# *A ladder of heresy*? Religion, *dhimmīs* and medicine in the light and shadow of Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa

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The Buyid Muʿtazilite vizier Ibn ʿAbbād (d. 385/995) famously referred to medicine as 'a ladder of heresy' (*sullam al-ilḥād*). This statement reflects the opinions of an important number of Muʿtazilite theologians who, already since the 3rd/9th century, polemicised against the opinions that some physicians and natural philosophers held concerning creation, causation and the very definition of science. The figure of Ibn al-ʿAbbād is also a good example of the apparent contradictions that we will find when approaching this topic: he did not only surround himself with physicians and non-Muslim scholars, but he was himself also the author of a work on medicine, according to the testimony of Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī.

Our knowledge of pre-Modern science and scientist mostly relies on the large biographical works written by scholars such as Ibn al-Qifṭī, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, Ibn Khallikān, or al-Ṣafadī. In the field of medicine, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa is undoubtably the most relevant source. And yet for all its importance and documental richness, the *ʿUyūn al-akhbār fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, is almost completely silent about these polemics. Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa presents a rather idealised image of the court physician, unsullied, with a few exceptions, by the suspicion of unbelief. The most illustrative example is his biography of al-Rāzī, treated by many as one of the greatest *mulḥids* in Islam, and presented in the *ʿUyūn* as an eminent physician, without any reference being made to his controversial ideas about prophecy.

In this paper I will survey a number of texts that show the relationship between medicine and religion in a different light and will help us to re-contextualise the role of medicine, religion and *dhimmīs* in medieval Islamic societies. I have decided to briefly discuss five case studies, so to say. At first sight they may appear to be unconnected and, even worse, contradictory. In this regard, this paper also aims at being an exercise to explore the heuristic value of—apparent—contradictions.

## 1. Medicine, Reason and Revelation in 3rd/9th c. Bagdhad

Polemics and attacks against medicine are attested from a very early date and they are usually related with Muʿtazilite debates on atomism and Galenic doctrines. But medical theories concerning the composition of the bodies and their behaviour also proved to be very useful for other kind of interreligious polemics.

One of the earliest and more curious examples can be found in a largely influential work written by a Syriac theologian and physician by mid 2nd/8th c.: Job of Edesa's *Book of Treasures*. This treatise is an eclectic text indirectly dependant on Galen, close to the genre of *Problemata Physica* and other cognate works such as the Ps.-Apollonius' *Sirr al-khalīqa*. In this book, Job presents an account of the creation of the world and its creatures and explains a number of problems of natural philosophy resorting to Galenic theories. *The Book of Treasures*, however, concludes with an attack against the Muslim theologians who wanted to defend their religion with rational arguments.

The origin of this polemic is the Qurʿanic depiction of Paradise as an idyllic garden of sensual pleasures, where the true believers may enjoy the best foods and drinks. Job criticised the carnality of this description by asking a very relevant question: do the denizens of Paradise poo? Or, to put it in a more elegant way, is the Heaven governed by worldly physics?

The existence of excreta in Paradise was certainly a problem for Muslim theologians, for it would sully the purity of the heavenly abode. But Job's answer was even more challenging that the question itself. We could, of course, presume that Heaven is governed by laws that differ from those of the earthly realm, because God is omnipotent. We should also accept that, in virtue of God's

omnipotence, two plus two are four today, but they could be five tomorrow if God so wishes. However, this can be defended with faith only, not with reason.

The problem of the existence of excreta in Heaven became an important point in religious polemics. It is discussed in the Baḥīra legend and mentioned in *ḥadīth*; several refutations of Job's argument were written by Muslim theologians, and the *mufassirūn* have also discussed this topic at length. Job's *Book of Treasures* is one of the earliest examples of how medical theories were put at the service of religious scholars to engage in religious disputation.

Of course, there are many other cases. Greek medical tradition was especially used to debunk the value of *ḥadīth*. The most typical example is perhaps the *ḥadīth* '*la ʿadwā wa-lā ṭayra'*, 'there is no contagion or omens', and similar sayings on this topic. The first extant treatise on contagion written in Arabic, Qusṭā ibn Lūqā's *K. al-ʿIdāʾ*, states in its introduction: 'I am most surprised by those who give credit to those nonsensical sayings of the Muslims (*al-aḥādīth al-khurāfiyya min ahl al-Islam*) and then they believe in the prophethood of their prophet and claim that he is the most perfect man'.

Interestingly, Qusṭā ibn Lūqā was also the first author of a book to help with the medical needs of the pilgrims to Mecca, the *Risāla fī tadbīr safar al-ḥajj*.

Things become more complicated if we pay attention to the opinions that some early Muʿtazilites held about *ḥadīth*, for they also appealed to natural laws and medicine to mock those who believe in these sayings. The most famous were al-Naẓẓām and his followers who, like Qusṭā ibn Lūqā, claimed that many *ḥadīths* were fanciful and contrary to reason. The best account of these critiques can be found in Ibn Qutayba's introduction to his *Taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*. The 'contagion *ḥadīths*' disparaged by Qusṭā ibn Lūqā were also a typical example raised by Muʿtazilites to rebuke the proponents of *ḥadīth*. On the one hand, they argued, contagion is a well-known phenomenon; on the other hand, there is another *ḥadīth* in which Muḥammad urges people to run away from lepers, implicitly acknowledging the existence of contagion. The Muʿtazilites discredited this and other *ḥadīths* appealing to the laws of nature. Ibn Qutayba's defence of *ḥadīth* is also based on medicine, or on a particular kind of medicine to be precise:

'When the physicians prescribe that one should not associate with a consumptive or a leper—says Ibn Qutayba—, they do not thereby imply a principle of contagion, but rather only have in mind the change of odour, which may well cause the one who smells it for an extended period to fall ill —a physician would be the last people to lend any credence to felicitous or evil omens' (tr. L. Conrad)

As later scholars such as al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā pointed out, this is not what physicians say. Qusṭā ibn Lūqā, for instance, defined contagion as: 'A spark (*qadaḥ*) that springs from a sick body to a healthy body and causes in the healthy body the same disease it caused in the sick one' But Ibn Qutayba had done his homework. This interpretation of contagion based on smell was actually discussed in the book on sympathy of the *Problemata Physica*, considered then a book of medicine.

This is not the only instance in which Ibn Qutayba resorted to medicine when defending apparently irrational or nonsensical *ḥadīths*. He invokes the authority of physicians to explain a saying mocked by al-Naẓẓām and al-Jāḥiẓ, the so-called 'fly ḥadīth': 'If a fly falls in the drink of one of yours, let him fully submerge it and then remove it, because there is disease in one of its wings and a cure in the other'. The explanation in the *Mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* is based on the comparison of flies with snakes (*al-dhubāb fī dhālika illā bi-manzilat al-ḥayya*). The great antidote made by physicians (*al-tiryāq al-akbar*) has viper's flesh because one part of the snake neutralizes the venom of other part: the same phenomenon can be found in the wings of the fly.

Thus, medicine and the natural laws in which it is based may be invoked by a Christian scholar to attack the Qurʾanic depiction of Paradise or the authority of Muḥammad, by a Muʿtazilite Muslim to deny the value of *ḥadīṯh*, and by a Sunnī paragon like Ibn Qutayba to defend it.

Although in the 3rd-4th/9th-10th c. medicine was especially practiced by Christians and Sabians, the religious confession of the physicians is not raised in the discussion of these religious texts. But the problem raised by Job of Edessa had deeper implications. In the scholarly milieu of Early Abbasid Baghdad, religious scholars of different confessions largely agreed on the basic principles in which inter-religious debate had to be conducted. They also seem to have reached an agreement about something that transcended the particularities of the revealed texts accepted by each religious community: the argument from design. This is what James Montgomery has denominated the 'Design Complex', a kind of ecumenical project in which theologians joined forces to defend the existence of God from a common enemy: the materialists, often referred to as *dahriyya, aṣḥāb al-hayūlā* and *aṣḥāb al-ṭabāʾiʿ*. Broadly speaking, these terms refer to the adherents of a doctrine that denied the divinity and the metaphysical realm altogether: they did not accept the revelation and prophecy, and only relied on the knowledge that the senses derive from the material world, which is formed by the four stochastic elements — according to some authors, some of them only relied on the sense of touch.

