

6. The religious problems connected with medicine

6.1. Reliance on God (*tawakkul*)

Already very early in the history of Islam there were Muslims who chose asceticism as a sign of their devotion. By renouncing the world the ascetics hoped to gain salvation for their souls. For an ascetic the body represented the material world and to care for its needs only proved that a person was still too much tied to the visible world and too little concerned with the hereafter. Compared to the eternal happiness awaiting in paradise, physical suffering in this world was transitory, and to treat the illnesses of the body was a waste of time. This attitude is illustrated in a story told about Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, a contemporary of the Prophet. Abū Dharr once suffered from an eye inflammation and was advised to treat it. He disagreed, saying: "I am busy with other things". He was then told to pray to God to heal his eye. To this Abū Dharr said: "I pray God for things that are more important than my eyes".²²⁶

The ascetics saw illnesses as trials sent by God to test the strength of the believer's faith. The stronger one's belief was, the harder God tested it. The Prophet was reported to have said: "The prophets meet with the most difficult trials, after them the pious and then the exemplary. A man is tried according to his faith. The servant of God is tried as long as he walks in this world and until there is no sin upon him."²²⁷ The last part of this tradition refers to the view that illnesses, and suffering in general, were an atonement for sins. This is more clearly expressed in other hadiths: "Do not curse fever. It removes sins like fire removes dross from iron" and "A day's fever equals a year's penance".²²⁸ Illnesses became signs of God's grace: by making a believer ill God allowed him to wipe out some of his sins. Not only illnesses but all forms of suffering, if it was endured patiently, was seen in this positive light: "When God wishes well to someone, He afflicts him with a misfortune".²²⁹

Both as trials and as a divine grace, illnesses were ultimately beneficial and therefore it was absurd to try to cure them. Furthermore, all attempts to cure illnesses were useless, because it was God who made a person ill and He was also the one who would cure him, when it suited Him. The answers that Abū al-Dardā', one of the Prophet's companions, gave to some questions put to him during an illness reflect this

²²⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, vol. 4, p. 246. About *tark al-tadāwī* (refusing medication) and *zuhd* (ascetism) see Reinert 1968, pp. 207-209.

²²⁷ DH, p. 207.

²²⁸ DH, pp. 174f and IQ, p. 23.

²²⁹ Ibn Māja, *al-Sunan*, vol. 2, p. 1137 (hadith 3436).

view:

They asked Abū al-Dardā': "What do you suffer from?" He answered: "I suffer from my sins". "What do you desire?" "The mercy of my Lord." "Should we send for a doctor?" "A doctor with his medicine and medicaments cannot protect me against what God has foreordained for me."²³⁰

According to the traditions Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, the first caliph, held a similar view and when he was asked if he wanted to see a doctor, he answered: "The doctor has already seen me and he said—what did he say?—he said: 'I am the performer of what I desire.'²³¹ In his answer Abū Bakr referred to the sentence of the Koran describing God as the «Performer of what He desires» (85:16) indicating that God had made him ill and that the illness would last as long as God saw it fit. God was omnipotent. He decided over life and death, health and sickness. If God afflicted a believer with an illness, he should not try to fight against it but to suffer it patiently trusting that God, if He so desired, would cure him. Instead of resorting to medical help, the believer should rely on God for recovery: «In God let the believers put all their trust» (9:51).

The doctrine that complete reliance in God (*tawakkul*) and the relinquishing of one's own activity was a stage that the believer should strive for was developed by the ascetic mystics. The practice of *tawakkul* required the rejection of all means of subsistence and in extreme forms it led the ascetic to disregard danger and to refrain from earning or begging for food or treating illnesses. An extreme example of *tawakkul* can be illustrated by the mystic Ḥātim al-Aṣamm (d. 237/852), who refused to beg for food and even declined to eat the food given to him, if it was not put in his mouth.²³²

