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HUMORAL THEORY IN THE MEDIEVAL NORTH

An Old Norse Translation of Epistula Vindiciani in Hauksbók

THE OLDEST preserved Old Norse text explaining the theory of the four humours is estimated to have been written shortly after 1300.¹ This roughly 900-word-long treatise, connecting ancient and medieval physiology to the character and dispositions of men, is preserved in the compilation Hauksbók, under the title *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* [On the nature of man and his blood].²

The treatise consists of two parts, which differ somewhat in nature. The first section is a theological preamble or preface, elucidating the divine creation and the nature of the elements (*höfuðefni*; earth, water, air and fire) and their harmonious interaction. The second part is a physiological text describing how the elements are inextricably linked to the corresponding four humours in the human body, followed by a systematic explication of the constitution of the humours and their effects on the character and dispositions of men.

Although much has been written on Hauksbók, the context, origins and nature of this treatise – which is unique in the Old Norse corpus – has not been the subject of much investigation. Finnur Jónsson noted in 1892 that it seemed to be a free adaption of *De mundi constitutione*.³ This is an eleventh-century treatise on cosmology and the soul, written by an

¹ See discussion on the dating below.

² Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this essay are the author's. The treatise is on folios 16r–17r in AM 544 4to, printed in Eiríkur Jónsson and Finnur Jónsson (eds.), *Hauksbók: Udgiven efter de Arnamagnæanske håndskrifter no. 371, 544 og 675, 4^e samt forskellige papirshåndskrifter* (Copenhagen: Det Kongelige nordiske oldskrift-selskab, 1892–1896), 180–82.

³ Finnur Jónsson, "Indledning," *Hauksbók: Udgiven efter de Arnamagnæanske håndskrifter no. 371, 544 og 675, 4^e samt forskellige papirshåndskrifter* (Copenhagen: Det Kongelige nordiske oldskrift-selskab, 1892–1896), cxxiii. Regrettably, both the false attribution of this work to Bede and Finnur's claim that it is the source of *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* have been taken at face value in at least three recent scholarly writings on Hauksbók.

unknown author, but in Finnur's time erroneously attributed to Bede.⁴ Finnur also referred to Bede's *De natura rerum* I.4 and *De temporum ratione* [35], as well as William of Conches' *Philosophia mundi*, which was at that time attributed to Honorius of Autun.⁵ Jón Helgason noted in 1960 that the treatise is "no doubt translated, but the immediate source has not been pointed out."⁶ The matter was briefly visited again by Lars Lönnroth in 1963–64, who rightly concluded that the idea of an adaptation from *De mundi constitutione* was baseless.⁷ Lönnroth also noted that the other texts Finnur mentioned offered no more than some general parallels and the question still remained open as to what degree the treatise in Hauksbók was a free adaptation or a direct translation of a still unknown learned text.⁸

Many fine studies have been published in recent years that situate Hauksbók and Haukr Erlendsson within the intellectual culture of Iceland and Scandinavia.⁹ In his study, Sverrir Jakobsson argues that the contents of Hauksbók reflect the adoption of a European Catholic world view within an Icelandic context, and that the work's broad scope is reflective of the interests of the intellectual Icelandic social élite.¹⁰ Stefka Eriksen

4 Printed with an extensive introduction in Pseudo-Bede, *De mundi celestis terrestrisque constitutione. A Treatise on the Universe and the Soul*, ed. and trans. by Charles Burnett, Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts, 10 (London: The Warburg Institute, 1985). See also footnote 28.

5 Finnur Jónsson, "Indledning," cxxiii. The chapter number of *De temporum ratione* is here amended from 33 to 35, as the former is on unrelated matters and must be an error.

6 Jón Helgason, "Introduction," *Hauksbók: The Arna-Magnaean Manuscripts 371, 4to, 544, 4to, and 675, 4to*, ed. by Jón Helgason, Manuscripta Islandica 5 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1960), xiv.

7 "Kroppen som själens spegel—ett motiv i de isländska sagorna," *Lychnos. Lärdomshistoriska samfundets årsbok* (1963–64): 34.

8 Ibid.

9 Sverrir Jakobsson, "Hauksbók and the Construction of an Icelandic World View," *Saga-Book* 31 (2007): 22–38; Stefka Georgieva Eriksen, "Body and Soul in Old Norse Culture," *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Scandinavia, c. 1100–1350*, ed. by Stefka Georgieva Eriksen, Disputatio, 28 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2016), 408–21; Gunnar Harðarson, "Old Norse Intellectual Culture," *ibid.*, 35–73; Gunnar Harðarson, "Hauksbók og alfræðirit miðalda," *Gripla* 27 (2016): 127–55; Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, "Literary, Codicological, and Political Perspectives on Hauksbók," *Gripla* 19 (2008): 73–74. Most recently, Jonas Wellendorf analyses in particular the context of the text found in the first two gatherings of AM 544 4to in his "Universalist Aspirations in *Hauksbók*," *Gods and Humans in Medieval Scandinavia: Retying the Bonds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 43–70.

10 Sverrir Jakobsson, "Hauksbók and the Construction of an Icelandic World View," 22–23. See also Rudolf Simek's response, "The Medieval Icelandic World View and the Theory of the Two Cultures," *Gripla* 20 (2009): 183–98.

extends this context to medieval Norway¹¹ and Gunnar Harðarson concludes that the theoretical interests in man and the world as demonstrated in Hauksbók – for example, with the treatise *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* – are “a fine example of the personal intellectual culture of an aristocrat in the Norwegian fourteenth century.”¹²

In what follows, the ideas presented in the first part of *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* will be put into the context of currents of thought transmitted in a body of medieval learned and theological texts, while maintaining a focus on the writings that we have grounds to believe were extant in medieval Iceland and Norway. Furthermore, the elucidation of the theory of the four humours, which appears in the second part of *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði*, will be traced to a popular and widespread learned Latin text: *Epistula Vindiciani ad Pentadium*. The two texts will be compared, and it will be argued that the latter part of *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* is an Old Norse translation derived from *Epistula Vindiciani*.

Manuscript and dating

Stefán Karlsson has dated the bulk of Hauksbók to 1302–10 on the grounds of a comparison between Haukr Erlendson’s hand in the book and his dated autograph letters.¹³ However, the treatise in question is not written in Haukr’s hand, but by a Norwegian scribe whose hand is one of at least fourteen that Jón Helgason has established in Hauksbók, apart from Haukr’s own.¹⁴ The treatise is written on folios 16^r–17^r in AM 544 4to.¹⁵ These folios belong to the third gathering in the manuscript, which contains seven leaves (folios 15–21).¹⁶ This quire is notably different from other quires in the manuscript. The support is thicker and it originally

11 Eriksen, “Body and Soul,” 410.

12 Gunnar Harðarson, “Old Norse Intellectual Culture,” 63.

13 Stefán Karlsson, “Aldur Hauksbókar,” *Fróðskaparrit: Annales Societatis Scientiarum Færoensis* 13 (1964): 118–20.

14 On the hands, see Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” ix–xi.

15 Hauksbók is divided into three parts in the Arnamagnæan Collection, with the shelf marks AM 371 4to, AM 544 4to, and AM 675 4to. On the codicology and palaeography of AM 544 4to in context with the compilation as a whole, see Gunnar Harðarson, “Hauksbók og alfræðirit miðalda”.

16 Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” viii.

had a larger format; the outer margins have been trimmed to fit the size of other quires. This raises the possibility that it was made independently and inserted later – by Haukr or somebody else.¹⁷

The hand of the treatise, which Jón called the “second Norwegian hand,” appears on four consecutive leaves in this gathering (folios 15r–18v line 31).¹⁸ Stefán Karlsson and Gunnar Harðarson have estimated that this text was written at about the same time as Haukr’s own portions of *Hauksbók*.¹⁹

Surrounding the treatise on the humours in this gathering are tracts mainly on theological subjects. The source of the exempla preceding it (on folios 15r–16r) has been identified as *Disciplina clericalis* by the Spanish Christian writer Peter Alfonsi (1062–c. 1140).²⁰ Succeeding our treatise is a text on Seth’s journey to paradise. Both are written in the same hand as *Af nattu mannzins ok bloði*.

The orthography and linguistic features of the text in the “second Norwegian hand” has been described by Finnur Jónsson.²¹ He remarks that despite a few Norwegian features in the orthography, both the language and the orthography are on the whole Icelandic.²² Finnur therefore concludes that the scribe was Norwegian but copying an Icelandic original.²³

The theological section of the text

We first turn to the first part of *Af nattu mannzins ok bloði*.²⁴ It tells of how God created earth, water, air and fire, and how these elements interact in harmony. The elements are layered: uppermost in the world is

17 See *ibid.*, vi. See also Gunnar Harðarson, “Hauksbók og alfræðirit miðalda,” 139; Wellendorf, “Universalist Aspirations in *Hauksbók*,” 54–55.