Medical works such as Galen's *On the Usefulness of the Body Parts* provided important arguments to the scholars arguing for God's design. Galen's *On My Own Opinions*, on the other hand, gave arguments to those who professed their agnosticism about the hereafter and only concerned themselves about what they could know about this world. These are branded as materialists, considered unbelievers and very often associated with physicians.

An early testimony of the association of materialists, physicians and unbelievers can be found in a work written by a little known Christian scholar active in the second half of the 3rd/9th c., al-Ruhāwī's *Adab al-ṭabīb*. In the introduction to this work, al-Ruhawī warns against the temptation of *tazanduq* and *tadahhur* that lures some scholars. The first chapters are in fact an attempt to separate himself and his fellow physicians from these materialists, defending of God's wisdom and omnipotence, and vindicating of the value of medicine as a path to the realisation of God's design. The faith and religious commitment of physicians is proved by quoting Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq's theological works, especially his *K. al-Tawḥīd*.

In this period, at least when it comes to medicine, the social implications of the antagonism between religion and reason should be assessed in term of belief, not religious affiliation. In later periods, as we shall see, these conflicts manifest themselves in different ways.

## 2. Medicine and the 'proofs of prophethood'

The genre of *dalāʾil al-nubuwwa* does not seem particularly relevant for the study of the relationship between medicine and religious minorities, but some works may hide precious information. This is due to two main reasons: the theory of the apologetic miracle and the dogma of the infallibility of prophets. The theory of the apologetic miracle developed by Muslim theologians is culturally deterministic: the probative value of the miracles performed by prophets depends on their adequacy to the cultural and scientific hierarchies accepted by the community of the believers to whom they convey the divine message. Muḥammad's prophethood was proved to the Arabs through the revelation of the inimitable Qurʾān because language was the most cherished and valued knowledge among them. Before him, Moses had performed the miracle of turning his staff into a snake, because the Jews gave most importance to magic. Likewise, Jesus healed lepers and resurrected the death, because Christians place medicine above all branches of knowledge.

Due to the large corpus of sayings attributed to Muḥammad, the infallibility of prophets was a delicate topic in inter-religious polemics. Sayings such as those discussed above were a valuable ammunition for non-Muslim polemicists, who argued that most medical *ḥadīths* were mistaken and contrary to the expert opinion of physicians. The relationship between Christians, medicine, and miracles was already brought forth in the 3rd/9th century by authors such as al-Jāḥiẓ and Ibn Qutayba when they discussed the apologetic miracle, but the works discussing the proofs of prophecy gained importance during the

following century, with al-Baqillānī (403/1013)'s *Iʿjāz al-Qurʾān* as probably the most outstanding and influential work of this genre.

The most relevant for our purposes is, however, a treatise written in the last decade of the 4th/10th century entitled *Tathbīt Dalāʾil al-Nubuwwa* and usually—wrongly—attributed to the Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār.[1] This is an apologetic work in defence of Muḥammad's prophecy that can be broadly divided into two sections. The first one, focused on the Revelation, addresses the treatment of prophets in different scriptures and surveys the tenets of different religious groups (the information about Christianity, Ismaʿīlism and the Qarmaṭa is particularly important). The second part centres on the prophethood of Muḥammad and defends him from his critics. The critique of medicine belongs to this second part.

The entire treatise is, at least in theory, animated by an ecumenical spirit. The author's aim is not to attack Christians, but rather to unveil the corruptions introduced in their doctrines, treating all true believers with respect, be they Muslims or not. The same happens with 'true medicine' and 'heretic doctors'. It is not a question of religious confession, but of faith:

'Muslims should keep away from [heretic] physicians. They do not know any [real] principle (*ʿilla*) and are only guided by unbelief (*al-ilḥād*), mercilessness and indifference. Those who claim to be Magians are not Magians, those who claim to be Christians are not Christians, nor the Jews are Jews nor the Muslims are Muslims, because they are only driven by their [unbelief]'.

The author of the *Tathbīt* warns not against *dhimmīs*, but against medical doctrines that he considers an heresy:

'We want to call attention to the signs (*āyāt*) of God Almighty, who is the One Who Puts to the Test (*al-Mubtalī*) and the One Who Grants Wellbeing (*al-Muʿāfī*). Because most of those physicians believe that drugs have an effect and that drugs have natural properties (*ṭabāʾiʿ*) that improve health and remove diseases, and they held many other stupid opinions. They deny prophecy and accuse prophets of being impostors, they accuse the Muslims and the people of religion of being ignorant, they reject the divinity and the resurrection.'

These accusations of unbelief against physicians, which we find again and again from the 3rd/9th onwards, are the same cast against the so-called Naturalists (*ṭabaʿiyyūn)* or Eternalist (*dahriyya*) with whom they are usually associated.[2] Our information about the Dahrīs mainly comes from the reports collected by al-Jāḥiẓ in the *K. al-Ḥayawān*, which is precisely one of the most important sources for the attack of medicine and physicians in the *Tathbīt*.

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[1] Hasan Ansari has suggested the authorship of Abū Aḥmad ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī ʿAllān (d. 409/1019), a Muʿtazilite Ḥanafī *qādī*. Without further evidence this is only speculation, but it was certainly not written by the author of *al-Mughnī*.

[2] Physicians, Naturalists and Eternalists are usually associated in these polemical works. In *kalām* treatises the definition of these groups is more nuanced and sophisticated. Al-Juwaynī, for instance, gave a simple and practical classification of the philosophical and theological attitudes towards nature (*ṭabʿ*) that might help to contextualise this discussion. He divided the proponents of the *ṭabāʾiʿ* theory into two groups. The first group, to which some Muslims adhere, believe that the world has been created by a Creator, and that He created the bodies according to natures and properties (*ʿalā ṭabaʾiʿ wa-l-khawāṣṣ*) that determine their natural acts (*afʿāl ṭabīʿiyya*). Within this group there were divergences as to whether this acts a free choice (*ikhtiyār*) or not and about the implications of this theory in terms of causation (engendered or necessary acts), and theodicy and moral ontology (is God the cause of evil?). A second group, says al-Juwaynī, are the proponents of the theory of the eternity of the four natural elements (fire, air, water, and earth), i.e. these elements are co-eternal with God.

The *Tathbīt*'s critique of medicine is based on ontological and epistemological arguments, usually misrepresented to build up the accusation of disbelief. On the one hand, medicine is based on the Hippocratic-Galenic theory of the four stochastic elements and four natural qualities, which approaches physicians to the Eternalists. On the other hand, physicians rely on the causality governing nature to infer universal laws. This conflicts with the position of God as the ultimate cause and implicitly is a negation of His omnipotence. This is why they should be considered unbelievers (*kāfirūn*, *mulḥidūn*).

Since the aim of the *Tathbīt* is to prove the infallibility of Muḥammad and defend the value of his medical sayings, the way in which these doctrines are addressed is not the typical of a Muʿtazilite work. There is no proper discussion of primary and secondary causation, or of divine justice. Rather, the rebuke of medicine is framed within the opposition of the notions of nature (*ṭabʾ*), and habit *ʿāda*. Medicine deals with particulars (drugs have different effects in different lands) and cannot formulate universal laws, therefore: 'medicine is not a science (*ʿilm*), but rather something acquired through experience (*tajriba*), and these experiences are not always the same nor occur in the same manner: they differ in numerous and various ways.' Physicians may know the normal course of things (*ʿāda*) through experience (*tajriba*) or intuition (*ḥads*), but not the causes (*ʿilal*) that allow the inference of universal laws, because medicine is not a science.

This epistemological critique may be found in different contexts and goes back to Aristotle, who did not include medicine in his enumeration of sciences. But the main concern expressed in the *Tathbīt* is the way in which the natural laws accepted by these physicians curtail God's omnipotence. Things are the way we know them because God so wishes, but they could have been different and can, in the future, be different.

I will quote two passages to illustrate this point. The first one is a critique of the account of the creation of the world, here attributed to the Nestorian Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq:

'Ḥunayn does not know whether God created the heavens and the bodies with [the stochastic] elements, with something else, or not from a thing (*min lā shayʾ*). Because fire was not created from fire or from a thing; water was not created from water or from a thing, the earth was not created from earth or from a thing, just like the sun was not created from the sun. Likewise, God created the moon and the stars neither from stars nor from a thing. And if He created the skies from vapour (*dukhān*) and many animals from water, He did it only to acknowledge the value of rational beings (*al-ʿuqalāʾ*), i.e. angels, men and jinn. Had He desired to create them from nothing, He would have done so, as He did with all that which we have mentioned before and other things that we have not mentioned, which were created nor from a thing and not for a thing (*lā min shayʾ wa-lā li-shayʾ*).'

