DIALECTICS NOT DUALITIES:
CONTEMPORARY TURKISH MUSLIM THOUGHT IN DIALOGUE

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ABSTRACT

“Dialectics not Dualities: Contemporary Turkish Muslim Thought in Dialogue” examines Turkish theology faculties and the creative and critical responses of Turkish theologians to challenges of modernity. Turkish theology faculties are funded by the Turkish government and function as higher institutions of learning where Islam is both studied and practiced alongside the social study of religion more generally. This study undertakes a theological evaluation of the scholarly output of a range of contemporary Turkish theologians and resists attempts to reduce the theological value of Turkish theologians to common binary frameworks, such as religion vs. secularism, modernity vs. tradition, or Islam vs. the West. In order to move away from binary explanatory frameworks, I propose a dialectical threefold schema of engagement as a heuristic for appreciating the complexity and creative opportunity of Turkish theological efforts. I propose that, when Turkish theologians do theology, they navigate a multiplicity of authoritative traditions: Turkish/Ottoman, Arab-Islamic, and Western intellectual traditions. In this way, Turkish theology is marked by dialectical engagement of a range of sources, some even Western and Christian. To illustrate how this threefold dialectical schema plays out in individual theological projects, I take up questions of gender, authority, skepticism, and religious pluralism to show how individual Turkish theological contributions exemplify this dialectical threefold engagement. This dialectical threefold engagement not only results in generative and explorative theological results for Turkish theology, it also represents a unique response to the challenges of modernity.
This thesis is dedicated to everyone who helped along the way. I thank my family, friends, colleagues, and teachers for all their guidance, care, patience, and support.

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Lastly, I thank every Turkish theologian who has offered their time and hospitality to help me better understand what it is they do.

My sincere gratitude,

Taraneh R. Wilkinson
CONVENTIONS

For Arabic transliterations, I follow the *Encyclopedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. Jane D. McAuliffe. For classical Islamic sources. Modern Arabic names are not transliterated in this way and instead follow common English spellings. Common Arabic words like “hadith” and “sharia” (with the exception of “Qurʾān”) also follow common English spellings, but italicized Arabic words are translated in the same manner as classical Islamic sources.

As for Turkish script, the Turkish alphabet is rendered as is. It is phonetic and contains the additional letters ç, ğ, ı, ş, ö, and ü. The ç is pronounced like the “ch” in cheese. The ğ has no English equivalent and is largely silent. The ı is darker and further back in the throat than the “i” in pick; it contrasts with the i, which is like the “ea” in flea. The ş is pronounced like the “sh” in “shape.” And the ö and ü are similar to the German letters of the same appearance.

The Turkish academic printing situation can be more ephemeral compared to European or North American academic publishing rhythms. Where appropriate, reprinting information is cited for Turkish works. Central works discussed list both original publication date and a reprinting date (if available), and in the case of some works I specify the number of reprintings to better indicate their popularity. Also, even with a printed copy in hand, sometimes full publishing details are not available.

I generally follow the M.A.S. Abdel Haleem English interpretation of the Qurʾān and indicate when I modify this translation.

Dates are given in Common Era.

For brevity, the Encyclopedia of Islam, *Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs is cited as *EI2*. Likewise, the *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition*, edited by Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson is cited as *EI3*. I also make use of the Turkish Encyclopedia of Islam, or *İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (*Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı*) and do not abbreviate its name when citing.
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INTRODUCTION

TURKISH THEOLOGY, A PLACE OF DIALECTICS AND DIALOGUE

When many people think of Islam today, they think of sources in Arabic, despite the fact that the mother tongue of the majority of Muslims is a language other than Arabic. When the word “theology” is uttered, the immediate connotation is Christian theology. Yet, in this inquiry I direct the reader’s attention to contemporary Turkish Muslim theology, or the academic realm of Turkish ilahiyat faculties.

Turkish ilahiyat faculties as they are known today arose shortly after the founding of the modern Turkish Republic. They are state-funded institutions of higher education and offer spaces for Muslims in Turkey to pursue the academic study of religion alongside their religious conviction. Although these institutions are state-funded, this does not necessarily mean that their function can be reduced to politics. Instead of approaching these faculties through a political lens or from the question of secularism, I make a case for the complexity and irreducible theological value of Turkish ilahiyat faculties, especially in light of their engagement with Western and Christian sources. To do so, I look at the output of these faculties across several topics that are often heavily associated with modernity and that also serve as central topics of discussion in contemporary European and Anglophone Christian theology: gender, authority, atheism, skepticism, and religious pluralism. Since these subjects are common areas of discourse in the Western academy, I also hope to engage those readers more familiar with Christian theology than with Islam.
Literature on religion in Turkey has tended to fall into dualistic schemas—modernity vs. tradition, religion vs. secularism, or Western vs. Islamic sources. I argue that such dualities are insufficient and at times misleading when it comes to understanding the complex dynamics of Turkish academic theology. The present analysis proposes a more complex schema, which is meant to resist reductive interpretations of Turkish theology that might frame Turkish theological projects in terms of static binaries. To make this case, I draw on the work of Felix Körner and Philip C. Dorroll. Körner argues that Turkish theology faculties are places particularly open to a modern engagement with the Qur’ān and he identifies the influence of hermeneutical philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer along with the influence of Muslim scholar Fazlur Rahman on contemporary Turkish debates concerning historicity and interpretation of scripture. Dorroll looks at the early history of Turkish theology faculties and identifies a Turkish interpretation of an Islamic theological school as both central to Turkish theology’s self-understanding and open to reform and to modern values. Dorroll refers to this Turkish interpretation as “The Ankara Paradigm” and looks at its continuing influence into the twenty-first century. While I confirm the presence of Gadamer, Rahman, and strong elements of the Ankara Paradigm in several of the figures studied here, I also push back against the implied dualities even in the analyses of Körner and Dorroll. For while both scholars look at the theological arguments present in Turkish theology faculties, they do not go far enough. They both imply modern values are a positive standard and do not use Turkish theological efforts to dialectically challenge and redefine such a standard. In my reading, Turkish theological endeavors have the resources to dialectically challenge and move beyond the dualities through which religion in Turkey is so often defined.
I argue that state-funded Turkish theological faculties and their affiliated organizations distinguish themselves from other religious voices and authorities in Turkey today through a unique and intentional double dialogue—one with European and Anglophone scholarship and one with classical (and sometimes modern) Arab Islamic authorities. Otherwise stated, Turkish theology is characterized by a dialectical threefold schema of engagement.

I propose this threefold schema as follows: 1) Scholarship on religion in Turkey still operates within frameworks of binaries, such as tradition vs. modernity or the religious vs. the secular; but Turkish theology does not neatly fit into binaries. 2) Analysis of Turkish theology should therefore not be reduced to such binaries and should instead engage Turkish theology for its theological value. 3) To better engage this theological value, I propose a threefold schema in which Turkish theology involves a dialectical engagement of Turkish/Ottoman, Arabic, and Western sources. 4) This threefold schema is dialectical, complex, creative, and—while primarily internal—it carries implications beyond Turkish theology.

To best illustrate this complexity along with the pervasiveness of this schema, I have chosen three categories of examples, moving from the least to most direct engagements with other sources. I begin with gender, move to authority, and then tackle Turkish responses to doubt and other religions. The range of examples is not accidental, but rather demonstrates the pervasive nature of this threefold schema. The purpose of the threefold schema is to encourage non-reductive theological evaluations of Turkish theology, and with this aim in mind I have fleshed out each set of examples with sustained theological engagement. I sustain and engage a range of arguments in order to concretely highlight the importance of not reducing Turkish theology to overly simple binaries. In order to appreciate Turkish theology for its complexity and
its potential theological contributions, schemas alone do not suffice. Accordingly, I flesh out my proposed dialectical threefold schema with particular engagements so as not to reduce my treatment of Turkish theology to the proposed threefold schema but rather to use the schema to better engage Turkish theological contributions.

A multi-faceted analysis offers both a breadth of context as well as the opportunity for moments of theological depth. Examples from Turkish theological discussions on gender, authority, doubt and other religions all serve to illustrate the complex dynamics present in Turkish academic theology, particularly vis-à-vis their use and appraisal of Western and Christian sources. By examining multiple topics, I resist reducing the discussion to a question of whether or how well Turkish theology has grasped or applied Western or Christian scholarship relevant to any one topic of discussion. It is problematic and, at best, superficial to reduce an intellectual appraisal of Turkish theology to a question of whether or not the institution as a whole is sufficiently modern or has satisfactorily grappled with a particular concept. The point I wish to underscore is that in order to appreciate Turkish academic theology qua theology it is useful, perhaps necessary, to look in detail across a broader spectrum of topics, since theological nuance, creativity, and insight—even in Christian settings—often lies in details and the annals of individual argument. Engaging Turkish theology qua theology entails engaging individual arguments and individual theologians alongside the broader context in which this theology is produced.

Before laying out the subsequent chapters of this analysis, I will address two related questions: what are Turkish ilahiyyat faculties and why is it defensible to refer to them as
theology faculties? Below is a brief history of the ilahiyat faculties and an explanation of the word “ilahiyat.”

The first instance of a government-regulated institution devoted to the study of ilahiyat can be traced back to 1900, in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire and in connection with what is now known as the University of Istanbul. In the earliest years of the Turkish Republic, the first faculty devoted to ilahiyat operated from 1924-1933 but closed due to poor matriculation. The present generation of ilahiyat faculties began with the opening of the Ankara University Ilahiyat Faculty in 1949. Throughout I will refer to these ilahiyat faculties as theology faculties. Similar to a college or school within a university, these faculties boast a broad range of studies, from traditional Islamic sciences, sociological disciplines, to history of religions, and the study of non-Muslim faiths. The Ankara University Theology Faculty, the Marmara University Theology Faculty, and the Istanbul University Theology Faculty, for instance, all host about twenty distinct sub-departments nested under three main departmental divisions. The three main departmental divisions (Turkish singular: bölüm) are the Department of Fundamental Islamic Sciences (Temel İslâm Bilimleri Bölümü), the Department of Philosophical and Religious Sciences (Felsefe ve Din Bilimleri Bölümü), and the Department of Islamic History and Islamic Arts (İslam Tarihi ve Sanatları Bölümü). Standard sub-departments within a theology faculty

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1 Howard Reed, “The Faculty of Divinity at Ankara I,” Muslim World 46 (1956): 296. Reed refers to this first institution as a “Faculty of Theology,” but the current Istanbul University Faculty of Theology refers to it primarily as a department or branch (şube) and only parenthetically as a faculty (fakülte), which is larger and more independent, like a college or school within a university. See the official history page of the Istanbul University Theology Faculty, accessed February 19, 2017, http://ilahiyat.istanbul.edu.tr/?p=6056.
3 The general structure of sub-disciplines in these faculties is uniform across Turkey. An additional fourth department for religious education is usually included as well. The standard sub-departments within a faculty have changed somewhat over the years.
include the study of Qur’ān commentaries (tefsir), study of hadith (hadis), Islamic law (İslam hukuku), Islamic theology (kelam), Sufism (tasavvuf), logic (mantık), history of philosophy (felsefe tarihi), Islamic philosophy (İslam felsefesi), philosophy of religion (din felsefesi), sociology of religion (din sosyolojisi), psychology of religion (din psikolojisi), history of religions (dinler tarihi), history of Islam (İslam tarihi), and even the history of Turkish Islamic arts (Türk İslam sanatları tarihi). Islamic law and Islamic theology are both part of the Department of Fundamental Islamic Sciences (Temel İslâm Bilimleri Bölümü), whereas history of religions and Islamic philosophy fall under the Department of Philosophical and Religious Sciences (Felsefe ve Din Bilimleri Bölümü). Set apart on its own self-contained campus, a Turkish theology faculty is meant to be broad in disciplinary scope and it incorporates traditional Islamic sciences, along with sociology, history, and philosophy. Much in the same way as Anglophone theology is increasingly challenged to scientifically engage other academic disciplines without sacrificing confessional identity, Turkish theology faculties are set up to engage topics within and outside the repertoire of traditional Islamic sciences. It is also in light of this disciplinary diversity that I have selected several topics through which to engage Turkish theological contributions, since valuable theological insight might be gleaned from various corners of the Turkish theology faculty.

I use the term “theology” to refer both to the faculty itself and to some of the intellectual output produced by these faculties. While it is true that the term “theology” is not an unproblematic label, it is nonetheless used by some academics in Turkish. Another word used in these faculties to translate “ilahiyat” is “divinity,” which also carries some Christian
connotations. The word *ilahiyyat* originally comes from Arabic, and one of its earliest known uses was by the medieval philosopher Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037) to refer to the metaphysics portion of his magnum opus, *al-Shifā’*. According to the Turkish Encyclopedia of Islam (*İslâm Ansiklopedisi*), the term “ilâhiyyât” refers to beliefs and doctrines concerning God’s essence and attributes, the first of three main categories of Sunni belief.* Ilahiyyat* does not, however, designate theology in modern Arabic, and its use in the Turkish context arose visibly at the turn of the twentieth century, amid ongoing discussion on how to use or coin Arabic terms in modern Turkish.* The modern *ilahiyyat* faculty functions more as a college with multiple departments than as theology or religion departments do in Europe and North America. As mentioned above, the range of subjects taught includes traditional Islamic sciences, sociological approaches to religion, theological approaches to religion, and more. When I refer to these faculties as theology faculties, I follow some Turkish and other scholarly precedent and do not mean a theology department exactly as one might be found at a Christian institute of higher learning.* In a second sense, I employ the term theology in a more relational signification, suggesting that Christian theologians might be able to recognize and appreciate that Turkish theologians share common

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4 The Ankara Faculty, for example, uses the term divinity, whereas the Istanbul Faculty uses the word theology on their English language webpage. Compare Ankara University’s *Ilahiyyat* Faculty site http://divinity.en.ankara.edu.tr/ with Istanbul University’s *Ilahiyyat* Faculty site http://ilahiyyat.istanbul.edu.tr/en/ (both accessed February 19, 2017). Even Ankara’s Turkish language page web address includes the word “divinity”: http://www.divinity.ankara.edu.tr/.


7 For first-hand accounts of major Turkish intellectuals’ disagreements over the proper use of Arabic terms in Turkish academic discourse from the early to mid-twentieth century, see Ismail Kara, *Din ile Modernleşme Arasında: Çağdaş Türk Düşüncesinin Meseleleri [Between Religion and Modernization: Issues of Contemporary Turkish Thought]* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2003).

issues, interests, challenges relative to other academic disciplines that do not explicitly cultivate confessional values alongside academic rigor.⁹

While I will use the word “theologian” for both Muslims and Christians, Turkish theologians can still distinguish themselves from their Christian counterparts by calling themselves “ilahiyatçı” rather than “teolog”—the Turkish word for Christian theologian. So, to clarify, I am a “teolog” speaking about the ideas and intellectual projects of “ilahiyatçı” scholars. That is, having started my intellectual formation in Christian philosophical and theological traditions, I have taken up the study Islamic religious thought, especially as it has been developing in Turkish “theology” or “divinity” faculties in the past two decades. Having a Christian theological background has been exceedingly helpful in this effort to understand Turkish academic theology, since many Turkish theologians do Muslim theology in heavy engagement with Christian theological and philosophical sources. In fact, it is almost impossible to appreciate the intellectual output of some Turkish theologians without also being fairly versed in Western philosophy and religious thought. This does not mean knowledge of Christian theology is sufficient for appreciating Turkish Muslim theology.

Turkish theology is also marked by domestic dynamics, an increasing sense of Ottoman heritage, sustained efforts to speak to Muslim communities outside Turkey as well as to academic milieus around the world. This often results in a subtle play of intersecting contexts, including contexts outside of the sphere of theology. This admixture can be confusing, even

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⁹ The analogy between Christian theology and Turkish theology has limits. Turkish theologians will generally not be interested in Mariology or Trinitarian theology outside of a sub-department of the history of religions; whereas scholars in a Turkish department of philosophy of religion are likely to share more concerns with Christian thinkers, such as how to read scripture, how to integrate science with a religious worldview, or what language means for theology.
daunting to an outsider. Political concerns and climates affect Turkish theology along with other religious and intellectual concerns; the line between theology and politics is not always easy to draw. At times, this complexity endemic to Turkish theology can default into clichés, name dropping, or superficial intellectual bricolage. Yet, Turkish theology is also fertile ground for synthesis and for a remarkable breadth of perspective across academias. Within any given academic milieu, the questions deemed worth asking are often assumed and are only challenged as the academic field itself evolves. Turkish theologians are in the challenging situation of having to juggle the academic standards and assumptions of multiple milieus—academic theology at home, non-academic religious discourse in Turkey, religious studies and theology abroad (often on Western terms), and even Persian or Arabic trends in the academic study of religion. With different academic milieus also come different ideas of what it means to bear authority. Instead of reducing or confining the subject of religious discourse in Turkey to debates on politics or secularism, as most previous literature has done, a closer look at Turkish academic Muslim theology is needed.

Many Turkish academic theologians use Arab-Islamic sources to mediate their own authority vis-à-vis the Western construct of modernity, effectively redefining modernity and its terms. In other words, through engaging European and Anglophone theologies, these Turkish theologians are reclaiming the concept and perceived tenets of “modernity” with Arab-Islamic sources. In this process of reclamation, Turkish theologians have dialogued extensively with Western Christian theological and philosophical resources. Some might even accuse these theologians of overly grounding their discourses not in Arab-Islamic sources but in Western terms and discussions. While the present engagement significantly privileges Western sources,
this engagement, I will argue, qualifies as intentional and critical dialogue and, as such, is in a position to recast and reformulate the terms of the discussion. Turkish theologians and others affiliated with Turkish academic theology have been forging their own double dialogue with Western authoritative traditions and non-Turkish Muslim authoritative traditions, while at the same time affirming the viability, insights, and even continuity of Turkish/Ottoman Muslim intellectual authority. In other words, Turkish theology is characterized by a dialectical threefold schema of authoritative intellectual traditions. This complex and multi-faceted internal dialogue of traditions offers insights for those interested in theology and thought within and outside Turkey.

Much prior scholarship exists examining religion in Turkey, but this scholarship generally takes a political or sociological vantage. Further, apart from German Jesuit scholar Felix Körner, and to some degree Philip C. Dorroll, little work has been done to explicitly examine Turkish theological voices for their theological value. Even Körner’s work limits itself to questions of scriptural hermeneutics, without exploring other intersecting themes, such as gender. Nevertheless, he has rightly signaled an untapped and lively discussion in state-funded Turkish theological faculties, a vein which, despite the international activities of many Turkish theologians and scholars, remains largely inaccessible to those who do not speak Turkish.

In recapitulation, state-funded Turkish theological faculties and their affiliated organizations distinguish themselves from other religious voices and authorities in Turkey today through a unique and intentional double dialogue—one with European and Anglophone scholarship and one with classical (and sometimes modern) Arab-Islamic authorities. This thesis offers an analysis of some of the significant theological aspects of said dialogue and further
endeavors to encourage Anglophone scholars more familiar with Christianity than Islam to take greater interest in an exchange for which they are often, wittingly or not, already a part.

The bulk of my analysis is built upon printed publications and various Turkish theological journals. In addition to the printed word, I have enjoyed the intellectual, moral, and spiritual support of various Turkish academic theologians as well as the generous hospitality of both the Marmara University Theology Faculty in Istanbul and the Ankara University Theology Faculty in Ankara—two important faculties, which I visited in late 2015.

What Lies Ahead

The first chapter, “It’s Complicated: Turkish Theology Faculties and the Dialectics of Modernity,” lays out some of the Ottoman and Turkish history behind Turkish theology faculties in the context of religion in Turkey more generally. In my review of literature on the role of religion in Turkey, especially in the context of modernity, I problematize binary explanatory frameworks, as these fail to address the full complexity of Turkish theological identity. I situate Turkish theology faculties within broader discussions on religion in Turkey and argue that Turkish theological output cannot be reduced to politics or parsed in polarized schemata such as tradition vs. modernity, Islam vs. the West, or religion vs. secularism. Drawing on recent trends in Ottoman studies, I show how Turkish theology has an ongoing history of complex intellectual tributaries and argue that the threefold schema characteristic of Turkish theology today is rooted in a late Ottoman past. I stress that instead of reducing Turkish theology to politics or debates on secularism, it is necessary to look at the theological value of the arguments presented by Turkish theologians—particularly in their responses to Western
Christianity, modernity, and global issues. What I alternately call a double dialogue or threefold schema of engagement strongly forms Turkish theological perspectives on such issues. This threefold dynamic perspective puts Turkish theologians in a position to offer unique theological perspectives on Western theology, philosophy, and modernity.

Each subsequent chapter highlights different theological contributions in light of Turkish theology’s dynamic dialectics—being in dialectical relation to its own history, to Islamic tradition outside of Turkey, and to Western intellectual tradition.

Chapters 2 and 3 form one framework: the considerations of three Muslim thinkers on the question of whether and how human nature is gendered. Chapter 2, entitled “Gender Ontology in the work of Barbarosoğlu and Tuksal: Two Takes on Gender and Islam in Turkey,” addresses the question of gender in the context of Turkish Muslim culture, hadith, and the Qur’ān. While neither Barbarosoğlu nor Tuksal currently teach within a theology faculty, the works of both are widely read in theology faculties and, for this reason, are formative voices within theology faculties. I argue that, while both scholars exhibit some dialectical engagement with Western discussions and classical Islamic roots, neither thinker applies this dialectical dynamism to her respective understanding of gender: Barbarosoğlu espouses rigid gender binaries, and Tuksal chooses not to engage the heterogeneity of gender and focuses instead on shared human identity irrespective of gender.

Chapter 3 is entitled “Scriptural Hermeneutics Through the Lens of Gender: Fidan from Dialectics to Mirrors.” Chapter 2 provides the context for chapter 3, which subsequently turns to a lesser known figure, whose understanding of gender I argue is truly dialectical, both in a philosophical sense and in terms of her engagement with Turkish, Arabic, and Western
traditions. Theologically trained Hafsa Fidan, known for her affiliation with the state-run *Diyanet Vakfı* (Endowment for Religious Affairs\(^\text{10}\)), serves as the locus of discussion. The significance of what I will call her “relational ontology” in approaching gender in the Qur’ān renders, as I argue, Fidan an exemplar of the synthesizing and creative potential of Turkish theology. Examination of this synthesis reveals a complex dialogue of authoritative traditions—from Western European and Anglophone voices to classical Islamic sources. I conclude that Fidan and other Turkish theologians, even when discussing topics in an Islamic context, are doing theology in relation to sources of authority outside Turkish academic theology and even outside the Muslim intellectual heritage. I think it important to better understand the dynamics of this relation.

The previous two chapters on gender introduce a complex dynamic of operative authoritative traditions in Turkish theology. To deepen perspective on how Turkish theologians navigate different authoritative traditions, especially in relation to Western sources, I turn to the question of authority in the work of two additional Turkish theologians highly versed in the Western and Christian intellectual tradition. This section on authority is comprised of an introductory chapter and two subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4, entitled “**Authority: On the Individual’s Dynamic Relation to Tradition According to Two Turkish Theologians,**” provides context for the following two chapters. Here I examine more closely the work of Philip C. Dorroll, which takes up the history of theological assumptions in Turkish theology faculties. Dorroll’s treatment of the “Ankara Paradigm” traceable to the mid-twentieth century shows that there exist many arguably humanist assumptions about religion popular in Turkish theology and these assumptions have a history

\(^{10}\) An alternate translation of this institution’s title reads “Directorate of Religious Affairs.”
connected to the early days of the Turkish Republic. Central to this humanistic reading of Islam is the tendency of Turkish understandings of Islam to affirm the authority and independent judgment of the individual believer. How far back such a humanistic reading of Islamic sources goes remains an open question; yet, Turkish theologians today, though not necessarily unified, continue to advocate for a humanistic reading of Islam and true religion. The significance of these humanistic values and their connection with Turkish theology’s highly dialectical character is left to be examined further in the ensuing two chapters.

In “The Individual in Dialectical Continuity: Alpyağıl on Authority,” I examine the work of philosopher of religion and ilahiyatçı Recep Alpyağıl. Alpyağıl tackles the stagnation inherent in the division between philosophy of religion and Islamic philosophy characteristic of Turkish theology faculties by arguing for an authentic Turkish philosophical canon that would include Islamic sources, Turkish and Ottoman sources, and finally Western sources. I hold that his call for an inclusive Turkish philosophical canon and for a responsible (believing) individual to successfully navigate this canon render his work exemplary of the dialectical threefold schema of intellectual traditions. His project does not try to give all the answers, but aims to start better conversations. Accordingly, he encourages his readers not to be satisfied with simple answers or with giving up on finding new answers. His playful and incisive engagement with many Western philosophically theological discussions makes him an exemplar of Turkish theology in active, creative, and critical dialogue with Christian intellectual tradition, while remaining grounded in Islamic sources.

Düzgün, an ilahiyatçı well-versed in Islamic *kalām* (speculative theology), directly engages the challenge of modernity, its associations with Western Christianity, and even Christian theological responses to modernity. His humanistic reading of a certain strand of Sunni Islam allows him to place the individual at the center of human responsibility. In his view, a free individual who understands that her freedom is from God is also a truly responsible individual who accepts that her actions and choices matter, living out true religion actively and employing individual authority mediated by her social and ethical context. I read him as a less robust but equally informative theological example of Turkish theology in dialectical relation to both Islamic and Christian concepts and sources.