Such extreme practices were only followed by some mystics and they were not accepted in the wider Muslim community. Only the rejection of medication (*tark al-tadāwī*) formed an exception. It was also accepted by Muslims who were not ascetic mystics, but rather scholars of the religious sciences. Early evidence of the scholars' acceptance of *tark al-tadāwī* was the opinion of Ḥasan ibn Ziyād al-Lu'lu'ī (d. 209/819), who was not an ascetic but a jurist. He supported the view that treatment was incompatible with *tawakkul*.²³³ Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, who is said to have laughed at some extreme practices of *tawakkul*,²³⁴ accepted rejection of medical treatment as a proper course for "those who believe firmly in *tawakkul* and follow this path".²³⁵ On the other hand, he is also reported to have considered medication permissible, even obligatory.²³⁶ Ibn Ḥanbal's opinions appear to be contradictory, but the conflict resolves itself if he is understood to have addressed different groups of people. Ascetics,

²³⁰ DH, p. 152.

²³¹ DH, p. 152. Reinert 1968, p. 212.

²³² Ibn al-Jauzī, *Talbīs Iblīs* pp. 303f and Reinert 1968, p. 218.

²³³ Reinert 1968, p. 207 and further Hawting 1989, p. 133.

²³⁴ Reinert 1968, p. 218.

²³⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, vol. 4, p. 246. Also Reinert 1968, p. 207.

²³⁶ DH, pp. 151f.

who followed the path of *tawakkul* also in other aspects of their lives, were in Ibn Ḥanbal's opinion allowed to reject medication, whereas others could with good conscience seek the help of physicians and accept medication for their illnesses.

The arguments presented by the opponents of medicine were countered with traditions claiming that the Prophet had approved of medicine. One of these is about some bedouins who came to the Prophet and asked whether they should use medications. The Prophet answered: "Servants of God, use medicaments! God did not give an illness without giving it a cure."²³⁷ Probably owing to the abundant evidence in the hadiths showing that medication was the Sunna of the Prophet, the popularity of *tark al-tadāwī* among Muslims outside the ascetic circles declined fairly quickly. Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) considered the anti-medication views held by "those of the Sufis and believers who have no intelligence" as corrupt.²³⁸

As mentioned above the earliest known book on the Prophet's medicine was written in the first half of the 3rd/9th century by the Andalusian ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Ḥabīb al-Sulamī al-Qurṭubī. The book is only known by its title, so its contents are not known. It can, however, be assumed that it was a collection of hadiths without comments like the oldest surviving books written one to two centuries later by Ibn al-Sunnī and Abū Nuʿaim. Abū Nuʿaim's book contains several traditions which report that the Prophet had called doctors to treat the sick and that the Prophet's own illnesses had been treated as well,²³⁹ and these hadiths had probably also been quoted by al-Qurṭubī. al-Qurṭubī's book was scarcely the only one written at a time when the discussion on the permissibility of medicine was going on and anti-medical views were expressed even by legal scholars and theologians. It is possible that the earliest books were compiled in order to strengthen the position of medicine and to counter the anti-medical views. The Muslim community respected the Prophet and his words favouring medicine must have convinced most Muslims of its permissibility.

6.2. The problem of causality

Even though al-Ṭabarī only blamed some marginal groups for supporting *tark al-tadāwī* in his time, there were some authors who wrote lengthy refutations of the anti-medical attitudes, indicating that they saw *tark al-tadāwī* as a serious problem. Muḥammad ibn Zakarīyāʾ al-Rāzī (d. 313/925) wrote two treatises refuting the attacks upon medicine made by two Muʿtazilites, al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868-9) and al-Nāshī al-Akbar (d. 293/906). These treatises are only known by title and the arguments of these two Muʿtazilites cannot be verified, but it has been assumed that they rejected medicine on theological grounds.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ al-Bukhārī, al-Ṣaḥīḥ, vol. 4, p. 50 (bāb 1).

²³⁸ Ibn al-Jauzī, Talbīs Iblīs, p. 278. Reinert 1968, pp. 212f.

²³⁹ Recep 1969, pp. 11-14 of the Arabic text. Hawting considers the hadiths mentioning al-Ḥārith ibn Kalada to be the results of a need to show that the Prophet himself had recourse to medicine and doctors (Hawting 1989, pp. 134f).

²⁴⁰ Rosenthal 1969, pp. 531f.