God is not limited by the existence—or co-existence— of any element, as he is not subjected by the natural laws postulated by natural philosophers and physicians such as al-Rāzī:

'As you know, it has been disclosed that Ibn Zakariyā al-Rāzī was a Christian son of a Christian, he concealed himself behind his Christian identity but followed the path of the heretics. Then he embraced Islam and took the name of Muḥammad after having been called Yuḥannā. He did this as a ruse [i.e. to conceal his unbelief]. For he used to say: "It is impossible for God to create a [fully developed] human at once (*ḍarbatan wāḥidan*) without his intellect and potencies being nurtured and gradually brought to completion. If He had been able to do that, He would have done it, but He has not, as we see again and again."

However, intelligent men see that the chicken comes out of the egg clothed [with feathers] and able to live by itself (*kāsiyan kāsiban*), it does not need from his father and mother or from others. When the little goose is born, it can swim and does not need to learn [how to swim], unlike persons with rational capacity (*al-ʿuqalāʾ*). And what to say about the construction skills of bees, the weaving skills of spiders and silkworms! All this was created in a single moment, as I have already written for you in *al-Miṣbāḥ*.

[Al-Rāzī] forgets that God created the heavens, the earth and the mountains at once, and the white colour of cotton, beards and horses; he created all colours at once, also all tastes and smells. But [al-Rāzī] denies Him the power of creating grapes and similar things in a single moment, and argues that it is necessary, first, that they be unripe green grapes, and then sweetness begins to grow in them together with the black colour. Concerning the greyness of the hair he claims that this is due to the decay of moist in the roots of the hair. But one might argue that horses, birds and other creatures are white not because of the moist but because [they were made like that] in a single moment'.

Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq wrote both medical and theological works. None of them suggest what the *Tathbīt* claims. In fact, Ḥunayn's *K. al-Tawḥīd* was authoritative enough among Christians to be quoted by al-Ruhāwī when defending physicians from the accusation of unbelief, as mentioned above. The Christian origins of al-Rāzī are in all likelihood another fabrication, and although he wrote polemical works about religious matters, the arguments reported here seem to be a misrepresentation. Needless to say, the vast majority of physicians mentioned by name in this treatise are Baghdadi Christians and Sabians. The reader of the *Tathbīt* would learn that those professing Galenic medicine are unbelievers and that their arguments, not based on science but rather on experience and intuition, are not valid to refute medical *ḥadīths*.

It does not mean that all medicine is invalid, but Muslims should avoid this kind of physicians:

'... that is why we reject the treatment with drugs: the [proper] way to heal is to turn towards God Almighty and seek a cure in the Qurʾan, the water of the Zam-zam, and the practice of charity. Whoever wants to rely on this only should do it. If you are used to be treated with drugs you might use them as well, provided that you have done what we have just said [i.e. avoiding heretic physicians], because the religious law permits the treatment with drugs, as long as they are considered lawful, as the *ḥadīth* says: 'God sent down a cure for you in that which is not forbidden'.

We do not know who wrote this treatise, certainly not ʿAbd al-Jabbār. But this is a paradigmatic example of the polemics cultivated by a particular group of 'anti-scientific' Muʿtazilite *mutakallimūn*. This text might have been written by Ibn Abī ʿAllān, as Ansari argues. But contemporary—or almost contemporary—Muslim scholars ascribed these doctrines—and maybe also this treatise—to a rather different figure: a parrot. A bird with beak and feathers. Concretely, the garrulous *babaghāʾ* sent by the Griffin (*ʿanqāʾ*), king of the birds of prey, to the court of the king of the Jinn to defend the case of animals before men. The parrot's speech in the famous Epistle 22 of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ repeats many of the arguments advanced in the *Tathbīt* to rebuke medicine. The intention of the parrot is not specifically to attack medicine, but rather to belittle the value of human science altogether: the achievements of physicians and engineers are nothing compared with the skills that God has inspired in bees, silkworms and spiders; human learning abilities do not match the wonder of the bird who is born fully clothed and able to live by himself or to swim.

Whoever has seen a baby parrot would realise that this speech is intended as irony. My interpretation is that the Ikhwān use the parrot to mock the group of corrupted and evil dialecticians (*hadhihi l-ṭāʾifah al-ẓalama al-mujādila al-mukhāṣima al-kafara al-fajara*) in which they would have included the author of the *Tathbīt dalāʾil al-nubuwwa*. Their attack in their epistle 42, *On Opinions and Religious Doctrines* (*Risāla fī al-ārāʾ wa-l-diyānāt*) is merciless and unambiguous:

" ... they rely on words but disregard the knowledge acquired through the senses (*al-maḥsūsāt*), they argue with each other with proofs and analogies (*al-barāhīm wa-l-qiyāsāt*) but do not know anything of mathematics (*al-riyāḍiyyāt*). They engage in theological debate about metaphysics (*al-ilāhiyyāt*) while ignoring natural philosophy (*al-ṭabīʿiyyāt*). They occupy the leading positions in the *majālis* and debate with each other about things that do not add anything to the proper knowledge of religion, nor bring any benefit to science, such as their discussion of [God's] justice and injustice, the indivisibility of the atom, and similar fabricated and adulterated questions that are neither true nor real, but rather false chimeras that their proponents cannot defend with any proof, not those who enquiry about them can support in any demonstration.

They rush to discuss these things in their *majālis* and waste their time with argumentations, debates, disputes, and polemics. But if someone asks about something real, something which is possible among people, something accepted and known by scholars, they are incapable of giving any answer. If someone refutes them with questions and research, they reject and deny them, instead of saying 'we do not know', or 'God and His Prophet know better'. On the contrary, they persist in their exaggeration and ignorance, and only offer excuses. Sometimes, they resort to adorned speeches to argue with wise men and scholars, and slander them saying things such as: 'medicine and astronomy are false sciences', 'the stars are inorganic bodies and the celestial bodies do not have existence', 'medicine is useless', 'geometry is a false science', 'logic and natural philosophy are tantamount to unbelief and heresy, and those who practice them are heretics'.

They argue against [scholars] with excuses and tell false stories about them, claiming that those are their [real] opinions, doctrines, ideas, and beliefs. And this group might have said nothing at all nor believe anything about that [which they claim] —or, if those are their beliefs, nobody has ever heard about them, or might have died with them and their school disappeared without anyone knowing anything about them. Those [dialecticians] are like cattle that have chosen the worst path."

In summary, a Muslim anti-Christian polemic focused on the proofs of prophethood might include a refutation of the scientific status of medicine, a defence of *tawakkul* and the doctrine of *the tarak al-tadāwī* (rejecting medical treatment), and an accusation of unbelief against those who follow the Galenic tradition. Being most of them *dhimmīs*, the implications of these polemics contradict the alleged ecumenism of the book. On the other hand, other Muslims can mock these theologians and defend the value of science in an alleged ecologic fable and an epistle on religious doctrines. As we will see, similar arguments will be repeated in different contexts and times.

The *Tathbīt Dalāʾil al-Nubuwwa*, in addition, contains many ad hominem attacks against 4th/10th c Baghdadi physicians who were unable to cure their own illnesses or those of their close relatives. The prosopographical information about some *dhimmī* scholars contained in this work is unique and cannot be found in any other source as far as I know.

### 3. The Islamisation of medicine and the medical madrasa

Unlike the schools of law that proliferate since the 5th/11th century, the Muslim ruling elites did not develop analogous institutions for the provision of medical education. This discipline was usually learnt in the *majlis* of private teachers and at the hospital. The teaching duties of hospitals are often mentioned in the endowment deeds of the mausoleum complexes built by Ilkhānid, Timurid, and Mamluk rulers; and in Iran the term madrasa seems to have been also used to refer to the hospitals' teaching facilities. Already the Ibn Ṭūlūn mosque complex founded in Old Cairo in 265/878 included a hospital in which some kind of medical training seems to have been imparted at least since the Fatimid period. When the Mamluk sultan Lājīn restored the Ibn Ṭulūn mosque in 696/1296, it was turned into a complex that included institutions of learning and, even though the Ṭulūnid hospital was no longer in use, the Sultan's endowment somehow maintained the old tradition by establishing lectures of medicine (*dars*$^{an}$ *lil-ṭibb*).

