

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Human Body, Agency, and Self-Cultivation: A Comparative Study of Body in Greek, Chinese, and Muslim Medical Traditions

Abstract

The various ways of observing the body have led to diverse conceptions of the self and its bodily cultivation, as presented in Greek and Chinese medical literature. If Greek observation of the body offers the notion of agency in the form of voluntary actions within muscles, the Chinese gaze of se suggests the notion of agency through necessary “obedience” or “submission” for self-cultivation. However, the existing accounts of the body and its self-cultivation in Chinese and Greek traditions do not comprehensively represent the entire concept of the body and the self. Therefore, this article examines comparable bodily aspects obtained from the Muslim medical tradition. The Muslim physicians employed the anatomical body from the Galenic tradition to form their concept of the body, while simultaneously their ideas paralleled those of the Chinese medical tradition in emphasizing the necessity of “submission” to certain regimens and disciplines in the pursuit of bodily self-cultivation.

Key words: Human Body, Self Concept, Greek World, Islam, Chinese Medical Tradition

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Introduction

The modern medical tradition tends to perceive the human body as an anatomical and physical reality, which has little relation to the notion of human agency. When a certain physical organ is not functioning or bodily humors are in a state of imbalance, the treatment focuses on fixing the bodily sickness by means of certain medication and physical regimens. This may be attributed to Hippocratic medical sources, which emphasize bodily channels (Craik, 2009; Ventegodt, 2020), and Galenic anatomy (Yount, 2009). Meanwhile, other medical practices may emphasize different aspects of human beings, such as spiritual, cognitive, or cultural dimensions, to understand and improve human well-being (Kim, 2017; Daidoji, 2013; Wu, 2016). In this regard, unlike those who study merely the physical, spiritual, cognitive, or cultural aspects of human beings in terms of understanding and improving the well-being of “*the self*”, Shigehisa Kuriyama (2002) conversely puts “*the body*” and its relationship with the reality beyond the body. This is important and interesting, as he opens the discussion on the relationship between the human body and agency. In this regard, the concept of agency refers to the capacity of persons to intentionally shape their circumstances and exert influence over the character and quality of their lives as formulated by Albert Bandura (2001) or what Charles P. Chen (2006) understands it as “*a person’s power to act*”. In other words, the notion of agency assumes the autonomous capacity and free will of human beings. Unlike Pierre Hadot (1995) who suggests that human agency is located in the spiritual aspect of human beings, Pierre Bourdieu (2007) who refers the human agency to his notion of habitus, and Ann Swidler (2003) who maintains that the agency resides in her notion of the cultured capacities, Shigehisa Kuriyama shows another possibility of finding a sort of agency in the human selfhood through a bodily-cultivation. By carefully studying the treasures of Greek and Chinese medical traditions, he finds a notion of the self within the body. It is centered on the concept of muscularity in the Greek and *se* (color, expression, or appearance of face) in the Chinese context. Kuriyama might succeed in portraying a divergent conception of the self in Greek and Chinese traditions; however, his portrayal of the body does not represent a whole account of the notion of the body and the self, especially the concept of the body and the self in Islamic tradition. Therefore, by incorporating the concept of bodily faculties (*quwwāt al-jasadiyah*) from Islamic medieval medical tradition into this comparative project, this paper aims to provide a comparable and complementary account to Kuriyama’s work, thereby facilitating a more holistic understanding of the self and its cultivation. In this respect, the self-cultivation is understood as a lifelong process through which individuals continually refine both mind and body, engaging in an ongoing transformation of the self, with the ultimate aim of strengthening moral capacities (Peters, 2020, pp. 1720–1726). The inclusion of the Muslim medieval tradition in this comparative study is useful because, among others, the Muslim-Arabic medieval medical tradition inherited much of the Greek medical sources and encountered Eastern (Chinese, Indian, Alexandrian, and Persian) medical traditions as well. In fact, the nature of the bodily self and its cultivation in this tradition is inextricably linked with the intellect and psychological faculty since

