

The Concept of Man in Ibn Sina's Philosophy of Education

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Abstract: Artikel ini akan menggali konsep manusia dalam filsafat pendidikan Ibn Sina. Pandangan Ibn Sina tentang kesatuan jiwa dan raga ini diuraikan dalam karya-karyanya di antaranya Al-Shifa, Al-Najat, dan Risalah al-Quwa al-Nafsiyah. Dalam artikel ini diuraikan bahwa manusia dalam pemikiran Ibn Sina merupakan kesatuan jiwa dan raga. Selain teori kesatuan jiwa dan raga, Ibn Sina juga menjelaskan bahwa manusia merupakan makhluk sosial (social being). Kesimpulannya bahwa menurut Ibn Sina dalam jiwa manusia itu terletak kekuatan berfikir, memahami, dan membedakan sesuatu. Inilah daya atau kekuatan jiwa yang paling substansial dan esensi. Dalam hal ini Ibn Sina membedakan antara akal dan jiwa. Karena kekuatan jiwa antara yang positif dan yang negatif saling berlomba maju dan hendak menjadikan dirinya paling depan, maka jiwa berfikir (nafsu al-nathiqah) yang positif perlu di bina dan di latih terus menerus melalui proses pendidikan.

Introduction

For Avicenna, human minds were not in themselves formed for abstract thought. Humans are intellectual only potentially, and only illumination by the Angel confers upon them the ability to make from this potential a real ability to think. This is the Tenth Intellect, identified with the "active intellect" of Aristotle's *De Anima*.

The degree to which minds are illuminated by the Angel varies. Prophets are illuminated to the point that they possess not only rational intellect, but also an imagination and ability which allows them to pass on their superior wisdom to others. Some receive less, but enough to write, teach, pass laws, and contribute to the distribution of knowledge. Others receive enough for their own personal

realization, and others still receive less. On this view, all humanity shares a single agent intellect - a collective consciousness. The final stage of human life, according to Avicenna, is reunion with the emanation of the Angel. Thus, the Angel confers upon those imbued with its intellect the certainty of life after death. For Avicenna, as for the Neo-Platonist who influenced him, the immortality of the soul is a consequence of its nature, and not a purpose for it to fulfill.

The first certitude apprehended by the human mind, he says, is that of being, which is apprehended by means of sense-perceptions. The idea of being, however, is so deep-rooted in man that it could be perceived outside of the sensible. This refrigeration of the Cartesian 'Cogito ergo sum' appears to have two causes: intuition (*Hads*) is so powerful in Ibn Sina (see

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in the Physics of the *Danishnama* the part that it played for him) that he bases himself here on a metaphysical apprehension of being; in addition, since the human soul, according to him, is a separate intelligence, which leads its own spiritual existence while being united with the body, it is capable of apprehending itself directly.

The second certitude is that the being thus apprehended in man, and in every existing thing, is not present there of necessity. The essence of 'man', 'horse' or 'stone' does not imply the necessity of the existence of a particular man or horse. Existence is given to actualized, concrete beings by a Being that differs from all of them: it is not one of the essences that have no existence in themselves, but its essence is its very being. The Creator is the First Cause; as a consequence of this theory the proof of the existence of God is restricted to Metaphysics, and not to Physics, as happens when God is proved to be the prime mover.

Ibn Sina did not formulate the distinction between the uncreated Being and created beings as clearly as did Thomas Aquinas, but the latter does base himself on Ibn Sina's doctrine; only being is in God, God is in no genus and being is not a genus.¹ Ibn Sina maintains that God, as he conceives Him, is 'the first with respect to the being of the Universe, anterior to that being, and also, consequently, outside it'²

¹ Vasteenkiste, Avicenna-Citation by S. Thomas, September 1953, citations no. 12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 148, 330, pp. 460-1, 473 and 491).

² E. Gilson, *The Spirit of Philosophy in Medieval*, p. 80-1.

However, this apparent impetus of Ibn Sina is interrupted by the data of Plotinus, for they inspire the emanatist theory of creation. The Qur'an, like the Old and New Testaments, explains creation by a free act of will on the part of God. For Ibn Sina, by way of Plotinus, the necessary Being is such in all its modes-and thus as creator-and being overflows from it. Moreover, this emanation does not occur freely, and creation involves intermediaries, which are also creators. From the One can come only one. The necessary Being thus produces a single Intelligence. This, having a cause, necessarily possesses a duality of being and knowledge. It introduces multiplicity into the world; from it can derive another Intelligence, a celestial Soul and a celestial body. Ptolemy's system becomes the framework of creative emanation; emanation descends from sphere to sphere as far as a tenth pure Intelligence, which governs, not a sphere, but our terrestrial world, which is made, unlike the others, of corruptible matter. This brings with it a multiplicity which surpasses human knowledge but is perfectly possessed and dominated by the active Intellect, the tenth Intelligence. Its role is demonstrated in a poetic and symbolic form in the Recital of Hayy bin Yaqzan (*Risalah Hayy bin Yaqzhan*)³; a name that refers to the active Intellect itself.

³ "The Recital of Hayy bin Yaqzhan" is one of the Ibn Sina's trilogies. The others recital are The Recital of the Bird (*Risalah al-Thayr*) and The Recital of Salaman wa Abshal (*Risalah Salaman wa Abshal*). See Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and The Visionary Recital* (Texas: Spring Publication, Inc, University of Dallas Irving, 1980).

