

The Place of Psychology according to Aristotle and Avicenna

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EXtended Abstract:

A problem concerning Aristotle's psychology asks where its right place of study is. Should it be studied in physics or in metaphysics or some part of it in physics and some other part in metaphysics? There are two views concerning the place of psychology according to Aristotle's philosophy of science and both find evidences in Aristotle's own books, but this article criticizes them and shows that in spite of the Aristotelian texts, one cannot consider psychology as a physical science. This paper tries to show that according to Aristotelian principles, psychology is a metaphysical science and Aristotle's texts show nothing but the close relationship between psychology and physics. Likewise, although Avicenna himself puts the discussion of soul in his Physics but we try to show that according to him the right place of psychology is in another science.

Keywords: psychology, physics, metaphysics, Aristotle, Avicenna

1. 1. Introduction:

A problem concerning Aristotle's psychology asks where its right place of study is. Should it be studied in physics or in metaphysics or some part of it in physics and some other part in metaphysics? The place of psychology cannot be a problem for platonic and neoplatonic philosophers as they consider the soul as an immaterial substance which study falls in the field of theology.

2. A critique of two main attitudes towards the place of Aristotelian psychology:

There are two views concerning the place of psychology according to Aristotle's philosophy of science and both find evidences in Aristotle's own books, but this article criticizes them and shows that in spite of the Aristotelian texts, one cannot consider psychology as a physical science. The first view sees the Aristotelian psychology as a pure physical science. According to this view, this is so because Aristotle thinks that a philosopher of physical sciences should study the soul (403a 27-28) and also the study of soul is beneficent especially for the physical science. (402a5) Similarly Aristotle defines the soul as a perfection of the body. The second attitude believes that the Aristotelian psychology is split up into two sciences: physical and theological. It has been shown earlier that these argumentations are not sufficient because primarily psychology is a unified science because of the allegory between different meanings of the soul and secondly psychology is not a physical science and the arguments presented above are not sufficient to prove that and they at their best prve that psychology and physical science are interrelated and interdependent. (Hosseini, 2017: 23-36)

3. The place of Aristotelian psychology:

This article tries to show that according to Aristotelian basics, psychology is a metaphysical science and Aristotle's texts show nothing but the close relationship between psychology and physics.

3.1. Aristotle's phrase in Metaphysics:

According to Aristotle, the physical scientist studies the soul insofar as it is not immaterial. (1026a4-6) this phrase shows that for Aristotle the science of soul does not fall into the field of physical science.

3.2. Aristotle's phrase in Parts of Animals:

According to Aristotle in his Parts of Animals, the physical scientist speaks about the soul, but not in an absolute meaning, rather those types of souls which belong to animals. (641a21-26) here Aristotle clearly confines the study of the philosopher of physical sciences to material souls.

3.3. Metaphysics as a science of substance:

For Aristotle metaphysics is the study of substances (1028b2-4) and souls are primary substances.

3.4. Metaphysics as a science of being:

For Aristotle metaphysics is the study of being qua being and psychology is the study of the essence and existence of souls.

3.5. Metaphysics as a science of causes:

For Aristotle metaphysics is the study of causes (981b29-30) and souls are causes of living bodies.

3.6. Metaphysics as a science of immaterials:

For Aristotle metaphysics is the study of God and the immaterial beings (1064b10-13) and souls as themselves are not identical with bodies rather souls are the forms of the bodies.

3.7. The difference of the methodology of psychology and biological works:

Aristotelian psychology differs from his physical and biological works not only in its subject matter but also in its methodology.

4. The place of Avicennan psychology:

Although Avicenna himself puts the discussion of soul in Physics but we try to show that according to him the right place of psychology is in another science.

4.1. Psychology as a physical science:

At the first glance it may seem plausible that Avicennan psychology is a physical science as he placed it in his physics. But with a deeper look it becomes clear that his psychology cannot be a physical science as physics studies bodies insofar as they are in motion and rest but soul is not identical with body.

4.2. Psychology as two physical and theological sciences

Some think that Avicennan psychology is split up into two sciences: the vegetable and animal souls are studied in physics and the immaterial human soul is studied in metaphysics. But Avicenna himself sees psychology as a unified science.

4.3. Psychology as a theological science

Lizzini thinks that Avicenna psychology is a theological science as physics itself falls in the field of metaphysics. This is so because the origin of the physical world is in the metaphysical world. (Lizzini, 2010: 236-241) it seems that her argumentation is based upon an unacceptable mix between ontology and epistemology.

4.4. Psychology as an independent science

For Avicenna psychology is a unified independent science which falls neither in physics nor in metaphysics. (Avicenna, 1404: vol. 2, 1-9)

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