of the two activities of the soul is an attempt to affirm intellectual activities exclusively to the rational soul (*nafs-e aqlani*). So it is evident that unlike Aristotle, Plotinus and Avicenna derive their accounts from the premise that the intellectual part of the soul is separable from the body.

#### 4.7 CONCLUSION

Avicenna argues that our rational soul does not receive universals from the faculties of the lower souls, nor do we create them; rather, we receive them from above, from the Active Intellect and other celestial intelligences. The theoretical aspect of our intellect is what receives the intelligibles. This part of our intellect develops in steps, culminating in the acquired intellect, possessed by the holy prophets. Avicenna calls this mode of knowledge creative knowledge (*al-ilm al-basit*), and only a few people can have the prophetic faculty. Their intuition is capable of receiving the best influence from the Active Intellect without any instruction of others. The chief business of the theoretical faculty is not to provide the intelligible forms, but to act as a recipient of the forms supplied by

the Active Intellect. The Active Intellect bestows forms not only upon our intellect, but also upon all four forms of simple bodies (fire, air, water, and earth) at the lower stage of emanation. It brings forth the cosmic world and the intellect in act from its potentiality. It should not be conceived that the Active Intellect causes the material intellect to pass toward actuality; rather, in its emanation it provides forms to a stage, and at that stage it takes a new shape. It is for this reason that Ibn Sina holds that our soul does not create the intelligibles, but receives them from above.

Avicenna tries to prove the rational soul as incorporeal and independent of the body. How? Because the human intellect receives forms from the Active Intellect, which is itself incorporeal, the forms we receive are incorporeal. He categorically admits that the Active Intellect is a transcendental entity. And he finds this truth in neo-Platonic philosophy, confirmed in Islamic theology, as the *Qur'aan* says that it is God who is the source of intellect and who endues us (human beings) with this (*Qur'aan*: 20: 52; 20: 128). Although there is a peculiar similarity with it in Aristotle's *De Generatione Animalium* (II. 3. 736<sup>b</sup>25-28) in which Aristotle seems to treat the active intellect as an additional aspect which is divine and which enters in us from outside, his *De Anima* does not support this, and we cannot claim that Avicenna is indebted to Aristotle for his views of the Active Intellect because the two philosophers have attributed different characteristics to it. Unlike Aristotle, who rejects the emanation theory, Avicenna expresses the Active Intellect as the direct cause of all existence and theoretical thought in the sublunary world, the remote cause of which can be attributed to the Necessary Existent. Davidson reports the Active

Intellect as the vicar of God on earth (Davidson, 1992, 5). This comment, I think, bears a remarkable significance in Islamic cosmogony. Comparing it with the ray of the sun (the Necessary Existent), we can surmise that its role in bringing about the cosmic world and supplying our intellectual forms resembles that of the Angel Gabriel, who, it is believed, used to fetch God's messages (*wahi*) for the Prophet Muhammad (sm).

Avicenna repeatedly argues that the rational soul does not depend on any bodily organ. His claim rests on the fact that the theoretical faculty does not depend on any bodily organs in order to receive intelligibles; it does not need to use any physical organ (*Av.De.An.*, 216), and thus does not undergo corruption. Intelligible forms have no parts and thus cannot be located in the body. Intelligible forms are such that they cannot be divided; if they were divided, then they could be located in the body, which is divisible, because a form thus supposed to subsist in a divisible thing (body) must itself be divisible. The practical intellect, as opposed to the theoretical intellect, on the contrary, is always dependent on the body (*Av.De.An.*, 208). We have already seen that the faculties of the animal soul, discussed in the previous chapter, use bodily organs to function, and therefore cannot be treated as that which can provide perfect knowledge. In other words, all the faculties of the animal soul and the practical intellect of the rational soul are physical, and thus prone to make mistakes, while only the theoretical intellect is spiritual, capable of receiving spiritual knowledge or abstract universal forms (*Av.De.An.*, 48). The rational soul is, thus, a spiritual substance. Avicenna's arguments can be put in a single sentence: any substance receptive of intelligible forms is indivisible, immaterial,

and incorruptible. All the four stages of the theoretical intellect are separate from the attachment with the body, and thus not imprinted in the body (*Av.De.An.*, 209, 221, 262, 268). As opposed to all other faculties, only the theoretical intellect can attain self-knowledge, the peculiar characteristic of the rational soul (*Av.De.An.*, 218). It is also worth mentioning that our intellect, unlike other faculties, never gets suspended, nor does its function deteriorate in old age or illness (*Av.De.An.*, 218-219)—our intellect may for the time being be preoccupied with the body during illness, but only temporarily diverted from intellectual activity. That Avicenna proves that the rational soul is a substance because it is separate from the body functionally, leads him to enquire further whether it is a self-subsistent entity, and the arguments which Avicenna has offered are sufficient for us to claim that he firmly sets himself from the view of the soul defended by Aristotle. There is no doubt, as we have seen, that Avicenna is committed to neo-Platonic and Islamic philosophy with regard to the rational soul, and he is not an Aristotelian to this extent. Ibn Sina accepts just the Aristotelian framework of the rational soul, but he employs the neo-Platonic view of the incorporeality of the soul. His offering of the view that the rational soul does not use a body leads him to the soul-body dualism, suggesting that the body plays a role of an instrument (*ala*) for the soul. We shall see in the next chapter how Avicenna further distances himself from the Aristotelian philosophical system and grasps the neo-Platonic and Islamic views in his attempt to prove the rational soul's distinctness from the body so as to remain consistent with his proposition, held at the beginning of his psychological

accounts, that the human soul is a substance subsisting independently of the body.

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## CHAPTER 5

### *ON THE DISTINCTNESS AND THE SEPARABILITY OF THE SOUL FROM THE BODY*

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The term ‘soul’ in the title of this chapter refers to the rational soul for Avicenna, but soul in general in Aristotle and Plotinus. On the question of the soul being identical with the body, both Plotinus and Avicenna have put forward numerous arguments to show that the two things possess different characteristics—the soul is immaterial, intelligible, active, while the body is material, sensible, passive. They see the soul as the cause of change in the body without being affected (ἀπαθής) by this change, so it cannot be identical to the body, or a state of the body—a view which opposes that of the Stoics. Similarly, the soul is treated as governing or controlling the body, but not *vice versa*. The soul needs the body to function, but it does not depend on the body for its development. We shall see in this chapter that, on a common ground, both Plotinus and Avicenna argue that the body exists for the sake of the soul. In the same fashion, they take into their account, although from different platforms, that the soul needs to inhere in the body to function. The focus of their thought on this moot point is whether the soul is enveloped in the body in the same way that ‘the wine can be in the jar’. It is seen that they seem to be more comfortable with the suggestion that the soul is present to the body, as fire is present to air, and only when they are accidentally attached do they interact,

but the soul is capable of existing and functioning independently of the body. This leads Avicenna to the dualistic approach to the soul–body relationship, and in this case his arguments closely resemble those of Plotinus, for it is neo-Platonism in which he takes refuge to strengthen his claim that the soul is a substance in itself.

## **5.2 THE SOUL–BODY DISTINCTION**

### **5.2.1 The Greek Antecedents: *Psyche* is not Body**

In the fourth *Ennead* (IV.7.2), Plotinus takes pain to refute the Stoic view that the *psyche* is any kind of body. Plotinus also argues against the Epicurean view that the *psyche* is produced by the combination of atoms (IV.7.3.1-6). Against the atomists, he contends that this view violates the very unity of the soul, because the soul is what holds bodies together and is what interacts with the body, but the bodily materials, in nature repugnant to unification and to sensation, can never produce unity (IV.7.3.3-7). Against the Stoic view, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and Avicenna all argue on the same ground that it is the soul which is responsible for life in the living bodies. That for the same reason the life–principle cannot be attributed to the material elements is a common viewpoint among all of them. Plotinus and Ibn Sina grant the Aristotelian definition of ‘life’ as being capable of nutrition, growth, reproduction, etc., and agree with Aristotle that as ‘life’ is identified with these functions, and as ‘life’ is due to the *psyche*, not to the body, it follows that *psyche* is not a body, nor can



it be of any bodily nature. From Aristotle's point of view, it can be argued that life can disappear without the body which is animated by the presence of the *psyche*. Not only is the animation of a body attributed to the soul in the Aristotelian notion of the *psyche*, but also, as we shall see later, the power of feeling, perceiving, thinking, etc. This is reflected in Plotinus's and Avicenna's psychology. In addition to what Aristotle says in terms of life, his *entelecheia* view also leaves a strong criticism against the Stoic view.

### **5.2.2 Avicenna's View of Soul–Body Distinction**

According to the *entelecheia* doctrine, the body is not the actuality of the soul, but the soul is the actuality of the body. From this point of view, Aristotle argues that those who hold that the soul neither is body nor exists without body are right (*DA* 414<sup>a</sup>19).

Like Aristotle, Avicenna holds that the soul is not the body, but the perfection (*kamaal*) of the body.<sup>1</sup> In the *ash-Shifa*, Ibn Sina points out that there exists a soul, which gives rise to all the functions of the body. So when we observe bodies performing functions, such as feeling, growing, reproducing, we cannot claim that these things take place on account of their being bodies. Rather, it is the soul that causes these things, apart from physicality (*Av.De.An.*, 5). For Avicenna, things which are observed to have a soul, must be bodies and exist as they are potentially. For example, plants and animals live actually as plants and animals only because of the soul they possess. It follows, then, that it

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<sup>1</sup>*Wa Howa Kamaal ul-Jesme men haithu Howa Majanah Wa Howa Ghair ul-Jesme (Av.De.An., 254).*

is cogent to argue that the soul itself is not a body, but a constituent part of plants and animals, either a form or something like one, or a “principle of realization”, a *kamaal (entelecheia)* [*Av.De.An.*, 6]. Avicenna distinguishes two types of constituents—some which enable a thing to be what it is actually, and others, which are potential. The former type of constituents is called form, while the latter plays the role of material. Avicenna, in this connection, classifies the soul as the power, because it causes perception in plants and animals as a form, because in relation to matter this power composes the material substance of a plant or animal, and as an *entelecheia* because it has a role in realising the genus as higher and lower determinate species (*Av.De.An.*, 6).

### **5.2.3 Plotinus and Avicenna: A Dualistic Approach**

From the foregoing, on Avicenna’s understanding of the soul–body relation, the soul is not the same as what we know to be the body. In the *Shifa*, he thus clearly states that ‘the soul is something other than the body’ (*Av.De.An.*, 16). This dualistic tendency is not new in the Avicennan psychology. In ancient Indian philosophy this dualism was strictly maintained. The Buddha denies that the soul is identical with the body or *vice versa*. In the philosophy of Plato and Plotinus we also notice a significant attempt to distinguish the soul from the body; they are contrary to each other in their nature and constituents. The soul, according to Avicenna, needs a particular body for its individuation, but the rational soul does not need the body to exist, for the reason that the rational soul acts without the body and that the rational soul survives the death of the body—

a view which is also shared in modern times by Descartes, who has much in common with Avicenna on the issue of the soul–body relation.<sup>2</sup> Avicenna, like Descartes, is an exponent of body–soul dualism, which was strongly formulated in the *Phaedo* by Plato and supported in the *Enneads* by Plotinus. Avicenna’s dualistic approach can be observed in his allegories in which the soul is characterised as captive in the body, and in the context of the ‘Flying Man’ argument which expresses that a man is aware of his existence as self-conscious, even if he is stripped of all sensation of bodily conditions (*Av.De.An.*, 16). This dualistic approach to the body–soul relation is not present in the *De Anima* of Aristotle, for he does not seem to hold that the two aspects of the living organism—soul and body—are two separate entities.

The emanation doctrine also causes some peculiar characteristics of the soul that distinguish it from the body. For Plotinus the One is the source of all things, and the material world has no independent cause; it ultimately derives directly or indirectly through the soul, from the One. The soul thus has priority over the body, the material world. Ibn Sina’s emanation doctrine suggests that the being of the soul emanates from something different from the body and bodily functions; for the body is only its accidental cause, not necessary cause. Avicenna does not agree here with Aristotle. In the close relationship of the body and the soul, Aristotle contends, the soul is the complete expression of the body; the soul sums up all that the body is to be. Thus, for Aristotle, the body is the necessary condition of the soul, since only through the body can the soul express itself. Avicenna also rejects the view of the body as being the material

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<sup>2</sup>For details see Druart, 1988, 27-49.

or the receptive cause of the soul, for the soul, he argues, is not imprinted in the body.

One of the chief concerns in the Plotinian account of soul–body distinction is that the soul is simple and is not compound, while the body is so. Plotinus elaborates this in terms of quality, quantity, change, movement, growth, etc. The objects of the soul like virtue, justice, wisdom are eternal and unchanging, like the concepts of geometry, and thus these cannot be the objects of the body, which is a thing of flux (IV.7.8). For Plotinus the psychic functions of enlivening, remembering, perceiving are caused by the *psyche*, not by the body. And so he claims that the *psyche* possesses life of itself. The psychic functions of memory and recognition entail our stable identity and the evidence of the psychic functions proves that the soul is not the body; if it were the body, it would be impossible to account for this identity, for the body is subject to continuous flux and is not stable (IV.7.8), while the soul is a unified entity. Plotinus and Ibn Sina are unanimous in holding that the soul is the agent of the bodily changes. The body is changed by the soul's action, as growth in the body is caused by part of the soul, but in causing growth in the body, the soul does not itself grow (IV.7.5), for the activities of the soul are different from the various changes produced by these activities (O'Meara, 1995, 30-31). This ambiguity of the Plotinian distinction between soul's action and bodily change in part derives from Aristotle, who links changes to imperfection or incompleteness, and activity, to perfection or completion. The implication of Plotinus's distinction expresses a difference between imperfect bodily changes and 'a perfect functioning characteristic of soul' (O'Meara, 1995, 31).

Turning to the psychic functions, both Plotinus and Avicenna share the view that the psychic functions such as memory, recognition, sense-perception must be attributed to the permanence of the soul, not to the body, which is subject to loss and replacement, and incapable of self-organisation. The body, which is corporeal, is incapable of retaining a unity of impressions, because its actions are restricted by its specific qualities (IV.7.4). The soul, by contrast, as an incorporeal entity, is capable of doing all sorts of different things in different living beings (IV.7.4). From this point of view, Plotinus treats the soul as a principle of motion and change (IV.7.5). This reflects Plato's notion of motion. Plato in the *Phaedrus* (245e) considers the soul as the source of all bodily movement and change. The soul, characterised as the self-mover, is the first principle of motion for all other things that are moved (245c) and what is a self-mover is imperishable; since the soul is the self-mover, it is imperishable (245d). Plotinus also argues that as an incorporeal soul is necessary for memory to be meaningful, sense-perception is also impossible if we do not conceive of the soul as its seat. What he focuses on here is the notion of a permanent recipient of sensation which is everywhere the same (IV.7.7), because there can be no sense-perception without a unitary recipient (IV.7.6). It testifies, Plotinus corroborates, that the soul, as the principle of sense-perception, cannot be the body or of bodily nature (IV.7.7). With reference to pure thought (*νόησις*), Plotinus believes that 'the intellectual act would similarly be impossible if the soul were any form of body' (IV.7.8.1-2). He argues that as sensation exists for sense objects, so does intellection for the intellectual object. Beauty, justice, virtue are things without magnitude; body, on the contrary, is a thing of

magnitude. ‘How,’ he asks, ‘then, can a thing of magnitude know a thing that has no magnitude, or how can the partless be known by means of what has parts’ (IV.7.8)? For Plotinus, the principle of intellection must know itself by virtue of being, or becoming, free from body (IV.7.8). Against materialists, who hold that all intellection deals with the ideal forms in matter, he argues that it always takes place by abstraction from the body, and in this case he considers the *nous* as the separating agent. For he insists that the process by which we abstract the concepts of geometry, such as circle, triangle, line, or point, must be carried through by the soul, not by matter of any kind (IV.7.8). For the sake of brevity, in Plotinus’s opinion, the objects of the soul’s contemplation, virtue, and other intellectual forms are eternal and must have an author or a source. As the soul is occupied with these objects, ‘the soul’s contemplation must be of the eternal and unchanging, like the concepts of geometry,’ and thus these objects are not bodies, for Plotinus supposes that the recipient must be of equivalent nature to the received. He then reiterates that, since all body-nature lacks permanence and is a thing of flux, the soul cannot be body (IV.7.8).

From the Avicennan point of view, we can see that he makes a similar contribution to the understanding of soul–body distinction. There is no doubt that certain bodies nourish, grow, reproduce, but it is not the case, for Avicenna, that these functions arise in the bodies by virtue of their physicality; rather, in their essences there are principles that are responsible for these actions. According to Avicenna, it is the soul that gives rise to such actions. So, all motion is to be assigned to the soul as a prime mover—a view which is shared with Aristotle’s physics. Avicenna describes motion in the same fashion as he

defines the soul. He holds motion as the ‘first actuality or perfection of that which is in potentiality in that respect in which it is potential’ (*an-Najat*, 105). This is the Aristotelian notion of motion (*Physics* III. 201<sup>a</sup>10). As we have suggested, motion cannot be a generic attribute of body. The observations that fire moves upwards, water downwards, etc. might lead one to suppose that matter possesses intrinsic motions, but on Avicennan understanding, ‘such motions do not express the sheer physicality of the bodies involved (since not every body shares them) but rather reflect the organisational structure of the matter in question and so express not its *material* but its *formal* character, analogous to soul in the human case, and derived (on Neoplatonic assumptions) from the overarching World-Soul.’<sup>3</sup> The notion that the soul initiates motions in matter presupposes the inertness or passivity of matter. Similarly, it leads us to conceive of the soul, as Goodman puts it, as ‘a ghostly substance whose physicality is denied in the same breath that assigns it location, spatio-temporal dimensions, and even a misty, almost palpable presence to imagination’ (Goodman, 1992, 154). Surely, this is a quasi-physical conception of the soul that corresponds with the ancient philosophical and religious view. Over and above this, the notion of the soul as a prime mover of matter shows an analogy between ‘the soul of a living being and any source or cause of movement’ (Goodman, 1992, 153). There follows a suggestion that bodies would not exist or act if there were no soul—a theme which Avicenna appears to have shared with neo-Platonism. That the soul is the self-mover is also found in Plato (*Phaedrus* 245e).

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<sup>3</sup>Cf. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De Anima*, 1, 9-15, tr., Athanasios P. Fotinis, Washington: University Press of America, 1979, pp. 6-11, reprinted in Goodman, 1992, 149-50.

### **5.3 THE BODILY APPROACH TO THE SOUL**

#### **5.3.1 The Greek View: Body Matters**

It is a philosophical commonplace that body, given the Aristotelian definition of a soul, is that which has potentiality (for life) [414<sup>a</sup>27-28]. As an anti-dualistic approach to the Platonic body–soul problem, this line of definition opposes Plato’s view of material body to which immaterial *psyche* brings life and in which the *psyche* resides. Aristotle’s view results from the criticism of Platonic and Pythagorean accounts that bodies are simply inert stuff, to which the soul brings life and motion (Olszewsky, 1976, 391-404). To be fair to Aristotle, bodies are capable of moving and living, but not all bodies have such capacities, therefore not all bodies are related to soul as matter to form. Matter is thus, for Aristotle, not amorphous, but is always informed. As he puts it, for Aristotle:

As the thing it is potentially, it is a matter, but as the thing it is actually, it is a form. Clay qua clay is actually clay and is the form of clay, but clay qua brick is potentially brick and is the material out of which the brick is made (Olszewsky, 1976, 391-404).

Aristotle explicitly holds that there can be no soul if there is no potentiality in the body, but he also suggests that ‘the organised body’ doctrine must not be understood in the sense that *psyche* comes and enters into it; rather, it is the *psyche* itself, which takes initiative, ‘organises the body, gives it its specific characteristics, and makes it what it is’ (DA 415<sup>b</sup>8). As has been suggested, for both Plotinus and Avicenna the body is not merely a body, possessing matter *qua* matter passive. Although the *psyche* informs the body, this does not mean



that the body does not take its part in the process, nor does it mean that the body has no capability to approach the soul. It is not the soul which goes outside of itself to enter the body, but the body, which approaches the soul and takes part in the process of emanation (VI.4.16). In VI.4.15, Plotinus expounds how the intruder (*psyche*) finds its entrance (into body). Plotinus grants body's aptitude and suitability for the soul. The body has that suitability which allows the soul to enter the body. By its nature it is capable of receiving soul (VI.4.15.2-3). Although the soul is present entirely in the body, not all bodies can take soul entirely (VI.4.15.3-6), and Plotinus thus is bound to conclude that the different plant and animal (apart from human and heavenly) bodies can have as much soul as their bodies are capable of receiving. So, that which comes into existence, containing soul, according to Plotinus, is not merely an empty body, but a 'living body,' and 'this body,' Plotinus asserts, 'is not a husk having no part in soul, not a thing that earlier lay away in the soulless; the body had its aptitude and by this draws near: now it is not body merely, but living body' (VI.4.8-13).<sup>4</sup> This expression implies, as Corrigan puts it, that 'to the degree body possesses the capacity for power, the closer is that body to soul, and the more capable is that body of manifesting a higher expression of soul' (1985, 37-52).

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<sup>4</sup>Translated by MacKenna, Stephen, *The Enneads*, London: Faber and Faber Ltd. mcmxxx, p. 531.

### **5.3.2 Avicenna's View: Body is Necessary for the Individuation of Soul**

Having laid emphasis on the analogy between the soul of a living being and any source of movement, Avicenna relates his arguments to the Aristotelian prime mover concept. To the extent that living things must be conceived of as having some principle of motion in them, because they move in such a fashion they can neither be accounted for by an internal force, nor by an external mover—‘for their mode of motion is subject to choice.’ What Ibn Sina is suggesting here is that when we talk about body of which the soul is the *kamaal*, we must not take body in the material sense, but in the generic sense, because soul cannot be *kamaal* or *entelecheia* of *any* body, for example, artificial objects, such as a table or a chair, but only of a natural body; and not of just any natural body, for soul is not the *kamaal* or *entelecheia* of fire or earth (*Av.De.An.*, 12). On this principle, Ibn Sina refers to natural organised bodies capable of life functions. It is also noticed that Avicenna cites here ‘chair’ or ‘table’ as not being a natural body of which the soul can be an *entelecheia*, just as Aristotle cites an ‘axe’—a man-made article, as not being a natural body. What is evident from this is that Ibn Sina designates the organised body as capable of carrying out life functions, which is to say, body is not merely an empty vessel—a view which can be traced to Aristotle and Plotinus. In fact, bodies in the Aristotelian, neo-Platonic, and Avicennan accounts are *informed* and *therefore do* exist and act (Goodman, 1992, 153). It is thus legitimate to claim that, for Avicenna, matter as such does

not act, but bodies do so in specifiable ways by the aid of *entelecheiai* that organise them and give them a definite character.

A parallel to Plotinus's view of the body's fitness for the soul is to be found in Avicenna's psychology. Like Plotinus, Ibn Sina argues that 'the soul comes into existence whenever a body does so, fit to be used by it' (*Psychology*, 57). Now how does the soul come into being in association with the body? Both Plotinus and Avicenna contend that the soul and body descend alike but this does not happen by accident or by chance; rather, they argue, only when the body is 'ready' to receive the soul does it come into existence together with a certain body. Ibn Sina, in the context of individualisation, argues that the soul does not exist before the body; rather, it comes into existence together with a certain body, because in the soul 'there is a natural yearning to occupy itself with (its own) body, to use it, to control it, and to be attracted by it' (*Av.De.An.*, 225; *Psychology*, 57). This yearning, which binds the soul to the body, is necessary for the individuation of the human soul (*an-nafs an-natiqah*), since this yearning 'turns (the soul) away from other bodies different from it in nature so that the soul does not contact them except through it' (*Psychology*, 58-9). This is what Ibn Sina means by the notion of 'individuation', based on which, he rejects as impossible, the transmigration of souls. Since the soul needs a particular body for its individuation, it cannot exist before the body. Ibn Sina adds that the soul needs to be associated with the body in order to achieve its first *entelecheia*, but it has independent activities from the body, after it leaves the body completely. In this circumstance, Ibn Sina concludes that the body

cannot be the cause 'but a necessary occasion for the existence of the soul' (*Av.De.An.*, 227-31).

### **5.3.3 Plotinus & Avicenna: Soul has a Natural Yearning for Body**

The Avicennan view of the soul's natural yearning for the body can be traced back originally in the *Enneads* (IV.7.13). Plotinus holds that the rational soul has an appetite that drives it to descend into the body; similarly, the individual souls have the appetite for the divine intellect (νοῦς), which urges them to return to their source (IV.8.4). Although the soul takes initiatives to control and to govern the body, according to Plotinus, the body, as stated above, approaches the soul, when ready to receive it. Avicenna assigns the soul-body connection to the natural yearning of the soul, but 'it is the body which overwhelms it and diverts it, causing it to forget its proper yearning and its quest for perfection' (Arberry, 1951, 73). This bond, for Avicenna, has its origin in the body, but he does not contribute much to understanding of how the body welcomes the soul in response to the latter's yearning for the former in the process of emanation. We have seen how Plotinus sketches his arguments for different types of souls in different bodies (of animals, plants) in the context of bodily aptitude. Added to what he has said is an illustration which runs: 'it is like a skilful craftsman competent to create all kinds of works of art but reduced to making what is ordered and what the aptitude of his material indicates' (VI.7.7). Evidently, he means by 'craftsman' the soul of a particular body, and shows that in the cases of plants and animals, bodies receive as much soul as their capacities permit.

Avicenna does not seem to digress from this point. In a different perspective and sense, he, given the understanding of the human soul, begins with the impossibility of its being either single or multiple entities, and shows that ‘the difference among the souls could be either due to their quiddity and form, or due to their relation to the elements, or due to the time in which they became attached to the body’ (*Psychology*, 56-7). But he turns down quiddity and form on the ground that their form is necessarily one, and emphatically holds that the differences among souls must be due to the recipients of the form, which is to say, ‘the individual body to which that particular form and quiddity became attached’ (Afnan, 1958, 148). But this relationship is not such that the soul is imprinted in the body, rather it is such, as Avicenna envisages, that the soul is conscious of the body, and that the body is controlled and governed by the soul. The idea that the soul is not imprinted in the body, rather it controls and governs it is surely of Plotinian origin.

The opacity that lies in both Plotinus and Avicenna’s soul–body attachment is that for Plotinus it is the body that ‘determines the type of the soul a living creature is to receive’ (VI.7.7), but by contrast, bodies are preformed by soul (IV.3.6) [Blumenthal, 1971a, 55-63]. According to Blumenthal, the preformed body, which is a part of the content of *Nous*, cannot match with ‘the vague notion of a recipient, an X, which determines its appropriate “type of soul”’ (Blumenthal, 1971a, 55-63). Avicenna confronts the same problem. Once he accepts the help of the body for the soul to achieve its perfection, he asserts that ‘the soul requires the body as an instrument in order to acquire (the basic) principles of conception and judgement’ (*Psychology*, 56-7), by contrast,

he rejects the body on his understanding that it is an impediment to the soul. He indicates that if there were no body ready to receive the soul there would be no soul. It implies that the soul relies on the body being capable in order to become existent. But this is contrary to Avicenna's view. He thus admits the soul can act in relation to the body and without any aid of the body. However, what is evident from his arguments is that he distances himself from Aristotle on the issue of the soul being able to exist independently and this view he shares with Platonic, neo-Platonic, and classical religious dogmatism.