The philosophical origin of this active Intellect is the passage in the *De Anima* in which Aristotle refers by this name to the active part of the human soul. Ibn Sina irremediably mutilates the latter by taking away from it this active part, and with it it's most noble action and its highest intellectual function: abstraction of intelligibles. This active Intellect, which, according to Aristotle, produces all intelligibles, is now a separate Intelligence. Thus the human soul receives them passively, and so cannot think except by leave of the Intellect; comprehension, knowledge and the sciences are now no longer its affair. It can elaborate only that which is given to it by the active Intellect. The latter produces not only these intelligibles but also all the substantial forms that are created in accordance with the models that it have conceived in conformity with the potentialities of matter. It is in this way; Ibn Sina replies to Plato's anxious question, that the concrete being can share in the Idea. The active Intellect has an ability which Plato sought for in vain: it apprehends the two series of relative perceptions, both the forms with their mutual relationships and the concrete beings with their mutual relationships; in addition, it apprehends their common repository, which is its own essence⁴ A reply is also given to the question of Aristotle as to the provenance of form and the contribution of the Ideas to sensible beings

The human soul by itself can attain only the first three degrees of abstraction: sensation, imagination and the action of estimation that

⁴ Goichon, The Theory of Avicenna, in Atti XII Congr. intern. The filosofia, ix, at 137-8.

extracts individual non-sensible ideas. It then apprehends the intelligible that is given to it from outside. Intuition is due to its joining with the active Intellect.

Being and intelligence overflow like a river from the necessary Being and descend to the extreme limits of the created. There is an equally full re-ascent, produced by creatures' love and desire for their creators, as far as the supreme Principle, which corresponds to the abundance of this gift. This beautiful concept, which could derive only from a soul inclined towards religion, has been thought of as mystical. *The Risala fi 'l-'ishq*, 'The Epistle on Love',⁵ however, is primarily a metaphysical explanation of the tendency of every being towards its good, and a physical explanation of the motion of the stars; they imitate in their fashion, which is material, the unceasing action of the pure Act. The spheres, in fact, thus imitate the unceasing desire of the celestial Souls which correspond to each one of them. The rational soul of man tends towards its good with a conscious motion of apprehension of, and love for, the active Intellect, and, through it, for the necessary Being, which is pure Good. In the highest states, however, it can tend directly towards the latter.

Ibn Sina believed firmly in the immortality of the soul. Corruption cannot touch it, for it is immaterial.

⁵ Ibn Sina, *Risalah fi al-Isyq* (A Treatise of Love), this book was translated into English by Emil L. Fackenheim. Considering *isyq* (love) Ibn Sina also explains in his *Rasail*, Book 19 in Seven Chapter: (1) *al-'isy fi kully wahid min al-huwiyyat, wujud al-isy fi al-basa-ith, wujud al-isyq fi al-shura al-nabatiyah, isyq al-nufus al-hayawaniyah, 'isyq al-dharafa wa al-fityan liwajhi al hasan, 'isyq al-nufus al-ilahihim and khatimah.*

The proof of this immateriality lies in its capability of apprehending the intelligibles, which are in no way material. He is much more hesitant on the question of the resurrection of the body, which he at first admits in the *Shifa'* and the *Najat*, and then denies in the epistle *A-Hawiyya*, after indicating in the *Risalah Hayy bin Yaqzan*; that this dogma is often an object of temptations. He appears finally to have decided to understand it in a symbolic sense.⁶

Among the fierce controversies to which Avicenna's thought has given rise is the discussion as to whether or not he should be considered a mystic. At first sight, the whole range of expressions that he uses to speak of love's re-ascending as far as to the Creator leads one to an affirmative interpretation-not in an esoteric way but in the positive sense of the love of God. The more one studies his philosophical doctrine, the more one finds that it illuminates these expressions. The stages of the Sufis, studied in the *Isharat*, leave rather the impression of experiences observed by a great, curious and respectful mind, which, however, does not participate. Ibn Sina is a believer, and this fact should be maintained in opposition to those who have made of him a lover of pleasure who narrowly escapes being a hypocrite, although there is so much seriousness in his life and such efforts to reconcile his philosophy with his faith-even if he is not always successful. He is far above the gnosis impregnated with occultism and paganism to which some would

⁶ Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and The Visionary Recital*, (Spring Publication, Inc: University of Dallas Irving Texas, 1980. About "The Recital of Hayy ibn Yaqzhan", pp. 123-151.

reduce him. Is he a mystic in the exact sense that the word has in Catholic theology? It reserves the word for one whose whole life is a great love of God, in a kind of intimacy of heart and thought with Him, so that God holds the first place in all things and everything is apprehended as related to Him.

Had it been thus with Ibn Sina, his writings would give a totally different impression. Nevertheless, at bottom he did perhaps apprehend God. It is in the simple expression of apprehension through the heart, in the secret of the heart (*sirr*), in flashes, however short and infrequent, that we are led to see in him a beginning of true mystic apprehension, in opposition to the gnosis and its symbols, for at this depth of the heart there is no longer any need for words.

One doubt, however, still enters in: his general doctrine of apprehension, and some of the terms that he uses, in fact, in texts on *sirr*, could be applied at least as well to a privileged connotation with the active Intellect, and not with God Himself. Again, on this question, the absence of his last great work, the 'Eastern Philosophy', precludes a definite answer.

This irreparable lacuna in the transmission of his works does not allow us to understand in what respects he wished to complete, and even to correct, Aristotle, as he states in the prologue. As a hypothesis, suggested by his constant efforts to express the concrete and by his biography, we may suppose that he wished to make room for the oriental scientific tradition, which was more experimental than Greek science. The small alterations made to Aristotelian logic are slanted in this direction. In

metaphysics, it is probable that he was shocked by the contradictions between Plotinus and Aristotle that were evident in the texts which the knowledge of the time attributed to one single author, and that he wished to resolve these anomalies by giving new explanations.

Although Avicenna believed that the world is a creation of God, he also believed, under the influence of Aristotle, that both God and the world existed eternally. As Aquinas and other theists acknowledge, this view is not self-contradictory because creation does not necessarily require a beginning in time. Avicenna, of course, noted that in itself the world is only "possible" and requires a cause for its existence. God, on the other hand, exists necessarily and brought the world into being from nothing. This act could either have a beginning or be beginning less and endless. Other Islamic philosophers put forward the kalam argument, made famous in recent times by William Lane Craig, which shows that the universe had to have a beginning in time. F.F. Centore observes that one defect of Avicenna's thought was his assumption that the world necessarily emanates from God.

