

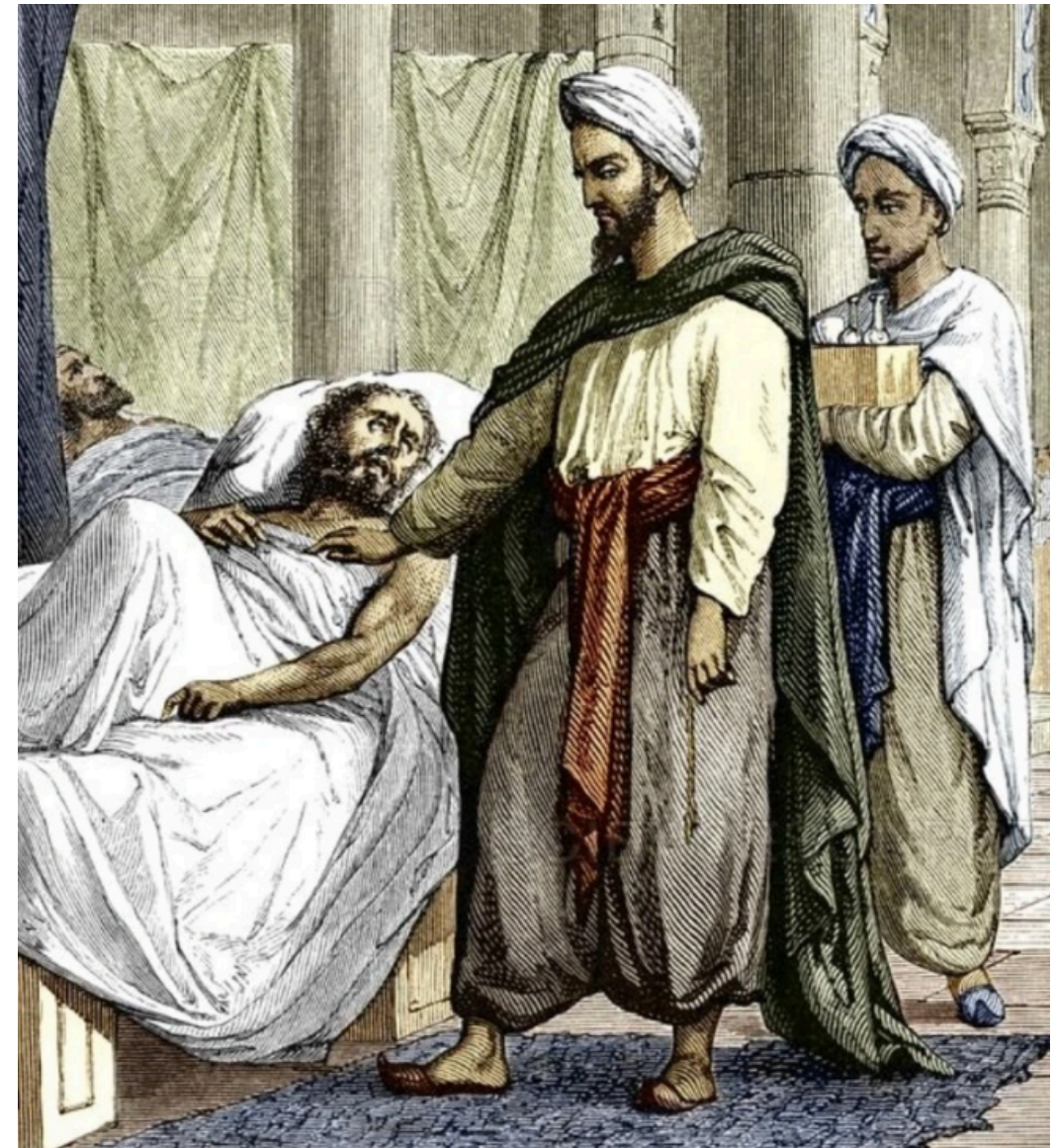
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MUSLIM SPIRITUAL CARE AT THE TIMES OF PANDEMIC

A Study of Muslim Early Works

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Abstract

The study of spirituality continues to draw increased academic interest, especially in the way it defines the meaning and purpose of life, mould both thinking and emotions, motivates and drives actions, shapes human relations, and sustain life balance and wellbeing. In the context of the Muslim faith,

Statement of the Problem



How the early Muslim scholars have responded to the challenge of pandemic? And how they used spirituality to repel it?

Muslims are encouraged to nurture their moral character, cultivate their spiritual discipline, and engage in the overall betterment of the quality of life. The methodical individual and collective religious practices which feed and at the same time sustain Muslim spirituality represent an ever-evolving state proportionately resonating with one's spiritual commitment, dedication, and actions. During times of tribulations, crises, or pandemics, however, spirituality appears to play a critical role in Muslims' processes of coping, management, and community support. This study investigates the works of early Muslim scholars with regards to the conception and approach to pandemics, and the categories of spiritual support and practices they prescribed for coping and mitigating the many adverse effects of crises related stress and and wellbeing.

Methodology



Textual Analysis of the early sources on pandemics and methods of repel it .