Finally, “Skepticism, Atheism and Pluralism: A Mixed and Interconnected Bag” deals with the connected debates on skepticism, atheism and religious pluralism. More often than not, in Turkish theology, these three concepts are heavily associated with Western Christianity. And while there is a tendency to dismiss atheism, skepticism (and sometimes religious pluralism) as a Christian problem, there are cases of Turkish theological engagements that treat these issues as serious challenges to Muslim identity as well. I argue that majority opinions which unproblematically dismiss these challenges fail to express dynamic potential in navigating Western, Turkish, and Arabic sources; while minority opinions that take these problems more seriously better reflect the dialectical strengths of the Turkish threefold schema. Although Turkish responses to skepticism, atheism, and pluralism may form the most obvious engagement with Western and Christian sources, such responses are not always the most illustrative of Turkish dialectical engagement.
The conclusion, “Resources and Requisites for Further Dialogue,” reflects on how the complex dynamics of Turkish theology promotes further reflection on the theological challenges of modernity and globalization. I suggest that Turkish theologians who do theology along a threefold schema of Western, Turkish, and Arabic sources hold up a valuable mirror to European and Anglophone Christian theologians. This mirror does not necessarily provide an exact reflection, and I see this as something positive. Instead of a placid reflection, this mirror can offer a dialectical perspective on both Turkish theology and Christian theology alike. Turkish theologians depict and engage Christian theology from an Islamic and Turkish perspective. The perspective gleaned by various Turkish theologians of Western academic Christian theology is part of a larger conversation yet to be continued.
CHAPTER ONE

*It’s Complex: Turkish Theology Faculties and the Dialectics of Modernity*

*Our nation can neither abandon its sacred religion, nor dispense with the necessities of modern life. Reason requires not to sacrifice one of these inclinations to the benefit of the other, but rather to try to reconcile them.* – Ziya Gökalp (1916)

These words, written a century ago by progressive reformer and sociologist Ziya Gökalp, point to a long-standing conversation in Turkish political and religious history. For Gökalp, “religious enlightenment of the people” and a “revival of the faith” were not incompatible goals. Yet, Turkey has been the ground of so many polarizing discussions over the respective roles of religion and the secular, such that most literature on Turkey and religion cannot fail to cast its discussion in terms of a secular-religious framework. Turkey remains a relevant topic for discussing the implications of religion and secularism in the modern world. And although discussions on secularism and religion in Turkey offer important contributions, allowing such an approach to dominate can easily drown out other valuable voices—in this case, theological ones. By looking at theological voices, rather than reducing them to either secular or religious camps, we can not only gain a deeper understanding of religion in modernity, but perhaps also challenge and revise the very frameworks and assumptions packed into the notion of modernity.

This chapter provides a broader context for Turkish theology faculties. Namely, it lays out some of the Ottoman and Turkish history behind Turkish theology faculties with reference to

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more general scholarship on religion in Turkey. Using the concept of modernity as a touch-point, I problematize binary explanatory frameworks often explicit or at least implicit in readings of religion in Turkey, arguing that binary frameworks are insufficient for engaging Turkish theological output. Drawing on recent trends in Ottoman studies, I highlight how Turkish theology reflects an ongoing history of complex intellectual tributaries, particularly regarding encounters with Western intellectual tradition and global issues. I stress the need to look at the theological value of the arguments presented by Turkish theologians—particularly in their responses to Western Christianity, modernity, and global issues without reducing these discussions to binaries such as tradition vs. modernity, religion vs. secularism, or Islam vs. the West. Instead of using a binary sense of modernity contrasted with tradition, I use a threefold schema to characterize Turkish theology today.

By “threefold schema,” I mean Turkish theologians enter into dialectical relation with their Turkish/Ottoman identity, with wider Islamic identity (particular in classical Arabic sources), and with Western sources. In this chapter, Turkish/Ottoman dialectics and Western dialectics come to the fore. The threefold schema is meant primarily as a heuristic for navigating and evaluating Turkish theology in non-reductive fashion.

In short, State-funded Turkish theological faculties and their affiliated organizations distinguish themselves from other religious voices and authorities in Turkey today through a unique and intentional double dialogue—one with European and Anglophone scholarship and one with classical (and sometimes modern) Arab-Islamic authorities. Such a double dialogue

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13 Chapter 4 treats Turkish theological ties to the classical Islamic tradition.
14 I lump references to Persian sources with the Arab-Islamic leg of the schema, since it is not independent enough to be considered a fourth relation. For this reason, I alternately refer to the Arab-Islamic point on this triad simply as broader Islamic identity. On another point, arguably, the double dialogue is not entirely unique to the Turkish
also dynamizes the entity in dialogue, namely Turkish/Ottoman identity. For this reason, the double dialogue is also a threefold dialectical schema of complex interactions, where the dynamic complexity provides impetus for new, creative theological contributions.15

This chapter proceeds with four related discussions: 1) to indicate that literature on Turkey and religion is still largely bound up in secular vs. religious narratives; 2) to underscore the importance of theology faculties as an understudied resource for understanding religion in Turkey; 3) to situate these faculties in wider conversation of Islam in Turkey; and 4) to address the concept of modernity as a framework that Turkish theology may fruitfully challenge. In the first discussion, I signal a need for new heuristics in treating religion in Turkey, but also offer some historical background behind the old heuristics of secularism. In the second discussion, I engage the work of Felix Körner on Turkish theology faculties, agreeing with him on the value of studying Turkish theology but resisting his portrayal of Turkish theology as modern. In the third discussion, I engage literature on Said Nursi and the Gülen movement for parallels and contrasts with Turkish theology. Finally, in the fourth discussion, I take up the concept of modernity and re-apply it to Turkish theology, but only as a problematizing force.16

Theology faculties. Given the international emphasis of the Gülen movement, including its publications in Arabic and English, one could claim that the movement has also developed its own double dialogue—however the Gülen Movement is known to be less centralized and focused and is active in places like South Africa and Central Asia. It is also less strictly devoted to the development of new theological ideas and approaches, being more oriented toward education, hizmet (service), and providing models for good Islamic living. In the neighboring context of Iranian Islamic political thought, Siavash Saffari also argues for the creativity of “neo-Shariatis” and their ability to get beyond old binaries of East and West. See his Beyond Shariati: Modernity, Cosmopolitanism, and Islam in Iranian Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). I am not the only one to make a case for intellectual creativity of a group of Islamic intellectuals in order to move past an old binary, but I stress the theological rather than political dimensions.

What I ultimately wish to suggest is that when looked at through my proposed threefold schema, Turkish engagement with the concept of modernity is de facto problematized.
Turkey and the Politicization of Religion

“Islam matters to Turkey in a way few outsiders appreciate.”
– M. Hakan Yavuz

The modern Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923 after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the wake of World War I. In addition to being a home to numerous non-Muslim religious minorities, Turkey is also a country of intra-Muslim religious diversity. The majority of scholarly attention has focused on the Islam of Sunni groups which are often cast in ideological tension with the secular state, such as the Gülen and Nurcu movements, or on the Islam of minorities such as the Kurdish Alevi. There exist a rich variety of Islamic identities and groups in Turkey, and Turkish state-funded theology faculties have received relatively less attention in secondary literature on religion in Turkey.

Much of the literature on Turkey treats Islam only to bring it within a framework of politics and sociological analysis. While notable exceptions exist on the religious thought and contributions of Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen, even those discussions tend towards the political. And though newer works do challenge the older, more established narrative of the secular Republic vs. the traditional Ottoman Empire, these same works remain heavily focused on the categories of secularism and religious identity that earlier generations of scholarship felt little need to challenge.

For example, Nilüfer Göle, who writes on the politics of the veil in Turkey, dwells on the theological questions insofar as they enter into debates over the category of secularism.18 Yıldız

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Atasoy, for his part, argues in *Islam’s Marriage with Neoliberalism* (2009) that Turkey’s history of secularization began in the Ottoman Empire and has always been and continues to be tied to the pressures of integrating into the capitalist market economy. Massimo Rosati, in *The Making of a Postsecular Society* (2015), uses Durkheim’s sociological approach to treat the transformations of symbols used to shape Turkish political and religious identity. Rosati argues that Turkey is a post-secular society and a model of note for European societies struggling with their own secular identities. Brian Silverstein’s *Islam and Modernity in Turkey* (2011) represents an ethnographic study of Islamic discourses in Turkish society, and similar to Rosati he emphasizes the modern way in which Turkish Muslims view their Muslim identity. In *Turkish Islam and the Secular State* (2003), a collection of scholarly papers on the Gülen movement, Gülen is styled as a solution to many of the problems secularism entails, proving to be a “force in the development of the Islamic discourse of globalized multicultural pluralism.”

These are merely some of the most relevant examples of the strong focus on politics and secularism exhibited by scholars on religion in Turkey, yet each one evaluates Islamic identity in terms of political alignments and questions of secularism.

There are two important exceptions: Philip C. Dorroll and Felix Körner. Apart from these scholars, little work has been done to explicitly examine academic theological voices for their theological value. Dorroll argues that progressive Turkish theological views on the compatibility of reform and religion are self-understood to be authentic expressions of Turkish Islam rather than political ideologies. Dorroll’s work rightly challenges reducing progressive

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20 Körner is treated in the following section and Dorroll is treated in chapter 4.
trends in Turkish theology to political agendas, but his scholarship on Turkish theology still operates within discussions of secularism. Körner also rightly points to the value of Turkish theology for its contributions to wider theological discussions outside of Turkey, yet he does so by stressing Turkish theology’s modern qualities. Nevertheless, he has rightly signaled an untapped and lively discussion in state-funded Turkish theological faculties, a vein which despite the international activities of many Turkish theologians and scholars remains largely inaccessible to those who do not speak Turkish.

*The Problem with Religion and the Secular*

Although the secularization hypothesis is no longer unquestioned canon in debates on modernity and religion, most literature on Turkey and religion remains within a framework that emphasizes the political dimensions of religion. This is unfortunate, for such an emphasis on secularization, politics, and religion fails to appreciate the variety of theological options and engagements available. Further, broader scholarship has increasingly challenged the underlying assumption that secularization represents an inevitable outcome of modernization. And though secularization may represent an overemphasized category; that does not mean it should be

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21 Since Dorroll is not treated until later, here is a basic summary. Philip Christopher Dorroll’s dissertation at Emory (2013), entitled “Modern by Tradition: Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and the New Turkish Theology” treats Turkish theology faculties. Dorroll defines Turkish scholars through one specific school of thought, “The Ankara Paradigm,” and its relation to al-Māturīdi—i.e. this, arguably, is more a historical analysis than a theological engagement. His further work also engages theological voices in Turkey today, but still within a framework of secular vs. religious, even if he is pushing against some of the central assumptions of this framework. See especially, Philip C. Dorroll, “The Turkish Understanding of Religion: Rethinking Tradition and Modernity in Contemporary Turkish Islamic Thought,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 82:4 (2014), 1033-1069.

22 Körner’s work also limits itself to looking at questions of sacred hermeneutics, without exploring other intersecting themes, such as gender, skepticism, authority, or theologians’ responses to other religions.

overlooked. Nilüfer Göle, writer on secularism and the politicized history of the veil in the Turkish Republic, reminds her reader:

Western secularity cannot be separated from its claim for a higher form of civilization, its impact in shaping and stigmatizing a certain understanding of religion (as backward), its role in spreading models of secular governance to different parts of the world, and, last but not least, its permeation of material culture in norms of sexuality and private-public distinctions.24

It may not be practically possible to get around the impact of secularism when dealing with religion and modernity. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that, in Turkey, secularization did not come into existence with the birth of the Republic; some of its origins are indeed Ottoman.25 Thus, while secularism and secularization are important for understanding religion in Turkey, secularization is not a monolith that emerged ex nihilo with the rise of the Republic. With this in mind, questions of secularization need to be contextualized rather than given reign to set the context of all discussions.

One scholar, Markus Dressler, has recently made a very strong case for the importance of moving beyond what he calls Turkey’s “monodimensional modernist narrative.”26 For Dressler, the problem with lingering too long in categories like secularism and modernity is that it tends to flatten out discussions of religion and state into a “monolinear narrative.”27 In short, “the master narrative of the Turkish modernization experience needs to be broadened.”28 It is paramount not to get caught in a strict dichotomy of religious vs. secular when speaking of Turkish history and the role of religion in Turkish identity. Dressler sagaciously warns of this double-edged danger:

[...] many chapters of late Ottoman and early Turkish republican history have remained under the impact of a modernist metanarrative. A critical rereading of this history requires not only diligent avoidance of liberal presuppositions, but also not succumbing to the temptation of merely switching to a perspective that overemphasizes religious continuity.²⁹ Although there is danger of losing perspective by overemphasizing rupture and secularism or, conversely, by overstressing religion and continuity, there may exist less polarized avenues of schematizing religion in Turkey. Dressler, for instance, speaks of the “asecular” dimensions of religion—religious trends and voices that, though marginalized, were not caught up in the religio-secular paradigm.³⁰ What if the focus were shifted to religious voices not wholly subject to the religio-secular dichotomy, or at the very least, voices which challenge this dichotomy’s reductive framing of their confessional contribution? These could be religious voices that respond self-reflexively to the religio-secular dichotomy, challenging its binary reductionism. I contend there are such voices among Turkish theologians.

*Turkey and Religion Today*

Despite the importance of moving beyond politics, a brief sketch of Turkey’s history with religion is in order. While I argue against reducing Turkish theology to politics, it cannot be denied that politics has played a large role in religion in Turkey and that Turkish theology faculties are ultimately funded and regulated by the state.

Though very much in flux today, even the current political and ideological climate in modern Turkey stems from initial reforms and movements harking back to the nineteenth century. Beginning with the Tanzimat Period (1839-76) and the First Constitutional Era (1876-

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78), the then Ottoman Empire was already attempting to reshape itself along more Western models on many fronts. However, with Sultan Abdülhamid II’s suspension of Parliament in 1878, lasting transformation was postponed until the outbreak of the Young Turk Era (1908-1918), followed by the termination of the Ottoman state in the aftermath of World War I. With a Turkish victory over the encroaching Western powers, a new republic was established and the Caliphate officially abolished (1923 and 1924 respectively). At this moment in Turkish history, there arose a new emphasis on Turkish and Muslim identity as constitutive of a national framework. In less than a decade, the new nation of Turkey underwent a massive and far-reaching transformation: all major religious educational institutions were banned by the Unification of Education Law in 1924, religious orders were similarly banned the following year (this included dervish lodges, small mosques and Sufi orders), the Roman calendar was adopted, and in 1928 the Latin alphabet along with the European metric system were placed in effect. This last change in alphabet and measurements was done in tandem with a wider language reform tailored to remove Persian and Arabic influence from modern Turkish in favor of Turkic recoveries and European borrowings. By the 1930s, a significant shift towards a secular emphasis on national identity was underway.

Despite this dramatic shift to a Western secular ideal, the question of Muslim identity was destined to resurface with the establishment of the multi-party system in 1946. The tensions between secular and religious models for statehood only grew more pronounced as the century progressed. As a result, state involvement in religion came to represent a key feature of

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32 Saktanber, Living Islam, 143.
33 Saktanber, Living Islam, 149-151.
Turkish politics. This did not entail an abolition of Muslim identity, but rather a refashioning of Muslim identity under Turkish nationalistic auspices. Kemerli aptly sums up the situation:

The view that Turkish secularism is hostile to religion and eliminated it from the public sphere has also been disputed. Rather than disestablishing religion, secular nationalization in Turkey brought it under strict state control. The institutional locus of this control has been the Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (Directorate of Religious Affairs), which was established after the abolition of the caliphate in 1924 and the state’s appropriation of the properties of pious foundations… rather than unmitigated hostility, Turkish secularism entails a pragmatic approach to religion that involves selective promotion and frequent accommodation.34

After the end of the early Kemalist period, Turkey had several moments of rapprochement with “less secular” trends. However, until recently, military coups have discouraged the Turkish state system from tilting too strongly away from what were seen as Kemalist secular ideals. The exception has come with the current ruling party in Turkey, the AKP. The AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi), Justice and Development Party, is an offshoot of the earlier Welfare Party (Islamicist Refah Partisi) and has been in power since 2002. It offers its own casting of Turkish Muslim identity, which has its share of both popular following and stark criticism. Far from banning the secular military, it has aggressively tamed it through ongoing scandals such as the infamous Ergenekon conspiracy.35 Despite recent electoral setbacks in the summer of 2015 and the attempted coup in July of 2016, the AK Party remains the dominant face in the Turkish political landscape. Presently, funding for the current Directorate of Religious

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35 Kemerli, “Religious Militarism and Conscientious Objection in Turkey,” 290: She writes, “…dominant Islamist groups in contemporary Turkey—including the AKP and Gülen—endorse rather than challenge the militarist-nationalist interpretation of Islam that has been utilized by the state in support of Turkish militarism since the foundation of the republic.” The Ergenekon affair refers to the indictment, long trial process, and imprisonment of members affiliated with the Turkish military on the grounds that they were plotting against the current AKP government. The government’s response in the aftermath of the July 2016 coup has brought further changes to the relation of ruling political party and Turkish military.
Affairs (now Diyanet Vakfı\textsuperscript{36}) as well as research libraries like that of İSAM\textsuperscript{37} in Istanbul is intimately linked with AKP politics and policies.

![Image of the Interior of the İSAM Library](image-url)

**Figure 1**: The Interior of the İSAM Library.\textsuperscript{38}

Along with a new relation to the military and a new casting of the state’s role in religion there has come an increased interest in the continuity between the Turkish state and its Ottoman past. That is, under the AK Party, revisiting Ottoman heritage has grown more popular; the party has actively stressed Muslim identity in the form of continuity with the Ottoman past.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} For their official website: [http://www.diyanetvakfi.org.tr/](http://www.diyanetvakfi.org.tr/).

\textsuperscript{37} İSAM is an abbreviation for İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi (The Center for Islamic Studies) and is affiliated with the 29 Mayıs University. For more information see: [https://www.29mayis.edu.tr/hakkinda-44.html](https://www.29mayis.edu.tr/hakkinda-44.html). Their center is equipped with a large research library. Summer of 2013 the author visited this library as a guest researcher with the help of Turkish colleague and theologian Abdulnasır Süt. Felix Körner has reported the Center, “a non-university scholarly institution […] founded in 1993, is a branch of the Türk Diyanet Vakfı and seems to have unlimited financial resources.” Felix Körner, *Rethinking Islam: Revisionist Koran Hermeneutics in Contemporary Turkish University Theology* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2005), 56.

\textsuperscript{38} Photo downloaded from the “About” page of 29 Mayıs University, accessed Nov 2, 2016, [https://www.29mayis.edu.tr/hakkinda-44.html](https://www.29mayis.edu.tr/hakkinda-44.html).

\textsuperscript{39} See for instance Malik Mufti, “The AK Party’s Islamic Realist Political Vision: Theory and Practice,” *Politics and Governance* 2 (2014), 28–42. Mufti notes that it has become common to apply the term “Neo-Ottoman” to the political and religious identity promulgated by the Ak Party.
In classical Islam, the literal meanings of the three terms for theology are as follows: (1) kalām, ‘words’, ‘speech’, ‘discourse’; (2) uṣūl al-fiqh, ‘the roots of law’; and (3) uṣūl ad-dīn, ‘the roots of religion’. […] Thus, in Islam, there is no term equivalent to ‘theology’ as the ‘science of God’…”

“The idea of a higher religious academy has its roots in the philosophy of the Ottoman era.”

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Figure 2: Theology Faculty Journals.

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42 This photo was taken by the author in the Ankara University Theology Faculty (Dec 2, 2015).
*İlāhiyat fakületleri* or Turkish theology faculties are heavily influenced by Western philosophy as well as in active engagement with it.\(^{43}\) Although the term *ilâhiyat* appears in classical theology, the Arabic word has never designated “theology” in the sense of the whole academic discipline—it had been used to mean metaphysics, to label questions about God, and to refer to rational theology, but never as the title for a faculty.\(^{44}\) In modern Farsi, however, essentially the same term designates “theology”—a word also used to designate theological faculties in Iran.\(^{45}\) The first of Turkey’s present theology faculties stands in Ankara, Turkey’s capital, and was founded in 1949. Since then, faculties have spread across the nation—their character and focus often varying by region and reputation. By the early 2000s there were two dozen faculties, and by the close 2015 there were at least 86 opened, only 46 of which actually accommodated students.\(^{46}\) Judging from this recent surge in numbers, it is clear that as state-funded institutions, the current government has invested a lot into the project of theology faculties.\(^{47}\) Moreover, a new type of faculty is being opened—called an “İslami İlimler

\(^{43}\) Felix Körner gives an explanation of the word İlāhiyāt as used in the Turkish context, “İlāhiyāt’ appears in many classical works of theology. But in Arabic it has never meant ‘theology’ as the whole academic discipline.” It could be used to mean metaphysics, to designate questions concerning God as such, to mean rational theology (in paired distinction with *sam ḳyâṭ*, or the positive religious knowledge which is not accessible through reason alone but must be heard through tradition). *Rethinking Islam: Revisionist Koran Hermeneutics in Contemporary Turkish Theology* (Würzburg: Ergon Press, 2005), 55.

\(^{44}\) Körner, *Revisionist Koran Hermeneutics*, 55.

\(^{45}\) The word for theology in Farsi/Persian is *ilmāti*. See for instance the Theology Faculty of Tehran University: [http://ftis.ut.ac.ir/](http://ftis.ut.ac.ir/).

\(^{46}\) By 2013, according to an announcement of Raşit Küçük – head of the High Council for Religious Affairs the time – there were already 86 faculties. See “Türkiye’də kaç ilahiyyat fakültesi var?” [“How many Theology Faculties are there in Turkey?”], published Nov 5, 2013, [http://www.haber7.com/unce/1024883-turkiyede-kac-ilahiyyat-fakultesi-var](http://www.haber7.com/unce/1024883-turkiyede-kac-ilahiyyat-fakultesi-var) (accessed Nov 3, 2016). It seems that between 2013 and 2015 the number of theology faculties did not notably increase. However, Mevlüt Uyanık (see footnote 48) notes, a new type of faculty (Faculty of Islamic Sciences) was launched 2012–2013. Turkish theologians have described these new faculties as something like “seminaries.”

\(^{47}\) This growth in numbers has often meant the faculty are thinly spread.
“Fakültesi” or a “Faculty of Islamic Sciences.” With these developments in mind, state-driven change seems to be an ongoing factor in the landscape of Turkish Theology Faculties.

In short, politics and funding also play a role in the variety and quality of output. Though the question of state funding of these theologies is highly relevant, it cannot be addressed within the limited scope of this discussion.

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"Turkey is, as will be seen, a great blank on the Western map of Muslim exegesis."
– Felix Körner

The German scholar Felix Körner, SJ at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome has done extensive work on the subject culminating in two books relevant to our current discussion:

49 This was taken by the author Nov 20, 2015. Marmara Theology Faculty scholars Rahim Acar, Bilal Baş, and İsmail Taşpınar graciously offered their welcome, time and advice on this project.
50 Körner, Revisionist Koran Hermeneutics, 19.
Körner emphatically points to the Turkish faculties of theology as both *terra incognita* for Western scholarship and as a potentially fruitful field for theological cross-pollination and growth. In his enumeration of criteria suitable for his projected desideratum of revisionist “Koran Hermeneutics.” He explains:

Another criterion would be to look for places which offer (a.) good conditions for a reception of new philosophical approaches, perhaps from Western traditions of thought, into Muslims’ theology (b.) a fertile ground for new ideas to grow, and (c.) a climate conducive to a comparably open scholarly discourse. When scanning the map with this gauge, *Turkey* proves to be the primary destination of our expedition.52

To summarize the main thrust of his reasoning, the unique phenomenon implicated in Turkish theology faculties provides an academic landscape that is nearly *sui generis* in its embodied synthesis of Western philosophical methodology and its Muslim heritage. And as such, Körner views this synthesis in terms of an opportunity to approach the dilemma that his teacher Rotraud Wielandt identifies in contemporary Muslim quranic exegesis:

Wielandt assesses the development of Muslim Koran interpretation as stuck in a dilemma. Either the Koran is seen as a fully human product and thus at the mercy of historical critique; or it is totally from God, and historical analysis cannot provide any clues to its understanding.53

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51 See his faculty webpage: [http://www.sankt-georgen.de/lehrende/koerner.html](http://www.sankt-georgen.de/lehrende/koerner.html).
For Körner, finding a way out of this conundrum ought to prove easier for those within the bounds and training of the Turkish theological project. The reason for this lies in how the institution itself got started, its characteristic goals, Western influence, and continuing autonomous endeavors to approach theological and quranic studies at new and often pragmatic angles.