These are all, however, royal foundations related to hospitals. The first recorded example of a madrasa in which medical education is provided without it being connected to a hospital seems to be al-Madrasa al-Mustanṣiriyya of Baghdad founded by the caliph al-Mustanṣir (r. 623–40/1226–42) and completed in 631/1233–34. According to Ibn al-Athīr, the endowment deed allotted funds to hire a professor of medicine (*shaykh ṭibb*) to teach ten Muslim students (*ʿashara min al-muslimīn yashtaghilūna bi-ʿilm al-ṭibb*). But this is all the information we have about it.

Also in the 7th/13th c., in the late Ayyubid period, appear in Damascus the only institutions of medical learning comparable to the schools of law. They are all associated with the circle of the physician Muhadhdhab al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥamīd al-Dimashqī, known as al-Dakhwār (d. 628/1230). The sources mention three medical madrasas;

*al-Madrasa al-Dakhwāriyya*

The information about this endowment comes from Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, who mentions the madrasa in the biographies of its founder al-Dakhwār and of Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn al-Raḥbī (d. 667/1267), a prominent student of al-Dakhwār and the first one to hold a teaching position in this centre. Al-Dakhwār was born in Damascus to a family of oculists and initially trained in this discipline. He subsequently read the major medical texts under the physician Raḍī al-Dīn al-Raḥbī and Ibn al-Muṭrān, the famous physician or Christian origins who embraced Islam while working for Saladin.

Al-Dakhwār enjoyed the patronage of several Ayyubid rulers. At the beginning of his career he served al-Mālik al-ʿĀdil as oculist; then he worked as physician for the Mālikī vizier Ṣafī l-Dīn ibn Shukr and for the sultan himself, who eventually appointed him supervisor of physicians in Syria and Egypt. After the death of al-Malik al-ʿĀdil, his successor, al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam continued the allowances of al-Dakhwār and instructed him to take care of the Nūrī Hospital in Damascus, where he practiced and taught medicine until the days of al-Malik al-Ashraf. Al-Dakhwār was not only versed in medicine, he studied philosophy with al-Āmidī and astrology with Abū l-Faḍl al-Isrāʾīlī and it seems that he also discussed philosophical matters in his own *majlis*. In fact, most part of his teaching activities took place in his own house, which he endowed in 622/1225, shortly before his death, as a madrasa for the study of medicine.

Al-Dakhwār appointed his former student Sharaf al-Dīn al-Raḥbī as the first teacher of this madrasa, and Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa's second reference to this institution occurs in the biography of this physician. Sharaf al-Dīn was the son of one of al-Dakhwār's teachers, Raḍī l-Dīn al-Raḥbī, a deeply pious person who considered appropriate 'never to teach medical principles to non-Muslims (*al-dhimmah*) or to persons who were not worthy of them, for he considered that he was thereby enhancing the profession and upholding its prestige.' The report of Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa also presents his son, Sharaf al-Dīn, as a deeply pious Muslim inclined to asceticism: 'a righteous and high-aspiring man who did not like to frequent rulers and state officials' and preferred to work at the Nūrī Hospital. Sharaf al-Dīn was also a poet and composed a large number of *zuhdiyyāt* that revolve around the religious topoi of *contemptus mundi* and *mememto mori*.

Concerning al-Madrasa al-Dakhwāriyya, Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa states:

"[Sharaf al-Dīn al-Raḥbī] worked for some time at the 'Great Hospital' founded by al-Malik al-ʿĀdil Nūr al-Dīn ibn Zangī. When our shaykh Muhadhdhab al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn ʿAlī – may God have mercy upon him – made a charitable donation of his house in Damascus, dedicating it as a place where the medical arts were studied, *so that the Muslims could learn there*, he appointed Sharaf al-Dīn ibn al-Raḥbī as a teacher, because Sharaf al-Dīn had proven to be an erudite and intelligent person." (15.37.1)

In addition to the quotes from Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, al-Nuʿaymī (d. 927/1521) collected in his history of madrasas some biographical notes about the physicians who taught at this institution at least until mid 8th/14th c. since an inventory of *waqfs* dated in 820/1417–18 mentions some repairs expenses. ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ al-ʿAlmawī (d. 981/1573-74), who wrote a summary of al-Nuʿamī's *Kitāb al-Dāris* a century later, only adds to this information that al-Dakhwār also endowed a garden to the Umayyad mosque.

Due to the scarce information, scholars have cast doubt about the exact nature of this madrasa, since we cannot know for certain whether medicine was the only discipline imparted in this institution. Leiser suggested the possibility that 'this college maintained the connection with *fiqh* even though that subject seems to have been pushed to the background'. Lewicka, who acknowledges the importance of this precedent, also expressed doubts about 'the "medical" character' of this madrasa. Savage-Smith and Pormann believe that it was 'devoted exclusively to the teaching of medicine', and this seems to be also the understanding of Eddé, and Ragab.

It is true that al-Dakhwār was a Shāfiʿī with training in *fiqh*, like most of the teachers mentioned in these sources, but physicians with a solid formation in religious disciplines appear in the biographical sources since the 6th/12th century. The list of teachers provided by al-Nuʿaymī suggests that this madrasa was mainly focused on the study of medicine because some of them taught law in other institutions. We know very little about these individuals and few of their medical works have survived. Considering the titles list by Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, Ragab has argued that these scholars, and their colleagues linked to the Nūrī hospital, were highly influenced by the medical tradition that those who left Baghdad fleering from the Mongol invasions brought with them, imposing a medical curriculum based on Ibn Sīnā's *Qānūn*, for the theoretical aspects of medicine, and al-Rāzī's *K. al-Ḥāwī* for the practical part.

*al-Madrasa al-Dunaysiriyya*

Our knowledge of this second 'medical madrasa' comes exclusively from al-Nuʿaymī, which, in addition to al-Dakhwār's foundation, includes two further Damascene institutions under the general rubric '*faṣl madāris al-ṭibb*'. These two endowments were also founded by physicians associated to al-Dakhwār's circle.

Al-Madrasa al-Dunaysiriyya, named after its founded ʿImād al-Dīn al-Dunaysirī (d. 685/1286), is described as a 'madrasa for physicians close to the Nūrī Hospital.'

The biographical information about al-Dunaysirī also comes from Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, who died before this physician and therefore makes no reference to the endowment. Al-Dunaysirī was a physician, Shāfiʿi scholar and a poet, also born to a family of *ʿulamāʾ*. His father was a famous judge and preacher from Dunaysir, Taqī al-Dīn ʿAbbās ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUbayd al-Rabʿī. Al-Dunaysirī served at the court of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Yūsuf and practiced medicine at the Nūrī hospital in Damascus. The major part of this physician's entry in the *Uyūn al-anbā* is focused on his poetry which, in contrast with the ascetic tenor of al-Raḥbī's poems, abounds in profane and love themes.

The sources do not provide further information about this institution. According to the sources used by al-Nuʿaymī, al-Dunaysirī taught at al-Madrasa al-Dakhwāriyya, but nothing is said about lectures held at the institution that he founded. The only reference about scholars related to this centre that I have been able to find occurs in the biography of the physician known as Nāṣir al-Dīn Ibn Ṣaghīr (d. 749/1348-49) who, according to al-Ṣafadī, went to Damascus to be treated from an illness in this madrasa, where he spend around fifty days. In view of this information and the silence of the sources about any teaching activity I find it more likely that it may have been a property endowed by the physician to the contiguous hospital, rather that an independent institution of learning. Al-ʿAlmawī adds that in the 16th c. this building, by then a library, was believed to have been a mosque built by the chief *qāḍī* of Damascus Muḥammad Beg.

*al-Madrasa al-Lubūdiyya al-Najmiyya*

The third of the 'medical madrasas' is al-Madrasa al-Lubūdiyya al-Najmiyya, founded by the physician Najm al-Dīn Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Lubūdī in 664/1265-66. The biographical information about this physician also comes from the *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ*, although Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa does not mention this madrasa. Al-Nuʿaymī states that Najm al-Dīn's father, Sharaf al-Dīn Ibn al-Lubūdī (d. 621/1224), was buried in a *turba* that he built in the outskirts of Damascus and that Najm al-Dīn's madrasa next to his father's tomb.