Findings



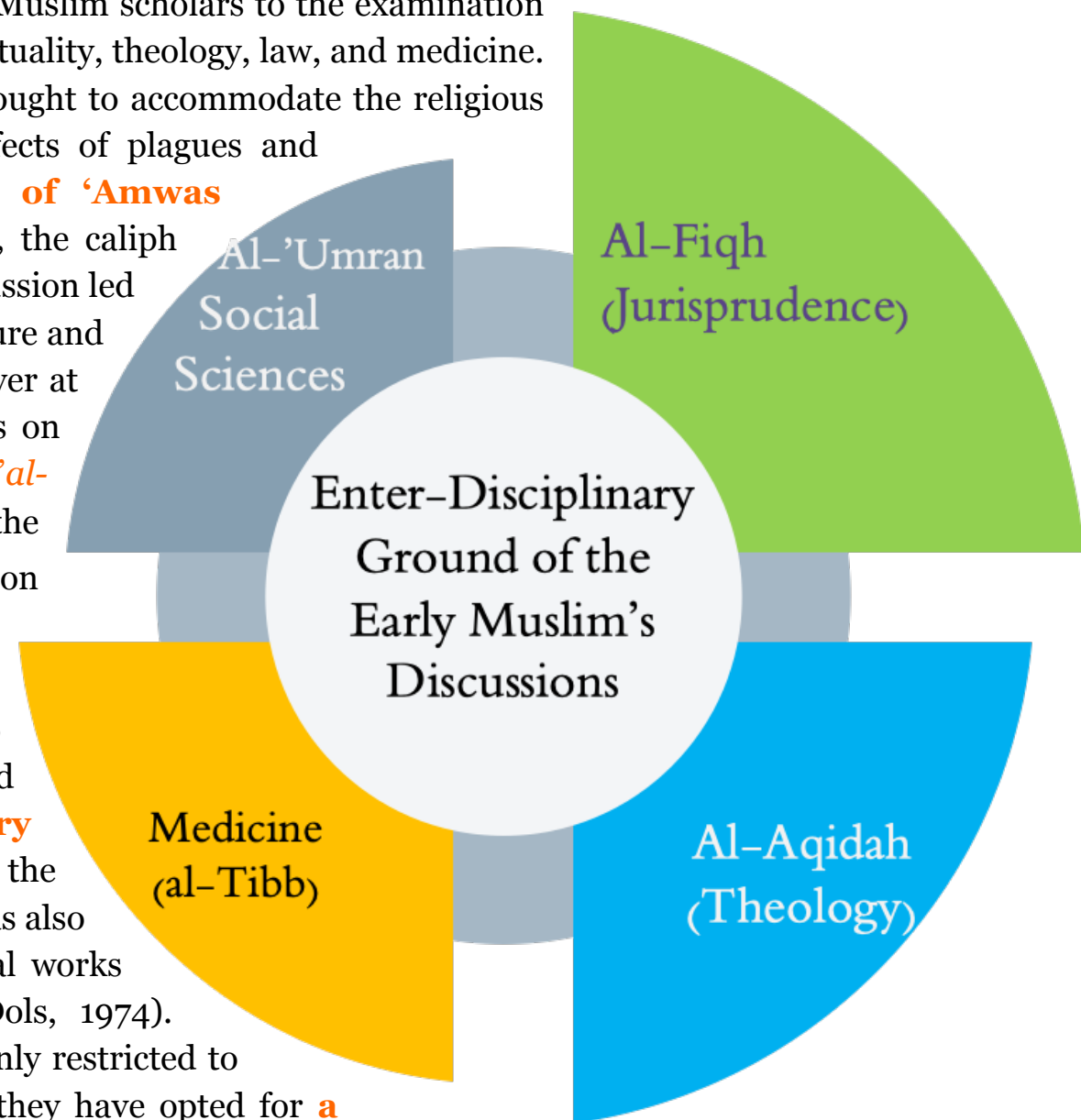
Many works | Revelation | Interdisciplinary | holistic perception & response | skills | openness | Creativity

anxiety on mental health

Keywords: Spiritual support. Coping. Spiritual care. Islamic spirituality. Pandemic.

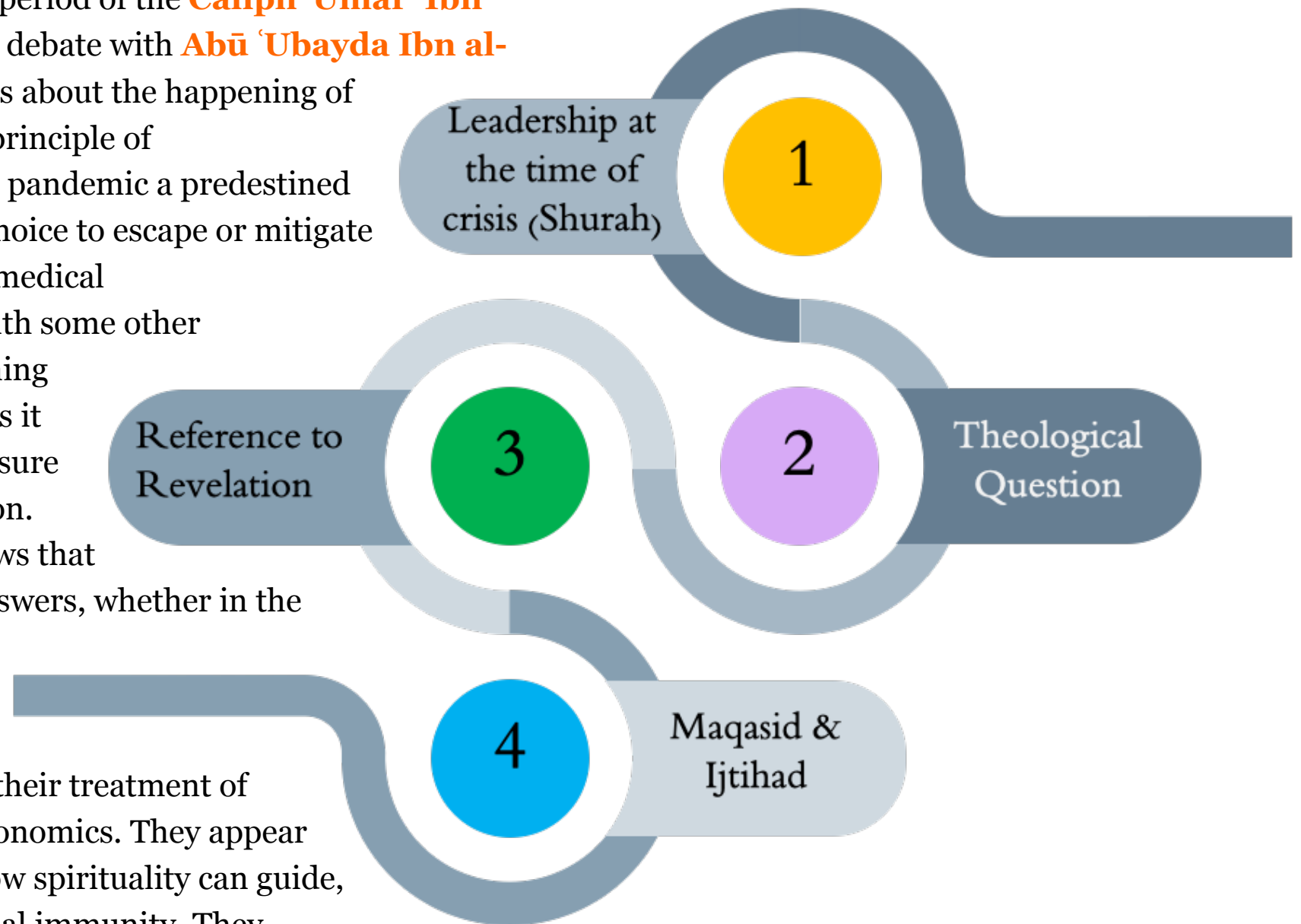
On Early works: Holistic Perspective on Health and Immunization

