

# Psychiatry in Al-Andalus. A lesson of creativity and tolerance

J. J. López-Ibor

*Servicio de Psiquiatría. Hospital Clínico. Madrid. Spain*

## *La psiquiatría en Andalucía. Una lección de creatividad y tolerancia*

### INTRODUCTION

Particularly because the events which I am going to refer to, and which took place sometimes more than thousand years ago, had a great impact on the way mental illness was considered and mental patients treated. There are profound lessons for us today, lessons of creativity stemming from tolerance but, alas, also of splitting of a society and of intolerance who brought to end the probably most enlightened society of history.

I have written along my life several chapters about the history of Spanish psychiatry and I was always fascinated by the achievements in the islamic parts of the country during the Middle Ages. In 1997 I was invited to pronounce the «Okasha lecture» in El Cairo and this gave me the opportunity to delve in this topic and to read more about it. I was fortunate to find in an old book store an almost complete collection of the scientific journal *Al-Andalus*, founded and edited by the great arabista Miguel Asín Palacios and Emilio García Gómez which appeared between the years 1936 and 1966.

### AL-ANDALUS

The name Al-Andalus refers to the southern parts of the Iberian Peninsula under the islamic domination in the Middle Ages. During the latter periods the same rulers governed also over Northern African territories of the present Morocco and neighbouring countries, specially under the rule of the almoravids (*al-Murābiṭūn*), since 1091 and the almohads (*al-Murābiṭūn*), since 1172.

In this land and specially during the rule of Abd-er-Rahmān III an-Nasir (912-961) one of the greatest, moments of wisdom, cultural enlightenment and tolerance of human history took place. Curiously enough physi-

cians highly interested in what we call today mental disorders and mental patients played a leading role in this achievements (fig. 1). Unfortunately this period reached an end and there are two lessons, important ones for today. First is how much tolerance leads to creativity, second how much the political power falls into the temptation of controlling culture, paves the way to fundamentalism, and brings creativity to an end (fig. 2).

### A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

#### The fall of the roman empire

The Iberian peninsula is the most South-western part of Europe. It comprises present Spain and Portugal. It was invaded by Germanic tribes at the fall of the Roman Empire. In 409, the Alans, Vandals and Suebes came in, followed shortly by the Visigoths, who entered in 429 and pushed the vandals and also the Alans to the North of Africa (fig. 3). The name of Andalucia, literally «land of the vandals», was given by the Arabs to the Iberian peninsula and later on only to those territories under islamic domination (fig. 4).

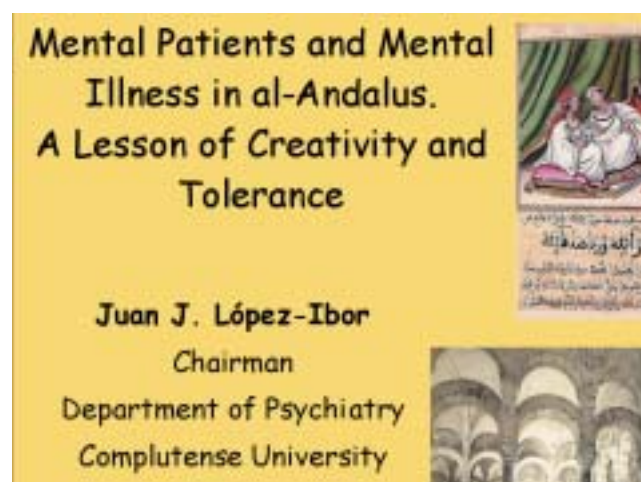


Figure 1.

#### Correspondence:

Juan José López-Ibor  
Servicio de Psiquiatría  
Hospital Clínico San Carlos  
Pl. Martín Lagos, s/n  
Madrid (Spain)

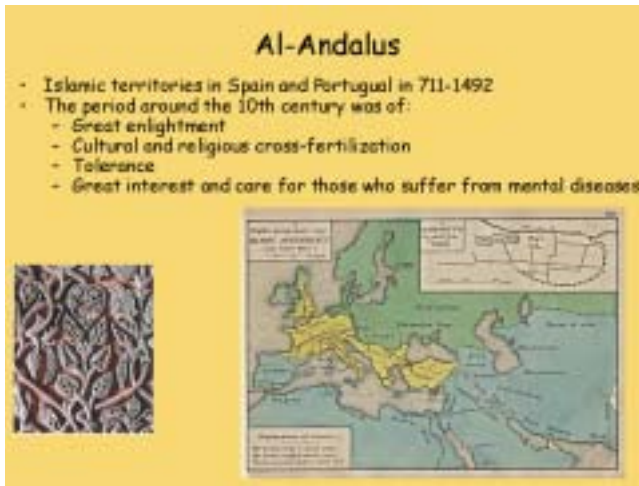


Figure 2.

### The expansion of Islam

The expansion of Islam (fig. 5) was extremely quickly after the Hijrah (622) during the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the year 750 the Islamic World extended from the Pyrenees in the north of the Iberian peninsula to the borders of China, reaching in the south to an important part of Sub-Saharan and eastern Africa.

This expansion has been described as a conquest and as a military event. However, nowadays it is known that it had a very different nature (fig. 6). It is impossible to organized in a part of the world with extremely low density of population, an army to conquest such a large territory, and to keep it and to expand it during the following centuries. It is also impossible to have enough horses, which drink up to 40 liters of water a day, to move and invade pertering from extremely dry lands. Therefore, the expansion was religious, political and cultural.

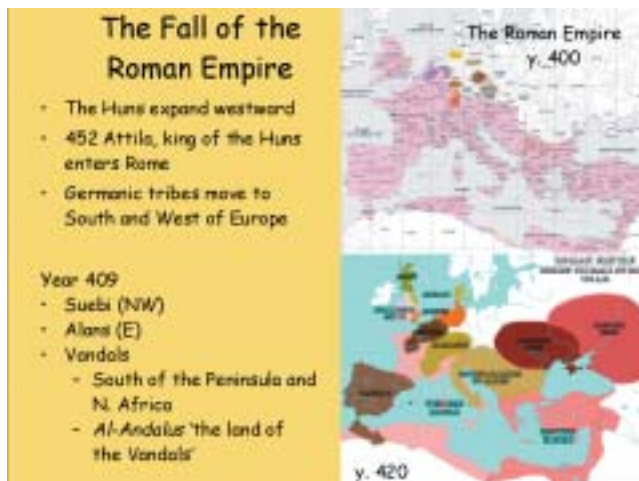


Figure 3.



Figure 4.