the anatomical body is perceived as an emanation from the active intellect and as a reflection of the macrocosm.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a comparative approach as formulated by Shunqing Cao (2013), which is called Variation theory. This approach allows for comparative analysis of literary phenomena across countries, with or without factual contact, by focusing on what Cao identifies as the internal patterns of difference and variation within distinct systems of knowledge (Cao, 2013). It differs from other comparative methodologies that pay more attention to analogous aspects and homogeneities, which can lead to a hierarchical comparison prioritizing or preferring one over another. By focusing more on the internal patterns of difference and variation, this theory provides a non-hierarchical approach to the comparative study. This non-hierarchical approach will look for divergences and differences, despite presumed similarities and affinities, of distant cultures and civilizations, which enables us to understand the distinct value and wisdom of each object of comparison. If this comparative approach is applied to study intellectual and medical traditions from different civilizations, the Variation theory names it as “*cross-civilization*” study (Cao, 2013).

This comparative study is used by Tanzia Mobarak (2022) to study the theory of human psyche of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111 and Sigmund Freud (d. 1939). In this regard, this article studies the notion of body in three different civilizational contexts, which are Greek, Chinese, and Islamic. However, instead of comparing the works of a single author, this study discusses the conception of the body from scholars representing each civilization, such as Andreas Vesalius (d. 1564), Shigehisa Kuriyama (2002), and a Muslim philosopher cum physician, Ibn Sina or Avicenna (d. 1037).

The Perception of the Body in Greek, Chinese, and Islamic Culture

In the Hippocratic Corpus, the human body is represented as a network of major organs, including the lungs, liver, and kidneys, together with bodily openings such as the eyes, ears, and reproductive organs, all linked through cavities, ducts, channels, blood vessels, veins, arteries, and fibrous strands or *neura* (e.g ligaments and nerves) (Craik, 2009). This general understanding of the body that heavily emphasizes on the human flesh, bodily channels, and organs has changed in the Greek, Chinese, and medieval Islamic medical tradition. In the context of Greek/European medical scholarship, the bodily figure is defined not by its nature as human flesh, but by its anatomical musculature as Andreas Vesalius, the modern anatomist, describes in Figure 1 below.

Within this framework, Greek and European medical traditions approached the body as a muscular, functional structure rather than merely flesh to understand how each part was shaped by nature for a specific purpose (Kuriyama, 2002). The method employed by Greek doctors in terms of knowing the body is certainly anatomy. This is the core of the body in Greek conception since muscles have certain structures and functions which engender motion and the work of the body. However, according to



Kuriyama, Galen in *On the Movement of the Muscles* goes far beyond an exposition of muscular function and struggles with the conundrum of action and self-awareness (Kuriyama, 2002). For him, it might be true that the crux of muscularity would be functions of bodily organs, yet human life cannot be adequately explained solely through involuntary physiological activities such as digestion or arterial pulsation. Galen emphasizes that, in addition to automatic bodily processes, there are voluntary acts initiated by the soul and executed through the muscles, its bodily instruments. (Kuriyama, 2002). In addition to the perception of body as a composition of muscular structures and functions in the Greek/European context, Vesalius also called the anatomical body as a “*manifestation of the Great Creator’s wisdom*” (Kuriyama, 2002). Considering the role of soul and “*Great Creator’s wisdom*” in the shapes and movements of the human body, it can be inferred that there is a source of human vitality or the agency of the self in the Greek/European notion of the human body, although it might be a short-term agency, which is a willful motion of the self.