Avicenna also introduced innovative arguments to show that the human soul is immaterial and indivisible. He noted that each person is ineradicably aware of his/her existence as an individual self, a self that will permanently retain its individuality.

Body and Soul

In all these dealings with prophecy, knowledge and metaphysics, Ibn Sina takes it that the entity involved is the human soul. In *al-Shifa'*, he proposes that the soul must be an

incorporeal substance because intellectual thoughts themselves are indivisible. Presumably he means that a coherent thought, involving concepts in some determinate order, cannot be had in parts by different intellects and still remain a single coherent thought. In order to be a coherent single unity, a coherent thought must be had by a single, unified intellect rather than, for example, one intellect having one part of the thought, another soul a separate part of the thought and yet a third intellect having a third distinct part of the same thought. In other words, a coherent thought is indivisible and can be present as such only to an intellect that is similarly unified or indivisible. However, corporeal matter is divisible; therefore the indivisible intellect that is necessary for coherent thought cannot be corporeal. It must therefore be incorporeal, since those are the only two available possibilities.

For Ibn Sina, that the soul is incorporeal implies also that it must be immortal: the decay and destruction of the body does not affect the soul. There are basically three relations to the corporeal body that might also threaten the soul but, Ibn Sina proposes, none of these relations holds true of the incorporeal soul, which therefore must be immortal. If the body were a cause of the soul's existence, or if body and soul depended on each other necessarily for their existence, or if the soul logically depended on the body, then the destruction or decay of the body would determine the existence of the soul. However, the body is not a cause of the soul in any of the four senses of cause; both are substances, corporeal and incorporeal, and therefore as substances they must be independent

of each other; and the body changes and decays as a result of its independent causes and substances, not because of changes in the soul, and therefore it does not follow that any change in the body, including death, must determine the existence of the soul. Even if the emergence of the human soul implies a role for the body, the role of this corporeal matter is only accidental.

To this explanation that the destruction of the body does not entail or cause the destruction of the soul, Ibn Sina adds an argument that the destruction of the soul cannot be caused by anything. Composite existing objects are subject to destruction; by contrast, the soul as a simple incorporeal being is not subject to destruction. Moreover, since the soul is not a compound of matter and form, it may be generated but it does not suffer the destruction that afflicts all generated things that are composed of form and matter. Similarly, even if we could identify the soul as a compound, for it to have unity that compound must itself be integrated as a unity, and the principle of this unity of the soul must be simple; and, so far as the principle involves an ontological commitment to existence, being simple and incorporeal it must therefore be indestructible.⁷

According to De Boer, Ibn Sina's theory of human nature is dualistic. De Boer wrote:

“Body and soul have no essential connection with one another. All bodies are produced, under the influence of the stars, from the mingling of the Elements; and in this way the human body also is

produced, but from a combination in which the finest proportion is observed. A spontaneous generation of the body, just like the extinction and restoration of the human race, is therefore possible. The soul however, is not to be explained from such mixture of the Elements. It is not the inseparable Form of the body, but is accidental to it. From the Giver of Forms, that is—from the Active Spirit over us, every body receives its own Soul, which is adapted to it and too alone. From its very beginning each Soul is an individual substance, and it develops increasing individuality throughout its life in the body. It must be admitted that this does not agree with the contention that Matter is the principle of individuality. But the Soul in the “infant prodigy” of our philosopher. He is not a credulous man, and he often cautions us against too ready an acceptance of mysteries in the life of the Soul; but still he has the art himself of relating many things about the numerous wonderful powers and possible influences of the Soul, as it wanders along the highly intricate pathways of life, and crosses the abysses of Being and Not-Being”.

The speculative faculties are the choicest of all the powers of the Soul. Acquaintance with the world is conveyed to the rational soul by the External and Internal Senses. In particular a full account is given by Ibn Sina of his theory of the Internal Senses, or the sensuous spiritual faculties of representation, which have their seat in the brain. Medical philosophers commonly assumed three Internal Senses or stages of the

⁷Edward Craig, *Routledge's Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*, p. 163.

representative process: (1) Gathering the several sense perceptions into collective image in the fore part of the brain; (2) Transforming or remodeling this representation of the general sense, with the help representation already existing, thus constituting apperception proper, in the middle region; (3) Storing up the apperceived representation in the Memory, which was held to reside in the hinder part of the brain. Ibn Sina, however, carries the analysis somewhat farther. He distinguishes in the anterior portion of the brain the Memory of the Sensible, --or the treasure-house of the collective image—from the General or Coordinating Sense. Farther, he makes out Apperception, --the function of the middle region of the brain—to be in part brought about unconsciously, under the influence of the sensible and appetent life, as is the case also with the lower animals, and, on the other hand, to take place in part consciously, with the cooperation of the Reason. In the first case the representation preserves its reference to the individual thing, --thus the sheep knows the hostility of the wolf, --but in the second case, the representation is extended to the Universal. Then, in the hinder part of the brain, the Representative Memory, or store-house of the representations formed by combined Sensuous impression and Rational Reflection, follows as a fifth power. In this way five Internal Senses correspond to the five External senses, although with quite another reference than the five Internal Senses of the Faithful Brethren. The question which is raised --as to whether one should farther separate Recollection, as a special faculty, from Memory, -remains unanswered.

At the apex of the intellectual powers of the Soul stands the Reason. There is indeed Practical Reason also, but in its action we have been only multiplying ourselves immediately: On the other hand, in Self Consciousness, or the pure recognition of our essential nature, the Unity of our Reason is directly exhibited. But instead of keeping down the lower powers of the Soul, the Reason lifts them up, refining Sense-Perception, and generalizing Presentation. Reason, which at first is a mere capacity for thought, becomes elaborated gradually, in that material which is conveyed to it by the external and internal senses, -into a finished readiness in Thought. Through exercise the capacity becomes reality. This comes about through the instrumentality of experience, but under guidance and enlightenment from above,-from the "Giver of the Forms", who as Active Spirit impart the ideas to the Reason. The Soul of man, however, does not possess any memory for the pure ideas of Reason, for memory always presupposes a corporeal substratum. As often then as the Rational Soul comes to know anything, that knowledge flows to it on each occasion from above; and thinking Souls do not differ in the range and contents of their knowledge, but in the readiness with which they put themselves in communication with the Spirit over us, in order to receive their knowledge.

