

Conclusions

In this study, I focused my research so that it provides a critical and analytical study of the conceptualisation of the unborn in the Islamic West – al-Andalus and al-Maghrib – by addressing the works of Abū Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī and Qādī ‘Iyād. I have identified the embryological ideas and described their backgrounds. In this section, I summarise my findings in the above chapters and add some clarifying fresh conclusions that did not find a place in the previous chapters. In terms of my methodological framework, there are thirteen points:

- First, I demonstrated that Ibn al-‘Arabī prioritised exposing the idea that Isrāfil is the angel charged with the womb and has other angels at his disposal. In addition, I found that the Andalusi Sufi philosopher Ibn ‘Arabī had the same idea in his *al-Futūhāt al-makīyya*. This leads me to suggest that the association between Isrāfil and the unborn and its shaping was likely spread in the scholarly Andalusi milieu in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE. It might also have been widespread in popular Andalusi belief, and this could have had an impact on the line of thought of the scholars in the way they tried to adapt it and incorporate it into their works.
- Second, Ibn al-‘Arabī is inclined towards the Hippocratic theory of generation. He adopted some of these ideas and inserted them into his exegetical corpus with caution, insisting each time that these opinions are generally based on experimental and popular belief and should not be taken as asserted truths. For instance, regarding sex determination and identification of resemblance, Ibn al-‘Arabī’s explanation is mooted from prophetic traditions and Hippocratic material. His effective strategy utilised the most appropriate positions from ancient Greek thought, readapting them to fashion his own opinion. Regarding the Hippocratic sources Ibn al-‘Arabī used, I have shown that he mainly used ‘Arīb Ibn Sa‘īd’s treatise entitled *Kitāb khalq al-janīn wa-tadbīr al-habālā wa-l-mawlūdīn* as well as *Kāmil al-ṣinā‘a al-ṭibbiyya* by al-Majūsī. Nevertheless, ‘Arīb Ibn Sa‘īd received harsh criticism from Ibn al-‘Arabī when he followed the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*’s astrological explanation of the foetal development and the maximum gestation period. Al-Majūsī and all the Aristotelian physicians are similarly criticised for arguing that the blood

is the first phase of embryogenesis. Ibn al-‘Arabī deals carefully with this source and does not hesitate to refute any inadequate ideas. Furthermore, I have traced the Ghazalian impact and shown that Ibn al-‘Arabī drew from his teacher’s opinions expressed in *al-Wasīt*, specifically when talking about the criteria of *takhtīt* and *takhīlq* in the funeral rites and the naming of the miscarriage.

- Third, the examination of the definitions and analysis carried out by the different authorities of the two adjectives *mukhallaqa* and *ghar mukhallaqa* shows how they emphasised the dichotomy of both adjectives and left aside a probable unity between them since the conjunctive coordinator *wa* seemed to query the function of the disjunctive coordinator *aw*. Ibn al-‘Arabī perceived this differently. He argued that the tripartite *nutfa-‘alaqa-mudgha* inevitably passes first through the *ghayr mukhallaqa* and then the *mukhallaqa* states and insists on the fact that there are essential factors that determine the changing from one state to another. These factors, which I call the *triple T*, are the *talwīn*, the *takhthīr* and the *taṣwīr*.
- Fourth, Ibn al-‘Arabī plays the role of bridge between the Islamic East and West. He generates a debate between Qādī Ismā‘il and al-Kiyā al-Harrāsī about the expiry of the *‘idda* in cases where the miscarriage or delivery occurs before the period of four months, which was known from the East to the West. He even uses both the place and the debate to align with the Iraqi Mālikī jurist and argues that the woman’s *‘idda* ends once the miscarriage is delivered independently of its state or shape.
- Fifth, I followed Ibn al-‘Arabī’s analysis diachronically along three works. I demonstrated with detailed textual evidence the evolution of his thoughts and how his corpus gradually changed and developed, especially when it came to an important moment in the prenatal life, i.e., the ensoulment.⁸⁸¹ In *Aḥkām al-qur’ān*, the ensoulment is absent in the embryological Qur’anic corpus, yet appears in a different context related to wind fertilisation. In this Qur’anic exegesis the *taṣwīr* is considered the *khalq ākhar*. In *al-Qabas*, when determining the permissibility of *coitus interruptus*, the term ensoulment appears as the criterion for establishing penalties. Accordingly, Ibn al-‘Arabī divided the embryological development into the pre-ensoulment, the ensoulment, i.e., when the

⁸⁸¹ In the context of the judicial organisation of Andalusi *dhimmīs*, Serrano Ruano noted differences and contrasts between several approaches of Ibn al-‘Arabī. See Serrano Ruano 2016, 194–95.

foetus acquires the ontological status of a human being (*nafs*), and the post-ensoulment. In *al-Qabas*, the ensoulment represents juristically the second criterion – after the *inkhilāq* – for establishing penalties. *Āridat al-ahwadhi* represents the shift, where the ensoulment is the core of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s embryological approach, firmly consolidated by the presence of the Ibn Mas‘ūd *hadith*.