Arabic is the language of the koranic revelation. Islam has a vocation for universality and after the death of the prophet, the arabs felt compelled to pass on his message to the non-arabs. The expansion of islam is based on the expansion of the arabic language and of a religious perspective which put a high emphasis in human solidarity. Shortly before his death Mahomed pronounced a *jutba* (sermon), the «Farewell speech of the prophet» in which he declared that arabs and non-arabs were equal beyond all nationality or race.

In its expansion, the Islam reached territories of the former Roman Empire and entered in contact with classical philosophy, the richness of Alexandria's library and of the greek traditions. The interest to conquer was united to the interest of knowledge. The philosopher Al-Bermin wrote around the year 1000, that the science and knowledge of the whole world had been translated into arabic, in order to achieve that the new heart, driven by so many living streams, could



Figure 5.



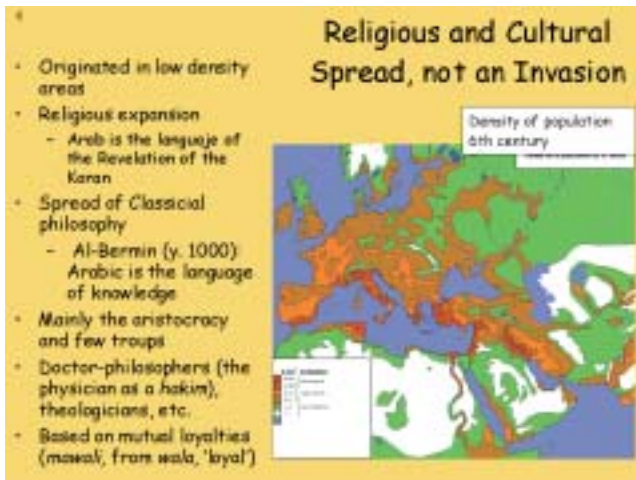


Figure 6.

start and keep alive the new and large formed organism. The greco-latin inheritance was extended not only to western christianity, but also to China, India, the Far East, Byzantium, Africa, besides the whole area that already comprised Islam. Arabic language stood between the Hellenic culture and the new western christianity and produced a greater cultural spreading than the one generated by its conquests.

So, the Arabic expansion was carried out by a very small group of citizens, specially aristocrats and warriors, accompanied by *muheccins*, priests, philosophers and physicians. Physicians played an important role in these developments. The islamic doctor was a wise man (*hakim*), that's to say a doctor-philosopher. May be that the practice of medicine allowed philosophers to earn their living. Physicians were used to travel as they were often called to distant countries and to carry with them knowledge and perspectives, which were essential for mental diseases and for the study of the psychological aspects of other diseases, but at the same time, physicians seldom remained in one place. The travel of physicians was a way of disseminating knowledge.

The expansion was supported by the voluntary submission of the invaded people. In this submission the invaded people were treated much better than under other kind of invasions. Therefore it was wise for the defeated to decide for submission. Later on with the course of time most of them converted into Islam. This relations is established under the figure of the mawālī, according to which the newly converted remained united by a bond of loyalty (*wala*), this is why war prisoners were freed. *Mawālīs* are persons integrated into a new society.

## Islam in Spain

During their way towards the West, the arabs confronted the berbers who had settled in northern africa

since prehistoric times (fig. 7). Their submission to arabic sovereignty and conversion to Islam allowed a substantial increase of the army and resources to continue expanding towards Spain.

The islamic expansion into the Iberian peninsula was also very quick. The first military disembarkation organized by Tarik, governor of Tingitania and Mauritania took place 710 at the request of visigothic leaders Ajila and Witiza. Only 400 men participated. Tarik himself crossed, with an army of 9,000, the Strait, from then on bearing his name, Gibraltar (Gib-al-Tarik, Gib, «mountain»). He joined the supporters of Witiza in Andalusia to fight and defeat King Rodrigo in the battle of Guadalete (711), taking advantage that the King was engaged in the military battle against basques and the french. From then on the arabic troops advance until Poitiers in France, where after having been defeated they end their advance to the rest of Europe. The total number of persons who crossed the Straits of Gibraltar was very reduced. In total during the 7 centuries of Muslim domination not more than a few thousand (circa 20,000) for a total population of Spain which in 1492 reached 14 millions persons. Recent studies on the genetic of populations have shown that the genetic pool of the settlers of the Iberian peninsula and North Africa changed almost nothing because of the islamic invasions.

The reason for the speed of the islamization of the Iberian peninsula was that the visigothic kingdom was divided and in a great part was engaged in a civil war of a religious background. The germanic tribes brought back to the christian european countries Arianism, an old heresy which denied that Jesus Christ and in addition the Holy Spirit had a divine nature. The fight between trinitarianists, the official Christian theology and unitarist was resolved in the Christian Church in the Council of Nicea (325) but subsisted outside the territories of the Roman Empire, because it allowed more space for local minor deities. The last redoubts of arianism were to be found in the Iberian peninsula and ended with the islamic invasion.

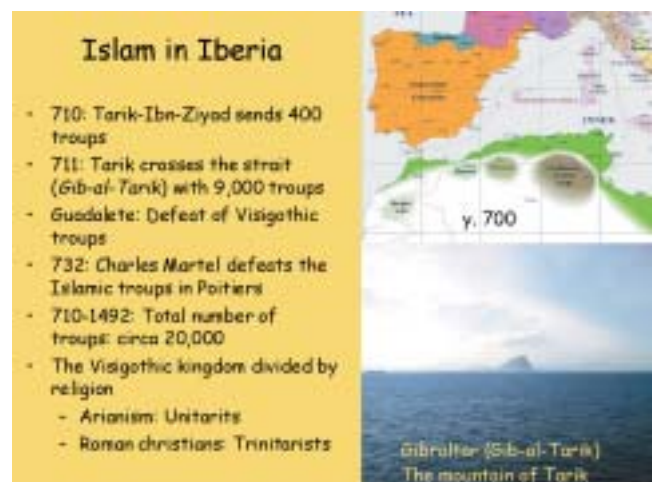


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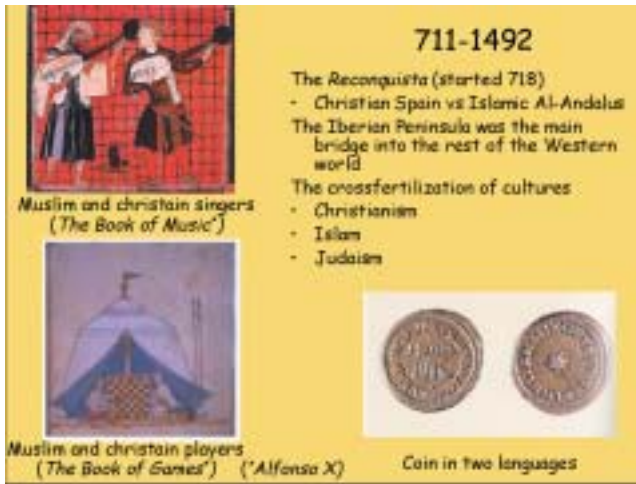


Figure 8.