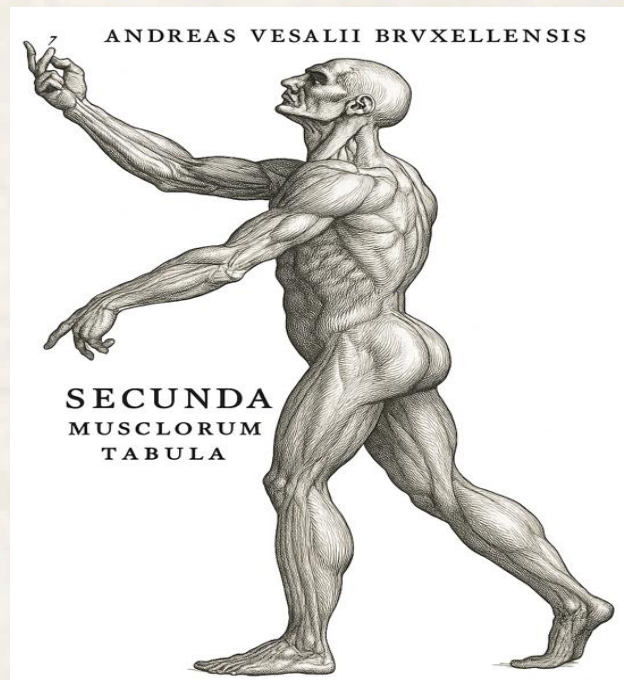


Figure 1. Muscleman from the 1543 *Fabrica* of Vesalius, p. 174.
(Kuriyama, 2002, p. 11)

Meanwhile, in the Chinese medical tradition, the body is defined by the location of acupunctural points. Through these points, a Chinese physician can see not only expressions or colors of the face (*se*), but also inclinations, feelings, and moral developments within a person. In fact, four qualities of human goodness, which are perceived as innately given from birth—benevolence, rightness, the rites, and wisdom—are also expressed through *se* from the acupuncture conduits (Kuriyama, 2002). If the Greek anatomical body is perceived as a manifestation of God’s wisdom, the acupuncture conduits in Chinese culture that are expressed in the color (*se*) of the body are per-



ceived as a microcosm (Kuriyama 2002, 123). The acupuncture conduits, as expressed in the Chinese human body, appear in the following Fujikawa collection (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Hua Shou, *Shisijing Fahui*, 1341, Fujikawa Collection, Kyoto University Library, as cited by (Kuriyama, 2002).

In turn, human agency in the Chinese bodily context might not refer to the discourse of human volition or autonomous will that has been developed in the Western hemisphere, yet; it is more inclined to the idea of “*submission*” or “*subordination*” to certain rules and disciplines in the aims of attaining certain moral developments of the self. Those rules may resemble ways of helping plants to grow, because in Chinese culture, the human resemblance to plants was understood not merely in terms of growth and nourishment, but also as a metaphor for moral cultivation and the gradual emergence of the self as a person (Kuriyama, 2002). To ensure the development of plants, one must constantly attend to them. Accordingly, to cultivate the self, one should devote oneself to taking care of it without any attempts to force its growth. The agency in this regard could be regarded as a long-term agency, which is achieved through bodily self-cultivation.

As for Islamic medieval tradition, based on Avicenna’s explanation, the body is closer to the idea of Greek’s anatomical body. However, the anatomical body in this culture is not only regarded as a manifestation of the design and wisdom of God, but also as “*emanation of the Active Intellect*” and as “*microcosm which relates to the movements of the heavens (macrocosm)*” (see Pormann, and Savage-Smith, 2007, Widdigdo, 2020).

Given the importance of knowing anatomical body in Islamic medieval period, a prominent Muslim philosopher-theologian at that time, Al-Ghazali (d.1111) said, “*Whoever does not know anatomy is deficient in the knowledge of God*” (as quoted by Pormann, 2007). In this regard, knowledge of anatomy is religiously and scientifically important in the study of the body.