The rational Soul, which rules over that that which is under it, and comes to know the higher by men of the enlightenment given by the World-Spirit, is then the real Man,-brought into existence, but as unmixed essence, as individual substance, indestructible, immortal. On this point the climes of Ibn sina's

teaching mark it off from that Farabi; and, since his time, the assumption of the individual immortality of the human Souls, which have come into being, is regarded in the east Aristotelian, and the opposite doctrine as Platonic. Thus a better understanding prevails between his philosophy and the accepted religion. The human body and the whole world of sense furnish the Souls with a school for its training. But after the death of the body, which puts an end to this body forever, the Soul continues to exist in a less close connection with the World-Spirit. In this union, with the Spirit over us-which is not to be conceived as a complete unification-the blessedness of the good 'knowing' souls consists. The lot of the other is eternal misery; for just as bodily defect lead to disease, so punishment is the necessary consequence of evil conditions of Soul. In the same way too, the reward of Heaven are apportioned according to the degree of soundness or rationality which the Soul has attained in the life on earth. The pure Souls are comforted amidst the sufferings of Time by its prospect of Eternity.

The highest is of course, reached only by a few; for on the pinnacle of Truth there is no room for many; but one passes forward after another, to reach the source of the knowledge of God, welling forth on its lonely height.⁸

According to Fazlur Rahman, Ibn Sina stresses the intimate connection of mind and body. The soul in its real being is then an independent sub-

stance and is our transcendental self. Ibn Sina's arguments for immortality of the soul are based on the view that it is a substance and that is not a form of the body to which it is attached intimately by some kind of mystical relation between the two. There is the soul which emerges from the separate substance of the active intelligence simultaneously with the emergence of a body with a definite temperament, a definite inclination to attach itself to this body, to care for it, and direct it to the mutual benefit. Further, the soul, as being incorporeal, is a simple substance and this ensures for it indestructibility and survival, after its origination, even when its body is destroyed.⁹

But if at the transcendental level the soul is a pure spiritual entity and body does not enter into its definition even as a relational concept, at the phenomenal level the body must be included in its definition as a building enter into the definition of a (definite) builder. That is why Ibn Sina says that the study of the phenomenal aspect of the soul is in the field of natural science, while its transcendental being belongs to the study of metaphysics¹⁰

The express his view of the Human Reason, Ibn Sina employs and explains poetical tradition, -a favorite proceeding in the Persian literature. First and foremost our interest is awakened by the allegorical figure of Hai ibn Yaqzan. It represents the ascent of the Spirit out of the Elements, and through the realm of Nature of the Souls, and of the Spirit,

⁸ T.J. De Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, translated by Edward R. Jones, B.D. (New York: Islamic Philosophy Inline, Inc), p. 51.

⁹Fazlur Rahman, "Ibn Sina" in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, edited and introduced by M.M. Sharif (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), 489-90.

¹⁰ Fazlur Rahman, *ibid*, p. 480-90.

up to the throne of the Eternal One. Hai presents himself to the philosopher in the form of old man with an air of youth about him, and offers his services as guide. The wanderer has been striving to reach knowledge of Earth and Heaven, by means of his outer and inner senses. Two ways open out before him, one to the West, the way of the Material and the Evil, the other to the Rising Sun, the way of Spiritual and ever-pure Forms, and along that way Hai now conduct him. Together they reach the well of Divine-Wisdom, the fountain of everlasting youth, where beauty is the curtain of beauty, and light the veil of light, -the Eternal Mystery. Hai ibn Yaqzan is thus the guide of individual, thinking Souls: he is the Eternal Spirit who is over mankind, and operates in them.

A similar meaning is found by our philosopher in the frequently remodeled late-Greek legend of the brothers Salaman and Absal. Salaman in the World man, whose wife (i.e., the World of the Senses) falls in love with Absal, and contrives by a stratagem to wile him into her arms. But before the deceive moment, a flash of lightning comes down from heaven, and reveals to Ansal the wantonness of the action which he had nearly committed, and raises him from the world of sensual enjoyment to that of pure spiritual contemplation.¹¹

Therefore, Ibn Sina's classification these mental faculties into three groups. First, the group of vegetative faculties, in which humans and plants both share. They re concerned with the survival of the human being, growth through nutrition, and reservation of the species through

reproduction. They thus comprise three faculties: feeding, growth and reproduction.¹²

This group is followed by the faculties that make animals superior to plants, and are shared by human beings and animals. Typically, they allow the human being to be attracted to what it desires, and to be repelled by anything harmful arousing fear or anger. They comprise, in his view, two faculties: a faculty of motion and a faculty of comprehension or perception. Each is, in its turn, divided into other faculties: the motive faculty consists of an instinctive reaction, and a rational movement, permitting the human either to act or desist from action; comprehension is also divided into a perceptive faculty of the exterior world through the five senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch—and one directed from within, by way of common sense, imagination, memory and reflection.¹³

In the *Book of al-Shifā*, Ibn Sina says:

“You can have no doubt that all the vegetative and animal powers that we mentioned are found in man. But man has the additional power of perceiving intelligible reality; this distinguishes him from other kinds of animals, and is called the rational soul. It has two powers, one practical, the other for knowing; the two are called intellects in an equivocal sense. The practical intellect is a power that perceives things that

¹¹ T.J. De Boer, p. 51.

¹² Ibn Sina, *al-Najāt*, Cairo, al-Babi al-Halabi, 1357 AH, p. 158; and *al-Shifā*, Tehran, Hajar, 1353 AH, Vol. I, p. 294).

