

GALEN AND THE ARABIC RECEPTION OF PLATO'S *TIMAEUS*

This first full-length study of the Arabic reception of Plato's *Timaeus* considers the role of Galen of Pergamum (129–c. 216 CE) in shaping medieval perceptions of the text as transgressing disciplinary norms. It argues that Galen appealed to the entangled cosmological scheme of the dialogue, where different relations connect the body, soul, and cosmos, to expand the boundaries of medicine in his pursuit of epistemic authority – the right to define and explain natural reality. Aileen Das situates Galen's work on disciplinary boundaries in the context of medicine's ancient rivalry with philosophy, whose professionals were long seen as possessing superior knowledge of the cosmos vis-à-vis that of doctors. Her case studies show how Galen and four of the most important Christian, Muslim, and Jewish thinkers in the Arabic Middle Ages creatively interpreted key doctrines from the *Timaeus* to reimagine medicine and philosophy as well as their own intellectual identities.

AILEEN R. DAS is an Assistant Professor of Classical Studies and Middle East Studies at the University of Michigan. Her work aims to illuminate the diverse, and often subversive, uses to which medieval Arabic writers put their Graeco-Roman sources in realising their own scientific ambitions. In addition to translating Arabic versions of lost or fragmentary Greek texts, she has published on various topics relating to ancient and medieval medicine and philosophy, including Islamicate receptions of Hippocrates, epitomatory literature, and views on plant life.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-49948-4 — Galen and the Arabic Reception of Plato's Timaeus
Aileen R. Das
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

GALEN AND THE ARABIC
RECEPTION OF PLATO'S
TIMAEUS

AILEEN R. DAS
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-49948-4 — Galen and the Arabic Reception of Plato's Timaeus
Aileen R. Das
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108499484
DOI: 10.1017/9781108583107

© Aileen Das 2020

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2020

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-49948-4 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

In memory of Amanda Das (1985–2013)

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-49948-4 — Galen and the Arabic Reception of Plato's Timaeus
Aileen R. Das
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>Notes on Texts, Translations, and Transliterations</i>	xi
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xii
Introduction: Plato's <i>Timaeus</i> as Universal Text	i
1 Galen and the 'Medical' <i>Timaeus</i>	30
2 From the Heavens to the Body: Ḥunayn's Ophthalmology	69
3 Al-Rāzī: The 'Arab Galen' and his Plato, New Disciplinary Ideals	104
4 Laying Down the Law: Avicenna and his Medical Project	140
5 Uprooting the <i>Timaeus</i> : Maimonides and the Re-Medicalization of Galenism	170
Conclusion: Medicine Disciplined	198
<i>References</i>	204
<i>Index Locorum</i>	235
<i>General Index</i>	240

Figures

- | | | |
|---|--|---------|
| 1 | Anatomy of the tunics of the eye according to Ḥunayn's <i>Ten Treatises on the Eye</i> (Ṭibb Taymūr MS 100). | page 93 |
| 2 | A map of eighth-century Baghdad's round city. | 94 |

Acknowledgements

This book began around ten years ago as a doctoral thesis at the University of Warwick, which funded my studies through a Warwick Postgraduate Research Fellowship. I am grateful to Peter Pormann and Maude Vanhaelen for their joint supervision; from them, I learned how to navigate my way through medieval Arabic texts without losing sight of the broader historical picture. I also wish to thank Simon Swain, who taught me invaluable lessons during my stay at Warwick, and Uwe Vagelpohl, who read drafts of several chapters. During the preparation of my thesis, I benefited from Gerrit Bos and Rüdiger Arnzen generously making their work available to me pre-publication.

Since the thesis's completion, the project has undergone reconceptualization a few times, prompted in part by the helpful feedback that I received from my Ph.D. examiners, Peter Adamson and Mark Schiefsky. My interest in disciplinarity and knowledge production – issues which inform the conceptual core of the book – was sparked during my time as an Early Career Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Study at the University of Warwick and as a Frances A. Yates Short-Term Fellow at the Warburg Institute, where I found it generative to listen to researchers from diverse disciplinary backgrounds discuss the claims and limitations of their own fields. Special thanks go to Charles Burnett for his warm welcome to the Warburg and to the members of the Arabic philosophy reading group that met weekly at the institute, whose impressive command of medieval Arabic set a model for my own work. During this period, the award of a Leverhulme Small Research Grant to myself and Pauline Koetschet, who has been a supportive interlocutor for some years now, enabled me to write the section on al-Rāzī's Platonic sources in Chapter 3.