The historical pandemic events have sparked the interest of Muslim scholars to the examination of many related issues from the perspective of religion, spirituality, theology, law, and medicine. The literature is replete with works on pandemics which sought to accommodate the religious understanding of the issues but also help curb the negative effects of plagues and pandemics on people and communities. During **the plague of 'Amwas (693/17-18 AH)**, and following discussion with Abu 'Ubaydah, the caliph Umar instructed him to return to Medina to avoid death. Their discussion led Muslims to turn to Hadith in pursuit of health and preventive measure and to turn to God through acts of worship such as congregational prayer at the time of plague. Perhaps, one of the earliest writing attempts on plagues is by **Imam Malik (d. 179 AH)**. In his famous magnum opus '*al-Muwatta'*' **الموطأ**, Malik devoted two chapters on the subject, "On the plague of Medinah" and "On the account of the plague in the tradition of the Prophet". **Ibn Abi Al-Dunya (d. 281 AH)** also compiled a book on "The plagues" (*kitab al-tawa'in*) **كتاب الطواعين**. Muslims' earliest attention to the study phenomenon of plagues caused them to debate it according to various angles of examination and consequently produce a significant amount of **interdisciplinary works**, especially with regards to having a good understanding of the problem and ways to repel it. Moreover, the recurrence of plagues has also resulted in the investigation and discussion of pre-Islamic medical works besides the data they collected from their own experience (Dols, 1974). However, in the discussion of plagues, Muslim scholars were not only restricted to medicine or translation of work on health and diseases. Instead, they have opted for a **holistic perspective on health and immunization**, applying interdisciplinary approaches to benefit from the various branches of knowledge and experience, while highlighting the effective role of spirituality in coping and managing pandemics.