## **5.4 THE BODY AS THE INSTRUMENT OF THE SOUL**

### **5.4.1 The Aristotelian Sense of Instrumentality**

Aristotle holds in the *De Anima* that the soul can have no activity independent of the body (403<sup>a</sup>5-12), but he seems to contradict this view, as he says that natural bodies are instruments of the soul (*DA* 415<sup>b</sup>18-19) in the sense that the soul is the cause and first principle of the living body (*DA* 415<sup>b</sup>8).<sup>5</sup> So plant bodies are instruments for the vegetative soul, animal bodies for the animal soul, and human bodies for the rational soul, enumerating that the bodies exist for the sake of soul. For Socrates, the *psyche* is the true self and the body is only its instrument (Guthrie, 1969, 469). Aristotle strenuously holds that if there is no sight, there is no eye; similarly bodies are in vain, if there is no sense-perception. This is why he says that the soul acts and the body is acted upon;

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<sup>5</sup>Simplicius takes up Aristotle's definition of the soul in two senses. The soul gives form and life to the body, and it also uses the body so informed and enlivened (*De Anima* 90.29 ff).

the body is the means to the soul as end (*DA* 415<sup>b</sup>19-20). This clearly leads us to say that if there were no soul, there would not be any bodily existence. Obviously, Aristotle's account of the relation of the soul to the body parallels that of sight to the eye (*DA* 412<sup>b</sup>17-413<sup>a</sup>3).

#### **5.4.2 The Plotinian Sense of Instrumentality**

However, it is Plato who first used the instrumentalist doctrine in his *Phaedo* (79C) stressing that the body acts as the instrument for the soul, and using the body implies for him using the senses, so when the soul uses the body it uses the eyes for sight, ears for hearing, etc. The tendency to treat the body as the instrument of the soul prevails in the psychology of Plotinus and Avicenna. Plotinus says 'the soul uses the body as an instrument, just as an artisan uses his tools, and receives and processes the stimuli which affect it' (IV.3.26.2-8).<sup>6</sup> The body is passive and menial, while the soul is active. The soul governs, controls and cares for the body (IV.8.3). Avicenna shares the same view in his account of the soul-body relationship. In the *Canon of Medicine*, Ibn Sina intends to consider the soul as an animating principle having the 'task of ruling the body that it needs initially as an instrument' (Zedler, 1977-78, 165-77). In severe illness, the physician Ibn Sina suggests no treatment is of any use if the soul, the governor of the body, is incapable of governing. In this stage, the soul sets itself free from all the tasks of ruling the body and turns towards the Supreme Being, as his disciple reports that 'he passed away into the presence of his Lord' (Gohlman, 1974, 89).

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<sup>6</sup>Translated by Blumenthal, 1971b, 20.

### **5.4.3 Avicenna's two Contexts of Instrumental View**

Avicenna's use of the term 'instrument' (*ala*) can be known in two different contexts—individualisation and knowledge. Avicenna argues that the soul needs a particular body only for individuation; later on it can develop by itself. Although the soul comes into being together with a certain body, which is suitable for the soul, this body is the kingdom and instrument (*ala*) of the soul.<sup>7</sup> The soul requires a body, because through the body it achieves its first perfection (*kamaal* or *entelecheia*), but for its subsequent development it depends on its own nature, rather than on the body. This is how the process of emanation brings forth the rational soul with the body from the Active Intellect. The rational soul comes with a body just to get started. This is the principle of individualisation.

In another context the body is considered as the instrument. The rational soul requires the help of the animal faculties, i.e. of the body at the initial stage in order to perfect its knowledge. The soul must need the body as an instrument for the attainment of theoretical knowledge. Our knowledge begins with the sensibles of sense perception, but these are processed, step by step, by imagination and apprehension. Then the intelligibles, acquired by the intellect from the Active Intellect, operate on them. Only by means of the faculties of the animal soul do we gather sense-data which are dealt with by the practical intellect of our rational soul. But universals cannot be obtained from

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<sup>7</sup>Ibn Sina reiterates the view of the body being the instrument of the soul in almost all his works. See for example, *an-Nafs*, 199, 202-206; *an-Najat*, 223; *Ahwal*, 99-107; Avicenna, 1974, 222-27; *DNA (Tab'iyat)*, 1952, 100; *Av.De.An.*, 224.



particulars. So, although the practical aspect of the human intellect controls the lower animal faculties and appetites, operates on the particulars supplied by the animal faculties, and works as a mediator between the animal and the rational faculties by distinguishing rational premises from irrational ones, we still do not acquire universals.

Particulars are always attached to matter, as sensation cannot completely disentangle form from the external world. The perception of particulars is the activity of the soul through the bodily organs. So, the process by which the particular forms are perceived by the external senses is possible only when the body participates in it. The rational soul, Avicenna maintains, is a substance which is neither in body, nor a form of a body, and thus does not use a body to acquire concepts. But the rational soul needs particulars in order to cognise universals. Without the particular idea of a human being, for example, Zaid, the quiddity of man, that is, the abstract concept of humanity cannot be apprehended. The cognitive imaginative faculty bridges the gap between particulars and universals by preparing the proper disposition of the rational soul to acquire and apprehend abstract concepts. Similarly, the practical intellect of the rational soul dealing with imagination and estimation regulates our behaviour. The practical intellect is like a Kantian 'schema' that conjoins sensibility and understanding. So, although the particulars received from the external senses cannot be treated as genuine forms of knowledge, they can provide us with material clues, if they are processed by the internal senses, helping the rational soul to find relations among the individual concepts (*an-Najat*, 220). The particulars brought by sensation to the rational soul are used

by it as the fundamental basis of knowledge. Moreover, the empirical premises of syllogistic reasoning are based on empirical data. So, the three constituents—sensibles from the external senses, images from the internal sense, and the intelligibles from the Active Intellect are the basis of human knowledge: the last source, being immaterial and divine, the concepts it supplies for the rational soul are equally immaterial. The faculties of the animal soul deal only with sensible ‘particulars,’ while the rational soul deals with ‘universals’, immaterial ideas (Heath, 1992, 82).

From another point of view, the division of the primary and the secondary intelligibles as well leads Ibn Sina to acknowledge the role of animal faculties in acquiring knowledge for the rational soul. The secondary intelligibles, derived from syllogistic reasoning, are attained by only a few men, some (e.g. prophets) of whom do so directly, while others do so by the processes of sensation, imagination, and estimation. This requires the involvement of the animal faculties which make the preparatory process for the rational soul. This is, in brief, how the animal faculties assist the rational soul. But this is not all. Avicenna insists that we require the help of the animal faculties, that is to say, the body through which they act, only because we need to acquire knowledge (*an-Najat*, 221), as opposed to Plato’s theory of recollection (*anamnesis*) which offers a particular account of the way in which we acquire knowledge as innate ideas (*Meno* 80-86; *Phaedo* 72-77; *Phaedrus* 247-250). This aid of the animal faculties, Avicenna, however, further maintains, takes place only at the initial stage; it is the means, not the end, since once the soul has acquired the foundation of conceptions for rational knowledge, it abandons the contact of the

animal faculties and returns to itself for its own individual operation, and thus any further contact thereafter with the lower faculties diverts it from its proper functions, rather than being helpful (*an-Najat*, 221-22). Furthermore, when the rational soul is completely perfected, the connection with the lower faculties, i.e., imagination, estimation, etc. cannot affect it.

In this way Avicenna proves how the rational soul uses the body as an instrument. Comparing the body with a riding animal and the soul with a rider, Avicenna holds that man is in need of a riding animal and other means to reach a certain destination, but once he has reached the destination, he may feel the very means of his arrival as an impediment (*an-Najat*, 223). This is a metaphysical view expressed in terms of rational soul's acquiring theoretical knowledge. The striking point that sets Avicenna apart from Aristotle and Plotinus lies in the fact that by soul Avicenna here refers only to the human soul (*an-nafs al-insaniyah*), which is capable of existing by itself. Although Plotinus argues for the separability of the soul, he does not mean here any specific soul. Aristotle's use of the notion of the instrumentality of the body provides only additional explanation of the *psyche* in terms of *entelecheia*. For him, to say that the *psyche* uses a body as an instrument means nothing, but, to say that the *psyche* actualises itself through the living body. He, therefore, does not envisage the question of separability of the *psyche* from the body. Avicenna's instrumental view, on the other hand, is a clear indication that the rational soul is a self-subsisting substance independent of the body, which needs to be proved.

#### **5.4.4 Avicenna's Successors and the Instrumental View**

The view that the body is an instrument of the soul is also reflected in Christian psychology. St. Thomas Aquinas holds in the *Summa Theologiae* that the soul has no life without the body, but he insists that it is equally true that the body is the organ and instrument of the soul (Aquinas, 1952, I, q.30, art.3). According to him, matter should be the basis of individuality, for pure forms only exist in the immaterial world. The rider–animal analogy is reflected in the Augustinian accounts of the soul. Following his predecessor, Augustine compares the soul with a rider and the body with his horse. He adds that although they are separate, they are also inter-connected in the sense that a rider is not a rider without the riding animal (Peursen, 1966, 7). Avicenna's rider-animal metaphor was taken up by the subsequent Sufi philosophers so as to show the individual existence of the human soul. Surprising as it may seem, Al-Ghazali, who critically opposes Avicenna's rational exposition of the soul, expresses a similar view of the riding–animal metaphor. As he puts it:

The body, so to speak, is simply the riding-animal of the soul, and perishes while the soul endures. The soul should take care of the body, just as a pilgrim on his way to Mecca takes care of his camel; but if the pilgrim spends his whole time in feeding and adorning his camel, the caravan will leave him behind, and he will perish in the desert (Al-Ghazali, 1910, 44).

The view of the soul in itself as a spiritual substance and its ruling of the body as an instrument suits the Sufi exposition of the soul. Inayat Khan treats the body as an instrument of the soul; it is that tool with which man experiences his life (Khan, 1973, 290). The soul brings the body with it as a vehicle in order to experience outer conditions. Likewise, the soul brings mind as a vehicle, because through the mind it experiences inner conditions of life. Thus, the soul

has two spheres—the physical and the mental. As Plotinus treats the body as the shadow of the soul and Avicenna as the garment of the soul, so does the Sufi Inayat Khan, who adds that ‘the soul wears this garment in order to stand the conditions of a particular sphere—say, the sphere of the *jinns*’ (Khan, 1960, 128). This Sufi view, however, is also found in the Christian dogma in which the body is compared with a *garment*, or *clothing*, for the soul (*Psalms*. L.22; *Luke* XII.23; *Corinthians*. V.2,3,4).

## **5.5 THE SOUL IS NOT IMPRINTED IN THE BODY**

### **5.5.1 Aristotle: the *Psyche* Belongs to the Body**

One of the moot points of the soul–body relationship in the Peripatetic and neo-Platonic psychology is whether the soul is in the body, or the body is in the soul. And this problem is as controversial as any of the others in ancient psychology, since as we shall see later, there is no settled consensus of opinion in accounts of the soul–body relationship. Plato, to begin with, conceives of the body in the *Phaedo* (82<sup>e</sup>2, 92<sup>a</sup>1) as the dungeon or prison house in which the soul is temporarily chained. His soul–body distinction is constructed in terms of the container model—the body is the container of the soul. The container model maintains that the soul needs to occupy a space to exist.<sup>8</sup> Aristotle criticises his predecessors for endeavouring to fit the soul into a body without exploring the nature and qualities of that body (*DA* 414<sup>a</sup>22-25). Aristotle relates the body to

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<sup>8</sup>That the body is a prison house in which the soul dwells is also a Christian view. See *Job*. 4.19.ch.13.2, also *Thes*. 4.4.

the soul as matter to form. This seems to imply that the body is in the soul, rather than the soul in the body. This view can be buttressed by Aristotle's various uses of 'en' (ἐν) in the *Physics*. The *hylomorphic* explanation leads us to the supposition that any matter, *qua* matter, has no actualisation; it is informed by the soul. The potential existence of matter is meaningless without the actuality of the soul. For Aristotle, matter has a potentiality to become actualised, and when it is actual, it exists in its form (*Met.* 1050<sup>a</sup>15-17). This is the most extensive sense of the use of 'en' in Aristotle's philosophy. Aristotle goes on to say that matter is in form, not in any sense of containment, but in its performance (ἐναργούντα) and completion. The *entelecheia* view implies that 'matter is *in* completion (*entelecheia*) in a fulfilment sense' (Olszewsky, 1976, 391-404), and since form is designated here as completion, it suggests that the body is in the soul. But quite contrary to this view, there is another sense of *entelecheia* which tends to reflect Plato's container model. Being the *entelecheia* of the living body, the soul cannot be conceived of separately. The soul does not exist without the living body, since the soul is in a bodily function, that is, the body exists for the existence of the soul. In this sense, Aristotle holds that the soul is not a body, but something belonging to a body, which means that the soul exists in a body, more specifically, a body of the appropriate kind (*DA* 414<sup>a</sup>20-23).

### **5.5.2 Plotinus: the *Psyche* is not Contained in the Body**

The problem of whether the soul is in the body or the body is in the soul also obsesses Plotinus and Avicenna. Both Plotinus and Avicenna attack the view

that the soul is imprinted in the body.<sup>9</sup> Plotinus defends his point with reference to the powers or what we call the ‘parts’ of the soul. It can be argued that some of the soul-parts are situated in place or space, while others are not. Aware of this problem, Plotinus says that if we do not allocate some form of place to each faculty of the soul, in other words, if we leave the soul parts unallocated to the body, we can no longer think of a living body possessing soul, and it would be equally impossible to explain the various activities of the soul in different bodily organs (IV.3.20). Again, he points out that if we suppose some of the parts (capable of being located) of the soul to be located in place while others not to be so, we can suppose that those parts to which we deny place are ineffective in us: such a view shows that we do not possess our entire soul and Plotinus does not accept this (IV.3.20). In spite of the problems set forth above, he attempts to show that neither the soul entire nor any part of it may be considered to be within the body as in a space: space is a container, a container of things which consist of isolated parts (IV.3.20). The soul cannot be in the body as part in a whole, because the soul is not a part of the body. Contrarily, it cannot be in the body as a whole in parts, because this would mean that the whole consists in its parts and for the soul as a whole to be made up of the body in its parts would be absurd (IV.3.20). So, Plotinus does not accept the Platonic container model: the soul is not such a thing that is *contained* rather than *containing*.

Plotinus continues to argue that the soul cannot be in the body as in a vessel (ἄγγεῖον), because ‘if it were it would be concentrated on itself, and only the contiguous parts of the vessel would be besouled’ (Blumenthal, 1971b, 16-

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<sup>9</sup>For Plotinus’s discussion see his the *Enneads* (IV.3.20), for Avicenna’s points see *Psychology*, Chs. IX-XIII.

17). Furthermore, it cannot be accepted that the soul could transmit something from itself to its containing body, for in that case it would mean that the soul would be diminished by just as much as the vessel received, which is absurd. He goes on to say that if the soul were contained as in space, the only possible contact the soul could make would be at the surface of the body, not throughout the entire mass; while another difficulty would be that ‘this space would be shifted with every movement, and a thing (soul) itself would carry its own space about with it,’ which is equally absurd, because it is understood as ‘immovable’ (ἀκίνητος) in the Peripatetic psychology. But space can also be understood, as from the Stoic point of view, as the ‘interval’ (διάστημα) separating objects. Even if we take for granted space in this sense, we cannot claim, Plotinus points out, that the soul is in the body as in space—for such a separating interval must be a void, but the body is not a void, rather it is in the void (IV.3.20).

### **5.5.3 Avicenna: Intelligible Form is not Imprinted in the Body**

Much of what Avicenna has to say on the problem of the soul being *in* the body can be extracted from his account of the rational soul. Beginning with the point on ‘substance’, he says, as has been described in the second chapter, that ‘the substance which is the substratum of the intelligibles is neither itself a body nor does it subsist in a body’ (*Psychology*, 46). In other words, the substratum of the intelligibles is substance which is not a body, nor a bodily faculty. In an attempt to defend this point, Ibn Sina argues that if the substratum of the intelligibles were in a body then the place of the forms would be either—

(a) divisible, or



(b) indivisible parts of that body.

But he rejects the supposition of the form being imprinted on some indivisible parts. Following the Aristotelian view,<sup>10</sup> Ibn Sina argues that the position of a point cannot be distinguished from the whole line, and ‘thus if anything were to be imprinted on it, it must be imprinted on a part of that line’ (*Psychology*, 46). After a prolonged argument on ‘the point’, Ibn Sina concludes that points cannot be synthesised into a line by being put together, and have no particular and distinct position in a line. As for the other alternative, Ibn Sina equally rejects the supposition that the intelligible form is imprinted in the divisible matter, for in that case it would follow that with the division of the matter the form would be divided—which is contrary to his doctrine. Here, Avicenna strenuously safeguards the separability of the soul, and his view in this regard can be considered as a rejection of the Aristotelian sense of the *entelecheia* doctrine.

Now, an alternative may be that the form would be divided into either—

(a) similar, or

(b) dissimilar parts.

But if the intelligible form were exactly similar, the only difference its totality could make is an increase in quantity or number, and not in form. But it is impossible for the intelligible form to be some sort of shape or number, for in that case it would be representational form, not intelligible one. Furthermore, following Aristotle’s (*Physics*, 1.2.185<sup>b</sup>10) ‘whole-part’ argument, Avicenna says, since the whole is different from the parts, the form cannot be divided into exactly similar parts. Avicenna goes on to argue that if we consider the division

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<sup>10</sup>For Aristotle’s arguments on ‘point-line’ see his *Physics*, IV: 8.215<sup>b</sup>18; VI: 1.231<sup>a</sup>24.

of the intelligible form into dissimilar parts, we can only think that these dissimilar parts can only be the parts of definition, *viz.*, *genera* and *differentiae*, and from this, inevitably, many absurdities will follow—for example, as every part of the body is potentially divisible *ad infinitum*, it would follow that the *genera* and *differentiae* of a given form must also be infinite. But for Avicenna the *genera* and *differentiae* of a single thing are not potentially infinite, but finite. Avicenna continues to argue that we cannot claim that every intelligible is divisible into simpler intelligibles, for ‘there are those which are of the simplest, constituting the principles for others; and they have neither *genus* nor *differentiae*, nor are they divisible in quantity or in meaning, and their parts, therefore, cannot be dissimilar’ (Afnan, 1958, 144). From this point of view, Ibn Sina claims that the substance which is capable of conceiving the intelligibles cannot be constituted in a body, nor its action be in a body (*an-Najat*, 292).

Avicenna, however, in order to strengthen the above claim, puts forth another argument with reference to ‘the rational faculty’, which, he says, abstracts the intelligibles from quantity, place, position, etc., *i.e.*, from all the different categories (*Av.De.An.*, 214). This supposition leads him to claim that when the intelligible form comes to exist in the intellect, it does not possess any position, quantity, or place to be indicated or so divided or subjected to similar processes, and thus it is sensible to argue for Avicenna that the intelligible form cannot be in a body (*Av.De.An.*, 209). In other words, the intellect or the rational soul is not imprinted in the body, but is a substance, and it does not use a physical organ (*Av.De.An.*, 209-221). In the Plotinian manner, Ibn Sina argues

that if a simple indivisible form were to be imprinted on a divisible matter having dimensions, then its relation would be either—

- (a) with every part of that matter, or
- (b) with some parts, and not others, or
- (c) with none at all.

Beginning with the last option (c), if with none, then the whole cannot possibly have any relation to it either. Considering the second one (b), we are to argue that if some parts have a relation to it, then the others which have no relation to this intelligible do not enter as factors into the form. Similarly, we cannot establish the first point (a), because, if every part of matter is conceived of as having relation to the form, then it obviously follows that the parts are not parts of the intelligible form at all, but each part itself is an independent intelligible in itself, and ‘the intelligible as it actually is at a certain moment of time’. If it is argued that every part of the matter has a different relation to the form, then we have to concede the intelligible as conceptually divisible—which is contrary to Avicenna’s view, as he has presupposed it to be indivisible. On the other hand, we cannot accept the point that the relation of each part is to a different part of the form, because this would equally mean that the intelligible form is divisible. In this view, Avicenna suggests that ‘the forms imprinted on matter are only the exterior forms of particular divisible entities and every part of the former is actually or potentially related to every part of the latter’ (*Psychology*, 50).

What Avicenna implies by the above is that the intelligible form as indivisible cannot be imprinted on something divisible. As indicated earlier, the intellect which encompasses infinite things cannot be a body or in the faculty of

a body according to the usual interpretation of the Aristotelian *Physics*. This demonstration is also found in various commentaries on Aristotle's *De Anima* by John Philoponus and Themistius, for example. But it is Plotinus who is believed to have influenced Ibn Sina to a great extent in establishing that the soul is not imprinted in the body. Plotinus is seen to have defended the view by the examination of the possibility of the soul-parts being inherent in the bodily-parts, but the examination has been expounded by Avicenna at large, as he takes over his predecessors' view to shed new light on it in his own way.

#### **5.5.4 Plotinus and Avicenna: the Soul is not in the Body as Substrate**

In Plotinus's psychology, we find a similar line of argument for the claim that the soul is not in the body as in a substrate. He argues that anything in a substratum is a condition of something else, but the soul as a substance cannot be a condition of anything. Moreover, if the soul is thought to be in a body as in a substrate, we are to suppose that the soul is such a state of the body that it cannot be separated from the body, for instance, as in 'colour'. But this will contradict Plotinus's central view that the soul is separable (*χωριστός*). Turning to the point of the parts of the soul in the body, Plotinus insists that we cannot accept that the soul can be in the body as a part in the whole, for the soul is not a part of the body. On the other hand, he equally rejects the view that the soul can be in the body, as a whole 'in' its parts, for it would be absurd to think that the bodily parts can make up the soul as a total (IV.3.20).

With reference to form and matter, Plotinus also argues that the soul cannot be in the body as its form, for the form is inseparable from the matter while the soul is separable from the body. This argument is based on his rejection of the *entelecheia* view (IV.7.8<sup>5</sup>). He goes on to argue that the soul is not related to the body as the form is in matter, for in that case we are to suppose that the form is in matter, and it leads us to suppose that the form is logically posterior to matter upon which the form is superimposed, which is contrary to his view. He rather regards the soul as that which engenders the form residing within the matter (IV.3.20), and the soul is therefore other than the form. Here he makes a sharp distinction between the soul and the form.

From the Avicennan point of view, the rational soul is a single substance, and absolutely simple, is not divisible into matter and form. But the non-rational soul does not enjoy this separability from the body, and in this case, he ignores the Plotinian attack on the *entelecheia* doctrine. Avicenna could accept the soul, at best, as the 'quasi-form' or 'quasi-perfection', and with Plotinus he shares the view that the soul is not imprinted in the body as form in matter, and here he seems to join Plotinus in attacking the *entelecheia* doctrine, which holds that form is imprinted in matter. Avicenna's *entelecheia* view in this regard which contributes to our understanding that the soul is the perfection or completion of the organised body (having life in it) does not mean the same as Aristotle holds. The forms which come from above organise and control the bodies and their actions. But the rational soul as a substance is separable from the body. Although the soul needs the body initially for its perfection, the rational soul can exist and develop itself without any further aid of the material

body. The capability of the soul's being separable from the body shows that the soul is not imprinted in the body; rather it is present to the body. This is exactly what Plotinus says in general on this issue. Here, Avicenna is seen to have reconciled Aristotle's and Plotinus's some aspects of psychology, ignoring other basic themes. With Aristotle he agrees that the non-rational soul is the actuality of the body, while with Plotinus he agrees that the rational soul is immortal and separable from the body. But while Plato (*Phaedo* 80a) and Plotinus (IV.7.14) talk about the separability of the soul in general, Avicenna restricts it to the human soul only.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter we have seen that Avicenna accepts the Plotinian accounts of the soul-body distinction, and like Plotinus, he holds a dualistic view of the soul. Avicenna remarkably develops the Platonic and neo-Platonic dualism in his accounts of the rational soul. Like Plato, Plotinus and Avicenna show that the soul governs the body and uses it as merely an instrument. Avicenna finds this instrumental view congenial to the religious dogma. Although Aristotle uses the term 'instrument', his intention is not to separate the soul from the body. Plotinus and Avicenna, on the other hand, set themselves against Aristotle in endeavouring to establish the separability of the soul. Another striking point on which Plotinus and Avicenna differ from Aristotle is that both of them reject the Aristotelian view that the soul is a composite of matter and form. The rational soul, for Avicenna, is simple and not divisible in the body. As the rational soul does not depend on the body for its activities, it does not exist in the body. The

intelligible form which comes from the celestial intelligence do not possess any position, quantity, or place, and therefore, there is no question of its existing in composite physical body. He makes a clear distinction between bodily parts and the soul and believes that the soul exists whether or not the body or the limbs exist. The soul exists without depending on any limbs of the body. The continuity or unity of self-consciousness does not depend upon the body or limbs. As he puts it: 'I am myself, even if they do not exist.' He goes on to say: 'I know that I am myself, even if I do not know that I have a hand or a foot' (*Av.De.An.*, 255). The limbs are instruments for the self, and the self designates the soul. This is known as the 'Flying Man' argument, which we shall discuss in the next chapter. However, it is evident from the present discussion that for Avicenna, the body matters; the body is needed to individuate soul and to prepare it for knowledge, and this individuation is what Avicenna means perfection (*kamaal*). This perfection is necessary for the soul to get started.

