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Salvation of the Rational Soul: The Primacy of Theoretical Knowledge in Avicenna's Soteriology

Summary

This article seeks to elucidate how the philosophical soteriology which has its roots in the teaching of the philosophical schools of Late Antiquity has been transformed in the context of the Islamic culture. The study reveals that even though Avicenna in his works laid emphasis on the importance of philosophy as solving problems (*masā'il*) and extrapolating derivatives (*furū'*) from the fundamental principles (*uṣūl*) of scientific knowledge, at the core of Avicenna's notion of philosophy we still find the salva-

tion of the rational soul as its main concern. The article analyzes Avicenna's soteriological theories as expounded in his different works. It shows that even though Avicenna presupposed at least two notions of soteriology, one based on the religious imagery which was designated for the philosophically inept masses and the other based on purely philosophical notions, the state of the soul after the demise of the body by and large depends solely on the degree to which the soul in question has attained theoretical knowledge.

Keywords: Avicenna's soteriology, philosophical *praxis*, philosophical theory, rational soul.