¹³ Ibn Sina, *al-Najāt*, op. cit., p. 159-63; *al-Isharat wal-Tanbihat*, Leiden, 1892, Vol. I, p. 125; *al-Shifā*, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 333; Muhammad Uthman Najati, *al-Idrak al-hissi ind Ibn Sina*, Dar al-Ma'arif, 1961, p. 117.

are related to bodily well-being in its particular conditions and the acts proper to it. It moves the body to act on the basis of an estimation it forms about it. The relationship of these practical things to the power for knowing gives rise to widespread common judgments which are not based on pure intellect. Their relationship to animal appetitive powers gives rise to dispositions preparing man for action or passion. Their relationship to the inner senses, such as the estimative sense and the imagination, gives rise to arts, works and management of everything that is generable or corruptible. If the intellect dominates the powers of the body and has influence on them a praiseworthy and pleasant character results. But if these powers dominate the intellect and are not influenced by it and it rather is influenced and led by them, a bad character results”.

This leads you to conclude that the soul is a simple substance, one in essence, as we will establish later. It has one orientation towards the Holy and another towards the body and its needs. For this double orientation it has two powers, each one perfecting the relationship between it and what it is dealing with. As it is orientated to the Holy it always receives from it. The power for knowing is a power in which are engraved universal forms which are separated from matter, either of themselves or because of the action of the intellect in receiving them.

These are sometimes in potency and sometimes in act.....¹⁴

According to Ibn Sina, a body unable to perceive knowledge, but the human soul has able to it. Ibn Sina says:

“A body is essentially unable to perceive intelligible forms. This act is only ascribed to animated bodies because of powers that are in them. A power that by its essence perceives intelligible forms is the subject of these forms and is a substance. But if it does not perceive by its essence but with the body, then strong objects of perception must tire, weaken and change the body; thus sight is weakened when very bright objects are seen; the same for hearing when sound is too powerful. But whenever the

¹⁴ In Arabic as Ibn Sina says in the *Book of al-Shifa* Book II, Chapter 5:

النباتية القوى من ذكرناه ما جميع أن في تشك فلا وأنت أخرى قوة له بأن يزيد ثم الإنسان في موجود والحيوانية سائر عن بها يمتاز المعقولات إدراك من بها نمكن ولها الناطقة بالنفس المسماة هي تلك الحيوان أصناف بالاشترك عقلا واحة كل وتسمى وعالمة عاملة قوتان أحواله في البدن بمصالح تتعلق لأموار مدركة قوة فالعاملة على ذلك إلى له محرقة وهي به الخاصة وأفعاله الجزئية النظرية القوة إلى هذه وبنسبة عليه يجمع رأي مقتضى إلى مستندة ليست التي والمشهورة الذائعة القضايا تحدث النزوعية الحيوانية القوى إلى وبنسبتها الصريح العقل والانفعال الفعل لقبول الإنسان بها يستعد هيئات تحدث تستتبط والمتخيلة كالهومية الباطنة القوى إلى وبنسبتها ويتسلطها فاسد كائن كل في والتدبير والأعمال الصنائع الأخلاق تكون عنها القوى وانفعال البدن قوى على تنفعل لا وإن عليها القوى تلك ويتسلط المرضية الحميدة الرذيلة الأخلاق تكون لها وتنقاد تلك عن هي وتنفعل عنها بسيط جوهر النفس أن هذا لك يحصل والذي إلى به تنصرف وجه ولها بعد نقره كما الذات أحدي وبحسب ومصالحه البدن إلى به تنصرف وجه النفس وبين بينها فيما العلاقة بها تتم واحدة كل قوتان لها هذين يقبل لا البدن إلى المنصرف والوجه إليه منصرفه هي ما دائم القدس إلى المنصرف والوجه بوجه الطبيعية الآثار منه القبول تكون التي الكلية بالصور المنتقشة القوة فهي العالمة وأما وقبولها لها بتجريدتها وإما بأنفسها إما المواد عن مجردة.....الفعل يكون وقد بالقوة يكون قد لها

intellective power understands highly intelligible realities it grows stronger. The body grows weaker after the age of forty, while the intellect grows stronger. Thus we know that the soul understands by its essence. But everything that understands by its essence is a substance. Therefore the soul is a substance.¹⁵

Ibn Sina also says:

“If you observe very well you will also find that when you refer to yourself as "I" you mean something different from what you mean when you say "it". When you say "I" you are referring to your essence, but when you refer to any one of your members or bodily parts you say "it". Such a reference is distinct and separate from what is "I". So it is not "I" nor a part of "I", since "I" does not express a collection of "it" definitions, because the reality of the parts can be different from the reality of the whole. Therefore your use of the word "I" shows that it is something different from your body and different from any of its parts or attributes. That different thing is called the soul”.

¹⁵In Arabic as Ibn Sina says in the *Book of al-Shifa*, Book II, Chapter 5:

المعقولات إدراك على قوي غير بذاته فالجسم إن والقوى فيها لقوى الحيوانية الأجسام به وصفت وإنما جواهر فهي بذاتها العقلية للصور كائتمحلا بذاتها أدركت ورود عند الكلام لزم الجسم مع بل بذاتها تحرك لم وإن عند البصر ويضعف وتغيره الجسم توهي الشاقة المدركات القوية الأصوات ورود عند والسمع النيرة المبصرات توارد الشاقة المعقولات تعقلت كلما للمعقولات الدراكة والقوة الإدراك ويقوى الأربعين بعد الجسم يضعف وقد أقوى كانت جوهه فهو بذاته مدركا كان ما وكل بذاتها للنفس أنه فعلم جوهه فالنفس.

Man has certain knowledge that his essence exists and he can have no doubt of this under any circumstance, but he can be unaware of any one of his members or of his whole body. But what is known is different from what is not known. Therefore his essence is different from his body and all the parts of his body.....

The reality of each man is that substance which he refers to by the expression "I", or another addresses as "you". This is one in essence with different functions in the various parts of the body; these are the powers which are known by their distinct influence on single organs which do not have multiple operations. Between the soul and these functions there is a relationship of dependence, since the soul is their source. This relationship is the reason why the operations of these powers can affect the soul and the soul can affect these powers, on a mutual basis.