However, Plotinus's suggestion that the body is in the soul, rather than that the soul is in the body, does share the Aristotelian view, which suggests that the body is in the soul. But while Aristotle treats the body–soul relationship as the same relationship as matter–form, Plotinus and Avicenna do not accept this view. It is sensible for Plotinus and Avicenna to argue that the soul as a separate and indivisible substance cannot inhere in the body, but they never say that the soul can be conceived without the concept of the body. We never imagine our souls naked, but rather as possessing bodies clothing them. Avicenna metaphorically holds that the body or the organs are related to the

soul, just as garments are related to the body.<sup>11</sup> It seems to suggest that the soul dwells in the body, at least in the world. Although apparently it seems that the soul belongs to the body, for Plotinus and Avicenna, it is just a temporary or accidental attachment, because the soul has an inherent inclination towards the body. The soul uses the body as the body uses garments, and thus the soul can abandon the body and exist separately, just as we shed our clothes. And obviously, Avicenna's accounts of the rational soul as distinct from the body and, being simple, not imprinted in the composite body, lead him to the substantiality of the rational soul, which we shall discuss in the next chapter.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibn Sina says the bodily organs are nothing but like a garment which we constantly use, and which can be perceived as part of our body. As he says: *Wa Laisat haadehee Al-AaDaa La naa Feel Haqeeqa Ellaa Kasseyaabe Al-latee Saarat Ledawaame Loozomeha Ayyanaa ka Ajzaa Mennaa Endanaa (Av.De.An., 25).*



## **CHAPTER 6**

### ***ON THE SUBSTANCE, SUBSTANTIALITY, AND THE UNITY OF THE SOUL***

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The central thesis of Avicenna's psychology is that the rational soul functions independently of the body. This forces him to claim that the soul is a substance, in particular, immaterial substance. Furthermore, Avicenna argues for the self, identified with the rational soul, as existing independently of the body, or any bodily organs—a view which he puts forth as an imaginary argument, known as the 'Flying Man'. This too, for him, proves that the rational soul is an immaterial substance. So, Avicenna's arguments for the substantiality of the rational soul are two-fold—negative and positive—in the former sense, it is not a function of anything, but of itself, and in the latter sense, it is existentially separable from the body. Now, if the rational soul is claimed to be a self-functioning and self-subsisting entity, the question arises: how is it related to the faculties of non-rational souls, which are subsidiaries of it? This question is concerned with the problem of unity of the parts of the soul. We shall see in this chapter that Avicenna's views are not a reflection of Aristotle's philosophy; rather, they are to be traced to neo-Platonic thought, Avicenna agrees with Aristotle on the notion of substance and the unity of the soul.

## **6.2 ON THE NOTION OF SUBSTANCE**

### **6.2.1 The Aristotelian & Plotinian Notions of Substance**

Aristotle examines the notion of substance in the *Categories* and the *Metaphysics*. In scrutinising and expounding the question ‘what is a substance?’, he is equally concerned with a further question, ‘what is it that makes a substance to be a substance?’ Aristotle argues that although some things might look to be (primary) substances, they should be excluded from the category of what he understands as primary substances. He seems to argue that the primary substances are individual members of various different species, i.e., individual humans, cats, trees, etc. More clearly, primary substances are basic entities, capable of existing independently (*Met.* 1029<sup>a</sup>26). As to the second-order account of what it is that makes a substance to be a primary substance, Aristotle examines four possible candidates: the essence (τὸ τι ἦν εἶναι) or form (εἶδος), the universal (καθόλου), the genus (γενος), and the matter or substratum (υπόκειμενον). Aristotle’s answer to the above question is the essence. Put confusingly, he uses the word ‘substance’ to denote whatever in a primary substance is responsible for its being a substance (*Met.* 1028<sup>b</sup>33).

In the sixth *Ennead*, Plotinus elucidates the notion of substance at length in order to understand the character of the Existent, often taken for Being, which must have the attribute of eternity and must be so constituted as never to belie its own nature (VI.2.1). Plotinus defines substance, almost in Aristotelian terms, as that which does not belong to anything else and cannot be predicated of anything (VI.3.4). Substance is that which belongs essentially to itself. More

generally, Plotinus holds that substance is that which is not present in a subject (VI.3.5). This definition is indebted to that of Aristotle. Identifying Being with substance, Plotinus says the soul is a substance, as it is one and many. The soul is both divisible and indivisible. It is indivisible before it gives itself to the body (IV.2.1), and it is divisible among bodies: it descends and is split up. Again, the soul is indivisible in that it does not all descend (IV.1.9-13): 'its divisibility lies in its presence at every point of the recipient', i.e., the body; but the soul is indivisible in the sense that it dwells entire in the total and entire in any part (IV.2.1.59 ff.). The soul is, in this sense, one and many: it has higher and lower phases—it is attached to the Supreme and yet reaches down to this sphere, like a radius from a centre (IV.1.1). In Plotinus's terms, the indivisibility of the soul is what he understands as the first or the primary substance of the soul, the divisibility, on the contrary, as the secondary substance (IV.2.1).

### **6.2.2 The Avicennan Notion of Substance**

A thing is a substance (*jauhar*), according to Avicenna, if and only if it exists in no other thing as an accident (*'arad*) in a substrate, on the other hand, an 'accident is that whose being subsists in something else' (*Metaphysica*, 15). So, a substance is 'that which is not an accident, whose being (*hasti*) is not in a subject, but is a reality (*haqiqah*)'.<sup>1</sup> Labelling the Aristotelian primary and secondary substances as *jauhar-i khass* and *jauhar-i amm* respectively, Avicenna expounds Aristotelian primary substance as that which exists by itself

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<sup>1</sup>We should remember that by accident is denoted a 'predicate'. An accident is ontologically dependent. It 'exists in' a substrate, while substance 'exists in' itself. Moreover, accidents can change into their opposites, while substances have no opposites.

without being inherent in a subject as an accident,<sup>2</sup> and which can also exist separately (*Av.De.An.*, 9), while the secondary substance is a ‘species which is the essence of the individual but which is incapable of independent existence.’ The soul in general (e.g. vegetative, animal, and human souls) is a substance in the sense that the soul is the very essence of the substratum (body). This is the secondary sense of the Aristotelian substance. Put very simply, according to Avicenna, substance is that which has an essence, such as materiality (*jismi*), spirituality (*nafsi*), humanity (*insani*), and horseness (*farasi*) [*Metaphysica*, 56]. Avicenna simplifies his definition of substance as that which can be realised only in a subject-matter (*maudu*), and from this point of view he treats body (*jism*) as a substance. Contrarily, in the primary sense, only the human soul is a substance, for only the human soul can exist separately and independently—a view that leads Avicenna to the immortality of the human soul.

According to Avicenna, substance could be in different states. It could be part of the body and thus its matter; if it is separate and apart, it could have a relation of authority over the body through movement; and it could be entirely free of matter (Afnan, 1958, 110). So Avicenna affirms three kinds of substance—Body (*jism*), Soul (*nafsi*), and Intellect (*‘aql*). The Intellect is a substance whose Being<sup>3</sup> is one and capable of being separate (*mujarrad*) from matter. The body and the soul are also substance whose being is one, but they

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<sup>2</sup>An accident cannot exist by itself and it inheres always in a subject.

<sup>3</sup>Avicenna makes a tripartite division of Being—the Necessary (*waajib*), contingent (*mumkin*), and impossible (*mumtani*). Only God is considered the Necessary Being (*Waajib al-wujuud*), in which essence (*maahiyaah*) and existence (*wujuud*) are inseparably united, while in the case of all other beings existence is added as an accident to their essence. The Intellect falls into the contingent beings (*mumkin al-wujuud*) but it is such a contingent that it receives its origination from the First Cause. Apart from Intelligences, Angelic substances are also called this kind of substance.

accept the form of other beings. The soul is such that it can exist in separation from matter but acts with the help of the body, while the body is matter, having length, width, and depth. In other words, the essential divisions of substance are the material and the immaterial—the body is the material substance whereas the soul and the intellect are the immaterial substance.

Aristotle's *De Anima* suggests that the *psyche* be a substance, but not in the way in which Plotinus and Avicenna are seen to grapple with the problem. In *DA* 412<sup>a</sup>19, he first attempts to define the *psyche* in terms of substance. The soul is a *substance* (οὐσίᾱ) in the sense that it is 'the form or *entelecheia* of a natural body having in it the capacity of life.' So the soul is a substance, according to Aristotle, only in the sense that it is *actuality*.<sup>4</sup> It is noted that the soul is substance *qua* form of a natural body possessed potentially of life. By contrast, having distinguished three ways in which we speak of substance—'matter' (ὕλη), which is considered as the nature of the substratum, 'shape' (μορφή) or 'form' (εἶδος) or 'essence' (τὸ τι ἦν εἶναι), as he interchangeably uses the terms, and the composite of both matter and form—Aristotle says every natural body possessed of life would be a substance as being the *composite*: the *composite* is endowed with soul (*DA* 412<sup>a</sup>18-20). In fact, Aristotle does not adequately differentiate between form and essence, and thus, for him, to say that the soul is the form of the body does not contradict saying that the essence of the living being is its soul.

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<sup>4</sup>For Aristotle Substance is one of the fundamental forms or categories of the actual. The other forms are Quantity, Quality, Relation, Place, Time, Position, Possession, Activity, and Passivity. These categories are enumerated in the *Topica* (103<sup>b</sup>22). Being is known under these categories. Aristotle suggests all of the forms are reducible to subject (ονομα—corresponding to 'Substance') and predicate (ρημα—corresponding to the remaining nine categories).

### **6.3 AVICENNA ON THE SUBSTANTIALITY OF THE RATIONAL SOUL**

#### **6.3.1 Against the Functionalist View**

Plotinus is a strong believer in the substantiality of the soul. The soul is entirely separable from the body, its existence in the body is only temporary and accidental, argues Plotinus. Affirming the soul as ‘Veritable Essence’, Plotinus claims that the substantial existence of the soul does not depend upon serving as form to anything else: it is a substance which does not come into being by finding a location in a body...(IV.7.8<sup>5</sup>). That the soul is a substance rests also on the notion of immortality in the *Enneads*. The soul is a separate entity and it is a substance eternally unvaried (IV.2.1).

Avicenna agrees with Plato and Plotinus on the separability of the human soul from the body. So, substantiality depends on itself. It cannot be determined, for Avicenna, to be related *functionally* to anything. Now, how is the soul a substance? The soul is a substance in that it is not a function of anything, but of itself; and the soul is not a function of anything else because it is, to a large extent, its own determinant (Goodman, 1969a, 547-554, p. 550). Here, Avicenna merges a functionalist explanation of the *nafs* with a dualistic view of it, and by soul he means the rational soul, though he is not entirely clear about it. His view that the soul is a substance is completely different from that of Aristotle. While for Aristotle the soul is a substance in the sense of *form* of a natural body potentially having life, Avicenna’s conception of the human *nafs*, being a substance, illustrates the separability of the soul from the body. Avicenna’s understanding of substance is akin to a Cartesian substance—an

independently existing thing, as opposed to Aristotle's. Unlike the plant and the animal souls, the human soul, for Avicenna, is capable of subsisting independently of the body.

Of the three phases of the soul, the rational soul is, in the primary sense, the substance, since Avicenna contends that it is the only soul that is capable of subsisting by itself. Its four stages of the theoretical faculty function independently of the body. Since the rational soul comprising of rational faculties can receive intelligible forms without the participation of the body it is a self-subsisting substance. In brief, our rational faculties in the soul are the things that are capable of conceiving intelligibles independently of the body. A thing that can act through its own essence is a self-subsisting substance. The rational faculty acts through its own essence, so it is a substance. The human body acts here as a substrate of a substance, and a substrate cannot be capable of receiving what a substance can. Another strong argument put forward by Avicenna as to why the rational soul can be considered as independent of the body rests on the account of the functions of the soul. For Avicenna, the living body, which is active in youth, fails in old age; for example, a man may lose his sight or hearing ability; contrarily, the rational faculty enhances his intellectual power and he becomes more active and accurate in acquiring intellectual knowledge. What he suggests is that if the rational faculty were attached to our body or bodily organs it would fail to perform the intellectual activities with the deterioration of the body. Even, during illness, he argues, the intellectual activities are not halted; rather, our soul temporarily diverts from its own functions and engages with the body. This answer does not satisfy our rational

mind, because if the rational soul is independent of the body, then the bodily illness should not influence the function of the rational soul, but it is not clear why during illness it should turn, even for the time being, to bodily affections. To resolve this problem Avicenna in this context assumes two types of activities of the soul, which we have discussed before.

### **6.3.2 The ‘Flying Man’ Argument**

Apart from the argument for the substantiality of the human soul grounded on the fact that it is not a function of anything else, i.e., of the body, rather, of itself, there is another strong argument, namely, the ‘Flying Man’ or the ‘Suspended Man’ argument, which can be seen as an expression of neo-Platonic soul–body dualism. Having defined the soul–body relationship in terms of *entelecheia* (*kamaal*), Avicenna asks what the soul is in itself, and in so doing he draws our attention to the case of the rational soul. Taking the ‘Flying Man’ as a hypothetical argument, Avicenna intends to affirm our existence as self-evident. His concern focuses mainly on the independent existence of self-consciousness, which is a peculiar characteristic of man. According to this argument, if it is imagined that someone is born, already mature suddenly, with a sound mind and bodily disposition, but stripped of all sensation of his body and his physical circumstances, then such a man will find that he is unaware of everything, i.e. his physical body, the heart, the brain, and so on, except for the fact that he still exists (*Av.De.An.*, 16).<sup>5</sup> His self-consciousness does not depend on his bodily sensation; rather, it depends on self-knowledge, and it is hinted that for self-

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<sup>5</sup>For details see Marmura, Michael E., 1986, 383-395.



knowledge we do not need any body or bodily parts. So, Ibn Sina affirms that since our self-consciousness is independent of the body, it is immaterial. The rational soul exists in its own right without depending on the body, because the 'Man in the Void' affirms that he exists regardless of his bodily condition, and that what is affirmed is other than what is not affirmed. The essence of the being, not the body, of such a man is what is affirmed. Hence, the very existence of the self is not in doubt, and it also shows that this self is other than the body. This is the most striking dualistic picture of man in his psychology, which is open to criticism. Avicenna's 'Flying Man' argument has a link with Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*, by which he discovers his existence as a self-conscious being by doubting all his senses and body.<sup>6</sup> However, Avicenna's intention regarding the 'Flying Man' in this context is to prove that there is self-consciousness which does not depend upon the bodily organs, and the subject of this self-consciousness is the self, which he identified with the rational soul. The *Miraj Nama* also confirms Avicenna's notion of self-consciousness. The rational soul exists through itself and thus whatever 'it knows it knows through itself,'<sup>7</sup> furthermore, the rational soul is 'the knower of its essence' (*Miraj*, trans., Heath, 1992, 116). However, although he intends to establish the existence of the human soul by identifying it with self-awareness regardless of bodily and physical circumstances, Avicenna does not show how the 'Flying Man' or the 'Man in the Void' will be in a position to acquire and sustain this

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<sup>6</sup>For an interesting comparison of Avicenna and Descartes on this matter see Druart, 1988, 27-49.

<sup>7</sup>As Avicenna puts it: if the rational soul were to know through a physical organ, its peculiar activity would be incomplete and thus it would not know its self and the act of knowing (*Av.De.An.*, 216-17).

self-awareness. The 'Flying Man' argument is preconditioned upon the maturity of a man, in which state a man is able to be self-conscious. Why is maturity necessary? Does it not mean that to become self-conscious one's body has to be perfectly disposed for attaining rational knowledge? It seems to mean that an infant, who is not mature at all, is not self-conscious, and hence does not possess an immaterial soul. Avicenna is clear that his 'Flying Man' is an imaginary argument; however, whatever it is, it does not serve as a sound argument for the substantiality of the soul.

Avicenna's supposition of the 'Flying Man', intended to prove the human soul as a self-subsisting incorporeal substance, appeared in the *an-Nafs* (1975, I, 1) immediately after his *entelecheia* view. It seems that his intention is to describe what we know by 'soul', as he uses the term *entelecheia* to refer only to the relationship of the soul to the body. That Avicenna's main concern is to accommodate the neo-Platonic view of the soul as an incorporeal entity is clear, and his attempt to get engaged in the 'Flying Man' argument immediately after defining the soul-body relationship in general suggests that he explicitly denies incorporeality to non-rational souls.

There is a distant similarity to his argument in neo-Platonic thought. At IV.8.1 in the *Enneads*, Plotinus expresses his personal experience of how he becomes united with the Divine Intellect, and wonders how he was captive in the physical body. This sounds as if his soul is a 'Flying Man' entity. The difference is that Avicenna used his argument as a hypothesis, a supposition, whereas for Plotinus it is his personal experience. Plotinus, thus, shows a greater mystical tendency than Avicenna. Secondly, Avicenna proves here the

existence of self-consciousness, whereas Plotinus expresses how he becomes united with the Divine Intellect in order to discover the self. However, it might be the case that Avicenna found the foundation of his ‘Flying Man’ argument in the expression of Plotinus’s personal experience.

## **6.4 ON THE INTRINSIC UNITY OF THE SOUL**

### **6.4.1 Avicenna: Unity — Self-Consciousness — the Self — the Soul**

Avicenna depicts the incorporeal human soul as possessing the corporeal souls, and his accounts of them are remarkably contrasting; yet the latter’s role for the formation of the former’s knowledge cannot be ignored, especially the preparatory role of the cognitive imaginative faculty for the proper disposition of the intellect, enabling it to conjoin with the heavenly body. The question arises: how do the divergent functions of the different faculties of the corporeal souls and that of the incorporeal soul interrelate within the soul? In other words, if they are not united under a single principle, are the vegetative, the animal, and the human souls three completely distinct souls? Ibn Sina claims that the human soul possesses three phases—each with divergent functions and faculties. Does it mean that Avicenna, in giving different accounts of the incorporeal and corporeal souls, fragments the soul in an unacceptable way?

Avicenna does not leave such a concern unanswered. He does not deny that there are different faculties of the soul, the functions of which interact and

influence each other. Now, there must be a unifying principle which can unite all the faculties under one principle so that we can make such true statements as ‘when we perceived, we desired’ (*Enna Lemaa Ahsasna Ashtahainaa*) and ‘when I perceived such and such a thing, I became angry’ (*Lemaa Ra’aina kadhaa ghaDabnaa*) [*Av.De.An.*, 253; *Psychology*, 65]. That is to say, there should be one and the same thing that perceives and becomes angry. Now, this principle can be either

- (i) one’s physical body, or
- (ii) his incorporeal soul.

Considering the first alternative, Avicenna replies that if it is his body, then it is either

- (i) the totality of its organs, or
- (ii) some of them.

Now, he rejects the first alternative because hands and feet are not involved in perception and anger. Similarly, the second alternative is rejected, since if it is held that there are two organs—one perceiving and the other becoming angry, then there is no question of a unifying principle: how can two different bodily organs be one and the same thing? So the body or any bodily organ cannot be the unifying principle (*an-Nafs*, 324). He thus concludes that there is in us one single entity, not two or more, which perceives and becomes angry. This entity is one’s self. This view is grounded on the unity of self-consciousness, which is another (second) version of Avicenna’s ‘Flying Man’ argument, to be found in the *an-Nafs* (1975, V, 7). We maintain a continuity of self-consciousness, no matter what happens to our body or any parts of it. As he puts it:

'I know that I am myself, even though I do not know that I have a hand or a foot' (*Av.De.An.*, 255).

The aforesaid claim is supported by another hypothetical 'Flying Man' argument, which runs:

We say: if a man is created suddenly with his limbs separated and he does not see them, and if it also happens that he does not touch them, nor do they touch each other, and he does not hear anything, then this man is ignorant of the existence of all his limbs, yet he knows his 'essence' (*anniyatihi*) as one thing (*Av.De.An.*, 255).

This is, of course, a hypothetical argument, not a categorical one. So, it should not be taken for granted as the foundation of Avicenna's argument for the existence of the self [I] as a unifying principle of experience. Avicenna does not rest his view solely on this so called 'Flying Man' argument. In fact, he uses it as an extra support, or in fairness to him, as an illustration, though imaginary, to buttress what he has already claimed, that the self, which is identified as the soul, has constant knowledge of itself.

As is seen from the foregoing, Avicenna, having identified the self [I] as the unifying principle of experience with the soul, claims that the soul is one single substance but has many faculties (*Av.De.An.*, 252). What he means by the 'soul' here is the soul in the generic sense, not any species, or parts. But the problem may be raised: if the vegetative soul possesses some faculties exclusive to it, and not shared with animal or rational souls, and similarly, the faculties of the animal soul are peculiar to the animal soul only, then it seems that Avicenna believes in three different kinds of souls; each of which is absolutely different in its functions and faculties and cannot be united by a single principle at all. Avicenna was clearly aware of this objection, and we see him engaged in elaborating what he said in terms of the generic definition of the soul in the *an-*

*Najat* as ‘a single genus divided into three parts’. And this quoted line harks back to what he says about the generation of the soul in different natural bodies in proportion with their temperaments and dispositions. The vegetative and the animal bodies are deprived of receiving the whole soul, and receive only a part, due to their improper mixture. On the other hand, the whole soul is received by human beings, since they can properly approach like other heavenly bodies to the Active Intellect. This view is based on the thesis that ‘the finer the mixture, the more perfect the form’, and it leads him to believe in the Islamic and neo-Platonic themes that the human soul can return to, or become united with, the Divine. However, Avicenna illustrates this by a physical analogy. Taking the sun or fire as a unitary substance, he reminds us that it can warm a body, or illuminate, or engender a flame—just as happens in the case of the Active Intellect’s giving forms to vegetative, animal, and rational souls. Just as warmth alone, or both warmth and illumination, but not the flame can exist, and when the flame exists all three can co-exist (*Psychology*, 111), the rational soul subsumes all the faculties of the vegetative and the animal souls. In this way, Avicenna reaches the conclusion that different faculties are not different souls (*Av.De.An.*, 259), that is, sensation, perception, anger, appetite, intellection—all are powers of a single soul—and all these powers exist in the rational soul, so it is a single unity. However, one can point out that Avicenna divides all the soul’s powers at first into three parts, each of which he equally calls ‘soul’ (*nafs*)—each ‘part’ again is divided into several faculties. From the above argument we can say that these three parts are not, from Avicenna’s point of

view, three different souls; rather, they are related as parts to the whole, just as the species are related to the genus.

#### **6.4.2 Plotinus: Unity — One — Many — One**

Avicenna's arguments for the unity of the soul are similar to those of Plotinus. As Plotinus understands it, the soul is the image, or the expression of *nous*. And it is legitimate to think of the soul, since it is a product of intellect, as both one and multiple. In relationship with the body, the soul is like the Ideal-Form which enters the divisible bodies and thus is sundered; while, as it is still present entirely as one whole in each of its severed parts, it is a unity (IV.2.1). So, the soul is both one and many—divisible and indivisible—and still a unity, which cannot be attributed to the body, since it is an extended thing (IV.2.1). The individual souls existing in individual bodies are not fragments of a single soul, rather when they reside in the bodies they do not impair the totality of the soul. Apart from this individual soul, Plotinus recognises the World-Soul governing the world and the soul as an intelligible reality. As we all spring from the World-Soul, we also are bound to it, hence the World-Soul is a unity. Plotinus's view suggests that as we individual souls stand to our bodies, so does the World-Soul to the universe. That the soul is one and many is also shown by the relationship of the soul in two ways—internal, i.e., we individual souls are related to each other, and external, i.e., all individual souls are related to the World-Soul.

Plotinus's most telling passage about the unity of the soul is expressed at IV.9.5 in which he gives two examples—a science and a seed—in each case the

parts produced from the whole are whole, while the original whole remains undiminished. This raises the question: are all souls one possessing same consciousness? It is strange that my soul and another's should be one thing; if they were, then all would share the same feeling, the same experience. He then raises the concern over how we reconcile the unity of my soul and another's with the distinction of reasoning soul and unreasoning, animal and vegetative souls (IV.9.1), because if there is no unity the universe ceases to be one thing. Plotinus resolves this problem by saying that it is the different bodies, the recipients, that are responsible for different experiences in different individuals, and this opinion is the same as Avicenna's. The soul in me is identical with that in you, but the bodies which are recipients of my soul and yours are different because if my feelings and yours should of necessity be one, the unity would have to be corporeal: should the two bodies be made one, the souls would feel as one (IV.9.2). He further says that it is not strange to think that one and the same soul may be active in me and inactive in others—virtuous in me and vicious in someone else (IV.9.2). Now, for the question of various powers in the individual soul. He does not oppose Aristotle's notion that the reasoning part of our soul is indivisible, whereas the rest are divided among bodies. There is one distinct thing that secures sense-perception. This is unity of our experience: the variety of powers does not conflict with this unity, just as a seed containing many powers is one thing, and from that one arises a variety which is also a unity (IV.9.3). From this point of view, we can assume that Plotinus envisages that the soul as the subject of experience is a unity in the individual.



### **6.4.3 Aristotle: Soul — Single Unity — Many Faculties**

Plotinus's and Avicenna's thesis that the soul is a single unity with many faculties can be found originally in Aristotle's thought. Aristotle, having mentioned different faculties at *DA* 413<sup>a</sup>20, points out at *DA* 413<sup>b</sup>11 that it is yet to be investigated whether each of them is a separate soul, or a part of a soul, and if a part, then how they are related to each other. We can sum up Aristotle's views by saying that for him sense-perception, imagination, and desire are interdependent, and are not separable, even though they are different in definition (*DA* 413<sup>b</sup>16-24). But as to the intellect, he says that it is not clear whether or not it is separate (*DA* 413<sup>b</sup>24-<sup>b</sup>30). Obviously, this ambiguity about the unity of the soul could contribute little to what Avicenna described above. Unlike Avicenna, Aristotle does not elaborate how different faculties make a union under a single and simple soul. However, Aristotle believes that the soul and the body together make a single entity, proving for him the unity of the soul.

It may be worth mentioning that, although Avicenna's unity doctrine can be found to some extent in Aristotle's system, the manner by which Avicenna proves it does not correspond to Aristotle's. Avicenna's unity view, grounded on the direct consciousness of the self as the unifying principle of all experience, is not found in Aristotle. Aristotle vehemently insists upon sense-perception as the means of knowledge. We, therefore, find differences between Aristotle and Avicenna over self-consciousness. Aristotle points out that when we perceive an object by our senses it is also the senses which perceive that they perceive an object. As he puts it: 'Since we perceive that we see and hear it must either be by sight that one perceives that one sees or by another sense' (*DA* 425<sup>b</sup>12).

Aristotle's intention here seems to be to identify self-consciousness with sensation. Now, Aristotle thinks that there is a difficulty in the view that it is by sight that we perceive that we see—because in that case if one sees colour, then, if one is to see that which sees, that which sees will have colour (*DA* 425<sup>b</sup>17-22). He, therefore, modifies it by saying that perception by sight is not a single thing. In the *De Somno* (455<sup>a</sup>16) it is suggested that not sight, but the common potentiality, which he regards as common to all the senses, is that by which one sees that one sees. It means that self-consciousness is accompanied by sensation—a view which is entirely rejected by Avicenna. However, at *NE* IX 9, Aristotle talks about our awareness of our own existence and activities. Admittedly, Aristotle never seems to speak clearly about awareness of a *self* in the Avicennan sense, but he does say that each of us is to be identified with our *nous*—which suggests that he takes the *nous* to be the self.

## **6.5 CONCLUSION**

Although Aristotle, Plotinus, and Avicenna are in agreement on the concept of substance, their understanding of Reality differs greatly. Aristotle is of the view that soul is a substance, but not in the sense that it exists independently of the body, as has been argued by both Plotinus and Avicenna. Aristotle's understanding of the soul as a substance is completely different from his successors. According to him, the soul is a substance only in the sense that it is a *form* or *actuality* of a natural body, not in the sense of an entity capable of existing separately from the body, as Avicenna holds. From the Avicennan point of view, on an Aristotelian account, only God (θεός) is a substance, not

the soul, while for Avicenna both God and the Soul are to be granted to be substances. This is the crucial point on which Plotinus and Avicenna differ from Aristotle.

