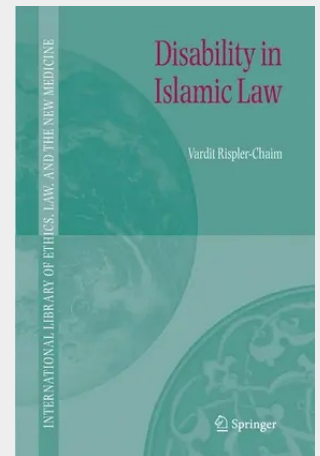


Disability in Islamic Law

1 When I completed my book Islamic Medical Ethics in the Twentieth Century, I was aware that I had omitted certain topics that I would have to return to. One of these was the ethical treatment of disabilities and the disabled, and of handicaps and the handicapped. Since responses to burning medical dilemmas within the wide field of medical ethics was the main focus of that book, it addressed ethical aspects of the doctor-patient relationship, and contemporary Islamic debates on issues such as birth control and abortion, artificial insemination, organ transplants, postmortem examinations and euthanasia. The main source material was 20th-century fatwas (legal responses) issued by various Middle Eastern muftis. In this book I now wish to survey attitudes to the disabled and their disabilities as evinced by selected Sunni and Shi'i legal compilations throughout 1400 years of scholarly Islamic activity, but also through contemporary fatwas. The sources used for this book are a selection of medieval as well as modern legal writings, medical books and articles in Arabic, books and articles on medicine from an Islamic religious point of view, Prophetic medicine, and the Qur'an and medicine. I have scrutinized all these for their consideration of people with disabilities, and for the behavioral or social adjustments these people were offered, mainly through legal rulings.

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