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Muslims in Psychology

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AL-KINDI (803-873)

He was the first great Arab philosopher. As an Islamic psychologist, al-Kindi was a pioneer in experimental psychology. He was the first to use the method of experiment in psychology, which led to his discovery that sensation is proportionate to the stimulus. He was also the earliest to realize the therapeutic value of music and attempted to cure a quadriplegic boy using music therapy.

He also dealt with psychology in several other treatises: On Sleep and Dreams (a treatise on dream interpretation), First Philosophy, and Eradication of Sorrow. In the latter, he described sorrow as "a spiritual (Nafsani) grief caused by loss of loved ones or personal belongings, or by failure in obtaining what one lusts after" and then added: "If causes of pain are discernable, the cures can be found." He recommended that "if we do not tolerate losing or dislike being deprived of what is dear to us, then we should seek after riches in the world of the intellect. In it we should treasure our precious and cherished gains where they can never be dispossessed...for that which is owned by our senses could easily be taken away from us." He also stated that "sorrow is not within us we bring it upon ourselves." He developed cognitive methods to combat depression and discussed the intellectual operations of human beings.

AL-FARABI (870-950)

In psychology, al-Farabi's Social Psychology and Model City were the first treatises to deal with social psychology. He stated that "an isolated individual could not achieve all the perfections by himself, without the aid of other individuals." He wrote that it is the "innate disposition of every man to join another human being or other men in the labor he ought to perform." He concluded that in order to "achieve what he can of that perfection, every man needs to stay in the neighborhood of others and associate with them.

His work on the Cause of Dreams, which appeared as chapter 24 of his Book of Opinions of the people of the Ideal City, was a treatise on dreams, in which he was the first to distinguish between dream interpretation and the nature and causes of dreams.

Al-Farabi wrote more than 80 books on different topics. According to him man is composed of two principles : Body and soul. His theory of human nature is dualistic. Body and soul have no essential connections with each other.

IBN SINA (980-1037)

Ibn Sina was born in 980 C.E. in the village of Afshana near Bukhara which today is located in the far south of Russia. His father, Abdullah, an adherent of the Ismaili sect, was from Balkh and his mother from a village near Bukhara.

In any age Ibn Sina, known in the West as Avicenna, would have been a giant among giants. He displayed exceptional intellectual prowess as a child and at the age of ten was already proficient in the Qur'an and the Arabic classics. During the next six years he devoted himself to Muslim Jurisprudence, Psychology, Philosophy and Natural Science and studied Logic, Euclid, and the Almagest.

In Muslim psychology and the neurosciences, Ibn e Sina was a pioneer of neuropsychiatry. He first described numerous neuropsychiatric conditions, including hallucination, insomnia, mania, nightmare, melancholia, dementia, epilepsy, paralysis, stroke, vertigo and tremor.

Ibn e Sina was also a pioneer in psychophysiology and psychosomatic medicine. He recognized 'physiological psychology' in the treatment of illnesses involving emotions, and developed a system for associating changes in the pulse rate with inner feelings, which is seen as an anticipation of the word association test attributed to Carl Jung. Ibn e Sina is reported to have treated a very ill patient by "feeling the patient's pulse and reciting aloud to him the names of provinces, districts, towns, streets, and people." He

noticed how the patient's pulse increased when certain names were mentioned, from which Avicenna deduced that the patient was in love with a girl whose home Ibn e Sina was "able to locate by the digital examination." Ibn e Sina advised the patient to marry the girl he is in love with, and the patient soon recovered from his illness after his marriage.

Ibn Sina noted the close relationship between emotions and the physical condition and felt that music had a definite physical and psychological effect on patients. Of the many psychological disorders that he described in the Qanun, one is of unusual interest: love sickness! Ibn Sina is reputed to have diagnosed this condition in a Prince in Jurjan who lay sick and whose malady had baffled local doctors. Ibn Sina noted a fluttering in the Prince's pulse when the address and name of his beloved were mentioned. The great doctor had a simple remedy: unite the sufferer with the beloved.

