

10. Excessive emotions as illnesses of the soul

In Graeco-Islamic medicine, illnesses were divided into physical diseases and diseases of the soul (*amrāq al-nafs*) that were of a moral character. According to the medical view excessive emotions—such as anger (*ghaḍab*), worry (*hamm*) and passionate love (*‘ishq*)—were illnesses that required treatment. This was based on the idea that body and soul formed a unit each part affecting the other. Therefore if the soul was ill, the body also suffered and vice versa. According to this view physical symptoms could be caused by emotions. Due to this interaction the doctor had always to be aware that emotional balance was as important as physical balance. The doctor should not only concentrate on the physical aspect of the diseases, because the physical symptoms could have emotional causes. For example, if the doctor noticed that the patient had the symptoms of worry (*hamm*)—deep-set tearless eyes—he first had to drive away the worry from the patient’s soul and only then could he successfully deal with the physical symptoms.⁵¹⁸ It was important to cure emotional imbalance, because excessive emotions could have serious consequences: uncontrolled passions could develop into incurable mental diseases⁵¹⁹ or they could weaken the innate heat and cause death.⁵²⁰

The idea that the health of the soul and the health of the body were interdependent led the doctors to give ethical and moral instructions that were meant to prevent emotional disturbances. For example, al-Rāzī wrote a book titled *al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī* (Spiritual medicine), which contained instructions on how to avoid excessive emotions or how to cure one’s soul of them as soon as possible. A similar type of a book was written by the Hanbalite scholar Ibn al-Jauzī. His book carried the same title *al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī*, but its content had a more religious flavour. This can be illustrated by comparing the two authors’ views on the best way of life. al-Rāzī based his view on the teachings of the philosophers and claimed that a man should endeavour to live quietly without quarrelling with people, he should be just and honest, help others and feel sympathy towards them.⁵²¹ Ibn al-Jauzī’s advice was not so much different but it was expressed in the language of religion. He recommended that a man should defeat his passions and avoid what God has forbidden. He should treat people with fairness and give them his advice whenever they asked for it. His body should be among people but his soul (*qalb*) should be with God.⁵²²

⁵¹⁸ Ibn Bakhtīshū‘, *al-Risāla fī al-ṭibb wal-aḥdāth al-nafsānīya*, p. 28 (Einleitung) and pp. 53 and 62 (in the Arabic text).

⁵¹⁹ Siegel 1973, p. 216.

⁵²⁰ Ibn Sīnā, *al-Qānūn*, vol. 2, pp. 94f.

⁵²¹ al-Rāzī, *al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī*, pp. 91f.

The authors of the Prophet's medicine also recognized the existence of illnesses of the soul. Ibn al-Qayyim classified illnesses into illnesses of the body (*amrāḍ al-badan*) and illnesses of the heart (*amrāḍ al-qalb*). He based this division on the text in the Koran which mentions both groups. The verse «In their hearts there is a sickness, and God has increased their sickness» (2:10) mentioned the disease of the heart, and the diseases of the body were referred to in the verses giving special instructions about pilgrimage, fasting and ritual ablutions for the ones who are ill.⁵²³

He further divided the illnesses of the heart into two groups. The first group included the diseases of uncertainty (*shubha*) and doubt (*shakk*) and the second the diseases of lust (*shahwa*) and seduction (*ghayy*). Also this division was in accordance with the text of the Koran. The diseases of uncertainty and doubt were referred to in three verses: «In their hearts is a sickness, and God has increased their sickness» (2:10); «And that those in whose hearts there is a sickness, and the unbelievers, may say, 'What did God intend by this as a similitude?'" (74:31); «When they are called to God and His Messenger that he may judge between them, lo, a party of them are swerving aside, but if they are in the right, they will come to him submissively. What, is there sickness in their hearts, or are they in doubt, or do they fear that God and His Messenger may be unjust towards them?»⁵²⁴ Nay, but those—they are the evildoers» (24:48-50). The diseases of lust and seduction were mentioned in the verse «Wives of the Prophet, you are not as other women. If you are godfearing, be not abject in your speech, so that he in whose heart is sickness may be lustful; but speak honourable words» (33:32).⁵²⁵

Ibn al-Qayyim devoted one long chapter to passionate love (*'ishq*) and another to the diseases of worry (*hamm*) and grief (*ghamm*, *ḥuzn*). He did not mention which main group of heart diseases these emotions belonged to, but obviously passionate love was a disease of lust, whereas worry and grief could be listed under the heading of diseases of doubt.

Also Ibn Muflīḥ divided illnesses in a similar manner.⁵²⁶ His presentation bears a close resemblance to that of Ibn al-Qayyim, but it is much more concise. Ibn Muflīḥ described passionate love in an independent chapter characterizing it as a disease of lust. al-Dhahabī did not present any classification of illnesses, but, in addition to physical illnesses, he also dealt with moral diseases in independent chapters and therefore seems to have recognized the same grouping of illnesses as Ibn Muflīḥ and Ibn al-Qayyim.