18 See Jón Helgason, “Introduction,” xi.

19 Gunnar Harðarson and Stefán Karlsson, “Hauksbók,” *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf (London: Garland, 1993), 271; see also Finnur Jónsson, “Indledning,” xxxvi.

20 Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, “Sagnastef í íslenskri menningarsögu,” *Saga* 30 (1992): 83, 99–101. The text in gathering three begins *in medias res* and was thus presumably preceded by a now lost quire including more of *Disciplina clericalis*. See *ibid.*, 82–85.

21 Finnur Jónsson, “Indledning,” xxxi–xxxvi.

22 *Ibid.*, xxxv.

23 *Ibid.*, xxxv–xxxvi.

24 *Hauksbók*, 180:7–181:15, *Inc.* “Allzvalltandi guð...” *Exp.* “...veralldligum kykvendum.”

fire, associated with the sky, which is hot and dry in nature; below the sky resides the air, which is hot and moist; next comes water, which is cold and moist; and furthest down is the earth, dry and cold in nature. All these are presented as equally vital, and the function and interdependence of them is explained in some detail. Finally, it is recounted how God created Adam out of the four elements and therefore man embodies the likeness of them all in the form of the four humours. Each humour resonates with one of the elements – blood with fire, red bile with air, black bile with earth, and phlegm with water – and has corresponding qualities.

The seasons and microcosm: “Enn minne heimr”

Echoes of quite a few of the ideas presented in *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* can be found in the writings of Bede (c. 673–735). Various works of Bede have been identified as source texts of medieval Icelandic writings.²⁵ However, Bede’s works are not the ultimate source of our treatise, but rather a part of the same pool of ideas and knowledge. Bede associates the four elements with different strata in a similar way to *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði*: earth is heaviest and holds the lowermost place, water is lighter, but heavier than air, and so forth.²⁶ Additionally, he discusses the link between the elements, the humours and the seasons, and furthermore connects the dominance of each humour to the ages of man.²⁷ This interrelation appears in many medieval texts, such as in the short account at the beginning of the anonymous eleventh-century *De mundi constitutione* (I. 1–2).²⁸ These writings represent the widespread medieval view of man

25 See “Beda Venerabilis” in Gottskálk Jónsson (ed.), *Islandia Latina*, <<http://islandialatina.hum.ku.dk/>>.

26 Bede, *De natura rerum*, IV, ed. by Charles W. Jones, *Opera didascalica*, 3 vols, Corpus christianorum, Series latina 123A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), vol. I, 195–96. This clarification can furthermore be found in other medieval texts, such as V. 1–2 in William of Conches, *Dragmaticon philosophiae, Summa de philosophia in vulgari*, ed. by Italo Ronca, Lola Badia, and J. Pujol, Corpus christianorum, Continuatio mediaevalis 152 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997).

27 Bede, *De temporum ratione*, 35, ed. by Charles W. Jones, *Opera didascalica*, 3 vols, Corpus christianorum, Series latina 123B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), vol. II, 391–93. The character-ology accompanying each humour as presented in the writings of Bede is discussed further below in connection with the second part of *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* – it is different in fundamental aspects and cannot be the direct source.

28 This is the text that Finnur Jónsson regarded as a possible source (see above). The relevant text is in Burnett’s edition on page 18, see Pseudo-Bede, *De mundi constitutione, Inc.* “Sunt

as microcosm, the image of the world.²⁹ What Bede and others describe in words – and which also appears in *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* – has a pictorial form in a well-known diagram in Isidore of Seville's *De natura rerum*, a diagram that was widely copied, reworked and circulated in different contexts during the Middle Ages.³⁰ The diagram shows the interconnection (*syzygy*) of the elements, seasons and the humours.³¹ At the centre are the words: world, year, man (*mundus, annus, homo*). With interlacing circles, the schema displays in a clear visual way the four combinations of: fire, dry, hot, summer, red bile; air, moist, hot, spring, blood; water, moist, cold, winter, phlegm; earth, dry, cold, autumn, black bile. A diagram of this type appears in a number of medieval European manuscripts and was adapted to different contexts – even painted on walls and ceilings.³² Sometimes, the zodiac was incorporated into the system, or the four ages of man, as is the case in a diagram in the Icelandic manuscript GKS 1812 4to – a compilation that represents the remains of at least three different

enim quatuor humores..." *Exp.* "...regnat in senectute." On the dating of this work, its dissemination and sources, see Charles Burnett, "Introduction," *ibid.*, 2–3, 15–16.

- 29 The authority most often credited with the idea was Plato, see Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 20; Tullio Gregory, "The Platonic Inheritance," *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. by Peter Dronke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 62–63.
- 30 Regarding the dissemination, reproduction and influence of the diagram, see Sears, *The Ages of Man*, 17–20; Peter Vossen, "Über die Elementen-Syzygien," *Liber Floridus: Mittellateinische Studien: Paul Lehmann zum 65. Geburtstag am 13. Juli 1949 gewidmet von Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern* (Saint Ottilien: Eos, 1950), 33–46; also John Anthony Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 17–26. On Isidore as a source for Bede in this context, see Faith Wallis, "Introduction / Commentary," *The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1988), 319–20.
- 31 As printed in Isidore of Seville, *Traité de la nature, suivi de l'Épître en vers du roi Sisebut à Isidore*, ed. and trans. by Jacques Fontaine, Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes études hispaniques 28 (Bordeaux: Féret, 1960), 216. Isidore speaks on the harmony between the elements and the nature of each element (cold, hot, moist, dry) in 11. 1–3, but on the seasons and their nature in 7. 4.
- 32 There are numerous examples. Such a diagram can for example be found in a medieval manuscript of William of Conches' *Philosophia mundi* and in a manuscript connected to Pseudo-Bede, *De mundi constitutione*, see Burnett, "Introduction," 6, 8–9. About the diagram on the ceiling of the crypt of the Italian Cathedral of Anagni, painted c. 1250, see Sears, *The Ages of Man*, 20.