The People’s Party moved to establish the first Islamic Theological Faculty in Ankara in 1948, and it was formally opened in 1949. As Körner depicts, this new institution took root in an open intellectual space cleared by the abolitionment of the traditional Islamic educational system in 1924 and left fallow for nearly a quarter of a century. The faculty itself emerged from the wider bounds of Atatürk’s vision, concerning which Körner writes, “He [Atatürk] seems to have been able to distinguish between Islam as a sclerotic blockage against modernization, and Islam as a tradition able to evolve.” Thus, according to Körner, the founding of these new theological faculties, or ilâhiyât fakülteleri, represented a step in the direction of genuine innovation, a break with the past, with only a minor measure of continuity with earlier Ottoman efforts at educational reform. However, Körner’s reading risks waxing one-sided in the face of new scholarship on the contribution of late Ottoman intellectuals risks. For instance, Turkish theologian Mehmet Paçacı and sociologist Yasin Aktay argue that, “[t]he idea of a higher religious academy has its roots in the philosophy of the Ottoman era.” Along with his colleague Yasin Aktay, Paçacı goes so far as to claim, “[t]he Turkish Republic has nonetheless inherited much from its Ottoman predecessors, such as the religious tradition of the nation and,

54 Felix Körner, Revisionist Koran Hermeneutics, 50.
55 Felix Körner, Revisionist Koran Hermeneutics, 53.
56 Mehmet Paçacı and Yasin Aktay “75 Years of Higher Religious Education in Modern Turkey,” in The Muslim World vol. 89 (1999), 389. The same quote reappears without change in the (2006) version of the article.
quite paradoxically, so-called Westernization and modernization.” Paçacı and Aktay not only argue for religious continuity in terms of Islamic tradition, but also in terms of the Ottoman interest in modernization even in affairs of religion. In support of a narrative of greater continuity between state faculties and Ottoman past, Paçacı and Aktay point out that there had been a Turkish Faculty of Theology of Istanbul University, but it was abolished in 1933. Körner, by contrast, does note the existence of a previous Ottoman faculty of theology, founded in 1847, but dismisses it with the implication that the time was not yet ripe. I consider Turkish theology faculties to exist both in rupture (Körner) and in continuity (Paçacı and Aktay) with their Ottoman past.

Paçacı and Aktay’s account of the birth of Turkish theology faculties stresses continuity between Ottoman and Turkish identity, whereas Körner’s account emphasizes the rupture. Yet, what do Turkish faculties of theology officially make of themselves? The official website of the first and still foremost theology faculty still functioning in Turkey, the Theology Faculty of Ankara University, notes that the inception of a modern theology faculty came into being with the idea of founding a “modern” university. This was marked by the decision made in 1846 to open a “Dar’ül Fünûn,” or faculty of sciences (i.e. university) in Istanbul. The project continued along with major setbacks, until the faculty was shut down in 1871. However, in the 1900s a new faculty of sciences was opened in Istanbul—an institution which eventually offered religious and philosophical courses. Further, with the start of the Republican Era, a movement

57 Paçacı and Aktay, “75 Years of Higher Religious Education in Modern Turkey,” (2006), 122. This is a slightly updated version of the article.
59 Körner, “Turkish Theology Meets European Philosophy,” 806.
60 See the Ankara Divinity (i.e. Theology) Faculty official webpage under “tarihçe” (history), accessed 10/19/15, http://www.divinity.ankara.edu.tr/. All subsequent data in this section on courses offered, institutions opened and closed, and dates are taken from this page.
was made in 1924 to open a theology faculty in affiliation with the university in Istanbul. From 1924 to 1933, the first state theology faculty offered courses in history of religions, Islamic history, history of Islamic philosophy, metaphysics, sociology of religion, psychology of religion, history of Turkish religion, history of Islamic sects, history of \textit{kalām}, history of Islamic jurisprudence, history of Sufism, Arabic, ethics, and the history of philosophy. Even when the theology faculty was not kept open after 1933, courses on religion were taught in the literature department within the Institute of Islamic Sciences—history of \textit{kalām}, history of Sufism, Iranian literature, history of Islamic sects, and history of religions. A mere sixteen years after the closure of the first faculty, the present-day faculty of theology in Ankara was opened. Though Ankara marks the first of now many theology faculties across Turkey, it certainly did not appear out of the blue.

The unique intellectual currents at play in these theology faculties draw Körner’s scholarly attention. Here he sees the mark of secularism and Western thought combined with genuine theological and traditional engagement—an environment strikingly analogous to Western universities’ theology and religious studies departments yet nevertheless wonderfully distinct from its Western counterparts. Thus, Turkey serves as an opportunity for the development of a revisionist Qur’ān hermeneutics from “within.” This means quranic scholarship might well look to Turkey for novel responses to current sticking points in Muslim scholarly interpretation of the Qur’ān,\textsuperscript{61} for example the issue of how human agency and

\textsuperscript{61} In describing the optimal grounds for advances in Qur’ān hermeneutics, Körner details, “Another criterion would be to look for places which to offer (a.) good conditions for a reception of new philosophical approaches, perhaps from Western traditions of thought, into Muslims’ theology (b.) a fertile ground for new ideas to grow, and (c.) a climate conducive to a comparably open scholarly discourse. When scanning the map with this gauge, \textit{Turkey} proves to be the primary destination of our expedition.” \textit{Revisionist Koran Hermeneutics}, 47.
historicity apply to the Qur’ān as revelation sent from God. Importantly, in the scholarly
toolbox of Turkish scholars active in these theology faculties Körner finds the pervasive
influence of the renowned philosopher of interpretation Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002),
famous for his philosophical hermeneutics.

However, Körner’s interest in Turkish theology faculties remains relatively limited to
questions of hermeneutics and sacred text. Beyond this, even his interest in hermeneutical
questions leans heavily towards discussions that engage modern standards of historicity. The
discussion he refers to is internal debates on how Turkish theologians should make sense of the
historical and divine when interpreting the Qur’ān and the hadith tradition. Yet, focusing solely
on questions of hermeneutics may obscure the wider currents of engagement with European and
North American philosophical or religious trends.

**Recognizing Diversity Beyond the Dichotomy**

In making the case for studying the theological output of Turkish theological faculties, it
is paramount to clarify that academic theologians and faculties represent only one facet of a
complex, mutually formative context. Not only are academic theology faculties not wholly new
or unique in terms of their ties to Ottoman legacy, but in the present day they move and operate
in both a contested political arena and amid competing theological visions. Ignoring this wider
context risks producing strongly skewed analyses of the theological motivations and output of

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62 On this point Körner cites his mentor Rotraud Wielandt, “Wielandt assesses the development of Muslim Koran
interpretation as stuck in a dilemma. Either the Koran is seen as a fully human product and thus at the mercy of
historical critique; or it is totally from God…” *Revisionist Koran Hermeneutics*, 40.
63 In chapter 5, discussion will touch on a few direct references to Gadamer by a Turkish theologian (Alpyağil) in an
evaluative schema.
academic theologians. Such a bias can manifest itself in an overemphasis of the secular vs. the religious in Turkey, challenged now by many scholars; and it can also lead to mistaking minority opinions for majority ones. While it is by no means exhaustive, this section looks at the late Ottoman intellectuals, as well as influential theological currents in more recent Turkish history.

Late Ottoman Heritage—A Reclamation of Surprising Dimensions

Even in Körner’s analysis, which otherwise directly addresses Turkish theology faculties for their theological contributions, I identified a tendency to project the religious vs. secular dichotomy directly onto Turkey’s national timeline, neatly dividing modern, republican religious institutions from their Ottoman past. While this narrative has been the predominant one for some time, it has now increasingly become the case that scholars of Turkey and the late Ottoman Turkish Empire, as well as Turkish discourses of national identity appreciate the veins of continuity which stich together late Ottoman state and the modern Turkish Republic. As Silverstein aptly remarks, “[a] new generation of Islamic scholars and historians in Turkey are reconceptualizing the Turkish present’s relationship to the Ottoman and early republican past…”64 In particular, the work of Erik-Jan Zürcher, Şükrü Hanioglu, Christoph K. Neumann, Elizabeth B. Frierson, and others in a relatively recent volume, Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy (2005), has given a variety of Ottoman intellectual case studies and has also highlighted the work of modern Turkish intellectuals in order to shift the emphasis towards continuity between Ottoman past and republican present. Their work will be used in the following discussion to emphasis my own reading of Turkish theology faculties as entities in a complex dialogue that has roots in the late Ottoman history.

Just as Turkish theology faculties deal today with Western sources on skepticism, atheism, and other intellectual trends critical of religion, mid to late nineteenth-century Ottoman intellectuals too were no strangers to materialism, skepticism, and even outright atheism. Yet, instead of a portrait of late Ottoman intellectuals grappling with Western intellectual challenges on questions of religion, the dominant narrative up until recently was of a decadent, decidedly unmodern religious past from which the “modern” project of a secular Turkish Republic haply emerged. Examples of such a dated and dismissive dichotomy abound, where Mustafa Kemal Atatürk “set out to break the loyalty of the Turks…to outmoded Islamic institutions and habits, and he sought to replace that loyalty with nationalistic zeal and energy.” Rupture is emphasized; the secular state’s ties to its Ottoman intellectual heritage are neglected. Such a black and white narrative underplays the variety of interactions between science, European ideas, political/legal reform, and religion.

It is well known that Ottomans of the nineteenth century instigated major modernizing reforms. These started with education reforms under Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839) and were followed by the famous Tanzimat Period (1839-1876). Less well known is the fact that

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67 Despite relatively constant contact with Europe, an increased attention to Western European civilization coincided with a recognition of the military threat of Russia. One Turkish historian’s account put it this way: “The Ottoman Turks had numerous contacts with the new Western world. In fact, they were never out of contact with the West. They were aware of the rise of a new civilization, but they steadfastly remained aloof from Western developments because they were convinced of the superiority of their own system. It was only in the wave of doubt occasioned by certain events in the early eighteenth century that they began to realize that their assumptions were no longer absolute truths. They began to realize that they had been overwhelmed by a superior military power. The acknowledgement of defeat became the stimulus for the rise of a new attitude.” In Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (New York; NY: Routledge, 1998), 24. Halil Inalcik, by contrast, attributes the Ottoman recognition of “the superiority of the West” to a period of defeats in Hungary at the end of the seventeenth century.
Ottoman intellectuals imported European materialism into discussions among the educated elite—many of whom prepared much of the underlying ideology that facilitated the birth of the Turkish nation-state. As Özdalga puts it:

For a long time Turkish historians have under-estimated, even ignored, the importance of the Ottoman intellectual heritage…Instead of recognizing the multifaceted and vibrant atmosphere of late Ottoman society, its authoritarian and despotic character is noted, an image which well serves the purpose of forming a dark backdrop to the alleged ‘enlightened’ mentality of the republican era.68

But this image of late Ottoman intellectual society has been changing, both in English and Turkish scholarship. The more recent approaches see late Ottoman society as “a social order where a wide variety of ideas and streams of thought competed, where a great diversity of publications flourished, and where educational institutions of good standing developed fairly rapidly.”69

Further, as Zürcher argues, it makes more sense to see the late Ottoman discussions on reform as leading up to and facilitating the birth of the new republic, rather than in strict opposition to republican ideals. His portrait is one of significant continuity even amid rupture between Ottoman and Turkish identity. On this Zürcher writes:

Under the influence of the European academic orientalism and of Turkish intellectuals from the Russian Empire influenced by Ismail Gasprinskij’s Usul-u cedid, awareness of, and pride in, Turkishness as a distinct identity had been growing among the Ottoman ruling elite around the turn of the century, but for Ottoman Turkish intellectuals it was just one element in a complex identity in which being an Ottoman subject…and a Muslim were at least equally important.70

(1638-1699), resulting in first military and eventually administrative reform. See Halil İnalcık, *Turkey and Europe in History*, (İstanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 2006; 2008), 63.
69 Özdalga, Introduction in *Late Ottoman Society*, 2.
70 Erik-Jan Zürcher, “Ottoman Sources of Kemalist Thought,” in *Late Ottoman Society*, 19.
Even more noteworthy, some of the most surprising examples of late Ottoman intellectual diversity exhibit a profound interaction with European materialism, skepticism and scientific pursuit. For instance, figures like Beşir Fu’ad (1852-87), Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932), and Baha Tevfik (1884-1914) all contributed to Ottoman discussions on European materialism.\(^{71}\) In the central parts of the Ottoman Empire, the conflict between religion and science as an intense object of dispute was promoted through the spread of German materialist Büchner’s thought in the late 1880s.\(^{72}\) With the translation of Büchner into Arabic in 1884, many intellectuals had divided themselves into opposing camps over the question of evolutionary theory.\(^{73}\) But the debate in the Arab parts of the Ottoman Empire over evolution had started as early as 1876 via the journal *Maqtaṭaf*, where the debate tended to split into Arab Christian intellectuals’ defense of evolution and the Muslim *ulema*’s rejection of it.\(^{74}\)

This being said, debates on materialism and Darwin were far from the beginning. M. Şükrü Hanoğlu notes that three decades earlier, Scotsman Charles MacFarlane on his mid-century visit to the Ottoman Royal Medical Academy was shocked to see cadavers and autopsies, and even more shocked when he asked the medical students about the religious implications of autopsies, one of whom responded in French: “It’s not at Galata Saray that one must come and seek religion.”\(^{75}\)

Not only were there late Ottoman intellectuals who moved away from religion, but some actively promulgated the spread of scientific and scientistic ways of thinking.\(^{76}\) Abdullah Cevdet,

\(^{71}\) M. Şükrü Hanoğlu treats all three figures in “Blueprints for a Future Society: Late Ottoman materialists on science, religion, and art” in *Late Ottoman Society*.

\(^{72}\) Hanoğlu, “Blueprints for a Future Society,” 33.

\(^{73}\) Hanoğlu, “Blueprints,” 32.

\(^{74}\) Hanoğlu, “Blueprints,” 32-33.

\(^{75}\) Hanoğlu, “Blueprints,” 34.

\(^{76}\) Another example is Beşir Fu’ad.
a medical student in the latter half of nineteenth century, provides an intriguing example of conversion from religion to science—from a conservative religious education as a youth to an atheist within six months of starting his medical studies at the Galata Saray Royal Medical Academy. The conversion is visible from his poetry. Abdullah Cevdet moved from penning poems in praise of the Prophet to laments about the delusional nature of religion. Yet, despite his rejection of a religious worldview, his belief in science and his effort to translate European materialist thinkers remained grounded in aspects of Islamic tradition. Embracing what he perceived to be a sacred duty, he effectively islamicized his materialism through his “desire to follow the Prophetic ḥadīth requiring all Muslims to attain ‘wisdom and truth’.”

Of course, these materialist thinkers represent only one section of late Ottoman intellectuals. However, of significance here is that questions of science vs. religion, skepticism, materialism and atheism are by no means new topics of engagement for Turkish intellectuals. These are already part of Ottoman heritage. Further, the efforts of translating and engaging European intellectual trends in the late Ottoman period suggests a deeper continuity between Ottoman intellectual life and modern Turkish intellectual life. That is, active engagement with European intellectual trends is a hallmark of both Ottoman and modern Turkish thought. At the same time, the variety and range of perspectives in the late Ottoman period should not be underplayed. To read either late Ottoman intellectual history or modern Turkish thought through the polarized lens of religion vs. science or the sacred vs. the secular blurs the positive range of diversity in opinion.

77 Hanioğlu, “Blueprints,” 40-41. Here, Cevdet writes about the Prophet, “You are the bright stars that radiates in the ninth heaven of Islam,” and not long after beginning medical studies scrawls in French, “Religion, ce faux et ravissant rayon, Emané de cerveaux ivres d’illusion…”
78 Hanioğlu, “Blueprints,” 42.
Theology Faculties: Products of the Republic in Continuity with the Past

Given the intellectual engagement and diversity of late Ottoman intellectuals, I propose to read Turkish theological faculties as not merely new and unique products of a modernist rupture with an Ottoman past. Instead, Turkish theology faculties are products of the “modern” Republic in continuity with an Ottoman past—both in a historical sense, as well as in a constructed sense. Firstly, the fact that numerous academic theologians in Turkey today engage with scientific materialism, atheism, skepticism and European as well as North American philosophy is not altogether foreign to the late Ottoman intellectual landscape touched on above. Secondly, Turkish academics are looking more and more both to the Arab world and to their Ottoman past for new answers to the challenges of today—the work of a scholar and theologian like Mehmet Paçacı representing but one example.

Other Voices

Turkish theology faculties have received less scholarly attention than other manifestations of Islamic identity in Turkey. Before we continue the discussion on Turkish theology faculties and modernity, it is important to recognize that however diverse the various academic voices and various faculties may or may not be, there have been and continue to other Islamic voices in Turkey with the organization, funding and influence to make themselves heard internationally. Said Nursi and his followers as well as Fethullah Gülen and his movement represent a much better studied set of Islamic responses to modernity.

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79 Turkish scholars are increasingly looking to ground the modern Turkish theological identity in Ottoman past. Take for instance the Osmanlı Araştırmaları / Journal of Ottoman Studies jointly published by ISAM and 29 Mayıs University.
Said Nursi (1876-1960)

Said Nursi was an ethnically Kurdish Ottoman who witnessed the birth of the modern Turkish Republic while writing most of his life’s work, the *Risale-i Nur*, in prison. A major theme in his theological work is the Muslim identity in the face of modernity, or as Ibrahim M. Abu Rabi’ explains, “[his work] is an inquiry into why the modern Muslim world has fallen into a religious abyss, and why the “other,” that is to say, Europe, superseded the Muslim world in matters of science and civilization.”

His serious engagement with modernity as a committed and traditionally educated Muslim remains highly influential and widely read by Turks even to this day.

As Jesuit scholar Thomas Michel puts it “Said Nursi is probably the most influential Muslim thinker in Turkey in the 20th Century.” Not only was Nursi influential, but his efforts to reach out to other monotheistic religions preceded some of the major Christian developments in interreligious dialogue of last century. Said Nursi was calling for unity between Muslims and true Christians long before Vatican II called for increased understanding and cooperation between Muslims and Christians. In fact, Nursi sent one of the first legally printed copies of his magnum opus *Risale-i Nur* to Pope Pius XII ten years before the opening of Vatican II.

Importantly, Nursi was not wholly critical of modernity. Nursi saw modernity as both positive technological advancement and negative rupture from one’s religious and spiritual heritage. Humanity living in modern societies is essentially benumbed and blinded to the

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greater, more fulfilling spiritual reality beyond simple materialism and worldly comforts. With his eye on the potential for spiritual bankruptcy in a modern world, Nursi reached out to other faiths seeking greater solidarity, while also projecting Islam as the ultimate solution to the negative side effects of modernity. His legacy lives on in his readership and in his followers, members of the Nurcu Movement, who prioritize print readership over oral culture and value the spread of literacy and education. Turkish scholars also hold regular international conferences on the subject of Nursi’s legacy and its applicability to questions of pluralism, other religions and the challenges of modernity.

The Gülen Movement and Modernity

Nursi’s attitude of mixed reception vis-à-vis modernity is carried forth in a living figure, who, though never Nursi’s student, nonetheless took inspiration from him. One of the most common and controversial figures that comes up in discussions about religion and modernity in Turkey is Fethullah Gülen (b. 1941), founder of the now international Gülen Movement. Born in Erzurum, and imprisoned multiple times by the Turkish government, Fethullah Gülen is the leader of a now international Islamic movement. Since 1999 he has been at the center of his own

86 After the attempted coup on July 15, 2016, this name received additional press, as the AK party accused Gülen of orchestrating and encouraging the coup. Turkish theologians like Halis Şule Albayrak strongly condemned both the Gülen movement and the United States government for condoning him in an email through the Sociology of Islam listserv directed at Graham Fuller (Gencer’s emails: July 17, 22, 26, and 30 of 2016; Albayrak’s email: July 31, 2016). Thomas Michel, a Gülen scholar, who has written favorably of the movement, offered a response to these types of accusations against the Gülenists: “Why is Turkey Targeting Hizmet?” in the Commonweal Magazine, Oct. 11, 2016, https://www.commonwealmagazine.org. Michel does not foreclose on the possibility of Gülenist involvment in the coup, but he also stresses that at one time the AK Party and the Gülenists shared common goals and behaved as allies. However, evaluation of the failed July 15th coup in Turkey is beyond the scope of this project. While the coup and its aftermath are important and have undeniably effected the climate of Turkish theology faculties, I am neither qualified to render judgment on its perpetrators, nor do I wish to obfuscate the theological contributions of the scholars treated here with this recent political development.
community in Saylorsburg, PA. The Gülen Movement has grown from a frequently persecuted national movement to a diverse international network. In addition to works in Turkish, its members publish extensively in English and Arabic, and have founded Turkish schools in Central Asia and Africa. Gülen-inspired schools provide private education alternatives in various countries around the world. Numerous scholars have stressed the importance of the modern and traditional synthesis in Gülen and his followers, especially with regards to their international networks offering private education.

Thomas Michel describes the Gülen approach to education:

Whereas the earlier systems had been divisive and had resulted in the polarization of society into “secular” and “Islamic,” “modern” and “traditional,” “scientific” and “religious,” Gülen’s integrated approach to life enables Turkish people to preserve what is best and still valuable from the past and accept and make use of scientific and technological advances.

For many, Gülen and his followers represent a viable Muslim vision of modernity.

Regarding the question of modernity, Fethullah Gülen is critical of what he calls modernism, or the goal to modernize society at all costs—an ultimately superficial, destructive, and hollow goal. Instead of focusing on a critique modernity, Gülen de-emphasizes modernity as a category, speaking of civilization as the worthier goal.

Gülen himself also says of modernity:

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91 Michel, “Sufism and Modernity,” 351. I think the point of this contrast is to prioritize the existence of human culture and civilization prior to and beyond the frameworks provided by the still operative myth of modern progress.
Modern facilities can help to ‘modernize’ the outward appearance of life, but that does not amount to being civilized. Civilization is an atmosphere propitious for the development of man’s potentialities.\footnote{Fethullah Gülen, *Towards the Lost Paradise* (London: Truestar, 1996): 70. Cf. Michel, “Sufism and Modernity,” 352.}

For Gülen, it is not appropriate for Muslim societies to either unquestioningly chase after modernism or outright reject it—instead he proposes a middle path, or his own understanding of Islam.\footnote{Michel, “Sufism and Modernity,” 353.}

*There is More to the Picture*

While Said Nursi and Fethullah Gülen are crucial figures for understanding some of the major theological trends in Turkey, they by no means make up the entire discussion. Greater theological variety as well as more specific and sustained engagement with categories, concepts and figures associated with modernity can be found in the output of Turkish theology faculties.\footnote{Further, for the time being, Gülenist perspectives are no longer welcome in Turkish theology faculties.}

*What Does Modernity Have to Do with it?*

*Modernity?*

It has become overwhelmingly common to include the term “modernity” in both theological and sociological discussions today. As Brian Silverstein writes in *Islam and Modernity in Turkey*, “The term ‘modernity’ has taken on a fetish status, is often deployed as a sign of trendiness, and is in danger of referring to just about anything and therefore, of course, nothing.”\footnote{Brian Silverstein, *Islam and Modernity in Turkey*, 4. For his use and extended understanding of the concept of modernity see pages 4-5 of the same work.}

Limiting the discussion to literature on Turkey alone, the various uses and foils under which the term “modernity” serves could fuel long and circuitous discussions of questionable
worth. Even in broader discussions outside the Turkish context, “[m]odernity is often read through its least impressive, most trivializing offshoots.”\textsuperscript{96} The term modernity has become so popular in academic works on Turkey and religion that one might wonder if looking at religion in Turkey through such a lens trivializes the discussion. I argue that the category is useful, but only if the idea of modernity is taken critically and developed in discussion with the actual phenomena it is meant to explain. Further, instead of a merely explanatory category, in the context of Turkish theology, “modernity” is more helpful as a dialectical category. That is, various Turkish theologians have their own idea of what modernity entails, and it is more helpful to bring their definitions into the discussion, rather than simply take external definitions of modernity and rigidly apply them to Turkish discussions.\textsuperscript{97} The result is an ongoing dialectic, or back and forth, on what it means to respond to and take part in modernity.

For our current purposes, let us start with the following generalizations: Modernity in various contexts connotes technology, the supremacy of rationality over traditional authorities, capitalist economies, nation-states, democratic forms of government, a questionable West-other dynamic, secularism, globalization, homogenization and devaluing of local rhythms, and disenchantment. For many, the question of modernity calls primarily to mind the question of religion’s place in modernity; or as Brian Silverstein suggests, “religion is not merely one topic among many for people who see themselves as modern; it is a—indeed arguably the—key site at which definitions of modernity have been formulated.” For Silverstein, Turkey is precisely one


\textsuperscript{97} This said, the terms “modernity” and “tradition,” while understood differently by various Turkish theologians; nevertheless, often connote various polarities within the Turkish theological academy.
Accordingly, theological engagements with thinkers associated with the Enlightenment (in particular Baruch Spinoza, Blaise Pascal, René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, etc…), European Romanticism, nineteenth-century materialism, and modern hermeneutics (Friedrich Schleiermacher, Hans-Georg Gadamer, E.D. Hirsch Jr., etc…), or the scientific worldview would qualify as engagements with and responses to modernity. Also, theological discussions which assume or critically engage the vocabulary of modernity—science, skepticism, atheism, pluralism, globalization, etc…—should be counted as both responses to and products of modernity. While the fulcrum of such starting assumptions on modernity is still heavily anchored in recent European and North American intellectual history, this is merely a starting point open to development. The importance of engaging Turkish voices on modernity lies largely in the opportunity to rethink the category of modernity through a different set of perspectives and assumptions.