Both Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Muflīḥ used the term *amrāḍ al-qalb* (diseases of heart/soul) instead of *amrāḍ al-nafs* (diseases of soul), although the latter was current

⁵²² Ibn al-Jauzī, *al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī*, pp. 66f.

⁵²³ IQ, pp. 1f.

⁵²⁴ In verse 24:50 I have deviated from Arthur J Arberry's translation. He translated it as follows: «... or do they fear that God may be unjust towards them and His Messenger?» The Arabic text is: «... am yakhāfūna an yaḥīfa Allāhu 'alaihim wa-rasūluhu».

⁵²⁵ IQ, p. 2.

⁵²⁶ IM, vol. 3, p. 123.

in the medical literature. There can be found two reasons for this choice of the term. One is that *amrād al-qalb* can be considered to have Koranic authority, whereas *amrād al-nafs*—the term used by doctors of the Graeco-Islamic school—cannot. The other reason is the meaning of the word *qalb* in Muslim mystical thinking. For the mystics *nafs* was the sensual soul, which drew man to the world of senses and opposed man's desire to come closer to God. In contrast *qalb* was the organ of awareness of God. The heart reflected the light of God and had knowledge of God. The increase of the heart's knowledge of God and the purification of the heart from evil were the goals of the mystic. This division of the soul was indicated when Ibn al-Qayyim wrote:

One thing is the life of the animal, passionate soul (*al-nafs al-bahīmīya al-shahwānīya*) and its health and strength. Another different thing is the life of the heart (*qalb*), its health and strength. The one who cannot distinguish between these two things must weep for the life of his heart, because his heart is dead. He must weep for the light of his heart, because his heart is drowned in the seas of darkness.⁵²⁷

The authors of the Prophet's medicine were aware of the current medical views on the interdependence of body and soul and on the necessity of emotional balance. Following the views of Graeco-Islamic medicine, al-Dhahabī warned against the dangers of uncontrolled emotions. The emotions he listed were anger (*ghaḍab*), joy (*farah*), worry (*hamm*), grief (*ghamm*) and shame (*khajal*). He did not describe the physical effects of the emotions in any detail, but confined himself to a few remarks. For example, anger heated the body and dried it, whereas worry and grief could cause fever. Also excessive joy was dangerous: it could cause death.⁵²⁸ Therefore excesses should be avoided and emotional balance should be maintained.

The model for a Muslim's behaviour was the Prophet, and he never acted in anger. al-Dhahabī quoted some traditions to prove this. According to one of them a bedouin had pulled the Prophet's cloak so hard that it hurt his neck and had then said to the Prophet: "Muḥammad, give me some of God's property that is in your possession". The Prophet turned to him, laughed and ordered that a gift should be given to him.⁵²⁹ The Prophet had also advised Muslims not to act in anger and had said: "Anger is from the Devil. The Devil was created from fire. Fire is extinguished by water. When one of you gets angry, he should perform ablutions (*wuḍū'*)."⁵³⁰

It was not only medically correct to avoid excessive emotions, but it was also in accordance with the Islamic ideal of learning to restrain emotions. The indulgence in emotions not only endangered man's physical well-being but also his salvation at the Last Judgement. Excessive emotions were not acceptable to God. This al-Dhahabī proved by referring to verses such as «... a garden whose breadth is as the heavens

⁵²⁷ IQ, pp. 3f.

⁵²⁸ DH, pp. 45-47.

⁵²⁹ DH, p. 18.

⁵³⁰ DH, p. 46.

and earth, prepared for the godfearing who ... restrain their rage» (3:133-134) and «God does not love those that exult» (28:76). The Prophet had taught that the correct way to restrain emotions was to turn to God in prayer. For example, if a person felt anger he should say: "I seek the protection of God against the accursed Satan". This should quieten his emotion. A person who wanted to avoid worry and grief could follow the example of the Prophet and add to each ritual prayer a supplication against them. The more a person is afflicted by misfortune the more often he should say: "There is no power and no strength save in God, the High and Mighty".⁵³¹

al-Dhahabī was not only concerned about restraining these emotions, but he also gave more general instructions on conduct. He called them electuaries (*ma'jūn*). The first of the electuaries consisted of eating what was permissible, being pious, refraining from what was doubtful, guarding the external and internal parts of the body, letting knowledge govern the soul, guarding the inmost by observation, and begging God to give protection against the lustful soul (*nafs*), passions and the Devil.⁵³² The second electuary was given in the form of an anecdote about Dhū al-Nūn:

It is related that Dhū al-Nūn once passed by a doctor who was surrounded by men and women with vessels containing urine samples. To each of them the doctor gave a prescription. Dhū al-Nūn tells: "I approached the doctor and greeted him. The doctor returned the greeting and I asked: 'May God have mercy on you, give me a prescription against the disease of sin'. The doctor bowed his head and was silent for a moment. Then he lifted his head and said: 'If I give you a prescription, will you pay attention and understand what I mean?' I said that I would, and then the doctor continued: 'Take roots of poverty with the leaves of patience, the myrobalan of humility, the belleric of submission, the tamarind of obedience, the polypody of purity, the birthwort of sincerity, the agaric of fidelity. Put the ingredients into the casserole of chastity and keep it on the fire of love until there appears a froth of wisdom. Then strain the concoction through the sieve of invocation and pour it into the cup of contentment. Fan it with a fan of praise until it cools. When it is cool, drink it and then rinse your mouth with godfearingness. After this you will never again commit a sin.'"⁵³³

This electuary was intended to give both a good life in this world and to ensure salvation after death. As a theologian al-Dhahabī was not only concerned with the physical well-being of the people but also with their spiritual state. The way of life that he considered to be the best was to live in accordance with the Islamic ideal.

al-Dhahabī stressed the importance of emotional balance and warned against excesses, but he confined himself to briefly presenting the current medical view on the interaction of the body and soul without a thorough discussion on the religious aspects of the emotions, adding only a few instructions on ethical conduct. In contrast, Ibn al-Qayyim's presentation of the excessive emotions was much more detailed. He considered the influence of excessive emotions on man's life and future salvation. He

⁵³¹ DH, pp. 45-47.

⁵³² DH, p. 204.

⁵³³ DH, p. 205.

claimed that curing diseases of the heart should be given precedence over curing the body, because the deterioration of the body was only temporal, whereas the consequences of a diseased heart were eternal: "Curing the body without curing the heart is useless. If the body is destroyed when the heart is cured, it is an insignificant loss. It is a transitory loss amended by the eternal and perfect gain."⁵³⁴

Ibn al-Qayyim, like al-Dhahabī, expressed his opinion on the most favoured way of life. al-Dhahabī gave his instructions in the form of the two electuaries quoted above, which exhorted Muslims to live up to the Islamic ideal. Ibn al-Qayyim's instructions were equally Islamic. He stressed the importance of keeping the heart healthy: according to Ibn al-Qayyim the health of the heart meant that "the heart is aware of its Lord and Creator. It knows His names, character, deeds and judgements. The heart is content with Him and loves Him. The heart avoids what God has forbidden and what arouses His anger. Only in this way does the heart achieve health and life. The health of the heart is only reached through the prophets. Some think that it can be achieved without following the prophets, but they are mistaken."⁵³⁵

10.1. *Passionate love ('ishq)*

In Graeco-Islamic medicine passionate love was one of the excessive emotions that damaged the functions of the body by making the soul lose its natural balance. Ibn Bakhtūshū⁶ (d. after 450/1058) defined passionate love to be love that was exaggerated and connected with a desire for sexual pleasure. The physical symptoms of the disease were dryness and emaciation of the body, tearful eyes, the yellow colour of the skin. Further symptoms were frequent deep sighs and an irregular pulse. The irregularities of the pulse were caused by the patient's thoughts: when the patient thought that he would reach his goal, the pulse became stronger and when he despaired, the pulse became weaker. The pulse was most irregular when the patient suddenly saw his beloved or heard his/her voice.⁵³⁶

Ibn Sīnā explained in *al-Qānūn* how the doctor could determine the object of the patient's passion by feeling the pulse. For therapeutic purposes it was necessary for the doctor to know who the beloved was, but often the lover was reluctant to divulge his or her identity. Ibn Sīnā instructed that after ascertaining that the patient suffered from passionate love, the doctor should proceed, all the time keeping his fingers on the patient's pulse, to list names repeating them occasionally. If the pulse became fitful every time a certain name was mentioned, the doctor could feel confident that he had discovered the correct name. After ascertaining the name of the beloved in this way, the doctor should continue to use the same method in order to find out more details about the beloved: where he/she lived, which family he/she belonged to and what his/her profession was.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁴ IQ, p. 18.

⁵³⁵ IQ, p. 3.

⁵³⁶ Ibn Bakhtūshū⁶, *al-Risāla fī al-tibb wal-aḥdāth al-nafsāniya*, pp. 46, 49 and 53 (of the Arabic text).

⁵³⁷ Ibn Sīnā, *al-Qānūn*, vol. 2, p. 72.

In their books on the Prophet's medicine, Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Muflīḥ did not present any of the above-mentioned physical symptoms of passionate love. Ibn Muflīḥ only mentioned that a person suffering from *‘ishq* withered and could even die.⁵³⁸ Ibn al-Qayyim dealt with the same disease in another book *al-Jawāb al-kāfī li-man sa’ala ‘an al-dawā’ al-shāfī*, also known as *al-Dā’ wal-dawā’*, and there he briefly referred to its physical consequences: "Passionate love makes the body ill and emaciates it; it may even cause death. This is demonstrated by stories about persons whom *‘ishq* killed."⁵³⁹ By giving the physical aspects of the disease only minor attention, the authors obviously wanted to indicate that the spiritual damage it caused was far more serious than any physical discomfort.