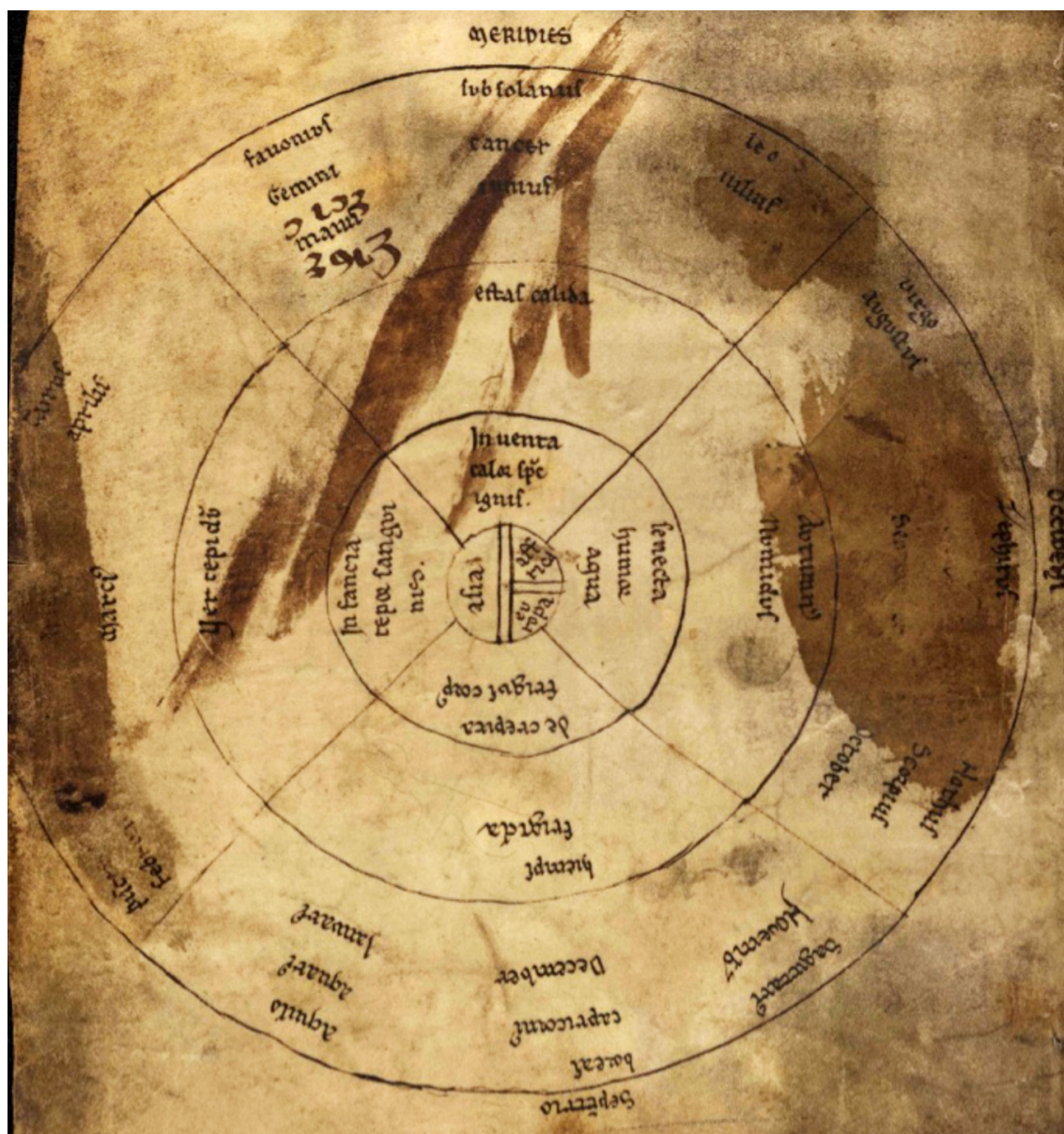


Figure 1: A cosmological diagram from GKS 1812 III 4to, fol. 6v.

Photograph: Jóhanna Ólafsdóttir, Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum.

encyclopaedic manuscripts, dating from *c.* 1192–1400.³³ It contains writings on astronomy and time-reckoning, drawings of maps and the division of philosophy, as well as calendars, a Latin glossary and a chapter from *Íslendingabók*, among other things. The second oldest part of the compilation (GKS 1812 III 4to, *c.* 1225–1250), contains a cosmological diagram in Latin on folio 6v (Figure 1).³⁴ At the centre is a T–O map that shows the three known parts of the world, Asia, Africa and Europe.³⁵ Three concentric circles are drawn around the centre, forming a dial that is sliced into four equal sectors. At the outer edges of the outermost circle are the names of the four cardinal points.³⁶

Within the outermost circle are the names of winds,³⁷ along with the twelve months and signs of the zodiac. In the next (second) circle are the four seasons with their distinctive qualities. The third circle represents the human microcosm; it entails the four ages of man and some accompanying features and/or elements. The second and third circles give us the following four combinations:

- 33 For a description of the manuscript and its contents, see Kristian Kålund, *Katalog over de oldnorsk-islandske håndskrifter i Det store kongelige bibliotek og i Universitetsbiblioteket* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1900), 38–41; Kristian Kålund, “Håndskriftbeskrivelse,” *Alfræði íslensk. Íslensk encyklopædisk litteratur*, ed. by Kristian Kålund and Natanael Beckman, 3 vols (Copenhagen: Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 1914–16), vol. II, cxx–ccxxv (in particular about folio 6v on ccxii). See also Gunnar Harðarson, “A Divisio Philosophiae in the Medieval Icelandic Manuscript GKS 1812 4to,” *Cahiers de l’Institut du Moyen-Âge Grec et Latin* (2015): 1–4.
- 34 Dale Kedwards analyses the diagram and its relationship to a larger map on the other side of the folium and puts both in context with Old Norse and European cartography; see his “Cartography and Culture in Medieval Iceland” (PhD diss., University of York, 2014): 151–223. See also Rudolf Simek, who refers to the diagram as *mappa mundi*, concentrating on the T–O map in his *Altnordische Kosmographie: Studien und Quellen zu Weltbild und Weltbeschreibung in Norwegen und Island vom 12. bis zum 14. Jahrhundert*, *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* 4 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 63–65, 508–10. Simek refers to the diagram on folio 11r, which is an error for 6v.
- 35 The parts are delineated by a “T” and encircled; a classic circular T–O map, where the “T” represents the sea that separates the three known parts of the world and “O” stands for the ocean that encircles the world, see Simek, *Altnordische Kosmographie*, 37–46; Naomi Reed Kline, *Maps of Medieval Thought: The Hereford Paradigm* (New York: Boydell, 2001), 13, 22.
- 36 From the top: *Meridies* (south), *Occident* (west), *Septentrio* (north) – and one can therefore presume that *Oriens* (east) was written on the part of the left margin that has been cut off.
- 37 Legible are: in the top quarter – *Fauonius* (west), *Subsolanus* (east), *Zephirus* (west); right quarter – *Nothus* (south); bottom quarter – *Boreas* (north), *Aquilo* (north). See on the twelve winds in Isidore of Seville, *Traité* 37. 1–5, including a diagram of the winds. See also on the winds in GKS 1812 III 4to in Kedwards, “Cartography,” 229–38.

<i>estas calida</i> (hot summer)	<i>autumnus humidus</i> (moist autumn)	<i>hiemps frigida</i> (cold winter)	<i>ver tepidum</i> (warm spring)
<i>inuenta [iuventa]</i> (youth)	<i>senecta</i> (old age)	<i>decrepita</i> (decrepitude)	<i>infancia</i> (infancy)
<i>calor spiritus</i> (hot breath)	<i>humor</i> (moisture)	<i>frigus corpus</i> (cold body)	<i>tepor sanguinis</i> (warmth of blood)
<i>ignis</i> (fire)	<i>aqua</i> (water)		

The diagram does not incorporate the temperaments into its system, and incorporates the humours and elements in only the most fragmentary way. Furthermore, autumn and mature age are associated with moisture and water, while medieval European learned texts (e.g., Isidore, Bede, and *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði*) associate both with dryness and the element earth.³⁸ Flawed or incomplete as this schema may be, as a whole it reflects a trace of the larger body of medieval European epistemology on the nature of man and the elements, which is elaborated on in the second part of *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði*.

The creation and Christian cosmology

Additionally, the first part of *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* places the interrelation of the elements and the humours firmly within the framework of the creation and Christian cosmology. Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl trace how, throughout the twelfth-century, “the tendency to interpret the temperaments theologically grew,” and argue that this fuelled the revival and expansion of the doctrine of the four humours.³⁹ A significant figure in this development was William of Conches (c. 1080–c. 1154).⁴⁰ While William of Conches’ *Philosophia mundi* does not link the four humours to characters, it contains writings from the same body of teaching as can

38 In addition, Kedwards has pointed out that the wind scheme in the diagram is erroneous and incoherent, *ibid.*, 236–37.

39 Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy and Art* (London: Nelson, 1964), 106. This development is traced in some detail on 102–11.

40 See *ibid.*, 102–5.

be found in *Af nattu ru mannzins ok bloði*; the elements are linked with the creation, and their nature associated with the humours in men (books I and IV).⁴¹ It can be noted in this context that Simek has identified an Old Norse translation from *Philosophia mundi*, book III, in GKS 1812 I 4to, folios 11v–12r (c. 1300–1400).⁴²

The French cleric Hugo de Folieto (c. 1100–74) goes even further than William and lays out the learned doctrine of the humours in the context of Christian salvation in *De medicina animae*. As an example, he writes that black bile makes men sad out of longing for God, but they can purify themselves by crying the black bile out: “Purgationem [de cholera nigra] habet per oculos. Ab his enim vitiis, pro quibus tristes efficimur, si per confessionem ejecta fuerint, per lacrymas purgamur.”⁴³ [The purification (of black bile) is through the eyes, for if we liberate ourselves by confessing the sins that make us sorrowful, we are purified through the tears.] Thus, the theory of the four humours serves as a vehicle for a Christian message. Though no fragments of *De medicina animae* have been found in the Old Norse manuscript corpus, extant Norwegian fragments from 1200–1300 show that some writings of Hugo de Folieto were copied in medieval Scandinavia;⁴⁴ as for medieval Icelandic clergymen, *De claustr*

41 *Philosophia Mundi* is printed under the name of Honorius Augustodunensis in *De philosophia mundi libri quatuor*, ed. by Jean-Paul Migne, Patrologia Latina 172 (Paris: Migne, 1854), cols. 39–102, see on the creation of man in I. 23, the elements in I. 21 and IV. 20. In Paradise man had the ideal temperament but lost it after being expelled, and the qualities (hot, cold, dry and moist) could increase or decrease, resulting in the choleric, phlegmatic and melancholic state: “Homo naturaliter calidus et humidus, et inter quatuor qualitates temperatus, sed quia corrumpitur natura, contingit illas in aliquo intendi et remitti,” *Philosophia mundi*, IV. 20 (col. 93). [Man is by nature warm and moist, and tempered by the four qualities. But because his nature is corrupted, it happens that in some people, some qualities increase or diminish.] Parallel ideas are also found in later writings of William of Conches, based on his earlier *Philosophia*; see II. 1–7 in William of Conches, *Dragmaticon*.