The period known in Spain as the Reconquest started in 711, liberating the occupied Islamic regions until the fall of the kingdom of Granada in 1492 (fig. 8). But the «arabization» of Spain was not a military conquest, as has often been mentioned both in Spanish and arabic texts, but a phenomenon of integration of different cultures which allowed a period of great flourishing. The illustrations of two books of Alfonso X «the Wise» show christian and muslims singing together, money was often coined in two languages, and there were muslims living in Christian Spain and viceversa (fig. 9). De facto Christians, Muslims and Jews were considered as *people of the Book*. Changes of faith were not uncommon, and in any case, those who did were not considered a renegades (fig. 10).

### The splendor of the umayyads

When the umayyads (fig. 11) had to leave Damascus due to the pressure of the abasides, they settled in Spain. Abd-er-Rahmān I became emir of Córdoba in 756 and

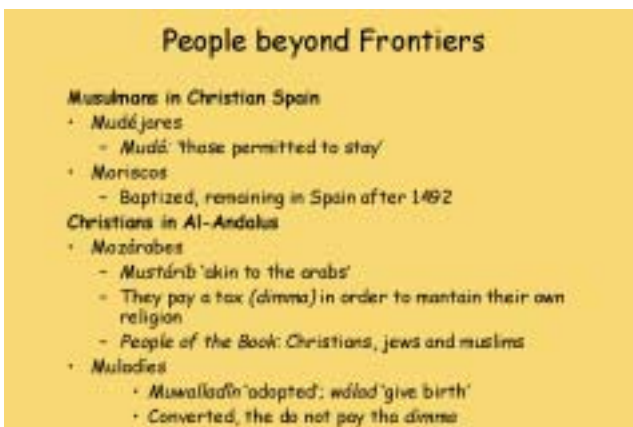


Figure 8.

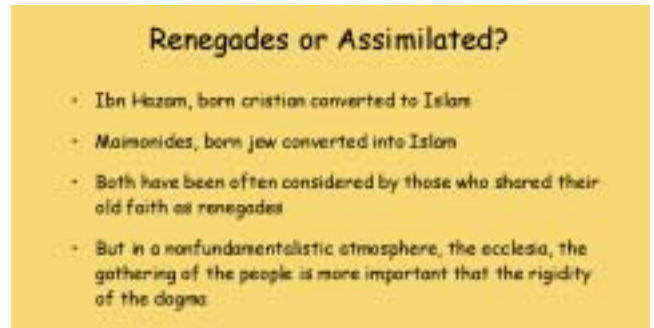


Figure 10.

Abd-er-Rahmān III became caliph independent from Damascus in 929. Córdoba, which had been the capital of the roman province of Betica, a city which was already in that times very rich since it was a trading centre nested near a navigable river (Guadalquivir) and very well connected with great roman roads. During the califate of Abd-er-Rahman III, Córdoba was, according to arabic sources, the largest city in the whole european continent (fig. 12). It extended in an area of 40 by 10 kilometers, it had one million inhabitants (more than doubling the present population), 260,000 buildings, including 80,000 stores, 3,000 mosques and baths and one library with 40,000 volumes. It had 30 hospitals, each one of them with two units for mentally ill patients, one for men the other one for women. It was a city with a great industrial production, but above all with a great cultural and artistic production which devoted great efforts to education (fig. 13). It was a study centre for East and West, specialised in the interpretation of the Koran, of islamic rules, medicine, music, chirurgy... In Córdoba the Andalusian School for Music was created and Ziryab who deceased in the year 852. It was a great period of tolerance, christians were allowed to keep their churches, schools and libraries.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century the califate was divided in many small kingdoms called Taifas. They lost their power and

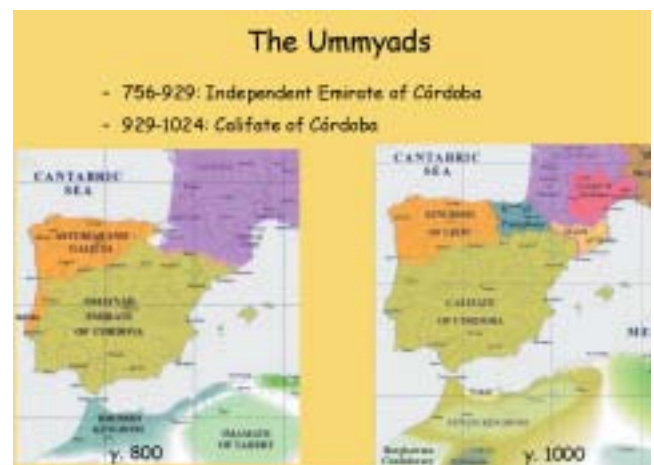


Figure 11.



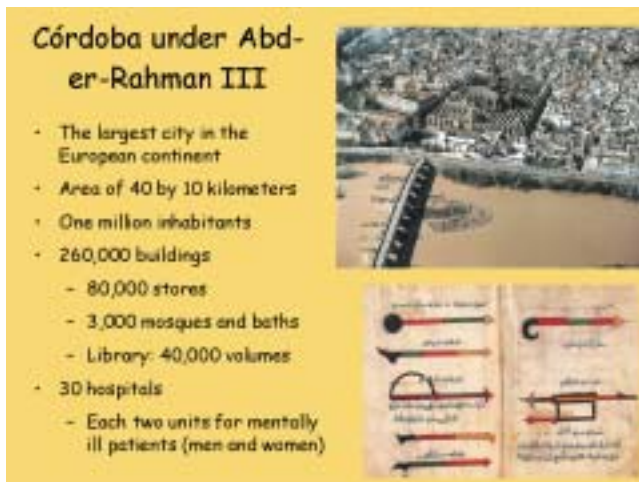


Figure 12.



Figure 14.

two new invasions from North Africa, the almoravids (1091) and almohads (1172) restored the order in the city but they brought along a period of great intolerance (fig. 14).

The almoravids (1056-1147) (*al-murābiṭūn*, «those dwelling in frontiers, fortresses») a confederation of saharian berbers had their capital in Marrakesh, came into Spain in 1090, after the collapse of Córdoba. They were warrior-monks and their leader, Yahya Ibn Ibrahim, and the theologian Abd Allah Ibn Yasin ruled them with high religious fervor.

