

# THE CONNECTION OF BODY AND SOUL IN THE LUSITANIAN MEDICINE, AS AN EXAMPLE WITHIN THE HISTORY OF WESTERN AND EASTERN MEDICINE

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**ABSTRACT.** *The purpose of this summary is to expose briefly the exercise of Eastern and Western Medicine, with regard to the relationship of the body with the soul within the world that surrounds it. We will give a practical example of this link between body and soul, by analyzing the Lusitanian medicine of António Sanches and we will conclude that the relationship between body and soul is a metaphor of our relationships.*

**KEYWORDS:** *soul, body, medicine (Eastern, Western), António Sanches*

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## Introduction

Etymologically the word “soul” is derived from the Hebrew *nephesh*, meaning life, from Latin *animu*, which means “what animates”, and the Greek *pneuma*, which might be translated as “breath of life”. The diverse cultures, both Eastern and Western, which have existed throughout the ages have been poring over the question of the possible relationship between the body and the soul. However, this bond has always been controversial because the soul has never been observed, and therefore proven to your existence.

In philosophical terms, the soul is defined as the part that participates in the deity and is admitted in some currents of thought, which survives the death of the body. For example, in the West, the Gnostics evoke the transcendental spirit “embedded”, and the Greeks [Bremmer, 1987], as Plato [1975] (in *Phaedo*) assumes the immortality of the soul and the successive reincarnations, while Aristotle (in *De Anima*)\* speak to us of the tripartition of the soul (vegetative, animal, human), being the life in the body, in counterpoint to the Stoics who defend the idea of a unitary soul. St. Augustine [2012] (in *De Civitate Dei*) argues that the man is a soul with a body or the soul is the “knight” of the body. Descartes was known for defending the

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dualism mind/soul and body, while Kant [1998] (in *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*) believes that the soul was not demonstrable by reason, that is, “the reason posits the immortality of the soul”. In the East, in particular in the philosophies of India [Dasgupta, 1997], soul is defined as “atman” or the “Being” that survives the death of the body with possibility to reincarnate into another body, while in China, with Tibetan Buddhism, there is six “psychological states” of the soul in earthly evolution. Taoism holds that the soul has a sensitive side (called *po*) that disappears with the death, and a rational side (referred to as *hun*) that survives death. The Egyptians already, and many African tribes, argue that there is a guardian spirit that stays with the person throughout life, called the *ka*, and which is connected to the physical body, *ha*. This idea is shared by some tribes, in which the existence of the soul is characterized by an individual spiritual experience.

The soul (Psyche) is, for Aristotle, the vital principle of every living being, whether plant, animal or human, i.e. the principle that animates the bodies of living beings. Therefore, the analysis contained in “*De Anima*” [Lawson-Tancred, 2004] is not of a religious background, but instead of physical/biological and metaphysical background. Aristotle discusses the question of separation and survival of the soul out of the body, not going into details. A foundational statement is that “εἰ δὲ τι κοινὸν ἐπιπάσης ψυχῆς δεῖ λεγεῖν, εἴη ἀνεντελέχεια ἢ πρώτη σώματος φυσικοῦ ὀργανικόν”, i.e. that Stagirite defines soul as “the first entelecheia of a natural functional [instrumental] organ [body]”. In this sense, and although the term “Psychology” has been coined only in the 16th century, Aristotle is considered, by many, the founder of psychology, as was many other sciences [Freudenthal, 1995]. Due to the contents of “*De Anima*”, eight small treatises related with the subject of the soul were written (known by the Latin title “*Parva Naturalia*”).