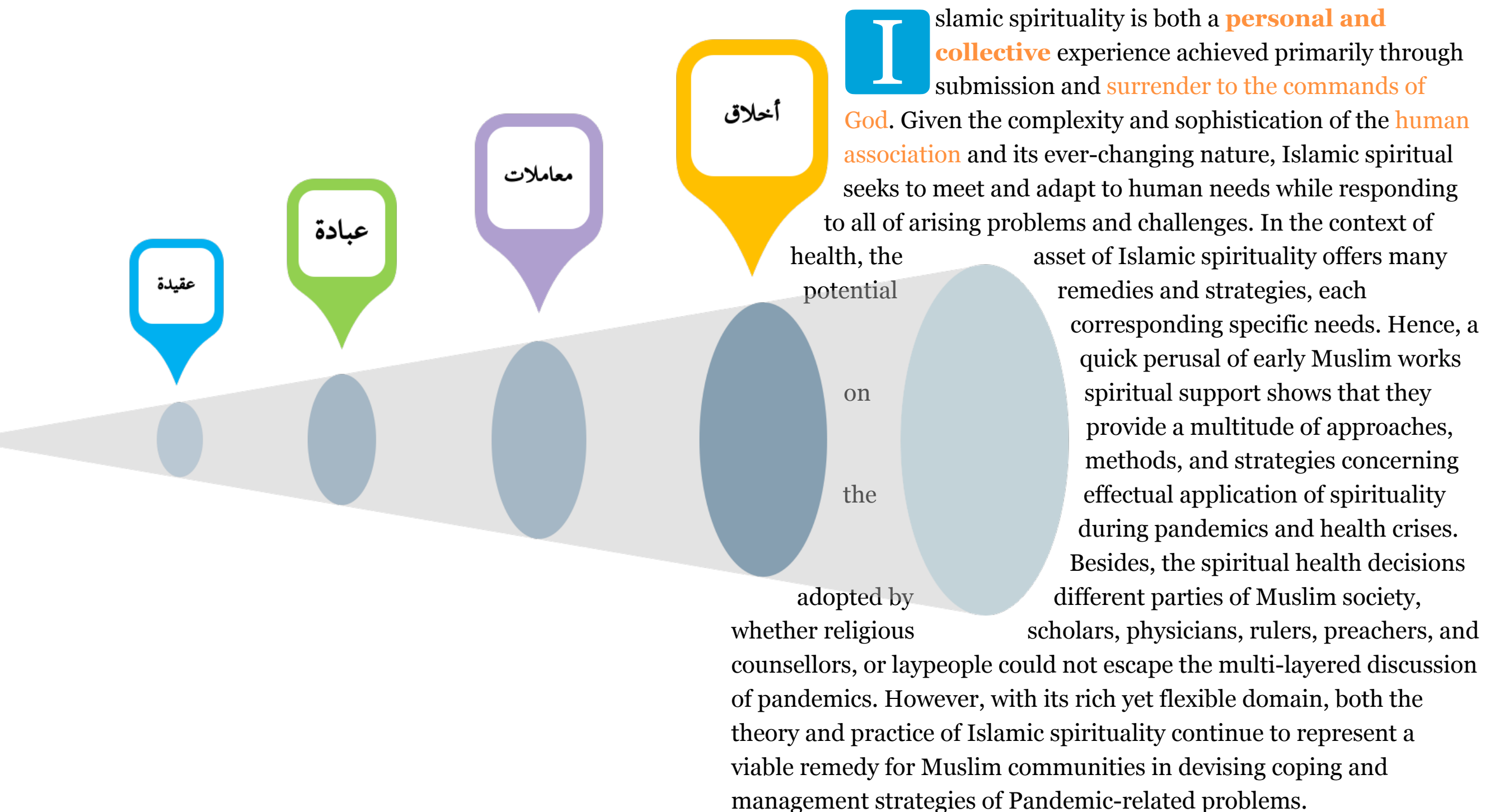


Early Debate: Theological Question

Perhaps one of the earliest debates on plagues (*ṭāʿūn*) and pestilence (*wabāʾ*) can be traced to the period of the **Caliph ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb** and his interesting debate with **Abū ʿUbayda Ibn al-Jarrāh** (d. 639 AD). Their debate was about the happening of the pandemic versus the theological principle of predestination; In other words, is the pandemic a predestined fate in human life leaving leaves no choice to escape or mitigate even when resorting to spiritual and medical treatment? Following consultation with some other companions, ʿUmar decided that turning back to Medina would be the wisest as it will save people's lives and strictly ensure the eventual risk of disease contraction. Muslim discussion of pandemics shows that they sought to provide a variety of answers, whether in the context of theology (*ʿaqidah*), law (*fiqh*), medicine (*tibb*), politics (*siyasah sharʿiyya*) or spirituality, and that they did not largely confine their treatment of pandemic to medical treatment or economics. They appear to have placed significant focus on how spirituality can guide, motivate, and sustain people's spiritual immunity. They strongly believe that offering the needed spiritual care is a crucial factor in managing this type of crisis.

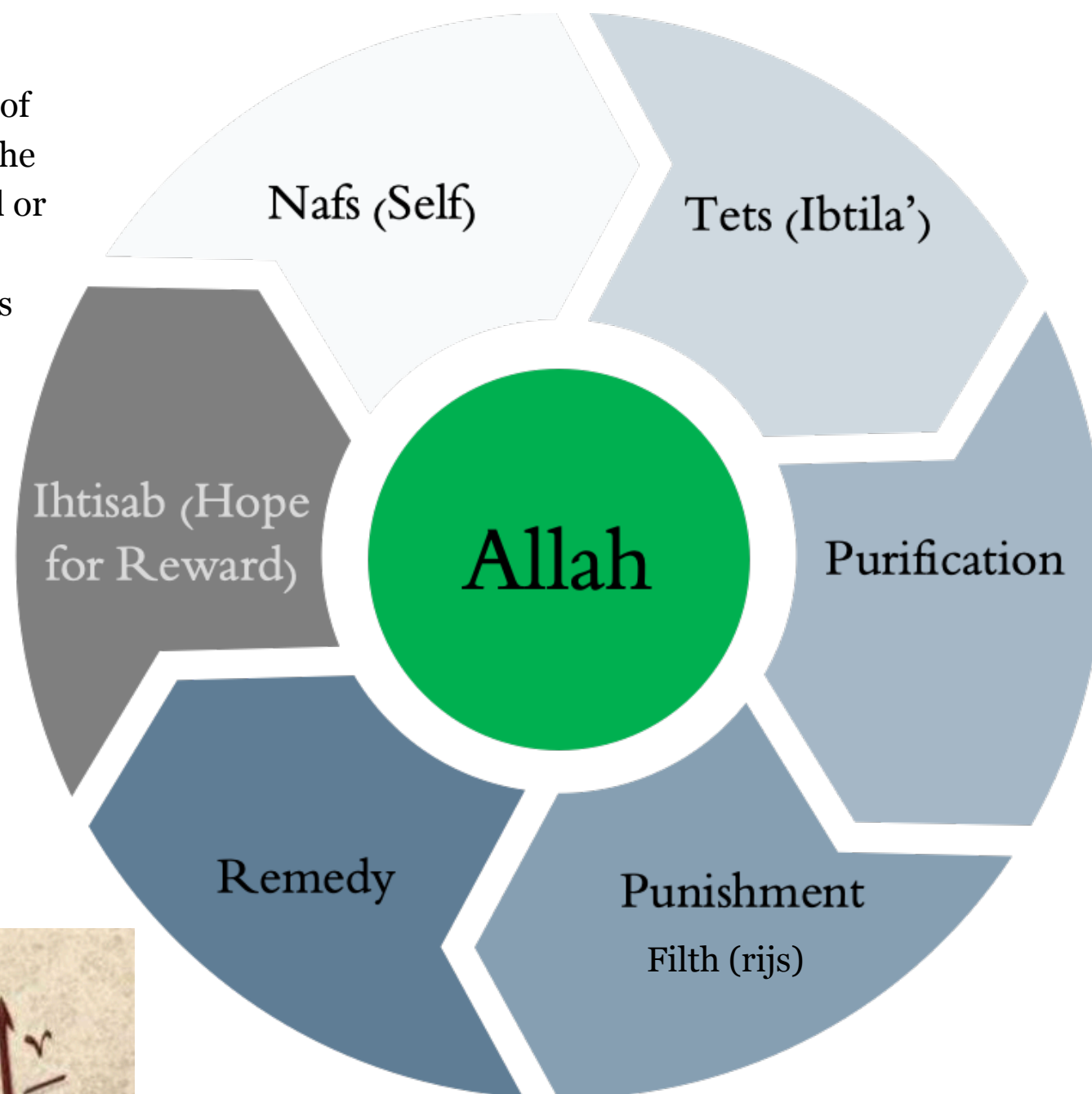


On Muslim Spiritual Care: Concept & Experience



Re-defining The Meaning of Illness

The review of early Muslim works points to a redefinition of concepts of illness and diseases. This is partly based on the Islamic view that illness should not be interpreted as evil or calamity, but instead, be seen as a purification, rewarding to test, and a blessing from the divine. Plagues may also be interpreted as punishment for disbelievers and for those spreading corruption and mischief. The redefinition of the illness finds support in the fundamental principle of the oneness of God, His attributes, meaning and purpose of life, divine wisdom, and laws in creation (Sunnat-Allah). As such, events of hardship, calamity, and health crises should be viewed as normal stages inherent in the cycle of human association. Through the integration of the meaning of “testing” (*ibtila'*), Islam provides people with the opportunity to change and improve their conditions.