The speculative theologians continued to hold anti-medical views in spite of the various refutations. This led ʿAbd al-Wadūd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, who lived in the late 5th/11th and early 6th/12th century, to write an essay in defence of medicine. In the essay he complained that the arguments of the speculative theologians (*mutakal-limūn*) against medicine impressed the masses. In his opinion the sophistication of their argumentative methods made it difficult for physicians to counter them on an equal basis.²⁴¹

Unfortunately ʿAbd al-Wadūd did not specify the arguments of the speculative theologians, but it seems that the theologians did not only reject medication on an individual basis, as an act of ascetic piety, but denied the validity of medicine. For example the Muʿtazilite scholar Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Iskāfī (d. 240/854) expressed his distrust of the effects of medicaments by taking drugs with the opposite effect to those prescribed for him. The consequence of his action was that he died.²⁴² I think that his action did not so much reflect *tawakkul* as the view that medicaments did not have any effect at all. The basis of al-Iskāfī's view was the theologians' belief that God directly created all events without any intermediaries. This led the majority of speculative theologians to deny causality.²⁴³ When this was applied to medicine, the logical conclusion was that medicaments were useless, because there was no causal nexus between taking a drug and the improvement of health. The denial of causality was the motive behind al-Iskāfī's action.

According to the speculative theologians, illnesses were accidents (*aʿrāḍ*) created by God and existed either as long as God continued to recreate them or as long as God did not order them to perish. There was no need for intermediary causes such as medicaments to make illnesses disappear. Every illness lasted as long as God recreated it or allowed it to last. Medicaments did not contain any natural properties that affected illnesses. This view was expressed by a 12th century Muʿtazilite scholar, Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144). He advised a patient to reach out to God, who caused health and illness, because God was the true healer not the famous doctors Yūḥannā ibn Māsawaih or Bakhtīshūʿ.²⁴⁴

The theoretical idea that there was no true causality, shared by the majority of the speculative theologians, may well have been their motive in rejecting medication, but this could not have been shared by al-Jāḥiẓ, who belonged to a minority group of Muʿtazilites accepting causality. In spite of that, al-Jāḥiẓ is also reported to have held anti-medical views, as mentioned earlier. al-Jāḥiẓ followed the views of his teacher, the Muʿtazilite scholar Muʿammar, in whose opinion accidents were not created by God, but resulted from an act of nature.²⁴⁵ al-Jāḥiẓ cannot, therefore, have opposed

²⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 522. ʿAbd al-Wadūd's essay is titled *Fī dhamm al-takassub bi-ṣināʿat al-tibb* (The blame-worthiness of making a living from the craft of medicine). Rosenthal dates ʿAbd al-Wadūd to the late 11th and early 12th century (*ibid.*, p. 520).

²⁴² *ibid.*, p. 524.

²⁴³ Wolfson 1976, pp. 522-543. Wolfson discusses the main views of the speculative theologians (Muʿtazilites, Karramites and Ashʿarites) on the creation and duration of bodies and accidents.

²⁴⁴ al-Zamakhsharī's work *Aṭwāq al-dhahab* is quoted in Reinert 1968, p. 213.

medicine on the grounds that there is no causal nexus between medication and recovery. His reasons may have been those of personal piety even though he is not known to have been an ascetic. Another, and in my opinion a more probable assumption is that al-Jāhīz as a satirist and social critic was directing his criticism against the characteristics and behaviour of some individual medical practitioners rather than against medicine as such.²⁴⁶

The Ash‘arites shared the belief that there was no causation with the majority of Mu‘tazilites. The causality perceivable in the world was explained as being apparent, not real. In order to explain why events always seemed to occur in the same way, the Ash‘arites developed a theory of custom (‘*āda*). According to this theory events followed a sequence, because it was God’s custom to create the events in that way. God further created knowledge in the minds of men that He would always create the events in the same order of succession.²⁴⁷ In accordance with this theory, al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) claimed that when cotton was brought into contact with fire, it was not the fire that caused the cotton to burn, but God who created the burning at the time the cotton came into contact with the fire.²⁴⁸