However problematic the category may be, modernity functions as much as a positive standard of judgment as it does a label of condemnation. As a positive standard, the term modernity stresses individual freedom—legally, ethically, aesthetically, etc… The modern subject’s right and curse is the freedom to self-actualize, to subscribe to any range of subjective truths, and to live out any number of values. The modern moral outlook is that “we ourselves are the sources and creators of the values by which we live.” In the words of sociologist Anthony

98 Silverstein, Islam and Modernity in Turkey, 10.
Giddens, “…modernity is vastly more dynamic than any previous type of social order.”

However, modernity can also be polarizing, reductive, and intolerant of ambiguity.

From a more philosophical rather than a strictly sociological or political angle, Charles Taylor provides a monumental account of the narrative of modernity. In his widely-read Sources of the Self, Taylor portrays modernity and the secular age as the troubled child of a destabilizing marriage of Enlightenment reason and the Romantic turn to individual feeling. For Taylor, the two horns of modernity are the “disengaged-instrumental” and the “Romantic-expressive”—the respective embodiments of Enlightenment and Romantic values. With the disenchantment of the modern world, in order to escape a mechanically deterministic reality, people turned inward and celebrated the inner world of feeling, yet this inner world grew more and more divorced from public realities and calls to greater shared meaning. Taylor boldly declares, “We are now in an age in which a publicly accessible cosmic order of meanings is an impossibility.” Instead of providing a bulwark against the dizzying advent of an industrial and technological era, this inner turn ultimately instigated a decentering of the self. However, the dizzying cornucopia of goods available to the decentered modern is not bad in and of itself—nor is any one good to be discarded if in an extreme form proves detrimental. On this Taylor argues the need to recognize “the multiplicity of goods” and the “conflicts and dilemmas they give rise to.” Thus, Taylor touches on the dangers of modernity’s singlemindedness—either in raising

101 This was translated recently into Turkish by the academic theologian couple Bilal Baş and Selma Aygül Baş as Benliğin Kaynakları: Modern Kimliği İnşası (Istanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2008). The author has personally met Bilal Baş at Marmara İlahiyat Fakültesi, where he generously offered me a copy of the monumental translation.
102 Taylor, Sources of the Self, 510-511.
103 Taylor, Sources, 512.
104 Taylor, Sources, 514.
one good above all others (like freedom\textsuperscript{105}) or in abandoning a good which in radicalized form brings harm (like benevolence\textsuperscript{106}). But what theorists like Taylor do not single out as a facet of modernity is its signature intolerance of ambiguity—a clear corollary of Enlightenment values which uphold universal perspectives, God’s eye views, and the homogeneity of human reason across time, individuals and cultures.

\textit{Ambiguity: The Canary in the Mineshaft}

German scholar of Islam Thomas Bauer challenges the fundamental assumption still held by many theorists of modernity and religion—that literalism in sacred texts stands in fundamental opposition to modernity.\textsuperscript{107} Rather, for Bauer, the “literal” interpretation is precisely modern in its rejection of polyvalence and ambiguity. Habermas, however, describes religious fundamentalism as an opponent of modernity: “a fundamentalism founded on a literal interpretation of holy scripture. This mindset, whether we encounter it in Islamic, Christian, Jewish, or Hindu form, clashes with fundamental convictions of modernity.”\textsuperscript{108} Yet, as Bauer carefully argues, fundamentalist interpretations of Islam are far removed from traditional Islam,

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\textsuperscript{105} Taylor clarifies that even post-modern thinkers are rather modern in their insistence on freedom as final good: “The very [post-modern] claim not to be oriented by a notion of the good is one which seems to me to be incredible…But it also reflects that the underlying ideal is some variant of that most invisible, because it is the most pervasive, of all modern goods, unconstrained freedom. To the extent that this kind of freedom is held up as the essence of ‘post-modernity’, as it is by Jean-François Lyotard, it shows this to be a prolongation of the least impressive side of modernism.” \textit{Sources}, 489.

\textsuperscript{106} Taylor writes, “…the demands of benevolence can exact a high cost in self-love and self-fulfillment, which may in the end require payment in self-destruction or even in violence.” \textit{Sources}, 518.

\textsuperscript{107} Bauer is certainly not to the first to challenge this. Since the popularity of the secularization hypothesis has waned, it has become more common for scholars to recognize religious and textual fundamentalism as a product of modernity rather than a living fossil of some earlier traditional and superstitious time.

in that the epistemological assumptions that drive their arguments are decidedly modern. Bauer
is not alone on this point. Turkish scholar of the Gülen Movement M. Hakan Yavuz writes:

…both Islamism and secularism are aspects of the same phenomenon (i.e., modernity). Even though they are historically not simultaneous, since secularism preceded and spawned its modern Islamist reaction, they eventually became intertwined through mutual interaction and conditioning each other.¹⁰⁹

Further, well-known scholar of religion and secularism José Casanova, in stressing the different contexts of secularization,¹¹⁰ brings light to the very modern character of many religions today. Casanova defines modern religions: “religions that are not only traditional survivals of residues from a pre-modern past but rather specifically products of modernity.”¹¹¹ Further, Casanova stresses the role non-Christian religions can play in forging their own understanding of secularism (and arguably by extension, modernity):

Others, particularly non-Western traditions, emboldened by modernity’s self-doubts, are able to reaffirm their own identity against the modern West. […] [T]heories of secularization and modernization should be open to the possibility that other religions may also play a role in institutionalizing their own particular patterns of secularization.¹¹²

In this light, modernization can be cast as a particular process of rationalization whereby ambiguity is not tolerated, not an inexorable development in universal human history.¹¹³ Bauer explains:

The process of bureaucratization and mechanization presses for unified standards and sees each ambiguity as disruption, and the efforts of computer science are pitted against

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¹¹⁰ José Casanova, Public Religions in the Modern World (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 25. For Casanova, different societies experience different dynamics of secularism, and this fact should not be ignored.
¹¹¹ Casanova, Public Religions, 26.
¹¹² Casanova, Public Religions, 234.
the recognition of the inevitability of ambiguity in order to refine its strategies of disambiguation as far as possible. In the Classical Islamic world ambiguity was accepted as an unavoidable component of existence, [a component] which has good and bad sides, and hence can and must be observed and bounded, but not totally wiped out; whereas in Western Modernity, a small ambiguity-friendly intellectual discourse coexists alongside a powerful main stream inimical to ambiguity. Precisely this component of modernization has led to considerable devastation in the Islamic world.114

For Bauer, the problem of modernity is not a question of traditional vs. modern, but a much more subtle play about what kinds of knowledge and thinking are really valuable. He writes:

It is not the Middle Ages and Modernity which stand in opposition, but rather the modern desire for clarity [i.e. unambiguousness] and the post-modern potential of the Islamic post-formative tradition.115

Of course, holding up Islamic intellectual trends to the standards of postmodernism is arguably no less reductive than trying to fit an Islamic understanding within the bounds of a popularized ‘modernist’ framework. Yet, if we can set aside the category of postmodernism and modernity for a moment, it may be worthwhile to dwell on the significance of how reigning cultural and intellectual standards play subtle roles in delimiting what counts as knowledge and, in particular, what counts as a defensible contribution to scholarly dialogue:

If classical [Qur’ān] commentators place several possible interpretations side by side, including the occasionally abstruse, without explanation, they are merely following this principle of the possibility of parallel truths. From the nineteenth century onward this principle was no longer understood in the West.116


115 Bauer, Ambiguität, 114: „Nicht Mittelalter und Moderne stehen einander gegenüber, sondern das moderne Beharren auf Eindeutigkeit und das postmoderne Potential der islamischen nachformativen Tradition."

116 Bauer, Ambiguität, 124: „Wenn klassische Kommentatoren mehrere Auslegungsmöglichkeiten, darunter gelegentlich auch relativ abstruse, kommentarlos nebeneinanderstellen, folgen sie damit ebenfalls nur diesem
If Bauer is right, this means that intellectual appreciation for certain ways of thinking and processing information was lost when the Islamic world imported European epistemological values and assumptions. Furthermore, according to Bauer, once Islamic discourse was put on the offensive by European critiques, the Islamic response to (in this case Western) modernity’s enmity towards ambiguity ended in rupture—that is, by adopting the same criteria for knowledge as the European critics of Islam, the earlier tolerance and sometimes celebration of ambiguity was not only no longer understood, but even seen by many Muslim intellectuals as a liability and an indication of decadence and decline.\textsuperscript{117} Such a portrait is corroborated by Wael Hallaq’s retelling of the history of Islamic Law—one that stresses the rupture of an entire system of (in this case legal) knowledge by forcing it to fit within Western legal frameworks.\textsuperscript{118}

For instance, Bauer sees the historicization of the sacred text, from a Muslim or non-Muslim perspective as extremely reductive, an apparent but deceptive way out—looking for a kernel amid historical context is very much what a modern resistance to ambiguity fosters.\textsuperscript{119}

Such an attitude contributes to the conversion of rich, ambiguous and multifaceted Islamic

\textsuperscript{117} Another possible example of this phenomenon is legal reform in Muslim countries like Egypt and the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. On Ottoman and Egyptian legal reforms of the nineteenth century, see chapter 4 in Wael B. Hallaq, \textit{Shari'a: Theory, Practice, Transformations} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2009). In Egypt of the 1860s, al-Ṭahṭāwī (1801-1873) and his students undertook the translation of French codes. By 1876 there existed mixed courts in Egypt and laws were even drafted first in French before being translated into Arabic. In the Ottoman Empire, the Humayun decree of 1856 gave non-Muslim minorities legal rights before the Ottoman state and the \textit{Mecelle} (formally codified Islamic law, i.e. civil code) effective as of 1877, though inclusive of sharia norms, also marked the rise of state authority above sharia.

\textsuperscript{118} See Wael B. Hallaq, \textit{Shari'a}. Throughout this work Hallaq endeavors to contrast of sharia law prior to colonialism and Western influence with a mutated and ruptured understanding of sharia that forms in the wake of such rupture. Hallaq argues fiqh was not a totalizing power/knowledge structure originally. But the story of sharia’s transition into modernity is one of rupture, entexting, and reduction, where both Islamic states and those who see sharia as “other” construct a disconnected remnant of the old fiqh tradition(s) along Foucauldian lines of power and totalizing discourse.

\textsuperscript{119} Bauer, \textit{Ambiguität}, 129.
intellectual heritage into set doctrines which must be made rational, unambiguous and defended at all costs. This Bauer sees as both modern and as a loss of the earlier richness of the tradition. Notably, this process of historicization is incidentally what characterizes Fazlur Rahman’s widely known method for reading the Qur’ān: the historical husk of the quranic milieu must be shucked off to arrive at a transcendent kernel that must then be repackaged to suit today’s needs and context. Rahman’s take on quranic historicity and his understanding of Gadamer are very much at play in Turkish theological debates on sacred text.120

Above, we touched on Fethullah Gülen and his movement’s widely known reputation for offering a lived, Muslim response to modernity. What does Gülen have to say about ambiguity? As Ismail Albayrak reads Gülen, “…only human beings are bound to muhkam [clear] and mutashābih [ambiguous]. God, however, knows everything in all its detail…According to Gülen, absolute ambiguity is not intended.”121 For Thomas Bauer, Gülen would rate as modern precisely because he approaches the Qur’ān through a lens that eschews divine ambiguity; whereas according to the traditional science of reading the Qur’ān, “God reckons with [the quranic] variations and divinely communicates them as such.”122 In the traditional reading of the Qur’ān, as Bauer argues, there is a positive value to ambiguity even regarding the variant readings of the

120 For instances, many of his works are translated into Turkish. Worthy of note, theology faculties still regularly carry works by Turkish scholars on Fazlur Rahman in their theology bookstores. Translations into Turkish include: Fazlur Rahman’s İslam [Islam], transç Mehmet Aydin and Mehmet Dağ (Ankara: Ankara Okulu); Ana Konularyla Kur’an [Major Themes of the Qur’an], trans. Alparslan Açıkgenç (Ankara: Ankara Okulu); İslam ve Çağdaşlık [Islam and Modernity], trans. M. Hayri Kirbaşoğlu (Ankara: Ankara Okulu); Tarih Boyunca İslami Metodoloji Sorunu [Islamic Methodology in History], trans. Salih Akdemir (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 1997); İslam’da İhya ve Reform [Revival and Reform in Islam], trans. Fehrullah Terkan (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2006). Works like F. Rahman’s İslam and Major Themes of the Qur’an have been available in translation so long that the original printing dates are no longer listed on the most recent printings.

121 İsmail Albayrak, “Fethullah Gülen’s Approach to Qur’anic Exegesis” in Mastering Knowledge in Modern Times, 23.

122 Bauer, Die Kultur der Ambiguität, 110-111. The original German reads, “Gott rechnet mit Varianten und offenbart sie gleich selbst.”
Qur’ān (not only the interpretations but variations in the actual text)—an ambiguity which, more often than not, scandalizes modern Islamic readings. After all, with its variant readings, its elliptical and concise style, a veritable sea of interpretations, the Qur’ān is the ambiguous text *par excellence*. Yet, in the pre-modern Islamic tradition, such a label vindicated rather than challenged the sacred status of the Qur’ān. It is, by contrast, today’s readings, including that of Gülen, which operate under a modern assumption that ambiguity is not a value or a quality of richness, but unscientific, representing an intellectual liability or fault.

**Conclusion**

In Taylor’s and Bauer’s treatment of what it means to be modern, clear theological implications abound. Though Taylor focuses on European intellectual history and Bauer looks at Islamic intellectual history, one trend is decidedly shared: discussions of modernity cannot be divorced from the theological baggage that has produced, accompanied and challenged such attitudes towards modernity. Theology, as much as philosophy, political theory, or technology has an important, defining role in how modernity comes to be defined. Finally, to better critically engage Turkish theological scholarship, it remains important to recognize both the deep continuity as well as rupture with the late Ottoman intellectual heritage that Turkish theology as a whole represents. Part and parcel of this recognition is the necessity for setting aside polarizing narratives of religion and secularism or rigid definitions of modernity.

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124 John Caputo has made a post-modern call for embracing ambiguity as an intellectual value, but this is certainly as Bauer notes, the less common position. See his “In Praise of Ambiguity” in *Ambiguity in the Western Mind* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2005), 15-34.
125 One interesting connection here is that between disenchantment and opposition to ambiguity. An ambiguous world is also an enchanted one—where one is not forced to settle on one mode of explanation or one narrative, but is allowed the magic of combining cause and genesis. It stands to note that Bauer’s hypothesis that modernity is linked to a high intolerance of ambiguity goes hand in hand with debates over ‘disenchantment.’
Turkish theologians have already been active in addressing and redefining discussions of modernity. They have plenty to say about modernity, as just a cursory listing of recent titles (in Turkish) suggest: Recep Alpyağıl’s *From Derrida to Caputo: Deconstruction and Religion*, Şaban Ali Düzgün’s *Religion and Believers in the Contemporary World*, İlhami Güler’s *Theology of Resistance* or *New Approaches to Religion*; Şinasi Gündüz’s *Global Problems and Religion*; Yaşar Nuri Öztürk’s *Deism: Belief that Recognizes Nothing Sacred except God, Reason, and Morals*; Burhanettin Tatar’s *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Authorial Intention: Gadamer vs. Hirsch*; and Zeki Özcan’s *Theological Hermeneutics*—to name a few.126

There are also other academic writers who have joined in on this discussion—some outside the academy proper and affiliated with the Gülen Movement (Ali Bulaç, *Religion and Modernism*127), as well as other voices that overlap with theological discussions in Turkish sociology, literature and philosophy departments (Caner Taslaman, *Modern Science, Philosophy and God*; Tülin Bumin, *Disputed Modernity: Descartes and Spinoza*).128 To emphasize the crossover between Turkish theology and these related disciplines, it should be noted that there are also scholars trained in Turkish theology faculties, who have done graduate work in Europe.

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127 The Turkish original: *Din ve Modernizm*, 6th edition (İstanbul: Çıra Basın Yayın, 2012).

128 Again, the Turkish publications are as follows: Caner Taslaman, *Modern Bilim Felsefe ve Tanrı* (İstanbul: İstanbul Yayınevi, 2015); Tülin Bumin, *Tartışılan Modernlik: Descartes ve Spinoza* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1996; 2015).
or North America and return to find their place in philosophy, sociology or literature departments. ¹²⁹

In particular it may be fruitful to draw from a hermeneutic of ambiguity tolerance/intolerance in judging how much Turkish theologians are both responding to modernity and themselves a product of modernity. Rather than letting inquiries of the category of modernity be reduced to oversimplified categories of the secular and religious, angling from subtler values of what sort of knowledge counts could add depth and new dynamics to already over-hashed discussions. Moreover, looking to the understudied theological output of Turkish theology faculties, we find a range of engagements with other religions, European thinkers, science, and categories associated with discussions on modernity.

Finally, with Körner, I signal the importance of engaging and understanding Turkish theological discussions—but for a broader purpose than Qur’ān hermeneutics. In my analysis, Turkish theology faculties are products of modernity in disputed continuity with their past, and because of this dynamic relationship offer a rich resource for looking at the role of religion in modernity through a new lens. Not only that, but Turkish theology faculties are a crucial component to understanding the complex web of theological currents in Turkey. Thus, engaging their theological output could not only add to the understanding of religion’s role in Turkey but also challenge old perspectives on what it means to be religious and modern.

¹²⁹ For instance, see the work of Adnan Aslan, Religious Pluralism, Atheism and the Perennialist School: A Critical Approach and Mehmet Bayrakdar, Pascal’s Wager: Betting on the Afterlife According to Ali, Ghazali and Pascal. For more on these two authors, see Chapter Six, which includes edited sections from Taraneh Wilkinson, “Moderation and Ghazali in Turkey: Responses to Skepticism, Modernity and Pluralism,” The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences 32:3 (2015): 29-43. The titles in Turkish are: Adnan Aslan, Dini Çoğulculuk, Ateizm ve Geleneksel Ekol: Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım (İstanbul: İSAM, 2010) and Mehmet Bayrakdar, Pascal Oyunu: Hz. Ali Gazzâlî ve Pascal’a Göre Âhiret Zarb Atmak (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2013).
CHAPTER TWO

Gender Ontology in the work of Barbarosoğlu and Tuksal: Two Takes on Gender and Islam in Turkey

In the preceding chapter, I argued for the value of Turkish responses to modernity, claiming that this value lies in part due to the complex perspective which Turkish theology can offer to discussions of modernity. We now turn to specific examples of Turkish theology’s complex engagement. The present section, comprised of this chapter and the next, looks at how Turkish discussions of gender manifest a complex and at times creatively generative relationship to multiple authoritative traditions.

It is perhaps a truism to say that questions of gender are modern questions. Yet, with the question of gender comes the added question of essence or ontology. Is gender an ontological reality (Luce Irigaray\textsuperscript{130}) or a social construct (Judith Butler\textsuperscript{131})? What may not be quite as obvious is that critically turning an eye to essence or ontology is also a modern phenomenon. This is certainly true in the context of Western theology, with watershed markers such as Ludwig Feuerbach’s \textit{The Essence of Christianity} (1841) and later Ernst Troeltsch’s “What Does ‘The Essence of Christianity’ Mean?” (1903). Further, with the rise of feminist discourse and the emergence of feminist theology in the 1960s, the question of essence has taken on new spins,

\textsuperscript{130} Some argue it is a misreading to label Luce Irigaray a gender essentialist, however, she does insist on the “difference” between men and women and criticizes other feminist authors for overemphasizing equality and sameness. See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Feminist Theology,” \textit{Modern Christian Thought: The Twentieth Century}, eds. Livingston et al. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), especially pages 433-437.

\textsuperscript{131} See, for instance, Judith Butler’s \textit{Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity} (New York: Routledge, 2006). This work originally appeared in 1990. The philosopher J. Butler is a widely-known for arguing that gender is socially constructed in this work and elsewhere. In \textit{Gender Trouble}, Butler states, “the ‘being’ of gender is an effect, an object of a genealogical investigation that maps out the political parameters of its construction in the mode of ontology,” 45.
where terms like “sameness” and “difference” carry charged meanings. Of course, assigning an ontological status to women’s so-called nature is nothing modern. Modern, however, is the conscious attempt to critique and renegotiate what it means to be a woman, including positions for or against any essential or ontological identity. In this light, a discussion of the ontological status of gender provides a potential bridge between diverse discussions in feminist studies as well as Muslim women thinkers on gender. Yet, to cross this bridge requires a shift in starting perspective. Instead of beginning with the question of whether gender is an ontological reality, we can instead ask whether the fitra, or original human nature, is gendered. As such, this chapter constitutes an ontology of woman, setting the stage for the following chapter’s presentation of a quranic hermeneutics of relationality.

What is fitra, and why would people argue as to its gender? Fitra is a key concept in Islamic tradition and the term also appears in the Qurʾān. It can be translated as nature or natural disposition and it refers to the pristine state of a human soul before its original Muslim nature is corrupted by sects, delusions, and false beliefs. Let us open the discussion with two fundamental verses from the Qurʾān to set the stage for this analysis of fitra. In the Qurʾān most appearances of the root ʾ-f-t-r are as verbs or participles; while the singular noun designating “nature” appears only once. Q 30: 30 states:

So as a man of pure faith, stand firm and true in your devotion to the religion. This is the natural disposition [fitrat] God instilled in mankind—there is no altering God’s creation—and this is the right religion, though most people do not realize it.132

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132 Translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, The Qurʾān: A new translation (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, 2008). All subsequent Qurʾān citations use the same translation unless otherwise specified. Since this chapter and the next focus heavily on gender readings of the Qurʾān, I have put quranic verse notations in bold, as is sometimes done.
This is the only instance of *fitra* used as a singular noun in the Qur’ān. Yet, there is another word which refers to original human nature—*-nafs* or soul—that is central to debates on the essence of gender in Islam. Q 4:1 declares:

…be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single soul [*nafs*], and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide…

While *fitra* is used in the Qur’ān to refer to natural religious disposition, another word, “*nafs,*” or self/soul, is used in conjunction with the creation of the sexes. In discussions on gender in Islam the two concepts often get blurred together. The question of *fitra*’s gendering becomes a question of whether and how the original *nafs,* or human soul, was gendered in its original state.

In an attempt to span sociological, traditional and hermeneutical analyses of gender, I ask the question: Is the primal human nature (*fitra*) gendered? If so, how and why? How an author responds to this question can reveal a wealth of information. Instead of asking in a “Western” context whether gender is constructed or ontological—that is, an accidental attribute of society or a fundamental essence that transcends physicality—I suggest we pose the question in Islamic categories of *fitra.* To this end, I present three Turkish scholars with an analysis of their interpretation and assumptions concerning *fitra.* I treat the first two figures in the present chapter and the final figure in the next chapter. The present chapter begins with a discussion of the Islamic concept of *fitra* and subsequently unfolds in four sections. In the first and second sections, I offer some broader context for discussion of gender in Islam outside of Turkey followed by a brief treatment of the question of gender within Turkey. In the third section, I argue Fatma Barbarosoğlu clearly assumes a gendered male and female *fitra.* Sociologically

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133 “Western” is admittedly a problematic but still widely used term. It will be used throughout to refer loosely to European and North American intellectual tradition/scholarship. I have kept the designation, in large part, because it is used so frequently by Turkish scholars themselves.
trained, her positions are a mixture of scholarship and personal reflection. In the final section, I argue Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal resists the idea of a gendered fitra. She does this through an analysis of prophetic traditions. This inquiry will continue in the following chapter with an analysis of a lesser known Turkish scholar. Hafsa Fidan embraces a relationally gendered fitra, which reflects ambivalence as well as openness for constructive theology from the discipline of quranic hermeneutics.

The present analysis frames the question of equality in terms of fitra, approached by each of the three scholars from a distinct angle. The choice of fitra as an analytical category instead of ontology sets these scholars within an Islamic framework, while simultaneously drawing together sociological, traditional and hermeneutical discourses. This framework helps organize these three figures based on whether they argue for a gendered or non-gendered original human nature.

The body of this chapter will divide into two major sections, each focusing on a single author. Before analyzing Barbarasoğlu and Tuksal, I will first provide some relevant background on discussions of gender in Islam outside of Turkey as well as some important non-theological context for the question of gender in Turkey.

**Beyond Turkey: Quranic Hermeneutics of Equality**

As scholar of religion Kecia Ali notes, “[f]eminist or gender-conscious interpretation of the Qur’an” is “a discipline still in its infancy despite some paradigm altering scholarship.”

Yet despite the newness of the discipline, some patterns can readily be identified. In debates on

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gender equality and the Qur’ān, it has become common to criticize the traditional readings of the sacred text. Self-identified Islamic feminists or simply gender-conscious Muslim scholars often accuse traditional commentators of overlaying patriarchal biases into and onto the Qur’ān.\(^{135}\) In this new schema, the sacred text receives unproblematic—even egalitarian—status, whereas the traditional commentaries on the text present the primary source of gender inequality. For example, Pakistani scholar Asma Barlas, presently at Ithaca College, vindicates an increasingly egalitarian appropriation of the sacred text. She describes the liberating endeavor to read “behind” and “in front” of the text in a way that shows the God of the Qur’ān is above (1) sexual affinity with men and (2) sexual hatred of women. Yet for Barlas this liberating endeavor is hindered by the structure of a male-dominated religious authority.\(^{136}\) Another example is the work of American scholar and controversial imam Amina Wadud, who uses the concept of tawḥīd, or divine unity, to argue in a fashion similar to Barlas that God is beyond gender distinctions.\(^{137}\) Both Wadud and Barlas appeal to a God beyond gender as a hermeneutic key for reading gender equality into the text; it is not the Qur’ān which is problematic, but the patriarchal readings of the Qur’ān which are to blame.\(^{138}\) As long as the pious reader disregards traditional patriarchal readings and instead approaches the sacred text with the appropriate hermeneutic

\(^{135}\) Labels of Islamic feminism and various self-identifications of gender-conscious Muslim scholars are a complex, evolving, and sometimes controversial topic of discussion. This is a discussion outside the purview of the present chapter.