If a person suffered from *‘ishq*, he had to suppress it so that it did not lead him to commit a sin. In *al-Jawāb al-kāfī* Ibn al-Qayyim presented the behaviour of some eminent predecessors as exemplary, who had remained chaste in spite of their passion. According to Ibn al-Qayyim "their religion, virtue and sense of honour prevented them from committing a sin that would have corrupted their relationship with God and with their beloved".⁵⁴⁰

One of these persons was Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Dā’ūd al-Zāhirī (d. 297/910), a jurist and a poet, who suffered from a forbidden passion. Even though his passion caused him physical suffering, he remained chaste and concealed his feeling. Ibn al-Qayyim related the discussion that had taken place between Abū Bakr al-Zāhirī and Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad Niṭṭawaihi (d. 323/935), a grammarian, when the passion had weakened Abū Bakr al-Zāhirī so much that he was dying. When Niṭṭawaihi asked Abū Bakr al-Zāhirī how he was, Abū Bakr al-Zāhirī answered: "The love for the one you know caused me what you see". Niṭṭawaihi asked: "What prevented you from enjoying your love, when you had the strength for it?" Abū Bakr al-Zāhirī answered: "Enjoyment has two sides. One of them is looking, which is a morally neutral act. The other is pleasure, which is forbidden. The permissible looking caused me what you are seeing, whereas I was prevented from obtaining the forbidden pleasure by the hadith: 'Who loves passionately but conceals it remaining virtuous and patient, is pardoned by God and allowed to enter paradise.'" The forbidden character of Abū Bakr al-Zāhirī's love was clarified by the verses he then recited to Niṭṭawaihi:

Look at the enchantment in his glances.
 Look at the pupils in his tranquil eyes.
 Look at the hairs on his cheeks;
 they are like ants crawling on ivory.

Why did they disapprove of the blackness on his cheeks,
 when they do not disapprove of flowers on branches.
 If the light hair is the disgrace of his cheeks,
 then the lashes must be the disgrace of eyes.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁸ IM, vol. 3, pp. 124f.

⁵³⁹ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziya, *al-Jawāb al-kāfī*, p. 220.

⁵⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 227.

⁵⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 228.

After telling this story Ibn al-Qayyim quoted the words written by Abū Bakr al-Zāhiri in his book *al-Zahra* that seem to explain why he died of *‘ishq*: "If the one who gives up all hope of obtaining the one he desires does not die at that moment, he will forget his beloved, because the first shock of giving up all hope takes the heart unawares, whereas the second shock finds the heart prepared by the first".⁵⁴²

Abū Bakr al-Zāhiri belonged to a group of scholars whose passions were famous. Ibn al-Qayyim considered these scholars blameless and claimed that anyone who blamed them was himself a wrongdoer.⁵⁴³ What made Ibn al-Qayyim deem Abū Bakr al-Zāhiri free of any blame in spite of the forbidden character of his passion, was that his *‘ishq* did not exceed his love of God. Abū Bakr al-Zāhiri's suppression of his passion proved that he gave God and His law first priority. He gave up his beloved rather than yielded to sin. The fact that the shock of the renouncement caused his death was not so important, because he died loving God and was thus saved from eternal damnation.

In contrast to the view of Graeco-Islamic medicine, Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Muflīh did not consider physical suffering as the factor that defined passion as an illness, rather the threat that passion led a person to commit sins made it a moral disease that required treatment. Unchecked *‘ishq* could damage a person's soul (*qalb*) to the extent that he lost his faith and could not gain salvation. The gravest danger the soul was exposed to, was that *‘ishq* developed into idolatry (*shirk*), which was an unforgivable sin. Idolatry was possible because the lover could be so obsessed with the desire for his beloved that his love for God weakened and he neglected his duties to God. According to Ibn Muflīh, the lover in such a case made the object of his love his god. If a person remained faithful to God, his heart was satisfied with that, and he did not feel tempted to find other objects of worship.⁵⁴⁴

In Ibn al-Qayyim's words *‘ishq* was an intoxicant that made the lover's spirit drunk and prevented it from mentioning God's name and loving him. It was characteristic of passionate love that the lover admired his beloved and desired sexual union with him, whereas a true Muslim filled his heart with love for God and a desire to meet Him. The beloved had, in the heart of the lover, become a rival to God and the attempt to share one's love between a created beloved and the Creator was the foundation of idolatry. Ibn al-Qayyim stressed that it was not possible for a man to contain in his heart both love for the Supreme Beloved (*al-maḥbūb al-a‘lā*) and passion for a created being, because these two loves were mutually exclusive. Therefore one of the two objects of love had to be excluded from the heart. If a man loved God, he could not feel a passion for anyone else, but if he suffered from a passionate love for something created, there was no place in his heart for God. Whatever the object of the passion was—women, beardless young men or graven images—he came to worship this object and this led him to abandon Islam.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴² *ibid.*, pp. 228f.