The almohads (1130-1269) (*al-murābiṭūn*, «those who affirm the unity of God») were a berber confederation, created in 1120, inspired by Ibn Tūmart, highly puritan and with a strict concept of the unity of God. Ibn Tūmart proclaimed himself as the *mahdī*, the messiah, the militar ruler to fight the almoravids.

The enlightened period of Al-Andalus. Rigid and fundamentalist attitudes, from some scholastics and theologians paved the way to important changes.

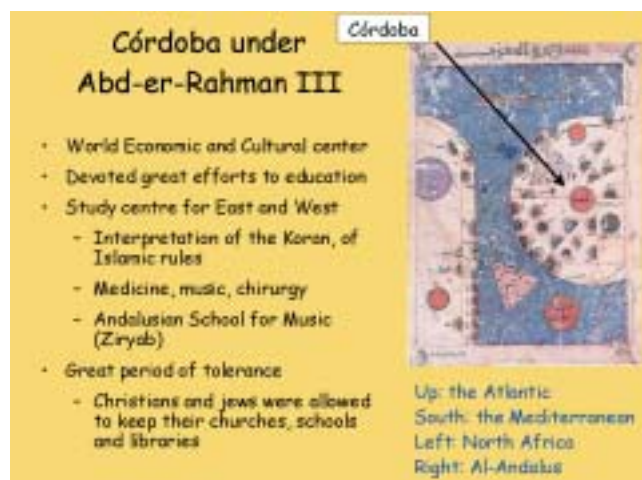


Figure 13.

The flourishing period survived in Toledo, in the Cristian Spain (fig. 15). The king Alfonso X «the Wise» created the School of Translators. There, under the leadership of arzobispo Raimundo de Toledo people like the jew Juan Hispano, also known as Ibn Dawud, Dominicus Gundisalinus and a high number of european intellectuals continued the work of translating classic texts into latin.

In 1492 the last muslim kingdom in Granada falls apart, the jews are expelled from Spain and America was discovered. New challenges were born that culminated with the integration of the empire of the Habsburgs and with the conquest and colonisation of America (fig. 16).

## THE GREAT INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE

The translation of the classical works into arabic, brought the challenge of incorporating greek philosophy of pantheistic roots, to a monotheistic islamic

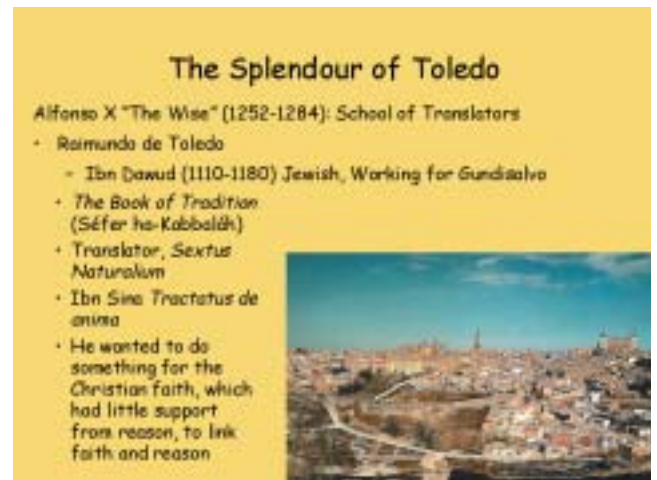


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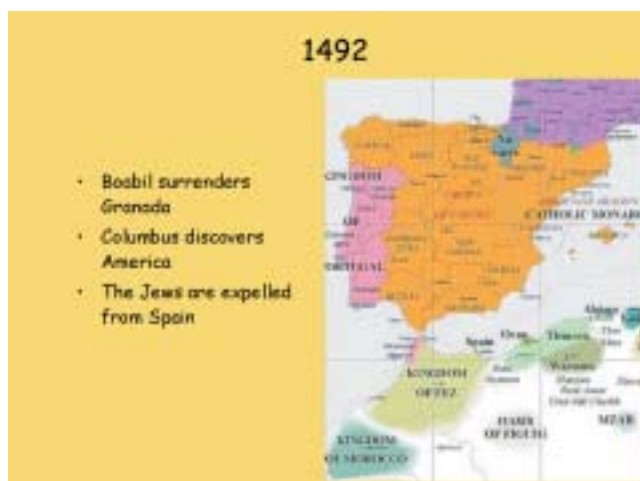


Figure 16.

culture and latter on to the two other monotheistic religions, christianism and judaism without violating the original message nor creating heressies (fig. 17). The result was one of the most important intellectual achievements of humanity. All this happened in Córdoba, specially during the caliphate of Abd-er-Rahmān III an-Nasir (912-961) and in the School of Translators of Toledo founded by Alphonse X «the Wise» (1252-1284).

### Philosophical contributions

The contributions of Avicenna and Abu Nasr (Al-Farabi, Alfarabiur or Avennasar) to ontology are precursors to contemporary philosophers such as Heidegger. Ibn Hazm (994-1063) tried to fuse faith and reason and in order to do so distinguished in the creatures the essence from the existence, while stating that in God they are one and the same thing (fig. 18). According to him, the being is manifested in its relationship with existence, is created (and therefore dependant on the creator). The essence of the being is not the existence (otherwise it would exist forever), except for God. The

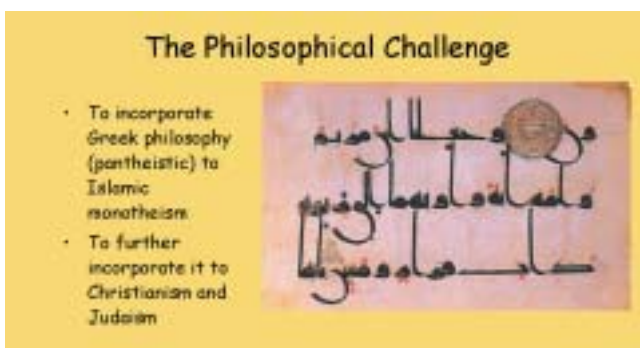


Figure 17.