Although the concern with the anatomy of Islamic medieval physicians resembles the Greek way of seeing the body, what they find is not the Greeks' muscular body. Instead, they find what Avicenna (980-1037) called "*faculties (quwwāt)*", which relate the body to the human soul and engender the functions of the body (Avicenna, 1993). The body is understood to operate through three principal faculties. The first is the natural faculty, or *quwwah ṭabī'iyah*, associated with the liver and concerned with growth, nourishment, and reproduction. The second is the vital or animal faculty, *quwwah ḥayawānīyah*, centered in the heart and linked to respiration, vitality, and affective states. The third is the psychic faculty, *quwwah naḥsānīyah*, located in the brain and responsible for sensation, cognition, and rational thought (Avicenna, 1973, Pormann, 2007). According to Robert E. Hall's interpretation, in classical Islamic medical theories, actual sensory perception and intentional bodily movement are assigned to the *quwwah naḥsānīyah*, the psychic faculty (Hall, 2004). It might be because within this psychic faculty, which is associated with the brain, there are two other faculties: the cognitive (*mudrikah*) and motor (*muḥarrikah*) faculties (Hall, 2004). The cognitive faculty makes decisions and then the motor faculty engenders motions of the body to execute the decisions. Based on the above explanation, we can find a potential agency within faculties of the body, especially in its psychic faculty. In the *Canon of Medicine*, as translated and interpreted by Oskar Cameron Gruner, Avicenna depicts the correlation among various human faculties in Figure 3 in the next page.

As can be seen from Figure 3, Plane I (vegetative life) is the description of the physical or natural faculty. This faculty reflects the vegetative life, which encompasses organs, bodily channels, and natural appetite, characterized by an inclination towards something according to its nature (Avicenna, 1973). There are two branches in this physical/natural faculty, namely the nutritive and the augmentative faculty. The former functions as a biological administrative faculty that provides nutriment for the organs so that an individual can grow well. The repository of this faculty, according to Avicenna, is in the liver. The latter functions as a generative faculty, which preserves the sustainability of species through generation and reproduction activities. The place of this faculty is in the testicles (Avicenna, 1993).

Plane II (Lower Reason and Instinct) and Vertical Plane VI (Heart/Ego) are manifestations of the animal or vital faculty. This faculty connects with the lower part of the Vertical Plane IV, which is emotion (Avicenna, 1973). The vital faculty and the emotion function to control pneuma, which is the vehicle of sensation and movement, through two forms of emotion, namely concupiscible and irascible. The concupiscible emotion appears in the forms of attraction, repulsion, love, hatred, desire, delight, abhorrence, and sadness, while irascible appears in the forms of self-preservation, hope, despair, fear, courage, and anger. The repository of this faculty is in the heart. When this faculty, along with its emotion, permeates organs, it prepares them to receive the faculties of sensation and movement and perform the functions of life (Avicenna, 1993).

Meanwhile, Plane III (Passive Intellect) is the depiction of the psychic faculty. This

faculty essentially describes the reality of rational life. The rational part of the faculty (passive and active intellect) has the power to think, which is also connected to the vertical plane that contains the power to will (e.g. attention, consciousness, heart, and ego). When rational power is connected to the power to will within the psychic faculty, the faculty engenders two powers, namely speculative and practical. The speculative, with the influence of the will, tends to orient itself to contemplation, wisdom, and ideal ends. The practical, with the influence of the will and the use of physical body, directs its focus on constructive works.

