

Avicenna's Work on the Bird Language

SHAKHLO KHALIMOVA

*Alisher Navoi University of Uzbek Language and Literature,
Tashkent, Uzbekistan*

ABSTRACT

Abu Ali ibn Sina, an encyclopedic scientist known throughout the world as Avicenna (980-1037), was famous mainly for his contribution to the field of medicine. It should be said that Ibn Sina in the preface of his work The Laws of Medicine emphasizes that creating medical theories is a left-handed job for him, and that his main research is to illuminate philosophical and mystical issues. For the first time in Eastern philosophical literature, he created a pamphlet about bird language through the image of a bird. He mainly showed his students and readers that this world is ephemeral and that we are all in a world of trials. Thus in this work, Ibn Sina tried to illuminate his spiritual experience and ways to find the truth. He wrote the work in the last period of his life in the Fardjon fortress, near Hamadan, waiting for his execution. By showing the birds caught in a trap, Ibn Sina suddenly remembers the freedom he has been given and resents himself for daring to question its value and allowing himself to be trapped in a cage.

Keywords: Avicenna, bird, mythology, philosophy, bird language, world, God, mysticism.

INTRODUCTION

The significance of bird language in mythology and cultural traditions is multifaceted and deeply ingrained in human societies across the globe. Here are some key aspects of its significance:

The language of birds appears in myths, legends, and folklore from diverse cultures around the world. These stories often feature characters who possess the ability to understand and interpret the messages of birds.



Manifestation of birds as the main totem in antiquity

In some cultures, specific birds are believed to have unique languages or to be endowed with special powers of prophecy. For example, the raven in Native American folklore or the nightingale in Persian poetry.



In ancient Greek mythology, birds were revered as the second form of the Gods

In summary, the significance of bird language in mythology, literature, and cultural traditions lies in its symbolic resonance, its role in facilitating communication with the divine, its presence in cultural myths and folklore, its potential for naturalistic interpretation, and its inspiration for artistic expression. Across different cultures and time periods, the language of birds continues to captivate the human imagination and provoke contemplation about the mysteries of the natural world and the cosmos.

Various mythological texts from different cultures, including Greek, Norse, Native American, and Persian myths, feature birds prominently and attribute symbolic significance to them. For example, in Greek mythology, birds like the eagle and owl are associated with gods and goddesses, while in Norse mythology, ravens are linked to Odin, the god of wisdom. These myths often depict birds as messengers, guardians, or manifestations of divine powers, highlighting their importance in cultural narratives and beliefs.

Folklore collections encompass a wide range of stories, legends, and folk beliefs about bird language, prophecy, and communication with the divine. These collections often include tales passed down through generations, featuring birds as intermediaries between humans and the spiritual realm. Themes of bird language and prophecy are common in folklore, where birds are believed to convey messages from the gods or foretell future events. Such stories provide insights into the cultural values, beliefs, and worldview of different societies throughout history.



*The motif of the bird entered Persian mythology
as the image that most often mentions God*

Avicenna, also known as Ibn Sina, was a Persian polymath and philosopher who made significant contributions to various fields, including medicine, philosophy, and psychology. In his philosophical treatise «Kitab al-Shifa» (The Book of Healing), Avicenna explores the concept of the language of birds and its significance within his broader philosophical framework.



Avicenna used the image of a bird to explain the laws of the world

Avicenna's philosophical treatise «Kitab al-Shifa» (The Book of Healing) is a comprehensive work that covers various branches of knowledge, including metaphysics, logic, physics, and psychology. Within this vast text, Avicenna explores a wide range of philosophical topics, including the concept of the «Bird Language.»

In «Kitab al-Shifa,» Avicenna discusses the possibility of communication between different species, including birds, and the idea that birds possess a form of innate knowledge or intuition that allows them to understand and convey profound truths about the nature of existence and the universe. Avicenna's exploration of the bird language is deeply rooted in his broader philosophical framework, which is influenced by Neoplatonic and Aristotelian ideas.

Avicenna views the bird language as a symbolic mode of communication used by birds to convey metaphysical concepts

beyond human comprehension. He suggests that just as humans have the capacity for rational thought and language, birds have their own mode of communication that transcends mundane speech and reflects a deeper understanding of reality.