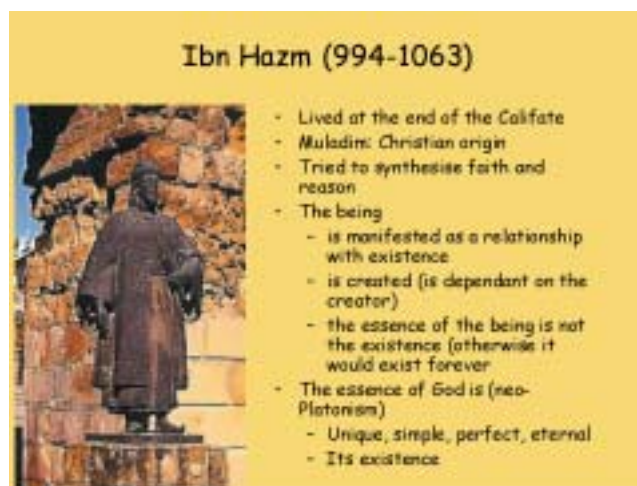


Figure 18.

essence of God is unique, simple, perfect, eternal, it is his existence. Avicenna, Al Farabi and others delved in ontology (fig. 19).

### Literary contributions

Arabic poetry is a good example of creativity and tolerance, towards women, foreigners and others. On the one hand it incorporates refrains in Mozarabic language (the first written Spanish known). These refrains are called jarjās, they were sometimes bilingual, but the emphasis was laid on the everyday language and not on the cultivated one (fig. 20).

On the other hand, it creates styles that are the root of later developments. For instance, Ibn Quzman had a great influence on Dante's *Divine comedy*; *The ring of the dove* by Ibn Hazm, one of the most beautiful love books of universal literature, presents for the first time women as an object of loving adoration, like the pro-

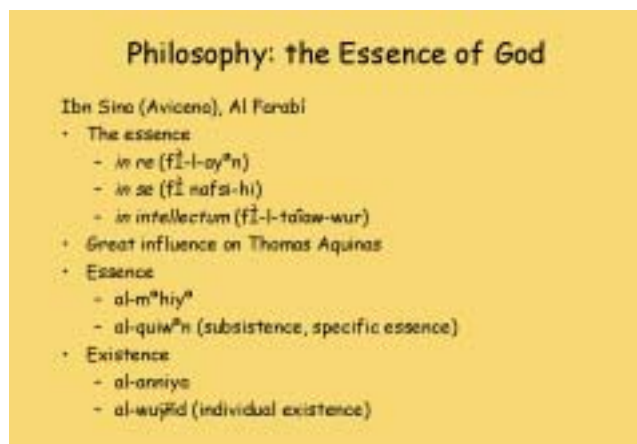


Figure 19.





Figure 20.

vençal poets did later; and the human and divine love themes influenced poets like Llull, the archpriest of Hita and the Spanish mystic literature (figs. 21 and 22).

### CONTRIBUTIONS FORM MEDICINE

#### Contributions of islamic physicians

Islam brought along a tradition of care of the mentally ill and a medicine linked to philosophy. The authors that contributed more to the fields of mental diseases and psychological medicine were: Avicenna or Ibn-Sinah (complete name was Ibn Ali Ibn Abdullah Ibn Sinah, 978-1036). His main treatise is *De anima*. Avicenna shared with Aristotle the idea of a potential intelligence, becoming actual by way of experience. He knew that the cerebral ventricles were twins and he distinguished the main functions ascribed to each one



Figure 21.

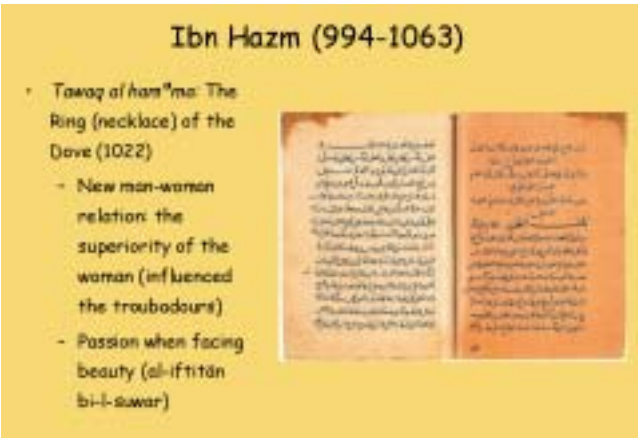


Figure 22.

of them. However, like Galen and others assigned the physiological and pathological functions to the cerebral mass occupied by the *neuma*. Avicenna and the arabs in general, thought that the functions of the brain unfolded in the same ventricular area. In melancholia, the brain is affected *per consensum*, and the original cause may be in the stomach, in the liver, in the spleen or in the uterus (fig. 23). In one case he talked of erotic melancholia, a very particular disease because the remedy usually is what causes it. This is the case:

*Once he was called to the land of Georgia to visit the nephew of its king. Avicenna called the chancellor of the palace and made him name all the persons living in palace, while he took the pulse of the patient. While saying the name of one of the persons, the pulse accelerated, from what Avicenna deducted that it was the person the patient was in love with, assuring his cure if the named person that inspired this love was given to the patient.*

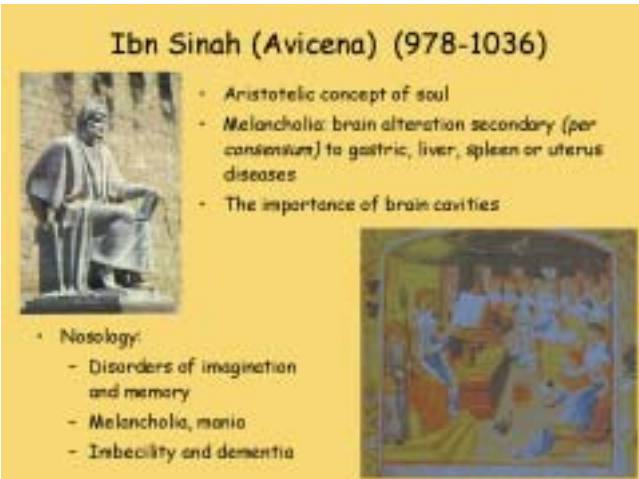


Figure 23.

Muhamad Ibn Rusá or Averröes (1126-1198) was known more as a philosopher than as a physician (fig. 24). He was very aristotelian, however, he did not conceive the *nous* in the aristotelian way since, following Alexander from Aphrodisius, he declared that the potential nous was individual. The potential nous is not only an ability demonstrated by its activity, because it is active and has a potential of its own. But this nous can not be individual, as said before, since it is linked to the active *nous* from which all human beings participate. Each one of the human beings has only the ability to take some of the active particles from this existential nous, the same way as all human beings hold the ability to see the light. After death, the *nous* continues to exist but not individually, it continues to exist like something common to all human beings and this is the nous that all human beings hold like an emanation from God. That's to say, in each individual soul there is a particle of the immortal spirit, since it is originated in it.

Abulcasis (1106) was very much inclined to surgery. He said: *When melancholia is produced by corrupt humidities and thick pituitary cauterisation is needed*, a very ancient indication of psychosurgery indeed!