IMAM GHAZALI (1058-1111)

In Islamic psychology, al-Ghazali discussed the concept of the self and the causes of its misery and happiness. He described the self using four terms: Qalb (heart), Ruh (spirit), Nafs (soul) and 'Aql (intellect). He stated that "the self has an inherent yearning for an ideal, which it strives to realize and it is endowed with qualities to help realize it." He further stated that the self has motor and sensory motives for fulfilling its bodily needs. He wrote that the motor motives comprise of propensities and impulses, and further divided the propensities into two types: appetite and anger. He wrote that appetite urges hunger, thirst, and sexual craving, while anger takes the form of rage, indignation and revenge. He further wrote that impulse resides in the muscles, nerves, and tissues, and moves the organs to "fulfill the propensities."

Al-Ghazali was one of the first to divide the sensory motives (apprehension) into five external senses (the classical senses of hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch) and five internal senses: common sense (Hiss Mushtarik) which synthesizes sensuous impressions carried to the brain while giving meaning to them; imagination (Takhayyul) which enables someone to retain mental images from experience; reflection (Tafakkur) which brings together relevant thoughts and associates or dissociates them as it considers fit but has no power to create anything new which is not already present in the mind; recollection (Tadhakkur) which remembers the outer form of objects in memory and recollects the meaning; and the memory (Hafiza) where impressions received through the senses are stored.

He wrote that, while the external senses occur through specific organs, the internal senses are located in different regions of the brain, and discovered that the memory is located in the hinder lobe, imagination is located in the frontal lobe, and reflection is located in the middle folds of the brain. He stated that these inner senses allow people to predict future situations based on what they learn from past experiences.

In The Revival of Religious Sciences, he writes that the five internal senses are found in both humans and animals. In Mizan al Amal, however, he later states that animals "do not possess a well-developed reflective power" and argues that animals mostly think in terms of "pictorial ideas in a simple way and are incapable of complex association and dissociation of abstract ideas involved in reflection." He writes that "the self carries two additional qualities, which distinguishes man from animals enabling man to attain spiritual perfection", which are 'Aql (intellect) and Irada (will). He argues that the intellect is "the fundamental rational faculty, which enables man to generalize and form concepts and gain knowledge." He also argues that human will and animal will are both different. He writes that human will is "conditioned by the intellect" while animal will is "conditioned by anger and appetite" and that "all these powers control and regulate the body." He further writes that the Qalb (heart) "controls and rules over them" and that it has six powers: appetite, anger, impulse, apprehension, intellect, and will. He states that humans have all six of these traits, while animals only have three (appetite, anger, and impulse). This was in contrast to other ancient and medieval thinkers such as Aristotle, Ibn e Sina, Roger Bacon and Thomas Aquinas who all believed that animals cannot become angry.

Al-Ghazali writes that knowledge can either be innate or acquired. He divides acquired knowledge into phenomenal (material world) and spiritual (related to God and soul), and divides acquired knowledge into imitation, logical reasoning, contemplation and intuition. He also argues that there are four elements in human nature: the sage (intellect and reason), the pig (lust and gluttony), the dog (anger), and the devil

(brutality). He argues that the latter three elements are in conflict with the former element and that "different people have such powers in different proportions."

Al-Ghazali divides the Nafs into three categories based on the Qur'an: Nafs Ammarah (12:53) which "exhorts one to freely indulge in gratifying passions and instigates to do evil", Nafs Lawammah (75:2) which is "the conscience that directs man towards right or wrong", and Nafs Mutmainnah (89:27) which is "a self that reaches the ultimate peace." As an analogy between psychology and politics, he compares the soul to that of a king running a kingdom, arguing that the bodily organs are like the artisans and workers, intellect is like a wise vizier, desire is like a wicked servant, and anger is like the police force. He argues that a king can correctly run the state of affairs by turning to the wise vizier, turns away from the wicked servant, and regulating the workers and the police; and that in the same way, the soul is balanced if it "keeps anger under control and makes the intellect dominate desire." He argues that for a soul to reach perfection, it needs to evolve through several stages: sensuous (like a moth which has no memory), imaginative (lower animal), instinctive (higher animal), rational ("transcends animal stage and apprehends objects beyond the scope of his senses") and divine ("apprehends reality of spiritual things").