وَإِذَا مَرَضْتُمْ فَهُوَ لِشَفَائِكُمْ

سورة الشعراء - الآية ٨٠

Medical Treatment in Theological Context



Attention to and promotion of spiritual care particularly during times of not show any or belittling of the efforts. Even though some chose contagious nature of jurists helped spread medical knowledge and community. A case in sharing of of the ancient Greek sources of Hippocrates (Galen) and found in works of Muslim philosophers and physicians like Ibn Sina, al-Razi, Ibn Nafis, and others.

contagion

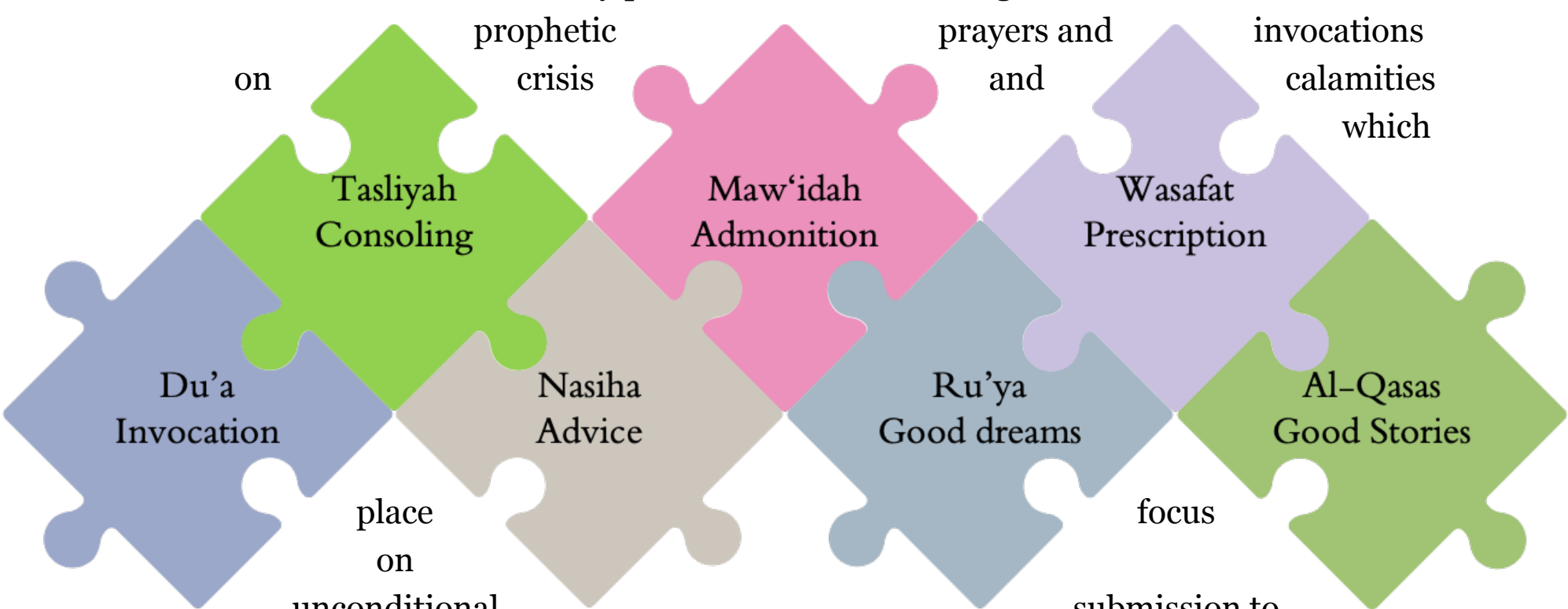
Greek Medicine

Philosophical Perspective

Pandemics, does form of neglect of physicians. to reject the Pandemics, many professional treatment in the point is their treatments (books and

Remembrance and Admonition

Islamic spiritual care (ISC) drives patients and their family members about the Creator, His Wisdom and Attributes, and of His Knowledge, love, mercy, compassion, proximity, and protection. Muslim scholars advises detachment from bad habits and embodying good ones, and effectively begin with observing religious duties, abstaining from intoxicants, hygiene, good diets, working for a balanced lifestyle, among many others. They particularly recommended close attention to increased practice of spirituality during moments of crisis. For that, they provided drew on a large number of related