As we have seen, Avicenna's examination of the unity of the soul is based on the proof of self-consciousness the subject of which is the self, which is identified with the rational soul. Does Plotinus, in pursuing the unity of the soul in experience, admit the possibility of self-consciousness? According to Plotinus, the possibility of self-consciousness depends upon the thesis that the knower knows itself. But our soul knows other than itself, by means of sense-perception and understanding—the former deals with external objects, the latter comes to us from intellect (V.3.3). True self-awareness is found only in the divine intellect which knows its objects of thought (V.3.6). So, Plotinus concludes that in order to know ourselves, that is, to experience self-consciousness, we must become united with the divine intellect (V.3.4). How can we do that? For Plotinus, a man can become the divine intellect, if he ignores all other phases of his being and seeks the divine intellect only and knows himself by means of his self; this way he attains self-consciousness which the divine intellect possesses (V.3.4). At IV.8.6 Plotinus expresses his personal experience of union with the Divine Intellect. The most profound expression of the union with the Divine Intellect is found in the passage IV.8.1.1-10.

Avicenna's account of self-consciousness is a highly developed thesis with its origins in neo-Platonic thought. In a sense, Plotinus's conception of the unity of the soul as one and many does not seem to contrast with Avicenna's

thought in the sense that the soul comes from the Active Intellect which is one, and the souls of different living beings are parts of a single genus. Each part is considered as a separate soul and has been defined in terms of *entelecheia*, but each species possesses its soul from the same single genus. Considering different recipient bodies possessing the souls of a single genus, from the Plotinian point of view, we can say that the soul is one and many, and by implying this we do not negate the unity of the soul. From the Ibn Sinan point of view, multiplicity begins with the Active Intellect, in the sense that it generates all the human souls and intellects within a single species (*an-Najat*, 280), and all these souls of man are species of a single genus—the Active Intellect. We find no conflict with the Plotinian view that the soul is one and many, without tampering with the unity. That the soul is present and entire at every point of the body, and that the soul acts through its different faculties located in different parts of the body, as has been shown in a previous chapter, further proves the unity of the soul—a view which was first formulated by Aristotle and shared by Plotinus and Avicenna, as against the Platonic view of the soul as a compound of three ‘kinds’ located in three parts of the body.

We conclude that Ibn Sina’s proof for the unity of the soul does not differ from his Greek counterparts’, despite the fact that their approaches are different. It is the different faculties of the soul for Aristotle that are not affirmed as different souls. Rather, that they belong to the powers of a single soul implies the unity of the soul, though he does not ask whether any self or subject experiences the operations of these powers. In Avicenna, self-consciousness, of which the subject is aware, already exists in human beings.

Plotinus, on the contrary, holds that true self-knowledge is found in the Divine Intellect and that we have to become united with It in order to attain it (self-consciousness). This is the crucial difference between them. The problem for Plotinus is how the soul, dwelling in the corporeal body, can become united with the Divine Intellect for self-consciousness before the death of the body. For Ibn Sina, as we shall see in the next chapter, union with the Active Intellect is possible for the intellectual part of the soul only in a disembodied state after death, though in acquiring knowledge the rational soul is in conjunction with it, while embodied.

However, from the tenor of the above discussion it is clear that Aristotle's position on this matter has no bearing on Avicenna's thought. Ibn Sina's position can thus be deemed as neo-Platonic, rather than Aristotelian. He subscribes to the Aristotelian notion of substance, but slips away from Aristotle's sense of substantiality of the soul, taking refuge in neo-Platonic thought, which is essential for him to be consistent in his position. The arguments that he offers are sufficient to prove that the rational soul is a self-subsisting substance, leading him to the immortality of the soul, with which we shall deal in the next chapter, examining whether Avicenna can pick his theme from Aristotle.

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## **CHAPTER 7**

### ***ON THE PROBLEMS OF IMMORTALITY, INDIVIDUALITY, AND THE HEREAFTER***

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

Avicenna's argument for the immortality of the soul is an attempt to reconcile reason and faith as its Greek antecedents touch the right chord of Islamic (and Judaic and Christian as well) temperament. Avicenna's efforts lie in putting the religious view on rationality. His stance on immortality is developed from a set of views, such as the distinction of soul and body, substantiality of the soul, etc. He puts forward two theses for his immortality view—one that rejects the body as the cause of the soul, and the other based on the simplicity of the soul. We shall see in this chapter that the Platonic and the neo-Platonic views of immortality do not basically differ from Avicenna's, though there are some differences between Avicenna and Plotinus on some issues related to the doctrine of immortality. We shall show that the arguments which Avicenna offers are based on Plato's and Plotinus's thought, and that they cannot be found in Aristotle; nor can Aristotle be consistent in holding the immortality of the soul, though Avicenna projects immortality view to him. We shall also examine how Avicenna's account of immortality of the soul leads himself to the problems of individuality and resurrection, and how he differs from both neo-Platonic and Islamic thought.

## **7.2 AVICENNA'S PROOFS FOR THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL**

### **7.2.1 Thesis One: Soul is Not Causally Related to Body**

From the Ibn Sinan point of view, a thing can be corrupted in two ways—either indirectly as a consequence of something else's corruption, viz. *per accidens*, or directly being corrupted by itself, viz. *per se*. Concerning the first case, Avicenna considers how the soul is related to the body, in particular, if they are causally related so that the latter's cessation would entail the corruption of the former. In pursuing the case, he presupposes and examines three possible kinds of relationship between the soul and the body—

- (i) the soul and body are essentially co-existent,
- (ii) the body has causal priority to the soul, and
- (iii) the soul has essential priority to the body.

Appealing to the notion of substance, Avicenna argues that the soul and the body cannot inter-depend or co-exist together, since if they do then they cannot be called separate substances, but in fact they are (*Av.De.An.*, 227). But we know that the body receives the soul when it is prepared: How can we say that they do not co-exist? Ibn Sina regards this relation as merely accidental, not essential. This accidental relation is necessary for the soul for individuation, but only at the initial stage (*Av.De.An.*, 228). Since their relation is not an essential attachment, the corruption of the body does not entail the destruction of the soul.

Considering the second sort of relationship, Avicenna holds that if the soul is considered as being posterior to the body in existence, then it is assumed that the body will be the cause of the human soul's existence, but in fact the

body cannot be a cause of the soul in any sense. Applying the four Aristotelian (*Physics*, 194<sup>b</sup>16-195<sup>b</sup>35; *Met.*, 1013<sup>a</sup>24-1014<sup>b</sup>15) senses of cause he says that the body cannot be a material (*maadii*) cause of the human soul on the previously mentioned ground that the soul is not imprinted in the body. Nor can the body be an efficient (*faa'ili*) cause of the rational soul, for the body acts through its accidents, not through its essence, and accidents, being material forms, cannot cause a self-subsisting immaterial rational soul. Again, if it acted through its essence, not through the faculties, then, there would be no difference between one body's acts and those of another. In fact, for Ibn Sina, the body does not affect the rational soul. So, the body cannot be considered as a formal (*suwri*) or final (*ghaa'i*) cause of the soul; rather, the reverse is the case.<sup>1</sup>

Avicenna further examines whether the soul and the body can be related in such a way that the soul exists prior to the body.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the relation can be termed as temporal and essential. First, it cannot be granted that the soul exists prior to the body in time (*Av.De.An.*, 230), because if it did then it would follow that the soul could never come in contact with the body, for the soul always preceded the body in time. Secondly, it cannot be granted either that the soul exists prior to the body in essence (*Av.De.An.*, 230), because in that case we have to maintain that the body can neither exist, nor die independently, which means that whenever the body ceases to exist it does so, not due to its

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<sup>1</sup>Aristotle analyses the nature of *psyche* in terms of three causes (efficient, final, and formal) in the *De Anima* (415<sup>b</sup>12, 415<sup>b</sup>15, 415<sup>b</sup>21).

<sup>2</sup>Avicenna strongly opposes Plato's view of the soul's origin prior to the body. Plato, in his doctrine of the immortality of the soul, presupposes the priority of the soul over the body on the ground that the world is subject to decay, but the soul is not, so the soul's origin must be prior to that of the body. Prior to its entry into the body, the soul, as described in the *Phaedrus*, is like a charioteer with two horses, ready to make a journey in the path of gods (Peursen, 1966, 39-40). See for details *Laws* (X.891-3), *Timaeus*, 34.



composition and causes, but through the destruction of the soul. In other words, essential priority of the rational soul over the body would entail the body's dependence on the soul for its existence and as such the only way the body could cease to exist would be by the cessation of the soul. And, then, the idea of the immortality of the soul would be out of the question, for bodily death would follow the destruction of the soul. This is absurd. For Avicenna, the body dies due to the changes in its composition and its temperament. The corruption that takes place in the body is its own creation, and has nothing to do with the soul. It is thus reasonable to claim that the rational soul is not attached to the body essentially; rather, the body along with its temperament plays the role of an accidental cause to help the rational soul emanate from the celestial realm. This role of the body is called its instrumentality for the soul, and this instrument is necessary for the rational soul, for it acts and attains perfection (*kamaal*) through this instrument (*Av.De.An.*, 224). This shows a clear indication that for Avicenna the soul and the body are separable, and he therefore sets himself against the *entelecheia* doctrine defended by Aristotle. If he meant by '*kamaal*' (perfection) what Aristotle did by '*entelecheia*', he would say that body's corruptibility would entail the corruptibility of the soul, since *entelecheia* doctrine means the soul is essentially attached to the body.

However, from Avicenna's point of view, the preparation of the body in its right temperament is the precondition of the soul to be emanated from a substance which is a form without a body. Also the existence of the body necessitates the existence of the soul. Does it not follow that the corruption of the former entails that of the latter? Ibn Sina's answers can be treated as

ambivalent. He holds that if a thing is a simple and self-subsisting entity, then it will not undergo the corruption of the body (*Av.De.An.*, 231). Here, he is indicating the rational soul. Again, he goes on to say that the soul emanates from a source other than the body, and so it does not owe its being to the corrupt body—the accidental cause—so its being should be independent of the body (*an-Najat*, 186). Here, by ‘soul’ is meant soul in general, rather than a particular soul, and this confusion prevails throughout his psychology. However, as we can surmise from the tenor of his arguments, it is the rational soul that is supposed to be a simple, self-subsisting, and incorporeal substance that is not affected by the corruption of the body (*an-Najat*, 187; *Av.De.An.*, 231).

### **7.2.2 Thesis Two: Simplicity of the Soul Prevents it from Corruption**

We shall now focus on the second part of Avicenna’s argument that the soul does not corrupt *per se*, as St. Thomas Aquinas understood it and based his arguments for the incorruptibility of the soul on this point (Aquinas, 1952, I, q.75, art.6). That the rational soul is simple is the basis on which Avicenna and St. Thomas argue against the soul’s corruption *per se*. The latter argues that the rational soul is an absolute form alone, rather than a composition of matter and form, for the reason that the ‘intellectual soul’ (*anima intellectiva*) knows forms of things absolutely, not as individuals; if it were a composition of matter and form, it would only know the individuals, ‘since matter is the principle by which forms are individualised’ (*Ibid.*, I, q.75, art.5). In other words, anything which is given by something is received in accordance with the condition of the

recipient; and since the intellectual soul knows a thing absolutely, for example, a stone absolutely as a stone, the soul itself is an absolute form. Based on the proposition of the simplicity of the rational intellect, it may be further argued, as Avicenna's second thesis holds, that the question of the possibility of corruption directly by itself poses a set of hypotheses—a potentiality of persistence, a potentiality of corruption, and the actuality of persistence. Avicenna reminds us again of the simplicity of the rational soul, arguing that a composite of matter and form is subject to persistence and corruption, but since we know that the soul is simple, not a composite, it possesses the potentiality of persistence, not destruction. Furthermore, it is impossible to suppose that a simple and separate thing can possess the contraries of potentiality of corruption and actuality of persistence (*Psychology*, 61). Since potentiality and actuality are two contrary concepts, it is inconceivable that the potency for corruption occurs due to the actuality of persistence in a single thing. Also they are contrarily related—the relation of potency to corruption is contrary to that of actuality to persistence—for one is related to corruption, the other to persistence (*Psychology*, 61). So, only in composites and in those simple things existing in composites, can we think of a combination of the two contraries of corruption and persistence, not in simple things whose essence is separate (*Psychology*, 61; Avicenna, 1972, 121-22). In other words, these two contradictory concepts cannot apply to a thing whose essence is unitary, for the nature of substance necessarily includes the potency for persistence. It is for this reason that a soul which is of one essence cannot accommodate two contraries. The supposition of substance does not allow the rational soul to contain the potentiality of corruption.

Furthermore, assuming that the rational soul is composed of matter and form, he argues that even in that case it would still be incorruptible. Since we know that the potency for both persistence and destruction is matter, in the case of a hypothetically composite rational soul, either the matter would lack the potentiality of contraries, or the constituent of the composite—the substance and base—would cease to exist. But it is absurd to suppose that the matter of the composite will not be of potency for persistence and destruction. It is only the heavenly bodies, as Avicenna says, that are lacking the contraries of persistence and destruction, not the matter of the composite in the world of generation and corruption. So, to avoid the absurd possibility of the matter of a composite not having contraries of persistence and destruction, the only conclusion open to us is that the ultimate constituent—its substance and base—is simple, and as such indestructible. Evidently, the argument that the rational soul is simple can be applied at least to the constituent part of a hypothetically composite rational soul, if not to the entire soul (Avicenna, 1972, 122). In this way, Avicenna corroborates his claim that it is the composite, not the simple, that corrupts, and in the case of simple things subsisting in matter, the corruptibility occurs due to its matter, not to the form. So, the rational soul, for Avicenna, is in no way destructible—neither *per se*, nor *per accidens*—and as such, it is immortal. This view underlies the work of Aquinas (1952, I, q.75, art.6).

The argument that composite things are destructible is found in Plotinus (IV.7.1). The body is composite, and thus destructible. It is worth mentioning that in the *Phaedo* (78b-84b) Plato argues for the soul's survival of death on the ground of its simplicity. In the *Republic* (X, 608 ff.) he talks about the

incorruptibility of the soul, though his argument in detail is quite unlike Avicenna's. However, there is no doubt that Avicenna's arguments for the immortality of the soul based on its simplicity and incorruptibility are not Aristotelian, rather Platonic and neo-Platonic.

### **7.3 AVICENNA AND ARISTOTLE ON IMMORTALITY: CAN AVICENNA TAKE HIS IMMORTALITY VIEW FROM ARISTOTLE?**

#### **7.3.1 Aristotle's Position on Immortality**

We must now explore whether Avicenna's demonstration of the immortality of the soul fits Aristotle's philosophy, assuming that it does not conflict with the neo-Platonic thesis. And with the Aristotelian position on immortality we are entering into one of the most obscure themes in his philosophy of mind. According to Nuyens, in the *Eudemus*,<sup>3</sup> Aristotle expounds a doctrine of pre-existence and immortality of the soul—a view which parallels that of the *Phaedo*. Like the *Phaedo*, the *Eudemus* holds that the soul is an incorporeal thing while the corporeal thing is the body, which is the tomb or prison in which the soul's exile is spent. Like Plato, Aristotle here seems to presuppose a dualistic approach to the body-soul relationship (*Phaedo* 80c-84b, *Eudemus* fr. 7). Although Aristotle may be identified as an orthodox Platonist in the *Eudemus*, in the *De Anima* his views can fairly be contrasted with Platonism.

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<sup>3</sup>A work which Aristotle wrote in memory of Eudemus of Cyprus who was killed in an engagement outside Syracuse in 354 B.C.

Unlike the *Eudemus* his *De Anima* gives us an ambiguous picture of the immortality or inseparability of the soul.

While discussing his predecessors' views of the soul in the *De Anima*, Aristotle points out that if there is any function peculiar to the soul, it will be possible for it to be separated from the body (*DA* 403<sup>a</sup>10-16). In like manner at *DA* 408<sup>b</sup>18, he says it seems that the intellect is born in man as a kind of substance and not to be perished. This passage is notorious and *prima facie* his remarks are inconsistent with the view that soul is related to body as form to matter. If he endorses the immortality view, he cannot be a systematic philosopher. Considering whether the soul is divisible because the body is so (*DA* 411<sup>b</sup>5-10), he attributes to the soul the unity of the parts of the body, and we cannot see that he holds that the intellect is not an attribute of the body (*DA* 411<sup>b</sup>18). Now arises the *entelecheia* doctrine, according to which he says, 'the soul or any parts of it, whose actuality also applies to the parts themselves, will not be separate from the body' (*DA* 413<sup>a</sup>4-6). But again he says: 'Nothing prevents *some* parts from being separable, because they are not actualities of any body' (*DA* 413<sup>a</sup>6-7). Here, by *some* Aristotle refers to the intellect, which he seems to characterise as a 'different kind of soul' (*psyches genos heteron*), capable of existing separately, as the eternal is from the perishable (things) [*DA* 413<sup>b</sup>24-26, 429<sup>a</sup>18 ff.], though he does not make any precision of this consideration. In fact, Aristotle does not hold that it is clear that *some* parts of the soul are separable because they are not actualities; rather, the passage suggests that if there are any parts, which are not actualities, they will not be prevented from being separable. For, in the next sentence, he says, it is not clear

whether the soul is the actuality of the body in the way that the pilot is of the ship. However, the view that the intellect can survive bodily death is expressed at *DA* 430<sup>a</sup>22-25, where Aristotle suggests a part of the soul to be eternal and immortal. Obscurities grow from here. Why the *entelecheia* view is not applied to the *intellect* is not clarified in the *De Anima*. Nor does Aristotle explain why and how the intellect acts independently of the body. He pays no attention to clarify how *hylomorphism*, which holds that the relation of soul to body is that of form to matter, matches the immortality of the intellectual part of the soul. It does not seem to be convincing that Aristotle endorses the view that the intellect is an entity distinct from the body; rather, as we understand from his account of the intellect that it does not exist as an independent entity before it thinks (*DA* 429<sup>a</sup>22), that it is identical with its objects (*DA* 429<sup>b</sup>6-7, 430<sup>a</sup>20), we can say that he does not, when he talks about the substantiality of the intellect (*DA* 429<sup>b</sup>22), seem to mean that the intellect is separable from the body in the Avicennan or Cartesian sense, as capable of existing independently of the body.

As we have seen, the active intellect in the *De Anima* is a part of the human soul, not a transcendent entity; on the other hand, in the *De Generatione Animalium* (II.3.736<sup>b</sup>27-29) it comes in us from outside. Considered as the power of contemplation, it is ‘a different *kind* (*genos*) of soul’. It looks apparently a good solution to Aristotle’s obscurities that since it is a different kind of soul, the *entelecheia* definition does not apply to it, and thus it removes a hurdle to the immortality problem. However, it seems from the *De Anima* that he does not commit himself to the separability of the intellect; rather, he discusses the question of separability raised by his predecessors, though most of

Aristotle's commentators seem to disregard this crucial point. For example, Simplicius and Philoponus took the view that Aristotle's soul can separate from the body. So, the meaning of *entelecheia* for them implies that the soul is an *entelecheia* means the soul is related to the body as the pilot is to the ship.

### **7.3.2 Is Avicenna's Immortality View Grounded on Aristotle's View of *Nous*?**

Now, the question arises: Does Avicenna regard Aristotle as an exponent of the immortality of the soul from which he extracts his thesis? The most striking point that seems to have influenced Avicenna was Aristotle's first passage of chapter four, book III of the *De Anima* (429<sup>a</sup>10-12), which holds:

In respect of the part of the soul by which the soul knows and thinks, whether this is separable or inseparable in terms of magnitude (κατὰ μέγεθος) but in definition (κατὰ λόγον) only.

Avicenna wrote a commentary on this point, and it seems he understood Aristotle's μέγεθος in different sense. As he comments on the above passage:

Aristotle, in pursuance of the theoretical faculty, is concerned here with whether its *essence* subsists independently (Avicenna, 1947, 98).

Here, Aristotle's 'magnitude' or 'spatially' is translated as 'essence' or 'substance'. So, Avicenna understands that Aristotle is concerned about whether the soul is separable, not in terms of *location*, but in terms of its *essence*. As he goes on:

...Aristotle's passage regarding the soul being separable or inseparable is not concerned about *location*, nor is he engaged in it; rather his discussion is devoted to the issue of *subsistence* (Avicenna, 1947, 98).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Avicenna here seems to agree with Philoponus's interpretation. See Verbeke, 1966, 7.42.



In another context: Avicenna understands Aristotle's phrase 'nothing prevents *some* parts from being separable, because they are not actualities of any body' as an implication of immortality, but by '*some* parts' he does not refer to any particular part, say, the active intellect; rather, Avicenna takes the entire rational soul for granted as immortal. He argues that the active intellect is an eternal and incorporeal entity and 'can hardly be described as "part" of the soul' (Avicenna, 1947, 93; cited by Davidson, 1992, 108-9). Avicenna also rejects the idea that Aristotle could have referred to the intellect after it is actualised on the ground that if something is not 'self-subsistent' from the beginning, it can never be so whatever attributes are added to it (Avicenna, 1947, 94; Davidson, 1992, 109). He thus concludes that Aristotle must have meant the entire human soul which is the principle of all faculties and can survive death, assuming the faculties have no activities without the physical organs.<sup>5</sup>

As Ibn Sina interpreted the Aristotelian view of the intellect as distinct substantially, not in definition, from the body, it is evident from the historical point of view that his view of the immortality of the rational soul grounded on the substantiality or essentiality of the soul might have an influence from his understanding (or misunderstanding) of Aristotle's concept of the *nous*, about which he puts forward neo-Platonic arguments, though his motivation comes from Orthodox Islamic principles. If Aristotle was a true believer in immortality, as Avicenna thinks, we, surely, would find inconsistency in his

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<sup>5</sup>Avicenna's view is again analogous with that of Philoponus. See for details Dimitri, 1986, 121-129.

thought; since the soul is a form of a body, and such a form, being inseparable from the body, perishes together with the body, which is perishable. It may be objected that Avicenna overlooked Aristotle's matter-form problem. Such an objection is unfair, because he was aware of this problem and tackled it in such a way that he could consistently accommodate immortality in his work. He reasons that the soul does not exist in the body as a mere form in a substrate. As we have discussed in the first chapter, the soul that perfects the various living beings, separating species from genus, is its form. But the rational soul is more than an *entelecheia*: it is a substance. It is a perfection (*kamaal*) of the body, because it differentiates the species (human being), but at the same time, it is a substance because it does not depend on the body for acquiring intellectual knowledge from above. This is Avicenna's compromise with Aristotle. He intends to take the Aristotelian *entelecheia* in a different sense perhaps in order to show that Aristotle, his First Teacher cannot be consistent in holding the separability of the soul. The key factor here is Avicenna's application of Aristotle's *entelecheia* doctrine. The substantiality of the soul is thus the fundamental precondition for the immortality of the soul, and he attempts to prove this in his entire psychology.

From the Avicennan point of view, to be consistent in the doctrine of immortality, Aristotle is required to prove at least the following:

- (i) the soul is functionally independent of the body,
- (ii) the different powers of the soul are not different souls,
- (iii) the soul is a self-subsisting entity,
- (iv) the unity and continuity of self-consciousness, and

(v) the soul is not a compound of matter and form.

Aristotle's accounts of *psyche* do not affirm that the soul is functionally independent of the body, as he insists that we cannot think without sense-images (*phantasmata*). How can the rational soul act independently of the body? We have seen before how the rational soul in this case deals with material things; and since material things are dependent on the body, which is corrupt, the intellect cannot be regarded as incorporeal and incorrupt. The *hylomorphic* view of the soul as a compound of matter and form restricts us to the claim that the soul is simple, as he eschews any further enquiry into whether the soul and the body are one, just as it is unnecessary to enquire into whether wax and shape are one. We have seen throughout this thesis how the Aristotelian accounts do not convince us that he intends to separate the soul from the body. Aristotle, unlike Avicenna, does not intend to engage in showing that the soul is a self-subsisting entity, or acts independently of the body. Aristotle refers to the thinking part of the soul as distinct from the body,<sup>6</sup> but he is not committed to this view, and that he does not believe in separability of the intellect is evident from his passages that say our thought does not exist without *phantasmata*.<sup>7</sup> He is an opponent of generation and corruption. Notwithstanding, he regards the active intellect as a transcendent substance, since in the *De Generatione Animalium* he regards it as coming from outside. Does it not mean that he commits himself to the generation of the intellect, since a corporeal body cannot produce the incorporeal thing? Avicenna does not find Aristotle's view against

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<sup>6</sup>See for example the *De Anima* 403<sup>a</sup>10-12, 408<sup>b</sup>18-29, 413<sup>a</sup>3-7, 413<sup>b</sup>24-26, 430<sup>a</sup>2-8, 430<sup>a</sup>15-25, 431<sup>b</sup>12-19, 432<sup>a</sup>9-25.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. for details *De Anima* 403<sup>a</sup>5-10, 427<sup>b</sup>28-428<sup>a</sup>5, 431<sup>a</sup>14-431<sup>b</sup>12, 432<sup>a</sup>2-14.

generation problematic. He does not object to Aristotle's contention that generation brings finiteness of objects, but according to him, something is corruptible if it is generated out of matter and form. But the human soul, he further argues, is not a compound of matter and form, although it is generated (*Av.De.An.*, 233). Aristotle's Latin and Medieval followers, such as Averroes and St. Thomas Aquinas, subsequently defended Aristotle, maintaining that his *hylomorphic* doctrine does not prevent him from holding the immortality of the soul.<sup>8</sup>

We, therefore, assume that Avicenna's arguments for the substantiality and the incorruptibility of the soul cannot be traced to the original Aristotelian teachings; rather, he seems to have relied on the commentators. The way he leads himself to the immortality doctrine and the arguments he offers do not fit Aristotle's accounts of the soul. Although it is not clear whether he truly believed that Aristotle was not an enemy of the immortality doctrine, it is clear that he found neo-Platonic thought congenial to his understanding of the soul as immortal. The separability of the soul can be fairly traced to Platonic, neo-Platonic, and Islamic thought. Plato, in the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, argues that the soul is immortal in that it partakes in the idea of life, and life is indestructible. Similarly, the view that the soul is immortal because it partakes

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<sup>8</sup>St. Thomas does not deny the matter-form dichotomy to Aristotle's psychology. He does not deny that the human intellect receives forms from the material things. The rational soul works in conjunction with matter, but man also has the capacity to understand, which is independent of the body. In fact, the soul and the body together constitute the human being. The soul has an operation *per se* apart from the body, so it exists *per se*, and in this sense it is a substance; again, its act is dependent on the body, so soul and body are related as form and matter, constituting a complete substance (Aquinas, 1952, I, q.75, art.2). For an interesting discussion on Aquinas's concept of rational soul see Pegis, Anton, 1955, 153-173; *idem.*, 1959, 168-188; Reyna, Ruth, 1972, 131-149. For recent interpretations of Aristotle's *nous* as distinct from the body and capable of acting without any body see Kahn, Charles H., 1992, 359-379. Christopher Shields has tried to show Aristotle's soul as immaterial within the investigation into the problem of matter and form (Shields, 1988, 103-137).

in the idea of life is (also) to be found in the *Phaedo* (102a ff.). In the *Phaedo* (80a) he regards the soul as divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, and self-consistent, whereas the body is mortal, multiform, unintelligible, dissoluble, and never self-consistent. But the soul has life, and life is indestructible, in its own right. In the *Republic* (608d-611e), Plato talks about the immortality of the soul in the sense that the soul is substance, and that substance is indestructible.<sup>9</sup> Plotinus considers the immortality of the soul in the fourth *Ennead* (seventh tractate). His arguments presuppose the nature of the soul, such as its independence of the body, the distinction between soul and body, arguments against the *entelecheia* doctrine, harmony view, etc. As we have already discussed these points in the previous chapters there is no need to repeat them here. There are a few passages in the *Enneads* (viz. IV.3.27 IV.7.14; VI.4.16) that indicate that even the lower soul is immortal. Plotinus's view reflects Plato who attributes life after death not only to the human soul, but also the animal and plant souls (*Phaedo*, 70d). Here, Avicenna deserts Plato and Plotinus. For him, only the rational soul is capable of being immortal.

