

Ibn Sina on Life after Death

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Ibn Sina posits an interactionist perspective, asserting that a human being composes of a dualistic nature of the soul (*nafs*), which its essence is intellect (*'aql*), and the body. Therefore, discussions about life after death in his philosophy can revolve around the life of the soul, the life of the body, or a combined life of both. However, Ibn Sina chose to focus primarily on the life of the soul. At times, he seems to attribute the resurrection of the body to religious beliefs, avoiding a philosophical discourse on the matter. Meanwhile, influenced by numerous Qur'anic verses linking paradise and hell with pleasure and pain, his discussion on the life of the soul often revolves around intellectual pleasure and pain. Given the fact that intellectual pleasure and pain are odd terms from the general public perspective, Ibn Sina first elucidates five principles related to sensory pleasure and pain and uses them as groundwork for explaining intellectual pleasures and pains. They describe the differences between kinds of pleasures and pains and the factors that hinder, diminish, or reverse their perception. In the next step, Ibn Sina classifies humans' condition after death (after the separation of the soul from the body) based on (a) their attainment of active intellect, (b) their entrapment in compound ignorance, and (c) their possession of moral vices. A soul that has achieved the status of active intellect during its worldly life will possess a non-material continuity. Such a soul, depending on whether they are entangled in compound ignorance or not, will experience intellectual pain or pleasure. However, if someone hasn't reached the active intellect stage—whom Ibn Sina refers to with terms like "simple" or "naive"—they will not experience intellectual pleasures or pains, but rather, they will have a different kind of life after death. Additionally, possessing moral vices can lead to experiencing intellectual pain. For Ibn Sina, the pain resulting from compound ignorance is permanent, whereas the pain stemming from moral vices is not.