\(^{137}\) Wadud writes, “The tawhidic paradigm then acts as a basic theoretical principle for removing gender asymmetry, which is a kind of satanic logic or shirk, positing priority or superiority to men. Instead, women and men must occupy a relationship of horizontal reciprocity, maintaining the highest place for God in His/Her/Its uniqueness.” In her Forward to “Engaging Tawhid in Islam and Feminism,” The International Feminist Journal of Politics 10:4 (2008), 437.

\(^{138}\) On this Barlas explicitly writes that she wants to claim “that the Qur’ān is egalitarian and antipatriarchal.” “Believing Women” in Islam, 5.
key—in this case, a recognition that God is beyond gender discrimination—scholars like Barlas and Wadud hold the sacred text tends to discourage gender discrimination rather than promulgate it.

Some scholars criticize these idealist readings of gender equality into the Qur’ān. For instance, Karen Bauer, a quranic scholar active at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, asserts that the attempt to read all verses of the Qur’ān as espousing gender equality necessitates a selective reading of the text. Bauer does not condemn the idea that verses which support gender equality bear greater hermeneutic weight than less egalitarian verses. She merely urges for comprehensiveness over selective idealism as a standard for academic approaches to the text. 139

In addition to debates on the divine relationship to gender, we can also ask how gender relates to God’s plan for humanity. It is easy enough to argue that God is beyond gender, but does God will women’s subordination to men? In other words, is subordination based on gender part of the divine plan, or is it a human construct? Kecia Ali, a scholar of gender and Islam at Boston University writes:

Male-female relations embody both norms of ultimate sameness and earthly differentiation. One common line of argument suggests that while men and women are ontologically equal as human creations, they are not meant to be socially equal in the life of this world. Revelation is seen to justify social differentiation, either because of an assumed male superiority or, in the twentieth century, a more palatable view of male and female complementarity. 140

Ali’s observation rests on a distinction she makes between equality and equivalence. To be equal in terms of status and dignity does not necessarily mean to be identical or equivalent in makeup or aptitude. Muslims (and non-Muslims) frequently affirm equality without equivalence, arguing

for equal essential value without equivalent roles or rights between the genders. The potential downside of this distinction is that affirming essential equality without equivalence may easily serve to mask and even reinforce social inequality between genders.

Like Karen Bauer, Kecia Ali also addresses the claims of Barlas and others who critique the tendency to project male-centered readings onto the Qur’ān, while at the same time projecting their own egalitarian views onto the Qur’ān:

Modern scholarship on the Qur’ān has rightly pointed out serious oversimplifications and distortions in the commentarial tradition, where commentators’ own assumptions about female inferiority and male supremacy have led to seriously flawed exegeses of particular verses. Yet, scholars intent on reform have at times committed the same error of allowing their own presuppositions to color their interpretations of the Qur’ān to the extent that they fail to consider other possibly legitimate readings. It is not enough to simply posit that “the Qur’ān is egalitarian and antipatriarchal,” and to blame interpretations that deviate from that perspective entirely on “misreadings.”

Ali does not assume egalitarian readings should be automatically assumed; instead they too must stand up to scrutiny. Her most intriguing move, perhaps, is her suggestion of the limitation of the Qur’ān itself, at least in its earthly form: “It is, and can only ever be, a pale shadow of the ultimate Reality.” This move goes beyond criticism of tradition directly to criticism of the contingent aspects of revelation, representing a less common and more radical approach.

While these trends may be generally applicable to some theological work on gender and Islam in Turkey, the situation in Turkey also differs. To better elucidate the specific context, the following subsection briefly turns to the question of women and religion in Turkey. The discussion then turns directly to the specific contributions Turkish scholars Barbarasoğlu and Tuksal. And although both thinkers exhibit a complex relation with concepts associated with the

Western tradition; I will argue that Barbarosoğlu works within a rigid gender binary, whereas Tuksal avoids this binary by stressing God’s recognition of common humanity beyond distinction of gender.

**Women and Religion in Turkey**

Much in the manner of Moroccan scholar Fatima Mernissi’s famous depiction of the infidel without and the woman within,\(^\text{143}\) the image of Turkish women has become a battleground for a dichotomous gendered identity. At once, protector of tradition and also portent of its demise, a woman represents both the stability of traditional values and a potential source of *fitna*, or social disruption and chaos.\(^\text{144}\) In the particular case Turkey, there is an additional edge to this dichotomy. For the secularists, the Muslim woman has represented the source of *fitna*, the secular woman the protector of valued republican tradition. For those supporting a Muslim identity of state, the Kemalist ideal of the feminine embodies *fitna*, while the pious and veiled Muslim woman bears the standard of sacred tradition. Even if this dichotomy proves an oversimplification, Turkish scholar Nilüfer Göle has insisted that, far from being derivative, this national gender battle poses nothing less than a central question to the Islamist movement in Turkey.\(^\text{145}\) Central as such a question may be, it can also serve (especially in the context of women’s dress and veiling) to impede the development of an authentic feminist discourse in

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Turkey—reducing discourse to static categories such as “modern” vs. “traditional.” Such debates merely enhance concrete modes of control over female sexuality.

There is an additional issue when it comes to speaking of an authentic feminist discourse in a Muslim context in Turkey, however. Despite the occasional use of the term feminism in Islamic discourse outside of Turkey, least in Islamic contexts, the word “feminist” within Turkey remains a negatively colored one. Turkish sociologist İpek Merçil relates the history of the relationship between Islam and feminism in Turkey. As she recounts, in the late 1980s, Muslim women wearing headscarves increased their visibility in public spaces, and this increase in visibility prompted criticism and even labels of “feminism” and “modernism.” It was only in the late 1980s and early 1990s that the terms Islam and feminism even occurred together. However, the two terms never really converged. Popular novels and short stories with Muslim themes and values indirectly engaged and critiqued a perceived feminist other. In popular Islamic portrayals, feminism has been associated with spiritual death or in other instances a reaction to greater Western oppression which has no analog in Muslim history. Instead of a radical feminist reaction in the West, popular Muslim voices argue that the needs of women in Muslim societies include balance and respect of their nature and contribution in the domicile and in child care, sometimes going as far to claim that only a Muslim society can truly provide

147 Kadioğlu, “Women’s Subordination in Turkey,” 647.
150 Merçil, “İslam and Feminism,” 106.
151 Merçil, “İslam and Feminism,” 107.
152 Merçil, “İslam and Feminism,” 108.
justice to women.¹⁵³ Further, for women to claim rights to their bodies, as is common in feminist discourse on reproductive rights elsewhere, is seen as a blatant denial to God’s right to all that pious Muslim women are.¹⁵⁴ And for those who try to label vocal Muslim women as feminist, the cry may sound something like this: “As soon as we do something in line with Islam, they label us feminists. Are feminists concerned about [following] Islam?”¹⁵⁵ In short, the two terms, feminism and Islam, are generally understood to be fundamentally at odds. As a result, it is uncommon to come across someone referring to herself as an Islamic feminist in Turkey.¹⁵⁶

Of the three major authors examined here and in the next chapter, I will argue two resist such sterile binaries. Barbarosoğlu upholds a rigid gender binary and does not challenge the binary of feminism vs. Islam. Yet, even Barbarosoğlu redefines Western terms and discussions to establish her own authority as a critical Muslim. Tuksal, unlike Barbarosoğlu, challenges the gender binary by minimizing it and positively incorporates discourse from feminism within a traditionally grounded Islamic framework. Finally, I will argue in the next chapter that Fidan goes the furthest in creatively rethinking gender binaries and in integrating Islamic and Western discussions.

¹⁵⁴ Merçil, “Islam and Feminism,” 111.
Fatma K. Barbarosoğlu\textsuperscript{157} (b. 1962) is a sociologist who finished a Bachelor’s (1984) and Master’s degree (1987) in philosophy in the Faculty of Literature and then a Doctorate in Social Science at Istanbul University. Her Master’s thesis was an evaluation of Sufi Education and her Doctoral thesis was entitled, “The Relationship of Mentality and Fashion in the Process of Modernization.”\textsuperscript{160} The latter was published in 1995 through İz Yayncılık, under the title

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\columnwidth]{image}
\caption{Fatma K. Barbarosoğlu.\textsuperscript{158}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{157} This section will draw heavily from Fatma Barbarosoğlu, \textit{Sözüm Söz [My Word is Word]} (Istanbul: Profil Yayncılık, 2012). Pages numbers cited in parenthesis throughout this section refer to this work.

\textsuperscript{158} Image available at \url{http://islamianaliz.com/uploads/haberler/7G66B2et3d.png} (accessed 2/13/16) and was taken from islamianaliz.com, \url{http://islamianaliz.com/haber/fatma-barbarosoglu-en-buyuk-hayali-%E2%80%98evlenmekten-ziyade-%E2%80%98gelin-olmak olanlari-yazdi-24027}.

\textsuperscript{159} She was recommended to me strongly by some theologians at Marmara University, where many of her works can be purchased in their faculty bookstore.

\textsuperscript{160} Original Doctoral Thesis Title: “Modernleşme Sürecinde Moda-Zihniyet İlişkisi.” Explicit data on all the details of her earlier academic career is difficult to find. Since she did not complete any of her theses in theology faculties, I cannot search her thesis in the ISAM library database. The Instanbul University thesis catalogue online, as far as I understand, does not go back to 1990s. Bios of her on popular Turkish media online have not proved forthcoming in details either.
While she did not continue a teaching career in the academic world after her doctorate, she nevertheless enjoys wide readership by popular and academic audiences. During a time when it was not possible to wear the veil and teach at a university in Turkey, Barbarosoğlu left academia physically, but not entirely in spirit. She continued to write—mostly for popular magazines on sociological and religious topics. More importantly, she became an important novelist and general author whose novels featured Muslim perspectives. Her choice to be veiled and to have a high profile has inspired many practicing Muslims in Turkey. In addition to popular writings, she has recently worked to interview and document the lives of pious women from the earlier years of the Turkish Republic.

Given her importance and impact on students of Turkish theology, I shall look at one of her more popular non-fiction works, My Word is Word. This work, which is a collection of essays and interviews produced throughout her career, contains a broad and consistent portrait of her appraisals and criticisms of modernity’s impact of Muslim identity—especially for pious Muslims in Turkey.

161 Barbarosoğlu, Moda ve Zihniyet (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1995).
163 The veil ban at universities was only lifted October of 2013. For media coverage on this event, see Roff Smith, “Why Turkey Lifted its Ban on the Headscarf,” in National Geographic, 10/12/2013, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/10/131011-hijab-ban-turkey-islamic-headscarf-ataturk/.
165 See also her Cumhuriyet’in Dindar Kadınları [Pious Women of the Republic] (İstanbul: Profile Yayıncılık, 2009; 2011).
166 Fatma Barbarosoğlu, Sözüm Söz (İstanbul: Profil Yayıncılık, 2012).
women in Turkey. While her main thesis addresses Islam and modernity, I will argue her response to modernity presupposes a clear sense of gendered fitra, or original human nature. In particular, her negative ambivalence to modernity (which is not outright condemnation) has some of its roots in the assumption that a modern lifestyle is fundamentally a threat to male and female fitras.

Fashion is Modern and Totalitarian

Barbarosoğlu, begins My Word is Word with a sociological analysis of the role of fashion in society and its subtle authority, and then turns to make a theological claim that the core values of Islam are entirely opposed to a life lived by the dictates of fashion. But why is fashion such an important concept for her response to modernity? Well, for Barbarosoğlu, fashion’s existence is indebted to modernity (27); historically speaking, fashion came into being with industrialization and globalization. Symbolically, fashion embodies modernity’s blind spot, its paradoxical nature. For though modernity’s banner may be criticism and individual freedom, fashion represents one authority which pervades the modern world virtually free from criticism (27-28).

As Barbarosoğlu explains, individualism (bireycilik) is a specifically modern thing (15). As I understand her argument, pre-consumerist cultures experienced a more stable relationship between garments and social identity. By contrast, a hallmark of modern culture is the frenzied consumerist behavior focused on external image and superficial consumption. Due to this, the fashion industry driving mass consumption has even affected Islamic clothing styles, turning

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167 Fashion (moda) is not the same as style (tarz). Fashion comes in styles, but a style is not necessarily in fashion (23). For Barbarosoğlu, the word fashion, “moda” in Turkish, carries etymological as well as sociological ties to modernity.
pious dress into another consumer brand or trendy image. In this context, modern individualism is marked by a certain irony. Fashion is modern and so is individualism, yet fashion actually inhibits the independent and integrated development of the individual person. In short, the authority of fashion highlights a modern paradox: Moderns are individuals untethered by traditional authority yet still bound by the unquestioned authority of fashion. In order to escape the tyranny of fashion, a person must be able to trust her own voice and make independent choices (22)—they must, in other words, resist the tyranny of fashion. For, fashion’s most dangerous aspect is that it destroys a person’s ability to critically contemplate (akletmek) (22). That is, fashion encourages mindless consumption and overemphasizes superficial realities. As she puts it, “Modern humans are the victims of the fetish for novelty” (24). People become victims of the next hot fad. Where fashion reigns, the incessantly new and inane proves an unquestioned cultural authority. In short, the message undergirding much of her work is that the link between fashion and modernity correlates to a dissolution of any profound religious and ethical consideration—a dissolution which she treats in her analysis of both secular and “Islamic” fashion (25).

Whereas many feminists take up a critique of systemic patriarchy or kieriarchy, Barbarosoğlu sets up a different target. Instead of referring to patriarchy, she coins her own term, “fashionarchy” (moda-erkillik), and so doing simultaneously implying a critical attitude toward liberalism and feminism (104). In criticizing fashion, she does not criticize a sense of personal style, or even the existence of explicitly Islamic styles of dress (28). What she sees as problematic is an Islamized brand of fashion. She opposes Islamic fashion, because fashion in its

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168 Original Turkish: “Modern insan, yenilik fetişinin kurbani.”
169 When asked, she asserts that Islam is not patriarchal (39).
nature is fundamentally opposed to the dynamics and values of Islam (29). Instead of being modest and avoiding waste, Muslim victims of fashion give in to vanity and excess. By marketing a brand of Islamic fashion, modern Muslims are tricked into confusing piety with fashion. Far from being a wearable brand, she asserts piety is not something that can shown; rather, it is something that must be lived (53).

For Barbarosoğlu, Islamic principles are incompatible with the law of supply and demand. Fashion, she opines, is a relatively recent phenomenon connected to industrialization and globalization, which has stripped away local values and identities. This stripping away of local identity started with the Industrial Revolution, when women entered the work place and started dressing more like men.\textsuperscript{170} This shift in women’s role in society effected fashion; with this revolution in gender and clothing, society lost the fabric of its language, literally (31). In the wake of globalization she depicts the stark loss of identity that has followed, a portrait of rupture which cannot be repaired simply by grabbing at threads of an idealized past. She claims:

A society with a decimated [collective] memory cannot have a clothing style or an architectural style. Turning back [to the past] is not enough to create a [sense of] style (32).\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{170} Barbarosoğlu does not go into history details at this point in the discussion. However, to note, the Ottoman empire was increasingly effected by industrialization and the spread of European capitalism. In 1838, the Ottomans struck a history trade agreement with Great Britain. Also, by the 1830s the first steam-powered factories were popping up in the empire. With this, the industrial textile industry in Turkey came into existence. The opening of new factories increased until the 1850s. Mehmet Genç, “Reform Sürecinde Devlet ve Ekonomi: Osmanlı İktisadi Dünyası Görüşünde Değişmeler” [“State and Economy in the Period of Reform: Changes in the Perspective of the Ottoman Economic World”], in Osmanlı Geçişi ve Bugünün Türkiye’si [The Ottoman Past and Turkey Today], ed. Kemal H. Karp (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004), 300-302.

\textsuperscript{171} For another view, Donald Quataert challenges the decline theory of late nineteenth-century Ottoman industry, arguing that the Ottoman loss of buying power in the 1873-1896 depression stimulated Ottoman production despite the apparent paucity of mechanized factories. He notes the emergence of mechanized Ottoman spinning mills in the late nineteenth century and Ottoman yarn production reached its peak in the first quarter of the twentieth century along with a general increase in Ottoman cloth production. Quataert, “Ottoman Manufacturing in the Nineteenth Century,” in Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, 1500-1950, ed. Donald Quataert (Albany: SUNY, 1994).

\textsuperscript{171} Original Turkish: “Hafızası yitik bir toplumun, ne giyim tarzı olabilir, ne mimari tarzı olabilir. Geriye dönmek, tarzı oluşturamayın yetemiyor.”
In this loss, Barbarosoğlu is especially sensitive to the plights of vulnerable rural Muslim women. Not only are they stripped of their identity, but they are also made a centerpiece for political ideology and consumerist fashion propaganda. This means that, depending on where one looks, the effects of modernity in the Muslim world may vary significantly (46). While many see globalization and its accompanying emphasis on pluralism as positive effects of modernity, Barbarosoğlu expresses concern that it is fashionable to emphasize a superficial plurality which ultimately ignores the various contexts of vulnerable groups. In short, she argues that hype about pluralism is both superficial and detrimental to actual local diversity (43). Local identity does not need to be in opposition to globalization, but she does express concerns that pluralism is not quite as positive as scholars like to imply (44). Significantly, for her, pluralism connotes the potentially negative impacts of globalization rather than fancy philosophical ideals. Even if there is no escape from modernity, there exists the possibility to minimize the negative impact on rural women. To minimize such negative impact, it is important to recognize that women are a prime target of consumerist culture (44)—especially less educated, rural, Muslim women. These are the women whose piety is most likely to be swayed and contorted by fashion, including Islamic varieties.

To better understand the context of her account it is important to keep in mind that the veil, though discouraged since the founding of the Republic, was banned in universities starting in 1968 in large part due to administrative advocacy at the Ankara University Theology Faculty and this ban was extended to public employees in 1978.172 Barbarosoğlu explains, from personal

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172 Salih Bayram, “Reporting Hijab in Turkey: Shifts in the Pro- and Anti-Ban Discourses,” *Turkish Studies* 10 (2009): 511. Bayram’s article was written before the lifting of the ban in 2013, but he recounts how the motion to lift the ban through a constitutional amendment was passed in 2007 and then annulled by the Constitutional Court, producing heated debates and accusations against the AK Party’s commitment to constitutional secularism (512).
experience, that Islamic fashion and political ideology in Turkey have a history starting in the 1970s. As she recounts, up until the mid-1970s there did not exist as much political hubbub concerning veiled identity in Turkey (37). In her opinion, before the 1970s, religious conservatives did not view women’s clothing a question of fashion (50). This changed and developed over time. Starting in the 1990s, younger generations switched from seeing the veil as a marker of ontological identity to viewing it as a social tool for anarchy (38).¹⁷³ Presumably, she means that since the veil was banned in public spaces like universities and looked down upon by Kemalists as a sign of backward tradition, wearing the veil could function for younger generations as a statement of rebellion, regardless of religious piety. In any case, it was not until the mid-nineties that veiled fashion shows and veiled fashion became part of the common cultural vocabulary in Turkey (51).¹⁷⁴ With all this in mind, Barbarosoğlu insists that wearing a veil ought not be equated with adhering to tradition. Especially with respect to the history of the veil in Turkey, this is a false assumption. That is, a veiled young woman is not necessarily a traditional young woman. Since the veil has gotten caught up in discourses of politics and fashion, wearing a veil can mean various things—societal rebellion, mere fashion, or political alignment.

She further treats the fact that the veil has come under serious criticism by noticeable sections of the Turkish population—this phenomenon she finds especially odd. Unlike European countries where the presence of veiled women is a relatively new phenomenon, the veil has never been a foreign element in Turkish culture (78). As such, she critiques the media and

¹⁷³ The term “ontological” is hers: “onjolik mana” or “ontological significance.”
¹⁷⁴ She holds the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) responsible for bringing women’s issues into the public arena (70). And in 2005 her alliance was with the CHP rather than the AKP (80).
militant secular voices which argue that the veil is out of place in Turkish society. The veil has long been a part of Turkish culture and customs.\textsuperscript{175} Thus, instead of trying to argue for religious values over and against secular ones, she avoids treating the religious dimension as something reducible to a mere opponent of secular discourse.\textsuperscript{176} For her, the secular vs. religious polarity is merely one product of modernity (168). Emphasizing this polarity can cause one to miss out on the larger picture of what it means to be religious and modern.

\textit{The Veil as an Ontological Marker}

When it comes to Islamic dress, the bigger and more important picture for Barbarosoğlu is how the veil functions as an ontological marker transcending both fashion and politics. She writes, “In Turkey and in the entire Islamic World, the veil is the most basic sign of women’s ontological position”\textsuperscript{177} (130). For her, wearing the veil serves to signal an ontological identity—that of a Muslim woman. For this reason, Barbarasoğlu is concerned with watering down of this ontological identity by superficial concerns for fashion. Adding fashion into this discourse is a concession to external pressures rampant in modern society. Society and fashion declare it is not

\textsuperscript{175} Related to this phenomenon, Barabarosoğlu makes a very good observation: there is a painfully obvious inequality in always making veiled women the subject of anthropological or sociological studies—why not study non-veiled women as a group to be analyzed (74)? As such, she questions the very assumption that non-veiled women are normal while veiled women are abnormal and as such must be studied, analysed, and reduced to political or social factors.

\textsuperscript{176} On anti-veil discourse and dialogue, Barbarosoğlu has several things to say. Firstly, she argues for a model of dialogue over a polemic of labels; labels seed hatred and limit everyone, but dialogue pushes against the bounds created by labels (79). In this sense, she pushes for a positive solution in dialogue. Yet, those who campaign against the veil (\textit{antitürbanistlerin}) she accuses of being closed to agreement, and discussion (91). They make arguments with cliches instead of actually arguing. And the result of engaging in such polarizing events is merely to strengthen the polarity (98). Barbarosoğlu also claims that those who strongly oppose the veil are the ones driving the division between veil-supporters and veil-opponents. As she sees events, first it was the anti-veil campaigners (\textit{antitürbanistler}) that antagonized women wearing the veil, then came the veil-campaigerns (\textit{türbanistler}) (131). At the same time, while it is tempted to feel targeted by anti-veil discourse, she doesn’t want to approach things from a perspective of being oppressed because she’s a veiled woman. She wants to keep a distance from a victimization complex (127).

\textsuperscript{177} Turkish: “Türkiye’de ve bütün islam dünyasında başörtüsü, kadınlardan ontolijik duruşunun en temel göstergesi.”

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enough for women to be pious and be heard in the public sphere—they must also prove themselves to be sufficiently modern Muslims (55). To elucidate her impression of the effect of Islamic fashion on genuine piety, Barbarosoğlu draws on the metaphor of adding water to milk (66). Trying to make the veil a question of fashion, or modifying its requirements to fit better with what is considered fashionably modern (by allowing hats, etc...) is like the watering down of milk.178

Addressing the tendency to “modernize” and transform Muslim identity into a fashionable item, she employs another power image: Muslims are no longer reaching for the sea but for lakes and muddy bottoms (68).179 Conceding to fashion results in a loss of ontological meaning and identity, something Barbarosoğlu refers to as “kararsız kimlik” or “irresolute identity” (72). Being unable to claim a stable identity is one of the central issues for modern Turkish Muslim women confronted with the challenges of wearing the veil. Within this discussion, she cites Erik Ericson (without citation), “Identity is the meeting point of who we want to be and what the world wants us to be.”180 From this citation she makes the following point: the greater the distance between what society wants us to be and what we strive to be, the more one’s identity is left undecided. And so it is with modern Turkish Muslim women.

Yet, what ontological identity does the veil actually represent? Does it indicate a gendered fitra? I argue that it does, and that one of Barbarosoğlu’s critiques of modernity is that modern understandings of gender stand in tension with the fully realized identity of male and female

178 To clarify, again she is not opposed to having personal style. However, if a person stays true to her personal style, she will not be an object of ever changing fashion and news tabloids (67).
179 While on this issues she makes some passing political remarks. She is somewhat critical of the AKP and says she does not align with their expression of “distanced attitude” (mesafeli tavri ifadesi). And she does not think they are actually distanced (mesafeli). Ultimately for her, the solution is not political but social/societal (69).
180 She does not cite the specific source. The Turkish, “kimlik, bizim olmak istediğimiz ile dünyanın olmamızı izin verdiği şeyin buluşma noktasıdır.”
fitras. As a foundation of this critique, she works from a model of a gendered fitra, where she clearly distinguishes between male and female fitras. For the time being I will refrain from evaluating this model and first try to set forth Barbarasoğlu’s position.

