

**THE LEGACY OF IBN SINA: A PIONEER OF MEDICINE AND  
PHILOSOPHY**

*Jizzakh branch of National University of Uzbekistan*

*named after Mirzo Ulugbek*

*The faculty: Psychology, the department of Foreign languages*

*Philology and teaching languages*

***Teshaboyeva Nafisa Zubaydulla kizi***

[\*nafisateshaboyeva@jbnuu.uz\*](mailto:nafisateshaboyeva@jbnuu.uz)

*Student of group 401-22 : Toshmamatova Osuda Davlat kizi*

[\*toshmamatovaosuda@gmail.com\*](mailto:toshmamatovaosuda@gmail.com)

***Annotation.*** *This article presents a comprehensive exploration of the vast influence of Ibn Sina (980-1037 CE), the renowned pioneer of medicine known as Avicenna in the West. Known for his pivotal contributions to medicine, philosophy, and science, Ibn Sina's writings had a profound impact on civilizations across the globe. And also this article tells the story of Ibn Sina's incredible legacy. Ibn Sina was a true pioneer, and his work continues to inspire and inform us today. This is a must-read for anyone who wants to understand the history of science, medicine, and philosophy. You can imagine a brilliant scholar who lived over a thousand years ago and made groundbreaking discoveries in both medicine and philosophy. That scholar was Ibn Sina, also known as Avicenna.*

***Key words :*** *Avicenna, the Canon (al-Qanun fi'l-Tibb), life and times, works, psychology, theory, Islam.*

Abu 'Ali al-Husayn ibn Sina is better known in Europe by the Latinized name "Avicenna." He is probably the most significant philosopher in the Islamic tradition and arguably the most influential philosopher of the pre-modern era. Avicenna was born in around 980 in Afshana, a village near Bukhara in

Transoxiana. His father, who may have been Ismaili, was a local Samanid governor. At an early age, his family moved to Bukhara where he studied Hanafi jurisprudence (fiqh) with Isma‘il Zahid (d. 1012) and medicine with a number of teachers. This training and the excellent library of the physicians at the Samanid court assisted Avicenna in his philosophical self-education. Avicenna wrote his two earliest works in Bukhara under the influence of al-Farabi. The first, a Compendium on the Soul (Maqala fi'l-nafs), is a short treatise dedicated to the Samanid ruler that establishes the incorporeality of the rational soul or intellect without resorting to Neoplatonic insistence upon its pre-existence. The second is his first major work on metaphysics, Philosophy for the Prosodist (al-Hikma al-‘Arudiya) penned for a local scholar and his first systematic attempt at Aristotelian philosophy.

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Knowledge was the basis of al-Ghazali's later Arabic work *Maqasid al-falasifa* (Goals of the Philosophers). The second, whose dating and interpretation have inspired debates for centuries, is *al-Isharat wa'l-Tanbihat* (Pointers and Reminders), a work that does not present completed proofs for arguments and reflects his mature thinking on a variety of logical, metaphysical issues. According to Gutas it was written in Isfahan in the early 1030s; according to Michot, it dates from an earlier period in Hamadan and possibly Rayy. Avicenna's major work, *The Cure*, was translated into Latin in 12th and 13th century Spain (Toledo and Burgos) and, although it was controversial, it had an important impact and raised controversies in medieval scholastic philosophy. In certain cases the Latin manuscripts of the text predate the extant Arabic ones and ought to be considered more authoritative. The main significance of the Latin corpus lies in the interpretation for Avicennism and Avicennism, in particular regarding his doctrines on the nature of the soul and his famous existence-essence distinction (more about that below) and below), along with the debates and censure that they raised in scholastic Europe, in particular in Paris Europe. This was particularly the case in Paris, where Avicennism was later proscribed in 1210. However, the influence of his psychology and theory of knowledge upon William of Auvergne and Albertus Magnus have been noted. More significant is the impact of his metaphysics upon the work and thought of Thomas Aquinas. His other major work to be translated into Latin was his medical treatise *the Canon*, which remained a text-book into the early modern period and was studied in centres of medical learning such as Padua.

Logic is a critical aspect of, and propaedeutic to, Avicennan philosophy. His logical works follow the curriculum of late Neoplatonism and comprise nine books, beginning with his version of Porphyry's *Isagoge* followed by his understanding and modification of the Aristotelian *Organon*, which included the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*. On the age-old debate whether logic is an instrument of philosophy (Peripatetic view) or a part of philosophy (Stoic view), he argues that such a debate is futile and meaningless.