Al-Dhahabī's *Taʾrīkh al-Islām* provides further information according to which Najm al-Dīn ibn al-Lubūdī was buried in a *turba* next to the Birkat al-Ḥimyariyyīn and endowed his mausoleum as a centre for the instruction of medicine an geometry (*dāl al-ṭibb wa-handasa*), for which he disposed the appointment of a *shaykh* and Qur'anic readers (*wa-qarrara lahā shaykh*$^{an}$ *wa-qurrāʾ*).

The only reference to the teachers of this madrasa occurs also in al-Nuʿaymī's *Dāris*, on the authority of Ibn Shaddād ,who claimed that first teacher of this institution was Jamāl al-Dīn al-Zawāwī (d. 683/), the chief Mālikī *qāḍī* in Damascus.

Like almost all the members of al-Dakhwār's circle, Najm al-Dīn Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Lubūdī was born to a family of religious scholars. He studied medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and Islamic law although, unlike the majority of physicians, he was Ḥanafī rather than Shāfiʿī. None of the sources quoted by al-Nuʿaymī specifically refers to this madrasa as a medical school. But the accounts of al-Dhahabī and Ibn Shaddād suggest that this madrasa was conceived as a family mausoleum where a mixed education was provided. This is consistent with al-Lubūdī's interests, which according to the list of books compiled by Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa include medicine, geometry, astronomy, philosophy, logic, and Islamic law. It is worth noting in this regard that G. Makdisi refers to al-Lubūdī as an example of the influence of the method of legal scholars in the study of medicine, since he was the author of a work entitled 'A detailed study of medical themes and identification of the questions concerning which there is a difference of opinion, in the way jurists deal with these differences of opinion' (*Tadqīq al-mabāḥith al-ṭibbiyyah fī taḥqīq al-masāʾil al-khilāfiyyah ʿalā ṭarīq masāʾil khilāf al-fuqahāʾ*).

*Medical Education for Muslims?*

Ayyubid and Mamluk sources attest a phenomenon to which scholars have referred to as Islamization of medicine. This Islamization is twofold: on the one hand, it affects the religious affiliation of the leading medical practitioners who, at least until the 7th/13th century were in their major part non-Muslims. Moreover, as the previous examples show, these Muslim physicians are very often legal scholars. On the other hand, the so-called 'medicine of the Prophet', i.e. a mixture of popular and Greek medicine based on the collections of medical *ḥadīths*, develops as a parallel medical tradition.

In her study of the Islamization of Medicine in the Mamluk period, Paulina Lewicka points out to al-Madrasa al-Dakhwāriyya as an antecedent for this phenomenon, and also to the relationship of al-Dakhwār with the Ayyubid ruler al-Malik al-Ashraf (r. 626/1229-635/1237). Well known for his religious zeal, al-Malik al-Ashraf involvement in the intellectual life of Damascus is often highlighted by scholars for his conflicted relationship with the Shāfiʿī theologian Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233). Al-Āmidī had to abandon his post as teacher at the Cairene madrasa of al-Qarāfa al-Ṣughra owing to his engagement with rational sciences. He travel first to Ḥama and then to Damascus, where the Ayyubid ruler al-Malik al-Muʿaẓẓam offered him the chair of al-Madrasa al-ʿAzīziyya, a position that he held since around 617/1220–21 until 629/1229, when the new ruler al-Malik al-Ashraf dismissed him and put him under house arrest. The reason behind al-Āmidī's deposition, according to some sources, were the complaints of the Damascene *ʿulamāʾ* who accused him of applying philosophical methods to the study of Islamic law. Other reports quoted by Ibn Wāṣil offer an alternative explanation pointing to political discrepancies related to Sayf al-Dīn's ties with the lord of Amida and intellectual enmities raised by the rivalry between Sayf al-Dīn and the popular Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.

When discussing this episode, Ibn Kathīr adds that al-Malik al-Ashraf issued orders to ban the study of non-religious disciplines in madrasas, and to expel those who taught Hellenistic sciences. Abū Shāma also mentions al-Malik al-Ashraf's policies against *al-ʿulūm al-awāʾil* after reporting on the imprisonment of the Christian director of the al-Malik al-Kāmil's library: 'The engagement with ancient sciences flourished in Damascus at the end of the rule of al-Muʿaẓẓam ibn Abī Bakr and during the rule of his son Dāʾud; it increased until God extinguished them in the time of al-Ashraf'.

These episodes have granted al-Ashraf the fame of being a ruler moved by his 'hatred for rational, or Hellenistic, sciences' and, by extension, associated the last years of Ayyubid rule with the Islamisation of science.

The research of historians such as Sonja Brentjes has cogently demonstrated that the abandon of the so-calle *ʿulūm al-awāʾil* is a myth and they continued being studied in different context, including madrasas. But was medicine ever a discipline for Muslims that could be studied in madrasas? For all we know, the Damascene madrasas al-Dakhwariyya and al-Lubūdiyya are the only private institutions created to teach medicine to Muslims, and they were not very successful. It has been argued that the madrasas in Cairo also imparted medicine, at least the kind of medicine known as *ṭibb nabawī*, but the sources show a rather different picture.

Ibn al-Ukhuwwa (d. 729/1328)'s famous *ḥisba* treatise is often quoted as proof that Muslims did not want to engage in medicine and that almost all the physicians were *dhimmīs*. Similar images might be found in all kind of genres. In al-Jawbarī (d. 619/1222)'s *Kash al-asrār*, a work devoted to unveiling the ruses of Cairene tricksters, the references to medicine are always related to the Jews. In fact, the chapter on the secrets of Jews consists of six *abwāb*. The first is introductory, and the rest are related to professions or activities associated with medicine: *banj* sellers, druggists, 'naturalist physicians' (*al-aṭibbāʾ al-ṭābiʿiyyūn*)—considered the greatest unbelievers and hypocrites (*ashadd kufr*$^{an}$ *wa-nafāq*$^{an}$)—, dung collectors, and those who sell poison.

More relevant is the testimony of the Mālikī scholar Ibn al-Ḥajj (d. 1336), who includes a long section on medicine and medical etiquette in his *K. al-Madkhal*. Since the lack of Muslim physicians is one of the most dangerous threats they had to face, Ibn al-Ḥajj wonders whether medicine could be learnt in madrasas. He claims that this discipline is based on experience (*tajriba*) and intuition (*ḥads*) and that madrasa students could learnt that. There is, however, an alternative and this is what really reveals the dimension of the problem: instead of by *dhimmīs*, he claims, medicine could be practiced by midwives (*qabāʾil*) and old women (*ʿajūz*). Being Ibn al-Ḥājj mostly known by his misogyny and the horrible things he says the midwives in the chapter on birth rituals, it is very hard to think that the provision of medicine in madrasas was a fact. The testimony of al-Qalyūbī, discussed in the last section of this paper, will corroborate that.

## 4. The Fight for Authority

*The fight for Galen*

The Arabic Jālīnūs was the depaganised version of Galen of Pergamon known to the Arabic speaking public in the translation of Christian scholars, especially Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq.

The most important critiques against Galen among Muslim scholars were mostly based on epistemological grounds. Galen's anti-atomism made him a favourite target of the Muʿtazila. His claim that medicine was a science related with philosophy, and that logic aws a necessary tool to engage in this discipline granted him the critique of philosophers such as al-Fārābī, who argued that Galen's use of logic was merely rhetorical (*khaṭābī*) and not demonstrative (*burhānī*). These critiques were accepted by later philosophers such as Maimonides and Ibn Sina, who valued Galen's contribution to medicine but did not consider him a proper philosopher. Other physicians, in turn, refuted al-Fārābī's arguments and defended the figure of the physician/philosopher able to apply the methods of demonstrative logic to medicine. The most relevant example is perhaps Ibn Riḍwān, the enthusiastic apologist of Galen, who wrote a treatise entitled *On the Use of Logic in Sciences and Arts*.

Galen did not escape the accusation of unbelief, but it was not caused for his expunged pagan refences as we have discussed, but rather for the agnosticism he acknowledged in *On My Own Opinions*, interpreted by some Muslim scholars as an implicit profession of materialism. Al-ʿĀmirī (d. 992) reported that Galen's contemporaries used to scorn him for doubting whether the world was created in time, whether there is life after death, and whether the soul is a substance or an accident. That is, accusations similar to those used against the *Dahriyya* and the physicians suspected of adhering to their beliefs.