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<sup>9</sup>See for other references *Phaedrus*, 245; *Phaedo*, 86, 87, 92; *Republic*, X.608; *Timaeus*, 41, 43, 69; *Laws*, X.904A, XII.959B, XII.967A, XII.967E.

## **7.4 THE PROBLEMS OF INDIVIDUALITY AND TRANSMIGRATION**

### **7.4.1 Avicenna's Reply to the Problem of Infinite Number of Souls**

Avicenna's discussion of immortality gives rise to the problem how the soul, after the death of the body in the present life, preserves individuality and subsists as such in the hereafter. A difficulty arises as to the infinite number of souls in the hereafter, since it follows, given the eternity of the world and humans, that 'the present moment has been preceded by an infinite number of people who have died, and so there must also exist an infinite number of souls which are immortal' (Leaman, 1985, 95). Avicenna admits that he faces the problem of an infinite number of souls if it is accepted that the soul comes into existence before the body. Considering this difficulty, he argues that if the soul existed before the body there would be a multiplicity of souls or a single one. He rejects the first alternative on the ground that before its attachment to the body the soul is a simple and immaterial substance, and that it is the material recipient bodies which are divisible and receive forms according to their dispositions. So the form is one, but the recipients are many, and because the divisible material recipients receive forms according to the bodily dispositions, the material bodies are individuating principles. So there cannot be many souls. Being simple and pure quiddity, the soul as a form cannot be divisible in itself and diversity of its essence cannot be accepted. Might the soul be one single substance before attachment to a body? This supposition Avicenna rejects as equally impossible, for then, there would be the absurdity that the souls of all

individuals would be identical, i.e., one and the same soul would be in two different bodies. Furthermore, if it be supposed that souls in different bodies are parts of the whole—the single soul—then, we will have to commit ourselves to another absurdity that one single soul, which has no magnitude and bulk, is potentially divisible. So, he rejects the possibility that the soul can exist before the body. Here, Avicenna goes beyond Plotinus's view that 'the soul as a substance exists even before it becomes the soul of any particular living being...(IV.7.8<sup>5</sup>). From Ibn Sina's point of view, this gives rise to serious problems as to the infinite number of souls. Avicenna, therefore, concludes that, if the soul cannot exist before the body—neither in plurality, nor as a single soul—then, it is proved that the soul must exist with the body (*Av.De.An.*, 228). His salient points are that the soul, as an immaterial and simple substance, which has no position in space, and therefore, no order in position (Marmura, 1960, 232-39), comes into existence, not before the body (nor after the body, as we have seen in the previous chapter on the substantiality of the soul), but rather, *together* with a certain body, which has a disposition suitable to receive it. So the peculiar dispositions of the different material bodies are the principles of individualisation. The material dispositions of the body determine the types of forms to be attached to it. This point resembles Aristotle's position that matter is the principle of individualisation (*Met.* 1074<sup>a</sup>31).

Ibn Sina resolves the problem of individuality of the immortal souls in the context of the above proof. At death, he further maintains, the soul retains its individuality due to the different material compositions with which it came into existence (Avicenna, 1949, 90), owing to the different times in which it

came into existence, and due to the different conditions and dispositions of the body (*Psychology*, 58).

#### **7.4.2 Avicenna's Refutation of the Doctrine of the Transmigration of Souls**

With the argument that the soul comes into existence together with a body and multiplies only when the bodies are properly prepared to receive them, Ibn Sina refutes the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, traced in ancient Indian and Greek philosophy. The *Bhagavadgita* holds the transmigration of the soul, as the Hindus believe in reincarnation. According to the *Bhagavadgita*, the soul is eternal and unchangeable; it never loses its entity when the body dies, because it enters into a new body after leaving the old one (II.V.20). Plato and Plotinus endorse this view. As Plato says: 'The soul of a man may pass into the life of a beast, or from the beast return again into the man' (*Phaedrus*, 249b–c).

There is no transition of life in Avicenna's theory. The idea that soul comes from God with different bodies according to their capacities prevents the supposition that the soul of a body comes from another body. In the *Kitab an-Najat*, while endeavouring to refute the transmigration of souls into several bodies, he suggests that there would be no souls if there were no bodies, since souls come into being and can multiply only when 'the bodies are prepared to receive them'. If there were no preparation in the body there would be no emanation of their souls, according to Ibn Sina. Contrary to Plato and Plotinus and in agreement with Aristotle, Avicenna opposes the transmigration of the soul into several bodies on the ground that it is an absurd view. For if,



according to this view, we accept that one soul transmigrates from one body to another we suppose that a body can have at least two (or more) souls together—one (or more) which transmigrates from another body, and the other its own, emanated by the Active Intellect (*Av.De.An.*, 233-34). This is absurd, and so he rejects it. Avicenna's view has a parallel in Aristotle's view that the soul can have only one particular body (*DA* 407<sup>b</sup>15, 414<sup>a</sup>20). Aristotle's refutation of the view of the transmigration of souls is found in Book I, Chapter 3. While he was criticising the ancient views of the soul, Aristotle dismissed the view that any soul, taken at random, can pass into any body. Taking a soul's passing into another body, Aristotle says:

'It is just like talking of a transmigration of carpentry into flutes; for the craft must employ the right tools and the soul the right body' (*DA* 407<sup>b</sup>20-25, trans. Hicks, 1907, 29).

Aristotle's rejection of a transmigration of a soul into a body rests on his *entelecheia* view that soul and body combine in a single living thing. If they were separable, there would be a question of one's passing into another. The distinctive point between Aristotle and Avicenna here lies in the fact that the former rejects the view of transmigration of souls by defending the *entelecheia* doctrine and by rejecting the soul-body duality, while the latter upholds the soul-body separability and rejects the view of transmigration of souls based on his emanation of souls from the Divine Realm.

## **7.5 THE GRADES OF IMMORTALITY AND THE HEREAFTER**

### **7.5.1 Avicenna's View of Reward or Punishment in the Hereafter**

As has been seen, the rational soul acquires intellectual knowledge in several stages. The problem of the immortality of the rational soul thus raises the question: Which stage of human intellectual development can attain immortality? Here, Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina differ from each other, though both of them agree that there is a hierarchy of human intellect. The highest level of intellectual development, which is the acquired intellect for al-Farabi, is a state in which humans can attain immortality; for him, only in this stage can a man perfect his intellect with all intelligible thoughts that enable it to survive death and exist independently of the body. From this point of view, therefore, not all humans can attain immortality, for example, infants, or young children, who have not acquired sufficient knowledge from the Active Intellect. Avicenna, by contrast, regards the very essence of the human soul as the key factor for immortality. All the four stages of the human intellect are equally capable of attaining immortality, regardless of intellectual development, which means that even a newly born baby's soul is immortal: all souls of men, regardless of age and knowledge, will survive death, since when humans are born, they possess the incorporeal and spiritual substance, which develops subsequently. But if intellectual development does not matter in attaining immortality, it raises the question: Will the fate of the disembodied souls be the same or different, since

we have different levels of intellectual knowledge? Furthermore, can the disembodied soul acquire new knowledge? Given the Avicennan framework of knowledge, the intellect, when disembodied, can acquire new knowledge, for its habit of apprehending intelligibles by contacting the Active Intellect will not cease after separation from the body, for the loss of the corporeal organs does not affect it, since it apprehends thoughts through itself, not through its organs (*Isharat*, 1892, 176). Avicenna posits that with the disintegration of the body, the soul retains some amount of knowledge that we acquire in the present life, and accordingly our souls will achieve happiness and spiritual bliss—a view which Avicenna finds well-suited to that of the *Qur'aan*.<sup>10</sup> So it is very important for us to achieve as much intellectual knowledge as possible in this present life, since it determines our state in the afterlife. So the state of disembodied souls is conditional upon the degree to which our souls in the present life have recognised and achieved perfection in life (Heath, 1992, 68). If one perfects his disposition for receiving intellectual thought from above, one will be bestowed with the highest degree of happiness. The holy souls (*al-anfus al-qudsiyya*) enjoy perfect bliss (*sa'ada*) in the afterlife, because they achieve perfection in the present life and are not fettered by worldly desire (Avicenna, 1593, 83). Those who cannot achieve total perfection for the conjunction with the Active Intellect, and thus receive a lesser degree of intellectual knowledge, will enjoy a lesser degree of spiritual bliss. There are some people, who engage themselves with bodily desire and forget their own essence, despite the fact that

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<sup>10</sup>The *Qur'aan* stresses the fate of the afterlife for disembodied souls. All humans will be accountable to God on the day of resurrection (19:95), and the happiness or unhappiness to be offered to them will be determined proportionately to their individual development in this life (91:9).

they know the purpose of life, which is to attain perfection; they will suffer eternal pain in the hereafter (*an-Najat*, 294-95). These are ignorant and wicked souls. And finally, there are simple souls, which are ignorant but virtuous, for example, those of the mentally retarded, or infants. They are exempt from pain, because they are unaware of the purpose of life due not to their negligence but to the circumstances in which they are born and brought up. These are all intellectual factors determining the fate of the soul in the hereafter.

Apart from those intellectual factors, Avicenna also considers ethical factors, and in this vein he offers an allegorisation of hellfire. The bliss of the soul in the hereafter is preconditioned upon the good exercise of the intermediate psychological characteristics of the soul in the present life; by contrast, pain awaits for them who allow their bodily characteristics to dominate over those of their souls. In other words, the soul, which fails to control the bodily characteristics attached to the material world, encounters conflicts in the hereafter between the nature of the soul, pulling the soul from the body, and the characteristics of the body accumulated in the present life, preventing it from conjoining with the Active Intellect—thus, the soul is dragged in two opposite directions and motions, causing it great pain (Davidson, 1992, 111).

### **7.5.2 Avicenna's Rejection of Plotinus's View of Reincarnation**

The fundamental difference between Ibn Sina and Plotinus is that the former, in accordance with Islam, believes that reward and punishment are offered in the afterlife, while the latter, in agreement with the Indian philosophical doctrine of *karma* (action) and rebirth, holds that man receives the consequences of his

previous lives in this world. Avicenna, by rejecting the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, opposes the reincarnation of the soul, as does Islam. By contrast, Plotinus believes in rebirth of the soul, and says that it is memory that controls the descent of the soul (IV.4.4). Memories make the soul what it is now. If memories characterise the nature of the soul, why do we not remember what we did in past lives? Plotinus seems to hold that retaining memories is possible in a disembodied state, as he suggests, 'when the soul releases the body, it, with the progress of time, becomes able to remember the events of previous lives' (IV.3.27). Difficulties arise as to how the soul, after leaving the body, can retain memories; and what, then, is the individuating principle of the soul? Earlier, we saw that Plotinus said it is the material body, but with the introduction of the idea of reincarnation, he changes his views and says that it is not only the body but also the character and mental operations carried over in the previous incarnations that determine the nature of the incarnate soul (IV.3.8).

Plotinus's reincarnation view is based on his attempt to enforce justice, as he says: A ruler will be made slave because in the previous life he abused his power, and this fall is to his future good; the rich will be made poor, and poverty is no hindrance to the good (III.2.13). Man can be reincarnated as a plant, if in his previous life the vegetative principle dominated his life; similarly, he might become a ferocious animal, if he led his life like an animal with sensual pleasure and satiation of appetite; on the other hand, he can be a human being again, if he maintained and preserved the character of the human level (III.4.2). This view reflects Plato's theme. As he says that 'the soul which has never seen the truth

will not pass into the human form' (*Phaedrus*, 249b–c). Plotinus's doctrine of reincarnation also reflects that of Empedocles who believed that he himself reincarnated as bush in his previous life. Avicenna never accepted such a doctrine of transmigration of life from one body to another. His line of thought here has no trace in Plato and Plotinus. In this regard he sets himself entirely against the neo-Platonic systems, and endeavours to defend the Islamic expression of the afterlife.<sup>11</sup> In *Treatise on Prayer (Risalah fi Mahiyyati'l Salat)*, Ibn Sina mentions that reward and punishment await the soul in the afterlife. As he puts it: 'Death is the sundering of the soul from the body, resurrection is the linking with those spiritual substances, followed by the reward and bliss' (Avicenna, 1894, 34; Arberry, 1951, 54). If a man's works are perfect he will be rewarded, if not, he will remain forever sorrowful, and forsaken and damned (*ibid.*, 34). No doubt, Ibn Sina here is using a Muslim religious simile. Plotinus's view echoes the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth. From the Ibn Sinan point of view, Plotinus faces the problem of transmigration and holds an ambivalent position on individuality.

## **7.6 THE PROBLEM OF RESURRECTION: THE AVICENNAN & ISLAMIC CONFLICTS**

Avicenna's view of reward and punishment raises the question of what sort of pain and pleasure he is attributing to the souls in the afterlife. Is the feeling of pain and pleasure possible without physical organs? This question is concerned

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<sup>11</sup>There are, in the *Qur'aan*, some vague references to the souls of saintly people that can reach heaven. See for example, *Qur'aan* 3:196, 197, 4:17-19.

with the problem of the resurrection of the body. But can Avicenna believe in the resurrection of a body which is lost at death?<sup>12</sup> Avicenna never says that this physical body will survive death; rather, he believes in the continuing existence of the disembodied soul. How can the disembodied soul experience pain and pleasure which is an affection of both body and soul? Earlier, we saw that the cognitive imaginative faculty located in the brain is that which presents images to our intellect. So it is plausible to claim that to experience pain and pleasure in the hereafter we need to have this faculty, but it is a physical faculty which dies at death. Avicenna replies to this objection that the disembodied souls in the celestial sphere are attached to something in the celestial spheres, which is the organ through which the soul performs its cognitive imaginative function, and an aspect of the celestial sphere ‘serves as a surrogate brain’ for this faculty (cited by Davidson, 1992, 113 from *Shifa : Ilahiyyat*, 431-32; *an-Najat*, 297-98). So, given this picture of the experience of pain and pleasure in the hereafter, it can best be called ‘quasi-physical’. In this vein, Avicenna’s resurrection does not mean resurrection of the present body, which perishes, as corruptible.

The *Qur’aan* repeatedly teaches us the resurrection and the Day of Judgement.<sup>13</sup> One of the most telling verses in the *Qur’aan* regarding resurrection is:

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<sup>12</sup>Avicenna’s pain and pleasure in the afterlife seem to be spiritual, not material, as he does not believe in physical survival. He, in fact, disregards corporeal reward and punishment, and emphasises the spiritual bliss that is attainable for the righteous. However, his view against material punishment does oppose the Islamic view. See the *Qur’aan* (13:38, 36:55, 43:70-75, 76:11-23).

<sup>13</sup>Some important references to resurrection occur in the following passages.

2:113, 2:212, 3:77, 3:161, 3:180, 3:185, 3:194, 4:87, 4:109, 4:141, 4:159, 5:36, 5:64, 6:12, 6:73, 7:167, 10:93, 11:59-60, 11:98-99, 16:25-27.

When you were dead and He gave life to you.  
Then He will give you death, then life again, and then  
Unto Him you will return (2:28).

The above verse says that God created man, and gave life and at death He seizes life and then He can bring the body back to life. Although it means that we will have a second creation and a second body, it does not clearly say whether we will have the same body as we possess now. From the Avicennan point of view, the present body is corruptible and the body to be presented with the soul in the hereafter will not be the same body. Does Islam accept this view? The *Qur'aan* says that God knows everything, and nothing is impossible for Him, as He can create anything by saying only "Be" and it is so" (36:76-81). By the same token, it can be claimed that God can, if He wishes, resurrect the body which perishes but merges with the material elements. Whether or not we will have the present body, the *Qur'aan* teaches that though we die, we will be raised again, so death is only the separation of the soul from this present body. As the *Qur'aan* says: 'God gives life to the dead' (22:6), and 'verily the time will come: there can be no doubt that God will raise up all who are in the grave' (22:7). This is assurance of resurrection.<sup>14</sup> It seems that God, in His excessive Will, can raise our present body from the graves, though it is not clear in theology. Avicenna, however, does not differ fundamentally from the basic themes of the *Qur'aan* on the matter of resurrection, but those who believe in the Islamic understanding that God will raise the present body, will not find him as a true Muslim, since he does not claim the resurrection of the present body.

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<sup>14</sup>For an interesting discussion on the Islamic concept of resurrection see Mohammed, Ovey N., S.J., 1993, 37-55).



However, Avicenna rationalises the reward and punishment in the hereafter, which are highly prescribed in theology.

## **7.7 CONCLUSION**

It is reasonable to claim that Aristotle does not maintain the immortality doctrine, though there are some obscurities in his psychology. Unfortunately, Avicenna fails to understand these and tries to find the groundwork of the immortality of the soul in Aristotle. Avicenna intends to argue for the immortality of the soul in order to defend the *Qur'aanic* doctrine of resurrection, with which he was preoccupied. However, one significant point which Avicenna might have taken from Aristotle is transmigration of souls. In the light of Islamic theory, he accepts and rationalises the doctrine of reward and punishment in the afterlife. And in this vein, we find Plotinus arguing against the traditional doctrine, since for him a man is punished or rewarded in this present life in accordance with his deeds in the previous lives. This view is not acceptable to monotheistic religions. Plotinus also goes beyond the Christian and Islamic traditions, since he believes in reincarnation. Avicenna, unlike Plotinus, in this regard defends the monotheistic religious doctrine and says that justice is to be sought on the Day of Judgement in the afterlife, while for Plotinus, justice is enforced in the present life. However, although there are some affinities between Avicenna's thought and Islam, his denial of the resurrection of the present body does seem to be unacceptable to Islam.

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## **CHAPTER 8**

### ***ON THE DESCENT OF THE RATIONAL SOUL, ITS IMPRISONMENT, AND ITS RETURN JOURNEY***

#### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

It is clear from the previous discussions that Avicenna, following Platonic and neo-Platonic eschatological theses, holds a spiritualist view of man and the human soul. As opposed to Aristotle, Plotinus and Avicenna regard the soul as fallen, fettered, and captive in the body for the time being, which is the 'Arc of Descent' for the Sufi thinkers. But there is also the 'Arc of Ascent' whereby man, the final and the finest soul, emanated from the loftiest realm, returns to his original source. Speaking mystically, everything has a return to its origin, and reaching its origin is achieving the goal. Our life is like a circle—we return from where we came. Both Plotinus and Avicenna suggest that man is the highest being, a view which is reflected in the *Qur'aan* and the *Bible*, and that man has an inclination to reach the Supreme Being. So as there is a process of descent, so is there a process of ascent. In this respect, they wear the mystic cloak and show sympathy towards the mystic way of life and view of the soul, though, as we shall see, they differ on mystical traditions. But in offering his mystical experience Plotinus speaks of enjoying communion with the One, the Absolute Being, while Ibn Sina confines himself within the conjunction (*ittisaal*) with, not communion (*ittihaad*) with, God involved in contemplative activity. The extravagant Sufis, or the radical Sufis, as I call them, regard the

Platonic and neo-Platonic framework of mystical union as the Unity of Being (*wahdat-i wujud*), identifying the soul with God—an expression of radical or unitary mysticism which was carefully rejected by Avicenna in order to safeguard the individual identity and personal immortality in his monistic system, and in so doing, Avicenna finds himself as neither a true Aristotelian, nor a true Plotinian.

## **8.2 THE SPIRITUALIST VIEW OF MAN**

### **8.2.1 Plato and Plotinus Against Aristotle**

According to Plato, the connection of the body to the soul is necessary to constitute a living being; more clearly, he assumes man to be the co-inherence of body and soul. He views the soul as an entity incarcerated inside the body, thus depicting a dualistic account of human being.. This view is rejected by Aristotle.

In the *Metaphysics* (1037<sup>a</sup>5), Aristotle defines man as a conjoint of body and soul, and by this he does not mean that the rational soul can be a separate substance from the body. His *hylomorphic* view does not allow him to think of the soul as separate. He claims the soul is the form of the body (*DA* 412<sup>a</sup>20) and this relationship is actually a relation of form to matter (*Met.* 1045<sup>b</sup>16-24), which seems to be convincing that the soul and the body are two aspects of one living thing.

Aristotle says that form is prior to matter (*Met.* 1029<sup>a</sup>32). Does he mean that form is superior to matter? Form is actuality of [something], while matter is potentiality of that (something), which apparently means that he ascribes different properties to form and matter, indicating them to be separable. This analysis should not mean that he is suggesting that the soul and the body are separable. Aristotle by ascribing different properties is simply trying to understand how they are related to each other. So he rejects the Platonic sense of man as a being, composed of a soul and a body. Rather, he is content with the expression that man is one thing—a besouled body or an embodied soul.<sup>1</sup>

In an idiosyncratic manner in the *Enneads* (VI.7.4), Plotinus proceeds to define man extensively. At VI.7.4, he argues that man is to be defined in terms of *logos* (Reason) which makes him what he is, and this *logos* is 'indwelling', not separate—a view which Plotinus attributes to Aristotle (*DA* 413<sup>a</sup>13-16). Plato says 'Man is soul'—a view which Plotinus develops, distinguishing a higher form of man, who 'rises from the more godlike soul, a soul possessed of a nobler humanity and brighter perception'(VI.7.5), from the lower form of man with 'certain dispositions, natural tendencies, and powers—all feeble since this is not the Primal Man' (VI.7.5). The central point of the definition of man in Plotinus is put at VI.7.5.2-5 where he defines man as a conjoint

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<sup>1</sup>This picture of man has a relation to Wittgenstein's picture of a person. In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein first criticised the old picture of man that man is a soul which is a mysterious inner entity. This picture is false and pernicious. According to him: 'My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul' (*Philosophical Investigations*, II.iv. p. 178; trans. Anscombe, 1953, p. e178). Whether or not we believe in the existence of a soul is not a matter of concern, for the issue lies beyond our experience. The most telling passage is, thus: 'The human body is the best picture of the human soul' (*Der menschliche Körper ist das beste Bild der menschlichen Seele*) [*ibid.*, II.iv. p. 178]. So he depicts the picture of man as a picture of body. He has two aspects—a body and a consciousness, and these two aspects make him a total unity, a single whole person. In recent philosophy, an enormous contribution is made on the concept of person by Strawson.

(συναμφορότερον)—a soul in a certain *logos*, the *logos* being a specific activity (*energeia*); the *energeia* having no capacity to act without the acting subject. According to Plotinus, man possesses body (σῶμα), soul (ψυχή), and spirit (πνεῦμα). The spirit is a faculty of the soul and is treated as immortal. Avicenna makes a similar division of man—body or substratum-matter (*madda*), soul or form (*nafs*), and intellect (*'aql*)—the last being immortal. Man possesses both material and immaterial elements—the former is the body, the latter is the immortal soul—in Plato, Plotinus, and Avicenna.

### **8.2.2 The Avicennan Accounts of Man in two Contexts**

In fairness to Avicenna, the nature of man can be considered in two different contexts—philosophical and medical. ‘Man’, in the *ash-Shifa : De Anima* is, according to him, ‘spirit, albeit a lowly spirit, compared with the separate intelligences above him in the hierarchy of being’ (Zedler, 1977-78, 165-77). Body, although seen as necessary for the soul to be individuated, is not part of the essence of man. The Avicennan account of man as a spiritual substance conflicts with the description of man in the *Canon of Medicine*, in which he begins with the hypothesis that body belongs to the nature of man. ‘Man is presented as a living breathing body having organs and fluids, composed of elements, subject to sickness and injury and in need of the help that a physician can give’ (*ibid.*). Here, man is described as having humours, breath, organs, temperaments, and no doubt, this description goes back to Hippocrates, Galen, and, to some extent, Aristotle.

From the philosophical point of view, Avicenna's man is a living, sentient, and rational animal, possessing a body and a soul. He possesses three species of the soul and a unity, as we have seen. He is unique in the realm of living beings, and as such, the highest animal in the hierarchical order. This view Avicenna finds congenial to Islamic thought, which assigns a high place to man, such as 'man is the viceroy of God' (*Qur'aan*, 2:30), 'man is created in His image' (Genesis, 1:26) and 'by God's hands' (38:75), etc. The most interesting note on Avicenna's view of man is expressed in the context of his 'Flying Man' argument, which leads him to hold the position that man is nothing but a soul and that the soul is a spiritual substance. Here, Avicenna deliberately diverges from Aristotelianism and evokes the neo-Platonic thesis that is implicitly found in Plato.<sup>2</sup> Plato's mystic definition of man as a soul suits Avicenna's mysticism in the context of the 'Flying Man'. The idea that 'man is man' by possessing a soul rather than merely 'life', and not the simple physical soul of animals, but the spiritual soul that comes from God and returns to God is the central theme of Plotinus's and Avicenna's psychology.

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<sup>2</sup>Plato's spiritualist view of man is opposed by the Stoics. According to the Stoics, a human being is a composite of body (*sy/ma*) in the sense that since man exists, he must be body. More generally, 'he is an ensouled rational and mortal body' (Long, 1982, 34). Against the Platonic view of 'Man is Soul', they say 'man is body'.