His views on logic represent a significant metaphysical approach, and it could be argued generally that metaphysical concerns lead Avicenna's arguments in a range of philosophical and non-philosophical subjects. For example, he argues in *The Cure* that both logic and metaphysics share a concern with the study of secondary intelligibles (*ma'qulat thaniya*), abstract concepts such as existence and time that are derived from primary concepts such as humanity and animality. Logic is the standard by which concepts—or the mental “existence” that corresponds to things that occur in extra-mental reality—can be judged and hence has both implications for what exists outside of the mind and how one may articulate those concepts through language. More importantly, logic is a key instrument and standard for judging the validity of arguments and hence acquiring knowledge. Salvation depends on the purity of the soul and in particular the intellect that is trained and perfected through knowledge. Of particular significance for later debates and refutations is his notion that knowledge depends on the inquiry of essential definitions (*hadd*) through syllogistic reasoning. The problem of course arises when one tries to make sense of an essential definition in a real, particular world, and when one's attempts to complete the syllogism by striking on the middle term is foiled because one's ‘intuition’ fails to grasp the middle term.

Consequently, Avicenna is well known as the author of one an important and influential proof for the existence of God. This proof is a good example of a philosopher's intellect being deployed for a theological purpose, as was common in medieval philosophy. The argument runs as follows: There is existence, or rather our phenomenal experience of the world confirms that things exist, and that their existence is non-necessary because we notice that things come into existence and pass out of it. Contingent existence cannot arise unless it is made necessary by a cause. A causal chain in reality must culminate in one un-caused cause because one cannot posit an actual infinite regress of causes (a basic axiom of Aristotelian science). Therefore, the chain of contingent existents must culminate

in and find its causal principle in a sole, self-subsistent existent that is Necessary. This, of course, is the same as the God of religion .

### **The Avicennan tradition and his legacy**

Avicenna's major achievement was to propound a philosophically defensive system rooted in the theological fact of Islam, and its success can be gauged by the recourse to Avicennan ideas found in the subsequent history of philosophical theology in Islam. In the Latin West, his metaphysics and theory of the soul had a profound influence on scholastic arguments, and as in the Islamic East, was the basis for considerable debate and argument. Just two generations after him, al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and al-Shahrastani (d. 1153) in their attacks testify to the fact that no serious Muslim thinker could ignore him. They regarded Avicenna as the principal representative of philosophy in Islam. In the later Iranian tradition, Avicenna's thought was critically distilled with mystical insight, and he became known as a mystical thinker, a view much disputed in late 20th and early 21st century scholarship. Nevertheless the major works of Avicenna, especially *The Cure and Pointers*, became the basis for the philosophical curriculum in the madrasa. Numerous commentaries, glosses and super-glosses were composed on them and continued to be produced into the 20th century. While our current views on cosmology, on the nature of the self, and on knowledge raise distinct problems for Avicennan ideas, they do not address the important issue of why his thought remained so influential for such a long period of time. In the 20th and 21st centuries, Avicenna has been attacked by some contemporary Arab Muslim thinkers in search of a new rationalism within Arab culture, one that champions Averroes against Avicenna.

In conclusion, Ibn Sina's legacy as a pioneer of medicine and philosophy continues to have a profound impact on the fields of science and thought. His contributions to medical practice, particularly in the areas of pharmacology and anatomy, have laid the foundation for modern medical knowledge and advancements. Additionally, his philosophical works, such as "The Canon of Medicine" and "The Book of Healing," have helped shape the way we understand

the human body and the natural world. Ibn Sina's innovative thinking and dedication to learning serve as an inspiration for generations to come, highlighting the importance of intellectual curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge. His influence in medieval Europe spread through the translations of his works first undertaken in Spain. In the Islamic world, his impact was immediate and led to what Michot has called “la pandémie avicennienne.” When al-Ghazali led the theological attack upon the heresies of the philosophers, he singled out Avicenna, and a generation later when the Shahrastani gave an account of the doctrines of the philosophers of Islam, he relied upon the work of Avicenna, whose metaphysics he later attempted to refute in his *Struggling against the Philosophers* (Musari‘at al-falasifa). Avicennan metaphysics became the foundation for discussions of Islamic philosophy and philosophical theology. In the early modern period in Iran, his metaphysical positions began to be displayed by a creative modification that they underwent due to the thinkers of the school of Isfahan, in particular Mulla Sadra (d. 1641). His enduring legacy stands as a testament to the power of human ingenuity and the impact that one individual can have on the course of history. Ibn Sina's timeless wisdom and groundbreaking discoveries will continue to shape the intellectual landscape for years to come, solidifying his place as one of the greatest thinkers in history. Ibn Sina was a key figure in the development of Islamic philosophy and his philosophy of existence and knowledge had a lasting impact on Western thought. He integrated Greek philosophy, particularly the works of Aristotle, with Islamic theology and metaphysics, creating a synthesis that would shape medieval European philosophy. Ibn Sina's legacy extends beyond his contributions to medicine and philosophy. He was also a poet, a mathematician, and a scientist, making significant advancements in fields such as astronomy, physics, and alchemy. His holistic approach to knowledge and his commitment to seeking truth through reason and observation have inspired generations of scholars and continue to influence intellectual thought to this day.

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