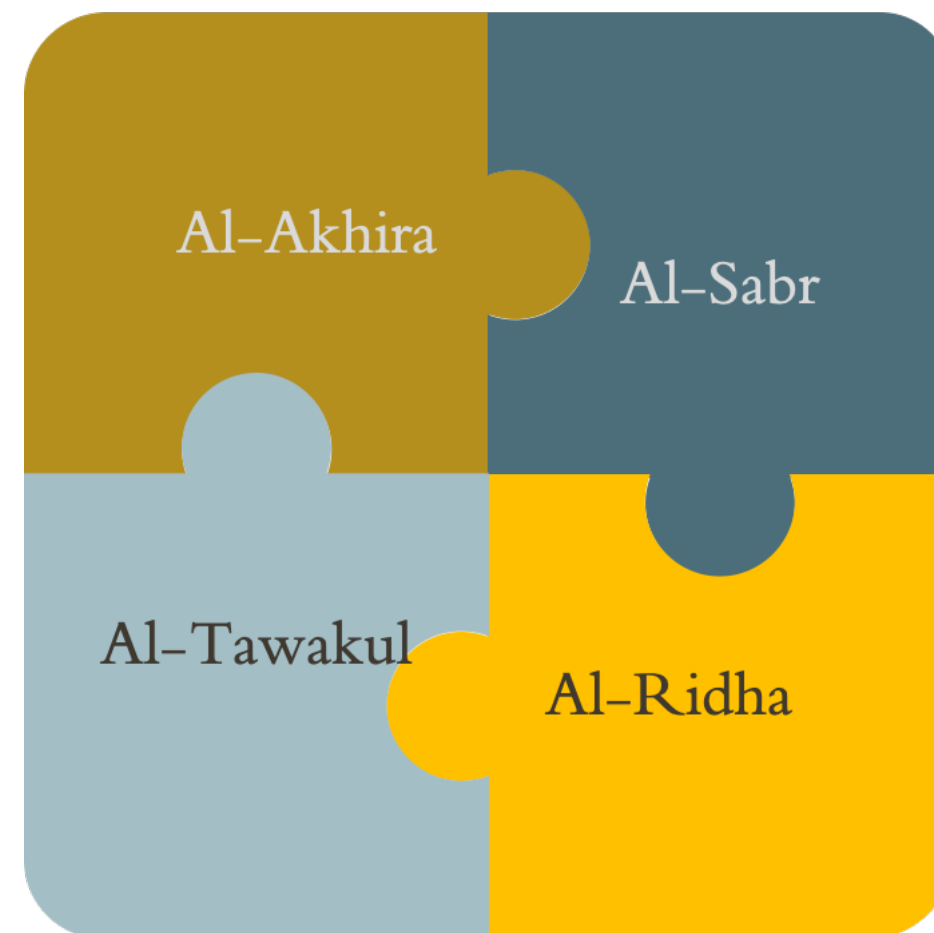
God, reliance on Him, acceptance and gratification about the divine decree, gratefulness, and reward for patience during hardship (al-thawab). Muslim scholars also record and preach particular supplications obtained by pious people through dreams.

Consoling of the Bereaved “Spirituality for A Health Crisis”

Early Muslim scholars devoted special attention to those in grief. One example in case is the work of Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Manbijī “Consolation for

Those Afflicted by Calamities” (*tasliyyat ahl al-masa’ib*) (تسليّة أهل المصائب) in 1373 who lost some of his family members during the plague in Egypt, Another similar work is that of Mustafa Muhammad al-Banani (d. 1816 AD) entitled “*salwat al-hazin ‘ala faqd al-ahibba wal banin*”. (سلوة الحزين على فقد الأحبة والبنين) Muslims draw on many verses of the Qur’an and

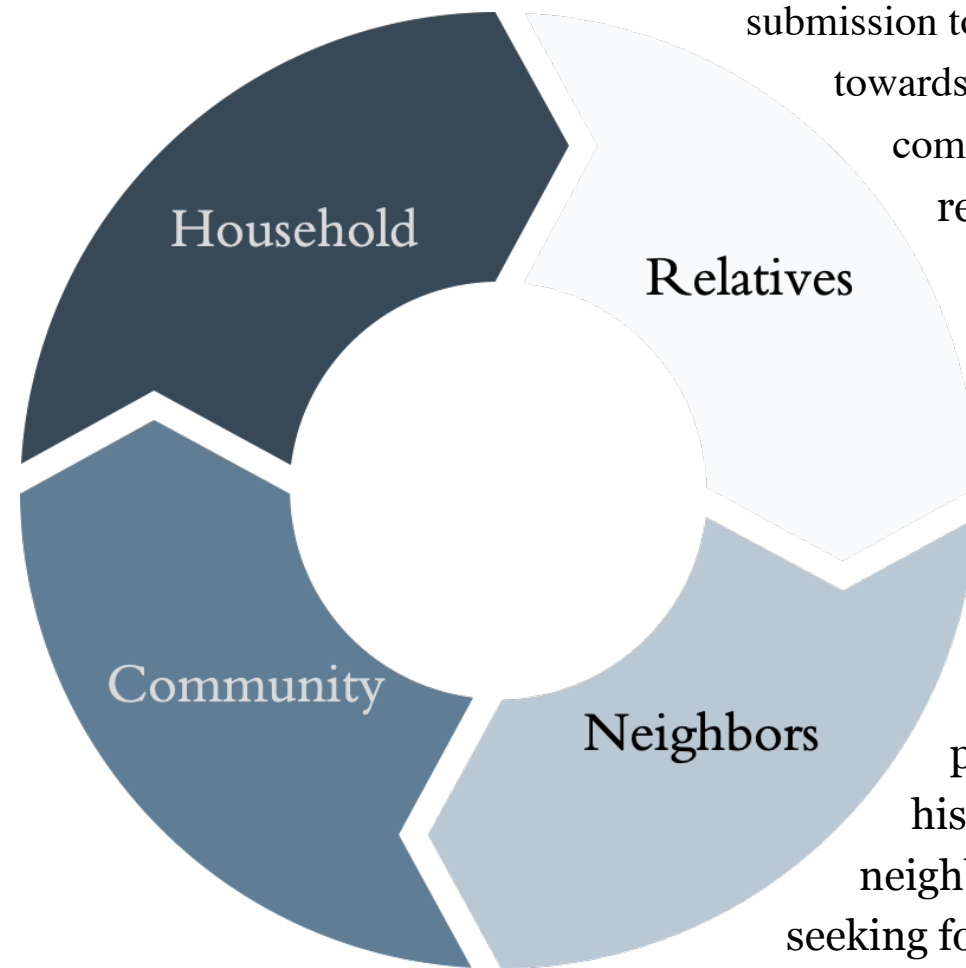
أحمد بن يحيى ابن أبي حجلة (1375) ”
سلوة الحزين في موت البنين“
أبو عبد الله المنبجي (785 هـ) تسليّة أهل
المصائب
مصطفى محمد البنانى (1817) سلوة
الحزين على فقد الأحبة والبنين



العلاج الالهى النبوي للمصاب (عبد الله محمد المنبجي: تسليّة أهل المصائب)

Hadith narrations about the virtue of positive mind-self, especially in times of calamity. They also benefited from the reports of pious people and from human experiences in general which exemplify qualities of patience, perseverance, resilience, wisdom, satisfaction, and gratitude.