He stated that there are two types of diseases: physical and spiritual. He considered the latter to be more dangerous, resulting from "ignorance and deviation from God", and listed the spiritual diseases as: self-centeredness; addiction to wealth, fame and social status; and ignorance, cowardice, cruelty, lust, waswas (doubt), malevolence, calumny, envy, deception, and greed. To overcome these spiritual weaknesses, al-Ghazali suggested the therapy of opposites ("use of imagination in pursuing the opposite"), such as ignorance & learning, or hate & love. He described the personality as an "integration of spiritual and bodily forces" and believed that "closeness to God is equivalent to normality whereas distance from God leads to abnormality."

Al-Ghazali argued that human beings occupy a position "midway between animals and angels and his distinguishing quality is knowledge." He argues that a human can either rise to "the level of the angels with the help of knowledge" or fall to "the levels of animals by letting his anger and lust dominate him." He also argued that Ilm al-Batin (esotericism) is fard (incumbent) and advised Tazkiya Nafs (self-purification). He also noted that "good conduct can only develop from within and does not need total destruction of natural propensities".

ASHRAF ALI THANVI (1873-1943)

Ali Thanvi, referred to by many South Asian Muslims as 'Physician of the Muslims' [Hakim al-ummat] and 'Reformer of the Nation' [Mujaddid al-Millat], is a towering figure of Islamic revival and reawakening of South Asia in the Twentieth-Century. Thanvi was an eminent Muslim theologian, a Sufi mystic, and a prolific author of numerous Islamic texts. His followers claim that his distinguishing mark and guiding principle was his remarkable sense of balance and straightforwardness--a trait manifested in his speeches, writings, and training of scholars and Sufis. Thanvi is posited by his followers as a reformer of the masses, an exemplary spiritual guide [shaykh], a successful author, a spiritual jurist, an intellectual sage, and a fortifier of Islamic tradition.

The most famous books of Ashraf Ali Thanvi include the famous "Behishti Zaiver" and "Tarbiyyat-ul-Shalik"

His views are identified by the three titles:

(a) Personality Theory

(b) Causes and Classification of Disease

(c) Treatment or Therapies

(a) Personality Theory: According to Thanvi, a child is born with innocent nature. He learns good and bad things from his environment. Three types of "Nafs" are developed in his personality: (i) Nafs Ammara (turning to evil), (ii) Nafs Lavvama (cursing after sin) and (iii) Nafs Mutmainna (following divines).

(b) Causes and Classification of Diseases: Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi explains the causes of mental

diseases as follows:

Causes: When a human being becomes detached from religion and goes away from God it makes him worthless. This also removes distinction between good and bad; greed and material gain becomes all-important goal of one's life in the world. This worldly gain and greed expose one to mental diseases. According to the Maulana, there are two forces within a human being: constructive force and destructive force. He lays great emphasis on training of the child so as to strike balance between the two forces. In the early days, parents especially mother plays greater role while bringing up the child on right lines. Wrong training spoils him making him prone to mental diseases.

Kinds of Mental Diseases: Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi divided the mental diseases two categories: Organic and functional disturbances or diseases. The organic diseases may be cured by medicines but the functional or psychological diseases are to be cured by individual and group therapies. In the individual therapy, the disturbed individual is made to understand his own self-known as right path. Maulana Thanvi cured thousands of persons suffering from organic and functional disturbances through his therapy. He simply provided the reading material and inspired the individuals to develop an insight to communicate with Allah directly.

For the group therapy, Maulana Thanvi invited his patients to his "Khanqah" to stay with other members of the group and assigned them different responsibilities. As they lived together in a group, they were trained and guided to live a normal life.