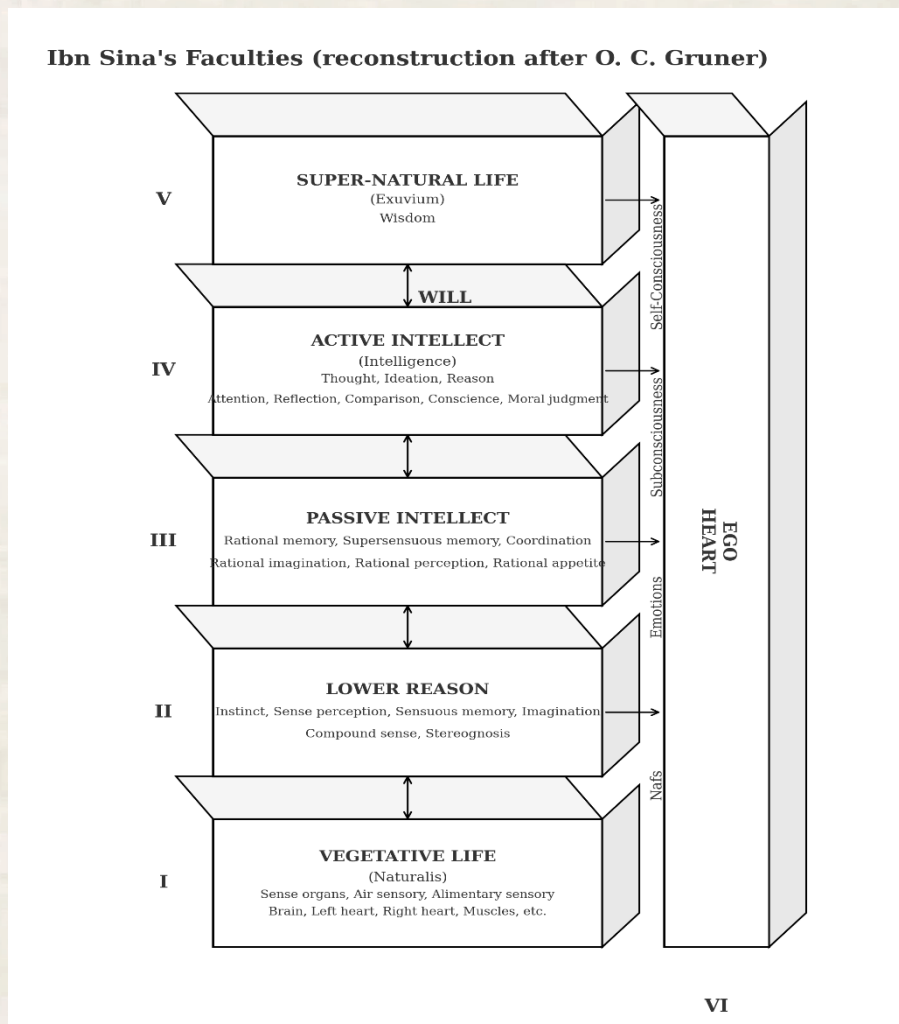


Figure 3. Reconstruction of Oskar Cameron Gruner's Interpretation of Avicenna's Faculties (Avicenna, 1993, pp. 142-143)

Avicenna further divides the psychic powers into perceptive power and motive power. While the motive power is primarily responsible for the contraction and relaxation of the movement, muscle, and instinct, the perceptive power is related to the process of cognition (Avicenna, 1993, López-Farjeat, 2021). There are two faculties of perceptive power, which are the external and internal perceptive faculties. The former consists



of sense-perceptive functions ranging from sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch: (1) the sense of sight, by means of eyes, observes the image of the forms of colored bodies, (2) the sense of hearing through eardrum perceives the sounds, (3) the sense of smell through the nasal passages perceives the odor, (4) the sense of taste through the tongue perceives the sensible forms of tastes, and (5) the sense of touch through the nerves distributed over the skin feels different types of sensation ranging from hot and cold, dry and moist, hard and soft, and rough and smooth. According to López-Farjeat's interpretation (2021), Avicenna perceives that those external senses provide the raw perceptual data that are subsequently organized, interpreted, and processed by the internal senses or inner faculties. The information provided by the external senses is in the forms of a color, sound, smell, taste, and different textures touched by skin. These material data are presented to the internal senses and processed through an abstraction, which humans can perceive forms (*ṣūrah* pl. *ṣuwar*), intentions or meanings (*ma'ānī*), and intelligible forms (*ma'qūlāt*). The internal faculties that can separate immaterial concepts from the material data and perceive the forms, intentions, and intelligible forms are the following: (1) the common sense (*ḥiss al-mushtarak*), (2) the retentive imagination (*al-khayāl*), (3) the estimative faculty (*wahm*), (4) memory (*dhikr*), and (5) the compositive imagination (*mutakhayyila*). In the case of humans, there is another faculty called *mufakkira* (cogitative faculty), which is essentially the faculty of compositive imagination that is under the control of the intellect. The commonsense faculty functions to receive and unify the sensible forms from the external senses. The retentive imagination faculty stores images obtained from the external senses. The estimative faculty is devoted to receiving intentions abstracted from the external senses. The memory and recall faculty, which is in the posterior ventricle of the brain, is responsible for retaining the intentions received by the estimative faculty. The compositive imagination faculty plays a role in composing and dividing both imaginative forms and intentions. Meanwhile, the cogitative faculty, which is in the middle ventricle of the brain, has a crucial role in providing the intellect with intelligible forms, which are not attached to a specific existing object. The cogitative faculty separates matters and accidents of certain perceptible objects from the immaterial non-individuated intelligible forms (*ma'qūlāt*) for human intellect (López-Farjeat, 2021, Avicenna, 1993). In short, in this scheme of cogitative process, perception is the basis for obtaining knowledge and information gained either through external and internal senses to the extent that they can help humans to obtain the intelligible forms through the process called abstraction (*intizā'*), extraction, or separation (*tajrīd*). According to Avicenna, as López-Farjeat's account (2021) explains, four types of abstraction start from sensation. First, the external senses receive and detach sensible forms from perceptible objects. Second, the retentive imagination preserves the particular image initially delivered by common sense. Third, the estimative faculty apprehends non-sensible meanings, while in human beings, the cogitative faculty further separates the particular features of perceived objects. Finally, the intellective faculty purifies the potentially intelligible forms supplied by the cogitative faculty by stripping away any remaining material traces, thereby completing the process of abstraction, or *intazā'*.