⁵⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 227.

⁵⁴⁴ IM, vol. 3, pp. 125 and 131.

⁵⁴⁵ IQ, pp. 207f, 213 and Ibn Qayyim al-Jauzīya, *al-Jawāb al-kāfi*, pp. 189f.

Ishq was an illness that could be cured with suitable treatment. According to Ibn al-Qayyim, passionate love had two necessary components: the admiration of the beloved and the desire for physical union. When one of these was absent, the love lost its excessive character. As long as the patient felt an unfulfilled sexual desire, his passion did not diminish, but when this desire was consummated, the passion in its obsessive form disappeared. Therefore the best possible cure for *‘ishq* was a lawful union of the lovers. This was recommended by both Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Muflīh, and the same view was also held by the doctors of the Graeco-Islamic school. Ibn Sīnā claimed that he had seen how a languishing patient had regained his health and strength after he had been united with his beloved.⁵⁴⁶ For Ibn al-Qayyim the return of physical well-being was of secondary importance; the main thing was that the lover's soul was saved from destruction. If the man continued to feel passion towards his beloved—now his wife or slave—it was no longer a disease that threatened his religion, but the passion had, in Ibn al-Qayyim's view, changed character and become salutary (*nāfi‘*), because it was now an incentive for the man to comply with God's law, i.e. only to have lawful sexual intercourse and to avoid the temptations of adultery.⁵⁴⁷

If it was not possible for the lover to be legally together with his beloved, the disease was more difficult to cure. According to Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Muflīh, the only cure then was to give up all hope of ever obtaining the beloved. When the soul became assured that there was no hope, it relaxed and forgot the beloved. In the case where relinquishing was difficult, both authors recommended the lover to realize that if he persisted in his passion, he would lose God, his true beloved. A created being could only give the lover a moment's pleasure, which would soon change into pain. According to Ibn al-Qayyim, that pleasure was not real but a sleeper's dream and pure fantasy, whereas the pleasure given by God was real and eternal. After understanding this it would not be difficult for the lover to endure the pain of giving up the beloved. This pain would disappear quickly and instead the lover would feel happiness and joy, because he had been able to retain his love to God.

This argument was obviously sufficient for a person concerned for his eternal life, but the authors of the Prophet's medicine seem to have been aware that there were also people for whom the thought of pleasures in the hereafter were not enough to make them relinquish worldly pleasures. For lovers that belonged to this category Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Muflīh recommended that they should think of the worldly problems they would encounter if they pursued their unattainable love. Ibn al-Qayyim did not specify these problems, but merely stated that passionate love prevented the lover from acting reasonably and obtaining advantages in the world. Ibn Muflīh explained that indulging in passion caused poverty and aroused other people's anger. Obviously a passion that could not find an outlet in a lawful union could obsess the lover to such an extent that he neglected his work and was impoverished or he would be disgraced in public.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁶ Ibn Sīnā, *al-Qānūn*, vol. 2, p. 72.

⁵⁴⁷ IQ, pp. 208-210 and Ibn Qayyim *al-Jawāb al-kāfi*, p. 247. IM, vol. 3, p. 129.

⁵⁴⁸ IQ, pp. 211f. IM, vol. 3, pp. 127 and 129.

If the fear of these adversities failed to have an effect on the feelings of the lover, he should try to find faults in his beloved. If he tried hard enough, he would soon find that the shortcomings of his beloved clearly outweighed his/her charms. This would make him dislike his beloved, and the desired goal was thus achieved. If all these treatments proved to be ineffective, the only alternative left for the lover was to seek refuge in God: "He shall throw himself down in front of God at His gate entreating His help humbly and submissively".⁵⁴⁹ In Ibn Mufliḥ's opinion this medicament was the strongest of them all.⁵⁵⁰

The treatments Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Mufliḥ proposed differed somewhat from the ones recommended by Ibn Sīnā. The authors of the Prophet's medicine concentrated solely on the psychological method, whereas Ibn Sīnā combined it with physical medication. Correction of the patient's temperament by nutriment and medicaments formed an important part of Ibn Sīnā's cure but was totally neglected by Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Mufliḥ. The psychological treatments they presented were not identical in detail with the ones presented by Ibn Sīnā, even though their ultimate goal—the curing of the passion—was the same. Ibn al-Qayyim's and Ibn Mufliḥ's intention was to get the patient to renounce his passion. This could be achieved by making the lover aware of the danger that the passion formed both to his future salvation and to success in his present life or he could be made to recognize the shortcomings of the beloved, which would then lead him to dislike the beloved. In contrast to this, Ibn Sīnā's goal was—if lawful union was not possible—to divert the lover's thoughts from the beloved and in this way make him forget him. The diversions he recommended were secular in character: discussions, work, play and hunting. New slave-women should be purchased to entice him into frequent sexual intercourse. Old women should be asked to tell him negative things about his beloved and they should gradually steer the lover's passion towards another person, with whom a union could be arranged.⁵⁵¹ Obviously the basis for these nuances in the proposed treatments was the difference in motivation of the scholars. For Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Mufliḥ, as moral theologians, it was important that the lover himself realized that his emotion was destructive and had to be eradicated, whereas Ibn Sīnā, as a doctor, was more concerned with restoring the physical well-being of the patient. Whether the patient was fully aware of his disease or not was less relevant.

