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THE ARCHITECTURE OF COGNITIVE HYGIENE: PSYCHOSOMATIC MEDICINE AND THE BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL-SPIRITUAL MODEL IN AVICENNA'S AL-QANUN FI AL-TIBB

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Abstract: Abu Ali Ibn Sina (Avicenna) is globally celebrated as a foundational figure in the history of medicine and philosophy. However, his specific contributions to cognitive hygiene and psychosomatic integration require deeper analytical framing within modern clinical paradigms. This article explores the intersections of healthy thinking (sog'lom fikrlash) and physiological health in Ibn Sina's Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb (The Canon of Medicine) and Kitab al-Nafs (Book of the Soul). By utilizing a historical-analytical approach, the study demonstrates how Ibn Sina anticipated the modern Biopsychosocial-Spiritual (BPS-S) model of healthcare. The research highlights his nuanced understanding of the internal senses, his pioneering use of cognitive-behavioral interventions, and his recognition of the profound physiological impact of moral and emotional states. The findings establish that Ibn Sina's medical philosophy transcends the reductionist biomedical approach, offering a holistic framework where mental hygiene and ethical equilibrium are absolute prerequisites for physical healing.

Keywords: Avicenna, Ibn Sino, cognitive hygiene, psychosomatic medicine, internal senses, biopsychosocial-spiritual model, Canon of Medicine, mental hygiene

Introduction

The evolution of modern medicine has increasingly gravitated toward holistic paradigms that recognize the inseparable, dynamic nature of the mind and body. While the Biopsychosocial-Spiritual (BPS-S) model is often viewed as a contemporary reaction to the limitations of reductionist biomedicine, its core theoretical and practical tenets were extensively articulated over a millennium ago by the Persian polymath Abu Ali Ibn Sina. Born in the Bukhara region, Ibn Sina synthesized Greek, Indian, and Persian medical traditions with his own rigorous empirical observations and philosophical reasoning, creating a medical system that dominated global healthcare for centuries.

In his magnum opus, Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb (The Canon of Medicine), Ibn Sina systematically categorized an exhaustive array of both somatic and psychological afflictions. Central to his medical philosophy was the conviction that physical health is intrinsically linked to cognitive hygiene — the active maintenance of healthy, rational thought processes — and moral equilibrium. This article investigates the degree to which Ibn Sina's theories on internal perception,

psychosomatic humoral responses, and non-pharmacological therapies established a highly sophisticated framework for mental health.

The Architecture of Cognition: The Internal Senses and Mental Hygiene

To comprehend Ibn Sina's approach to healthy thinking, one must examine his highly developed epistemology of the soul ('ilm al-nafs). In Kitab al-Nafs, he maps the cognitive architecture of the human mind by delineating the "internal senses." These faculties, which he conceptually located within specific ventricles of the brain, process the raw data gathered by the five external senses and form the foundational basis of human cognition, memory, and emotional reaction.

Ibn Sina posited that mental illness, cognitive distress, and moral failings often arise from dysfunctions or imbalances within these internal senses, particularly the imaginative and estimative faculties. If an individual fails to regulate these lower faculties through the dominance of the rational soul (which is responsible for moral and logical reasoning), they become susceptible to irrational fears, severe melancholia, and hallucinations.

Table 1 below outlines Ibn Sina's classification of the internal senses, illustrating the precision with which he understood cognitive processing and its vulnerabilities.

Table 1: Ibn Sina's Classification of the Internal Senses and Cognitive Functions

Internal Sense (Arabic Term)	**Aristotelian / Latin Equivalent**	**Primary Cognitive Function**	**Role in Mental Hygiene & Psychopathology**
Al-Hiss al-Mushtarak	Sensus Communis (Common Sense)	Integrates disparate raw sensory data from the external senses into a unified, coherent percept.	Dysfunction leads to severe sensory processing disorders and an inability to perceive immediate reality accurately.
Al-Quwwa al-Musawwira	Retentive Imagination / Sensory Memory	Stores the sensory forms and visual images synthesized by the common sense for later retrieval.	Overactivity can lead to intrusive visual memories or vivid hallucinations, a symptom frequently noted in melancholia.
Al-Quwwa al-Mutakhayyila	Active / Combinative Imagination	Combines and divides stored images to create new conceptual scenarios and theoretical constructs.	If left unchecked by rational logic, it generates catastrophic, illusory scenarios, fueling chronic anxiety and paranoia.
Wahm	Estimation (Vis Aestimativa)	Perceives non-sensible "intentions" (e.g., danger,	Crucial for biological survival, but a

		hostility, or affection) inherent in objects or people.	maladaptive wahm leads to irrational phobias, poor social judgment, and distrust.
Al-Quwwa al-Hafiza	Recollection / Memory	Stores the abstract intentions and emotional judgments produced by the estimative faculty (wahm).	Essential for learning from past events; however, obsessively holding onto negative intentions can lead to long-term psychological trauma.