### **8.3 THE ALLEGORY OF THE SOUL–BODY RELATIONSHIP**

#### **8.3.1 Avicenna & Plotinus on the Bird–Cage Allegory**

Plato is the first philosopher to depict explicitly the view of *psyche* as an immortal substance, entombed, or temporarily imprisoned, in the body. In the *Phaedrus*, he allegorically asserts the relationship of the soul to the body as ‘an oyster in his shell’ (*Phaedrus*, 248). But the soul merely uses the body (*Phaedo*, 79); for Plato the desideratum is ‘the release of the soul from the chains of the body’ (*Phaedo*, 67), which is, speaking metaphorically, the release of the bird from the cage. In the *Phaedrus* (246d–e), he depicts the journey of the soul as the flight of a bird. The bird-cage allegory is touchingly portrayed in Avicenna’s mystical writings. The “Ode on the Soul” (*al-Qasida al-ainiyya*), and the “Epistle of the Bird” (*Risalat at-Tair*) are the two most remarkable mystical poems in which he sketches the pathos of the soul’s descent from above and its transient immersion within matter (Heath, 1992, 92). Like the Platonic concept he compares the soul with a dove. Comparing the journey of the soul as the flight of a bird, Ibn Sina writes in the “Ode on the Soul”:

There descended upon you from that lofty realm,  
 A dove, glorious and inaccessible.  
 Concealed from the eye of every seeker [*arif*],  
 Although openly disclosed and unveiled.  
 Reluctantly she came to you,  
 And reluctantly, in her affliction, will she depart.  
 She resisted, untamed; then upon her arrival  
 She grew accustomed to this desolate waste.  
 She forgot, I think, promises of sanctuary and  
 abodes from which she had been unwilling to leave.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Translated by Peter Heath (1992, 92) from Kholeif, 1974, 129-130. Also see for full English translation, Browne, 1906, 110-111. There is also a translation by Arberry (1951, 77-78).

By ‘you’ Avicenna refers to human beings, human living bodies, or mankind, and ‘she’ he represents the ‘rational soul’ in the feminine gender (*samaya*). So the soul is compared to a female dove. This is the world to which the soul did not like to come down, because it is worse than the heavenly sphere; this is why Ibn Sina says that the soul is reluctant to come down to the body, but after attaching to the body, the separation is grievous to the soul because it becomes attracted to the material world and loses its original heavenly attributes. So the return journey is tedious to the soul. This is why he says that the soul is reluctant to depart from the body for the destination from which it came. The body is the cage which is a hindrance to the soul—the bird. The human body becomes a prison for the rational soul, i.e., the intellect, because of its having an appropriate balance of the material elements. The balanced mixture of the human body causes the bird, the intellect, to take pleasure from the material world, and as such the intellect finds it difficult to release itself from the cage, the prison. However, compared to the heavenly sphere, the existence of the worldly body in which the soul stays temporarily is very short, just as a flash of lightning lasts less than a moment.

However, it is difficult for Avicenna to reconcile his philosophical account of the soul as descent from above with the mystical view, as set forth here. The *an-Najat* states that the soul is merely present to the body, that is, the soul comes into existence with the body, but that the soul exists *in* the body, at least in the physical world, cannot be denied. The mystical expression of the dove-cage analogy confirms this. However, the soul is reluctant to come to the world, while he holds in the philosophical account that the soul has a natural



yearning for the body; this seems to be an inconsistency in his thought. The emanation of the first intellect from the Necessary Existent proceeds naturally and necessarily in the translunar realm, but this necessity does not occur in the case of the emanation of the sublunar world and our soul from the Active Intellect, as it governs our souls and the world of generation and corruption.

Plotinus encounters the same dilemma. The soul is free and determined to emanate itself from the Intellect. By the eternal law of nature the soul descends into the body (IV.8.5). So it has no choice whether or not it will descend. But Plotinus also accepts the other alternative that the soul derives from above and enters the body by its voluntary and free act for the purpose of adorning the body, which is lower than the soul (IV.8.5). To resolve this difficulty Plotinus finds an accord between freedom and necessity. Comparing the soul's act with that of the spirit in the heaven, he concludes that the soul goes forth neither under compulsion nor of free will (IV.3.13).

Plotinus, however, like Avicenna, shows that the soul separates itself from the loftier realm, and, being attached to the material body, it forgets God, from whom it derived its being, and cares for the external things, in which it deeply sinks (IV.8.4). The return journey for the individual soul to the World-Soul becomes an obstacle, since it is detached from the totality, and has no vision of the Intellect; thus it has drifted away from the universal and become partial and self-centred (IV.8.4). Plotinus, thus, like Avicenna, says, the soul is fallen, fettered, and captive in the body (IV.8.4). The soul has lost its wings and is imprisoned in the body (IV.8.4). Both Plotinus's and Avicenna's mystical themes hint that the soul, once fallen and imprisoned in the body, forgets the

origin from where it descended. Plotinus asserts that the soul's esteem of the material things and scorn of its true self is the cause of its forgetfulness of God (V.1.1). Avicenna's allegory is almost the same. For him, the soul is enticed by the earthly bait and entrapped by the material body which prevents it from remembering the sanctuary from where it came unwillingly.

### **8.3.2 The Influence of the Bird–Cage Allegory in Islamic Mysticism**

Throughout Islamic mysticism it is widely believed that the body is created by God as the temporary dwelling place for the soul which returns permanently to God. Rumi is the most renowned mystic bard who compares the soul with the bird of God's garden, and the body with the cage in which the bird is locked up for the time being. As he writes:

I am a bird of God's garden,  
I do not belong to this dusty world.  
For a day or two they have locked me up in the cage of my body (Rice, 1964, 67).

Here, 'I' represents the soul in the analogy of the bird-cage relationship. The verse clearly implies that the body cannot be a permanent abode of the soul. The bird-cage analogy of the soul-body relationship reflects the mystic thought of Al-Ghazali, who, although he criticises Avicenna, agrees with the latter on the soul's temporary abode in the body, which, he, following Avicenna's analogy, regards as the outer garment. It is said that Al-Ghazali woke up early one morning and as usual offered his prayers and then enquired what day it was. His younger brother, Ahmad Ghazali replied, 'Monday'. He asked him to bring his white shroud. He kissed it, stretched himself full length, and breathed his

last saying 'Lord, I obey willingly'. And underneath his head rest they found some verses, composed by him, probably, during the night. Quoting the bird-cage allegory:

Say to my friends, when they look upon me, dead  
 Weeping for me and mourning me in sorrow  
 Do not believe that this corpse you see is myself  
 In the name of God, I tell you, it is not I,  
 I am a spirit, and this is naught but flesh  
 It was my abode and my garment for a time.  
 I am a treasure, by a talisman kept hid,  
 Fashioned of dust, which served me as a shrine,  
 I am a pearl, which has left its shell deserted,  
 I am a bird, and this body was my cage (Lyrics: 40).

Like Rumi, Al-Ghazali represents the soul as 'I'. I, the subject, the whole being of Al-Ghazali. The Being of Al-Ghazali is therefore his soul. 'I' or the self is the subject of consciousness, identified with the soul in Ibn Sina, Rumi, and Al-Ghazali. Following Avicenna, he regards the body as a temporary garment. In addition, Al-Ghazali compares the soul to the pearl, the shell of which is the body, which is left behind at death. However, the Sufi view of the soul in relation to the body greatly influenced the Bauls, literally meaning lunatic, in the Indian sub-continent. Lalon Fakir (1772-1890), the greatest bard of Bengal, expresses his spiritual view of the soul in the same allegory.

I cannot make out how the unknown bird comes into the cage  
 Had I the capacity, I would fetter it  
 With the chain of the mind (Dastagir, 1995, 1273-1280).

The bird-cage allegory of the Sufis and the Bauls is used to clarify the nature of the soul as the spiritual being whose temporary dwelling place is the body, and Plotinus and Avicenna would not object to this view, but the Sufis and the Bauls have a different perspective. Their fundamental objective is to attain spiritual bliss through the love of humanity and for this purpose they are mainly concerned with the communion of the soul with God, because they believe that

God's highest manifestation is the soul. Plotinus and Avicenna do not deal with this problem here. The Sufis and the Bauls share completely with Plotinus and Avicenna the view that the soul leaves the body and can exist separately from it, and that the ultimate goal of the soul is to return to God, with which we shall deal in the next section. But while Avicenna, following the Islamic view, joins the Sufis and the Bauls to restrict body's survival to only the human soul, Plotinus attributes immortality to all vegetative, animal, and human souls.

## **8.4 THE MYSTICAL UNION OF THE SOUL**

### **8.4.1 The Greek Expression of the Mystical Union of the Soul**

As the soul descends into the corporeal world from the loftiest realm, the Divine, there is a logical claim that it also ascends towards the Divine—which is a return journey of the soul. Plotinus expresses that 'the soul's aim is likeness to God; in the contemplative life, man's highest activity, in which he is concerned with intelligence alone, he becomes himself divine' (Moore, 1931, 46). Plato is of the same view. It is believed that God as the creator is Omniscient and All-Just. Plato agrees with this religious view. For him, man should make himself like God in the greatest degree possible to man (Walzer, 1962, 16). According to Plotinus, individual souls exercise their natural inclination toward the Divine Intellect, urging them to return to their source, but at the same time the soul has an aptitude to administrate in the lower sphere (IV.8.4). The nature of the soul is divine and eternal, like that of the divine

Intellect (IV.7.10). He regards wisdom and true virtues as divine, which can only be found in things which are of divine nature, not in mortal things. He lays importance on the purifying of one's individual self or ego,<sup>4</sup> from material attachments by abandoning the activities of the body; and a purified man sees himself entered into the Pure, the Intellectual realm.

In this circumstance, the seeker does not depend upon his senses, nor does he see anything of mortality, but rather his outlook, being eternal, grasps everything in the intellectual substance, and he himself becomes united with the Divine Intellect. This is the ascent of the soul to the Supreme (IV.7.10). Plotinus, therefore, suggests that we can attain likeness to the One and become united with It.

### **8.4.2 The Mystical Union in Different Traditions**

According to Sufi thinkers, for example, Rumi, man's original source is God, and only man can return to this source, 'when man reaches perfection, God's manifestation is perfected and without man's perfection, God's manifestation would not be perfect.' The mystic poet Rumi strongly believes that he came from mineral, plant, animal, and has never become lower by dying, rather higher. So he does not fear to die, as by dying he becomes superior, so in the next life he will become superhuman. The radical or the unitary Sufis claim that everything is God's manifestation, and as the perfect manifestation of God, only man can attain the attributes of God. The Biblical and Qur'aanic verse 'God

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<sup>4</sup>This view is accepted by the Sufi thinkers with alacrity in the context of *nafs*.

made man (Adam) in His own image'<sup>5</sup> expresses two meanings—that man has the attributes of God, and that man has an appearance similar to God's—the latter view is adopted by the pantheist Sufis, who seek union or identification with God. This type of mysticism is called unitary or radical Sufism, the profound proponent of which is Mansoor al-Hallaj. The orthodox Muslims do not endorse this view. The Qur'aanic verses like 'Allah cometh in between the man and his own heart' 8:24, 'I (Allah) have breathed into him (man) of My spirit (*ruh*)' [15:29] appear to be of great importance for those who reconcile the neo-Platonic expression of 'soul's likeness to God' with the Sufi view of the soul's identity with God. One of the telling *Hadith* in this respect is 'He who knows himself knows his God',<sup>6</sup> the influence of which can be traced to the Platonic expression that 'the mind knows God through an inner likeness' (Rosenthal, 1940, 410). Since to know or realise one's self, identified with Soul, is to know God, it is believed by the Unitary Sufis that the soul is identical with God. This mystic view is also expressed in other traditions. The *Katha Upanishad* (II.2.12) says: 'The Supreme One dwells in the inmost part of our being'. In fact, in *Advaita Vedanta*, the unity of being means more than the soul's becoming united with God, it is rather to become God, as the *Upanishads* say: 'He who knows the Supreme Brahman, verily becomes Brahman' (*Mundaka*, 3.II.9; *Chhandogya*, 6.14.3; *Taittiriya*, 2.I.2).<sup>7</sup> The mystic view that

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<sup>5</sup>*Khala Kallaho Adma Ala Suratehi.*

<sup>6</sup>It is often claimed that this *hadith* is a replica of the Delphic maxim '*know thyself*' inscribed at the Pythian oracle of Apollo, but it is a serious mistake. The Delphic motto is a warning to acknowledge that we are mortal human beings and that we are ignorant; so to realise this fact and to acquire knowledge through self-realisation because 'knowledge is virtue' signify the meaning of the maxim, and it has no link with the *Hadith* 'He who knows himself knows his Lord' (*Maan Aa Rafa Nafsuhu Fakad Aa Rafa Rabbahu*).

<sup>7</sup>*sa ya ca vati tat paramam brahman veda brahmaiva bhavati, nasyabrahma-vit kule bhavati* (*Mundaka*, 3.II.9).

God dwells in the innermost part of man is also found in Christian theme: ‘And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us’ (I JOHN, 3:24).

The radical Sufis, in support of their view of God’s closeness to man, also refer to the *Qur’aan*: ‘and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein’ (50:16). A similar expression is found in Christian theology, as it is said, ‘God is more intimate to each than anything is to itself’. This view seems to have influenced St. Augustine. As he said, ‘Thou, my God, art “more inner” to me than my innermost self, and higher than my highest self’ (Confessions bk. 3, ch. 6, sec. 11).<sup>8</sup> The sober Sufis mean by the above mentioned Qur’aanic verse that man’s soul, as being the perfect manifestation of God, is divine and spiritual which is God’s manifestation. To the orthodox Muslims, it means God’s omnipresence. A pertinent question can be raised as to why God needs to be manifested in the perfect form in man while He is considered to be perfect. The Sufis understand the manifestation of God as ‘*I was a Hidden Treasure, and I wished to be known, so I created creation that I might be known*’ (Archer, 1980, 187). This does not mean for the Sufis that by being hidden God is limited, as the Sufis say that ‘God’s Will is expressive of His unlimited power which renders every thing possible for Him’ (Muslehuddin, 1974, 138). However, it can be objected that to identify God with every existing thing in the world is a serious deviation from the main tenets of Islam. Those who oppose the radical Sufis, like Al-Hallaj, argue that Sufism need not to regard everything on the earth as being identical with God. The

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<sup>8</sup> *Tu (Deus) autem eras interior intimo meo, et superior summo meo.*

basic principle of Sufism is ‘Unity of Being’, which means that ‘there is only One Being and whatever exists is a manifestation or realization of that Being’ (Lewisohn, 1992, ix). God is described in Islam as being the Omnipotent or Omniscient being who thus is not bound by any laws. So it seems to be sensible for the pantheist Sufis to claim that He can be manifested if He wills in all the things that He creates. It should be argued that being manifested in different things is different from being Creator of the things. So the view that ‘God is all and all is God’ is not accepted by Islam in the sense that everything is equal to God; rather, everything is the creation of God, through His will, so that all beings are to be treated with love and sympathy. God, in Islam, created this world because He wanted to be known; all creatures and, thus, the world as a whole, is a mirror wherein God sees Himself. In the most liberal sense, things are the reflection of God. But it does not follow that the reflection and God are one and the same.

### **8.4.3 Avicenna’s Philosophical View of Mystical Union**

Ibn Sina, while discussing the nature of the Necessary Existent, claims that It is a unity and all other things are contingent (*mumkin*), and it is plausible to argue that the Necessary Existent has no cause while all other beings, being contingent, must have causes (*Metaphysica*, 59). Accordingly, the contingent things either return to themselves, or to the primal cause—the Necessary Existent. But they cannot return to themselves (chain of causation), because in that case one thing would have to act both as cause and effect, which is impossible (*Metaphysica*, 59). It is thus obvious that everything must return to



the one unique cause, the Necessary Existent. This is the fundamental theme of all monotheistic religious traditions, and it is also expressed in the Platonic and neo-Platonic philosophy. The soul feels a desire to return to the source (*Isharat*, III, 1960, 244), for its union (*wusuul*) with the higher realm necessitates that it long for the return to the higher.

In the Plotinian fashion, Ibn Sina portrays in the *Isharat* the rational soul's deliverance from the sensible realm to the Divine realm. The intellectual seeker (*arif*) must, first of all, possess a spiritual desire or will (*iraada*) for God for his own good, and this desire or will can be attained either by intellectual perfection or by deep faith in God's Command (*Isharat*, IV, 1960, 78). Next comes the stage of self-discipline (*riyaada*) whereby the seeker should cleanse himself by eschewing bodily desire, subduing his animal faculties, and awakening the soul's spiritual insight. And one can awaken his spiritual insight by subtle contemplation (*al-fikr al-latif*) and virtuous love (*al-'ishq al-'afif*) [*Isharat*, IV, 1960, 85]. Having attained these two stages, a man can experience a slight conjunction (*ittisaal*) with God, but the more he practises the whole procedure, the more contacts he makes with God, like flashes of lightning (*Isharat*, IV, 1960, 89-90). Finally, when the seeker reaches the state in which he engages in continual contemplation, he receives the Divine illumination (*Isharat*, IV, 1960, 93-95). It should be pertinent to mention here that, although Ibn Sina uses the Sufi terms in portraying this framework of conjunction with the Divine realm, he makes no indication of soul's identity with God; rather, this is how Ibn Sina describes a man can have natural knowledge of God leading to the direct knowledge of God. This is what Ibn Sina means by the ascent of the

soul to the knowledge of God, and in portraying this framework, which is though attractive and beautiful in thought and elaboration, 'he is still moving within the intellectual confines of his philosophical system' (Heath, 1994, 91-102).

What we have seen is that Avicenna, in describing the attainment (*wusuul*) of God's knowledge, is concentrating on the conjunction (*ittisaaal*) of the soul with the Divine realm. But if looked at carefully, in the Ibn Sinan process of epistemology the pivotal principle is the Active Intellect which acts as an intermediary between man and God. The process of cognition is a conjunction (*ittisaaal*) of the rational soul with this Active Intellect, which is the last heavenly intelligence in the intelligible world, dominating the world of generation and corruption. So the Active Intellect is the linking principle between man and the Necessary Existent, God. The more the rational soul makes contact with the Active Intellect, the more perfection it achieves, and, to that extent, man's ultimate goal, as Avicenna hints, is to become united (*muttahaad*) with the intelligible world in which the form of the whole exists (*an-Najat*, 293). In the *Isharat* (1960, III, 270), idea of conjunction of the intellect of the rational soul with the Active Intellect is reiterated. It is through the conjunction with the Active Intellect that we know God, for 'God is the cynosure of the Active Intellect' (Goodman, 1992, 164), which is a clear rejection of the later Peripatetic view that the active intellect is identified with God held by Alexander of Aphrodisias, but denied by Themistius, Plutarch, and Philoponus (Merlan, 1963, 48-49). Conjunction (*ittisaaal*) with the higher entity is regarded as the source of happiness or spiritual bliss for the disembodied soul

in the hereafter. The more the soul makes contact with the Active Intellect, the more it can penetrate in the Universal Intellect, which is an aggregate of the separated intellects in the Divine realm. It is thus evident that by attainment or union (*wusuul*) Avicenna means the conjunction (*ittisaal*) of the human intellect with the Active Intellect, avoiding deliberately the neo-Platonic and Sufi view of the identity of the soul with God.

But in the mystical treatise *On Love (Risalah fi'l 'ishq)* he seems to appear to talk about the union (*ittihaad*), instead of conjunction (*ittisaal*), with God. Designating the Necessary Existent as the Absolute Good (*al-khair al-awwal*), Avicenna holds that every soul has a natural desire for its perfection—a desire which is expressed in ‘love’ (*'ishq*) [Avicenna, 1917, 23]. In the *Isharat* (IV, 40-5), Ibn Sina mentions that the soul can reach its highest stage by loving the Necessary Existent. It is a natural phenomenon that ‘a being loves the thing towards which it moves’, and in the similar vein, our souls, which are endowed with a divine nature, should love the Absolute Good (Avicenna, 1917, 21), which is the source of the ultimate happiness of man. In ‘The Treatise on Love’ he reiterates that perfection of the soul lies in two things, the first of which is ‘to become assimilated to the essence of the Absolute Good’ (Fackenheim, 1945, 224). He asserts that since ‘every being has a natural desire for its perfection and perfection means the acquisition of its goodness’, every entity has to depend upon the Absolute Good for perfection—the latter ‘manifests Itself to all those that love It’,—and thus the highest degree to which each entity approximates this perfection (*kamaal*) is ‘the reception of Its manifestation in its full reality, i.e. in the most perfect way possible, and this is what the Sufis call union

(*ittihaad*)' [Avicenna, 1917, 22; Cf. Fackenheim, 1945, 225]. The problematic term here is Avicenna's use of '*ittihaad*' (communion or unification), which apparently seems that Avicenna is led astray by his theory of the contemplative activity of the soul in conjunction with the Active Intellect. But a careful investigation would reveal that Avicenna, by using the term '*ittihaad*' does not agree with the Plotinian and the radical Sufi view of the soul with God. Treating the Necessary Existent as the Absolute Good (*al-khair al-mutlaq*), Ibn Sina holds that the Absolute Good manifests Itself to all those that love It, but as the things stand in the hierarchical order, the receptivity of Its manifestation varies in accordance with their capacities; and the highest degree of things' approximation to the Absolute Good is the reception of Its manifestation as perfectly as possible (Goodman, 1992, 170). This is, Ibn Sina shows us, what the radical Sufis know as communion or unification (*ittihaad*). So, as we have said before, the manifestation and the Absolute Good are not identical; rather, the former is the expression of the latter.

## **8.5 CONCLUSION**

The views that the soul is imprisoned in the body and returns to its original source are non-Aristotelian in Avicenna's psychology. He begins with the Aristotelian definition of the soul and ends with its mystical view. Plotinus, by contrast, from the beginning to the end, maintains a mystical and dualistic approach to the soul. However, that Avicenna maintains a spiritualist view of man and the human soul throughout his philosophical psychology, as we have seen in this research, cannot be denied. The views of the soul expressed in this

chapter are mystical and metaphorical, and we have seen that this mystic expression can be traced to some extent to Plato's thought, but was developed by Plotinus and culminated in the expression of extravagant or unitary Sufi thinkers. Plotinus and Avicenna are not only philosophers dealing with the rationalisation of philosophical problems but also mystic thinkers expressing the same problems in mystical ways, which closely resemble Christian and Islamic beliefs. Though, of course, reason and faith cannot be woven together systematically in a single fabric. Now, to what extent, can Avicenna's mystic view be related to Greek thought? There is no doubt that the notion of mystical union or communion in Aristotle's system is misleading and false. Unlike the Necessary Existent, Aristotle's Prime Mover is not a perfection of the human soul. Avicenna's idea of the soul's return to its original source is closely related to the neo-Platonic 'principle of reversion'.<sup>9</sup> But does Avicenna, like Plotinus and the Sufis, make any effort to identify the soul with God? We have observed that there are three important terms used in Avicenna's expression of his mystical view—conjunction (*ittisaal*), attainment or union (*wusuul*), and communion (*ittihaad*)—the last being closer to the Sufi expression. But although Ibn Sina uses this term, he does not personally commit to the view that the soul is identical with God, as held by the radical Sufis; rather, he just uses it to define what the Sufis mean by it. In the mystic expressions of Plotinus and his mystic followers the soul is identified with the One, God, and this fusion cannot safeguard the individual human identity. Avicenna, on the contrary, opposes this view and carefully chooses the term 'conjunction' to explain how

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<sup>9</sup>According to Proclus, every effect proceeds from its cause and reverts back to it. This view is called the principle of reversion (Proclus, 1963, 39).

and to what extent the soul is related to the Active Intellect—the tenth intellect in the celestial realm and as such ‘ten times removed from God’, as Fakhry puts it (1976, 137-143, see 141). However, it is difficult to deny that, as we have shown above, Avicenna, while talking about the mystical ascent of the soul to the knowledge of God, clearly has God in mind, not the Active Intellect. But the important point to be noted here is that there is no use of the term ‘communion’ (*ittihaad*), which convinces us that Avicenna’s mystical view of the soul does not reflect the idea that the soul is identical with God found in neo-Platonism and radical Sufism. He rejects two fundamental views of Greek philosophy—the later Peripatetic view that the active intellect is identified with God, and the neo-Platonic view that the soul is identical with God. And he therefore safeguards the individual identity, which Plotinus and his followers fail to realise. In Avicenna’s rational mysticism, we find that he circumscribes himself to the contemplative or intellectual activity in order to acquire perfection in conjunction with the Active Intellect, a link between man and God; and in this perspective he maintains the gulf between man and God, set in the *Qur’aan* ‘unto whom nothing is like’, which means God is superior to and distinct from His creations, of which man stands supreme. But within the same framework he moves beyond the boundary of the Active Intellect and turns to the world of Reality in order to attain the mystical knowledge of God (*ma’rifat Allah*), which means a kind of union (*wusuul*) with God, though not intended to mean this union as soul’s likeness to God, as taken in Plotinus’s mystical work. This framework, that is, the contemplative activity can remotely be related to the

Aristotelian tradition.<sup>10</sup> We can, therefore, conclude that Avicenna puts the neo-Platonic wine in the Aristotelian bottle, though not with much success.

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<sup>10</sup>The intellectual activity of the *nous* is described as eternal and God-like in the *De Anima* (430<sup>a</sup>3-25). In the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1178<sup>b</sup>8-22), the human's best activity is considered as contemplation, which is also an activity of God, and in this way man's contemplative activity can be compared to God's activity, which is divine. A similar kind of view is expressed in *Met.* (X, 1074<sup>b</sup>34). The import of this kind of view is that, since human contemplation is divine and noble (*NE* X, 1177a15) shared by God, it is consistent to argue that God can be known in the noble activity of contemplation—an idea which Avicenna might have inherited.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

The foundation of Avicenna's psychology is the Aristotelian philosophical system. As the later Peripatetic thinkers, such as Alexander (of Aphrodisias), Simplicius, Themistius, Philoponus derived their varied psychological thoughts from Aristotle, so did Avicenna. Avicenna seems to have attached value to the ancient philosophers' thought, from which he picked up the basic ideologies upon which he built his own psychological system. In absorbing ancient views, he defended whatever he found cogent and congenial. Thus, we cannot disregard the possibility of his diverting from one track to another. This seems to be the case in his psychological writings. Both Aristotelian and neo-Platonic elements, in addition to Islamic tenets, are encompassed in Avicenna's philosophical system. In absorbing Greek thought at an age when he had already attained a wide range of knowledge of Islam, he found foreign elements congenial, to some extent, with what he adopted from Islam. Thus, he interwove reason and faith together in a single fabric, establishing a wonderful harmony between divergent views. His natural bent for assimilating Greek philosophical views and Gnosticism, especially Hermeticism, produces a new form of Islamic philosophy. There is no doubt that, initially, he found himself an Aristotelian. In his early writings of psychological treatises, such as *Compendium on the Soul*, he is identified as an unqualified Aristotelian. He uses Aristotle's divisions of the soul, defining it in the same style as Aristotle did. Like Aristotle, he ascribes soul to all plants, animals, and humans; and he understands 'life-form' in terms of what the soul does, rather than what it is, just



as Aristotle does. The faculties of Avicenna's soul are Aristotelian. The human soul, which is the highest in the hierarchical order, possesses all the faculties of the lower souls, and in this sense the human soul has three main phases—the vegetative, the animal, and the rational souls. How Avicenna develops this view from Greek thought can be examined here.