Within the context of modernity’s sociological challenges, Barbarosoğlu speaks explicitly of a male fitra, or nature (125). She thinks male identity is formed through responsibility and that women working in public spheres steals that opportunity from them. As a result of women’s growing presence in the workforce, she perceives an increasing loss of a consciousness of responsibility among men (102). Barbarosoğlu does not draw on statistics, but on her own personal observations of Turkish society’s evolution over time. She interprets women entering the workforce in negative terms—women are given even more responsibility (at home and at work) and men are left with none, since they are relieved of duties both at work and at home. Instead of rethinking how women and men can redistribute reponsibility, she laments that men have lost responsibility and a sense of identity (45). Specifically, she is concerned for women working outside the service sector, as this trend will only accelerate the loss of responsibility in men. Within this analysis, she assumes a female fitra, finding the workplace (outside the

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181 Within this framework of male responsibility, she clarifies her own evaluation of polygyny as a dispensation rather than something to be actively sought. Polygyny is a dispensation only, a weakness to be avoided if possible (34). Further, the reason women do not enjoy the same right to polygamy is due to the necessity of determining lineage (35). Muslim women also have the right to secure a marriage condition which prevents the taking of a second spouse. For men, a second spouse signifies weakness (i.e. lack of responsibility).

182 To compare, the late Moroccan scholar Fatima Mernissi also treated the subject of women entering the workplace in a Moroccan context. Mernissi pointed to the discrepancy between cultural and legal discourse which styled men as providers of women and the economic reality that many men could not find adequate employment so that their wives and female family members had no choice but to enter the work place. Mernissi did not view the fact of women entering the workplace as a loss of responsibility for men, though she did stress the discrepancy between the cultural ideal of men providing for women contrasted with actual economic realities and pressure. She also critically described women’s entry into the workplace in Morocco as perceived in terms of a trespass into male space, pointing out that a lack of other “modes of relatedness” between men and women other than the sexual only aggravates the problem. Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 144-153.
service industry) ill-suited to women’s nature. Women in the workplace are hardened and men also lose their chivalric spirit or sense of duty. As such, she is not concerned about explaining current gender roles in terms of patriarchy.

As we will see, Barbarosoğlu’s pessimism concerning the value of those new possibilities open to women of the twenty-first century contrasts somewhat with the implied optimism of Tuksal and Fidan. Barbarosoğlu even views the idea of a woman president in Turkey as a threat (125). At work is a logic of exclusion rather than mutual enrichment and accountability. Barbarosoğlu seems to think that if a woman can occupy a position, then that woman effectively takes the position from men, instead of seeing women as enriching the workforce by widening the pool of potential job candidates. In her view, liberal and feminist ideals (blocked all together) threaten the Muslim sense of identity as slave of God and impede consciousness of this identity (120). In a more general light, she also affirms that a Muslim cannot be both a servant of God and a servant to the capitalist order (121). In other words, being a slave to fashion and capitalist consumption is a form of idolatry incompatible with true monotheism. Treating feminism, fashion, and consumerism as one interconnected phenomenon, Barbarosoğlu argues Muslim women (and Muslims in general) cannot fully be themselves and conform to the world of fashion and consumerism at the same time.

As we have seen, Barbarosoğlu lumps issues of fashion, global capitalism, religion identity, and gender roles into one narrative highly suspicious of modernity. However, I remain unconvinced as to whether all the the modern trends she views as problematic pose an equal threat to authentic Muslim identity. While consumerism due to its wasteful and superficial nature, may arguably pose a threat to many spiritual identities, how do women in the workplace
reduce the societal responsibility of men? To argue that the presence of women in the workplace takes responsibility away from men ignores the depth of responsibility necessary for equitable cooperation. Further, in a relational ontology of gender—as we will explore in the work of Fidan—one gender’s gain does not necessarily result in another gender’s loss. Relational ontology, as I envision it, is not a zero sum game. Raising or broadening the value of one gender’s contribution, enriches rather than impoverishes the value of the other. Women claiming agency outside the domicile could spell opportunities for women to hold men accountable outside the home and *vice versa*, fostering a spirit of mutual responsibility between genders. Yet, in Barbarosoğlu’s pessimistic view, a world where women hold full public responsibility lowers the incentive for men to be responsible, lowering the value of men in the public sector.

*A Future of Dialogue and Responsibility*

Despite her pessimistic views on the future of gender roles in modern society, Barbarosoğlu insists on an attitude of hope. In affectionate reference to Saint-Exupery’s *The Little Prince*, she insists that it is impossible to have responsibility without hope (105). Despite challenges and fears looming on the future horizon, Barbarosoğlu stresses the agency pious women have today and the significance of hope in actualizing that agency. She writes, “I am working to establish my [sense of] responsibility in order to not fall into despair” (105). The despair she feels is not only for pious Muslims, but for the future of humanity. Modernity poses a challenge for Muslim and non-Muslim alike (115). All live subject to the negative effects of a consumerist culture, and the way forward is to start by recognizing this shared predicament. If Muslims imagine they are

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183 On the topic of practical implementations of responsibility, she remains vague. However, resisting the watering down of true Islamic piety through the negative forces of consumerism is part of her vision of Muslim responsibility.  
184 Original Turkish: “Ben sorumluluğumu yerine getirmeye çalışıyorum, ümitsizliğe düşmemek için.”

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not motivated by consumerist values or living surrounded by a consumerist culture, subject to the pressures of that materialistic culture, they only serve to feed such a culture. And while it is tempting to look back to an idealized past and wish the course of history had taken a different turn, she finds this sort of reasoning unsound and simply unproductive. It does not make sense to label sociological changes and events as mistakes (60). Society changes, sociological events occur, and the best we can do is try to understand them—not bemoan them. So even if she looks back with some nostalgia to public Ottoman discourse as a discourse based on Islamic legal rulings (fetva), she does not look back and wish things had developed differently. Rather, she focuses on what can be done today and what can be learned from understanding the past. In fact, when interviewed about her work on Muslim women moving out of the Ottoman Era into the time of the early Republic, she points out there is a large gap in historical self-knowledge among women in Turkey, asserting that “we are living the same history twice”\footnote{Turkish: “Biz aynı tarihi ikinci defa yaşıyoruz.”} (124). Thus, the past serves more as a lesson for the future rather than a model to copy or return to. Despite her rejection of liberal Western ideas of gender, she does not believe the answer lies in a nostalgic return to an idealized past.

Barbarosoğlu strongly affirms that the future can only be faced by learning from the past, not wallowing in it. There is a limited value to treating the past as sociological better than the present. Idealizing the past does not provide solutions for the present. At the same time, she also warns against excessive confidence in progress.\footnote{She is aware of the subtle prevalence of assumptions of progress, noting that even if Muslims reject evolutionary theory, they are still effected by the narrative of progress (48).} In the name of progress and freedom, the concept of modernity can serve as a banner to spread not freedom but prohibition—this is what
she sees as a twisted paradox of modernity (134). Yet what sort of prohibition does she mean? For one, she has in mind the history of prohibition of the veil in places like Turkey and France.

Finally, despite her refusal to turn to an idealized past, Barbarasoğlu’s suspicion of modernity and postmodernity should not be downplayed. In her view, postmodernity is even more dangerous than modernity because of its emphasis on relativity (48). She thus affirms a strong need to protect Islamic values against modernity as well as postmodernity. However, not all the negative pressures of modernity are obvious. She astutely points out that modernity erroneously forces people into thinking being religious means being frozen in time—claiming, “they want to freeze religious people in a specific place in time”187 (92). By freezing pious practices outside of time, critics also hope to push them out of place as well. For this reason, despite her strong emphasis of the value of traditional society prior to the rupture of modernity, she also resists defining her project in terms of returning to tradition. Instead, hers is a project of hope and self-realization for pious Muslim women today.

Regarding her vision for the future, I judge that, despite her insistence on not dwelling on the past, she clings uncritically to a sense of distinct male and female natures, starkly defined by traditional gender assumptions. Her critique of the materialistic and consumerist aspects of modernity, as well as its tendency to rupture local identity, assumes that women’s presence and equality in the public sphere are a part of this corruption. However, if her model of fitra were not gendered in a rigid binary, would she be able to see women’s increasing presence in the public sphere as an opportunity for the enrichment of all human beings, regardless of gender? At the same time, it would be unfair to accuse of her of not taking an interest in pious Muslim women’s

187 Original Turkish: “dindarları zamanın belli bir yerinde dondurmak istiyorlar.” The “they” here is rather vague, but it refers to those who oppose the veil and wish to remove signs of Muslim piety from public space.
self-actualization and agency. Her work, both academic and literary, attests to her deep commitment to fighting for full recognition in public discourse of the claims, lived truths, and hopes of Muslim women.

Now let us turn to the work of Tuksal, whose verdict on *fitra* differs in some measure from that of Barbarosoğlu.

**Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal**

![Image of Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal](http://nettavir.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/04eb48a261aff9a38d88.jpg)

Figure 5: Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal.

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189 This photo is available at [http://nettavir.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/04eb48a261aff9a38d88.jpg](http://nettavir.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/04eb48a261aff9a38d88.jpg) and is taken from the following website [http://nettavir.com/hidayet-sefkatli-tuksal-akpyle-ilgili-cok-sert-bir-yazi-kaleme-aldi/](http://nettavir.com/hidayet-sefkatli-tuksal-akpyle-ilgili-cok-sert-bir-yazi-kaleme-aldi/) (Feb 11, 2016). As the title of the Nettavir article suggests (“Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal took up writing a very harsh statement concerning the AKP”), Tuksal, like many state-funded theologians, is not against criticizing the AK party government—even if the article in question does not seem to find her critique sufficiently forceful. For instance, Fatima Barbarasoğlu also openly expresses disapproval and strong reserve vis-à-vis AKP religious slogans. In addition, Tuksal has also been critical of the state-funded *Diyanet Vakfı* efforts to address Muslim women’s affairs, stating that while the intentions are good, the execution is still lacking—preferring herself to advocate for
Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal\textsuperscript{190} (b. 1963) studied at the Ankara Theology Faculty starting in 1980 and completed her doctorate in the Hadith section of Islamic Sciences there at the same faculty in 1998.\textsuperscript{191} Her dissertation was entitled “The Effects of the Patriarchal Tradition in [Prophetic] Narrations Against Women.”\textsuperscript{192} She has since been internationally active as a scholar, with a work recently appearing in English.\textsuperscript{193} Presently, she holds a position in the Mardin Artuklu University’s Literature Faculty in their Anthropology Department.\textsuperscript{194} During her graduate studies, Tuksal identified the need for a study on hadith which compiled hadith into a collection explicitly depicting women in a negative light. Thus, she resolved to fill the gap with her own thesis. As a reworking of her original thesis, her most well-known book \textit{Traces of Misogynist Discourse in Islamic Tradition}—originally printed in 2000 and now in its fifth printing—is an ambitious look at some of the most well-known hadith\textsuperscript{195} in critical comparison with quranic verses.\textsuperscript{196} Supplementary to her role as an academic, she has written in newspapers and is a member of the Capital City Women’s Platform.\textsuperscript{197}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{190} Her \textit{curriculum vitae} is available online at the Mardin Artuklu University website, last accessed February 12, 2016, \url{http://antropoloji.artuklu.edu.tr/hidayet-tuksal/}.
\textsuperscript{191} For her doctorate, she studied under the relatively well-known Turkish hadith scholar Hayri Kırbaşoğlu.
\textsuperscript{194} The words faculty (\textit{fakülte}) and department (\textit{bölüm}) function slightly differently in Turkish vis-à-vis the typical American Academic usage, where the faculty is a large department (\textit{fakülte}) with specialized divisions (\textit{bölüm}).
\textsuperscript{195} She states that given the plethora of hadith, she simply chose the most well-known ones from which to start her analysis (46).
\textsuperscript{196} This book is widely known and was recommended to me by several theologians at Ankara.
\textsuperscript{197} For a link to the Capital City Women’s Platform, an Islamic women’s rights and services group based in Ankara: \url{http://www.baskentkadın.org.tr/}.
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The scope of her sources is broad, and the material is arranged by topic rather than chronologically. She draws on an early hadith collection of Ibn Munabbih (d. 718), the collections of famous founders of legal schools Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855) and Mālik Ibn Anas (d. 795), the canonical collections of al-Bukhārī (d. 870), Muslim (d. 874/5), Abū Dāwūd (d. 888), al-Tirmidhī (d. 892), Ibn Mājah (d. 886), and al-Nasā’ī (d. 915), as well as relative contemporaries like al-Dārimī (d. 868) and al-Dāraqūṭnī (d. 995), to later hadith commentaries belonging of al-Nawāwī (d. 1277), Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350), Ibn Ḥajar (d. 1448), al-‘Aynī (d. 1451), and finally more recent al-Zurqānī (d. 1710), the Indian scholar al-Azīmabādī, al-Mubārakfūrī (d. 1934). In addition to hadith literature, Tuksal cites extensive passages from the Qur’ān along with well-known Qur’ān commentators spanning the course of Islamic history, including al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1143), al-Qurṭubī (d. 1272), Ibn Kathīr (d. 1372), Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī (d. 1209), Al-Ṭabarsī (d. 1153), Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905), Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), and Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır (d. 1924).

The breadth of her sources allows her to compare canonical material with its legacy in later commentaries, but overall historical criticism of the individual narrations is not her primary

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198 This is the death date Tuksal gives (28), and refers to Hammām, the eldest of five brothers. According to R.G. Khoury, Wahb ibn Munabbih, author of a ṣaḥīfa and known ascetic, died later, either in 728 or 732, while his older brother, Hammām died around 720. Here and in the rest of this paragraph I use the dates which Tuksal gives. See R. G. Khoury, "Wahb b. Munabbih" in EI2.

199 Others have put his death date at 796. See J. Schacht, "Mālik b. Anas," in EI2.

200 This death date has also been put in 889. See Christopher Melchert, "Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī," in EI3.

201 Some would put Mālik ibn Anas in place of Ibn Mājah here.


204 Ibn Ḥajar Al-‘Asqalānī’s death date has also been recorded as 1449. See F. Rosenthal, “Ibn Hadjar al-‘Askalānī,” in EI2.

205 She cites his death date as 1958, but according to other sources this may be closer to his birth date.

206 His death date has also been put at 1373. See H. Laoust, “Ibn Kathīr,” in EI2.

207 This Ottoman commentator is popular enough to have his Qur’ān commentary online in transliterated modern Turkish for the benefit of Turkish Muslims. See for instance, http://www.kuranikerim.com/t_elmalili_index.htm.
focus. Her focus lies in the content of the hadith narrations. Moreover, her engagement with so wide a selection of hadith collections allows her to include narrations popular in the later Islamic traditions which are not always included in English literature on the same subject. Like well-known authors such as the Moroccan Fatima Mernissi or Pakistani Asma Barlas, Tuksal’s most fundamental move is to distinguish between the Qur’ān and subsequent tradition. Her guiding underlying assumption is that those patriarchal elements harmful to women are not attributable to divine revelation itself, but rather to the society and subsequent tradition which received that revelation and took on the task of interpretation. In other words, the Qur’ān is not essentially patriarchal, but it does address a patriarchal society; as such, the language of divine address is affected by a patriarchal context. The subsequent tradition, however, has committed an error in interpreting a divine address to a patriarchal society as a validation of patriarchal assumptions. Moreover, she argues that non-Islamic influences have also helped skew the quranic message, diluting it with more patriarchal material loosely drawn from or attributed the Judeo-Christian tradition (in the form of the Isrāʾīliyyāt) as well as pre-Islamic Arabian culture. Where the tradition often is a stronghold for status quo, Tuksal argues that the Qur’ān, by contrast, explicitly critiques the patriarchal status quo (52). The patriarchal assumptions embodied in this status quo, for Tuksal, are most easily summed up in the implication that women’s primal nature is somehow less normative or less human than men’s primal nature. She consistently challenges any implication of a lesser female fiṭra within the tradition of prophetic reports. Yet, she does not

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208 As mentioned above, Karen Bauer has pointed out this trend and critiqued it, arguing rather that the Qur’ān does not support gender equality. The later work of Amina Wadud and thinkers like Kecia Ali address the issue of inequality in the sacred text more than those like Mernissi, Barlas, and here Tuksal.

209 As G. Vajda explains, the Isrāʾīliyyāt refer to roughly three types of material, not always easily delineated from one another: 1) narratives which refer to persons and prophets of the Bible including both Jewish and Christian sources, 2) narratives placed in the setting of Ancient Israel, and 3) folklore allegedly or actually borrowed from Jewish sources. See Vajda, "Isrāʾīliyyāt," in EI2.
challenge patriarchal authority from outside the tradition. Even though she moves to critique aspects of Islamic tradition, her critique is a critique of misused traditional authority, not of traditional authority per se.

In terms of style, method and voice, her work downplays her own critical voice and emphasizes a description and comparison of sources, an approach which has benefits along with drawbacks. Two possible benefits from such an approach are that she is able to present a wide variety of content in support of her basic thesis and that she is also therefore able to use the descriptive aspect of her writing to garner more authority without appearing overly polemical. Although in her introduction Tuksal does address Western sources on patriarchy and feminism, the body of her work sticks closely to quranic verses, prophetic reports, and traditional commentaries.

Her stated aim is to trace the patriarchal strains in the hadith literature. The assumption and fundamental argument in undertaking such a task is that it is important to see how women were made into objects or relegated a second-hand humanity. As Tuksal puts it:

The discourse founded by view that woman is a ‘human object’ created for men legitimized the understanding that women were secondary and men superior by accepting that female human beings were wicked, deficient and secondary creatures in comparison to male human beings. (277)

It is precisely this toxic discourse which Tuksal aims to identify and critique, doing so not with outside sources, but rather resources from within the Islamic tradition. So far, it is now clear she

210 Among her sources she cites historian Georges Duby, sociologist Élisabeth Badinter, Max Weber, and Egyptian feminist Nawal al-Saadawi. Her use of feminist theory is minimal, but she does address the concept of patriarchy, pointing to its existence long before the birth of Islam.

211 Original Turkish: “…kadının erkek için yaratılmış ’nesne insan’ olduğu anlayışı ile temellenen bu söylem; kadın insannın erkek insana nazaran daha kötü, eksik ve ikincil bir varlık olduğu kabulleriyle, erkeğin üstünüğü-kadının ikinciliği anlayışını meşrulaştırmaktadır.”
affirms that women do not possess an inferior \textit{fitra} to men, but it is still not yet clear whether or not she views \textit{fitra} as something inherently gendered. Let us turn now to this question.

\textit{The Question of Fitra}

I argue Tuksal’s work suggests that woman’s \textit{fitra} is not essentially different from the male \textit{fitra}, and that the distinction of gendered \textit{fitra} is attributable to the patriarchal elements of Islamic tradition rather than the divine message. This position bespeaks a strong influence on the part of the Muslim Pakistani thinker Fazlur Rahman.\footnote{She explicitly states her indebtedness to Fazlur Rahman (42).} By recognizing that divine revelation always enters into the historical process, this opens the door to recognizing the historical contingency of any one interpretation of that revelation. For instance, whereas some read the well-known qur'anic condemnation\footnote{See Q 53:19-21.} of female deities al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt as patriarchal; Tuksal stresses that in the context of the first generation of Muslims these deities had been part of a culture that nevertheless held women as fundamentally less valuable than women (59). The Qur’ān was not condemning women in condemning these female deities; the Qur’ān was condemning the idolatrous and patriarchal culture that worshipped such idols. In other words, female divinities of the polytheists could not bring real justice to women in society; whereas monotheism could.\footnote{On this point, there is a suggestive parallel with Luce Irigaray’s insistence on women’s need to seek liberation in the divine. Irigaray writes, “Only the divine offers us freedom—enjoins it upon us. Only a God constitutes a rallying point for us that can let us free—nothing else.” From “Divine Women,” in \textit{Sexes and Genealogies}, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 68. Of course Irigaray presses for a feminine divine, whereas Tuksal and other Muslim theologians would stress how the God of monotheism transcends gender.}

Yet why does Tuksal hold monotheism offer deliverance from patriarchy? Rather than stressing a Godhead beyond gender, Tuksal turns to divine revelation’s message about what it
means to be human. With notable originality, Tuksal develops a subtle understanding of how
revelation defines humanity.

Specifically, I argue one of the hermeneutic keys to her case is “îlahi lütuf” or “a divine
kindness.” One of Tuksal’s fundamental assumptions and arguments is that divine revelation
does not define humans in their essential natures by negative qualities—something which goes
for women as well as men. In not being defined negatively, humanity receives a divine kindness
from God, signaling important implications for gender. This kindness dwells in the divine
recognition that we as humans can never be reduced in essence to our faults and negative traits—
we are always in a position to repent and transcend them. She writes:

No bad quality was accepted as part of people’s essential [“fiṭrī” from fiṭra] attributes,
that is, in terms of an unchanging destiny. On the contrary […] one recognizes [in the
divine message] the possibility for a person to put distance between herself and her guilt,
[the possibility] of an ego able to perceive its mistake from under the merciless burden of
guilt—without being crushed to the point of ruin—and to move beyond. This is a great
divine kindness for humanity.215 (133)

This “divine kindness” serves as a guarantor to both female and male expressions of fiṭra,
stressing shared human identity rather than the inferiority of one gender’s essential nature.
Nevertheless, this kindness does not necessarily mean fiṭra is ungendered, but it does push back
against any assumption that gender can be defined terms of essential lack or a deficient fiṭra. Let
us look further at other ways in which Tuksal resists a rigidly gender binary fiṭra.

One instance of her pushing back on a gendered interpretation of fiṭra appears a detailed
treatment of traditional commentaries on Adam and Eve. Rightly, remarking that Muslim culture

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215 The Turkish original: “Hiçbir kötü özellik, kişilerin fıtri vasıfları olarak, yani değişmez yazı statüsünde kabul
edilmemiştir. Aksine…kişinin kendisi ile suçu arasında bir mesafe koyabilmesine; hatasını idrak eden benliğine, suçun
acısızlık yükü altından—heba olacak derecede ezilmeden—çıkabilmesine imkân tanımaktadır. Bu, insan için
büyük bir ilahi lütuftur.” Since pronouns are ungendered in Turkish, I had to choose a gender in English and sided
with the feminine.
tended to accept the biblical account of Adam and Eve, she proceeds to compare the tradition of hadith and quranic commentary with a rally of quranic passages which do not follow the account in Genesis II (Q 23:12-14, Q 38:71-72, Q 7:11, Q 6:98, Q 39:6, Q 4:1). Among these verses, she draws attention to the three passages which speak of God creating from one “nafs” or soul. These are Q 6:98, Q 39:6, and Q 4:1. In all three verses, the quranic revelation speaks of a single nafs as the inception of humanity, declaring: 216

It is He who first produced you from a single soul, then gave you a place to stay and a resting place. (Q 6:98)

People, be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide… (Q 4:1)

He created you all from a single being, from which He made its mate…He creates you in your mothers’ wombs, in one stage after another, in threefold depths of darkness… (Q 39:6)

Despite the influence of Genesis on Islamic tradition, which led classical interpreters to assume Eve was created subsequently from Adam, the nafs passages in the Qur’an (as seen above) leave open the possibility of another interpretation. Alternatively, one can see the original soul or nafs as human potential prior to gender distinction, which is then split into male and female human beings (77). Tuksal is not the first to propose such a reading. Though this interpretation was not widespread in the classical tradition, it has recently been taking on steam among contemporary scholars of the Qur’an. 217 Importantly, those who interpret the nafs passages in the second

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216 Translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem.
reading have at their disposal a quranic argument for a common, human *fitra*, or original nature, rather than two separately gendered natures.

Tuksal, of course, does not confine herself to material in the Qur’ān—she also addresses accounts in the hadith literature with no quranic correlate. The comparison of a woman to a crooked rib that cannot be made straight, for instance, is a widespread narration which strongly implies essential differences between a male and female *fitra*, or original nature. Tuksal notes this hadith appears in at least five collections—that of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Ibn Mājah and al-Dārimī, respectively. In four out of these five instances, the hadith can be interpreted as encouraging positive behaviors towards women (79). While she does interpret the instance of the crooked rib as a narrative instructing men to behave kindly towards woman, she nevertheless notes such advice condescends and views women as corrupt in their very nature or “defective from [her] creation”\(^{218}\) (84). Tuksal instead suggests that the crookedness traditionally assumed to be the reserved property of women is actually common to all humans (86). She remarks:

> In reality, this is not only women’s but every human being’s character exhibits this [faulty] quality. That is, this crookedness which cannot be made straight is a crookedness not only proper to women but to the entire human race.\(^{219}\) (86)

Tuksal accordingly faults the subsequent commentaries for focusing on the crookedness of women and not recognizing the context of the advice. That is to say, the report is advice addressed to men in a patriarchal society encouraging them to treat women kindly. In her view, the only reason men are addressed in this instance and not women is simply because men were in

\(^{218}\) Original Turkish: “yaratılıştan kusurlu.”

\(^{219}\) Original Turkish: “Ancak, sadece kadın değil, her insannın karakteri bu tür hususiyetler göstermektedir. Yani, bu düzeltilemez bir eğrilıkse, sadece kadına özgü değil, insan türüne özgü bir eğriliktir.”
power at that time and women were not (88). As such, the report is not a statement about women’s exclusive nature, and only by reason of its historical context does it appear to attribute crookedness only to women. She blames the sacralization of the authority of the first generations of Muslims as well as the sacralization of chains of hadith transmission for paving the way for canonizing patriarchal interpretations of these reports (87).