10.2. Grief (*ghamm/ḥuzn*)

Grief was also an emotion that was considered an illness. According to Ibn Sīnā excess in grief could lead to melancholy (*malankhūliyā*), which was a serious corruption of the psychical pneuma of the brain.⁵⁵² al-Rāzī considered it a person's duty to

⁵⁴⁹ IQ, p. 212.

⁵⁵⁰ IM, vol. 3, p. 129.

⁵⁵¹ Ibn Sīnā, al-Qānūn, vol. 2, p. 72.

⁵⁵² Ibn Sīnā, al-Qānūn, vol. 2, pp. 65f.

avoid or diminish grief, because it was harmful for both soul and body.⁵⁵³ Grief was best avoided by not becoming too attached to anyone:

Since the substance out of which sorrows are generated is simply and solely the loss of one's loved ones, and since it is impossible that these loved ones should not be lost because men have their turns with them and by reason of the fact that they are subject to the succession of generation and corruption, it follows that the man most severely afflicted by grief must be he who has the greatest number of loved ones and whose love is the most ardent, while the man least affected by grief is he whose circumstances are the reverse. It would therefore seem that the intelligent man ought to cut away from himself the substance of his griefs, by making himself independent of the things whose loss involves him in grief; and that he should not be deceived and deluded by the sweetness they impart while they remain in being, but rather keep in mind and image the bitterness that must be tasted when they are lost.⁵⁵⁴

Even though al-Rāzī presented a life free of deep emotional ties as the ideal, he did admit that it was natural for a man to have these ties, to possess loved ones. Therefore, because most men could not live without loved ones, they should prepare themselves for their loss. A man should constantly remind himself that everything, also his loved ones, perished. By frequently picturing to himself the future loss, he would discipline and strengthen his soul, so that when the misfortune actually occurred, he would be prepared and would not feel severe pain.⁵⁵⁵

When the intelligent man examines and considers those things within this world which are affected by the alternation of generation and corruption, when he perceives that their element is changeable and dissoluble and fluid, that nothing is constant or permanent as an individual, but rather that all things pass away and perish and change and decay and vanish; when he reflects on all this, he ought not to take too much to heart or feel too outraged or stricken by the sudden deprivation of anything. On the contrary, he must reckon the period of their survival to be an advantage, and the enjoyment he has of them a positive gain, seeing that they will inevitably perish and cease to be. Then it will not seem very terrible or important to him when the end comes, because that is a thing which must come upon them sooner or later. So long as he goes on desiring that they should survive for ever, he is yearning for the impossible, and by yearning for the impossible he is bound to bring grief upon himself, and follow the inclinations of his passion rather than his reason.⁵⁵⁶

When an intelligent man met with a calamity, he should not allow himself to be overwhelmed with grief. al-Rāzī accepted that even an intelligent man could not remain

⁵⁵³ al-Rāzī, *al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī*, p. 64.

⁵⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 65. The English translation: Arberry 1950, p. 69.

⁵⁵⁵ al-Rāzī, *al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī*, pp. 66f.

⁵⁵⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 67f. The English translation: Arberry 1950, p. 72.

totally free of grief, but if he had trained himself to resort to reason, he should be able to return to his normal balanced state of mind very quickly. The most reasonable thing such a man could do was to try to forget his grief, by diverting his thoughts from his loss and occupying his mind with other things. He should also remember that it was usual for men to meet with disasters and that his case therefore was nothing unexpected or exceptional. In this way the intelligent man would not suffer from his grief unduly but would soon regain his emotional balance.⁵⁵⁷

Among the three authors of the Prophet's medicine, Ibn al-Qayyim was the only one who discussed grief at some length.⁵⁵⁸ al-Dhahabī confined himself to a few remarks on the physical consequences of grief.⁵⁵⁹ Ibn Mufliḥ mentioned grief only in connection with the hadiths about the grief-expelling qualities of barley gruel (*talbīna*) without any further treatment of the subject.⁵⁶⁰ Therefore I will here concentrate on Ibn al-Qayyim's views and compare them to those of al-Rāzī.

al-Rāzī was a rationalist, who expressed his views in terms of Hellenistic philosophy. Therefore his survey of grief did not contain religious considerations, whereas Ibn al-Qayyim naturally gave them prominence. al-Rāzī pointed out that by observing his surroundings, a reasonable man was bound to realize that nothing in this world was constant and to wish things to be otherwise was folly. Ibn al-Qayyim did not emphasize the perishability of all things but instead reminded the reader that everything created was God's property, of which He could dispose freely. Whatever family or property a man had, it was only lent to him by God. If God chose to take it from him, it was as if the owner claimed back his property from a borrower. Man's property and his loved ones were just an enjoyment God had given him for a limited period. Ibn al-Qayyim found this confirmed by the Koran: «... yet give thou good tidings unto the patient who, when they are visited by an affliction say, 'Surely we belong to God, and to Him we return', upon those rest blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those—they are the truly guided» (2:155-157).