42 Simek, *Altnordische Kosmographie*, 67–68. As for other works by William of Conches being known in medieval Iceland, a partial translation of *Moralis philosophia de honesto et utili* has been identified in Hauksbók; see “Guillelmus de Conchis” in Gottskálk Jensson (ed.), *Islandia Latina*. That text does not touch upon the ideas brought forward above.

43 Hugo de Folieto, *De medicina animae*, ed. by Jean-Paul Migne, Patrologia Latina 176 (Paris: Migne, 1854), col. 1191. See further on the merger of theology and physiology in the writings of Hugo de Folieto in Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, 107–10.

44 See Marianne Wifstrand Schiebe and Espen Karlsen, “A Christian Approach to Vergil’s *Eclogues*. A Fragment of Hugo de Folieto, *De pastoribus et ovibus* in Oslo,” *Latin Manuscripts*

animae is listed in the 1397 inventory of the Viðey monastery.⁴⁵ Among other Christian writers who were presumably known in medieval Iceland is the French theologian Alain de Lille (c. 1128–1202), whose unspecified work is listed in the same inventory.⁴⁶ The idea that the four humours in man represent the four elements appears in his *Distinctiones dictionum theologicarum*: “Et sicut mundus constat ex quatuor elementis, sic homo ex quatuor humoribus, elementorum proprietatibus consonis.”⁴⁷ [And in the same way as the world is composed of four elements, man is composed of four humours with the same qualities.]⁴⁸

The creation of man is linked to the four elements in one of the oldest extant Icelandic manuscripts: the Old Norse translation of *Elucidarius* by Honorius of Autun (c. 1080–c. 1150). This theology textbook, popular among the laity in Europe, survives in numerous manuscripts, including eight Old Norse fragments.⁴⁹ The oldest of these, AM 674a 4to, dates to c. 1200 and is thus among the earliest translations of the Latin text into a vernacular.⁵⁰ This fragment contains the following answer to the question: From what was man created?

of *Medieval Norway: Studies in Memory of Lilli Gjerløw*, ed. by Espen Karlsen (Oslo: Novus, 2013), 274; Espen Karlsen, “Fragments of Patristic and Other Ecclesiastical Literature in Norway from c. 1100 until the Fifteenth Century,” *ibid.*, 228.

45 “Item liber Hugonis de abusibus clavstri.” Jón Sigurðsson and others (eds.), *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, 16 vols (Reykjavík/Copenhagen: Hið íslenska bókmenntafjelag, 1857–1972), vol. IV, 111. See also “Hugo de Folieto” in Gottskálk Jensson (ed.), *Islandia Latina*.

46 “Item Alanus,” *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, vol. IV, 110. For the Viðey-inventory, the editors of *DI* use several manuscripts (see *DI* II, 247–8; *DI* IV, 29–35). They note the variant reading “Alarius” in one of them (AM 256 4to, 17th century), see vol. IV, 110n3.

47 Alanus de Insulis, *Distinctiones dictionum theologicarum*, ed. by Jean-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 210 (Paris: Migne, 1855), col. 866.

48 Of other Christian writers linking theology and the humours, we can name Peter Alfonsi (see footnote 20), who wrote on the creation of Adam in the context of the elements and humours in his *Ex Iudaeo Christiani dialogi*, ed. by Jean-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 157 (Paris: Migne, 1854), cols. 641–42, and the French abbot William of Saint-Thierry (1085–1148), see Guillelmus abbas S. Theodorici, *De natura corporis et animae libri duo*, ed. by Jean-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 180 (Paris: Migne, 1855), cols. 695–726.

49 All eight manuscripts are published in Honorius Augustodunensis, *Elucidarius in Old Norse Translation*, ed. by Evelin Scherabon Firchow and Kaaren Grimstad, *Rit* 36 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1989).

50 On the manuscript and its background, see Firchow and Grimstad, *Elucidarius in Old Norse Translation*, xvii–xxxix; Jón Helgason (ed.), *The Arna-Magnæan Manuscript 674a, 4to: Elucidarius*, *Manuscripta Islandica* 4 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1957).

Af .iiii. hofop scepnom. oc callasc hann af þui enn minne heimr. þuiat hann hafþe hold af iorþo enn bloþ af vatne blost af lofste enn hita af elde. Hofop hans vas bollot íglíking heimballar.⁵¹

[Of the four elements – and because of that, he is called microcosm [lit. “the smaller world”]. For he got his flesh from the earth, his blood from water, breath from air, but his warmth from fire. His head was ball-shaped in the likeness of the world-globe.]

This represents the core of the idea of man as a microcosm (*enn minne heimr*) and forms a part of a system of thought further laid out in *Af nattu mannzins ok bloði*, where it is connected to the temperaments, seasons and the humours.

The closest parallels to the first part of *Af nattu mannzins ok bloði* of the texts discussed above – namely, the works of Bede, William of Conches, and Hugo de Folieto, and the anonymous *De mundi constitutione* – are not the ultimate sources of the Old Norse treatise. If there was one source text, it remains to be identified. It is also conceivable that the first part is based on a combination of many texts. The texts named above, along with the first part of the Old Norse treatise, seem to be a product of the same learned ideological pool. The first part of *Af nattu mannzins ok bloði* reflects the contemporary linking between theology and the humours, a tendency that has been described as part of a “revival of the ancient characterological doctrine within the framework of Christian moral theology.”⁵²

We will now turn to the second part of the treatise, which deals with physiology according to the medical doctrine of the time.⁵³

The physiological section

Vindician’s Letter and humoral theory in medieval Europe

The systematic linking of temperament or character to each of the four humours is a development of humoral theory that occurs at the post-Galenic

51 Honorius Augustodunensis, *The Old Norse Elucidarius. Original Text and English Translation*, ed. and trans. by Evelyn Scherabon Firchow, Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture; Medieval Texts and Translations (Columbia: Camden House, 1992), 14.

52 Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, 106.

53 *Hauksbók*, 181:15–182:9, *Inc.* “Maðrinn hefir...” *Exp.* “...sem bornum.”

stage, in late antiquity.⁵⁴ The Hippocratic treatise, *Nature of Man*, does not link the four humours to moods or temperaments, and the link is still not systematically developed to the fullest in Galen's work.⁵⁵ The characterology of the humours, and the accompanying moods and dispositions, seems to spring forward in a Latin treatise that appears to have enjoyed much popularity in medieval Europe, *Epistula Vindiciani ad Pentadium nepotem suum*, or *Vindician's Letter to his Nephew Pentadius*.⁵⁶ The *Letter* is presented as an introduction to medicine for the young Pentadius and claims its authority by maintaining that it is a translation "ex libris medicinalibus Hippocratis intima latinavi"⁵⁷ [from the core of the medical works of Hippocrates]. The author salutes his nephew and then goes on to explain the theory of the four humours, recounting their influence on a man's character and mood, and how the humours vary according to the hours of the day, the seasons and the ages of man. It further describes where in the body each humour resides, where their exit is, how they affect the pulse, the pathological consequences of the domination of each of them and the appropriate therapies. Vindicianus Afer (c. 340–c. 400 CE) was a physician and proconsul in North Africa and an acquaintance of Augustine of Hippo, who expressed his admiration for his skills as a physician in his *Confessions*.⁵⁸ If the attribution is authentic, the *Letter* would date from the second half of the fourth century.⁵⁹ The *Letter* seems to have been widely

54 On the development of the theory from Hippocrates and Galen, see, e.g., Jacques Jouanna, "The Legacy of the Hippocratic Treatise *The Nature of Man*: The Theory of the Four Humours," *Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen: Selected Papers*, ed. by Philip van der Eijk, *Studies in Ancient Medicine* 40 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 336–40.

55 See *ibid.*; Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, 61–65.

56 Published in Vindicianus Afer, *Epistula ad Pentadium*, ed. by Valentin Rose, *Theodori Prisciani Euporiston...* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1894), 484–92.

57 *Ibid.*, 485. Such false attributions are common in medieval medical texts.

58 Augustine, *Confessions*, IV. 3. 5, VII. 6. 8. On Vindician, see Louise Cilliers, "The Contribution of the 4th Century North African Physician, Helvius Vindicianus," *Medicine and Health in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, ed. by Demetrius Michaelides (Oxford: Oxbow, 2008), 122–23; Jacques Jouanna, "La théorie des quatre humeurs et des quatre tempéraments dans la tradition latine (Vindicien, Pseudo-Soranos) et une source grecque retrouvée," *Revue des Études Grecques* (2005): 139.