These powers of the soul can result in opposite operations, such as anger and pleasure, or joy and sadness. Whenever there is sensation, desire, anger, pleasure, joy or sadness the relationship of dependence brings about a disposition in the subject of that power. If these operations go on repeatedly they affect the soul, giving it an inclination which takes over and becomes a character trait of that substance, rooted with the firmness of a habit. If the soul is ever impressed by the thought of something it admires or abhors, the above-mentioned relationship carries this impression to these powers and they are affected by it. Specific impressions are made on them, so that they either tremble or are resolute or overcome by passion etc.

Thus courage or cowardice, chastity or wantonness, goodness or evil result from undergoing these experiences repeatedly, and they become a moral habit which can grow weak or strong. It is obvious that some are more prone to anger than others, while others are more ready to please or more courageous.

The soul perceives separated intelligible things by their essences; what is not separated from matter it perceives by abstracting their universal forms from the senses. Perception is the realization in the perceiver of a representation of the form of what is perceived; this representation is in every way intellectual and is available to be viewed by an act of perception whenever one wishes. Perception is nothing but the very presence of that representation in the perceiver, and is nothing else. The representation of a thing which corresponds to the thing in every aspect is the perceived object; the object is not the reality which exists outside. Some perceived objects have no outside sensible existence yet have a representational existence, such as geometrical forms and propositions connected [with these] which cannot conceivably be denied. But if the outside reality of the perceived thing were the object of perception then that perception would vanish once the reality itself vanishes, and other impossible consequences would also follow. So the design engraved [in the intellect] is the corresponding representation, and that remains and does not leave [the intellect].

When a thing is present it is perceived visibly and sensibly, but when it is absent it is imagined, as we have representations of many

things which are absent from us but we perceived before. When a universal meaning is formed from what is common among all the single things that you think of, among all the single things of its kind or its genus, it becomes intelligible. The first stage is like seeing Zayd with the sense of sight; the second is like imagining his form and having an inner representation of it after his absence; the third is like the universal meaning that is formed, such as the meaning of man, which belongs to this man and others of his kind.

The sensation of a man includes various accidentals which are part of his reality but their disappearance does not affect his essence. Such are size, location, position and quality. Should any of these accidentals suddenly and circumstantially be replaced [by its opposite], this does not affect the reality of one's humanity. The sensation of man with these concomitant accidentals is because of the matter of which he was made. The abstraction (*sic*) and perception [of a man] take place by a circumstantial relationship between the sensation of him and his matter, making him present. Therefore the sensory representation of man is the appearance of his visible form upon the elimination of obstacles. Imagination is bringing this image present together with those accidentals by which it is personalized and which express his individuality. The imagination cannot abstract absolutely, but only from the very relationship of sensing, so that in the absence of sensation the imagination continues to represent the visible form with the accidentals we spoke of. But the intellect is able

to abstract absolutely from all accidentals, and after abstraction the form remains stable in the intellect. It is right that universal meanings which have no relationship with matter and are free from extraneous accidentals should be intelligible by their essence and do not require abstraction, but by their own essence are abstracted.¹⁶

There are two power of the soul: practical and the other for knowing. Ibn Sina says:

“A soul has two powers, one practical, the other for knowing. The practical power is called the practical intellect and is the source of moving the appetitive power in particular matters which require choice; these matters are abstracted by the soul from what is particular and sensible according to a universal abstraction. We have already spoken about its function, and that does not require repetition”.

The power for knowing is called the speculative intellect. It receives the essences of universal things in so far as they are universal. The perfection of this power is to become an intellect in act. From this aspect it has four levels: the first is that of preparedness to receive abstract intelligible forms before receiving them; this is called the material intellect and also the "niche" The second level is the power that results when it actually attains the first intelligible principles through which it passes to secondary intelligible principles. This occurs either by a motion of the mind from first to derived principles as it stretches to

seek the middle term in this case it is the "olive tree" or it occurs without any motion but grasps the middle term by one thrust and vision and this is the "oil". The first way is called reasoning, while the second is called intuition. Yet intuition can be very powerful or weak or mediocre. Weak intuition is the [second level] we mentioned; mediocre intuition is more powerful than that, and is called the habitual intellect or the "glass"; the most powerful and mature intuition is that holy power "whose oil would almost glow forth of itself though no fire touched it." If the speculative intellect reaches this perfection by having present the first and derived intelligible principles, and these are there actually and in full view without being absent, then the derived principles are related to the first as "light upon light"; this is the acquired intellect, because it derives from both kinds of principles. If the soul has mastery of intelligible principles and is able to recall them whenever it wants without effort or assistance, that power is called the intellect in act, and this is the "lamp" that it makes use of whenever it wants. The superior cause over and above these levels is the cause of the existence of the soul, since it flows over it; this is the "fire", which is the agent intellect.

If you have paid attention to what I have said in the previous note about the way that leads to acquiring intelligible principles, you must know the difference between reasoning and intuition; that is, if you have really paid attention.

If you have paid attention, your mind must not be unaware that intuition clearly exists, but that some people excel in it, others are

¹⁶ Ibn Sina, *al-Shifā*, Book II, Chapter 5.

deficient, and others have an average amount. Likewise in reasoning, you find some people well prepared to receive intelligible principles, while others are prepared to a lesser degree and some to a lesser degree than that. According to these degrees they derive different benefit from reasoning; thus you find some who grasp many intelligible principles by one leap of their mind, without needing step by step learning; others grasp even more. Just as this power is stronger or weaker, and is sometimes so weak that a person has no intuition at all, so you can measure degrees of intensity and maturity until you come to those who need no step by step learning and no reflection.