When the theory of custom is applied to the problem of medication, it makes the use of drugs acceptable, because it can be argued that their use and the recovery from an illness form a sequence constantly created by God. This argument was actually presented by al-Ghazālī, when he discussed medication in his book *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* and maintained that God had arranged all causes and had established His custom regarding them.²⁴⁹ This view meant that medicaments were useful and also permissible and compatible with *tawakkul*. al-Ghazālī concluded his discussion by saying that there was no danger in using medicaments, if one took care not to regard the drugs as having any inherent curing qualities and not to forget that it was actually God who caused the drugs to have the desired effect each time they were used. In the same way it should be remembered that it was not actually water that quenched thirst nor bread that satisfied hunger.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁵ Wolfson 1976, p. 577. Wolfson gives Ibn Ḥazm as the source of the information that al-Jāhīz supported Mu‘ammar’s view on causality.

²⁴⁶ Rosenthal mentions this motive as an alternative to a religious one, but he considers that al-Jāhīz’s principal concern was the theological side of the problem. Rosenthal does not give any details as to what would have been al-Jāhīz’s theological opinions pertinent to the issue (Rosenthal 1969, p. 532).

²⁴⁷ Wolfson 1976, pp. 544-551 discusses the content and development of the theory of custom.

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 544.

²⁴⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, vol. 4, p. 249: "fa-inna jamī‘ dhālika asbāb rattabahā musabbib al-asbāb subḥānahu wa-ta‘ālā wa-ajrā bihā sunnatahu." Wolfson notes that al-Ghazālī uses *sunna* as the equivalent of ‘*āda* meaning custom (Wolfson 1976, p. 550).

²⁵⁰ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, vol. 4, pp. 250f.

6.3. The Hanbalite views

In contrast with the Sufis and speculative theologians, the Hanbalites did not find it difficult to accept medical treatment. Their attitude towards medicine was made positive by the fact that it was the Sunna of the Prophet. Even though Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal had accepted that the ascetics rejected the use of means in favour of *tawakkul*, his followers did not agree with him. Ibn ‘Aqīl (d. 513/1119) held the opinion that those who rejected the means created by God, were actually claiming that their spiritual level was higher than that of the Prophet, which showed that in reality they were deficient in their religion.²⁵¹ Ibn al-Jauzī wrote:

The one who denies God's grace by rejecting prudence, denies God's wisdom like the one who rejects food and medicine and then dies of hunger or illness. No one is more stupid than the one who lays claim to reason and knowledge but succumbs to affliction ... Men disregard the means given to them, because they are ignorant of the wisdom of the Giver. God has given food as a means against hunger, water for quenching thirst, medicine against illness. If a man rejects the means scorning them and then prays to God, he may be told: "We created means for your health. If you did not use them, you scorned our gift. Maybe we do not heal you at all, because you scorn the means."²⁵²

Ibn al-Jauzī's opinion shows that he did not share the view of the speculative theologians that God did not use intermediaries to cause events. It also indicates that he did not consider the causal nexus between the use of drugs and recovery only as a sequence constantly recreated by God, but accepted that God had created things containing properties that could be used for achieving a desired effect. For him it was water itself that quenched thirst and the drug that had a curing capacity.

This opinion was also held by Ibn Taimīya, who referred to it as the opinion of the majority (*jumhūr*) of Muslims in his book *al-Radd ‘alā al-mantiqīyīn* (The refutation of logicians). According to him the followers of al-Jahm and Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī belonged to those who denied causality, whereas the majority of Muslims accepted its existence:

It is known that in fire there is a power (*qūwa*) that necessitates heating, in water a power that necessitates cooling ... They [= the majority of Muslims] acknowledge the 'nature' (*ṭabī‘a*) which is called 'natural disposition' (*gharīza*, *naḥīza*) or characteristic (*khulq*) or custom (*‘āda*) or some other similar name.²⁵³

²⁵¹ al-Jauzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 276; also Reinert 1968, p. 242.

²⁵² al-Jauzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, p. 271.

²⁵³ Ibn Taimīya, *Kitāb al-radd ‘alā al-mantiqīyīn*, p. 94. Among the majority (*jumhūr*) accepting causality Ibn Taimīya also listed "the Mu‘tazilites who do not follow the Sunna" in spite of the fact that the majority of Mu‘tazilites rejected causality. The reason why Ibn Taimīya mentioned them may be that he ascribed the denial of causality mainly to the Ash‘arites, his contemporaries, who had developed the theory of custom.