59 However, Jacques Jouanna has argued that the *Letter* is most probably from the sixth century – that it represents the development of humoral theory in late antiquity and is a translation derived from a Greek text. See his "La théorie des quatre humeurs," 154–67; "Legacy of the Hippocratic Treatise," 357–58. For an account of the Greek texts, see *ibid.*, 241–50.

known in medieval Europe; it gained the status of an authoritative work and appears in many medieval manuscripts, the earliest one dating from the eighth or ninth century.⁶⁰ An edition of the *Letter*, based on seven manuscripts, was published in 1894, edited by Valentine Rose.⁶¹

The sources of items 1 and 2

The biggest part of the physiological section of *Af nattu ru mannzins ok bloði* seems to derive from *Vindician's Letter*. To facilitate comparison and discussion, the physiological part is here printed in its entirety but has been divided into sections with numbers from 1 to 10. Items 1 and 2 do not correlate directly to *Vindician's Letter*, while 3–10 do so rather closely. We will therefore begin by discussing items 1 and 2 separately, followed by a comparison of the Old Norse and Latin versions of items 3–10.

Af nattu ru mannzins ok bloði

1. Maðrinn hefir i ser likinði .iiijra hofuðskepna. ok má þat marka a æða bloði mannz ef þat stendr vm stund i keralldí. þa er þat með .iiij. litum. efzt er rauða bloð elldi likt. ok at nátturu heítt ok þurt. Þar næst er rauðbrúnt bloð likt lóptínv at vokua ok verma. Neðzt er Melannkolea suarta bloð iórðu likt at lít at nátturu þurri ok kalldri. Þa er flemína vatni likt af vátri nátturv ok kalldri. ok stendr þat vmhverfis bloðit sua sem hit mikla haf rennr vm iarðar kringlu. Enn ef skerst bloðlifrín þa rennr vatn er menn kalla vara i staðinn sem haf rennr landanna a meðal (181:15–24).⁶²

⁶⁰ For a (non-exhaustive) list of medieval manuscripts of the *Letter*, see Valentin Rose (ed.), *Theodori Prisciani Euporiston...*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig: Teubner, 1894), 484; on its dissemination and influence, see Klaus-Dietrich Fischer, “The “Isagoge” of Pseudo-Soranus: An Analysis of the Contents of a Medieval Introduction to the Art of Medicine,” *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 35 (2000): 9; Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, 112. For examples of how the letter was presumably used as a source for other popular texts in the Middle Ages, see, e.g., *Saturn and Melancholy*, 107–09, 114, 118. As a source for Bede, see Wallis, “Introduction/Commentary,” lxxxiii. On the close paraphrasing of the letter in Oxford-St. John's College MS 17, see Faith Wallis, “1. Medicine I: 1. Humours (1)” *The Calendar and the Cloister*. For Vindician as a source for the Pseudo-Soranus text, see Jouanna, “Legacy of the Hippocratic Treatise,” 350; and further in his article “La théorie des quatre humeurs.” He notes that parallel texts exist in Arabic, Armenian and Hebrew, see “Legacy of the Hippocratic Treatise,” 348.

⁶¹ Vindicianus Afer, *Epistula ad Pentadium*, 484–92.

⁶² The text is printed from Eiríkur Jónsson and Finnur Jónsson's edition of Hauksbók, page and line numbers in parenthesis refer to this edition.

[On the nature of man and his blood

Man has in himself the likeness of the four elements, and this can be noted in the blood from the veins of a man, if it remains for a while in a cask, it has four colours. Uppermost is red blood, like fire, and hot and dry by nature. Next is red-brown blood, like air by its moisture and heat. Undermost is Melancholea, black blood, like earth in colour, and dry and cold by nature. Then there is phlegm, like water, moist and cold by nature, and it surrounds the blood like the great oceans flow around the globe of the earth. But if the blood-liver is cut, the water that men call *vari* flows instead, just like the oceans flow between countries.]

Vindician's Letter also includes a section in which the nature of each humour is described as a combination of dry, moist, cold or hot. The difference is, though, that the microcosmic link between each humour and the corresponding element – which appears, for example, in Bede's and other writings as described above – does not appear in the *Letter*. Neither does the idea of the different stratum of the humours, and how it can be seen if the blood is kept in a bowl for a while. However, the Hippocratic treatise *Nature of Man* offers us the idea by informing us that “καὶ τοῖσιν ἀποσφαζομένοισι τὸ αἷμα ῥεῖ πρῶτον θερμότατόν τε καὶ ἐρυθρότατον, ἔπειτα δὲ ῥεῖ φλεγματωδέστερον καὶ χολωδέστερον” [and when men are cut, the blood that flows is at first very hot and very red, and then it flows with more phlegm and bile mixed in it].⁶³

It is noteworthy that this seems to echo in an unusual way a dramatic scene in *Bandamanna saga* (c. 1300).⁶⁴ At the end of the saga, the complex and shady Óspakr Glúmsson bursts into the house of the man who has now married his beloved wife, Svala, and stabs him to death. The killing is an act of jealousy, as Óspakr himself explains in a verse before leaving the scene

63 *Nature of man*, VI. 39–41. The work is now usually attributed to his student Polybus, fifth century BCE. The edition used here is Hippocrates, *Nature of Man*, trans. by William Henry Samuel Jones, *Hippocrates*, 10 vols, Loeb Classical Library 150 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), vol. VI, 1–41. Trans. Jones, *ibid.*, 19.

64 Estimated to be composed c. 1300, the oldest manuscript fragment from c. 1350, see Vésteinn Ólason, “Family Sagas,” *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. by Rory McTurk (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 114.

of the murder: “Unna ek eigi / arfa Hildis / fagrvaxinnar / faðmlags Svölu” [I do not like that the son of Hildir enjoys the embrace of the beautifully shaped Svala].⁶⁵ Óspakr is wounded in return, but walks away and is not seen again. In the autumn, a man is found dead in a cave: “ok stóð hjá honum mundlaug full af blóði, ok var þat svá svart sem tjara. Þar var Óspakr” [and beside him stood a basin full of blood, and it was as black as tar. That was Óspakr].⁶⁶ The sharp feelings of anger and jealousy communicated in Óspakr’s stanza, along with the swift killing, seem to be put into context with Óspakr’s physiology in this scene. The basin and the black, tar-like blood next to his deceased body create an image of his depressed melancholic state, which adds another layer illuminating Óspakr’s inner condition, with artistic imagery drawing from medieval learned physiology.⁶⁷ Autumn is the season of black bile, awakening jealousy, deceit and hasty temper, as is discussed in *Afnatturu mannzins ok blóði* (items 5 and 9).

Item 2 reveals the concept of the ideal state of the body, when all four humours are in balance:

2. Sua segia nátturu bækur. at sá maðr er alla hefir þessa .íííj. luti iafnmíkla i sínv blóði. þa er hann val heill. ok hófsamr maðr. ok stóðugr mundanga bliðr ok ekki míok braðr. (181:24–27)

[Nature books tell, that a man who has all these four things equally in his blood is a very healthy and moderate man, and steady, justly gentle, and not very hot-tempered.]

This idea is common, even though it is not found in *Vindician’s Letter*. We can, for example, compare this to the above-mentioned eleventh-century *De mundi constitutione*: “Hi cum nec plus nec minus iusto exuberant, viget homo” [When these (the four humours) abound neither more nor less

65 *Bandamanna saga*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson, *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar, Bandamanna saga, Odds þátrr Ófeigssonar*, Íslenzk fornrit VII (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1936), 362. The warm feelings between Óspakr and his wife Svala are communicated in ch. 4 of the saga.

66 *Ibid.*, 363.

67 This fits with Lars Lönnroth’s points on this scene, see his “Kroppen som själens spegel,” 48; for Peter Hallberg’s alternative view see his “Lars Lönnroth: Studier i Olaf Tryggvasons saga etc.,” *Samlaren* 86 (1965): 169.

than is right, man thrives].⁶⁸ The ultimate source text for the desirability of the proper blend of humours is, however, *Nature of Man*⁶⁹ – and *eukrasia*, proper balance, was the fundamental definition of health in Galen’s writings, which describe the best-balanced man as “good-spirited, affectionate, generous, and wise.”⁷⁰

Comparison of Af nattu mannzins ok bloði and Vindician’s Letter

We now come to items 3–10, which seem to be a translation of a manuscript of *Vindician’s Letter*. The published editions of both texts are presented here in parallel columns, followed by a discussion.