The Social Dimension



they donate their property, freeing their slaves, mending his manners, and some correcting their balance scale”.



Early Muslim scholars view spiritual care as both individual and collective concern and duty. Muslims are broadly encouraged to improve the quality of their relationship with the Creator through submission to Him, and also discharging their responsibilities towards their households, relatives, neighbors, and the community at large. Some scholars have particularly recorded the changes in in social behaviour and relationships of Muslim at the time of the pandemic. **Jalal al-Din Al-Suyuti (d. 1505 AD)** described the many positive changes he the people. Shortening hopes, improving vigilant from negligence, and preparing for the some of those changes. He added that people the opportunity to advise their children, and some even offer farewell to their brothers, while preparing their shrouds after they reconcile with his enemies. Others are showing kindness to their neighbors, expanding their spending on their family, seeking forgiveness from those they have betrayed, some

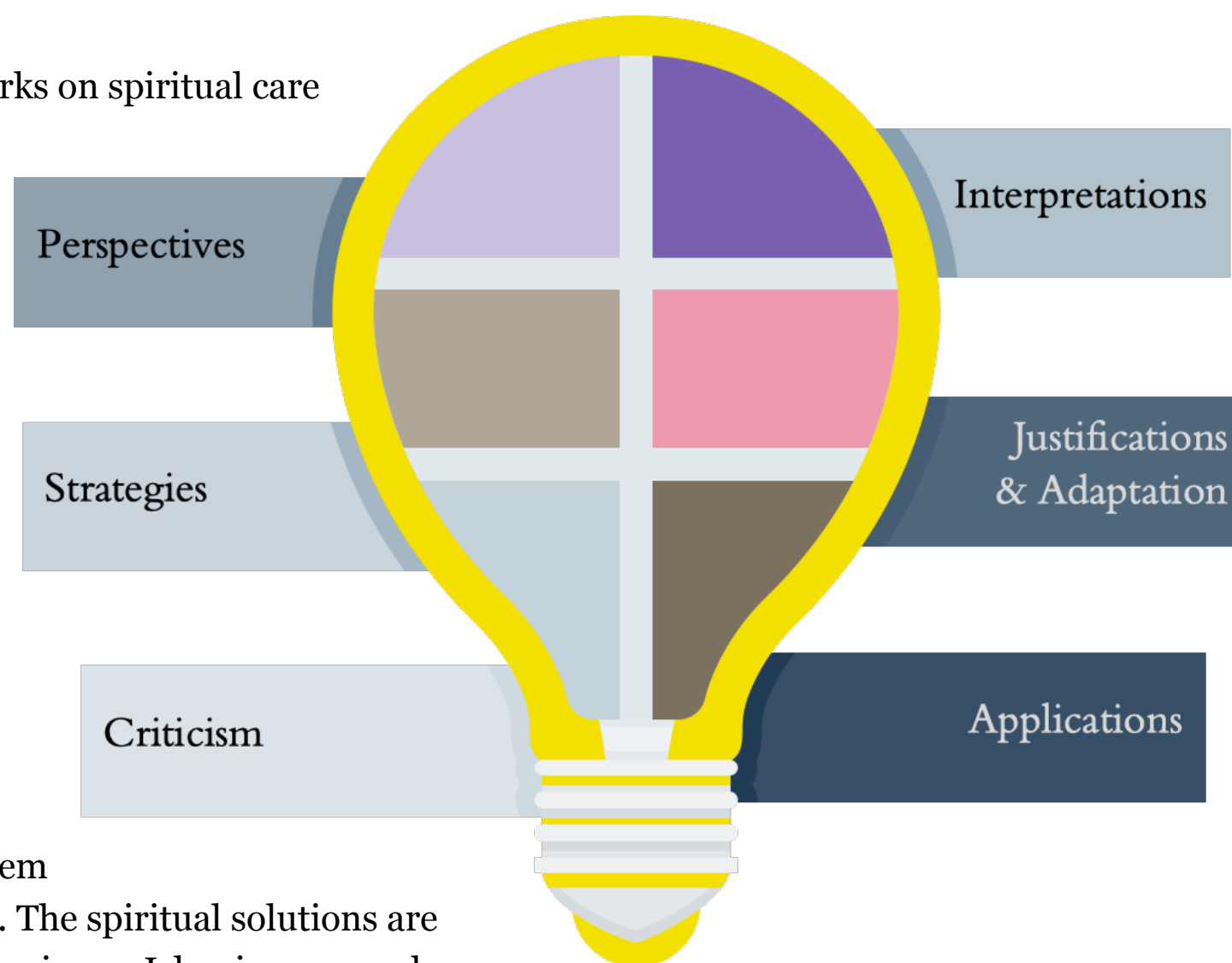
Openness to Critical Assessment



Early Muslims works on spiritual care during Pandemics

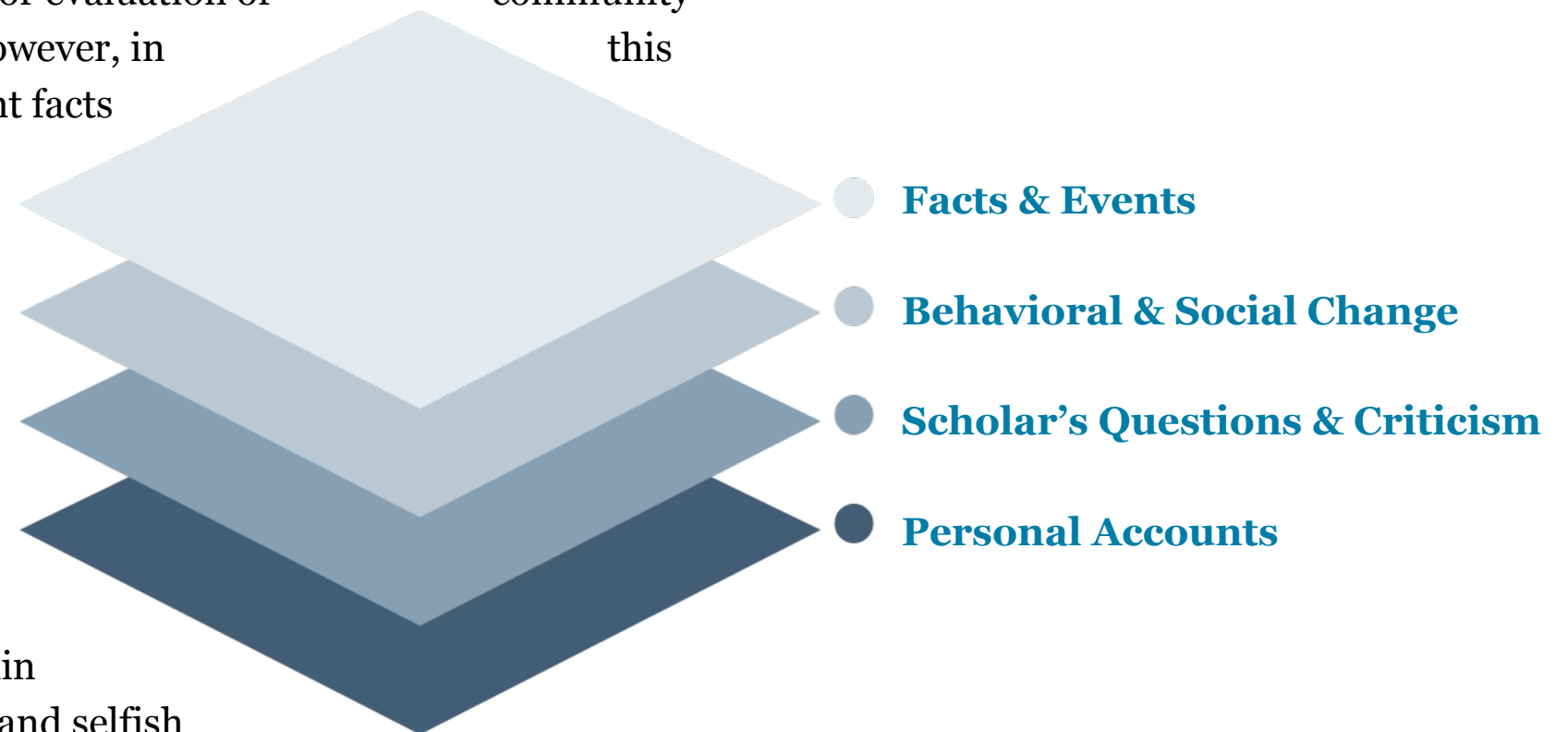
points to the application of creative thinking and problem solving (domain of *ijtihad*). Muslim scholars generated broad range of interpretations, justifications, and perspectives about the meaning and causes of plague emergence and strategies to cope with them

and mitigate their effects. The spiritual solutions are broadly derived from the primary Islamic sources, however, compiled and delivered in various adaptable formats, mediums and means. On instances, proposed solutions were either rejected or received insignificant recognition. Their contributions were subjected to rigorous criticism. While other unfamiliar and remote inscriptions (texts and cryptograms) promoted by some treatises are rejected and deemed to be a sort of fabricated witchcraft (*sha'wadha*).