The soul's perception of intelligible things by its essence and its perception of sensible things occurs only by means of the senses. The senses can only be directed to sensible things and is affected by them. That is because when a sense is affected by a sensible thing the soul can be distracted; in that case there is no perception when the sense is affected. Thus it is clear that perception belongs strictly to the soul, for it perceives sensible forms by the senses and intelligible forms by means of sensible forms. Otherwise, if man were able to perceive the intelligibility of all things only by means of their sensibility, his soul would fall short of the level of absolute perception. But whenever there is something that understands by its essence, such as the Creator and separated substances, it perceives intelligible forms without need of the intermediacy of sensible forms. For these intelligible forms do not come

from sensation but from occasions and causes. Yet man perceives such forms by abstracting universals from the particulars that he senses. His soul is potentially knowledgeable; thus the souls of children acquire first principles without the help of the senses. That is because their souls are prepared for them. You can easily understand that when the soul is separated, if it is ready for the perception of intelligible things, it has such perception without bodily powers. The acquisition of this perception comes without one's searching or being aware of it, just as first principles come to children, for the ways the soul makes use of knowledge are by the senses.

If there is sensation of a thing and the soul does not perceive it, it is because it is occupied by thinking of other affairs or because of distraction or attention to something else. For when the common sense receives something, it must pass it on to the soul. If the thing does not reach the common sense, this is because the soul has put it to work on something that it is concerned with; so the thing does not reach it.

The soul is prevented by the powers of the body from being alone with its essence and what is has perceived. For its perception is in an imaginary form and not absolutely intelligible, since the soul is drawn to sensible things; these take possession of it, and it does not get accustomed to intelligible things or knowledge of them. Rather it is content with the sensible world, trusting in it and not complaining about it. Thus one imagines that

intelligible things do not exist, but are only surmises¹⁷

Ibn Sina explains the relationship between the body and the soul. All these faculties are merely different functions of the human soul. For the human soul is one, and those three powers are different functions of it.¹⁸ To Avicenna, the soul is immaterial, and is quite different from the substance of the body.¹⁹ It is not pre-existent, coming into being together with the body;²⁰ but it survives and does not perish when the human being dies. Avicenna says: 'When the body dies and decays, the substance of the soul is released from its connection with the body; and if it is perfected in knowledge, wisdom and good deeds, it is drawn towards the divine lights, the lights of the angels and of the heavenly kingdom, just as a needle is drawn towards an enormous mountain by magnetic force; the divine presence flows over it, and it achieves real tranquility, as the call comes to it from the heavenly beings: "Oh soul at complete rest, return to thy Lord, well pleased and well pleasing. Enter then among my devoted servants! Enter My heaven!"²¹

Ibn Sina says:

¹⁷ Ibn Sina, *al-Shifa*, Book II, Chapter 5.

¹⁸ Ibn Sina, *Ahwal al-Nafs*, ed. by A.F. al-Ahwani, Cairo, Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-Arabiyya, 1371 AH, p. 108-10; *al-Najat*, p. 189 ff.

¹⁹ Ibn Sina, *al-Shifa*, Vol. I, p. 248-57; *Risalat fi marifat al-Nafs al-Natiqa*, ed. by A.F. al-Ahwani, Cairo, Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-Arabiyya, 1371 AH, p. 183-85.

²⁰ Ibn Sina, *Risalat al-Quwwa al-Insaniyya wa Idrakatuha*, Cairo, Matba at Kurdistan al-'Ilmiyya, 1328 AH, p. 212; *Tis Rasa'il fil-hikma wat-Tabi'iyat*, Bombay, Kalzar Husna, 1318 AH, p. 30. p. 97-98.

²¹ Ibn Sina, *Risala al-Shifa min Khawf al-Mawt wa-Mualajat al-Ihtimam bilhi*, in the collection *Jami'l-badi'*, Cairo, Matba'at al-Sa'ada, 1335 AH, p. 37-38.

"The soul comes to exist with the body. It is not possible for it to exist before the body, because in that case it would have to be either one soul or many. If there were one soul, the perceptions of one person would be the perceptions of all and vice versa, but that is impossible. Nor can it be maintained that while there is one soul perceptions differ because of different bodily conditions and differences in purity or turbidity of the powers. For we have seen that the soul has no relationship with the body or its conditions except the relationship of managing and governing it, and that the differences of bodily conditions do not in any way at all affect the substance of the soul. But the body is only an instrument of the soul which it uses to acquire its universal perceptions from particular things that are present in the senses".

But if there were many (pre-existent) souls, they would either be different from one another or not. If not, then multiplicity would be impossible. But if there were differences, they would either be intrinsic to the soul's reality or not. The first case is impossible, since its reality is the same and its substance is united; so its reality cannot accommodate an intrinsic difference. Nor can the difference of souls come from adjuncts, since a united reality cannot have opposite differences, and before the existence of the body there are no differentiating accidents. So its unification is not possible before it is involved in a body, since it is not a body or anything corporeal such as can

receive division and be multiplied. If it is false that the (pre-existent) soul is one and it is false that it is multiple, then it is false that it is pre-existent; rather it comes to exist together with the body.

From the principles which we have laid down it is clear that the human soul which is the subject of intelligible forms is a substance which is not a body or in a body, nor does it need a body for the subsistence of its essence, or for the preservation of intellectual forms, or for its specific operations, but its relationship with the body is that the body may be its instrument in acquiring the perfection that it desires. Once it attains this, it no longer needs the body and is independent of it, especially if it has the power and stable habit to elicit perfect acts of understanding. It has no need for anything corporeal, nor to refer to the bodily world at all. It has also been established that the cause of its existence is permanent, and if the body decays, the soul has lost something it does not need to exist. This does not necessitate the corruption of its essence or the impeding of its operations and acts of understanding. In spite of bodily corruption the cause of the soul's existence is permanent and that necessitates the permanence of the soul after the corruption of the body.

Whatever undergoes corruption must, before corruption, be capable of corruption. Since what subsists of itself does not have this capability, a corruptible thing must have a subject by which it subsists. This subject must exist when corruption takes place, because something which has the potentiality of undergoing corruption is the very thing that is

said to undergo corruption. So it is established that whatever undergoes corruption must have matter. But the soul has no matter, as has been said above. Therefore it is incapable of corruption.