And yet for all that, Galen became an often-quoted figure in the debates about God's design, and his *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* provided the most important argument to prove the compatibility of medicine with religion. The aforementioned Ibn Riḍwān, for instance, extolled this work in his *Risāla fī Sharaf al-Ṭibb*, arguing that medicine is the most noble science because it leads to the realisation of God's design:

"The physician will also find in the usefulness of the parts of the body an expression of God's wisdom, for He has not created anything that does not prostrate to Him [ref. to Q 16:48], and extol and pay Him the most perfect worship. Galen has demonstrated this in the third book of *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* and also in other works, in which he showed that this way of worshipping and honouring God—mighty and glorious—is more virtuous and more based on truth than any other form of worship. No one has ever matched Galen's prodigious understanding of how the varied manifestations of God's wisdom reveal themselves in the creation of every single thing. He also wrote a single-book treatise entitled *The Physician has to be a Philosopher* where he discussed that."

Similar references to Galen's *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* can be found in a number of medical treatises. Even in *adab* works written by physicians. The Christian Ibn Buṭlān, for instance, composed a fictionalised report of his stay in Cairo and his quarrel with Ibn Riḍwān entitled *The Battle of Physicians*. This treatise, a vitriolic satire against his Egyptian nemesis, contains a description of a hellish assembly seen in dreams where the souls of those killed by Ibn Riḍwān's malpractice came to denounce him. The *majlis* is presided by Hermes Trimegistus, and attended by Agathademon, Plato, Hippocrates, Galen, Dioscorides, Jasius, and other men of science who gather to worship the First Cause reading Galen's *On the Usefulness of Parts* and the twelfth book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī also compares Galen's treatise with a divinely inspired book in his *Muqābasāt*.

At some point, however, Galen became to be associated with Jesus and with Christian dogmas. More research is required to date this shift properly. Legendary stories in which Jesus and Galen are contemporaries and even meet, or where Galen meets Mary Magdalene or Luke the Evangelist can be found in Christian sources from the 11th and 12th c. Muslim authors seem to have recorded this chronology earlier. In the 9th c., Isḥāq ibn Ḥunayn, probably quoting Yaḥyā al-Naḥwī, made Jesus and Galen contemporaries in his *Taʾrīkh al-aṭibbāʾ,* and also Ibn Juljul a few decades later.

But it is during the 12th century when this association becomes more relevant, for it is directly related with the science of medicine. Al-Bayhaqī (d. 1170), on the alleged authority of the Christian philosopher and physician Ibn al-Ṭayyib, states that the apostle Paul was the son of Galen's sister. Galen was surprised by the news about Jesus, but being too old to travel to meet him, he sent him a letter that al-Bayhaqī reproduces. Galen refers Jesus as 'physician of the souls and Prophet of God', excuses himself for not being able to travel due to his bad health, and announces that he is sending his nephew Paul so that he would heal his soul. Jesus wrote back praising his knowledge and stating that healthy persons can dispend with physicians, since they only need to preserve their health.

Two works attributed to al-Ghazālī also report on the connection of Galen with Christians and physicians. In these cases the polemical purposes are evident. The first of them is the apologetic anti-Christian treatise entitled *al-Radd al-Jamīl*, which contains an odd reference to Galen in a passage denouncing the Christians' misleading reliance on philosophy:

"It is strange that they emulate people who forbid the conception of the particular characteristics of the founder of their divine law those who stipulate for them the impossibility of the formation of the child solely from the sperm of his mother without partnership with the sperm of a man, either following the opinion of their leader or, in this particular case, following the opinion of Galen." [tr. Beaumont & El Kaysy-Friemuth, al-*Radd al-Jamīl*, p.95]

This striking reference to Galen's opinions about semen in connection with Jesus' conception echoes medical and religious debates on the generation of sperm. Unlike Aristotle, Galen postulated the

existence of female semen and the need to combine both seeds to procreate [this will be discussed below in a different context]. The identification of Galen with Christian dogmas and, by extension, of Christianity with medicine has obvious implications that go beyond the sphere of religious disputation.

The second of the texts attributed to al-Ghazālī is a syncretic work entitled *Sirr al-ʿālamayn wa kashf mā fī l-dārayn*. A section discussing the influence of the stars includes an anecdote connecting Jesus and Galen. When the people heard that Jesus was able to resurrect the dead, they sent the Galen, physician, to enquiry about this. There he said to Jesus: 'We would not ask you to resurrect the dead, but here is a man affected by quartan fever. Heal him in this month—*Kānūn al-awwal*—and I will believe in you.' Jesus asked them to feed him watermelon and the man was cured. Then he said to Galen: 'Are you going to defy me now? – and left for the temple to pray. That very night Galen fell ill and died.

This is a surprising story in many ways. The figure of Galen and his connection with Jesus is clearly polemical, but in this case Jesus attitude approaches him to Muḥammad, since the use of watermelon to treat fevers is also prescribed in the treatises of *ṭibb nabawī*. In anything, this anecdote shows that the Greek authorities cannot compete with prophetic medicine.

Interestingly enough, the *Sirr al-ʿĀlamayn* and his presumed author, al-Ghazālī were rebuked by Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī in his *magnum opus*, *Mirʾāt al-zamān*. The chapters devoted to the life of Muḥammad include a rather long section in defence of medicine that reproduces the arguments used by the author's grandfather, Ibn al-Jawzī, in the *Luqat al-manāfiʿ* and, with regard to the Sufi rejection of medicine, also in the *Tablīs Iblīs*. The thread that menaced medicine in 13th c. Damascus was for him the same against which his grandfather warned in 12th c. Baghdad the proponents of *tawakkul* and, more concretely those who rejected medical treatment (*tarak al-tadāwī*), among them, many of the Baghdadī emigrees that arrived to Damascus fleeing from the Mongols, many of them were Ḥanbalīs, some probably associated with the circle of followers of al-Ghazālī's mystical—and often apocriphal— persona.[3]

The rejection of medicine is a topic that al-Ghazālī discussed at length in the *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*. Perhaps this is what drove Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī's attention towards the *Sirr al-ʿĀlamayn*. The anecdote about Jesus and Galen is reproduced in full in the *Mirʾāt al-zamān* and dismissed as nonsense, stating that the historians agree that Galen lived two-hundred years after Jesus.[4]

Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa also reacted against the wrong dates of Galen's life. It is difficult to believe that he was unaware of the implications of making Galen and Jesus contemporaries but, as in other topics, he avoids any polemic. Chapter five of his *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ* is in fact a celebration of the figure of Galen and he uses the works of several chronographers to refute the contention that Galen and Jesus were contemporaries.

*The fight for al-Shāfiʿī*

The aforementioned Ḥanbalī Ibn al-Jawzī was a prolific scholar. Among many other works, he wrote an extended treatise on medicine entitled *K. Luqaṭ al-Manāfiʿ fī ʿIlm al-Ṭibb*. The first chapters of this

[3] Another apocryphal work attributed to al-Ghazālī, the *Khawāṣṣ al-Qurʾān*, is a typical example of *tawakkul* literature discussing the therapeutic value of Qurʾānic recitation and the adequacy of certain verses to heal certain illnesses. Some sections follow very closely the homonymous work by the Fatimid al-Tamīmī.

[4] In the section of the *Mirʾāt al-zamān* dealing with the Greek sages, however, Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī reports that Galen and Jesus were contemporaries; in the section on the Roman emperors, he states that Galen died during the reign of Antoninus.

work are a defence of this science and a refutation of those who claimed that Galenic medicine and *sharīʿa* were incompatible. In the second chapter entitled 'On the Excellence of the Science of Medicine and its Conformity with Law and Reason', Ibn al-Jawzī quotes numerous hadiths to sanction the value of medicine, claiming that 'medicine is divided into theoretical medicine (*ṭibb qiyāsī*), which is the medicine of the Greeks, and empirical medicine (*ṭibb al-tajārib*), which is the school of the Arabs'.