Another text, relevant to our discussion, is *Isagoge Saluberrima*, a Latin medical treatise wrongly attributed to Soranus of Ephesus.⁷¹ The source for the Pseudo-Soranus work’s chapter on the humours seems to be *Vindician’s Letter*, but there are marked differences between the two.⁷² The origins, transmission and medieval dissemination of the *Isagoge* are quite obscure, but Fischer has argued that it seems to date, in its complete form, to the Carolingian period at the earliest.⁷³ Because of the close relationship

68 Pseudo-Bede, *De mundi constitutione*, 18. Trans. Burnett, *ibid.*, 19. Compare also Isidore of Seville, *Etym.* IV. 6. 7.

69 “ὕγιαίνει μὲν οὖν μάλιστα, ὅταν μετρίως ἔχη ταῦτα τῆς πρὸς ἀλλήλα κρήσιος καὶ δυνάμιος καὶ τοῦ πλήθους, καὶ μάλιστα μεμιγμένα ἦ.” *Nature of Man*, IV. 4–5. [Now he enjoys the most perfect health when these elements (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile) are duly proportioned to one another in respect of compounding, power and bulk, and when they are perfectly mingled.] Trans. Jones, *ibid.*, 11.

70 Galen, *Selected Works*, ed. and trans. by Peter N. Singer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 576. On proper balance, see, e.g., Ian Johnston, *Galen: On Diseases and Symptoms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 43; Robert J. Penella and Thomas S. Hall, “Galen’s “On the Best Constitution of our Body”: Introduction, Translation, and Notes,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 47 (1973): 283.

71 Published in Soranus Ephesus [Pseudo-Soranus], *Isagoge Saluberrima*, ed. by Alban Thorer, *Medici antiqui omnes...* (Venice: Aldus, 1547), folios 158v–163r. The parallel to *Vindician’s Letter* is in the fifth chapter, folios 159v–160v.

72 For a thorough comparison of *Vindician’s Letter* and Pseudo-Soranus and arguments, see Jouanna, “La théorie des quatre humeurs.” Jouanna prints a stemma describing the relationship on 153. See also Fischer, “The “Isagoge” of Pseudo-Soranus,” 9.

73 For an overview of the contents, attribution, manuscripts and transmission of the Pseudo-Soranus *Isagoge*, see Fischer, “The “Isagoge” of Pseudo-Soranus”; for the dating see *ibid.*, 19–20. Jouanna argues that *Vindician’s Letter* and Pseudo-Soranus are presumably derived from the same Latin translation of a Greek text, which is different from the source of Bede’s Chapter 35 of *De temporum ratione*; see “La théorie des quatre humeurs,” 150.

74 A note on the English translation of “rauða bloð” and “suarta bloð”: It is clear that “bloð” [blood]

between the *Letter* and Pseudo-Soranus, it will be examined here whether it can be determined if *Af nattu ru mannzins ok bloði* derives from the Pseudo-Soranus version. Relevant variants from Pseudo-Soranus (PS) are given in the footnotes. *Af nattu ru mannzins ok bloði* is printed from Eiríkur Jónsson and Finnur Jónsson's edition of *Hauksbók*, 180–182. *Vindician's Letter* is printed from Rose's edition, *Epistula Vindiciani*, 484–92.

Af nattu ru mannzins ok bloði

3. Enn ef rauða bloð er mest í bloði mannz. þa er sa fímr ok flogall. lettr a sér. slægr. ok bráðr. ok ma mikit eta. (181:27–28)

[If red blood⁷⁴ is greatest in a man's blood, than that man is agile and volatile, light, shrewd and hot-tempered, and can eat a lot.]

4. Enn ef mestr lutr af bloði mannz er þat er rett bloð er kallat þa er hann bliðr ok hófeskr kátr. ok litillátr. vakr. ok varmr í nattu ru sinni. (181:28–31)

Vindician's Letter

3. cholera rubea facit homines iracundos ingeniosos acutos leves macilentos, plurimum comedentes et cito digerentes. (488:10–12)

[Red bile makes men hot-tempered, clever, shrewd, light, thin. They eat a lot and digest quickly.]

4. sanguis facit homines boni voti simplices moderatos blandos euchymos seu <suci> plenos.⁷⁵ (488:9–10)

with the prefixes “rauða” and “suarta” refers to the specific humours known in English as “red bile” and “black bile” (note the explanatory *Melancholea*=black blood, item 1). “Bloð” without a prefix refers to the blood in the veins, but “rétt bloð” [right blood] to blood as a humour – except when there is no risk of ambiguity, such as in items 7, 9, 10. Semantically, the Old Norse text thus speaks of “rauða bloð” and “suarta bloð” as *humours in the blood*, which is very much in accordance with the humoral doctrine. According to the theory, the bloodstream in the veins was the carrier of all four humours in a mixture. Blood was one of the humours but also the medium that contained them all. This understanding also appears clearly in items 1 and 2. Because of this, imbalance between the humours could be corrected by the popular method of bloodletting: extracting blood from the appropriate parts of the body. See Vivian Nutton, “Humoralism,” *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine*, ed. by W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter, 2 vols (London: Routledge, 1993), vol. I, 287; Harold J. Cook, “Physical Methods,” *ibid.*, vol. II, 942–44.

⁷⁵ boni voti] – PS, simplices] – PS, euchymos seu suci plenos] – PS, blandos] + et formosos PS.

[If the greatest part of a man's blood is what is called right blood, then he is gentle and moderate, cheerful and modest, alert, and warm in his nature.]

[Blood makes men well-intentioned, direct, moderate, gentle, wholesome, full of moisture.]⁷⁶

5. Enn ef suarta bloð er mest þa er hann þungr ok þógull. sínkr ok svefnvgr. styggr. ok prettugr. áuf- und siukr ok af kалldri nátturu ok þurri. (181:31–33)

5. cholera nigra facit homines subdolos cum iracundia,⁷⁷ avaros timidos tristes somniculos invidiosos, frequenter habentes cicatrices nigras in pedibus. (488:12–15)

[If black blood⁷⁸ is greatest, then he is heavy and silent, miserly and sleepy, hasty-tempered, and deceitful, envious, and of cold and dry nature.]

[Black bile makes men deceitful together with hot-temper, miserly, timid, sorrowful, sleepy, envious. They often have black scars on their feet.]

6. Enn ef vari er mestr luti í bloði mannz. þa er hann af kалldri natturu. ok vátri. vstóðugr. vakr ok udiarfr. (181:33–34)

6. flegma facit homines corpore compositos, vigilantes, intra se cogitantes, cito adferentes canos in capite, minus audaces.⁷⁹ (488:15–489:2)

[If phlegm is the greatest part of a man's blood, then he is of cold and wet nature, unstable, alert and undaring.]

[Phlegm makes the body of men well-built, alert, reflective, quick to get grey hairs on the head, undaring.]

7. Nu hefir hvert þessa .iiijra. sítt sæti ímannzins likam. Vari er i hofði mannz. bloð ilifr. rauða bloð i galli. suarta bloð imillti. (181:35–36)

7. qui quattuor umores habitant vel dominantur in suis locis. sanguis dominatur in dextro latere in epate quod iecur vocamus.⁸⁰ sed et cholera rubea ibidem dominatur. in sinistro vero latere id est in splene

76 *Euchymos* = wholesome, plump, see “εὐχῦμος” in *Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon*, with references to Hippocrates, Galen and Ptolemy.

77 cum iracundia] – PS.

78 On the translation of “suarta bloð,” see footnote 74.

79 minus audaces] – PS.

80 in epate quod iecur vocamus] – PS, + uirtus est circa cor PS.

cholera nigra dominatur. flegma autem in capite, et alia pars eius in vesica.⁸¹ Sanguinis tamen pars dominatur in corde. (486:7–13)

[Each of these four has its seat in the body of man. Phlegm is in a man's head, blood in the liver, red blood in the gall, black blood in the spleen.]

[For the four humours belong and govern each in their place. Blood reigns on the right side in "epate," which we call the liver. But red bile also reigns at that very place. On the left side, in the spleen, black bile reigns. Phlegm, however, dominates in the head, and other parts in the bladder. Blood also in part reigns in the heart.]

8. hvert þessarra luta hefir ok sinn vtgang. ok andar tak. rauða bloð at eyrum suarta bloð at augum. rett bloð at nosum. enn vári at munni. (182:1–3)

[Each of these things likewise has its exit and respiration. Red blood by the ears, black blood by the eyes, right blood by the nose, but phlegm by the mouth.]

