

The Concept of Human Based on Iranian Mysticism and Wisdom: a Step toward Development of a Nursing Theory

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Abstract

Background and Objective: There is a need for developing theories for professional nursing based on non-Western philosophies and worldviews. For this purpose, the four nursing main concepts of human, environment, health and nursing need to be defined and conceptualized in such a worldview. This study was an attempt to do a concept synthesis of human (person) based on Iranian mysticism and wisdom.

Methods: This study is library-based and was carried out using Ryan-Wenger's method of concept synthesis. Inductively the anatomy of the concept of Walker and Avant were selected as the pre-determined categories; then, deductively the contents were attributed to the categories after studying one third of the items. A critical review was conducted using a targeted search in scientific Persian databases such as Noor, Yasin, Parsi Doc and HodaBlog; and English databases such as Google Scholar and EBSCO as well as the libraries of the faculties of philosophy and religion of the two universities of Shahid Beheshti and Allameh Tabatabayi, using keywords of perfect human, antropology, the knowledge of ego, the faculties of human ego, temperaments of human and other related terms. Finally, out of 508 sources found, 51 were chosen to be included in this study, which were mostly about to explain the science of self from the perspective of Avicenna, Mulla Sadra, Rumi and Attar. In this study all the ethical considerations were observed and the author did not report any conflict of interests.

Results: The attributes of the concept of human include bi-dimensional self, graded soul, tempered body, and the audience of directed order, while the supreme manifestation and graded entity were antecedents and balance/ imbalance and harmony/ disharmony were the outcomes.

Conclusion: The concept synthesis of human in Iranian mysticism and wisdom goes beyond the individualism and subjectivism dominant in Western nursing theories and gives human a profound responsibility for the perfection of self, others and the whole universe.



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Summary

Background and Objective

Nursing metaparadigms have been always defined from a Western philosophical perspective (1). One of the less known perspectives for nursing is the

Iranian mysticism and wisdom that has a religious standpoint (2).

Profoundly affected by Islam, Iranian mysticism and wisdom was also influenced by the philosophy of ancient Greece, Buddhism, Christianity and ancient Iranian thoughts, and is considered distinct from Islamic philosophy in

which the source of knowledge is only the Quran (3, 4). According to Islamists such as Henry Corbon and William Chittick, theoretical foundations of Iranian and Islamic philosophy are rich enough to expand our theoretical human sciences' knowledge all over the world; as their fundamentals are compatible with any other modern and ancient schools of thought (4, 5).

This article is the second report of a comprehensive study for developing a nursing theory based on Iranian mysticism and wisdom, which introduces a concept synthesis for human being.

Methods

Compliance with ethical guidelines: In the present study, all the ethical principles related to library research were observed meaning that, in using the references, honesty was observed in mentioning each source and trying to convey the content without changing the meaning.

In this study, a critical review of the Iranian mysticism and wisdom was conducted to synthesize the concept of human being. The steps taken for this purpose were 1) entering the context of Iranian mysticism and wisdom, 2) reviewing nursing theories related to human meta-paradigm, 3) determining the conceptual anatomy based on Walker and Avant's method, 4) reviewing the literature on Iranian mysticism and wisdom, 5) to synthesize the concept and 6) to name the themes (6).

Results

Human is defined as a rational being that has intellect and two dimensions, i.e. physical and spiritual, and an antecedent named spirit, which carries all the divine attributes and can actualize these attributes (7). The antecedents of the concept are the great manifestations and grades of being. Human being, who contains all divine attributes, enters the material world as the transcendent manifestation (8).

In the present study, the attributes of the concept of human being include the bi-dimensional self, graded powered soul, temperamental body and the audience of directive order. In Iranian mysticism and wisdom, human being is assumed to have two dimensions: material or body and psyche or immaterial (9). Body is a material system used by the soul as a vehicle to do its actions using its faculties in each level. Obviously, the human's survival is influenced by the function of vegetative soul and its faculties; psychological state is related to the animal soul, and intellect, morality and spiritual

transcendence of human being are related to the rational human soul (10, 11).

The outcomes of the concept are balance/ imbalance and harmony/ disharmony. According to Iranian mysticism and wisdom, the key to health here is the balance. In the physical dimension, the balance is to use internal and external factors such as food, sleep and physical activity to maintain temperamental balance. When imbalance happens, one may experience illness in either physical or mental dimensions (12). On the other hand, all the universal components have a flux which is an everlasting evolving movement toward perfection governed by the higher consciousness. To be accordance with this universal movement, one needs to manifest inner divine attributes as much as possible to gain a harmony which brings health (13).

Conclusion

Despite neglecting the categorization of temperaments by modern science, ancient traditional medicine in Iran and some of other Western countries has dealt with illness states according to modifying of human temperament using a variety of natural temperaments (14). This system introduces a personalized medical system which the new medicine needs to consider (15). Psychology has recently paid attention to this system. For example personality is categorized into sanguine, phlegmatic, bilious and choleric (16, 17).

There has always been a controversy about the topic of body and mind. According to Mulla Sadra, soul originates from the perfection of body. Avicenna believes that this phenomenon is governed by supreme consciousness (18). The concept of vital power considerably attended in ancient thoughts, has recently reappeared after the issue of metaphysical paradigm and unity of matter and energy was introduced. Biofield is the domain of energy which is centered in every organ and transmits its information to a higher power (19, 20).

From this perspective, spiritual dimension of human being is considered as important as the physical and mental ones. The inner and outer balance and harmony with the formative movement of the universe are the human-related outcomes which should be taken into account and considered in the field of nursing and health.

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Ethical considerations

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Conflict of interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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