Tuksal goes on to ask a very useful question, “What sort of relation is there between being a ‘normal human’ and being a ‘female human’ in the context of quranic criteria?” (88). To answer this question, she starts not from passages which single out women, but from passages in the Qur’ān which refer to human nature (Q 9:1-10, Q 95:1-6, Q 76:1-3, Q 80:17, Q 17:11, Q 3:1, Q 4:28, Q 10:36, Q 30:29, Q 25:44, Q 83:14) According to her analysis of these quranic passages, the assumption that women have a special crookedness to their nature is unfounded—she insists they are equally “normal” humans, just as men are (90). In short, humans—whether male or female—have faults and weaknesses. Quranically speaking both women and men are weak, and there is insufficient evidence in the quranic text to conclude that women are somehow morally weaker than men (91).

Still within the framework of her earlier question, Tuksal turns to the tale of Eve and the question of her guilt in paradise. Again, she looks at the Isrā ‘īliyyāt as well as Genesis, highlighting the difference between the suras in the Qur’ān and the accounts of Genesis along with their echoes in the Isrā ‘īliyyāt. On the legitimacy of the Isrā ‘īliyyāt, she lays out a hadith from al-Bukhārī which sanctions the transmission of Isrā ‘īliyyāt but also the grave infraction of

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220 Original Turkish: “Kur’an bağlamındaki ‘normal insan’ kriterleri ile ‘kadın insan’ arasında ne tür bir ilişki vardır?”
221 For her evidence, she cites passages which refer to human nature. Regarding passages which touch on the question of women’s testimony being unequal to men’s, she devotes a later analysis.
attributing them to the Prophet (100). She goes on to fault the developing tradition for succumbing to degeneration and slowly blurring the lines between prophetic narratives and Isrāʾīliyyāt (102). By reaffirming the distinction between prophetic narrative and traditions which uncritically assume the authority of Isrāʾīliyyāt, Tuksal argues that the symbols of Adam and Eve are symbols of humanity, where Eve does not carry especial guilt or serve to imply the inferior nature of women (106).

The reports in which the Prophet claims to see hell’s inhabitants are another set of narratives which imply a fundamentally different and inferior nature in women. In these reports the Prophet claims to have seen the inhabitants of hell, the majority of whom are women. Tuksal lays out a selection of these narratives, contrasts them with reports which suggest the inclusion of wives in heaven (112), and then cautions the reader that since the Prophet was describing a reality beyond the scope of this world, his descriptions of hell might not be intended entirely literally (116). Further, the description of women in hell might not be an observation of an actualized reality but merely a warning to women of a possible outcome (124). Though she draws heavily on later hadith commentaries, she does not investigate when these various narratives and interpretations became widespread or authoritative. That is, instead of historical, her argument is primarily hermeneutical. By looking at various faults which women are associated with, whether that leads them to hell, and whether those faults are shared with men, she concludes that apart from the donning of precious metal and silk (“the two reds”), any sin or

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222 She cites Buhārī, (60) Enbiyāʾ 50, IV.145. She uses a Turkish printing of the Arabic listed as Muhammed ibn İsmāʿīl el-Buhārī, el-Câmiʿ u l-musneduʾ s-sahihu l-muhtasar mīn umāri Rasūlillâh (s) ve sunenihī ve eyyāmihi (İstanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1992).
fault attributed to women in prophetic narrations is not a fault exclusively limited to women. In this way, she combs hadith for Islamic resources that would help her resist an interpretation of the Prophet’s vision of women in hell which would imply women are essentially more deserving of damnation than men (129). This is yet another way in which she uses an ambivalent relation to the authority of hadith tradition to create space for her own voice, authority and critique of harmful gender assumptions.

Tuksal tackles yet another way in which the essential nature of women and men have been seen to differ is in women’s assumed deficiency in reason and religion. These assumptions have much of their origin in the quranic declaration that two female witnesses bear the weight of one male witness (Q 2:282) as well as the debates on religious restrictions of menstruating women. The issue of witnessing implicates a woman’s ability to reason, and the issue of menstruation implicates a woman’s ability to fulfill religious obligations like prayer, fasting and pilgrimage. Tuksal takes on both of these issues in the hadith literature, continuing to look for ways of re-interpreting so that women’s essential deficiency in reason and religion is not implicated. Again, instead of stopping at the hadith literature, she again rallies numerous quranic verses which depict the divine call for human fulfillment in ethical reasoning and sincere worship—one that is clearly a human rather than specifically male calling (159-163). In a now familiar move, she reminds the reader that nothing the Qur’ān says can ever be fully separated from the human realities of the original event or revelation (164). And these human realities at

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223 To note, pious men also struggled with the question of wearing silk and precious adornments in the medieval period.

224 Tuksal accepts that restrictions on women’s religious activities due to menstruation are part of divine revelation and prophetic accounts, she takes a biological look at menstruation and suggests that any restrictions on women are not due to their essential human natures, but simply as health measures (208)—a fairly standard move, but made within the context of what I view as her central argument against a lesser female fitra.
the time of the Qur’ān’s descent into revelation included the patriarchal society of pre-Islamic Arabia as well as the patriarchal Judeo-Christian heritage. Once more, Tuksal attacks the tendency of classical Qur’ān commentaries to interpret deficiencies attributed in specific contexts to women not as deficiencies potentially inherent in any human being but as indicators of an essentially deficient female nature (174). As we begin to see, the problem with assuming a gendered fitra, or essential nature, is that it often carries with it the second assumption that women’s fitra is somehow less than a man’s fitra. Only by tracing how this assumption plays out in the formative narratives of Muslim identity is it possible to fully recognize the negative impact of such an assumption. This is a difficult task but a necessary one. Tuksal explains:

As a painful example of widespread ignorance concerning one gender’s essential nature and humanity, whose places of self-expression and self-realization were, over centuries, separated by thick walls from men, these commentaries—which must be made to serve as a lesson—continue to mislead ‘ulemā’ even in our day.225 (177-8)

According to Tuksal, it is impossible to escape the patriarchal nature of prophetic reports (228). At the same time, the scope and thrust of her work suggest that being aware of the patriarchal elements in Islamic tradition is a way of humanizing them and distinguishing them from divine revelation’s vision for human fullness. In other words, by identifying patriarchal tendencies it is possible to label them as products of human imperfection rather than expressions of a divinely willed order. Finally, in her conclusion she at last explicitly states her basic thesis:

Concerning investigating the possibility of obtaining a result like the secondariness or wickedness of women on an ontological level, when we tried to present the quranic

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225 Turkish: “Kendilerini ifade etme ve gerçeklestirme alanları yüzyıllar boyunca kalın duvarlarla erkeklerden ayrılmış bir cinsin fitra ve insanlık durumu hakkındaki yaygın cehaletin acı bir örneği olarak, ibretle müsahede edilmesi gereken bu yorumlar, günümüzdede bile âlimlerimizin kafasını kariştirmaya devam etmektedir.”
contents of what it means to be human, we determined that no difference between a male human being and a female human being was observed.\(^{226}\) (277)

I take this statement to mean that, regardless of whether fitra is ultimately gendered, there is no discernable difference in the essential natures of either men or women. Practically speaking, fitra, or original human nature, knows no gender distinction.

Tuksal’s work is a prime example of how ambiguity and ambivalence with regard to tradition can be a tool for opening up the tradition into fruitful dialogue with contemporary concerns. She is neither unquestioning of tradition, nor interested in breaking away from it entirely. Tuksal nevertheless uses an Islamic perspective to critique some aspects of Islamic tradition. Her critique targets the patriarchal strands in the hadith tradition, but she employs not only the Qur’ān but also those same hadith sources to argue for readings which challenge the patriarchal strands.

**Summary**

Barbarosoğlu and Tuksal hold potentially opposing views of fitra, or original human nature. Barbarosoğlu reflects on the societal effects of modernity with the help of a strongly gendered notion of human nature. Namely, there exists a male and female nature, and society functions best when it respects the needs and distinctions of these two binary genders. Tuksal, on the other hand, engages classical Islamic sources more directly, but resists what she sees as patriarchal attempts to project a rigid gender binary onto human nature. For Tuksal, women and men share equally in the faults and virtues of humanity. Further, Tuksal regards it as a divine kindness that human beings are not primarily defined by their deficiencies but by their positive

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\(^{226}\) Turkish: “...ontolojik anlamda kadının ikinciliği ve kötülüğü gibi bir sonucun çıkarılabilirlik ihtimalini araştırmak üzerine, Kur’ani muhtevanın insan anlayışını ortaya koymaya çalıştığımızda, erkek insan ile kadın insan arasında hiçbir farklılığı gözetilmediğini tespit ettik.”
qualities. Despite their differences, however, I conclude Barbarosoğlu and Tuksal are both concerned with protecting and nourishing the full humanity women. In Barbarosoğlu’s case this is only possible by respecting the gendered nature of human beings. In Tuksal’s case, this is only possible through the realization that women are no less human than men. We have now seen two very different Turkish interpretations of *fitra*. The following chapter introduces yet another interpretation of *fitra*, and this time from the pen of a scholar trained in Turkish theology.
CHAPTER THREE

Sacred Hermeneutics Through the Lens of Gender: Fidan from Dialectics to Mirrors

In the previous chapter, my treatment of gender began with the work of Fatma Barbarasoğlu and Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal. I turned first to these two figures due to their popularity among Turkish theologians and non-academic readers. Now I take up the work of Hafsa Fidan. Even though Fidan, the youngest and least known of the scholars treated here, lacks the broader popular influence of the first two authors, she nonetheless features in this chapter as a strong example of how Turkish theology can offer dynamic and creative solutions as it navigates multiple traditions. I argue her philosophical creativity in treating the question of gender and fitra reflects a generative interplay of discussions in Turkey, in Islamic tradition, and in Western academia. Fidan’s contribution is creative both in terms of method and in terms of her stance on gender. Namely, she combines the discipline of quranic exegesis with philosophical hermeneutics and, in this combination of method, offers unique way to affirm an essential equality, relatedness, and difference of male and female genders. Fidan keeps a gender binary, but radically transforms it with a dialectical understanding of gender and ontological relation, rendering gendered existence fundamentally relational in its essence. Moreover, she grounds this dialectical understanding of gender in her own reading of the Qur’ān. Thus, in

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227 I was strongly encouraged not to overemphasize place of Fidan’s work by theologians at both the Marmara and Ankara Theology Faculties. They encouraged me to examine figures more widely representative of the broader discussion. This is how came across the works of Barbarasoğlu and Tuksal. Nevertheless, I modified yet still held to my assertion of Fidan’s significance. If not for her representative function, I still value her for her philosophical insights and her worth as an example of what Turkish theologians do with great frequency: engage and reappropriate European and Anglophone discussions within a Muslim context.

228 She has also gone by Hafsa Fidan Vidinli, but her publications are generally listed only with her first surname. Henceforth, she will be referred to as Hafsa Fidan.
Fidan’s work, creative ambiguity on the question of gender opens a space for new approaches to religion and gender. This open ambiguity is best embodied in discourse on fitra, or original human nature.

**Hafsa Fidan and Relational Ontology**

![Hafsa Fidan](image)

**Figure 6: Hafsa Fidan.**

Hafsa Fidan (b. 1975), trained in tafsîr literature first at Uludağ’s theology faculty and

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then moved to Ankara, completed a master’s degree in 2000 and received her doctorate from Ankara University in *tafsīr* literature (i.e. Qur’ān commentary) in 2005. Her thesis advisor for both graduate degrees was Ankara theologian Mehmet Paçacı. She published her doctoral thesis in 2006 under the title *Women’s Image in the Qurʾān (Kur’an’da Kadın İmgesi)*. She has since authored a second book, entitled *Women in a Changing World (Değişen Dünya’da Kadın)* and has completed a post-doctoral degree in London on Islamic feminist discourse. In 2010, she was appointed head of the Center for Women’s Activities (*Kadın Faaliyetleri Merkezi*) in the (Turkish State) Endowment for Religious Affairs, or *Diyanet Vakfı*, replacing Ayşe Sucu. Since her appointment, she has continued to promote academic and local discussion on women’s issues. Recently, she participated as one of the leading scholarly voices in a large symposium on *Women and the Qurʾān (2010)* funded and organized by this same Endowment for Religious Affairs.

Fidan draws on modern and traditional approaches, citing both Arabic and Western (mainly English) scholarship. She engages traditional *tafsīr* and hadith literature as well as authors who reject traditional commentaries as patriarchal corruptions of the divine revelation. She charts her own path between idealism and comprehensiveness, including traditional as well as modern commentaries in her work, engaging both without entirely rejecting either.

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231 Her appointment in 2010 occurred in the wake of what many media sites depicted as the sudden and controversial dismissal of her predecessor, Ayşe Sucu. Many speculated the cause of the abrupt dismissal, and Sucu herself was deeply saddened after fourteen years of service as the center’s head. Whatever the reasons, it was probably not due to Sucu’s style of headscarf, as Fidan does not wear a headscarf at all. Speculations differ. See, for example, the following discussion from a popular newspaper Milliyet, Dec 30, 2010, [http://www.milliyet.com.tr/-gorevden-alinmam-bebegimi-kaybetme-acisindan-agir-geldi-/guncel/haberdetay/30.12.2010/1332667/default.htm](http://www.milliyet.com.tr/-gorevden-alinmam-bebegimi-kaybetme-acisindan-agir-geldi-/guncel/haberdetay/30.12.2010/1332667/default.htm).


233 She may no longer be affiliated with the *Diyanet Vakfı* or Endowment for Religious Affairs. There has recently been a lot of change, and her name no longer appears on their site.
The title of Fidan’s first book, *Women’s Image in the Qur’ān*, is significant in that it indicates a move beyond approaching women’s issues in the Qur’ān through the lens of a handful of hotly contested controversial verses. Fidan centers her discussion on a hermeneutically savvy analysis of images or characterizations of women in the Qur’ān. She proposes that, according to divine revelation as well as historical accident, the “image” of woman functions as a space of interplay and identity for the relations between women and men. The image of woman is subsequently always bound up with the image of man. This she refers to as “gender dialectic,” and for her it is fundamental to human identity. She claims it is the image of woman that brings light to the image of man, positing a relational ontology where each gender assumes its identity through its relation to its opposite gender.

In addition to questions of essence and historical accident, Fidan also makes use of linguistic interplay. This interplay culminates in her treatment of the quranic verse Q 4:1, which reads, “People, be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide…” Fidan interprets this single soul as a non-gendered unity, which only becomes gendered once it is split into a pair of mates. Thus, human existence is characterized by mutable yet unavoidable gender duality or dialectic (she uses both terms: *ikilik* and *dialetik*, respectively). Although she treats a variety of female personalities in the Qur’ān (e.g. Aisha, Maryam/Mary, Abu Lahab’s wife, the

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235 Approaching the Qur’ān based on what its most contested verses have to say about women is still common. Some of the contested verses are Q 2:187, Q 2:222-3, Q 2:228, Q 2:282, Q 4:3, Q 4:34, Q 24:30-1, Q 33:59-60, Q 42:20. While Fidan does treat many of the issues brought up in the Qur’ān, including the question of slavery and houris, she does so within a larger framework of “image.”
236 The concept of relational gender ontology will be taken up again in greater detail below.
237 Translations of quranic verses unless otherwise specified are taken from M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur’ān: A new translation* (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, 2008). For this chapter (as in the previous), quranic verses are listed in bold, since the focus is on gender and scriptural hermeneutics.
Queen of Sheba), it is Eve’s image, linguistically situated in the sacred text, which serves as the primary locus for what I call her “relational ontology.” By relational ontology, I mean making an entity’s relations to other entities an essential aspect of that entity’s basic reality. In other words, relations are not secondary, they in fact constitute one’s essential identity.

I argue that Fidan’s insights into the relationality of being allow her come up with a third response to the question of fitra. For Fidan, fitra expresses itself neither in a rigid gender binary, nor does it deny gender distinctions which she argues are an indispensable part of the human experience. She achieves this by developing a tantalizing vision of relational ontology to explicate primal human nature in the Qur’ān. Moreover, her reading of fitra allows her to affirm both equality and difference between genders in a radically transformative light. Below I will examine Fidan’s creative analysis of gender in the Qur’ān and its possible impact in the wider academic setting. First, I will present an analysis Women’s Image in the Qur’ān. Second, I will look to the question of gender more broadly in Turkish academia to better contextualize Fidan’s possible originality and even influence. Finally, to draw together both her creative contribution and considerations of broader context, I will conclude this section with treatment of her presentation at a later symposium on women in the Qur’ān.

Fidan on Image and Gender Dialectics

Before turning to her most evocative sections on what I call her relational ontology, let us first examine the method she expounds at the start of Women’s Image in the Qur’ān. For, it ultimately serves to highlight and contextualize the importance of her vision of relational

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238 While I acknowledge the term “relational ontology” has a history in Christian and Jewish philosophical discussions traceable to the works of Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas, I am not using it with reference to any specific European or Anglophone thinker. I argue the term is useful for the present discussion, but I do not wish to burden this discussion with excessive external theory.
ontology as well as touch on the specific terms she uses to designate her position.

Her primary modes (zemin kurucu) of examination are linguistic, historical, and ontological. As the conceptual structure of her book progresses, the first two modes (linguistic and historical) arguably culminate in the ontological. Even the structure of the book indicates its overwhelming emphasis of ontological questions. This primary role of ontology is also evident from how she explains the title of her book. She progresses from the simple concept of “image” to that of “women’s image” and finally arrives at elucidating her title “Women’s Image in the Qur’ân.”

Regarding the term “image,” Fidan understands it to mean the picture formed in the mind of [externally] existent things. Moreover, image, is the point of contact between mind and reality. Given her view of image as a point of contact, she writes, “We can never speak of an exact divide between the mere image and the mere reality.” Instead of a precise division between image and reality, we speak instead of an “intermediate phase between the two” (ara safha). For Fidan, images exist within a historical context and thereby lead a historical life. Images are also the way in which we access reality, the way whereby reality is given to us.

Progressing to the narrower category of “women’s image,” Fidan proposes that the image of woman is a world for the relations between women and men. The image of woman is subsequently always bound up with the image of man. More precisely, she thinks it is the image of woman that brings light to the image of man. This is where the recurrent term I translate as

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239 Hafsa Fidan, Kur’an da Kadın İmgesi (Ankara: Vadi Yayınları, 2006), 11. In this section, since more than one of Fidan’s work is regularly cited, all citations are in the footnotes. Henceforth cited as Women’s Image.

240 Fidan, Women’s Image, 12.

241 Fidan, Women’s Image, 12.

242 Fidan, Women’s Image, 13.
“relatedness of images” (*imgeler arasılık*) enters into the discussion. In conjunction with this, she affirms that, “like all images, the image of woman is also essentially of a linguistic character.”

Thus, Hafsa Fidan provides us with a linguistically situated interplay of co-dependent or symbiotic images—an interplay which plays out across history. Her suggestion is an interesting one within the context of women’s voices in religious scholarship. Fidan’s approach seems to suggest an attempt at avoiding direct opposition to a male-dominated historic-linguistic discourse, while still recognizing that the image of woman handed down historically from her religious tradition carries with it information about the men who preserved, embroidered and promulgated it. Nevertheless, her understanding of the relatedness of images implies less a historical emphasis than an ontological one. Further, why does she focus on women? Why is her intellectual gaze set on women’s images in the Qur’ān? Her work does not seem to address the feminist critique in terms of the feminist refusal to read women’s identity through the lens of a normative male-dominated tradition. That is, it is not always clear how Fidan’s image of woman differs from a patriarchal construct—one which reflects only what the male reading imposes on women’s conscience.

Her signature move, I argue, is grounding her use of “image” in not simply ontological dimensions of interpretation but in *specifically relational ontology*. Thus, the Qurʾān does not say exactly what the essence of woman is. Rather the Qurʾān shows that the essence of binary gender is a radically relational one. The question to be asked is whether she can she establish a truly symbiotic balance between male and female through her understanding of the relatedness of

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243 Fidan, *Women’s Image*, 13. Turkish: “her image gibi kadın imgesi de temelde linguistik (dilsel) bir karakterdedir...”
images. Taking the ontological road as her third and ultimate mode of examination makes this challenge particularly subtle, if not problematic.

Lastly, Fidan explains the purpose behind her full title “Women’s Image in the Qur’ān.” Building on her notion of the image of woman as a world for relations between the sexes, she now brings up the term or mirror function (ayna işlevi) and its use in the Qur’ān. She asserts that the final and narrowest point of inquiry is an attempt to give meaning to women of the Qur’ān as they are made known in the revelation itself. Moreover, the goal is not to come to an agreement on these women’s scientific objective reality, but to look at how the Qur’ān depicts women from the aforementioned linguistic, historical and ontological perspectives.244 Some may see in this a slippery loophole.

For her, understanding how women’s image functions linguistically, historically and ontologically is positively necessary not only for an inquiry into “woman’s essence” (which can prove problematic), but also in order to understand the complete gendered picture; that is, women’s image and men’s image are symbiotic and therefore merit equal importance. In the third and final section of Women’s Image in the Qur’ān, Fidan writes while expounding upon the verse Q 4:1 on women:

As woman is the mirror of man and at the same time the mirror’s light, so is the man the mirror of woman and also the mirror’s light. That is to say, one is not merely the other’s opposite in a passive sense. Thus, neither one can exist [solely] as “other,” nor is it possible [for either] to exist “without the other.” Here in the expression of a shared “nafs”245 we find a transformation to a dialectical relation, in the form of a pure and indistinct male-female unity, which shall never be transformed back into its original unity [prior to creation], such that the one may never be reduced to the other, and on the other

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244 Fidan, Women's Image, 16.
245 Here, we can read “primal soul.”
hand, as a duality which can never be fully divorced. We may call this, from the perspective of individuality, male-female duality.\textsuperscript{246}

In this passage, I argue, Fidan presents her reader with a transformative vision of women’s image in the Qur’ān. I interpret this passage to mean Fidan’s hermeneutically open vision of relational identity moves decidedly away from problematizing women’s identity. Instead, she presents feminine gender in equal and relational context with man’s image in the Qur’ān. To establish this, she interprets the original soul as androgynous; yet in such a way that still maintains the inevitability of some form of gender binary. That is, the original soul, while ungendered, served as the locus for the creation of human beings. Once humanity emerged from this androgynous unity, gender became an inevitable and integral part of full human identity. Nonetheless, the gender binary at play is not a rigid one but a relational and dialectical one. Fidan elucidates this dialectic with the image of two mirrors, where each gender is a mirror to its opposite. Anyone who has stood in a great hall of mirrors can understand the infinite openess and mutability her picture conjures up. Like the ever-changing and infinitely open reflections in a hall of mirrors, neither gender is a fixed portrait or an independent essence. Gender exists only in the context of human relation. Identity is thus a shared, non-essentializing project. Male and female gender are never utterly fixed identities. Instead, when we think of gender as a mirroring dialectic, rather than a static essence, divine revelation points to the mutually transformative and open horizon that manifests freedom and full agency.

But what are the tangible results of her proposed relational ontology? Despite her claims of gender-dialectic, her work focuses more primarily on the stories of women in the Qur’ān, and thus leaves open to interpretation what she means by mutual interrelation of the genders. Her philosophical insights into gender in the Qur’ān lack support when it comes to her choice of figures in the Qur’ān. If she views in the Qur’ān gender as truly dialectical, could she not supplement her female imagery in the Qur’ān with more male imagery?

Still, she claims that the “duality” (ikilik) of the two genders, male and female, signifies ontological equality without totalizing equivalence. This means that male and female are not determined once and for all at the start of time, but continually determine one another, even at level of their very essence. Further, just as the identity of male and female is left open to mutual co-determination, so too, Fidan argues, is the Qur’ān an open space (açık alan) for women to claim linguistic freedom to define themselves.

Fidan: An Initial Evaluation

Yet, with Fidan’s heavy emphasis on ontology, can a scripturally grounded relational gender identity offer a space beyond the traditional pitfalls of gender essentialism? Fidan’s optimistic ontological approach to gender contrasts strongly with the opinions of at least some of her Turkish colleagues. For example, Ankara theologian Mahmut Ay worries that claiming an ontological framework for the sacred text is a clever way of saying modern gender critiques produce corrupt readings of the text.247 That is, insisting on an ontological reality of gender

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247 Mahmut Ay in his response at the end of her session in the 2010 Symposium (to be treated below). See Kur’ān ve Kadın Sempozyumu 4-5 Haziran 2010 Ankara (Ankara: Türkçe Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2013), 170. Ay is primarily responding to an earlier paper in the session, but the critique of the ontological approach is telling. Mahmut Ay critiques those that would deny women’s issues are only a modern phenomenon, that women have more rights today than in early Islam, that women’s rights are a type of human rights, and that God is specifically interested in women’s struggles to become individuals (169-170).
affirmed in the Divine Revelation might pose a lasting hindrance to any serious gender critique. Nonetheless, Fidan’s ontological approach is notably more fluid and flexible than the approach of others—other colleagues have advocated a more rigid ontological approach to the text than hers. Further, as we have just seen above, a scholar like Barbarosoğlu—despite nuances elsewhere—works under a rigid and somewhat uncritical presupposition of gender.