8. haec omnia habent respirationes suas per singulas partes corporis, sanguis per nares, cholera rubea per aures, cholera nigra per oculos, flegma per os.⁸² (487:17–19)

[Each have their own respiration through the separate parts of the body, blood by the nose, red bile by the ears, black bile by the eyes, phlegm by the mouth.]

9. Bloð vex ok mest með manni vm uárið rauða bloð vm sumar suarta bloð vm haust enn vari vm vetur. (182:3–4)

9. sanguis crescit verno tempore, ab VIII. id febr. usque in VIII. id. mai. et sunt dies XCI. cholera rubea aestate, ab VIII. id mai. usque in VIII. id. aug. et sunt dies XC. cholera nigra autumnno, ab VIII. id aug. usque in VIII. id. novemb. et sunt dies XCII. flegma vero hieme ab VIII. id. novemb. usque in VIII. id febr. et sunt dies XCII. (487:3–9)

81 vesica] – PS, + stomacho PS.

82 flegma per os] + et nares PS.

[Blood increases in man in the spring, red blood in summer, black blood in the autumn, but phlegm in winter.]

[Blood increases in the spring time, from the 8th of February to the 8th of May and for ninety-one days. Red bile in the summer, from the 8th of May to the 8th of August and for ninety days. Black bile in the autumn, from the 8th of August to the 8th of November and for ninety-two days. Phlegm, however, in the winter, from the 8th of November to the 8th of February and for ninety-two days.]

10. Petta skíptiz ok olldrum. Vari er með bloði mestr með börnum. til fjortianda vetrar. síðan rauða bloð til .v. vetra. ok .xx. ok þaðan af bloð með svarta bloði mest til .lxx. vetra meðan maðr er a bezta alldri. Síðan er vari mestr með órvosvm. ok fellr þui slefa oruósum sem bornum. (182:4–9)

[These are additionally divided by ages. Phlegm is, with blood, the greatest in children to the fourteenth winter. Then red blood to five winters and twenty. And from then on blood with black blood is the greatest to seventy winters, while a man is in his best age. Then phlegm is greatest among decrepit men. And therefore, drivel falls from decrepit men like in children.]

10. dividuntur etiam hi humores quattuor per quattuor aetates, id est flegma in pueris cum sanguine ab ineunte aetate usque in annos XIII, exinde cholera rubea dominatur cum parte sanguinis in iuuenibus usque ad annos XXV.⁸³ exinde usque in annos XLII⁸⁴ maxima pars sanguinis dominatur cum cholera nigra. exinde usque ad summam aetatem sicut in pueris⁸⁵ flegma dominatur. (487:20–488:6)

[These four humours are additionally divided by four ages, that is, phlegm in children, with blood, from the beginning of the lifetime until the age of fourteen; after that red bile dominates with a portion of blood in youth until the age of twenty-five. After that up until the age of forty-two, blood dominates to the greatest extant, with black bile. Thereafter, and to the end of the lifetime, just as in children, phlegm dominates.]

⁸³ usque in annos XXV] usque 35. uel 4. PS.

⁸⁴ usque in annos XLII] – PS.

⁸⁵ sicut in pueris] – PS.

Discussion

It has been demonstrated that manuscripts containing writings on this topic often have considerable variation in how they describe the character and moods accompanying each humour, as well as their exits and location.⁸⁶ The Pseudo-Soranus text, for instance, locates the humours somewhat differently in the body (see notes to item 7), and Bede assigns sleepiness and forgetfulness to the phlegmatic character – the opposite of the alert disposition that the two texts discussed here agree upon.⁸⁷ No such contradictions are found between the Old Norse text and *Vindician's Letter* – on the contrary, the Old Norse text follows the *Letter* quite closely. Furthermore, where the *Letter* differs from Pseudo-Soranus, the Old Norse text follows the *Letter*.⁸⁸ Considering the relationship between the *Letter* and Pseudo-Soranus as depicted by Jouanna,⁸⁹ the source text for *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* seems to derive from a different branch of *Vindician's Letter* than Pseudo-Soranus.

It is not, however, a word-for-word translation. As is often the case in Hauksbók, the Old Norse text is shorter than the corresponding Latin edition (about 14%) in addition to three items in the *Letter* being missing

86 See, e.g., Jouanna, “Legacy of the Hippocratic Treatise,” 355; Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl print a table juxtaposing nine different texts that communicate the characterology of the humours to a different degree in *Saturn and Melancholy*, 62–63.

87 Bede, *De temporum ratione*, 35 (392–93). *Vindician's Letter* is considered to be the ultimate source of this chapter in Bede; see Wallis, “Introduction/Commentary,” lxxxiii.

88 The relevant variants vary in their importance, with those that include an omission in Pseudo-Soranus weighing heaviest. Omissions include: In item 5, on black bile, Pseudo-Soranus omits hasty temper, which both Vindician (*iracundia*) and the Old Norse text include (*styggr*). Item 6, on phlegm, Pseudo-Soranus omits the lack of courage, which is in both Vindician (*minus audaces*) and the Old Norse text (*udiarfr*). As for item 7, the Old Norse text agrees with Vindician that blood has its seat in the liver, while Pseudo-Soranus does not mention the liver in connection with the blood. As for item 10, instead of red bile dominating up to twenty-five years of age as in the other two texts, Pseudo-Soranus has red bile dominating up to thirty-four or thirty-five. Furthermore, it gives no specific age for the next transition. Lastly, Pseudo-Soranus omits the comparison of old age and infancy, which is found in both the other texts. As for additions, in item 8, on the exits of the four humours, the two texts compared here conform, while Pseudo-Soranus adds the nose as an exit for phlegm. In item 4, on blood, Pseudo-Soranus adds the characteristic *formosus* (beautiful), which is neither in Vindician nor *Um natturu mannzins ok bloði*.

89 Stemma in Jouanna, “La théorie des quatre humeurs,” 153.

altogether.⁹⁰ These describe the dominance of each humour according to the hours of the day, the pulse accompanying each humour, and the pathological features of humoral imbalance along with the relevant therapy.⁹¹ Furthermore, the order of the items is not the same: in *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði*, the characterology has been moved in front of the rest, and items 3 and 4 have been transposed, as well as items 8 and 9.

Although the Old Norse text follows the Latin on all major points, there are three noteworthy divergences. Two minor ones are as follows: in item 4, regarding red bile, the Old Norse text adds *kátr* [cheerful] and *vakr* [alert] to the description and in item 7, *Vindician's Letter* places the red bile "at the same place" as the liver, while the Old Norse text specifies that it is in the gall. This does not, however, create a contradiction in the overall meaning. The biggest divergence occurs in item 10, regarding the humours according to the ages of men. Both texts state that phlegm, with blood, dominates up to fourteen years of age, and red bile up to twenty-five. Next, the *Letter* tells, blood and black bile dominate up to forty-two (as in the Hippocratic *Nature of Man*).⁹² Thereafter, just as in children, Vindician notes, phlegm dominates. The Old Norse text claims, however, that blood and black bile dominate up to seventy years of age, not forty-two as in the *Letter*. When it comes to the correlation of certain humours to the different ages of man, the body of texts that has been cited here for comparison does not specify any years – only periods of life: childhood, adolescence, maturity and old age.⁹³ However, in Isidore of Seville's

90 This tendency in Hauksbók has often been noted, for a brief overview see Jón Helgason, "Introduction," xviii; Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, "Sagnastef," 82. As for AM 544 4to, see, e.g., on the treatment of *Disciplina clericalis*, the source of the exempla preceding *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* in the same gathering, in Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, "Sagnastef," 85; on the text in the first two gatherings of AM 544 4to, see Wellendorf, "Universalist Aspirations in Hauksbók," 55–60. For possible explanations of this overall inclination, see Jón Helgason, "Introduction," xviii; Sverrir Jakobsson, "Hauksbók and the Construction of an Icelandic World View," 29.

91 The *Letter* explains how the therapy follows the principle of opposites: to regulate, for instance, the predominance of black bile, which is cold, dry and sour, a remedy with the opposite qualities should be applied, that is, hot, moist and sweet. *Epistula Vindiciani*, 490–91.

92 *Nature of Man*, 15 (40–41).

93 For instance, Bede, *De natura rerum*, 35; Pseudo-Bede, *De mundi constitutione*, page 18, and Hugo de Folieto, *De medicina animae*, cols. 1185–87, as well as the different diagrams showing the interrelation of the elements, humours and ages, do not include specific years.