Data synthesized from historical analyses of Ibn Sina's psychological treatises and Kitab al-Nafs.

Psychosomatics and the Physiological Impact of Emotion

Ibn Sina's most groundbreaking contribution to clinical practice was his acute, empirical observation of psychosomatic relationships. Decades before the formalization of modern psychophysiology, he explicitly recognized that emotional states — such as intense grief, anger, fear, or romantic infatuation — could violently alter the body's physiological state, primarily by affecting humoral balance and the cardiovascular system.

His unmatched expertise in pulsology is a profound testament to this understanding. Ibn Sina refined classical Galenic theories to demonstrate how specific emotional perturbations produce distinct, measurable alterations in the pulse rate and rhythm. The most famous clinical anecdote recorded in the annals of medical history involves Ibn Sina diagnosing a severe case of “love sickness” (a depressive, consumptive state). He achieved this by carefully holding the patient's wrist and reciting aloud the names of various provinces, neighborhoods, streets, and finally individuals. He noted a severe, unmistakable spike in the patient's pulse when the name of the patient's beloved was mentioned. This systematic monitoring of physiological arousal in response to psychological stimuli is recognized by modern medical historians as an early precursor to both the word-association test and polygraph principles.

To visualize the Avicennian understanding of the psychosomatic loop, Diagram 1 illustrates the causal pathway from an emotional stimulus to a physiological response, culminating in a therapeutic intervention.

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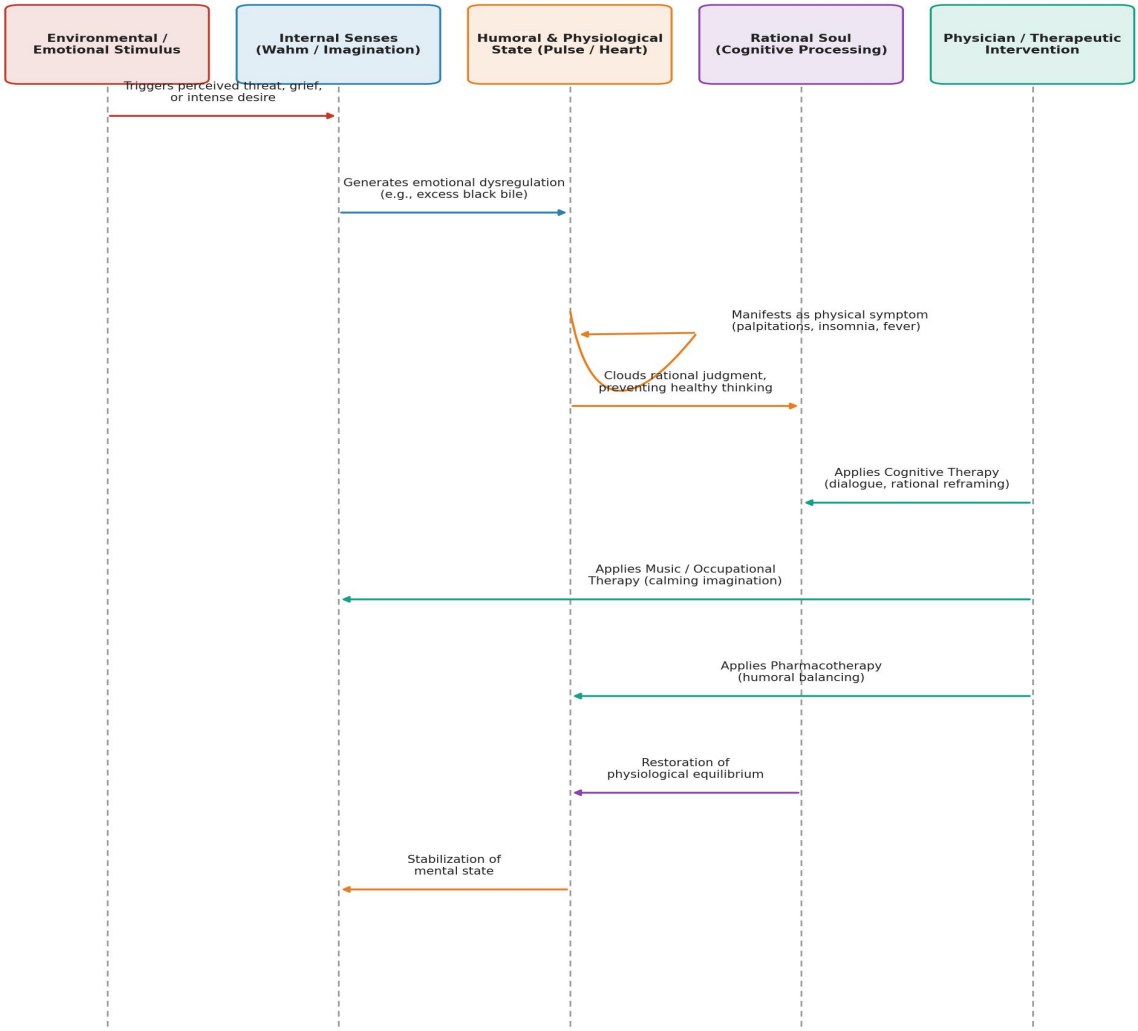