Ibn al-Qayyim not only showed that it was foolish to grieve over losing something one had not even ever possessed but he pointed out that excessive grief was actually an act of disobedience. Because God as the creator possessed everything, man did not have the right to consider anything his own. Neither did he have the right to grieve for the loss of a thing as if he had lost something of his own. The only proper way to react to a loss was to accept it as the will of God and show patience. Grieving would only anger God and endanger salvation. If a believer truly loved God, he did not disagree with Him but was content with whatever He decreed. A believer's dissatisfaction only proved that his love for God was not real but feigned.

Ibn al-Qayyim acknowledged that all believers had not reached the level of true love in their religious development, and therefore unquestioning contentment could not be expected of everyone. For the benefit of the believers whose faith was weaker, Ibn

⁵⁵⁷ al-Rāzī, *al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī*, p. 68.

⁵⁵⁸ IQ, pp. 147-156.

⁵⁵⁹ DH, p. 46.

⁵⁶⁰ IM, vol. 2, p. 375.

al-Qayyim presented several arguments that should encourage them to demonstrate patience in the face of misfortunes. Echoing al-Rāzī's opinion, he explained that it was futile to expect constant happiness in this world: "The joys of the world are a dream or a passing shadow. If the world makes you laugh a little, it makes you cry a lot. If it delights a day, it torments a lifetime."⁵⁶¹ Only in paradise could man enjoy true happiness and therefore it was important not to lose the opportunity to enter paradise: "Consider the lasting grace, eternal happiness and the greatest victory God has prepared for His saints and for the obedient. Consider also the disgrace, the punishments and the everlasting distress God has prepared for the idle and neglectful. Then choose the group you find the most appropriate for yourself."⁵⁶²

In order to make the right choice, the believer had to understand that God did not send the misfortunes to torment or destroy the believer but to inspect him, to test his patience, contentment and faith. God wanted the believer to supplicate humbly, to prostrate himself in front of Him, to seek refuge in Him. Ibn al-Qayyim explained that the misfortunes were like a smelting furnace that brought out the essence of the believer: either gold or dross. God could also use misfortunes as a medicament for pride, conceit and a hard heart. These were illnesses that destroyed man's life in this world and the hereafter, but if God wanted He could send man a cure in the form of an affliction that would make man humble. Therefore it was more appropriate to feel gratitude in misfortune than to feel grief.

When the believer then compared the two pleasures—the lost worldly pleasure and the pleasure of God's reward—he could choose the one he preferred. If he found the divine reward more pleasing, he would praise God in his misfortune. If he gave preference to the worldly pleasure, he showed that he had suffered a great loss in his reason, heart and religion. Ibn al-Qayyim stressed that man's acts indicate what he has been predestined to get: salvation or damnation. This view he confirmed with the Prophet's words: "When God loves a people, He afflicts them. The one who is content, for him is contentment. The one who is angry, for him is anger."⁵⁶³ It was the believer's reaction to the misfortune that indicated what his fate was to be:

Your fate is what misfortune causes you. Choose either the best of fates or the worst of them. If the misfortune causes and unbelief in a believer anger, he has been recorded in the list of the damned. If it causes apprehension in him, the negligence of duties and makes him to do what is forbidden, he has been recorded in the list of the wasted. If it makes him complain and loose patience, he has been recorded in the list of the deceived. If it causes him to oppose God and to reject His wisdom, he knocks at the door of atheism or goes in by that door. If the misfortune causes the believer to be patient and remain firm in his relationship with God, he has been recorded in the list of the patient. If it causes him to feel contentment, he has been recorded in the list of the content. If it makes him praise and thank God, he has been recorded in the list of the thankful and he follows the banner of praise together with those who praise God constantly. If it causes him to love God and to desire to meet Him, he has been recorded in the list of the faithful lovers.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶¹ IQ, p. 148.

⁵⁶² IQ, p. 153.

⁵⁶³ IQ, p. 151.

Ibn al-Qayyim gave precedence to the religious consequences of the extreme grief, but he also mentioned some physical aspects of the disease. Like al-Dhahabī he was aware that grief cooled the temperament and weakened the innate heat. He further stated that because the grieving person did not eat much, his body, especially his stomach, became dry. The dietary treatment should therefore consist of nutriment that strengthened the innate heat and increased the humidity in the body.