- Sixth, this change in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s line of thought is most likely linked to the fact that the textual basis for the Islamic position on the ensoulment is prophetic traditions rather than Qur’anic verses. In addition, being well-versed in various religious sciences, Ibn al-‘Arabī adeptly produced seminal works in each of these. As for a probable ascendant impact from Qādī ‘Iyād to Ibn al-‘Arabī, the findings of this study do not provide sufficient evidence to validate this hypothesis. Therefore, further research is necessary to explore this idea more comprehensively. In order to draw more definitive conclusions about the scholarly relationship between Ibn al-‘Arabī and Qādī ‘Iyād, future studies should not be limited to the embryological approach.
- Seventh, ‘Iyād argues that the ensoulment does not occur on the one hundred and twentieth day after conception, but rather after this date, during the following ten days, underlining that none of the traditions contradicts this assertion, since nowhere in these traditions is it mentioned that the angel comes or the ensoulment happens directly on the last day of the last forty days, i.e., the *mudgha* phase. According to him, breathing the soul requires three criteria to be fulfilled: the proportioning of the shape (*istiwā’ al-ṣūra*), the appearance of human features and the completion of shape (*tamām al-ṣūra*). In the same context of ensoulment, I have shown that Qādī ‘Iyād associated the movement of the embryo in its mother’s belly with its being ensouled. He deduced this assertion using an empirical approach or, as he calls it, *al-mushāhada*, based mainly on experiments on animals whose results were adopted for human embryogenesis.
- Eighth, the presence of Hudhayfa Ibn Asīd’s *ḥadīth* did not affect ‘Iyād’s argument. Despite the chronological difference between both traditions regarding the moment of the angel’s intervention and the contrast in the order of the angel’s acts, Qādī ‘Iyād insisted on their uniformity and held that the shaping, the creation of bones and, accordingly, the ensoulment cannot happen after the first forty days. Grammatically, syntactically, empirically, and using Qur’anic evidence and other traditions, ‘Iyād showed

that Hudhayfa Ibn Asīd's ḥadīth should not be understood literally but rather metaphorically.

- Ninth, the angel of the womb received the attention of Qādī 'Iyād, who attributed to him three main tasks: looking after the *nutfa*, accompanying it as well as the *'alaqa* and the *mudgha*, and informing God of what happens in the womb. Unlike Ibn al-'Arabī, Qādī 'Iyād did not identify the angel nor associate him with Isrāfil, which supports the idea that the association of Isrāfil with the angel of the womb was circulating in the Andalusi milieu and nowhere else.
- Tenth, both Ibn al-'Arabī and Qādī 'Iyād criticised the naturalists and their ideas on embryonic life. In the examples presented by the two scholars, the epithet *al-ṭabā'i'iyyūn* fits the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'.
- Eleventh, using a Qur'an exegesis, a legal work and a ḥadīth commentary by Ibn al-'Arabī, and only one ḥadīth commentary by Qādī 'Iyād means that any comparison between these two scholars is inevitably unbalanced and uneven. Nevertheless, I would like to highlight some points when I omit the quantitative part in the comparison:
 - Ibn al-'Arabī's embryological reflections are multifaceted and complex, whereas Qādī 'Iyād's opinions tend to be more one-dimensional.
 - Ranging from the jurisprudential, exegetical, medical, physical, ancient Greek and Hellenistic, I noticed much more diversity and variety in the sources used by Ibn al-'Arabī than those used by Qādī 'Iyād. I suggest that this might be connected with the scholarly credentials acquired during the Eastern *rīḥla* of Ibn al-'Arabī, an advantage that Qādī 'Iyād did not have. Another important factor that enhances this difference is likely the socio-cultural milieu in which each scholar grew up and lived. The multicultural merging milieu and the interactions between different communities, in addition to the effervescence of the translation movement in al-Andalus, may have served as key agents in the broadening and diversification of sources used by the Andalusi scholar Ibn al-'Arabī, which was not the case for the Maghribi Qādī 'Iyād.
 - Notwithstanding the fact that both Ibn al-'Arabī and Qādī 'Iyād belonged to the Mālikī school of law, they did not share the same opinions. For instance, Ibn al-'Arabī insisted that the *walad* exists only after the *mudgha* has been formed (*mukhallaqa*), otherwise the *walad* does not exist and the slave pregnant with it cannot be an *umm walad*. On the other hand, Qādī 'Iyād followed Mālik, who argues that a slave becomes an *umm walad* only if she miscarries at the *'alaqa* stage

or later. In the analysed embryological material, I noticed that Ibn al-‘Arabī displayed a strong personality when opposing Mālik and the Mālikī consensus. Thus, on the issue of the *umm walad* he even took the side of the opinions of the Shāfi‘īs, whereas Qādī ‘Iyād followed the Mālikī *madhhab*.

- Twelfth, grouping *al-Maghrib al-ifriqī* and *al-Maghrib al-andalusī* under the flag of al-Maghrib can be applied in a geographical context, yet scholarly and embryologically speaking, I would not resort to using this general denomination. Instead, I would insist on differentiating between al-Maghrib and al-Andalus because they present different entities in this regard. I would even go beyond these boundaries and suggest that scholars should individualise the imagination of the unborn. In this context, I demonstrated that in the case of Ibn al-‘Arabī, he presented multiple facets, and his opinions changed and developed from one work to another.
- Finally, in my thirteenth point, this study about the conceptualisation of the unborn in al-Andalus and al-Maghrib in the hermeneutics of Ibn al-‘Arabī and Qādī ‘Iyād reaches its end. Yet, despite being aware of the importance, centrality and complexity of the scholars I have selected for the analysis, I believe an important number of Maghribi and Andalusi scholars still require further study and analysis. I also hope my study will help discover new horizons in Islamic embryology.