According to Aristotle, the functions of the soul have a series with a definite order; the earlier form exists potentially in what follows in order, i.e., the triangle in the quadrilateral, and similarly, the nutritive faculty in that of sensation (*DA* 414<sup>b</sup>28-33). Therefore man, who has the rational faculty, must have the faculties of the lower forms of life. So the soul for Aristotle is common to all plants, animals, and humans. Aristotle explicitly asserts that the soul is that whereby primarily we live, perceive, and have understanding (*DA* 414<sup>a</sup>12-13). To take the term 'we' as human beings, we can assume that the human soul, in addition to its own functions, possesses the functions of both plant and animal faculties, since the term 'live' refers to the nutritive faculty which is the first and most widely distributed faculty, in virtue of which all things possess life (*DA* 415<sup>a</sup>25-30); the term 'perceive' reminds us of sensation and hence all animals; and the term 'understanding' obviously refers to the intellect of the rational soul. However, at *DA* 432<sup>a</sup>22-26, while discussing the parts of the soul, Aristotle objects to the tripartite theory of the soul formulated by Plato (*Republic* 434d ff.) and also to the division into rational and irrational parts, though he views the latter division as a popular distinction (*NE* 1102a26).<sup>1</sup>

In the ethical writings, while discussing ethical virtues in terms of functions of

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<sup>1</sup>In Book II of the *Generation of Animals* (chap. 3) and in Book II of the *De Anima* (chap. 4, sec. 1) and Book III of the *De Anima* (chap. 9, sec. 2 & 3), Aristotle elaborates these parts of the soul.

different parts of the soul, Aristotle characterises sometimes one, sometimes two of the parts as irrational, allocating a particular function for each part (*NE* I.13.1103<sup>a</sup>3-10, VI.1.3, VI.12.1144<sup>a</sup>9-10; *EE* II.1.1220<sup>a</sup>10). Having divided the soul into three parts—a nutritive part, an appetitive part, and a rational part, Aristotle holds that each part of the human soul has its own virtues except for the nutritive part (*NE* 1144<sup>a</sup>9-10). In the *Nicomachean Ethics* (book vi, chap. 2), he says clearly that there are three things in the soul which control action and truth—sensation, reason, and desire. Although it is not clear whether he makes a similar trichotomy in terms of the rational soul, it is obvious that he explicitly talks about an ordered series in which he is seen to emphasise the powers of the soul, rather than the parts of the human soul. The salient point is that the lower can exist without the higher, but the higher necessarily incorporates the lower, such that the notion of the quadrilateral is impossible without the notion of the triangle, whereas the latter is possible without the former. This is why Aristotle says that the nutritive part, being the lowest of the series, is possessed by plants, as well as sensitive beings—animals and humans—similarly, sensitivity is possessed by animals and humans only, not by plants. From this point of view, it seems that Aristotle is not against the triple division of the human soul, since the rational soul, being the highest grade, incorporates all of these faculties, some of which are, indeed, the faculties of lower grades—plants and animals.

However, although the trichotomy of the rational soul is found even before Plato's time,<sup>2</sup> it is Plato's philosophy in which the three-fold division of the rational soul is emphasised most firmly. In an attempt to depict an ideal

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. Hicks on *Aristotle's De Anima*, notes on 432<sup>a</sup>26, p. 550. For details see Cornford, 1929-1930, 206-219.

state in the *Republic* he claims the necessity of order or co-operation in the *psyche*, since the disorder and malfunctioning of the *psyche* results in the tyranny of man and ultimately the Ideal State begins to decline. In the *Republic* (IV.435b-c, 441a-e), we find the trichotomy of the human soul—the rational part (λογιστικόν), the courageous or spirited part (θῦμοειδης), and the appetitive part (ἐπιθυμητικον); he assigns a particular function to each of them, for instance, wisdom to the rational soul, courage or anger (*Republic* IV) to the spirited soul, and bodily pleasure to the appetitive soul.<sup>3</sup>

Plotinus's position on the issue of the triple division of the soul is very obscure. The most telling passage suggesting that he believes in a tripartite soul is to be found at IV.7.14, in which he refers to man's tripartite soul in terms of immortality. In the first *Ennead* (I.2.I.16-20), Plotinus, like Plato when discussing civic virtues and vices, talks about three faculties of the soul and assigns a particular function to each of them. Plotinus follows Plato (*Republic*, IV) in suggesting that the appropriate symmetry of the operations of these faculties of the soul can bring about virtue or justice. A further reference to the division of the soul is made at IV.4.28, where Plotinus is engaged in the discussion of age, pleasure, pain, and so on, but mentions only two faculties—the desiring faculty (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικον) and the spirited faculty (τὸ θῦμοειδης), but not the rational one (λογιστικόν). What is meant here is that he rejects the division of the irrational soul into a desiring and a spirited part, but attaches importance to the fact that it is the vegetative soul that produces the physical.

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<sup>3</sup>Plato's triple division of the soul corresponds to the different types of human life. When any of these three natures becomes dominant, it determines the character of the individual concerned. For example, when he is dominated by the appetitive desire, his sensual life becomes more active and thus he seeks sensual pleasure.

For Plotinus, when we see different forms of activities, this does not mean that there are different forms of soul engaged in each case. There are several places in the *Enneads* where Plotinus uses the terms *epithumetikon*, *thumoeides*, and *logistikon*, but nowhere does he clearly say that these are the parts of the rational soul; rather, they indicate the different faculties of the soul. So we can assume that there is in Plotinus's psychology acceptance of the Aristotelian types of faculties of the soul, but not the triple division of the human soul, and the functions of the soul, as we have seen in chapter three, provide the Aristotelian framework for Plotinus's own doctrine. It may be worth mentioning that, although we cannot establish that Plotinus accepts a trichotomy of the human soul, it is obvious that he makes a tripartite division of man into body (σῶμα), soul (ψυχή), and spirit (πνεῦμα), just as, in the Platonic manner, he illustrates the tripartite division of the divine principle into the World-Soul, Spirit, and the One, or the Absolute, also found in Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Heraclitus, and Empedocles. So there are two fundamental triads in Plotinus's philosophy, but neither of them suggests that the rational soul is divided into three parts.

Avicenna mainly agrees with Aristotle concerning an explicit exposition of the division of the human soul. He argues that each of the three aspects of the rational soul has its independent operations but at the same time each subsumes the faculties of others. For instance, the animal soul has its independent operations but includes all the faculties of the vegetative soul. The rational soul, in the hierarchical relationship, incorporates all the activities of the vegetative and the animal souls but is made unique by its own independent faculty, the rational element. Hence, for Avicenna, all three realms are intimately

connected. In the hierarchy of being, the plant kingdom edges towards the animal, and the animal towards the human. In this vein, he argues that the highest level of minerals resembles closely the lowest level of vegetables. Similarly, the highest level of plants resembles the lowest animals in various ways (Nasr, 1964, 38). There are some plants whose organs, such as roots, trunks, branches are very similar to some peculiar animal organs, as in both cases the functions of the organs are almost the same. The idea that all three realms of life are intimately connected can be found in Aristotle's *Historia Animalium* (588<sup>b</sup>4-13, <sup>b</sup>18-21) in which Aristotle describes the unbroken continuity of life, from the lower to the higher degree. This transition of life is best described in Aristotle's *Parva Naturalium* (681<sup>a</sup>12-16), in which he details the various physiological structures and functions of animal organs. Aristotle reasons that there are some strange sea-creatures that are not clearly either plant or animal. Although Avicenna concurs with Aristotle that plants and animals have to some extent a similar generating process, he takes issue with Aristotle, insisting that soul is brought about by God. Avicenna, however, agrees with Aristotle that man shares the powers of the vegetative and the animal souls, while he uniquely possesses rationality, differentiating him from vegetables and animals. He accepts Aristotle's claim that every higher level subsumes the functions of the lower level with its own added capacities. These parts can be described as levels of life and each level or order of life is distinct from the others. The vegetative power is separable from the higher faculty of sensation and locomotion, and locomotion from the highest faculty of reason. What is true of the plant soul does not fit the animal soul; nor can the animal soul be

identical with the human soul. This is why Aristotle feels the need for a separate enquiry into the nature of the plant, animal, and human souls (*DA* 414<sup>b</sup>32-33). This view applies to Avicenna as well. In Avicenna's system, the rational soul markedly differs from the non-rational or corporeal souls, not only in definition but also in essence, which is why he feels it necessary to offer different accounts of the plant, animal, and human souls.

Conflict and compromise between Avicenna and his Greek predecessors begin with the definition of the soul. He substitutes Aristotle's *entelecheia* for Arabic *kamaal*, literally meaning 'perfection'. Aristotle does not change the style in defining the soul while talking about different phases or kinds of soul. But as we have noticed in this thesis, Avicenna's soul is divided into three phases, each with its own *entelecheia*, functions, and faculties. He uses the very term *kamaal* as a substitute for *entelecheia*, but unlike Aristotle, Avicenna puts forward the definition of each of the three phases of the soul by adding some extra characteristics with a view to showing us that each soul has different psychical faculties to perform. It is the soul which brings about life-functions and makes the natural body living, in association with which the soul performs numerous activities through its selective faculties. In the cases of the plant and animal souls, this association never ceases, but in the case of humans, this association is temporary, just for initial purposes in order to get started, that is, the human body plays its role 'in determining the "time" when a soul is crystazed out of the emanation of the active intellect' (Davidson, 1992, 107); afterwards, the human body plays its role merely as an instrument for the rational soul. So the *entelecheia* or, in Avicenna's term, *kamaal*, is a founding

principle of nature. Souls are individualised in terms of bodily dispositions, determining which type of body will receive what type of soul. In humans, the bodily disposition reaches in equilibrium and perfect form to receive the perfect form from the Active Intellect. The human soul is, therefore, a complete soul emanated from the celestial realm.

It can now be observed that this is not what Aristotle means by his *entelecheia* doctrine. He uses it just to define the soul as an actualisation of the living body, but Avicenna goes beyond this. With Aristotle he agrees that the soul is an *entelecheia* means it is an actualisation of the living body, that is, it simply animates an organic body. Where he takes issue with Aristotle is that *entelecheia* is merely a form in the cases of lower souls, that is, plant and animal, because it simply animates the plant and animal bodies, but it is a substance in the case of the rational soul. So, *entelecheia* has many connotations in Avicenna's psychological scheme. It denotes actualisation, form, perfection, substance, etc. *Entelecheia* means actualisation, because it actualises natural body. It is merely a form in the cases of lower souls, for it simply animates the organic body. It is called perfection, because it perfects the several species of living beings. That the soul is an *entelecheia*, in the case of corporeal souls, means it is a form subsisting in matter without being separable from it; again, that the soul is an *entelecheia*, in the case of the incorporeal soul, means it is form of the human body in relation to its material constituents, but is separable from it, that is, it is form means it is a substance. So, the concept of the soul in Avicenna is ambiguous. The term '*nafs*' is equivocal. His generic description of the *nafs* in terms of *entelecheia* resembles Aristotle's in the case

of corporeal souls, but in the case of the human soul, this *entelecheia* means more than that. In the Aristotelian scheme, the *entelecheia* formula is taken as a whole in its essence, as taken by the neo-Platonists. Avicenna insists that it describes only the soul–body relationship; that is, ‘the soul is an *entelecheia*’ defines how the soul is related to the body, that is, form to matter (*Psychology*, 9). As Avicenna says, ‘If we know that souls are *entelecheiai*, we still do not know what they are in themselves’ (*Av.De.An.*, 10). By this relational description is meant that the soul is a vital or an activating principle of the body. Beyond this relational description, he goes farther and describes the soul in terms of his famous ‘Flying Man’ argument, which applies only to the rational soul. Simply put, his generic definition of the soul as an *entelecheia* (*kamaal*) of the natural body potentially having life, applies to all three kinds of soul—plant, animal, and human. But with regard to the last one, he says, adding a new dimension to the Aristotelian *entelecheia*, that it is a substance in itself. We can thus understand how he deviates from the original Aristotelian sense of *entelecheia* and incorporates so many connotations in the concept of the soul.

Aristotle’s *entelecheia* doctrine faces a severe attack by the neo-Platonists, who find it difficult to define the soul in the Aristotelian manner, for the *entelecheia* formula jeopardises the separability of the soul from the body. In IV.7.8<sup>5</sup> of the *Enneads*, Plotinus deals critically with the Peripatetic *entelecheia* view. The *psyche* cannot be treated, Plotinus argues, as form relating to matter, mainly because this would mean that, as in the case of, say, a bronze statue, upon any dividing of the body the soul, its form, would be divided with it; if a part of the body were cut off, a part of the soul, too, would



be cut off, which is absurd. Since an *entelecheia* is not a thing of parts, how can it be present partwise, in partible bodies (IV.7.8<sup>5</sup>)? Now, to avoid this difficulty, one must assume an *entelecheia* to be inseparable from the being of which it is an actualisation. But if it is inseparable, it will follow that the withdrawal of the soul in sleep cannot occur; in fact, sleep itself cannot occur (IV.7.8<sup>5</sup>). Plotinus stresses here the Platonic dualism of the soul and the body, as he engages himself in identifying them by conflicting characteristics—the body as opposed to the soul. Physical desire is assigned to the body, while reason, to the soul. But the Aristotelian *entelecheia* view would lead one to the supposition that there is no conflict between reason and bodily desire, since, Plotinus points out, *entelecheia* entails the whole organism as a uniform experience, and that would imply that ‘there can be no discord between the body and the soul that informs it’ (Rich, 1963, 1-15). Assigning pure thought to the soul, Plotinus also objects to the *entelecheia* account of Aristotle. For him, pure thought needs no bodily involvement at all for its activity, but given the Aristotelian *entelecheia* view, we are to assume that pure thought is impossible, since *entelecheia* must involve the body. Plotinus is also found to put forward his objection to the *entelecheia* doctrine in respect of his defence of animal metempsychosis (IV.7.8<sup>5</sup>). In fact, Plotinus’s main concern rests on the Platonic position of the separability of the soul from the body. It can be noted that in the criticism of *entelecheia* view, Plotinus consciously or unconsciously escapes from the ‘first’ in the Aristotelian definition.

Now, can Avicenna save his theory of the soul from the objections raised by Plotinus? By nature, Avicenna’s soul is of two types—corporeal (plant and

animal) and incorporeal (human)—for the former, Avicenna remains adherent to Aristotle, for the latter he joins the neo-Platonists. So, Plotinus’s objections apply to the corporeal souls. Since Avicenna does not make any effort to establish the separability of the corporeal souls, rather their functions are dependent on the bodily organs, Avicenna’s corporeal souls do not face the Plotinian objections, to the extent to which it is raised in defence of soul-body dualism. As to the rational soul, the *entelecheia* is taken as a substance capable of subsisting by itself, and as such, is separable from the body, so he escapes from Plotinus’s attacks here as well. Plotinus’s refutation of the Aristotelian *entelecheia* doctrine can be considered to have grounded on his arguments of the simplicity of the soul, that is, the soul is simple and is not divisible into parts, nor is imprinted in the body which is divisible. Avicenna’s account of the intelligible forms is completely analogous to Plotinus’s. As we have seen in chapter five (section 5.5.3), Avicenna strongly defends his position that the rational soul is not divisible, nor is located in the divisible body. If the soul is not imprinted in the body, there is no question of soul–body relationship as form to matter. Similarly, if the soul is simple, there is no question of its being divisible, or being located in a thing which is compound and divisible. The view of the simplicity of the soul is a clear rejection of the soul-body relationship as form to matter. So, in a sense, Avicenna not only rejects the Aristotelian sense of the *entelecheia* doctrine in the case of the rational soul, but also attacks the doctrine to safeguard the separability of the soul from the body. Avicenna distinguishes between forms (*suwra*) and *entelecheiai* (*kemaal*) and argues that all forms are *entelecheiai* (*kamaal*), but not every *entelecheia*

(*kamaal*) is a form (*suwra*) [*Av.De.An.*, 6]. According to him, a pilot is an *entelecheia* (*kamaal*) of his ship, just as a king is of his state. But neither the pilot nor the king can be a *form* (*suwra*) of the ship, or of the state. Here, by *entelecheia* or the term *kamaal*, as Avicenna uses it throughout his *ash-Shifa*, is meant perfection, and he stresses that an *entelecheia* or *kamaal* which has its own being cannot be a form imprinted in matter on the ground that a form existing in matter is actually imprinted in, and can subsist through, matter (*Av.De.An.*, 6). So the soul as an *entelecheia* is not imprinted in the body; the *entelecheia* only designates the relation of the *nafs* to the (natural capable of life) body (*jesmin tabi'ya*). Moreover, Avicenna holds that souls are not forms, rather than *entelecheiai* in that the *nafs* is a spring of action and a motive force; thus the *entelecheia* (*kamaal*) relates to the being as a whole, while the form relates to matter (*Av.De.An.*, 7). Avicenna's exposition shows that the pilot is a helmsman of the ship, as the steersman perfects the activities of the ship, but the steersman is not imprinted in the ship; rather, the pilot is related to the ship in such a way that he controls and governs the ship. Applying this analogy to the soul-body relationship, Avicenna reiterates that 'the relationship between the soul and the body is not in the sense that the soul is imprinted in the body, but in the sense that the soul is occupied with the government of the body so that it is conscious of that body and the body is influenced by its actions' (*Psychology*, 64).

The question of the separability of the soul makes it necessary for Plotinus to examine the suggestion that the soul is related to the body as the pilot is to the ship. In Plotinus's understanding, although the analogy indicates

the potential separability of the soul from the body, it does not exhibit the mode of presence of the soul in the body that can suit Plotinus's psychology. He points out that as a voyager is in a ship in some incidental way the presence of the soul in the body can be imagined so, but the analogy is inadequate because the steersman is not omnipresent to the ship whereas the soul is so to the body (IV.3.21). However, Plotinus also considers another analogy—a craft being in its tools—and equally rejects the analogy, for the comparison breaks down, since the craft is external.

That the soul controls and governs the body without being imprinted in it is clearly the Plotinian view (IV.3.9). Plotinus elaborates this point, emphasising that the best way the soul and the body can be related is in terms of the soul's presence to the body. With a spatial metaphor, Plotinus explains that the soul-body relationship can be truly analogous to the light-air relationship. Light can penetrate the air, but it is not blended with it, and it is thus legitimate to hold that light is both present and not present to air (IV.3.22). The light is the stable thing, while the air, according to Plotinus, flows in and out; when the air passes beyond the lit area it is dark; on the other hand, when the air is under the light it is lit (illuminated). On this understanding, Plotinus proposes that the best way to make the analogy is that the air is in the light, rather than the light in the air (IV.3.22.4-7). In this context, Plotinus invokes Plato (*Timaeus* 34b) saying that with reference to the World-Soul he is right in holding that the body of the World-Soul is in its soul, not the World-Soul is in its body (IV.3.22). Plotinus thus agrees with Plato that it is more accurate to say that the body is in the soul, rather than that the soul is in the body. But having said this, Plotinus

also says that there is no objection to saying that the soul is present to the body, provided that they do not coalesce with each other.

As we have seen in this thesis, since Ibn Sina's human soul acquires knowledge from a celestial realm by a conjunction with the Active Intellect, it cannot be a terrestrial being; and its involvement with the material body cannot be essential to it, but rather, accidental. The way he defines the rational soul and describes its activities produces a sensible consistency in holding that the rational soul is functionally independent of the body—a view which leads him to the immortality of the soul inherited from Islam. Unlike some philosophers in the Aristotelian tradition, Avicenna does not restrict human immortality to an aspect of the human soul; rather, it is the soul as a whole, which is considered to be immortal. Again, unlike, Al-Farabi, he does not limit human immortality to any particular intellectual stage of the soul; rather, for Ibn Sina, each individual soul, regardless of intellectual development, is immortal by its very nature. Later medieval philosophers in the Aristotelian tradition, like Averroes and Aquinas believe that Aristotle's teachings do not conflict with the immortality of the soul in Aristotle's philosophy. Aquinas criticises Avicenna for Platonising the soul and attempts to prove that the soul can be a form of a body and at the same time, an intellectual substance (1952, I, q.75, art.2). We shall critically examine his view from the perspective of Avicenna's soul and explore whether Avicenna's immortality view can be fitted into the Thomistic interpretation. Avicenna's intention is to prove the immateriality of the rational soul on the basis of his conviction that it has no involvement with the material body, rather than the conjunction with the immaterial Active Intellect from

which our intellect receives immaterial intelligibles. Avicenna's position was seriously challenged by St. Thomas Aquinas who, although he accepted Avicenna's view that the rational soul is spiritual, argued that it can receive the intelligibles from the material world; and in this supposition, he regarded the active intellect, like Aristotle and Averroes, as an aspect of the rational soul. So both for Aristotle and Aquinas the potential intellect and the active intellect are parts of the rational soul.

Aquinas first attacks Avicenna's view that the cause of our intellectual knowledge is a separate substance. He claims that it is not the active intellect which is the formal cause, but rather the sense-images (*phantasmata*). Since he does not regard it as actually functioning as the formal cause of human knowledge, there is no need to place the active intellect outside the human soul. Aristotle says that images are necessary for the thinking soul, as for him without an image the soul never thinks (*DA* 430<sup>a</sup>16). Images, which serve as sense-perceptions (*aisthemata*) for the rational soul, are received from senses, and thus are not divorced from particular matter. These images can be called potential intelligibles which become actual through the abstraction of the active intellect. How does this abstraction happen? Aquinas holds that the active intellect illuminates the images, i.e., its influence prepares the images in such a manner so that thoughts are abstracted from images, and it is for this reason that Aquinas says that the active intellect abstracts the intelligible species from the images (Aquinas, 1952, I, q.84, art.6). Moreover, since the soul is united to the body, as Aquinas claims, in the present state of life, it is impossible for the intellect to acquire forms without turning to the *phantasmata* (1952, I,

q.84, art.7). Here, Aquinas distances himself from Avicenna and defends Aristotle. While Ibn Sina holds that the Active Intellect *imprints* intellectual thoughts in the intellect, for Aristotelians (Avicenna in this case is not an Aristotelian) its function is just to illuminate the sense-images. Furthermore, while for the former, knowledge is brought about from above or is provided by the Active Intellect, for the latter, our knowledge is contained in images and is abstracted by a faculty (i.e. the active intellect is a higher intellectual faculty) of the soul.

From the above, it appears that for Aquinas, the intellect of the rational soul deals with material things, that is, being placed within man's soul and acting on the possible or potential intellect, it illuminates material things. The crucial point here is that man is a composite of body and soul and that his intellectual activity involves the association of the body; and in this sense, for St. Thomas the material world does not lie outside intelligibility. Whereas for Avicenna immaterial concepts are received from above, i.e., from the transcendent spiritual substance, for St. Thomas they are received from material things, i.e., from sense images (*phantasmata*). The intellect of man, then, deals with particulars existing in sense-images in order to abstract the universal nature in the particular existents (Lee, 1981, 41-61). Avicenna's intellect, by contrast, functions independently of the body, since in perceiving universals it retreats from matter and conjoins with transcendent beings. So, in Aquinas there are three crucial points that differ from Avicenna's philosophy:

(i) the intellect receives intelligibles from the material world,

- (ii) the active intellect is a part of the rational soul, and as such it is not the source of intelligibles,
- (iii) the soul is united to the body as its form.

Obviously, Aquinas remains faithful to Aristotelianism here and distances himself from Avicenna. But where he joins Avicenna is the view that the soul has a *per se* existence in the sense that it has its own act of operation apart from the body, such as in the case of understanding (Aquinas, 1952, I, q.75, art.2). Now, there appears to be some opacity and incongruity in his thought. For, one should ask: how can the rational soul, which is the form of the body, subsist *per se*? The answer depends upon what Aquinas intends to mean by saying that the soul is the form of the body. Following Aristotle, he vehemently argues that the soul is the form of the body, as it is the principle whereby we live and perform various activities (*Ibid.*, I, q.76, art.1). Further, the soul receives forms through *phantasmata* by virtue of its union with the body (*Ibid.*, I, q.75, art.6). Notwithstanding, he holds that the soul is separate in terms of its intellectual power, which does not belong to a corporeal organ, unlike the act of seeing belonging to the eye (*Ibid.*, I, q.76, art.1). The soul exists in matter as the form of the body, but the act of understanding or intellectual power belongs to the soul. In this sense, the soul is something 'subsistent in itself' (*aliquid subsistens per se*). St. Thomas equally argues that to operate *per se* belongs to what exists *per se*. In this sense, the soul is subsistent, that is, a substance. He attributes dignity and sublimity to the soul, for which he claims that the powers of the soul are not faculties of the material body, though they belong to the intellect, suggesting that the intellect functions without the body (Aquinas, 1948, 167).



Does he mean that the soul is a composite of matter and form? Aquinas holds that the soul communicates to the body in which it subsists, and in this way the soul and the body make the unity of existence, and this unity of existence is the existence of the soul, in which the soul and the body are related as form and matter (1952, I, q.76, art.1). But it does not mean for Aquinas that the soul is a compound of matter and form, as he argues in the discourse of the immortality of the soul (*Ibid.*, 1952, I, q.75, art.5 & art.6).