Something which would come into being without the possibility of its coming into being cannot come into being, since the possibility of its coming into being is insufficient to bring it about. Therefore its realization is dependent on conditions. If these conditions are not found, the thing cannot exist.

The existence of the body is a condition for the existence of the soul, without doubt. But the body is not a condition for the soul's permanence, since it has no need of the body. When it leaves the body, losing some perfection, it gains other perfections apart from it, since the body is not a condition of its perfection as it was for its coming into existence. If it is not a condition of its perfection, it is not surprising that the soul gains perfection after leaving the body.

Animals do not understand their essences, because their souls are not separated from matter. They can only perceive their essences by their estimative power, not in an intelligible way. The soul of man can understand its own essence because it is separated from matter, and the intelligibility of anything is its separation from matter. This is the reason for the permanence of human souls.²²

Finally, there is the group of faculties which distinguish the human being from the animal; in Avicenna's

²² Ibn Sina, *al-Shifā*, Book II, Chapter 5.

view they comprise two faculties: an active faculty directing the human's practical conduct, and a cognitive faculty directing his intellectual conduct. Both are given the name 'intelligence', but the first is practical and the second is contemplative.²³

Social Nature of the Human Being

According to Ibn Sina, the human being, as created by God, is not able to live in isolation but needs society for his survival, his growth and his education. In the book of *Metaphysics X*, Chapter 2, Ibn Sina says:

"We know say: it is known that man differ from the other animals in that he cannot lead a proper life when isolated as a single individual, managing his affairs with no associates to help him satisfy his basic wants. One man needs to be complemented by another of his species, the other, in turn, by him and one like him. Thus, for example, one man would provide another with vegetables while the other would bake for him; one man would sew for another while the other would provide him with needles. Associated in this way, they become self-sufficient.²⁴ This is why human beings are compelled to found societies'.²⁵

The whole of society must submit to the righteous holy law of God, through the Prophet who legislates it, guided by divine revelation. For

²³ Ibn Sina, *al-Najat*, op. cit., p. 164; *Risalat al-Quwwa al-Insaniyya wa Idrakatuha* op. cit., p. 215-16.

²⁴ *The Book of al-Shifa, Metaphysics*, Chapter 2.

²⁵ Ibn Sina, *al-Najat*, op. cit., p. 303; *al-Sifa*, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 556-57.

society needs someone to legislate its affairs and this legislator must be a human being who stands out from the others through qualities which ensure that his word is obeyed and the whole people follow him. This is Avicenna's justification for the existence of the Prophet, the specific miracles with which God distinguished him, and the need for the prophecy. Avicenna says: 'So it is necessary that there should be a Prophet, and necessary that he should be a human being, and also that he should possess a special quality not found in other people, so that they are aware of something in him not found in themselves; thus he is set apart from them and has miraculous powers'.²⁶

Ibn Sina says:

"Whoever, in the endeavor to establish cities, does not see to the requirements necessary for setting up a city and, with his companions, remains confined to forming a mere association, would be engaged in devising means (to govern) a species most dissimilar to men and lacking the perfection of men. Nevertheless, even the ones like him cannot escape associating with the citizens of a city, and imitating them".

In their life, human need law and justice, and law and justice demand a lawgiver and dispenser of justice. Ibn Sina says:

If this is obvious, then man's existence and survival require partnership. Partnership is only achieved through reciprocal transactions, as well as through the various trades practiced by man. Reciprocal

²⁶ Ibn Sina, *al-Najat*, op. cit., p. 304.

transactions demand law (*sunnah*) and justice, and law and justice demand a lawgiver and dispenser of justice. This lawgiver must be in a position that enables him address men and make them adhere to the law. He must, then, be a human being. Men must not be left to their private opinions concerning the law so that they disagree, each considering as just what others owe them, unjust what they owe others. Thus, with respect to the universal and actual existence of the human species, the need for this human being is far greater than the need for such benefit as the growing of the hair on the eyebrow, the shaping of the arches in the feet, and many others that are not necessary for survival but at best are merely useful for it. Now the existence of the righteous man to legislate and to dispense justice is a possibility, as we have previously remarked. It becomes impossible; therefore, that divine providence should ordain the existence of those former benefits and not the latter, which are their bases. Nor yet is it possible that which He knows to be if itself within the realm of possibility but whose realization is necessary for introducing the good order, should not exist?²⁷

In their life, human needs guidance, and the guidance brings by the prophet of God. According to Ibn Sina, a prophet, there for, must exist and he must be human. He must also possess characteristics not present in others so that men could recognize in

²⁷ Ibn Sina, *Kitab al-Shifa, Maqalah al-asyriyah, fasal tsani* (Book of al-Shifa, Metaphysics X, Chapter 2 on the proof of the prophecy. The manner of the prophet's call to God, the Exalted. The return to God, translated by Michael E. Marmura in *Medieval Political Philosophy*.

him something they do not have and which differentiates him from them. Therefore he will perform the miracles about which we have spoken. When this man's existence comes about, he must lay down laws about men's affairs by the permission of God, the Exalted, by His command, inspiration, and the descent of His Spirit on him.²⁸

Conclusion

Ibn Sina stresses the intimate connection of mind and body. Ibn Sina explains the relationship between the body and the soul. All these faculties are merely different functions of the human soul. For the human soul is one, and those three powers are different functions of it. To Avicenna, the soul is immaterial, and is quite different from the substance of the body. It is not pre-existent, coming into being together with the body; but it survives and does not perish when the human being dies. Ibn Sina believed firmly in the immortality of the soul. Corruption cannot touch it, for it is immaterial.

The human being, as created by God, is not able to live in isolation but needs society for his survival, his growth and his education. Human need law and justice, and law and justice demand a lawgiver and dispenser of justice. In their life, human needs guidance, and the guidance brings by the prophet of God. According to Ibn Sina, a prophet, there for, must exist and he must be human. He must also possess characteristics not present in others so that men could recognize in him

²⁸ Ibn Sina, *Kitab al-Shifa*, Metaphysics X, Chapter 2.

something they do not have and which differentiates him from them.

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