From the context it is clear that Ibn Taimīya did not use the term custom (‘āda) with the same technical meaning as the Ash‘arites, but as a synonym for ‘nature’ or ‘natural disposition’. Therefore I think that Felix Klein-Franke was mistaken when in his Vorlesungen he claimed that Ibn Taimīya followed the Ash‘arite view on causality, because Ibn Taimīya talked about "experiences of customs" (*mujarrabāt ‘ādīyāt*) when he referred to empirical knowledge.²⁵⁴ Ibn Taimīya expressed his acceptance of causality very clearly in *Majmū‘at al-fatāwī*, in which he stated that those who denied that bread appeased hunger and water quenched thirst were not following the Koran and Sunna.²⁵⁵ Because Ibn Taimīya accepted that matter could have various capacities, he also accepted the curative properties of medicaments.

From the legal point of view, Ibn Taimīya considered medication permissible but he did not accept medication with forbidden foodstuffs, i.e. wine or pork. It was permissible for Muslims to eat pork and drink wine if they were threatened by starvation, so it could be claimed that the forbidden foodstuffs should be analogically permissible as medicaments. Ibn Taimīya rejected the analogy, because in his opinion the forbidden foodstuffs effect on hunger was certain whereas their effect on illness was not sure. Experience showed that the efficacy of medicaments was not guaranteed. There were many who took medication but were not cured. Ibn Taimīya further pointed out that there was a large variety of medicaments to choose from, therefore the use of forbidden foodstuffs could not be considered necessary.²⁵⁶

Ibn Taimīya’s rejection of the use of forbidden foodstuffs as medicaments has been interpreted as a disparagement of medicine by Fazlur Rahman in his *Health and medicine in Islamic tradition*, according to whom Ibn Taimīya’s argument on the uncertain efficacy of medicaments indicates a negative attitude to medicine.²⁵⁷ I do not think that Ibn Taimīya can be blamed for depreciating the medical science. On the contrary, the fact that he recommended the use of alternative medicaments to wine and pork shows a general approval of medication. He even showed his respect for Graeco-Islamic medicine by quoting a saying ascribed to Hippocrates, which set Greek medicine above that of the idolaters and old women.²⁵⁸

6.3.1. *The views of al-Dhahabī, Ibn Qayyim al-Jauzīya and Ibn Mufliḥ*

The discussion about whether medical treatment was advisable, futile or even an act against God’s will also affected the three authors of the Prophet’s medicine, who in the 7th/13th and 8th/14th century wrote on the subject. Muḥammad al-Dhahabī, Ibn Qayyim al-Jauzīya and Ibn Mufliḥ considered it necessary to discuss the issue and explain

²⁵⁴ Klein-Franke 1982, p. 92, note 18. The reference is to Ibn Taimīya’s *Kitāb al-radd ‘alā al-manṭiqīyīn*, p. 95, line 9.

²⁵⁵ Ibn Taimīya, *Majmū‘at al-fatāwī*, vol. 8, p. 137.

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*, vol. 24, pp. 268f.

²⁵⁷ Rahman 1987, p. 51.

²⁵⁸ Ibn Taimīya, *Majmū‘at al-fatāwī*, vol. 24, p. 268.

why they approved of medicine.

The authors accepted medical treatment because it was the Sunna of the Prophet. al-Dhahabī saw health as being essential for the performance of the prescribed prayers and acts of devotion, therefore he gave the preserving of health and treatment of illnesses an importance that placed them immediately after obedience and avoidance of forbidden things among the ways to get nearer to God.²⁵⁹ He considered medicine as one of the God-given means (*asbāb*), the use of which was not incompatible with reliance on God:

Tawakkul means that the soul (*qalb*) has confidence in God. This is not incompatible with means nor with the use of means. Rather, the one who relies on God must constantly practise the use of means. The skilful doctor does what is necessary and then depends on God for success.²⁶⁰