Diagram 1. The Avicennian Psychosomatic Loop.

Therapeutic Interventions: Precursors to Modern Modalities

Because Ibn Sina viewed the human being through an inherently biopsychosocial-spiritual lens, his prescribed treatments were rarely purely pharmacological. He advocated for a deeply multidimensional treatment plan for psychiatric and psychosomatic illnesses.

His regimens often included techniques that modern clinical psychology would readily classify as Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT). For patients suffering from delusions, paranoia, or melancholia, he utilized guided therapeutic dialogues to challenge their catastrophic beliefs. The goal was to dismantle irrational cognitions and replace them with balanced, rational alternatives, thus restoring the dominance of the rational soul. Furthermore, he recognized the necessity of environmental and social adjustments. For scholars and officials suffering from the medieval equivalent of occupational burnout, he prescribed gradual exposure to supportive social gatherings before they were permitted to return to their intense public lecturing or administrative duties.

Music therapy was another foundational cornerstone of Avicennian mental hygiene. Believing that sound frequencies and rhythms could directly influence the soul and restore humoral balance, he prescribed specific musical modes (maqamat) for specific psychological states. For example, the saba mode was used to evoke compassion and gentleness in hardened patients, while the rast mode was utilized to instill emotional balance, and hijaz to inspire courage in the fearful. Furthermore, he frequently utilized targeted pharmacotherapy — such as mandrake for sedation, saffron for mood elevation, and valerian for sleep regulation — carefully dosed based on the patient's specific humoral temperament.

Table 2 outlines the diverse, highly integrated therapeutic strategies employed by Ibn Sina to maintain cognitive and moral hygiene.

Table 2: Avicennian Therapeutic Interventions for Cognitive and Moral Hygiene

Modality	**Avicennian Application in the Canon of Medicine**	**Modern Clinical Equivalent**	**Primary Target Domain**
Verbal Dialectic	Engaging the patient in structured logical discourse to dismantle false beliefs and illusions generated by an overactive imagination.	Cognitive Restructuring / Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)	Psychological / Cognitive
Music Therapy	Prescribing specific maqamat (melodies) to alter emotional states, lower stress responses, and soothe the human spirit.	Music Therapy; Sound Healing; Affect Regulation	Emotional / Spiritual
Environmental Control	Adjusting the patient's social exposure, modifying dietary intake, and prescribing specific, rigorous sleep regimens to support brain health.	Milieu Therapy; Lifestyle Medicine; Sleep Hygiene	Biological / Social
Occupational Engagement	Encouraging active participation in light crafts, pottery, calligraphy, or gentle scholarly tasks to rebuild self-efficacy and focus.	Occupational Therapy; Behavioral Activation	Social / Psychological
Spiritual Exercises	Emphasizing tawakkul (trust in the divine), prayer, and rigorous moral discipline as intrinsic motivators for mental resilience and healing.	Mindfulness; Logotherapy; Spiritually-Integrated Psychotherapy	Spiritual / Moral

The Biopsychosocial-Spiritual Paradigm in Practice

Ibn Sina's enduring legacy proves that the strict compartmentalization of the mind and body is a relatively recent, and arguably flawed, historical deviation. His philosophy strongly advocates for a multidimensional perspective on health, where biological, psychological, social, and spiritual factors are in constant, dynamic interplay. A disruption in the moral or spiritual domain — such as a failure to practice ethical restraint, or harboring excessive, chronic anger — was understood by Ibn Sina to produce tangible, detrimental, and sometimes fatal effects on physical health.