Etymologies, the age of seventy is specifically stated as the end of maturity and start of old age – though Isidore does not connect the humours to the different ages of man.⁹⁴ There are several strong indications that the *Etymologies* were well known in medieval Iceland, although only one small fragment written in Iceland survives: the thirteenth-century AM Acc. 7 Hs 140.⁹⁵ When the Old Norse treatise is viewed as a whole, one might speculate that the author of the text represented in *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* amended the year to conform to his other sources, and changed the span of maturity to seventy, instead of forty-two.

Yet another thing added in *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* is an image of a drivelling decrepit man, juxtaposed with a dribbling infant – since they are both dominated by phlegm. Old age is compared to childhood in *Vindician's Letter* as in the Old Norse treatise, but without any mention of saliva.⁹⁶

Conclusion

The treatise *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* represents the development of the theory of the four humours in late antiquity, and stems in part from a Latin manuscript of an identified text, *Epistula Vindiciani*, a text whose oldest witness is from the Carolingian period, the eighth or ninth century. The origins of the treatise's physiological section therefore predate the textual transmission following the Salernitan medical school and the flow of new Latin translations of Arabic science during the transformative changes in the long twelfth century in Europe – a movement that is sometimes called the twelfth-century Renaissance.⁹⁷ However, the theological context that the treatise presents is the product of the revival of the doctrine of the four humours within Christian doctrine in the long twelfth century, and has resonances in many other writings of that time. The Old Norse treatise,

94 *Etym.* IX. 2. 6. Isidore defines six stages in a lifetime.

95 Merete Geert Andersen, *Katalog over AM Accessoria 7: De latinske fragmenter*, Bibliotheca Arnemagnæana 46 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2008), 132; on Isidore's works in Iceland, see Margaret Clunies Ross and Rudolf Simek, "Encyclopedic Literature," *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf (London: Garland, 1993), 164.

96 It can be noted however that Galen mentions the abundance of saliva in both old men and children, see *Selected Works*, 580–85.

97 On the translation movement, see, e.g., Charles Burnett, "Translation and Transmission of Greek and Islamic Science to Latin Christendom," *The Cambridge History of Science*, ed.

as a whole, thus represents a reworking of *Vindician's Letter* into that context. Whether the treatise is merely a copy of such a reworking, or if the *Letter* is put into its context in *Afnatturu mannzins ok bloði* by Haukr Erlendsson's initiative and editing, still remains obscure. The text/s on which the treatise is based presumably shared the fate of the vast majority of the Latin learned and liturgical texts that existed in Iceland and Norway before the Reformation: they are now lost without a trace, as Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson has pointed out.⁹⁸ For the north as a whole, it has been estimated that ninety-nine percent of the Latin manuscript leaves that existed at the start of the Reformation are now lost.⁹⁹

Whether the source text (or texts) was in circulation in Iceland is a moot point. Indications point both to Norway and Iceland as possible places of writing. Haukr Erlendsson spent many years in Norway,¹⁰⁰ the scribe was presumably Norwegian, and the gathering that includes the treatise might have been inserted. However, Finnur Jónsson's investigation of the orthographic and linguistic features of the treatise led him to the conclusion that the scribe was copying an original in Icelandic.¹⁰¹

One can at least assume that the mere existence of the treatise in Hauksbók testifies to the fact that, at the dawn of the fourteenth century, the knowledge of the theory of the four humours was important to an

by David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers, 8 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), vol. II, 341–64. On the transformation of Europe in the long twelfth century, see, e.g., Robert Ian Moore, *The First European Revolution, c. 970–1215*, ed. by Jacques Le Goff (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Thomas F. X. Noble and John Van Engen (eds.), *European Transformations: The Long Twelfth Century* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).

98 Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson, "Latin Fragments Related to Iceland," *Nordic Latin Manuscript Fragments: The Destruction and Reconstruction of Medieval Books*, ed. by Áslaug Ommundsen and Tuomas Heikkilä (New York: Routledge, 2017), 175.

99 Áslaug Ommundsen and Tuomas Heikkilä, "Piecing Together the Past: The Accidental Manuscript Collections of the North," *ibid.*, 4; see also Áslaug Ommundsen, "Traces of Latin Education in the Old Norse World," *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Scandinavia, c. 1100–1350*, ed. by Stefka G. Eriksen, Disputatio 28 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 243–62; Gottskálk Jónsson, "The Lost Latin Literature of Medieval Iceland: The Fragments of the *Vita sancti Thorlaci* and Other Evidence," *Symbolae Osloenses* 79 (2004): 150–70.

100 For an overview of Haukr's background and career, see, e.g., Gunnar Harðarson, *Littérature et spiritualité en Scandinavie médiévale: La traduction norroise du De arrha animae de Hugues de Saint-Victor. Étude historique et édition critique*, Bibliotheca Victorina 5 (Paris: Brepols, 1995), 169–74.

101 Finnur Jónsson, "Indledning," xxxv–xxxvi.

Icelandic literary man of high social standing. The treatise can indeed be viewed as a manifestation of Hauksbók's "theoretical interests in man and the world," as Gunnar Harðarson asserts. If Hauksbók is to be considered "a fine example of the personal intellectual culture of an aristocrat in the Norwegian fourteenth century"¹⁰² and, as Sverrir Jakobsson argues, representative of the Catholic world view of the Icelandic literary élite,¹⁰³ this treatise – with its microcosmic elucidations of the interrelationship between the divine creation and detailed human physiology – can surely be regarded as a reflection of that.

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¹⁰² Gunnar Harðarson, "Old Norse Intellectual Culture," 63.

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SUMMARY

Humoral Theory in The Medieval North: An Old Norse Translation of *Epistula Vindiciani* in *Hauksbók*

Keywords: humoral theory, the four humours, *Hauksbók*, *Epistula Vindiciani*, learned texts, theology, microcosm, Old Norse translations

The oldest preserved Old Norse text explaining the theory of the four humours is a roughly 900-word-long treatise, preserved in *Hauksbók*, under the title *Af nattu mannzins ok bloði*. This unique text in the Old Norse corpus can be described as consisting of two parts, which differ somewhat in nature. The first section is a theological preamble or premise, elucidating the divine creation and the nature of the elements (earth, water, air and fire) and their harmonious interaction. The second part is a physiological section with a systematic explication of the constitution of the humours and their effects on the character and disposition

of men. In this essay, the ideas presented in the first part of *Af nattu-
ru mannzins ok bloði* are put into context with currents of thought transmitted in a body of
medieval learned and theological texts, while maintaining a focus on the writings
that we have grounds to assume were extant in medieval Iceland and Norway.
Furthermore, the elucidation of the theory of the four humours, which appears
in the second part of *Af nattu-
ru mannzins ok bloði*, is traced to a popular and
widespread learned Latin text: *Epistula Vindiciani ad Pentadium*. The two texts are
compared, and argued that this latter part of *Af nattu-
ru mannzins ok bloði* is an Old
Norse translation derived from *Epistula Vindiciani*.

ÁGRIP

Vessakenningin í norðri: Forníslensk útgáfa af *Epistula Vindiciani* í Hauksbók

Lykilorð: vessakenningin, Hauksbók, *Epistula Vindiciani*, lærðir textar, guðfræði,
norrænar miðaldabýðingar

Elsti varðveitti norræni textinn um vessakenninguna er ríflega 900 orða löng
ritgerð í Hauksbók, sem ber heitið *Af nattu-
ru mannzins ok bloði*. Þessum texta,
sem er einstakur meðal þekktra norrænna miðaldatexta, má skipta í tvo hluta
sem eru nokkuð ólíkir í eðli sínu. Fyrri hlutinn er guðfræðilegur inngangur, eða
forsenda, sem útlistar sköpun mannsins og tengsl hans við eiginleika hinna fjögurra
höfuðefna (jarðar, vatns, lofts og elds). Seinni hlutinn er líffræðilegur og inniheldur
kerfisbundna útskýringu á eðli og virkni vessanna fjögurra í líkamanum og áhrifum
þeirra á persónu og skapgerð manna. Í þessari grein eru hugmyndirnar sem birtast
í fyrri hluta *Af nattu-
ru mannzins ok bloði* settar í samhengi við þá hugmyndastrauma
sem finna má í lærðum og guðfræðilegum evrópskum ritum frá miðöldum. Áhersla
er lögð á þau skrif sem ástæða er til að ætla að hafi verið aðgengileg á Íslandi og
í Noregi á miðöldum. Ennfremur er sú útlistun á vessakenningunni sem birtist
í seinni hluta *Af nattu-
ru mannzins ok bloði* rakin til vinsæls og útbreidds latnesks
texta, *Epistula Vindiciani ad Pentadium*. Textarnir tveir eru bornir saman, og
færð rök fyrir því að *Af nattu-
ru mannzins ok bloði* sé þýðing runnin frá *Epistula
Vindiciani*.

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