He further expressed his disagreement with the idea that a person should abdicate responsibility for all his own actions and passively wait for God to act, by showing that this attitude was against the word of the Koran: «Take your precautions» (4:71) and against the Sunna of the Prophet: "Hobble the camel and then rely on God".²⁶¹

Like al-Dhahabī also Ibn al-Qayyim was convinced that medication was not in conflict with *tawakkul*. He saw the use of the God-given means not only as lawful but as a prerequisite for achieving *tauḥīd*—belief in the unity of God.²⁶² He further refuted the arguments of those who considered illness and health to be predestined and medicine useless:

In the Prophet's tradition there is an answer to those who deny medication and say that because recovery is predestined medication is futile ... This question was presented by bedouins to the Prophet. The companions of the Prophet had enough knowledge of God, His wisdom and His attributes that they did not ask this kind of questions. The Prophet's answer was unequivocal and sufficient. He replied to the bedouins: "Medicaments, incantations and piety are all God's predestination (*qadar*). Everything is included in predestination, thus God's predestination is resisted by His predestination." This answer is God's predestination and there is no way to avoid it: the predestination of hunger, thirst, heat and cold are resisted by their opposites, like the predestination of the enemy is warded off by *jihād*. Everything is God's predestination: the resister, the resisted and the resistance.²⁶³

Ibn Mufliḥ's discussion of the subject was a compilation of quotations with no direct disclosure of his own opinion. However, his choice of quotations shows that he, like Ibn al-Qayyim and al-Dhahabī, considered medication as Sunna and therefore permissible. Ibn Mufliḥ first introduced the opinion that medication was permissible but rejection was better and quoted some traditions that proved *tawakkul* to be preferable.

²⁵⁹ DH, p. 15.

²⁶⁰ DH, p. 152.

²⁶¹ *ibid.*

²⁶² IQ, p. 10.

²⁶³ IQ, pp. 10f.

These he then countered by stating that the majority of the pious ancestors and later generations (*jumhūr al-salaf wa-‘āmmat al-khalaf*) favoured medicine and considered medication better than its rejection. He further quoted Ibn Hubaira's (d. 560/1165) words that medicine was a communal duty for the Muslims (*farḍ kifāya*). According to Ibn Hubaira, the rejection of treatment could be seen as suicide, which was a sin. Ibn Mufliḥ concluded the presentation by quoting several traditions that proved the Prophet's acceptance of medicine.²⁶⁴ With his quotations Ibn Mufliḥ clearly showed that the rejection of medicine was a minority phenomenon, whereas the majority of Muslims had always considered medication to be the Sunna.

Apart from the issue of *tawakkul*, the authors had to clarify their attitude towards causality. All the three authors seem to have shared the Hanbalite view on causality although only Ibn al-Qayyim expressed his acceptance clearly and strongly. al-Dhahabī did not discuss the issue directly, but his opinion can be seen in this passage:

The one who drinks a poisonous or unknown drug that kills him has committed a sin, because the Prophet has said: "He who poisons himself, will have the poison in his hand and drink it in the fire of hell".²⁶⁵

al-Dhahabī's words can be interpreted as a very concise expression of his view on the natural characteristics of drugs. In al-Dhahabī's opinion, not only a person who took poison knowing its effect, but also a person who drank a drug without knowing its qualities endangered his salvation: if the drug proved to be poisonous, he was condemned to hell for the sin of suicide. This implies that to al-Dhahabī drugs contained natural properties and their effect could be either poisonous or salutary. al-Dhahabī did not share the Ash‘arite view that the causal nexus between the drug and its effect was only apparent.

Ibn Mufliḥ mentioned the question of causality when he discussed the evil eye. He stated that the scholars did not agree on the issue. According to Ibn Mufliḥ the denial of causality could be used to deny responsibility. If there was no true causal nexus between the evil eye and the damage that occurred, then the person having the evil eye could not be held responsible. Ibn Mufliḥ was opposed to this and maintained that the possessor of the evil eye who wilfully caused damage to another had to be held responsible. He further explained that the victim can deflect the evil eye and maybe even bounce it back to the possessor if he is prepared.²⁶⁶ This indicates that Ibn Mufliḥ accepted causality although he did not state his opinion very clearly. His equivocal attitude to the theoretical concept of causality did not prevent him from accepting it in practice. This is shown by his frequent use of expressions such as 'causes' (*asbāb*) of illnesses and 'qualities' (*khawāṣṣ*) of drugs or foodstuffs.