As to the terminology of soul in medicine, *pneuma* was taken from the lungs to the heart (called *vital force*) and then transformed in the liver (known as *natural force*) in 4 humors (blood, choleric, melancholic humor, phlegmatic humor). The vital force could generate a new life or become a psychic force (called *intelligence and consciousness*). The doctrine of *pneuma* was developed by Galen, as a supplement of the theory of 4 attributes which defend the concept of a single Creator, and later accepted by Christians, Jews and Muslims, as the Holy Spirit. This Greek physician argued that the *pneuma* was connected to the soul [Galien, 1962]. Already the Stoics argued that the health of the soul is determined by the correct balance of affections, that is, the cause of the disease is in the interior of the human being. An essential name of philosophy and medicine was Paracelsus, who argued that a good physician needed to be a good soul (virtuous man with good moral) in order to apply, without selfishness, his/her medical knowledge to the beings that suffer.

Later, the concept of the soul appears linked to the study of consciousness [Frank, 2002]. First, with John Locke, through the term “introspection” and Wilhelm Wundt, through the use of experimental psychology, and then with John Watson, with Behaviorism. With Freud, the study and structure of “psyche” as the meaning of “breathing” (characteristic of life), whereas with Carl Jung the “psyche” came to be used as a synonym for “soul” (having developed the “theory of the collective

unconscious” and the *archetypes*). Recently, it appeared in the West, the so-called integrative medicine which argues a correct integration between the mind/soul and the body, in order to have a balanced health [Rolf, 2015]. This point of view is defended by the Oriental medicines, since immemorial time.

### **An example of the connection of the body and soul in the Lusitanian medicine**

Since the mid-18th century, various theories about human nature, derived from the medical-philosophical area, which led some Lusitanian physicians to interpret the passions of the human body as a lack of discernment of the soul. One of these physicians was António Nunes Sanches (1699–1783) who wrote a work on this topic, entitled *Dissertation on the passions of the soul* [Sanches, 2003]. This work was the result of his studies in Medicine at Salamanca, together with his close contact with Herman Boerhaave, which referred him to the Russian court, between 1731 and 1747. The question of the interaction between the body and the soul is analyzed in this António Sanches’s work in a different way from the Hippocratic-Galenic tradition. The latter argues that the origin of human passions (degrading and devious) is associated with an imbalance of humours present in the body. The passions of the body would have the ability to change the rational actions, making the human behavior out-of-control. However, António Sanches argues that is necessary to see the passions of the human body as the “movements” of the soul that seeks to take the “instrument” – the body – to a complete realization on Earth. Thus, António Sanches proposes a reform in the medical practice, which should take into account the philosophical field for a full study of the human being. Normally, the philosophers and theologians were devoted to the study of the diseases of the soul, while the physicians focused on diseases of the body, in a physiological perspective exclusively. António Sanches proposes in his work a synthesis of these two approaches, following the example of his master, Boerhaave, who defended the paradigm of “eclectic physician” which is in line with the assumptions of Oriental medicine and a holistic view of human health, taking into account the link of the body with the soul.

### **Conclusions**

We saw in this brief essay that the study of the link between the body and the soul is a metaphor of the links we have established with anyone, regardless of being a family relationship, a friendship, a relationship/marriage. The link is the same as having the person printed on our soul, rooted in our life story, part of the constitution of our deepest memories and of our being as a whole. No strings life makes no sense because it is only through them that we connect truly and have our deepest emotions activated. It is only through the bond that we make a difference in the lives of others and the others make a difference in our lives. The personal links raise and bring out the most powerful of our humanity. Love, friendship and passion are still mysterious to science subjects and although researchers understand a series of chemical reactions that such feelings trigger in your brain, there are still many unanswered questions to set the whys of human relationships (why we connect more easily with one person

than another). The stronger the bond, the more powerful the relationship is. Many people says that moves away from a person because he/she stopped working at the same company or moved to another city. But if the link is honest, at some point, these people will be reunited, as much as this day be long coming.

The link between the body and the soul is the kind of relationship more intimate (and strong!) that we could have [Bailey, 1996], because it is the encounter with our own essence or our real Being. This meeting may take time, but as an intimate and strong relationship, it will happen and so both parties will feel that nothing has changed despite the time that has passed.

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