This process of abstraction is an empiricist account of how humans can attain immaterial, abstract knowledge within Avicenna's epistemology.

However, one may ask how the cogitative faculty, which resides in the physical and material organ called the brain, can extract immaterial knowledge from its material residue by itself? Another explanation emphasizes an important aspect of Avicenna's account of human cogitation, which is "*cosmological-metaphysical*" perspective. In his cosmology, Avicenna explains the emanation scheme in which God causes the existence of a series of (immaterial) intellects through emanation (*fayḍ*) out of His generosity and self-contemplation. These intellects derive the existence of other lower intellects through thinking themselves, the intellect above them, and God. This emanative process occurred in the realm of Supernatural Life (referring to Plane V in Figure 3 of Avicenna's depiction of human faculties). The lowest immaterial intellect in the hierarchy of these intellects is the tenth intellect, which is also called the Active Intellect (represented in Plane IV of Avicenna's human faculties).

Avicenna's account on the role of the active intellect in human material intellectual cognition opens some differing interpretations. Some scholars maintain that the active intellect is merely the storage of intelligible forms (Gutas, 2014, Gutas, 2012, Gutas, 2001, Hasse, 2013). Tomasso Alpina (2014) views that the active intellect plays an indispensable role in transforming the human intellect from potentiality into actuality, as it is understood to contain and provide the intelligible forms necessary for cognition. When the active intellect meets and interacts with the human intellect, the intellectual universal forms will be actualized, becoming imaginative particulars. Meanwhile, Themistius (1996) holds that the active intellect plays a crucial role in the formation of the intelligible forms and in guiding human intellect. Inspired by Themistius concept of correspondence between the active intellect and human intellect, Taylor (2019) suggests that intelligible forms in potentiality are stored in the active intellect, while intelligible forms in actuality can be formed in the human cognition if the human intellect connects with (*ittiṣāl*) the active intellect. Differing from other scholars, Stephen Ogden (2020) emphasizes not the role of the active intellect as the storage, collector, or provider of the intelligible forms. He steps up further by arguing that the active intellect emanates not intelligible forms but a power of abstraction into human beings, so that human beings' potential intellect turns into actuality and the cogitative faculty can separate immaterial intellectual forms from their material residues. In this regard, Robert E. Hall (2004) suggests that what emanates from the active intellect is not only the power of abstraction but also the human soul, or the rational soul itself, which, in turn, becomes the fetus and the particular body. He cites Avicenna, stating that the human soul, whose essence is rational, emanates from the Active Intellect and becomes attached to the fetus as the particular body in which it is embodied (Hall, 2004).