In contrast to both al-Dhahabī and Ibn Mufliḥ, Ibn al-Qayyim expressed his acceptance of causality very directly. He rejected the theory formulated by the

²⁶⁴ IM, vol. 2, pp. 358-363. The reference is to Ibn Hubaira's book *al-Ifṣāḥ ‘an ma‘ānī al-ṣaḥḥāh*.

²⁶⁵ DH, p. 152.

²⁶⁶ IM, vol. 3, pp. 70f.

speculative theologians that created things could not influence other created things. He considered that the words of the Prophet "For every illness there is a cure" proved that God had not only created a thing but that He had also created its opposite, which could destroy it. God had created the illness and He had created its opposite, the medicine. Each illness had its own specific cure, also those illnesses that seemed incurable. The reason why men did not know the cures of all illnesses was that God had not revealed the knowledge to them, not that God had refrained from creating the cure.²⁶⁷ According to Ibn al-Qayyim all bodies (*ajsām*) and spirits (*arwāḥ*) possessed natural characteristics (*ṭabāʿiʿ*) and capacities (*quwā*), which God had created in them. Many of these characteristics could influence other created things.²⁶⁸ Medicaments were bodies that God had given the capacity to cure. Ibn al-Qayyim expressed his views about causation at more length in his book *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, in which he maintained that God had created one thing to be the cause of another. He rejected the Ashʿarite theory of custom and wrote:

Only the dim-witted agree that the true belief in the unity of God (*tauḥīd*) demands that fire does not burn, bread does not nourish, and the sword does not cut ... and that the Creator wills each effect to come about when one thing meets another.²⁶⁹

In Ibn al-Qayyim's opinion there was a true connection between cause and effect that did not require constant creation:

If God wills, he can counteract the causality (*sababīyat al-shaiʿ*) ... He can raise obstacles to the causes that prevent their effect even though the causes retain their qualities.²⁷⁰

In his *Vorlesungen* Klein-Franke claimed that Ibn al-Qayyim accepted the Ashʿarite view on causality and therefore rejected medicine as futile. Klein-Franke supported this claim by quoting a passage from Ibn al-Qayyim's *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, here in Klein-Franke's translation:

Die Körper haben weder Fähigkeit, noch Natur oder Instinkt. Das Wasser, beispielweise, hat nicht die Fähigkeit abzukühlen, das Feuer nicht die Fähigkeit zu erhitzen, die Speisen nicht die Fähigkeit zu nähren und die Arzneien nicht die Fähigkeit zu heilen ... In [Gottes] Werken gibt es kein 'bā', das den Grund angibt und kein 'lām', das die Ursache bezeichnet.²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ IQ, p. 9.

²⁶⁸ IQ, p. 130.

²⁶⁹ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziya, *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, pp. 317f.

²⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 317.

²⁷¹ Klein-Franke 1982, p. 123. The passage is in the Preface (*Muqaddima*) of *Shifāʾ al-ʿalīl*, in Klein-Franke's edition p. 4 and in my edition p. 6.

Klein-Franke failed to notice that the passage he translated did not represent Ibn al-Qayyim's own opinions but formed a part of Ibn al-Qayyim's description of the opinions of the speculative theologians (*mutakallimūn*) on predestination, causality, divine attributes, etc. Ibn al-Qayyim concluded his description of these—in his opinion—erroneous views by saying that because there was obviously an urgent need for correct information on the questions of predestination (*al-qaḍā' wal-qadar*), reason (*ḥikma*) and assigning causes (*ta'ālil*), he had worked hard (*ijtahadtū*) to assemble the present book.²⁷² Klein-Franke's mistake may have been based on a misguided impression that all the scholars of religious sciences had the same idea on the theory of causality, regardless of their affiliation to various schools. Klein-Franke also showed a tendency to consider all theologians as opponents of medicine.

²⁷² Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Shifā' al-ʿalīl*, p. 7.