His defence of the harmony between *ṭibb* and *sharīʿa* is based on the opinions of legal scholars, especially al-Shāfiʿī of whom Ibn al-Jawzī quotes several sayings: "People neglect two things: the study of medicine, and the study of astrology, i.e. calendars (*ʿilm al-sinīn*)"; "There are two kinds of knowledge: the knowledge of the bodies and the knowledge of religions"; "There are two kinds of sciences: a science for the realm of religion, and a science for the world. The science for the religious realm is religious law (*fiqh*), the science for the world is medicine, in comparison to medicine poetry and grammar are nonsense or mere playfulness"; "People cannot dispense from two things: physicians for their bodies and religious scholars for their religion."

Some of these sayings attributed to al-Shāfiʿī, especially variants of the one about the two sciences, are sometimes quoted in the introductions to medical treatises from the 11th century onwards, perhaps earlier. The connection of al-Shāfiʿī with medicine and other sciences, and even with the polemics about translation, can be found in other texts.

But the authority of al-Shāfiʿī was also used with a different aim, especially by the scholars involved in the promotion of the alternative approach to medicine known as *al-ṭibb al-nabawī*. Ibn al-Jawzī reported al-Shāfiʿī's concern for the neglect of important sciences such as medicine and astrology. In contrast, in al-Dhahabī's *al-Ṭibb al-Nabawī*, this reproach is turned into a denunciation of *dhīmmīs*. In the chapter 'On the urgency of teaching medicine' the sayings attributed to al-Shāfiʿī are of a rather different tenor:

'al-Shāfiʿī said: "After the science of knowing the lawful and the unlawful, there is no science nobler than medicine."

He used to lament the little involvement of Muslims in this science and said: 'They have given away one third of [all] knowledge and entrusted it to Jews and Christians'. He used to say: 'The *ahl al-kitāb* are most numerous in medicine'.

In addition to his excellence in the sharīʿa and his mastery of Arabic, al-Shāfiʿī was also versed in medicine.'

The neutral tone of Ibn al-Jawzī's use of al-Shāfiʿī to defend the compatibility of medicine and *sharīʿa* contrasts with al-Dhahabī's polemical approach when the authority of the imam is invoked to denounce *dhimmī* physicians.

But perhaps the best example to illustrate the conflictive uses of al-Shāfiʿī's authority and his involvement in science is an anecdote reporting an encounter between al-Shāfiʿī and Hārūn al-Rashīd to which Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī refers to as *miḥna* in his *Manāqib al-Shāfiʿī*. Al-Shāfiʿī once boasted of being as well prepared to rule the *umma* as the caliph himself and therefore worthy of the caliphate. When news of that reached Hārūn al-Rashīd, he broke out in anger and summoned al-Shāfiʿī to the court. When asked about that, the scholar claimed that he had all the required knowledge of the disciplines needed to take care of the Muslims. These disciplines included religion, law and government, but also science, concretely astrology and astronomy (*ʿilm al-nujūm*) and medicine. In his reply about medicine, al-Shāfiʿī claimed to have learnt what the Greek (*al-rūm*) said in their own language (*bilughātihā*), mentioning by name Aristotle, Hippocrates, Galen, Porphyry, Mahārīs and Empedocles. He claimed to be also acquainted with the Arabic translations of Indian and Persian medical works.

This testimony is striking, even within a work of someone like Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, himself an author of medical works. It is clearly intended at presenting the *ʿulūm al-awāʾil*—especially Greek medicine—in a positive light and make them acceptable to religious scholars.

We do not know how the intended audience of al-Rāzī reacted to his report of al-Shāfiʿī's *miḥna*, but we are lucky enough to count on the testimony of a privileged—and furious—reader: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. This episode is commented on in his *Mifṭāḥ Dār al-Saʿāda.* According to Ibn Qayyim, anyone who understands how *akhbār* are transmitted knows that this report is a fabricated lie to discredit al-Shāfiʿī. Any intelligent person knows that al-Shāfiʿī did not know any Greek at all, and that he did not know anything about Greek medicine, either for he was only acquainted with the medicine of the Arabs (*ṭibb al-ʿArab*), as can be seen in his sayings about diet, the use of *ḥammāms*, etc. After this, Ibn Qayyim quotes a number of medical sayings attributed to al-Shāfiʿī, of the same tone of those that can be found in the works of *ṭibb nabawī*. This is the kind of medicine that he knew, but 'the claim that he had learnt Greek (*al-yūnān*), Roman (*al-rūm*), Indian and Persian medicine in their respective languages is a lie and a calumny cast upon him'.

This is the kind of reaction one would expect in a Ḥanbalī student of Ibn Taymiyya and author, among other works, of one of the most influential and widespread treatises on prophetic medicine. Yet Ibn Qayyim proved to be a careful reader of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in other instances, for instance, in his *tafsīr* of the Qurʾanic oaths entitled al-*Tibyān fī aymān al-Qurʾan*. This work has a long section discussing human procreation and one of the most relevant topics under discussion is the generation of semen apropos of the Qurʾanic term *sulāla*.

Following Hippocrates' *On Semen*, Ibn Qayyim tackles here an old medical polemic between the proponents of the theory of pangenesis, who argue that semen comes from all parts of the body, and those who claim that semen is the final and homogeneous residue of nourishment (*faḍl al-haḍm al-ākhir*) that comes from blood (hepatogenesis). Ibn Qayyim supports the pangenesis theory using Hippocratic and Galenic theories to refute Aristotle, and also to argue the existence of female semen, also corroborated by *ḥadīths*. He disputes, however, the theories held by most physicians about the way in which female and male semen are combined in the womb to determine the gender of the baby and its physical characteristics. For Ibn Qayyim this cannot be defined by any natural power and only depends on God's design (*bal hādhā al-taṣwīr wa-l-tashkīl marjiʿuhu ilā khāliq ʿaẓim ʿalīm ḥakīm*). This statement is not surprising. However, in the light of the previous discussion of al-Shāfiʿī's acquaintance with the Greek tradition, one cannot help but being struck by his subsequent use of secular authorities to support his interpretation of the Qurʾān:

'We already knew this from the two virtuous physicians, Hippocrates and Plato, who established that [these characteristics] depend on the wisdom and judgement of the Maker (*al-ṣāniʿ*) and cannot be attributed but to a wise, all-knowing and powerful creator (*khāliq*). Galen talks about them in his book *On the Opinions of Hippocrates and Plato*, but the ignorant physicians (*jahlat al-aṭibbāʾ*), the heretic philosophers (*zanādiqat al-mutafalsifa*) and the Naturalists (*al-ṭabiʿiyyūn*) persist in their heresy.'

Ibn Qayyim's use of Greek authors to support his interpretation of the Qurʾan might sound contradictory, in part because we are used to see him through the eyes of modern Salafis. The final section of his *al-Ṭibb al-Nabawī* in which the author collects useful maxims and sayings, he also quotes Hippocrates, Plato and Galen, in addition to two Christian authors such as Ibn Māsawayn and Ibn Bukhtīshuʿ. The final paragraph of this work is a fascinating example of appropriation of Galenic theories:

'[…] blood is the predominant temperament in Muslims, yellow bile in Jews, and phlegm in Christians. This is why most Christians are idiot, of little acumen and intelligence. Most Jews are vile and prone to sadness, anxiety, and distress. And most Muslims have a sound mind and are brave, receptive, resourceful and prone to joy'.

## 5. Corollary: The predicament of an unsuccessful physician

The information about the life of Ibrāhīm al-Qalyubī is extremely scarce. We know that he studied medicine under Muḥadhdhib al-Dīn Ibn Abī Ḥulayqa, a Christian who converted to Islam and held the positions of Chief physician in Syria and then chair of medicine in al-Qalāwūn's hospital in Cairo. We also know that al-Qalyūbī was still alive 1287; but it does not seem that he was very satisfied with his life, as he confessed in an autobiographic treatise denouncing the hard life of physicians, the *Naṣīḥat al-muḥibb fī dhamm akhlāq al-ṭabīb.* Even dogs, he says, had a better life.

Al-Qalyūbī was a younger contemporary of Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa and in many ways his negative counterpart. Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa offered an idyllic image of physicians as individuals of high social status, economic success, refinement and intellectual prowess. Al-Qalyūbī writes about contempt, poverty, intellectual dearth, moral depravity, and unbelief. But more than anything he writes about Jews, because, as he repeats again and again, 'the majority of physicians are Jews'. In this regard, this treatise can be read as an anti-Jewish diatribe, similar in spirit to Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Nabulūsī (d. 606/1262)'s *Tajrīd sayf al-himmah li-istikhrāj mā fī dhimmat al-dhimma* (although al-Nabulūsī's work interestingly lacks references to Coptic physicians).