The concept of the bird language in «Kitab al-Shifa» is part of Avicenna's broader exploration of the interconnectedness of all things and the quest for understanding the universal truths underlying existence. It reflects his belief in a holistic worldview where everything in the universe is interconnected and possesses inherent wisdom and knowledge.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Avicenna's interpretation of the language of birds is deeply rooted in his metaphysical and epistemological theories, which are influenced by Neoplatonic and Aristotelian ideas. He views the language of birds as a symbolic mode of communication used by birds to convey profound truths about the nature of existence and the universe. Avicenna suggests that birds possess a form of innate knowledge or intuition that allows them to understand and express metaphysical concepts beyond human comprehension.

Within his philosophical framework, Avicenna emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things and the unity of the cosmos. He believes that everything in the universe is interconnected and shares in a universal essence or «active intellect.» Birds, with their ability to perceive and communicate metaphysical truths through their language, exemplify this interconnectedness and serve as symbols of divine wisdom and insight.

Avicenna's exploration of the language of birds is also tied to his broader inquiry into epistemology and the nature of knowledge. He suggests that humans have the capacity to attain knowledge through rational thought and empirical observation, but he also acknowledges the limitations of human understanding. Avicenna proposes that birds, with their intuitive grasp of metaphysical truths, offer a different mode of knowing that transcends human rationality.

The significance of the language of birds within Avicenna's philosophical framework lies in its role as a symbol of the quest

for truth and understanding. By contemplating the language of birds, Avicenna invites readers to reflect on the nature of knowledge, the limits of human perception, and the mysteries of existence. In doing so, he encourages a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of all things and the pursuit of wisdom beyond conventional modes of inquiry.

Avicenna's ideas on the language of birds and his broader philosophical framework were shaped by the intellectual currents of his time, which included influences from both Islamic philosophy and Greek thought. In relation to other philosophical and scientific perspectives of his time, Avicenna's ideas can be contrasted and compared with those of his contemporaries and predecessors:

<p>1. Islamic Philosophy:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Avicenna was part of the Islamic philosophical tradition, which sought to reconcile Greek philosophy with Islamic theology and mysticism. His ideas on the language of birds were influenced by earlier Islamic philosophers such as Al-Kindi and Al-Farabi, who also explored themes of metaphysics, epistemology, and cosmology. •Avicenna's emphasis on the interconnectedness of all things and the pursuit of transcendent knowledge reflects the influence of Sufi mysticism, which sought spiritual union with the divine through intuitive insight and contemplation.
<p>2. Greek Philosophy:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Avicenna was deeply influenced by Greek philosophy, particularly the works of Aristotle and Neoplatonism. He drew upon Aristotelian logic and metaphysics in his philosophical system, adapting and expanding upon Aristotle's ideas to fit within an Islamic theological framework. •Avicenna's concept of the language of birds can be seen as a departure from Aristotelian thought, which focused more on empirical observation and rational analysis. While Aristotle acknowledged the intelligence of

	birds, he did not attribute to them a special language or capacity for metaphysical insight.
3. Scientific Perspectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Avicenna’s ideas on the language of birds were not based on empirical observation or scientific inquiry in the modern sense. Instead, they emerged from a combination of philosophical speculation, mystical intuition, and cultural beliefs. •In contrast, scientific perspectives of Avicenna’s time, particularly in fields such as natural philosophy and medicine, relied more heavily on empirical observation and experimentation. Scholars like Alhazen (Ibn al-Haytham) and Al-Biruni made significant contributions to scientific knowledge through their empirical studies and observations.
4. Judeo-Christian Traditions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Avicenna’s ideas on the language of birds may also be compared to certain themes in Judeo-Christian traditions, such as the biblical story of Noah sending out a dove to find dry land after the flood. This narrative symbolizes the dove as a messenger of peace and hope, echoing themes of communication and guidance found in Avicenna’s concept of the language of birds.

Overall, Avicenna’s ideas on the language of birds were situated within the broader intellectual landscape of his time, drawing from Islamic philosophy, Greek thought, mystical traditions, and cultural beliefs. While his ideas may have diverged from contemporary scientific perspectives, they nevertheless contributed to the rich tapestry of philosophical inquiry and cultural exploration in the medieval Islamic world.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Avicenna’s exploration of the concept of bird language in his philosophical treatise «Kitab al-Shifa» (The Book of Healing) yields several key findings that contribute to our understanding of his philosophical worldview and the cultural significance of

birds. Here are some key findings from Avicenna's work on bird language:

1. *Symbolism and metaphor*

Avicenna views the language of birds as a symbolic mode of communication used by birds to convey profound truths about the nature of existence and the universe. Birds are depicted as possessing a form of innate knowledge or intuition that allows them to understand and express metaphysical concepts beyond human comprehension.