Ibn-Bajjah (Avempace), who died in 1163 thought, against the prevailing neoplatonism, that man has the same instincts as the animals, and therefore the power that comes from underneath will reach the intellectual power, which is like an emanation from God (fig. 25).

### Hebraic contributions

Solomon Ben Yehuda or Ibn-Gobirol (Avicbron, 1021-1071), who systematised aristotelian knowledge on the soul: the vegetative soul produces the movements needed for reproduction and growing, the vital soul for sensations and movement, while the rational soul is in charge of the thought.

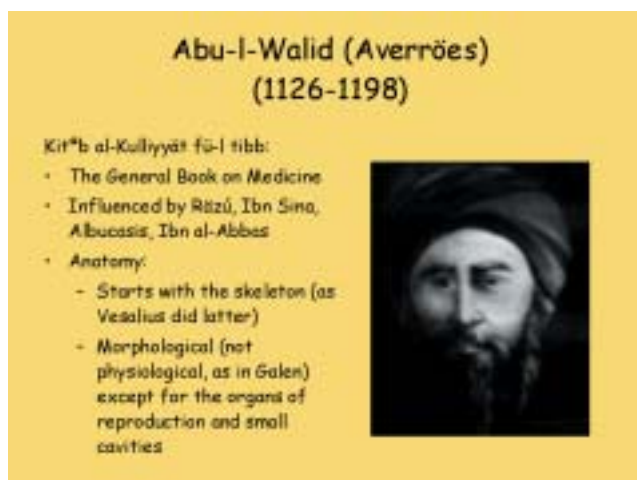


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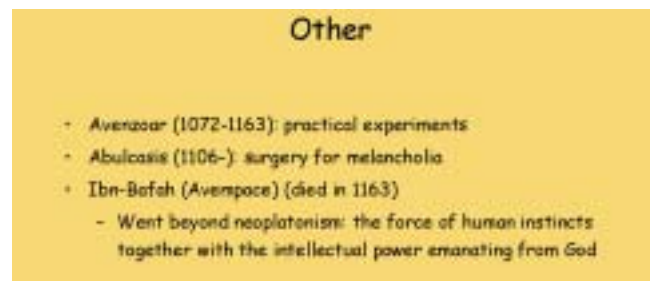


Figure 25.

Moses Maimonides lived in Córdoba (1129-1205). His most interesting contribution for our field is his treatise *The Guide of the Perplexed*, a book that still nowadays deserves to be read. According to Fidel Fernández his knowledge on psychiatry were not at all inconsiderable for the times being. He wrote: *Someone who runs through the streets, throws stones or breaks household equipment is not to be considered as insane, but only those who have their consciousness clouded by a fixed idea, being normal for what has no relation with that idea*, formulating this way the idea of monomania. Due to his Jewish origin he had to lead, despite his great worth, a wandering existence.

The most important work of the Jewish scholastic was a book written by Suhar. According to this author God manifests himself in his word and in his activity insofar as he was the Creator of Adam Kadmon (Cadmō according to Greek mythology). This original man is composed of ten powers from which derive, on the one side, the psychological or animic faculties and on the other one, the virtues. The spiritual and immortal soul of man (*Neshama*) is a part of the spiritual world. The soul that holds life (*Ruach*) belongs to the psychic world and the breathing (*Nphesch*) belongs to the third material world. Suhar was influenced by Plotino and Platon (fig. 26).



Figure 26.



In the writings of Avicbron, all what is not from God, has matter and form and therefore that is what happens in the soul, fusing the aristotelian and the neo-platonic doctrines with the jewish thought.

## Christian Spain

The long period between the islamic invasion (711) and the reconquest of the kingdom of Granada (1492) was crucial for the formation of Spain (fig. 27). First because the castillian or Spanish language was born, came to be accepted and expanded, and as Américo Castro stresses, the Spanish language became the language of an empire, something already mentioned by Antonio de Nebrija, who in the 15<sup>th</sup> century published the first grammar in roman language. Second and more important even was the coexistence of three religions: christian, hebreu and islam. Here relies the real intertwining, the one that formed the characteristics of the Spanish people, according to Sánchez Albornoz. Third, the Spanish identity appeared together with its character and sense of a nation, before the rest of european countries. Fourth, at the end of this period, the expansion through the Mediterranean sea, America and the Philip-pines (*an empire where the sun did not set*).

*Las siete partidas* (*The Seven Laws*) of Alphonse X «the Wise» include important contributions to the insanity defense. The laws follow the roman tradition, but impregnated of christian humanism. There, an insane person is considered as if being a child (*sicut infantes*), that's to say, irresponsible for his/her acting. The distinction between obsessio and possessio is also made in this compendium of laws.

Pedro Hispano (1226-1277) was Galenic as a physician and as a philosopher he followed the Aristotelian tradition. He was very interested in astrology. His main book is entitled *Tratado de anima* (*Treatise of soul*) (fig. 28).

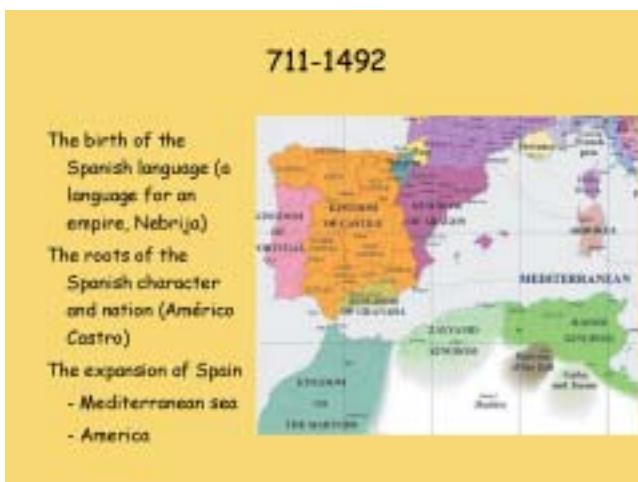


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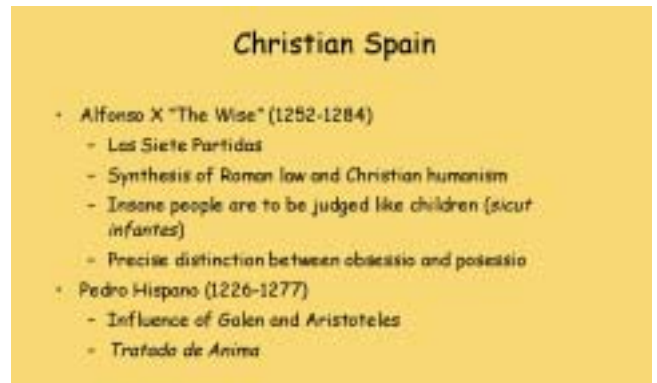


Figure 28.