Al-Qalyūbī's *Naṣīḥat al-muḥibb* consist of an ornated prologue written in rhymed prosed and four sections addressing how the practice of medicine (*iktisāb bi-l-ṭibb*): 1) destroys civility (*murūʾa*); 2) brings about shamelessness; 3) impairs reason; and 4) damages religion. Yet these rubrics define the contents of the treatise rather vaguely. In fact, many of the questions we have discussed in the previous pages pop up in this work and al-Qalyūbī's critique is not directed at the science of medicine per se, but at the way in which it is practiced and at its practitioners.

The beginning of the first section on *murūʾa* is an elaborated encomium of medicine based on Galen's *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*. The argumentation is the same we can read in previous authors: the study of medicine reveals the secrets of God's creation and leads to the realisation of His wisdom. The actual practice of medicine, however, does not measure up to his high purpose. Different reasons are adduced to explain this, but the most important is that 'the majority of physicians are Jews'. The treatise is full of anecdotes about Jewish physicians with which al-Qalyūbī shows that they monopolise the practice of medicine in Cairo and that they are disloyal and dangerous to Muslims. I will discuss a couple of them for the sake of illustration.

Al-Qalyūbī complains that some Jewish doctors pretend to belong to famous families of physicians such as the Ibn Abī al-Ḥawāfir, or the Banū Ḥulayqa, all of them Muslims. They do that because people like to believe that they are treated by physicians of renown. But worse that the fraud itself is that, when the physician is not—or does not pretend to be—famous, people simply refer to him as *al-yahūdī*, by which they mean any physician (*ayy ṭabīb kāna*), due to the abundance of Jewish in this profession (*kathrat al-yahūd fī hādhihi al-ṣināʿa*).

A second anecdote insist on this fact. For some people, the term *ḥakīm* had lost its original meaning and become to mean *yahūdī*. Thus, when they say *yā ḥakīm*, which is an appellative used to address physicians, they believe that they are saying *yā yahūdī.* Al-Qalyūbī states that he once saw a child addressing a Muslim physician with the customary *yā ḥakīm*, upon which an old man scolded him: 'How do you say *yā ḥakīm* to a Muslim? Is he a Jew by any chance?' This is because most people believe that all physicians are Jews (*kull al-aṭibbāʾ yahūd*).

For al-Qalyūbī, this popular belief is not only proof of the lack of Muslim physicians, but also a reason thereof: Muslims run away from this profession (*haraba akthar al-muslimīn min hādihi al-ṣināʿa*). The disdain that medicine deserves among Muslims is caused by the bad name that Jews have given to the profession, but also by the suspicion of materialism and heresy that hovers over all physicians, irrespective of their religious confession. This is discussed in the second chapter of the fourth and last section of the treatise.

The satisfaction of the religious duties, argues al-Qalyūbī, is the highest human goal and that which grants the wellbeing in this life and the hereafter. Physicians are aware of that, but the *ʿibādāt* are a problem for them. Medicine is such a profession, says al-Qalyūbī, that even if its practitioners became ascetics, fast until their bodies are emaciated, and devote themselves to praying, people would think that they dishonour their duties as God's servants, and that they behave like *dhimmīs*. They may fly in the sky and walk over water, and people would still believe that they do not have any religious commitment whatsoever. Of course, they do not float in the ether or walk above the sea. And they are not precisely known for fasting and praying either, but the worst of all is, again, that almost all the physicians are Jews.

Their virtuous actions (*ʿamālāt*) are also under suspicion. For instance, instead of asking for a reward, many physicians take their honoraria upfront, irrespective of whether the patient's health improves or not. This encourages fraud, especially among Jews. 'That is why people believe that all physicians are deceivers without exception—says al-Qalyūbī . They think that they are evil, treacherous, and harmful. If a Muslim and a Jew are called together to treat a sick person, the Muslim will run away in view of the dishonesty and the pain it causes and fearing for his religion and his name. But the Jew will accept the job. That is why Jews are employed and make a living [with medicine].'

But physicians do not only risk being considered bad Muslims for failing in both *ʿibadāt* and *ʿamālāt* and for the large number of Jewish doctors. They are also accused of unbelief. The arguments reported by al-Qalyūbī deserve to be translated in full [this is a quick draft though]:

'Those who slander the physicians argue that they do not believe in the resurrection of the bodies and, even worse, they do not believe in the afterlife of the soul, like the philosophers do. The people claim that the physicians' contention is that the soul is an expression (*ʿibāra*) referring to inhaled air or blood, and that it is created from a congruent mixture of vapours and nurtured by breathing, as happens with all animals; and that this spirit (*rūḥ*) necessarily dies and disappears together with the matter that forms it, just as the [light] of a lamp extinguishes when it runs out of oil. […]

People [believe] that their science does not allow physicians to conceive of anything else beyond that, and that they subordinate all human actions only to the powers that depend on that spirit (*rūḥ*), believing that human complexion and discernment are determined only by the mixture of specific constituents (*ʿanāṣir*), just as happens with the complexion and discernment of all animals, for they do not acknowledge the rational soul (*al-nafs al-naṭiqa*), nor that reason (*ʿaql*) may be separated from substance (*hayūlā*).[5] Their science is constrained within the limits of what we have described [i.e. the material world] and separated from all that lies beyond.

[According to the people's belief,] it is their contention that when this body loses its composition and returns to its initial constituents, [the soul] abandons it completely and nothing of it remains. But [medicine] does not look beyond the earthly realm and into all that happens in the superior world. [People think] that [physicians] are among those who do not believe in the resurrection of the body, because they don't study the principles and causes of the existing beings, and do not connect one world with the other, nor discuss the descent of the highly power onto the inferior world, the return of that which is in it, the way [this power] governs [the inferior world], its previous existence, and its continuity after it expires. This is how the philosophers understand it. But even if some physicians may know something about it, this is not proper of their science and belongs to other disciplines.

What we have said specifically about medicine, and about what people claim about [physicians], had been already put in verse by some poets. It is said that al-Shāfiʿī wrote:

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[5] This echoes Ibn Sīnā's theory of the rational soul.

Both the astrologer and the doctor claim

that there is no afterlife. And I reply: Be careful you two!

If your claim is true there's nothing to do for me

But if I am right, a calamity will fall upon you

It is said that Galen, the most excellent of all physicians, attended one day the assembly of the Stoics (*al-riwāqiyyūn*) and introduced himself as a philosopher. They used to meet regularly at a fixed time and each of them would provide arguments to support different opinions about the divine and the soul. Galen mingled with them and argued that the soul is an expression (*ʿibāra*) that refers to the essence of pure and wholesome vapour created from blood.

When they heard that, they realised that he was far from the truth, and that his position was against the tenets of their people. They ordered him to expose himself in front of the assembly, so that they could guard themselves from the evil of his doctrines.

In the antient times, people thought that the proponents of this idea were reckless and light-headed youth who prided themselves in offending the religious principles, which they despised, for they argued that those who respect religion are idiots […] may God save us from mixing with them.

All this happens because [people] believe that [physicians] are scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) or because they consider them men of learning (*ḥukamāʾ*), but people do not know that medicine is part of the science of natural philosophers (*al-falāsifa al-ṭabīʿiyyīn*), and that those who consecrate their lives to the study of the Truth are the metaphysicians (*al-falāsifa al-ilāhiyyīn*), such as Pythagoras, the father of all sages, Diogenes, Empedocles, the ascetic Socrates, the divine Plato, and others who have sought the Truth renouncing to this world and enduring hunger and cold, for were not inclined to other true knowledge than that which God has unveiled to His prophets and to those who followed them, the sincere believers, [a knowledge] that is but a drop of water in the ocean.

This is what people think about the [physicians'] beliefs (*al-iʿtiqādāt*). But worse than that is that they cannot separate the honest physician from the dishonest.'

*Dhimmīs*, especially Jews, are a big problem for al-Qalyūbī. But probably the major reason behind the rejection of medicine among Muslims is the suspicion of disbelief that, for centuries, have been cast onto this science.

**Conclusions?**

To be discussed on the 20th…