My colleagues at the University of Michigan assisted me greatly while I completed this book. My chairs Sara Forsdyke and Artemis Leontis have been very conscientious about protecting my time as a junior faculty member. I am also indebted in particular to Ryan Szpiech, Sara Ahbel-Rappe,

Rafe Neis, and Karla Mallette for their comments on the book during its many stages; their advice both encouraged me to develop further my theoretical arguments and helped me to articulate them clearly. Samer Ali graciously made time to translate with me Arabic passages with which I was having difficulty. My use of the conceptual frame of boundary work to describe the refiguring of medicine and philosophy that is the subject of this book is an outcome of my year of leave at Michigan's Institute for the Humanities, where I profited from intellectual exchanges with the director, Peggy McCracken, and colleagues from sociology, political science, and comparative literature. Off campus, the suggestions of James Uden at Boston University were indispensable for improving the book's introduction. Christina Hoenig also provided valuable observations on a draft version of the monograph.

I wish to express gratitude to my commissioning editor at Cambridge, Michael Sharp, for his interest in and assistance with the project during its various phases of production. Furthermore, this book is a better book because of the considerate responses of the Press's two anonymous readers, from whose reports I learned a lot. In preparing my manuscript for publication, I have received technical aid from a number of individuals and financial support from the Bruce Friar Fund. Salman Elamir Amir and Daniel Davies proofread the Arabic texts, Jonathan Farr copyedited and indexed the entire book, and Molly Schaub compiled the bibliographies. All errors are, of course, my own.

Over the course of the decade during which this book has been taking shape, my family has kept up my spirits when I felt fatigued or uncertain about what I was doing. Finally, words cannot adequately convey my appreciation for the love and support of my colleague and partner Ian Fielding. He has guided me through my grief for the loss of my older sister Amanda, who passed unexpectedly less than a month before my viva, and weathered two transatlantic moves with me. Moreover, I have benefited immensely from watching him approach his own research and receiving feedback from him on my own.

Notes on Texts, Translations, and Transliterations

Editions and Translations

< > Diamond brackets enclose words or letters added by the editor (or by me).

[] Square brackets in the edition of a text enclose material an editor or I think should be deleted. In a translation, they indicate words that have been supplied for the sake of clarification.

On an orthographical note, I have kept *tašdīd* (the doubling of consonants) to a minimum – on accusative and preventive particles and where context demands – for typographical reasons.

Transliteration

The following system of transliteration is employed for Arabic:

ع; ز; ط; د; ض; ص; ش; س; ز; ر; د; د; ح; ح; ج; ت; ب; ء; ا
 ؛ غ; ف; ق; ل; م; ن; ه; و; w, ū; ي-ية ī, iyya

For Hebrew, I follow the general transliteration rules of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2nd edition), ed. M. Berenbaum and F. Skolnik (Detroit, 2007), vol. I, pp. 197–9. My transliteration of ancient Greek conforms to the American Library Association-Library of Congress romanization scheme. In my bibliography, for Arabic and Hebrew titles, I reproduce the transliterations given in WorldCat.

Abbreviations

All abbreviations of the Galenic corpus follow the system used in the *Cambridge Companion to Galen*. I model my abbreviations of Aristotle's works on the *Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*. The abbreviations of other Graeco-Roman sources follow the usage of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th edition. In addition, the following abbreviations are used for reference works, collections, and editions frequently cited:

- ANRW* *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, ed. W. Haase and H. Temporini (Berlin, 1972–).
- Com.Tim.* *Galenii Compendium Timaei Platonis*, ed. and trans. P. Kraus and R. Walzer (London, 1951).
- EI* *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st edn., 9 vols. (online).
- EF* *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn., 12 vols. (online).
- EF* *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Three* (online).
- Elr* *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (electronic resource), ed. E. Yarshater (New York, 1998).
- K* *Claudii Galeni Opera Omnia*, ed. K. G. Kühn, 20 vols. (Leipzig, 1821–33).
- LG* *L'anima e il dolore: De indolentia-De propriis placitis. Testo greco a fronte*, ed. and trans. A. Lami and I. Garofalo (Milan, 2012).
- LSJ* *Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones (9th edn., Oxford, 1996).
- M-J* *Dalālat al-Hā'irin*, ed. S. Munk and I. Joel (Jerusalem, 1930–1).
- NP* *Brill's New Pauly Online Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden, 2005–).

List of Abbreviations

xiii

- OLD* *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ed. P. G. W. Glare (2nd edn., Oxford, 2012).
- SVF* *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta.*, ed. H. von Arnim, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1903).
- WGAÜ* *Wörterbuch zu den griechisch-arabischen Übersetzungen des 9. Jahrhunderts*, Supplement, Band I: A–O, ed. M. Ullmann (Wiesbaden, 2006).

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-49948-4 — Galen and the Arabic Reception of Plato's Timaeus
Aileen R. Das
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)