Now, to compare Aquinas's thought with that of Avicenna, we can find that Avicenna's attempt to safeguard the immortality of the rational soul prevents him from accepting Aristotle's theory of the soul as the form of the body in the Aristotelian sense. For Aquinas, it is not a problem, for the soul can be a form of the body and at the same time it must be a subsistent thing with its own operation (*Ibid.*, 1952, I, q.75, art.2), suggesting that there is no fundamental difference between Aristotle's *entelecheia* doctrine and the neo-Platonic view of the soul. Now, could this be applied to Avicenna? Could Aquinas hold the position that the soul is the form of the body and a subsistent thing if he accepted Avicenna's 'Flying Man' argument which holds that we could still be aware that we exist, even if we did not possess any body or bodily organs? Similarly, he cannot entertain Avicenna's view of the direct self-knowledge as the essence of the soul. How can the rational soul acquire intellectual knowledge from the sense-images as it is claimed by Aquinas? From the Thomistic point of view, the active intellect plays the preparatory role for the potential intellect so that thought can be generated from the images. Obviously, the active intellect does not contain the intellectual forms. Where do

they come from? For Aquinas, all the sensory faculties function in association with bodily organs, and it is thus impossible that the intellectual thought can be contained in the images upon which the active intellect acts. Again, can the active intellect really act upon the images? For Aristotelians, a corporeal thing cannot participate in incorporeal activities; for only the incorporeal acts upon incorporeal things. From this point of view, the active intellect cannot actually act, since it does not find anything intellectual in the images which can be acted upon. Furthermore, at *DA* 432<sup>a</sup>3-8, Aristotle says that unless one perceives things one cannot think, which means that 'there is nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the sense'. Aristotle's telling passage that 'when one thinks one must simultaneously think an image' (*DA* 432<sup>a</sup>8) forces us to object to the Aristotelian view that the intellect can abstract anything intellectual from images. Another striking objection can be raised against the intellect's thinking activity in the first place. If the intellect engages in images in us, whenever one contemplates to acquire pure abstract thought, then one can never succeed in so doing, since he always, from the Aristotelian point of view, knows the sensory images. If we cannot think without *phantasmata*, then the Aristotelians cannot consistently claim that the intellect is incorporeal and separable from the body. It can be claimed, thus, that Aristotle's doctrine of *nous poietikos* and that of Aquinas's *intellectus agens* are confusing. The crucial problem in the Aristotelian system consists in designating the intellect as the separate and incorporeal entity and envisaging intellectual abstract knowledge abstracted from *phantasm*. Avicenna's view of the Active Intellect as a transcendental entity that gives forms to the incorporeal soul is less

problematic. He cannot consistently hold that the rational soul, as a spiritual substance, which receives spiritual knowledge from above, is the form of the body. The arguments put forward by Avicenna for the separability and the substantiality of the soul are entirely different from those of Aquinas. Avicenna's use of a hypothetical self-conscious soul is a significant point on which Aquinas differs from Avicenna; and because he does not accept this view, it is possibly less problematic for him to accommodate two contrary views in his philosophy. Avicenna's position that the soul is a spiritual substance capable of receiving intellectual forms from the spiritual world, does not allow him to say that the soul is the form of the body in the Aristotelian sense. It is worth mentioning that Aquinas also says that the soul is spiritual, but not in the Avicennan sense; rather, it is spiritual in so far as the soul is intellectual. But this intellectuality, unlike Avicenna's, is nurtured by material things themselves, which explains the soul's union with the body (Lee, 1981, 41-61). We can therefore claim that Avicenna's argumentation for the immortality of the soul cannot be fitted into the Aristotelian tradition. His attempt to fit the neo-Platonic and Islamic view of immortality of the soul into his philosophical understanding of the soul necessarily made him slip away from the Aristotelian tradition. He distances himself from Aristotle and Aristotelians both on philosophical and methodological grounds. On philosophical grounds, because the fundamental theme of his psychology reflects neo-Platonic and Islamic thought, not Aristotelian one; and methodologically, because, though some of his philosophical views (such as, incorporeality, spirituality) resemble those of

Aristotelians, for example, Aquinas, he adopts different methods, such as the 'Flying Man', direct self-knowledge, and so on.

We can claim, therefore, that it is hard to believe that, given the Avicennan argumentation, his principle of the soul as a spiritual substance was derived from Aristotle's *entelecheia* doctrine. Of course, he takes up the Aristotelian formula of *entelecheia*, but he adds major new dimensions to it, as his doctrine of *kamaal* does not merely mean the Aristotelian sense of *entelecheia* as an actualisation or activating principle of the natural body having life potentially; rather, it has more applications than this in his psychological scheme. One of the dimensions added to the Aristotelian *entelecheia* is expressed in terms of the final end or return (*al-ma'ad*) of the soul. Avicenna sees *kamaal* in its ultimate meaning as dealing with the soul's innate perfection in its wedding to the Active Intellect. He poses that the ultimate purpose of human life lies in perfecting the soul, and suffering or bliss in the hereafter is determined by the degree of perfection we achieve in this life. This vision of Avicenna demonstrates a dichotomy of higher and lower, superior and inferior, virtue and vice, etc. In other words, we notice a feature of hierarchical order in Avicenna's whole psychological system.

To begin with his emanation theory, we find a hierarchical order from the highest to the lowest. The Necessary Existent is the highest being from which stems the First Intelligence, then other intellects beneath it, and so on. This suggests that the derivation directs in descending order from the nobler to the lower, until the lowliest reached is the Active Intellect, which is the last substance of the heavenly sphere. This world of generation and corruption and

all particular beings derive from the translunary realm. Again, there is a hierarchical order among these beings. The prime matter, along with its four forms, is the lowest in the hierarchy of beings in this world. Higher than this is the mineral soul, which is lower than the vegetative soul, which in turn is lower than the animal and the rational souls. The rational soul is the highest in rank. Hierarchy can also be noticed among the faculties of the soul. In the rational soul, the animal faculties are higher than the vegetative faculties, but lower than the rational faculties. Again, in the animal faculties there reigns hierarchy. The lower serves the higher—the common sense, which is served by five external senses, (*nusawwira*), serves the representation, imagination, and so on. Considered as a whole, all the animal faculties serve the rational soul. In the rational soul the same trend can be found, as there is a hierarchical order among the four stages of the theoretical intellect, the prophetic intellect (*al 'aql al-qudsi*) being the loftiest. Since there are differences among men in terms of possessing disposition for receiving forms from above, human beings differ from each other with respect to their degree of intelligence, and since the prophets are in this respect the loftiest and noblest of all human beings, they are considered to be closest to God in the ascending order of beings. Taking the theory of *kamaal*, we can say that the perfection of the natural body depends on the soul, and similarly the perfection of the soul depends on the Active Intellect; and, since every entity desires to attain perfection according to its capacity, the highest perfection can be achieved by man, because he stands supreme. Avicenna emphasises this in his esoteric teachings. Everything emanates from God, and it is his conviction that that which originates from God must return to

God. This is, what he says in the *Risalah al-Arshiya* (Treatise on Monarchy), the process of origination and returning, that is, ‘God is said to be the Originator and the Returner’ (Arberry, 1951, 37).

Now, can Ibn Sina’s status of hierarchy be called Islamic? According to the saying of the prophet, ‘the first thing God created was the intelligence’, from which it seems that God created first the loftiest thing, then the inferior to it, which accords with Avicenna’s and Plotinus’s views. Again, in terms of God’s creative activity both the *Bible* and the *Qur’aan* express that God created the world first, then all creatures and finally human beings, being the last and the best, and He made all the lower beings subservient to man. So the lower serves the higher. Man maintains the same hierarchical order in society, as we have a junior-senior, higher-lower ranking system in our social or political life. In mysticism, it has been emphasised that everything is a manifestation of God and, since no creation is purposeless and nothing will escape God’s judgement, everything will be returned to God and thus judged according to their kinds and actions. The significance of a harmonious hierarchical order in terms of the parts of the soul lies in Avicenna’s emphasis on the ultimate goal of the soul to reach the perfection of the highest by suppressing the lower faculties, advocated in his ‘*Risalah fi’l ‘ishq*’. By *kamaal* or ‘perfection’ is intended here to mean the acquisition of goodness—each entity desires this ‘perfection’ according to its capacity, but human beings, being the highest in the rank, can reach the highest perfection.

Such is the diversity of the meaning of *kamaal* in Avicenna’s accounts of the soul. Its diversity makes the concept of the soul confusing. Confusion also

remains in his flexible use of the term '*nafs*', by which he sometimes means soul in general, sometimes 'rational soul'; similarly, confusion is also noticed in his using the terms '*nafs*' and '*ruh*', which are sometimes used in the *Miraj Nama* interchangeably, but they denote different meanings. Terminological confusion is also noticed in his handling the internal faculties of the soul (Wolfson, 1935, 69-133). He starts his psychological accounts with the Aristotelian definition of the soul in terms of *what it does* (it is an actuality of the body), but later understands it in terms of *what it is* (it is a substance). However, the division of the three phases of the rational soul is a development from his Greek counterparts' concept of the soul. The particular functions of each phase of the rational soul in the individual correspond, to some extent, to those of three kinds of *nafs* set in the *Qur'aan*. Ibn Sina's doctrine of *kamaal* cannot be treated as a consequence of his misunderstanding of Aristotle's *entelecheia* doctrine; rather, it would be more sensible to claim that he develops Aristotle's *entelecheia* doctrine in order to fit the Islamic doctrine of immortality of the soul into his philosophical understanding of the soul, and this understanding he owes initially to the Aristotelian tradition, later to neo-Platonic philosophy. It was one of his intentions that he would make his Greek predecessors' thought worthy, and in so doing he found himself initially as a committed Aristotelian, but necessarily slipped away from the Peripatetic tradition. It is not the case that he was unaware of this shift; rather, he was aware of the defects in the Peripatetic tradition and intended to perfect those defects. As he comments on the Peripatetic tradition in the Introduction to the *Easterners*: 'We perfected what they meant to say but fell short of doing, never

reaching their aim in it; and we pretended not to see what they were mistaken about, devising reasons for it and pretexts, while we were conscious of its real nature and aware of its defect' (Gutas, 1988, 47). In perfecting his teacher's (Aristotle) defects by putting forward his arguments intending to defend the Islamic concept of the immortality of the soul implicit in the concept of afterlife, he cannot help but turn out to be more a neo-Platonic thinker than an Aristotelian. Again, in rationalising some Islamic beliefs with which he was pre-engaged, he finds himself deviating from the orthodox Islamic path. This deviation from the mainstreams of Aristotelian, neo-Platonic, or Islamic theology is necessary for him to build his own philosophical system maintaining consistency, since each tradition has its own distinctive characteristics. Put metaphorically, in Avicenna's psycho-physiological scheme, the skeleton is borrowed from Aristotle, which is clothed with the flesh of his arguments in the neo-Platonic manner, while the organism is animated by the Islamic 'Soul'.

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## APPENDIX

### *THE GENERATION OF THE SOUL: PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS ACCOUNTS*

As philosophers as well as scientists are divided with respect to the creation-evolution problem, so are Islamic scholars. Some Sufi thinkers, although they stick to the *Qur'aan*, are concerned with the evolution of man and the universe for which they strike a compromise between the materialistic theory and the gradual emergence of consciousness, but created by God—a view which is called creationist evolution. This is a way to fit the scientific theory of evolution into the Qur'aanic view of creation. By contrast, some orthodox Muslim scholars have made an all-out effort to stick to the interpretation of the Qur'aanic doctrine of creation of the world *ex nihilo*, as opposed to the theory of evolution which, according to them, is not supported by sufficient experimental evidence. Thus the *Qur'aan* has been interpreted in two opposite ways. Those who have found confirmation in the *Qur'aan* of the evolutionary philosophy include Mohammad Abduh, Sir Syed Ahmad, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Fazlur Rahman Ansari, Ayatullah Murtaza Mutahhari, Maurice Bucaille, and so on (Mabud 1986, 9-56). But in the Sufi philosophy of Jalal-ud-Din Rumi, Hazrat Inayat Khan and their successors the view that the soul is manifested in the most perfect form in humans is found very convincing, although it is not beyond controversy. Shaikh Abdul Mabud is one of those who reject the 'theistic evolutionary' view of the soul that consciousness gradually evolves through rock, tree, animal, to man, that is, from matter to man.

The *Qur'aan* offers the creation theory, which is based on other monotheistic religions, such as Judaism and Christianity. In all these religions God is the Ultimate Being with whom nothing is co-eternal, and who is independent of the world. He created particular beings, this universe, for example, ex nihilo. As the *Qur'aan* says:

To Him is due  
The Primal origin  
Of the heavens and the earth:  
When He decreeth a matter  
He saith to it, "Be",  
And it is' (2:117).

There is a parallel to this passage in the Bible.

In the Beginning  
God created the Heaven and the Earth  
And God said, Let there be Light;  
And there was Light (Genesis: 1:3).

The above verses say that the creation of all things comes from God, that the earth as well as the heaven is the result of God's will, and that nothing was in existence before, or with God. God created matter ex nihilo prior to the creation of other things, as the verse says: 'When He decreeth a matter'. So Nature is the primary factor for the origin of all things. Both Christianity and Islam accord that God's creation of all things is 'in proportion and measure'.<sup>1</sup> Accepting the view that everything is created according to its kind, it is sensible to argue that everything has a specific purpose of creation and thus everything

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<sup>1</sup>For example, in Genesis: "And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kind:' And it was so" (Genesis: 1:24). 'And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind' (Genesis: 1:25). Here living creature refers to what we understand as living souls. The assertion that the beasts are created according to their kind means their souls are different from each other, i.e., 'according to its kind' implies according to its soul. The same theme is reflected in the *Qur'aan*. As the following verses say:

Verily all things  
Have We created  
In proportion and measure (54:49).

has its own accountability after its kind and measure. According to Islam, plants, insects, birds, animals, humans, all have a spiritual development in their lives. As to plants and other matter, we have another reference in the *Qur'aan* which says that God fashioned everything according to the best organisational plan (95:4). It also adds that everything is unique in its creation and everything will be present on the Judgement Day so as to testify according to the standard of its kind. Human beings have a higher faculty, rationality, free will, so they will be judged according to what they have been bestowed; similarly plants, animals, which lack the attributes humans possess, will be judged accordingly.<sup>2</sup>

Those who attempt to reconcile the evolutionary theory with the *Qur'aan* find some Qur'aanic verses as their basic foundation-stones, on which they appear to believe that man appeared on the earth last in the order in which various forms have appeared: earth, water, rain, vegetation, cattle, and finally man. Let us consider the following Qur'aanic verses:

It is He Who sendeth down  
Water from the sky:  
From it ye drink,  
And out of it (grows)  
The vegetation on which,  
Ye feed your cattle (16: 10).

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<sup>2</sup>It may be a concern for the theists that if everything including the animals is deemed to have a soul, is it logically and morally lawful to kill them for our own sake? Both the Scriptures and some Greek philosophers agree with the point that animals are created for the service of humans. Aristotle is of the view that plants exist for the sake of animals, and animals for the sake of man, to provide him with food and clothing. This Greek view is very much akin to that of both *the Bible* and *the Qur'aan*. For example, *the Qur'aan* says that God created animals to serve man, and man to serve God: 'We created you and all the things on earth for you to make use of them.' It also says: 'It is He Who hath created for you all things that are on the earth' (2:29). God also said that plants are created for the consumption of cattle. It implies that we have rights to use plants and animals for our purpose. It also implies that human beings are the best creatures, for the welfare of which all other creatures are created. But it does not mean that this use of plants and animals should be unnecessary. No one would deny that plants are necessary for the existence of living beings. The *Qur'aan* does not permit man to be cruel to animals. In the same manner, we need to take care of plants for our own welfare, as plants and humans are interdependent for respiration, the vital function of bodies. According to the scripture we may use animals for any use that helps mankind: from consumption to scientific research, as long as there is a valid reason that is consistent with Islamic views. From philosophical and scientific points of view the same principle can be applied, as it seems to be inevitable.

Again, it is said:

And cattle He has created  
For you (men) (16:5).

From the above verses, it is assumed that cattle came after plants, and man came after cattle. *Critically speaking*, it is clear, as the above verses reveal, that man is the last in the order of creation, but it is *difficult to ascertain from those verses* whether cattle came after fish, or fish after cattle. However, the order of the evolutionary process does fit with that of the *Qur'aan* in which plants, animals and humans are believed to have appeared in the process of gradual transformation.

The way in which the Sufis Inayat Khan and Rumi understand the manifestation of God in every atom, from God to the smallest atom, and thus through rocks, plants, insects, birds, animals, humans can be compared to the principle of evolution, as explained by the scientists. Inayat Khan demonstrates that minerals turn into plants, and plants into animals, and in the same manner there are some stones on their way to becoming plants; and similarly, there are plants that look very much like stones; these plants catch and eat flies, even small animals—all show an evidence of gradual evolution from lower to higher (Khan, 1962, 96-97). For him, evolution is such that consciousness gradually evolves through rock, tree, animal, and to man where consciousness reaches its highest point of manifestation, and in which God's manifestation is perfected. There seems to be some ambiguity here in that, on the one hand, one might understand that evolution started with matter, and on the other, with God. How, then, is matter related to God? To the Sufis, matter is not what it appears to be.

For example, Rumi does not regard matter as 'independent of mind', as he says 'my body is a product of my soul, not my soul a product of my body' (Iqbal, 1983, 267). For him, matter is not only produced by mind but also is dependent for its existence on mind. In this vein, Rumi divides Reality into two realms: the Realm of Spirit, which is out of time, and the Realm of Nature, which is in time. The soul belongs to the former, whereas material objects belong to the latter. By evolution the Sufis thus do not mean evolution of the Soul, rather they argue that although 'plant-life is a development of the mineral kingdom, animal life of the vegetable kingdom, and human life the culmination of this evolution, this culmination is only the finishing of the vehicle which the soul uses' (Khan, vol. 1, 135). Broadly speaking, this evolution means that the soul has adopted a more finished instrument in order to experience life more fully. However, what is clear from Rumi's conception of evolution is that evolution does not take place, as Darwinism argues, by 'mechanical and passive natural selection, but according to the will of the organism to live a higher and fuller life, by assimilating the qualities of the higher organism' (Iqbal, 1983, 269). The crucial point on which Rumi differs from the Darwinians is that although evolution started with matter, his matter is not the matter of the materialists; rather, it was from the beginning only the outer form of the spirit; it consisted rather of the monads of Leibniz than the atoms of Democritus. Furthermore, while Darwin ends with man, for Rumi there are unlimited possibilities of man's development, that is, from man to superhuman, and finally to God from whence he came.

In accordance with Rumi's view of the soul as the Ultimate Reality, which is not created (as described above) but manifests itself, it makes sense that God is identified as the soul, the Ultimate Reality, in the terms of Plotinus the World-Soul, as both God and the soul are considered to be eternal and uncreated, but manifested in different kingdoms—minerals, plants, animals, humans, which is why to my mind, the Dervishes (mystic saints) are of the view: God slept in the mineral kingdom, dreamed in the vegetable kingdom, awakened in the animal kingdom, and realized Himself in the human race (Khan, 1962, 89-90).

But most Islamic thinkers would not endorse the above assertion, as they would adhere to the Qur'aanic view of the direct creation of everything by God, as opposed to some Sufis' claim that God is equally capable of creating living beings through the process of evolution. No doubt the belief that the soul is created can be traced to the scriptures. But it is believed by some scholars that there are some references in the holy scriptures which can be interpreted in such a way that we can get substantial support for the theory of evolution, although these versions of the theory of evolution differ radically from the Darwinian version. The most important verses in the *Qur'aan* that back up the theistic evolutionists are as follows:

'And that He createth the two spouses, the male and the female from a drop (of seed) when it is poured forth' (63:45 & 46): 'verily We created man from a product of wet earth; then placed him as a drop (of seed) in a safe lodging; then fashioned We the drop a clot, then fashioned We the clot a little lump, then fashioned We the little lump bones, then clothed the bones with flesh, and produced it as another creation' (23: 12-14).

To some scholars the above quotations are evidence of God's creation of human beings as a distinct creation. The creation of man, as described in the *Qur'aan*, follows a process of evolution, but it does not indicate clearly whether humans

(the two spouses) were created from the other animals through evolution; rather, it amounts to the view that man and woman were created from earth, or dust, that is, from Nature, as a whole. As the verses show that man's creation was accomplished directly by the hand of God from the earth, it is argued by some Islamic thinkers that man did not undergo any transformations. This explanation does not impair the divinity of the creation of man, but there are other verses in the *Qur'aan* which are interpreted in such a way by the Sufis that they take the side of the evolutionist. The *Qur'aan* says:

‘It is He who has Created man from water’ (25:54).  
 ‘And God has Created every animal from water’ (24:45).  
 ‘We made from water  
 Every living thing’ (21:30).

From the above verses, it is obvious that all animals, whether reptiles, vertebrates, invertebrates, bipeds or quadrupeds are created from water, and on the basis of this the theistic evolutionists may claim that all living things, including man, come from water. The believers in the creation doctrine, by contrast, stress the point that although all living beings are created from water, they are created distinctly, as they argue that ‘nowhere in the *Qur'aan* is it mentioned that only the first life-form was created from water and the others evolved from it’ (Mabud 1986, 9-56). The crucial difference between the Darwinian theory of evolution, including the theistic evolutionists, and the *Qur'aanic* explanation of creation lies here. Although both the *Qur'aan* and the Darwinians believe in the aquatic origin of life, the *Qur'aan* claims that all living things, simple or complex, owe their distinct origin to water, while for

the Darwinians the primitive life-form originated in the primeval ocean, denying the view of the divinity of the creation of life.<sup>3</sup>

Plotinus proclaims a substantial derivation of matter from the One, the World-Soul. In his theory, Plotinus thinks that we may be both naturalistic and mystic, monist and dualist, at the same time. Sometimes in his theodicy it seems that the world can be compared to a flask containing oil and water, 'in which the two liquids, though they cannot by nature mix, have been shaken into complete inter-penetration' (Fuller, 1912, 332). In the attempt to overcome the dualism of spirit and matter he brings the two opposite principles together, and seeks to derive matter from the One. As to the relation between matter and the One—the World—Soul—Plotinus says that the One might exist without matter, but matter could not exist apart from the One, because matter owes its being to the One. In the doctrine of emanation, Plotinus illustrates how the One overflows into intellect and Intellect into soul, so soul must overflow into further forms of existence. Plotinus thinks that the material universe which emanates from soul, may be regarded as a perfect whole in which each part occupies its appropriate place, and thus possesses a greater or lesser degree of

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<sup>3</sup>However, the Qur'aanic verse 'God created every living being from water' (21:30), is also similar to the view of some ancient Greek philosophers. We can invoke Thales as a particular instance. That water is the major component of living things is a common view in Greek philosophy, Islam, Christianity, and the modern scientific theory of evolution. Continuing the Ionian theory, Anaxagoras adopted the view that life first came from moisture, heat and earth. *Aer* (air, cloud) is, for them, an amalgam of all substances which make up plants, animals and inanimate objects. That man and animals are compounded of fire and earth can be traced back to Greek philosophy. Similarly, as to the origin of mankind, Democritus is of the same view that 'the first man came out of the earth, and that like other animals men owed their origin to *life-giving moisture*' (Guthrie, 1965, 473). This view is shared by Anaximander and Empedocles, and, to some degree, Xenophanes and Archelaus. In the light of this, Democritus and others such as Protagoras and Critias said that the first men lived like animals, lacking all technical skills. But there came cultural evolution in their primitive society, as soon as they were compelled to band together to protect themselves from wild animals, and gradually the rudiments of social life came into existence. But all these things happened to human society, because men possessed reason, the intellectual faculty.



being. And we have seen that Rumi's doctrine of emanation is almost similar to that of Plotinus. The main difference is that while Rumi thinks that life emanates from matter and mind emanates from life, Plotinus holds that the mind or intellect emanates from the One, and soul emanates from the mind and matter may be said to begin with the emanation of the intellect.

Avicenna's emanation theory explains that all possible beings derive from the Necessary Existent, that is, God, through successive stages, and lastly by the Active Intellect. The Necessary Existent is the ultimate origin of all existents in the sublunary world. It is, as Avicenna attributes, the 'absolute perfection'. In the *Risalah fi 'ishq* (On the Treatise of Love), Ibn Sina attributes to It the Absolute Good (*khair-i mutlaq*) for the reason that, all beings, being derived from the Necessary Existent, love It and as such seek perfection of love in order to become united with the Absolute Good. The Active Intellect is emanated in such a way that it contains all natural forms, and emanates them giving them reality in the sublunary world. So, although the Active Intellect gives forms to our thought and the universe, it is an emanation of the Necessary Existent, God. And if we are to use the term creation in Avicenna's philosophy we should say that for Avicenna God's creation means the giving of forms to matter which is brought into existence by the Active Intellect, and that the Active Intellect is brought into existence by God. The Islamic doctrine of creation means God's command to matter—from the One to the many. Avicenna's emanation means that the power of God is expressed in the same way—from the One to the many, through a series of intermediaries. The Necessary Existent acts through intermediaries, i.e., God does not directly

participate in bringing the particulars into existence. It exists necessarily and acts necessarily. That God is the Ultimate Being is not in dispute. Islam and Christianity believe that creation means generation of something out of nothing by God, but for Plotinus and Avicenna there is a series of emanations of the existence of all possible beings. Plotinus shows that both the intellect and the soul produce the material world. For Avicenna, the Active Intellect is the direct cause of the existence of the material world. While for Plotinus the universe emanates from the soul and the soul from the intellect, for Ibn Sina the universe comes from the Active Intellect. Both of them thus postulate that the emanation process proceeds from higher to lower, from the Ultimate Being towards particular beings, as opposed to Rumi who holds that the process of evolution runs from lower towards higher, from matter towards God.

The monotheistic theological view that matter was not co-eternal with God conflicts with Aristotle's view that 'matter means the substratum (*hypokeimenon*) which subsists permanently through generation and corruption' (Nasr, 1978, 219). Avicenna does not agree with Aristotle here, as his thesis that matter is generated by form and, not vice versa, expresses the inseparability of matter from form in the world of generation and corruption, but on the other hand, in the translunary region, form exists without matter. In the sublunary world, matter has no separate existence without form, as matter is brought into existence by form. So to say that matter is emanated in its eternity by the Active Intellect is to say that it is produced by the Necessary Existent through the intermediary process, and thus all production is owed to God—a common view for Islam, Plotinus, and Ibn Sina. In Islam, God created matter and then

commanded it to produce the material world, and all living beings, culminating with man as the highest in rank. Why does God use the intermediaries? Avicenna intends here to be consistent with the postulate of neo-Platonic logic that ‘one comes from one’, that is, if It produced the multiples of things from Its thought, it would mean that ‘many come from one’, which is absurd, for God’s Pure Essence cannot accommodate duality or two aspects of Its Being. God’s necessary act of self-thought cannot be such that It would break Its unity. This point does not fit the Islamic notion of creation that holds that multiplicity comes from one, God. Furthermore, this point implies that Avicenna’s God is restricted or limited, which also cannot be acceptable to Islam. However, in *al-Risalat al-'Arshiya*, while he insists that God is not a material or receptive cause, but is the Originator of all things that have being, he seems to speak in the traditional religious manner that the act of emanation from God through His Perfect Reason cannot be imperfection. And there comes the problem of evil in this world. However, God, who is, he reasons, a Being without a cause and who is a Cause of other than Himself, causes things to come into existence earlier or later through a known order and a known medium, and thus ‘totality emanated from Him, through Him, and unto Him’ (Arberry, 1951, 36). So, from the Ibn Sinan point of view, God produced matter by emanation, and man, being the last stage of the emanation process in the sublunary region, is the highest of all living things. Again, according to Islam, God produced first the celestial beings (jinns) and then the material world and all living beings including man. Avicenna does not seem to oppose this view, as we know his theory; the celestial bodies, souls, and intelligences are emanated from God first, then the

material world of corruption and generation, and then all beings. Avicenna's God, as can be seen from the above, produces the world out of necessity. It implies, then, that the Islamic God felt it necessary to create the world in order to become known that He is God, the Creator of all things. The Active Intellect provides sublunary matter with its forms, and again brings intelligible forms to the human intellect, and in this sense its role can be likened to that of the Archangel Gabriel (*Jibril*) in Islam. From this point of view, we can say that if we are to relate Avicenna's emanation doctrine to the creation theory of Islam, the best we can claim is that his understanding of the Islamic theory can be called a 'creative emanation' theory, just as some scholars understand it (the Islamic theory) as the 'theistic evolution' theory, that is, God creates the universe and us in an evolutionary process.

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