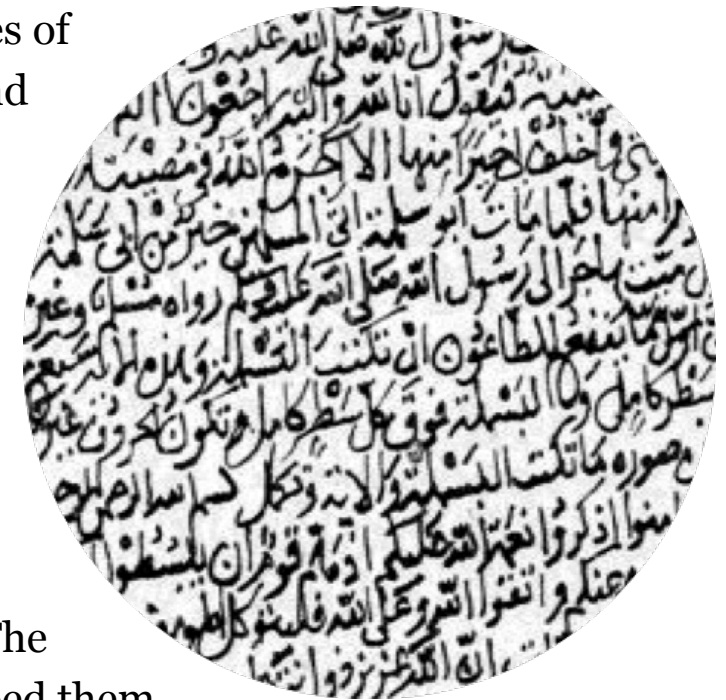
Reading and Assessing the Impact of Islamic spiritual care

The early Muslim works on pandemics lack discussion of the parameters required for evaluation of spiritual care. They however, in context provided many relevant facts and information including the behavioral changes people have made during periods of health crisis and maintaining positive attitudes and feelings, showing acceptance of the divine decree, quick recovery, and return to normal life. However, some works have also reported certain isolated cases of opportunism and selfish behaviour that contradicts the main vocation of Muslims community during these hard times. In some famous cities in Muslim world, the market prices of food and other needs like burial material are dramatically increased. However, the overwhelming generosity of the wealthy people and their donations have played a significant role to ease life of the needy and maintain the food security in society.



Conclusion

Early Muslim scholars have made **worthwhile contributions** on the role and advantages of spirituality during moments of crises and pandemics. They have elaborated on **various mediums of spiritual education**, support and care. Their contribution was not limited to the field of spirituality alone, but also to their **discussion of managing crisis** of pentametric and **developed solutions** via scholarly methods, **rigorous discussion**, and use of **interdisciplinary approach**. The different questions they raised also helped them develop rather a **holistic perspective** leading to mitigating pain and sufferings. This preliminary research on the perception and experience of early Muslim scholars on spiritual support and care will help Muslim communities today to learn from the history and think of the future in the light of their values and Islamic tradition.



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