(c) Thanvi's Therapy Approaches: Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi believed in individual potentialities and qualities of human beings. Before asking an individual to come down for therapy or treatment, he made it absolutely clear that his therapeutic techniques do not lead to the following:

Miracle and "Kashf"

Guarantee for forgiveness on the day of judgment

Promise of material gain or better prospects in life

Automatic cure through counselor's attention

Possibility of action without will

Promise or surely for inner experiences

Maulana Thanvi emphasized the importance of the patient's own will and effort in the cure of disease or illness. The counselor (pir) only assists the patient to understand causes of the disease and overcome adverse factors while organizing his own self. The patient should have full faith and confidence in the counselor and do as advised.

Kinds of Therapies: Ashraf Ali Thanvi divided his therapies into two kinds: **(I) Reading therapy, (ii) Communication therapy**

(I) Reading Therapy: Reading therapy is individual therapy. At the start of treatment session, Ashraf Thanvi asked his patient to write down his problem believing that a strong psychological link existed between the patient and the therapist. This association was developed through an exchange of letters. The patient must be conscious of his anxiety and explain his trouble in writing.

The therapist believed that some individuals needed direct guidance and counseling. After reading the contents of patient's letter, he put some questions to satisfy and prepare his (patient) for treatment.

More often than not, Maulana Thanvi provided reading material out of religious scholar's books to his patients. He never failed to let those read and received verses of the Holy Quran. Reading therapy depends upon the faint in ALLAH. Based on Muslim Philosophy, the reading therapy believes that man is a whole unit. He has definite purpose of life. His primary concern is fulfilling this aim. All directed towards definite goals of life. These are to purify one's soul and seek His pleasure and gratification.

(II) Communication Therapy: In this therapy, Maulana Thanvi patients to his Khanqah “Imdadia” where people always gathered together. The Maulana used to sermonize on certain topic which the patients had to listen intently and act upon as advised. He thought sermon was the best spiritual group therapy. The patients uttered again and again what they listened. Remaining near to the therapist was important for effective treatment.

This way of treatment applied to those who fully believe in religion. Belief relates to purity of thought, uprightness of character, nearness to ALLAH and commitment.

PROPHET MUHAMMAD SAW - 'THE' PSYCHOLOGIST (570-632)

Holy Prophet Muhammad SAW was perhaps the founder of modern psychology. He implemented the divine code which was revealed to him by Allah. He laid the foundation of a state which was the end to superiority complex and inferiority complex. The rules of justice and equality and no difference between the black and the white, arab and the non arab were practical steps on achieving universal brotherhood. Holy Prophet Muhammad SAW gave the solution to all prejudices, abolished the concept of ingroups and outgroups and invited the whole world to come under the fold of Islam. Meditation was a part of the Prophet Muhammad's life. He spent considerable time at Mount Hira before his prophethood and meditated there and by virtue of which he earned supreme emotional quotient. He was able to achieve the perfect balance between spirituality and logic, and that gave him matchless convincing power.

There are many quotations of the Prophet which can act as perfect therapies for depression. A simple quotation from the Prophet "**Look at those below you in worldly matters and those above you in religious matters**" is the fool proof therapy of depression. Holy Prophet Muhammad SAW laid greater attention on realizing one's inner self. "He who recognizes his lord recognizes himself". He gave simple "exercises" that would help one gain spirituality and would help him in discovering his inner self. He used the basic motives of LOVE and FEAR in the people as a Drive to keep them away from Evil. He knew how to win hearts. He told us the importance of spending time for "one's self". He laid stress on exercise, which naturally releases anti depressant harmones. He used to smile the most. All of his companions thought that I am the most closest to the Prophet. This is the Climax of emotional quotient. No one can ever achieve a higher EQ than this. As Coleman has mentioned in the book the five stages of EQ. This seems to me the sixth stage of EQ.

Prophet Muhammad stressed a lot on praying in congregation making it not only a mere worship but a method to come out from loneliness and meet with those around you. On conquering Makkah he said , " Go ! All of you are free today. No revenge shall be taken from you."He didnt conquer the world by sword , rather he taught us how to conquer the world on the basis on intellect, logic, wisdom and manners. Good Health, spiritual elevation and purity, clarity of thoughts, correction of intentions and aims and up building of character are sure shot outcomes of following the Sunnah of Muhammad SAW.

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