Arnaldo de Vilanova (1250-1313) was an extraordinary individual. Although he most probably was born in France, Diepgen is inclined to consider him as being Spanish taking into account his place of activity and because he descended from Valence (Peset, Ullersperger). He recalls Paracelso because of his varied inclinations and knowledge. His *Práctica médica* (*Medical practice*) deals with mania and melancholia, ascribing the first one to a defect in the anterior cells of the head which deprives at the same time of imagination and melancholy is ascribed to the animal spirit, which causes fear, sadness and mutism. Among the foods that cause melancholia is vine because when burning the humours it produces a black bile. Internal causes like rage, restlessness caused by excessive studying, retention of menstrual fluids or corrupted sperm. His small treatise on the interpretation of dreams is still today delightful to read. He was condemned by the Inquisition because he tried to merge Hippocratic principles with the veneration of demons.

Ramón Llull was born in Majorca in 1232 and died in 1272. He was a franciscan and a man an unusual reputation for the time being. Although he was not a physician he was also engaged with medicine. According to his diagram, the combinations between the different activities of the soul can produce different normal or morbid characters. The normal activity of the soul demands, or supposes, the normal activity of all main faculties, which are: memory, understanding and will; but if their functioning is not correct, the soul suffers a change in its activities, for example, a forgetful memory, an ignorant intelligence and a will directed towards hate more than towards love. He wrote a book entitled *Liber de instrumentu intellectus in medicina* (fig. 29).

## The first psychiatric hospitals

The first psychiatric hospital worth of that name of the world was the one in Valence, founded by Gilaberto Jofre in 1411. Before it, it is true that mental patients were admitted into isolated rooms of hospitals and that

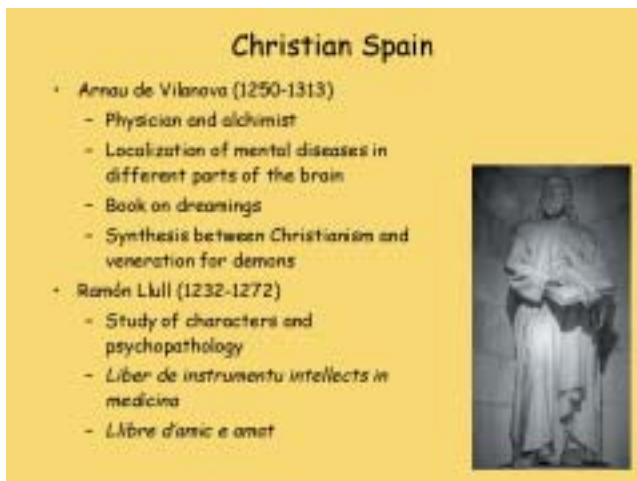


Figure 29.

admission of mental patients together with others who although not being mentally ill resulted disruptive, was allowed. In 1326 in the Georges Hospital in Elbing, that belonged to the dominion of the Teutonic Knights, some cells were built in the so called *Doll-haus* (lit., insane houses). Similar cells are mentioned in documents of the Local Hospital of Hamburg in 1375. They were also to be found in Erfurt, in the big hospital reconstructed in 1385. In 1403 in the London St. Mary of Bethlehem Hospital six mentecapti men, that's to say, deprived of reasoning, were staying. He same happened also in the Hotel-Dieu in Paris, in the Holy Trinity Hospital of Salisbury, in Mamburg, in Passau, in Regensburg and in other places. There are hints that in 1068 Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, a Spanish knight and hero called «El Cid» (from the Arabis *sheik*, «leader»), founded an institution destined for insane persons called San Lázaro (fig. 30).

Gilaberto Jofre was a priest of the Orden de la Merced (Order of the Mercy), engaged in the exchange of

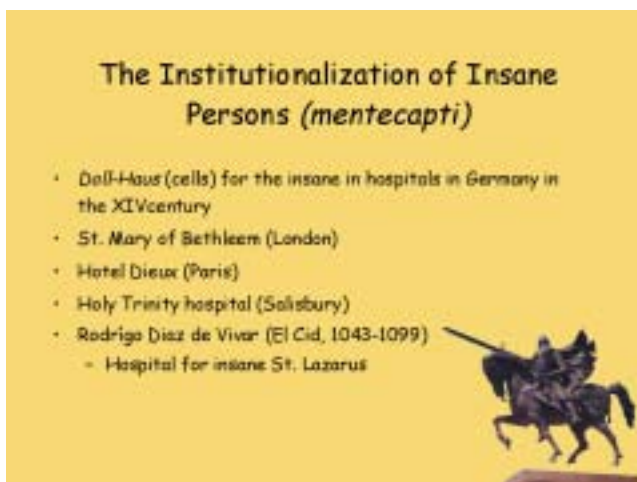


Figure 30.

prisoners and slaves from Islamic countries, and therefore he knew about institutions of this kind in the muslim world. In Granada in Al-Andalus there was a maristan, a building for the imprisonment of antisocial persons. The floor plans have been reconstructed (fig. 31). According to Delgado Roig, the hospital was built between 1356 and 1367 during Mohamed V reign. It was located in a quarter called of Pleasure (*Haxasir*) and was always called house of the insane and innocent (fig. 32). The description of the architect Lampérez says that it was made up of a two floor rectangular plan and in its facade, a small doorway with porticos on its four sides each one of them with its space in between. Behind there was a courtyard with four staircases and four halls in each one of the corners. The porticos and the galleries served as walkway for the convalescent patients and in the space in between them probably were located the infirmaries. The water came out from the mouth of two lions which are nowadays installed in front of the Torre de las Damas (Tower of the Ladies), in the Alhambra. In one of the halls a series of partitions divided the space into small cells, very similar to the ones built by Bar-el Moristan of Baghdad in the XIII century.

However, a hospital dedicated exclusively to the care of mental patients and only for them, separated from hospitals for the rest of patients, did not exist before the one in Valence (fig. 33).