Drawing from the above discussion, especially from Ogden's and Hall's interpretation of Avicenna, it is plausible to infer that the human body and sensation in Avicenna's thought is not merely perceived as a corporeal body, but it is also inextricably associated with the immaterial active intellect and human rational soul. Accordingly,



in order to have bodily health in Islamic medieval medication, especially in Avicenna's concept, one should not only maintain a balance of "*natural*" elements within the body (such as humors, qualities, and properties of the body), but he should also control the balance of "*six non-natural*" factors of Islamic medieval humoral pathology.

According to this humoral pathology, the body's natural elements are composed of four humors (*akhlat*): blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. Each humor corresponded to a pair of primary qualities, namely hot or cold and dry or moist, and was further linked to a particular season and temperament, such as sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, or melancholic. This classificatory scheme was also extended to the stages of human life, the months of the year, and the cyclical movement of the zodiacal signs. In this way, bodily function was interpreted within a broader cosmological order, in which the human body, as a microcosm, mirrored the structure and motion of the macrocosm (See Pormann, 2007, p. 43).

In the Islamic medical tradition, the preservation of health required attention not only to the body's internal constitution but also to the six non-natural factors: ambient air, diet, sleep and wakefulness, physical activity and repose, retention and evacuation, including practices such as bathing and sexual intercourse, and the mental states, such as anger, sorrow, joy, and love. These factors were termed "*non-natural*" because they referred to external or behavioral conditions over which individuals could exercise partial control. By contrast, "*natural*" factors denoted the internal constitution of the body, including the humors, qualities, bodily properties, powers, and conditions such as age (See Hall, 2004, p. 44). If the first five factors are related to physical well-being, the sixth is closely linked with mental-spiritual health. This is why moral philosophy is also considered a ramification of medicine. Moral philosophy served to guard the soul and mental states against destructive states such as desire, regret, and fear, which were understood to disturb bodily balance and contribute to physical disease (Pormann, 2007). In short, the bodily self in this context could be cultivated through a balance between bodily well-being and spiritual health.

The Bodily Self-Cultivation

Despite different styles of seeing the corporeal body and the self, Greek, Chinese, and Muslim-Arabic traditions tend to agree that human flourishing can be achieved by means of recognizing the reality of the body. In Greek culture, muscularity is associated with voluntary action, while in Chinese tradition, the perception of *se* (color, expression) can indicate signs of human flourishing. In this regard, muscle and *se* might become mirrors reflecting the existence of agency, even the source of it. Through the muscles, one can choose what they do, when, and how. Meanwhile, by means of nurturing *se*, one could attain a certain kind of human flourishing. Similarly, by nourishing the faculties of the body properly in Islamic medical tradition, one could obtain bodily and mental well-being.

In relation to the Greeks' study of the body, Kuriyama recognizes that the emergence and development of anatomical inquiry played a significant role in shaping Greek awareness of the muscles. By citing Greek thinkers, especially Galen, he ob-



serves that the study of muscle fosters a close relationship between the body and the self. The body is seen not only as a mere structure but also as a system of organs that enable it to function. The muscle is the unique organ that makes the body work. In line with Galen's idea, Kuriyama calls muscles "*organs of voluntary motion*". He notes, "*Muscles allow us to choose what we do, and when, and how; and this choice marks the divide between voluntary actions and involuntary processes. In tracing the crystallization of the concept of muscle, we are also, and not coincidentally, tracing the crystallization of the sense of autonomous will*" (Kuriyama, 2002). In short, based on Kuriyama's account, muscularity is a central feature of the agency of the self in the Greek context.

In Chinese culture, the concept of agency is reflected in the notion of *se*. Like the discussion of muscle in Greek, which signifies a deeper concept of personhood, *se* also refers to a subtle understanding of the self. In this regard, *se* is perceived not only as an object of gaze, but also as a reflection of the self. In Kuriyama's words, "*in observing se, we observe the self...Loss of se entailed at once losing the color and losing the self*" (Kuriyama, 2002). According to Kuriyama, Chinese intellectual traditions regarded facial expression, *se*, as more than a spontaneous response to passing circumstances. It was understood to reveal sustained moral training and stable dispositions of the mind, making it not only an observable feature of the body but also an aspect of personhood subject to deliberate cultivation. Thus, it can be inferred that Chinese tradition discusses human agency through the cultivation of *se*. In Confucian moral thought, the gentleman's conduct is shaped by three disciplined bodily and verbal expressions: seriousness of countenance as a restraint against violence, propriety of facial expression as a basis for trustworthiness, and regulated speech as a means of avoiding vulgarity and irrational conduct (Kuriyama, 2002). Two of those three virtues are called for managing the face, which means cultivating *se*; while the third concerns managing speech.