Diagram 2 provides a structural map of this highly integrated framework within Ibn Sina's medical and philosophical system.

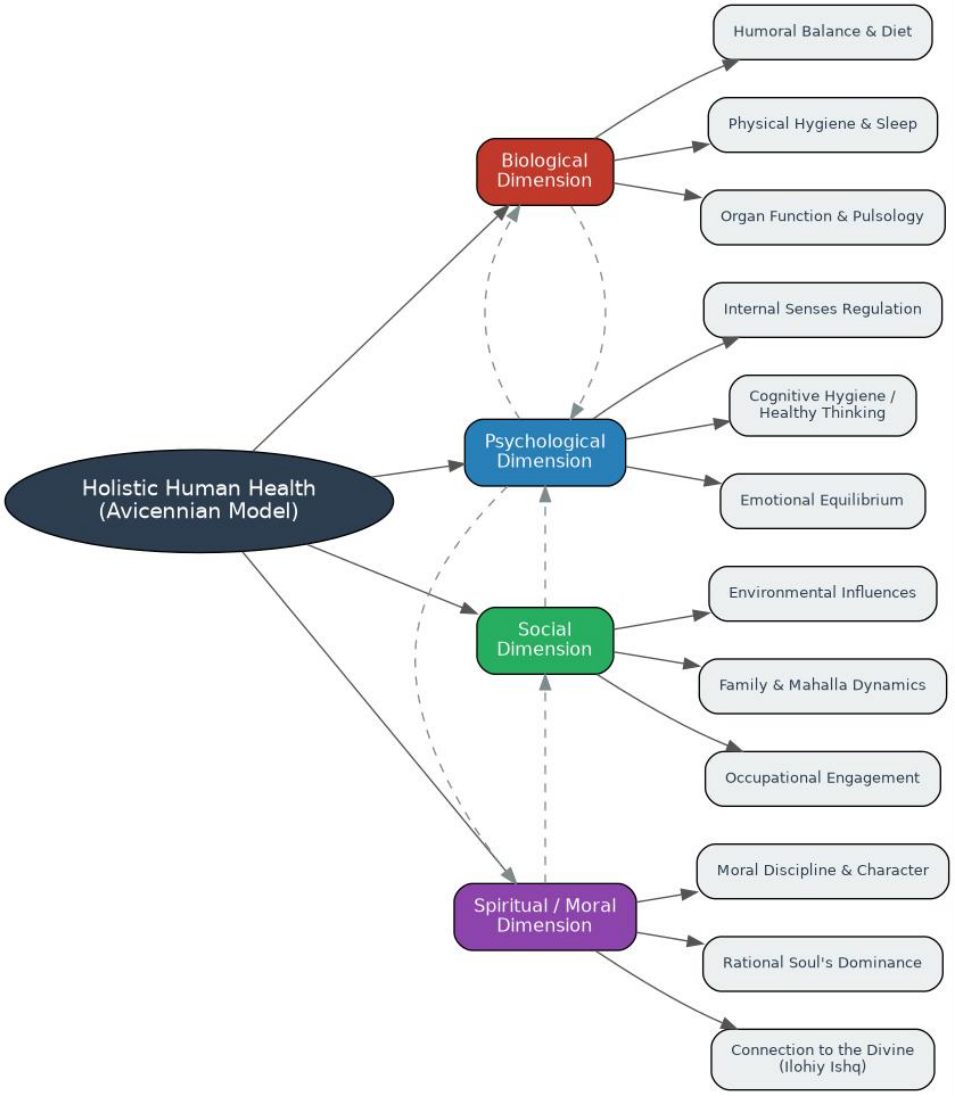


Diagram 2. Ibn Sina's Biopsychosocial-Spiritual (BPS-S) Model of Health.

Conclusion

Abu Ali Ibn Sina's Canon of Medicine and his related psychological treatises offer a remarkably sophisticated, interconnected framework for understanding the human condition. His

theories anticipated the modern Biopsychosocial-Spiritual model by centuries, asserting that cognitive hygiene, emotional stability, and moral rectitude are fundamental, non-negotiable prerequisites for biological health. By recognizing the immense power of the internal senses and the profound psychosomatic effects of human emotions, Ibn Sina deployed therapeutic interventions that resonate strongly with contemporary cognitive-behavioral and holistic therapies. Reviving and integrating this legacy offers highly relevant conceptual tools for modern healthcare and psychological practice, reinforcing the timeless truth that the true healing of the physical body requires the harmonious cultivation of the mind and spirit.

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