The Prophet had said: "*Talbīna* gives the heart of the sick rest, it drives away some sorrows". To this Ibn al-Qayyim commented that *talbīna*—barley gruel—indeed was one of the foodstuffs that gladdened the heart and was therefore a good treatment against grief. He explained that *talbīna* gave humidity and nourishment to the patient and strengthened his innate heat. It further evacuated the bilious or phlegmatic mixtures from the patient's stomach and corrected his temperament. It was especially efficient in the cases where the patient was accustomed to eating barley bread. This had been the custom in Medina in the Prophet's time, and Ibn al-Qayyim indicated that this was the reason why the Prophet had recommended *talbīna*.⁵⁶⁵

Talbīna was the only suitable nutriment mentioned by Ibn al-Qayyim, all the other medicaments were forms of religious observances. If a believer felt grief or worry, he could follow the Prophet's example and turn to God and seek refuge in Him. A believer disobeyed God if he despaired and did not ask God's help for curing the grief and worry. Ibn al-Qayyim presented various supplications that the Prophet had either used himself or recommended as effective remedies for the feelings. The Prophet had for instance said:

Whenever a servant of God is struck by worry or grief, he should say: "God, I am your servant, son of your servant and son of your community. My forelock is in your hand. Your ruling is decisive for me; your judgement is justice for me. By using all the names with which you have named yourself or which you have sent down in your book or which you have taught to one of your creation or which you alone possess as a divine secret, I entreat you to make the exalted Koran the spring of my heart, the light of my breast, the remover of my grief, and the destroyer of my worry." When the servant says this, then God will take away his grief and worry and replace them with joy.⁵⁶⁶

Also ritual prayer and *jihād* could be used as medicaments against grief. About *jihād* the Prophet had said: "For you is *jihād*. It is one of the gates to paradise. By *jihād* God removes worry and grief from your souls." Ibn al-Qayyim explained that when the soul neglected to fight against falsehood, it was filled with worry, anxiety and fear, but when the soul waged war against falsehood, God filled it with joy. According to Ibn al-Qayyim, the curing effect of all these divine medicaments was based on the fact that by using them the person proved that he believed in the unity of God and that he relied on God and did not consider Him unjust. Further the believer pleased God

⁵⁶⁴ IQ, pp. 150f.

⁵⁶⁵ IQ, pp. 95f.

⁵⁶⁶ IQ, p. 154. A variant is quoted in DH, p. 47.

when he called Him by the names and attributes that were dear to Him.⁵⁶⁷ The use of these medicaments showed that the believer intended to endure the affliction without losing his faith and was at the same time cured from the illness of grief.

10.3. Envy (*ḥasad*)

A further emotional disease presented by al-Rāzī was envy. This was also briefly mentioned by al-Dhahabī, Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Muflīḥ. al-Rāzī described an envious person as one who was upset when another man obtained something good, even though he himself did not suffer any injury whatsoever. The disease was harmful for both the soul and the body. The soul was harmed by it, because the emotion preoccupied it and prevented it from concentrating on beneficial things. The body suffered, because the envious feelings present in the soul prevented the envier from sleeping and eating well. The physical signs of envy were a poor colour, a bad complexion and corrupt temperament.⁵⁶⁸

In the Prophet's medicine envy received particular consideration, because it was connected to possessing the evil eye. According to Ibn al-Qayyim it was not inevitable that every envious person also had the evil eye, but he maintained that the prerequisite for the evil eye was envy. If the envious person possessed the evil eye, he not only harmed his own soul and body but was also able to damage others by influencing them with the evil spirits within him. Therefore the evil eye could in itself be considered a serious illness that needed to be cured. Ibn al-Qayyim further pointed out that the possessor of the eye could not control the effects of his envy nor could he prevent it from being effective. His lack of control resulted in his being unable to choose his victims, in some cases he could even damage himself.⁵⁶⁹

Ibn al-Qayyim, al-Dhahabī and Ibn Muflīḥ concentrated on presenting methods to avert the effects of the evil eye and to cure the damage caused to the envied by it. They did, however, also mention one way to cure the eye itself. According to them, the only cure was to eradicate the feeling of envy from the soul. If a believer remembered that the possessors of the enviable things possessed them, because God had wanted them to have them, he would accept it and not feel envy. The Prophet had not envied others but had said, when he saw something admirable: "Whatever God wills. There is no might except in God." If the believers followed the Prophet's example and said the same thing, they would also avoid becoming envious.⁵⁷⁰ The authors did not discuss the effects of envy on the envier himself in more detail, nor did they present its religious consequences. However, they probably agreed with al-Rāzī, when he wrote that the envious person deserved the hatred of God "because his will is diametrically opposed to God's".⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁷ IQ, pp. 155f and 164.

⁵⁶⁸ al-Rāzī, *al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī*, pp. 49 and 51.

⁵⁶⁹ IQ, p. 131.

⁵⁷⁰ IQ, p. 133. DH, p. 194. IM, vol. 3, pp. 67f.