In the Islamic tradition, however, human flourishing can be reached through nurturing the three faculties properly. The way of nurturing such faculties is by means of either bodily or spiritual diets, regimens, or disciplines. The natural faculty should be cultivated by maintaining a balance of humors (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile) and four primary qualities: hotness, coldness, dryness, and moistness (Hall, 2004). The vital faculty—which is associated with the heart—should be nourished through certain regimens that maintain its ability to provide parts of the body with their potentialities for sensations, motion, and other functions of life. The psychic faculty should be fostered by keeping well its cognitive and motor faculties. In this regard, there are several ways of cultivation, for example, regimen. Avicenna in Canon of Medicine gives an example of the necessity of regimen in the aims of gaining bodily and spiritual health. He explains that pain may be reduced through gentle and prolonged walking. Other forms of relief include massage with light fats and oils, soothing music, particularly when it encourages sleep, and engagement in activities that bring genuine pleasure (as cited by Pormann, 2007). In addition, in *On Spiritual Medicine*, a physician, al-Razi (855-925), maintains that afflictions of the soul



(*awarid an-nafs*), such as desire, regret, and fear, which are caused by a variety of human inclinations, should be avoided. They are considered harmful to health. For al-Razi, emotional disturbances such as sadness and anxiety should be minimized, since healing may be aided by music, pleasant social interaction, and a tranquil environment (as quoted by Pormann, 2007). As for the moral diseases, al-Razi recommends that persons with such ailments cultivate the services of a critical friend who should be both objective in analyzing their conduct and, at the same time, deeply sympathetic to them (see Rahman, 1987).

Conclusion

In short, the divergence of observation of the body results in different conceptions of the self and its bodily cultivation, as Kuriyama shows in studying Greek and Chinese medical treasures. The relationship between *se* and its content is not the same as the relationship between muscles and voluntary decision. If Greek observation of the body offers the notion of agency in the forms of voluntary actions within muscles, Chinese gaze of *se* suggests the notion of agency through necessary “*obedience*” or “*submission*” (remind me of R. Marie Griffith’s *God’s Daughters* (1997) to ways of self-cultivation. However, Shigehisa Kuriyama’s account of the body and its self-cultivation do not represent a whole concept of the body and of the self in human history.

In this light, this study provides a comparable element taken from the Muslim medical tradition in the medieval era by which a more comprehensive understanding of the body and its self-cultivation could be attained. Furthermore, the Muslim physicians in that era employed anatomical body from the Galenic tradition with some corrections, and at the same time, they were in parallel with the Chinese tradition in the necessity of a sort of “*submission*” to certain regimens and disciplines in the aims of bodily self-cultivation.

Medieval Muslim physicians offered a group of *quwwah* (faculties) of the human body as a complementary account of bodily self-cultivation to Kuriyama’s project. In this regard, although human beings have no control over natural faculties (*quwwah ṭabīʿīyah*) and vital faculties (*quwwah ḥayawānīyah*) just like Galen’s notion of muscles, which says that humans cannot attend to bodily processes such as digestion and pulsation, the concept of agency is found in the notion of psychic faculty (*quwwah nafsānīyah*). On the one hand, humans can freely make decisions within the cognitive aspect of the psychic faculty, and then execute them by means of the motor faculty. On the other hand, nurturing the human rational soul--which resides in the psychic faculty--through certain disciplines and regimens is also important to gain not only bodily well-being, but also spiritual health and good moral conduct. In this regard, the bodily self-cultivation in the Muslim medieval medical tradition can be found.

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Conflict of Interest

None.



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