The founding of the first mental hospital in Valencia in 1409 took place the following way: On the 24<sup>th</sup> of February of that year, Juan Gilaberto Jofre was going to give a preach in the Cathedral of Valence, on the day of *Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados* (Our Lady of the Defenseless), when he saw a crowd of kids who were throwing stones and insulting an obviously insane person. He shortened the sermon he had prepared for the festivity of the day and turned into an appeal to found a hospital, in which all kinds of mental patients could be admitted. His words as recorded in the Old Book of Constitution, By-Laws and Apostolic Reprieval awarded in favour of the General Hospital of Valence (*Libro viejo de las constituciones, ordenanzas e indultos apostólicos concedidos a favor del Hospital General de Valencia*), were:

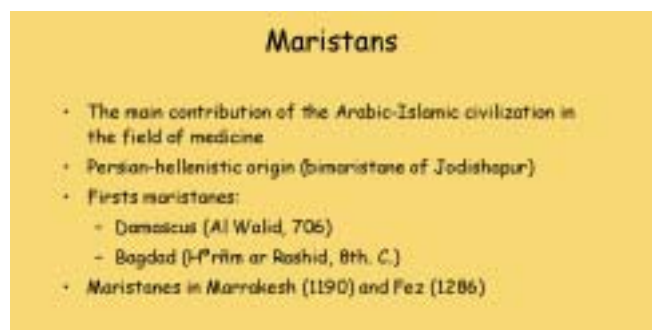


Figure 31.



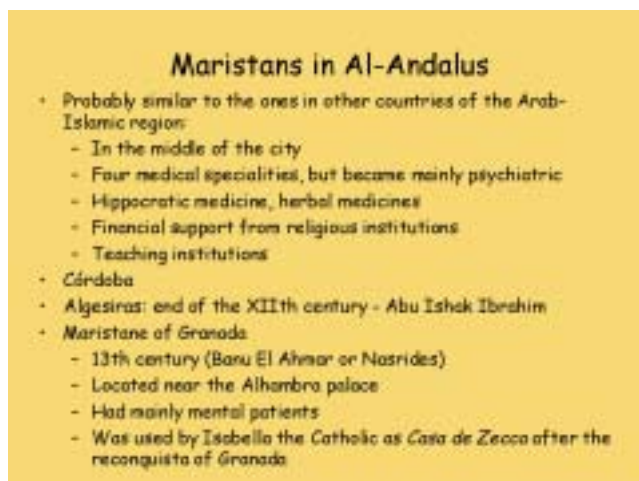


Figure 32.

*There are in this city many pious and charitable deeds of great benefit for the poor; but one of great importance is lacking: that's to say, a hospital or residence where the poor innocent and disturbed can be taken in. Many poor innocents wander around this city suffering from many needs, for this reason and because of their state they do not know how to earn money or ask for what they need to survive, they sleep on the streets and perish from hunger and cold and some wicked persons mistreat, offend and hurt them, some of them even get killed and if they happen to be innocent women it happens that they are abused. For this reasons it would be blessing-worthy and very good if in Valencia a room or a hospital could be arranged in which those innocent mad could find a place in order not to wander around the city causing and receiving harm.*

After finished his preach, a man called Lorenzo Salom followed by several other citizens<sup>1</sup> who had been listening to it, waited him at the low of the pulpit. They informed him about their on-site decision to contribute with the needed economic means to found a hospital to be called Santa María de los Inocentes (St. Mary of the Innocents). Inocente means innocent, that's to

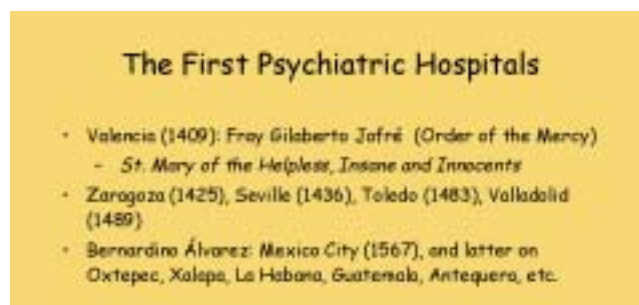


Figure 31.

say, those who although having lost their reasoning can do no voluntary harm to others.

The example spread and in 1425 Alphonse V founded in Saragossa the hospital called Virgen de Gracia, with an inscription on its facade that said *Urbi et orbe*, since any kind of patients could be admitted into this hospital, without making any distinction because of religion, nor citizenship. In one of the pavilions of this hospital there was a department dedicated to mental patients, that burned down and was rebuilt in 1829. This hospital achieved great fame since the first moment of its founding because of the introduction of the so called moral treatment of mental patients.

In 1436 in Seville, Marco Sancho or Sánchez founded the third mental hospital in Spain. Another one was built in Palma de Mallorca in 1456 and in Toledo in 1482 and Valladolid in 1489.

Bernardino Álvarez, founder of first mental hospital in the New Continent, was born in Utrera in 1517 and when aged 20 he emigrated to Mexico. He took part with the militia in several wars, but afterwards he alternated these activities with stripping off gambling houses, even if he had to fight with weapons for this. He was so violent that his fellows even came to proclaim him leader of that wicked mob. They were arrested but Bernardino Álvarez taking advantage of the dark of night jumped the walls of jail and escaped with other three less fortunate fellows who got captured and were condemned to the gallows; Bernardino with better luck found shelter in the house of a woman of a neighbourhood called Necaltitlan, who provided him with weapons, a horse and money to ease his flight. He then succeeded to reach Acapulco, where he embarked towards Peru. He abandoned the weapons, became a trader and amassed a huge fortune. Having lead such an eventful life, after the death of his father and when his mother told him about the misfortunes that afflicted the family, Bernardino changed his way of life. He took refuge in the Marqués del Valle Hospital to dedicate his efforts to take care of and give money to the ill people. Back in Mexico he conceived the idea of founding a new hospital for the insane. Short time afterwards the first hospital for mental patients was inaugurated in the New World (1567). Just as a comparison, the first psychiatric institution in USA was opened more than 2 centuries latter (Williamsburg, 1773). Bernardino Álvarez founded several other hospitals (Oaxtepec, Xalapa, La Habana, Guatemala, Antequera, etc.).

## CONCLUSIONS

The expansion of Islam incorporated knowledge from greek and roman classic periods and translated it into

<sup>1</sup> Bernardo Andreu, Juan Armenger, Francisco Barceló, Pedro de Bonia, Sancho Calvo, Jaime Domínguez, Fernando García, Pedro Pedrera, Esteban Valenza y Pedro la Plama (Sempere).

Arabic, consequently translations into arabic without destroying its original meaning and therefore this knowledge could be integrated in the three monotheistic religions: christianity, judaism and islam. All this took place in Spain around two cities: Cordoba during the 10<sup>th</sup> century and under the caliphate of Abd-er-Rahmān III and Toledo during the 11<sup>th</sup> century during the kingdom of Alphonse X. This coincided with a high cultural development and also in medicine, leading to a humanitarian approach to the care of the mentally ill. The further invasion of fundamentalist religions ended with this period of tolerance. Nevertheless many achievements in the care of the mentally ill persisted in christian Spain and spread to the New World.

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