

The Relationship Between the Body and the Soul: What Principle Does It Follow?

Examining the Relationship Between the Body and the Soul and Their Mutual Influence

What do you know about the relationship between the body and the soul? Do they influence one another, or are they two entirely separate entities? Can we say that a sick body leads to a sick soul, and vice versa?

The relationship between the body and the soul is a fascinating and complex topic that has long been a focus of interest, particularly among philosophers, physicians, and psychologists. Various theories have been proposed on this matter. For instance, Plato views the soul and body as fundamentally distinct and estranged from one another, whereas Aristotle holds that the soul and the body are interdependent and share a profound connection.

To comprehend the relationship between the body and the soul, we must first examine the soul (*Nafs*) and its perceptive faculties. As previously mentioned, the perceptive faculties of the soul include the sensate faculty, imaginal faculty, estimative faculty, intellective faculty, and supra-rational faculty. The movement of the soul toward perfection begins at its lowest level, that is, the sensate faculty, and progresses step by step until it ultimately reaches the maturity of the supra-rational faculty and the acquisition of a sound heart. In fact, the soul functions like a software program in which the initial inputs consist of data received from sensory faculties such as sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. These inputs are subsequently processed by the imaginal and estimative faculties and then analyzed

by the intellect. Ultimately, the output of all these processes manifests in the heart. Therefore, if we fail to properly regulate and maintain the health of our physical and sensory faculties as the first stage, our intellectual and supra-rational faculties will inevitably encounter difficulties as well.

The relationship between the body and the soul is profound and inseparable; a healthy and strong body has a direct impact on the development of a healthy and strong soul. Likewise, the opposite holds true; the soul also significantly influences the body. Certain physical illnesses originate from the states of the soul, which are referred to as psychosomatic diseases. For instance, a person may experience heart palpitations or high blood pressure due to anger or stress. In general, since all the perceptive faculties of the soul are different aspects of a single truth, they exert a direct influence on one another. Thus, the health or illness of any one of them inevitably affects the others.

However, an important question arises: Some individuals, for various reasons, possess a weak or ailing body, sometimes with no possible cure. Given what we have discussed the relationship between the body and the soul, does this mean such individuals cannot have a healthy and strong soul? In other words, is spiritual growth and elevation impossible for them? In the following section, we will delve deeper into the relationship between the body and the soul, examine the factors that influence this relationship, and ultimately address this question.

Factors Influencing the Health of the Body and the Soul

As mentioned earlier, the relationship between the body and the soul is close and direct. The healthier, stronger, and more vibrant the body, the greater the capacity for a strong and sound soul, and vice versa. Therefore, individuals suffering from

severe or chronic illnesses often experience a weakening of the soul, sometimes leading to conditions such as anxiety, stress, or depression. Thus, the factors that contribute to physical health also play a crucial role in the well-being of the soul. Among these, two of the most significant are proper nutrition and physical exercise.

The Importance of Proper Nutrition in the Health of the Body and the Soul

Consuming healthy and nutritious food is one of the most fundamental factors in maintaining physical well-being. Given the interconnected relationship between the body and the soul, proper nutrition not only enhances the body's health, strength, and vitality but also plays a crucial role in the well-being and strength of the soul. For instance, many cases of irritability, anger, mood swings, and impatience stem from deficiencies in essential nutrients caused by poor dietary habits. A notable example is iron deficiency, which can lead to unexplained depression and anxiety. Similarly, a lack of certain vitamins can make a person more prone to apathy and vulnerability. When faced with psychological distress, one should not hastily turn to psychiatric medications, as many issues might be resolved through a simple physical assessment and the adoption of a balanced nutritional regimen.

Another crucial aspect of proper nutrition is avoiding overeating. Overeating is the root of numerous diseases and has detrimental effects not only on the body but also on the soul. The soul, in its journey toward perfection, is like an airplane that must continuously ascend. Just as an overloaded airplane struggles to take flight, excessive eating burdens the soul, making it sluggish and hindering its ability to soar to higher spiritual levels.

Examining the Role of Exercise in the Health of the Body and the Soul

Exercise plays a crucial role in maintaining the health and vitality of both the body and the soul. Laziness and physical inactivity weaken the body, making it sluggish and even prone to illness, and as a result, the soul also becomes weak and afflicted. Engaging in physical activity enhances the delivery of oxygen and essential nutrients to the body's organs, improves cardiovascular efficiency, and, in many cases, has a remarkable impact on treating various ailments. The positive influence of exercise extends to all the faculties of the soul, including the supra-rational faculty, to such an extent that many Islamic scholars regard it as an obligatory act. In self-improvement approaches, they emphasize the importance of daily physical activity and exercise as a fundamental part of spiritual and personal development.

Now that we have explored the relationship between the body and the soul, let us return to the question posed earlier: Is a sound soul attainable only for those with a healthy body? What, then, is the case for individuals with disabilities or those who have suffered physical injuries?

The Main Key to a Healthy Soul: Self-Knowledge and Regulating the Hierarchy of Love

Due to the close relationship between the body and the soul, a sick body often dulls the soul. However, this is not an absolute rule. It is not necessarily the case that a person with a healthy and strong body will have a powerful soul, nor that someone with a weak or sick body will be deprived of spiritual growth and strength. In fact, the opposite is often true. Some individuals become so preoccupied with maintaining their physical health that they completely neglect their soul. On the other hand, some people, despite having physical disabilities, attain such immense

spiritual strength that very few others can reach. But why is this so? What is the secret behind the success of the second group?

The key to this lies in two elements: first, self-knowledge, and second, regulating the hierarchy of love—the latter being a direct outcome of the former. When a person comes to truly know themselves as a human being, their hierarchy of love and their primary life priorities naturally become clear. As we have stated before, the fundamental priorities of a human being are Allah, the Household of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon them), and striving in the path of Allah (*jihad*). It is important to note that we are speaking about the truth of a human being, not an animal. Someone who remains confined within the realm of animalistic pursuits and qualities will have entirely different priorities. However, the true priorities of a human being are centered on love for Allah, love for the Household of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon them), and love for striving in Allah's path. A person whose hierarchy of love is structured around these three beloveds will bring their body—no matter how weak or ill—under the command of their soul. In essence, Allah has created the human soul and heart with the capacity to completely govern and command the body. The miraculous abilities witnessed in the lives of many great Islamic figures serve as a testament to this truth.

Love for Allah is a miraculous alchemy that ignites longing in the heart and sets it into motion. When the heart is set into motion, it commands all parts of the body to serve it. A person whose heart is ruled by Allah will never allow their body to succumb to weakness or laziness. This is why we have often seen individuals who, despite facing severe physical challenges, achieve extraordinary spiritual growth. They possess such tranquility and joy that even those in perfect health envy them. At the same time, we must remember that Allah expects from each person only

according to their capacity and does not burden anyone beyond their ability. However, naturally, those who strive harder will attain greater rewards and achievements.

In this lesson, we explored the relationship between the body and the soul and understood that they influence one another. A strong and healthy body greatly contributes to spiritual growth and the acquisition of a sound heart. Conversely, a sick body can pose challenges to spiritual elevation. However, as we discussed, this relationship is not absolute. If the soul attains strength through self-knowledge and the regulation of the hierarchy of love, it can lead the body, no matter how weak or ill, along with it.

In essence, wherever the soul is inclined toward, the body follows. You have likely experienced moments when, despite physical exhaustion or discomfort, you continued moving forward with enthusiasm toward your goal. If you'd like, feel free to share such experiences with us and our dear readers.