2. *Interconnectedness of all things*

Avicenna emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things in the universe, suggesting that birds serve as symbols of this unity. Through their intuitive grasp of metaphysical truths, birds exemplify the interconnectedness of all beings and the universal essence that permeates existence.

3. *Quest for transcendent Knowledge*

Avicenna's exploration of bird language reflects his broader philosophical quest for transcendent knowledge and understanding. By contemplating the language of birds, Avicenna invites readers to reflect on the limits of human perception and the mysteries of existence, encouraging a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of all things.

4. *Integration of Islamic and Greek thought*

Avicenna's ideas on bird language demonstrate his integration of Islamic theology and Greek philosophy. Drawing upon both Islamic mysticism and Aristotelian metaphysics, Avicenna adapts and expands upon earlier philosophical traditions to develop his own unique perspective on the nature of birds and their symbolic significance.

5. *Cultural and literary influence*

Avicenna's exploration of bird language has had a lasting impact on cultural and literary traditions. His ideas have inspired poets, writers, and artists throughout history, who have incorporated

themes of bird language into their works as symbols of wisdom, transcendence, and spiritual enlightenment.

Overall, Avicenna's work on bird language sheds light on his philosophical worldview and contributes to our understanding of the cultural significance of birds in Islamic and broader intellectual traditions. His exploration of bird language invites readers to contemplate the mysteries of the universe and the role of intuitive insight in the search for truth and understanding.

CONCLUSION

Studying Avicenna's work on the language of birds involves consulting a variety of literature from different fields, including philosophy, theology, literature, and cultural studies. Here are some key sources that may be used in studying Avicenna's work on this topic:

1. *Avicenna's works*

Avicenna's philosophical treatise «Kitab al-Shifa» (The Book of Healing) is the primary source for studying his ideas on the language of birds. Specific sections or chapters within «Kitab al-Shifa» that address bird language and related topics would be essential for analysis.

2. *Commentaries and interpretations*

Scholarly commentaries and interpretations of Avicenna's works, particularly «Kitab al-Shifa,» provide valuable insights into his ideas on bird language. These may include works by contemporary scholars as well as medieval commentators who elucidate Avicenna's philosophical concepts.

3. *Islamic philosophy and theology*

Literature on Islamic philosophy and theology offers contextual background for understanding Avicenna's philosophical framework. Texts by Islamic philosophers such as Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, and Ibn Rushd provide comparative analysis and critical engagement with Avicenna's ideas.

4. *Philosophical studies*

Academic studies on Avicenna's philosophy, particularly those focused on metaphysics, epistemology, and cosmology, may discuss his ideas on the language of birds within the broader context of his philosophical system. These studies offer analytical perspectives and theoretical frameworks for interpreting Avicenna's work.

5. *Literary and cultural studies*

Literature and cultural studies that explore the symbolism of birds in various cultural and literary traditions can provide comparative insights into Avicenna's ideas on the language of birds. Works on bird symbolism in medieval literature, Islamic poetry, and cross-cultural mythologies offer contextualization and interpretation of Avicenna's concepts.

6. *Historical and contextual studies*

Historical and contextual studies of Avicenna's era, including the intellectual milieu of medieval Islamic civilization, provide background information on the cultural, religious, and philosophical influences shaping Avicenna's ideas on bird language.

7. *Interdisciplinary approaches*

Interdisciplinary approaches that integrate philosophy, literature, theology, and natural sciences offer comprehensive perspectives on Avicenna's work on bird language. These studies may draw connections between Avicenna's philosophical concepts and scientific understandings of avian behavior and communication. By consulting a range of literature from these fields, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of Avicenna's ideas on the language of birds and their significance within his broader philosophical framework. This interdisciplinary approach enriches scholarship on Avicenna's philosophy and contributes to a holistic interpretation of his intellectual legacy.

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SHAKHLO KHALIMOVA

PHD STUDENT,

ALISHER NAVOI UNIVERSITY OF

UZBEK LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE,

TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN.

E-MAIL: <SHAHLOKHALIMOVA41@GMAIL.COM>