Compared to contemporary scholars in the Western and Arab world—including Amina Wadud, Barbara Stowasser, Fatima Mernissi, Leila Ahmed, and Asma Barlas—Fidan charts a middle course between the weight of ontological and historical claims. While accepting a historical dimension to revelation, she is reluctant to allow the historical baggage of revelation eclipse the claims revelation appears to make concerning the reality of gender. For Fidan, it is wrong to assume that the historical and ontological implications of a verse function as absolute alternatives to one another. She remarks, “Perhaps it is more correct to not depict history and ontology as absolute alternatives to one another.”

Similar to Fazlur Rahman, she suggests that the ontological dimension is best understood as unfolding within the confines of the historical. And while Fidan generally opts for the most egalitarian interpretation of quranic examples she can accept as plausible, she does not stand with Mernissi and Barlas, who staunchly promulgate a radically and unambiguously egalitarian reading of the sacred text—in this, her analysis demonstrates a greater degree of reserve than some of her contemporaries.

Fidan charts a middle course in relation to scholarship on gender and the Qur’ān outside of Turkey. In addition, compared to her Turkish contemporaries Barbarosoğlu and Tuksal, Fidan

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248 Fidan, Women’s Image, 36. Original Turkish: “Belki tarih ile ontolojinin birbirine mutlak alternatif gibi sunulmaması daha doğrudur.”
249 Fidan, Women’s Image, 36.
charts a different middle course. Namely, Fidan’s gender dialectics resist the rigid gender binaries at play in Barbarosoğlu’s work and they also explicitly highlight the ontological value of gender difference in contrast to Tuksal’s downplaying of gender difference.

Another caution in overstating Fidan’s relational ontology is that it would be misleading to imply Fidan constructs a fluid paradigm of relational ontology without recognizing a specific quranic gender ideal. Her vision of a gender dialectic, while open and flexible, is also defined by quranic precedents. For example, Fidan contrasts the blameworthy quranic figure of Abu Lahab’s wife with the liberated image of the veiled woman. In Fidan’s interpretation, the veil functions both on the vertical axis of one’s relationship to God and in the horizontal aspect of one’s relations in society.250 Drawing on ancient Mesopotamian history as well as Eliade’s language of “homo religiosus,” she affirms the veil as a mechanism which protects a woman from the profane world and opens the way for its wearer to have vertical contact with the divine.251 Thus, while Eve functions as the central example of relational ontology, Fidan also favors figures like the obedient Mary (Maryam), the freedom of the veiled woman, as well as the active and powerful Queen of Sheba.

Gender Equality and Discussions after Fidan

Since Fidan is not nearly as well-known as either Barbarosoğlu or Tuksal, another question is whether or not Fidan's work has provoked further academic discussion within Turkish academia, and whether her approach to gender dialectics has caught on. She might have an

250 Fidan, Women’s Image, 95.
251 Fidan, Women’s Image, 101. She actually cites Eliade’s The Sacred and the Profane translated into Turkish as Kutsal ve Dindışı.
original interpretation of gender in the Qur’ān, but is anybody reading her? I cannot ascertain how many readers she has garnered. I do know that *Women’s Image* has, to date, only been printed once. In all likelihood, her work will not enjoy the level of popularity seen by Barbarosoğlu or even Tuksal. I still think it is important to ask whether other academics cite her, know of her, or think of gender in dialectical terms similar to hers. Fidan’s work may yet be an indication of a broader intellectual trend. Making use of Turkish theological journals, in particular, the journals of the Ankara and Uludağ Theology Faculties, I found several that treated the subject of gender equality in terms of Turkish Muslim women's identity. Below is a chart listing several articles relevant to the discussion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Authors for Discussion:</th>
<th>Work Title &amp; Year</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Mention of Fidan?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ayşe Güç</td>
<td>“Islamic Feminism: The Efforts of Muslim Women to Become Individuals” (2008)</td>
<td>Islamic feminism as a theological venture</td>
<td>Published in Uludağ University Journal of Theology</td>
<td>Cites Fidan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadriye Durmuşoğlu &amp;</td>
<td>“Women’s Otherness in Three Qur’ān”</td>
<td>Women as perceived in classical <em>tafsīr</em></td>
<td>Published in Uludağ University Journal of Theology</td>
<td>Do not cite Fidan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once I introduce the three texts listed after Fidan’s publication, I will turn to a deeper analysis of Güç’s article and then Durmuşoğlu and Kurt’s article, as the content of these two articles proves most relevant to our discussion of Fidan. I begin with a cursory overview.

In “Islamic Feminism: The Efforts of Muslim Women to Become Individuals” (2008), Güç treats extensively the question of gender equality in Islam, arguing it is necessary to give quranic verses which support gender equality universal validity over verses which seem to suggest lack of equality. She engages feminist readers of the Qur’ān abroad and also remarks on the underdevelopment of academic discussions on this theme in Turkey. Importantly, she makes reference to Fidan as an exemplar for future scholarship.

Kadriye Durmuşoğlu and Adurrahman Kurt do not cite Fidan but nevertheless treat the subject of gender dialectic in “The Othering of Women in Three Qur’ān Commentaries” (2008). The fact that Durmuşoğlu and Kurt do not cite Fidan is noteworthy given their
proposal on the ontological duality and relatedness of gender. This may point to the broad and pervasive influence and budding appropriation of Western thought’s work on relatedness/self-other dialectics, particularly as understood by Gadamer (introduced to State Theology faculties primarily through the work of Fazlur Rahman\textsuperscript{257}). Moreover, their philosophical/theological framework is exactly what Güç is calling for. Durmuşoğlu and Kurt consciously use Gadamer and others to construct a home-grown theoretical framework for Islamic feminism.

In the last example, Safa Demir may have studied under Mehmet Paçacı, but her scholarship does not contribute to the specific question we are pursuing. Safa basically makes the common move of depicting the Jāhiliyya or pre-Islamic Arabia as a time where women had no rights or protections and points to the Qur’ān as a document which changed women’s status and guaranteed them rights, protection, and importance as mothers and members of the household. She is entirely uncritical of the traditional Muslim \textit{Heilsgeschichte}, or salvation history—taking traditional accounts consistently at their word and using it as her primary data. In this way, she serves as a contrasting example of a female scholar under the guidance of Mehmet Paçacı. She reflects a more traditional camp and, at the same time, confirms a wider trend of Muslim readings arguing for human and women’s rights from the Qur’ān.\textsuperscript{258} Nonetheless, she does in fact cite Fidan.

\textsuperscript{257} Felix Körner’s work stresses the importance of this transmission.

\textsuperscript{258} Yvonne Haddad lays out this basic trend in an article. She explains that the Western idea of human rights is different from the traditional Muslim notion of human responsibilities and duties. Western thought can be summarized as advocating a culture of rights, whereas Muslim thought can be viewed as presenting a culture of duties. In response to the Western critique that Muslim thought lacks a concept of human rights, “The struggle to balance the discrepancies between the culture of duties and the culture of rights has challenged individual scholars to attempt to locate human rights in the Qur’ān and the Hadith” (70). “Muslims, Human Rights, and Women’s Rights,” in \textit{Religion and the Global Politics of Human Rights}, ed. Thomas Banchoff (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Safa Demir is doing just this—making a case for women’s rights in the Qur’ān. Of the three waves of reflection on human rights and women rights listed by Haddad—the pro-Western approach, traditionalist responses,
To better understand the context of Turkish theological discussions of gender in Islam, it helps to appreciate the variety of sources these three texts include in their discussion. That is, Western philosophical figures, Muslim and non-Muslim scholars of gender and religion and classical Islamic sources all represent valid points of reference. A glance at the bibliographies of the texts listed above include Gadamer (most often cited from the English), philosopher David West, writings on postmodern thought, Turkish digests of sociologist Max Weber, Jewish thinker Martin Buber (cited from the English), sociologist and post-modern thinker Jean Baudrillard, even Georgetown scholars of Islam John Esposito and Yvonne Haddad (in Güç). Also, names associated with the more esoteric side of religious studies appear, like that of Frithjof Schuon (see Durmuşoğlu). This indicates that within the context of these theology faculties, a wide variety of Western sources are being actively referred to. From the outside, it hard to get a grasp of how these sources contribute to Turkish theological discussions, a question that will be tackled more explicitly in subsequent chapters. Nevertheless, there is active engagement with Western scholarship as well as numerous translations of seminal works into Turkish.

More significantly, citations of important non-Turkish scholars of Islam and gender Asma Barlas, Leila Ahmed, M. Badran, Amina Wadud, and Fatima Mernissi occurs with

and Islamic feminism (77)—Demir decidedly falls into the category of traditionalist responses despite her context in the Ankara theology faculty.

259 This is just an overview to highlight the spectrum of sources cited in these discussions.

260 My following chapters on authority will go into these dynamics in greater depth.

261 Sometimes translations occur from other languages. German scholar Navid Kermani has been translated into Turkish and is cited in the bibliography of H. Yusuf Yılmazoğlu on Abu Zayd’s complex and slightly controversial work—*Kur’an Tefsirinde Bağlamsalci Yaklaşım: Nasr Hâmid Ebû Zeyd Örneği (The Contextual Approach in Qur’ān Commentary: The Example of Abu Zayd)* published through Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü in the department of Tafsir (2006), 82. Significantly, Yılmaçoğlu’s thesis advisor is none other than Mehmet Paçacı. What is striking about this master’s thesis (*yüksek lisans tezi*) is that Yılmazoğlu is defending and commending Abu Zayd’s work. He actively endorses the dialectic proposed by Abu Zayd and the literary/contextual approach to understanding the Qur’ān. No less significantly, Abu Zayd’s work, in significant part, has been translated into Turkish! In his bibliography he lists eleven works by Ebû Zeyd Nasr Hâmid five of which are cited in Turkish translation (80-81), another work by Amin al-Khuli is also cited in Turkish translation.
frequency (particularly in Güç). Notably, Amina Wadud and Fatima Mernissi have even been translated into Turkish.\(^{262}\) No less importantly, secular Western feminism as well as theological feminist thinkers of the West are cited—for instance, Annelise Maugue, E.S. Fiorenza, Susan Frank Parsons, R.R. Ruether, and Natalie Watson.

Despite the variety of non-Turkish and even Western scholarship engaged in these three texts, there is also heavy reference to classical Islamic thinkers and especially Qur’ān commentators (generally translated into Turkish)—al-Tirmidhī (Tirmizi), al-Qurṭubī (Kurtubi), al-Bukharī (Buhari), Muslim (Müsliim), Ibn Kathīr (İbn Kesîr), Ibn Mājah (İbn Mâce), to give an idea. Of the classical thinkers and philosophers who make their way into citations and bibliographies of the articles at hand, al-Ghazālī (Ebu Hamid Muhammed Gazali) and Niẓām al-Mulk (Nizâmül-Mülk) represent some of the most prominent examples.

Looking at the disparate authoritative traditions at play in these discussion, I ask whether some traditions (Western or classical Islamic) ultimately carry more weight and whether this admixture encourages scholarly synthesis. As, I suspect is the case with Hafsa Fidan’s understanding of a gender dialectic, academic theologians are in a position to creatively synthesize insights by joining contemporary Western and classical Islamic sources into one, sometimes blurry, discussion. Now I turn to a detailed discussion of each article.

Ayşe Güç, “İslamcı Feminizm: Müslüman Kadınların Birey Olma Çabaları” or “Islamic Feminism: The Efforts of Muslim Women to Become Individuals” (2008). 263

Güç frames her work through an analysis of the term “Islamic feminism” (islamcı feminizm264) as a developing fact of Islamic culture. Specifically, she concentrates on the intellectual output of women studying the condition of women in the context of religion and culture. Moreover, she asks if the discourse of Islamic feminism can produce its own theology to accompany it. She takes into account factors of Western feminist discourse along with Orientalism, colonialism, nationalism in the development of this new discourse. To start, she points out the irony of the matter—the developing critical women’s consciousness was triggered by Western men—and cites Leila Ahmed’s point that the Western men critiqued Muslim societies for their treatment of women while ignoring the calls of their European women protesting. She soberly stresses that in the development of a critical consciousness of women it cannot be denied that male thinkers have had a constitutive effect in it. She traces the development of this general phenomenon of Islamic feminism265 and the parallel developments of the 1980s. Following the 1980s there was a significant divergence of paths and movements in various countries began taking different courses.

Güç notes that Western scholars tend to lump together secular and religious Muslim women scholars. She suggests a distinction be made. Accordingly, she divides women scholars

264 Concerning the translation of “islamcı” – this seems to represent a less exact semantic space than the English terms Islamist, Islamic or Muslim. In general, islamcı might be taken to mean Islamist in the more fundamental sense or Islamic in a very general sense.
265 Güç, “İslamcı Feminizm: Müslüman Kadınların Birey Olma Çabaları,” 653—article henceforth referred to as “Islamic Feminism.”
who into two main camps—secular Muslim women and Islamic women. She lists scholars under each division. I present her suggestions distinctions in the following table:

| Secular Muslim Women: Fatima Mernissi, Nevval el-Saadawi, Nilüfer Göle |
| Islamic Women: Amina Wadud(-Muhsin), Aziza el-Hibri, Asma Barlas, Hidayet Şefkatli |

Figure 8: Secular Muslim Women and Islamic Women.  

Another common label she addresses is that of “Islamic feminism.” Güç is keenly aware of the tendency to put off the term “feminist” and deems it might be better to classify them “Islamic Women” (as shown above) in terms of their contribution to “Muslim Women Studies.” She further notes that, by the 1990s the question of an Islamic feminism was a hotly disputed one. Recognizing not all scholars will approve of her use and understanding of the term, she nevertheless defines Islamic feminism for her reader:

Islamic feminism is a discourse that evaluates from a critical vantage the situation of women in religion and in tradition, gives special importance to societal gender equality, interrogates the patriarchal character of traditional and religious interpretations, and all the while, with the Glorious Qur’an at the fore, takes religious texts as a reference.

For a sense of comparison, I contrast this with a secular definition of Islamic feminism by Georgetown scholar Yvonne Haddad. Haddad, like Güç, acknowledges that Islamic feminism is used as a negative label by detractors, but defines Islamic feminism in the following terms:

Islamic feminism refers to thinkers who advocate women’s rights from within the Islamic tradition but depart from the conservative traditionalist discourse.
Haddad lists leading Islamic feminist scholars, such as Asma Barlas, Amina Wadud, Riffat Hassan, Mona and Jawad Siddiqi. In her analysis, the twenty-first century has seen the rise of an Islamically validated, modern way of life as an alternative to secular liberal feminism. Since Haddad does not treat Turkey, but I might argue that scholars Güç and Fidan, along with the more well-known Tuksal embody aspects of this twenty-first-century trend.

Returning to Güç, the Turkish scholar stresses the fundamentally different character of Islamic feminism, yet asserts that it—like Western feminism—must face modernity. She views the shift from the 1980s to the 1990s as a turning point in the development of the discourse—the 90s being a time when Islamic feminism took a decisive independent turn. And while figures like the Moroccan Fatima Mernissi and Egyptian Nawal el-Saadawi don’t accept the label of Islamic feminism, they are still to be viewed as important contributors to its development. The distinction between the Islamic feminist and a secular feminist lies in the goals they aim for. The secular feminist is not bound to any religious authority, whereas the Islamist feminist discourse holds as its basic argument that the Qur’ān pronounces and affirms the equality (eşitlik) of all human beings and claims that the Qur’ān should be approached as women-friendly.270 As an example, Güç brings up the controversy over Q 4:34 and the question of men’s sovereignty over women, but dismisses the verse and views the quranic principle of religious/spiritual equality as being more universal than the implications of Q 4:34, fully aware though that the preceding patriarchal traditions did not see things in such a light.

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270 Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 657.
Thus, in Güç’s view, the goal of Muslim women at large is to return to the Qur’ān and spread a reading which emphasizes this latter aspect of spiritual equality. In this way, Islamic feminists, according to Badran as cited by Güç, are more radical than secular feminists for insisting on equality both in general and concerning particulars like state leadership, religious leadership, sovereignty and the ability to be a mufti.271 She points out that writers like Tuksal (treated above) have taken to mining through the hadith and attempting to re-interpret them.272 There has also been a marked proliferation of women’s groups and journals.273 Significantly, this last turn of events seems to be underrepresented in Turkey—she sees a need for a Turkish movement toward creating journals and environments where the philosophical/theological dimensions of Islamic feminism are actively developed.274 She equates this new feminism with a sort of women’s consciousness that must meet the following criteria: 1) the roots of this feminism are in the Qur’ān 2) there is a clear break between Muslim and Western secular feminism 3) the family [and its construction and dynamics] is not seen as an individual issue but as a societal one.275

She goes on to list developments in other countries only to conclude that Turkey lags behind in this phenomenon. For her the answer lies in putting to good use philosophical theological evaluations nurtured in academic circles as well as socio-cultural analysis.276 A possible reason, she suggests, for the lagging serious interest in this particular intellectual engagement is the subject’s embroilment in Turkish domestic issues. Another obvious hindrance

271 Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 659.
272 Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 659.
273 Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 659.
274 Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 660.
275 Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 660.
276 Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 662.
lies in the fact that this subject remains undertreated at the academic level. Significantly, at this point she cites Hafsa Fidan in the footnotes as an example of what she wishes to see more of.²⁷⁷

Next Güç treats what might be embarked upon in women’s studies and Muslim women’s life.²⁷⁸ In this she sees secular Muslim feminism and Islamic feminism as intimately connected and underscores the fact of their connection should not go neglected. Somewhat strikingly and by way of negative evaluation, she asserts that the Islamic feminist project is both in theory and practice as fairly limited one. Distinct from Western feminism, Islamic feminism cannot be said to insist forcefully enough on full, universal equality. Surprisingly, she draws the claim that Islamic feminism is better suited to making a theological impact than a socio-economic and political one!²⁷⁹ Thus her project is ultimately a theological one. In her call for a more locally grown feminism, she refers to the Christian and Jewish feminist theologies as a fruitful parallel (Elizabeth Candy Stanton, Rosemary R. Reuther, Phyllis Bird, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza).²⁸⁰

There is one issue she takes with these Western theological approaches to feminism, and that is that the Christian feminist theologians in particular can treat the sacred text itself as something written by men, whereas the Qur’an, as direct revelation from God, cannot be viewed in such light.²⁸¹ The Islamic feminist must insist that the problem lies not with the revelation (which came from God) but from tradition (which came from men).²⁸² By way of conclusion—given that “feminism” is so tied to the Western tradition—the probability of successfully conducting an

²⁷⁷ Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 662.
²⁷⁸ Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 663.
²⁷⁹ Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 664.
²⁸⁰ Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 667.
²⁸¹ Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 668.
²⁸² Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 669.
analysis within that framework is severely reduced. The Muslim woman has in her already a system of thought, so she has the opportunity to go about things differently.

There have been various developments in different countries, but something new is definitely on the rise among Muslim women writers. Prevalent across the board is the importance for these women to return to the primary sources. Furthermore, there exists a growing need to look at things from a new angle instead of relying on traditional and modern commentaries over a few disputed verses in the Qur’ān. She recaps that the viewpoint of learned males with negative ideas on women effectively silenced the potential positive vision of women that might have otherwise spread.

In addition, Güç deems it necessary to point out the differences between Western and Islamic types of feminism—the biggest differences dealing with family and women’s bodies. She seems to view Western feminism as being entirely denying the value of family. Not surprisingly, she also makes a point to reject limitless sexual freedom. Despite her critical stance toward Western feminism, she reiterates her internal critique that Islamic feminism is lacking in any sort of robust theory, suggesting it may be sufficient to proceed with a critical women’s consciousness in lieu of a newly constructed theory from scratch. Crucially (and this will tie into the following article by Durmuşoğlu and Kurt), she identifies the heart of the problem as “othering” and objectifying women. In this way, islami feminizm is a struggle to reclaim the Muslim woman as subject. This last point is a clear instance of a philosophical answer to a theological issue of gender and echoes both Fidan and the article about to follow.

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283 Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 669.
284 Güç, “Islamic Feminism,” 670.

The fact that Durmuşoğlu and Kurt do not cite Fidan is noteworthy given their proposal on the ontological duality and relatedness of gender. This may point to the broad and pervasive influence and budding appropriation of Western thought’s work on relatedness/self-other dialectics. Moreover, their philosophical/theological framework is exactly what Güç seems to be calling for. And to return to Felix Körner, we see Durmuşoğlu and Kurt making use of thinkers like Gadamer and Buber to construct a home-grown theoretical framework for Islamic feminism. This represents a fruit of this unique synthesis Körner has identified as a defining dynamic of the Turkish academic milieu.

This article proposes to look at three Qur’ān commentators and their remarks about “woman as other.” The academic duo examine Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (Fahruddȋn Râzȋ), Ibn Kathir (İbn Kesir), and al-Qurtubī (Kurtubȋ). However, the interest of their article goes beyond a simple analysis of three commentators. The two give provocative suggestions for developing the field in their conclusion—all done in tandem with a heavy reliance on Gadamer, Buber, and the notion of “othering.”

Kurt and Durmuşoğlu begin with a philosophical groundwork which can be summarized as such: the ‘other’ makes possible my own identity. Without the “other” there can be no “I.” The relation of I-Thou dialectic is key—in this their primary influence is Gadamer, who is cited from the English. They use the terms “I-Other dialectic” (Ben-Öteki diyalektiği) and “I-Thou

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dialectic” (Ben-Sen diyolojik) to speak of this dialectical relation between self and other. Referring to Gadamer, they explain the “You” or “other” is given meaning in three ways. 1) In an objectifying or instrumental relationship to the ego. 2) Recognized as a person by the “I” but this other is still formed by the will of the self—here they cite the Hegelian master-slave relation. They specify that in male-female relations the notion of male sovereignty over women falls into this second category of “othering.” 3) Finally there is the case in which “You” is truly recognized as a “you” in terms of its full individuality. This situation expresses an authentic dialogue between I and Thou.

Regarding the treatment of the commentators, they rely heavily on the Biblically influenced rivayetler, or Isrāʾīliyyāt, and seem to be willing to accord them some authoritative status. They cite the Qurʾān extensively but do not always check all the relevant passages as Fidan does in her approach of going through all passages related to key images. For example, Durmuşoğlu and Kurt fail to note as Fidan does that nowhere in the Qurʾān does Iblis tempt Eve. The two also fail to mention that Eve is superfluous in several of the quranic accounts of Paradise. At the same time, they nonetheless critique the stories told by commentators to supplement accounts like the narrative of Adam and Eve and recognize their connection to the Biblical accounts. They assert that such accounts drive people to assume that the Qurʾān affirms male hegemony as the natural course of things, when the Qurʾān is not really endorsing this as its primary message. Furthermore, such non-quranic accounts can at best be understood

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286 The shift in Turkish terminology is not reflected in my use of “dialectic.” Instead of translating this second term as dialogue, which would have been inappropriate, I kept the word “dialectic.”
289 Compare: Durmusoglu and Kurt, “The Othering of Women,” 629/Fidan, Women’s Image, 43.
metaphorically and should not be taken to show that women in her fitra, or primal nature, is fundamentally less than man. Thus, they put gender in the same category as race, color, etc…, arguing the Qur’ân does not distinguish along these lines—people are judged universally by their works. This they follow with an argument for upholding the positive difference between men and women. Her argument for the positive purpose of gender difference is rooted in Q 30:21. From this passage, they assert that the difference between the sexes is how we find peace and shelter in one another. Therefore, like Fidan, these two clearly work under the assumption that genders are equal but not equivalent.291 The question remains as to whether this functions at an ontological level as it does for Fidan.

Their analysis is fueled by a concern for the process of “othering.” They view this process of ‘othering’ women as starting with Eve—for instance, they mention Ibn Kathîr’s story of how woman was created clean but made unclean after she took the fruit, that since Eve made the tree bleed God punished her so that she too would bleed.292 They also wax critical of the commentators for not always citing their sources. As an example, they critique al-Qurtubî for not citing his source on the question of fitna, or social chaos and rebellion.293

In their conclusion, they stress the ontologically fundamental and constitutive nature of authentic relatedness. For this scholarly pair, the quranic message of human responsibility and Vice Gerency applies to both genders without distinction. They place the other-self dialectic within this quranic framework and maintain such a hermeneutic is authentically supported by the principles of the Qur’ân. At the very end of their conclusion there are three points of interest:294

294 Durmuşoğlu and Kurt, “The Othering of Women,” 646.
1) they connect the “you” of the human other with the eternal divine “You” God.\textsuperscript{295} 2) They seem to throw a critical stab at the Christian tradition of feminism, cursorily brushing aside notions of atonement and the necessity of being male to receive God’s special promise,\textsuperscript{296} and 3) close with a citation from the Qur’ān, \textbf{Q 4:123-4}:

   It will not be according to your hopes or those of the People of the Book: anyone who does wrong will be requited for it and will find no one to protect or help him against God; anyone, male or female, who does good deeds and is a believer, will enter Paradise and will not be wronged by as much as the dip in a date stone.\textsuperscript{297}

Thus, they close with a citation to stress one of the main hermeneutics of Islamic feminism—divinely ordained equal spiritual and moral responsibility between men and women, implying that relationality cannot be divorced from responsibility to others and to God.

\textbf{Ongoing Discussion? A Return to Fidan}

The question still remains as to whether this is a developing trend or simply a fluke. We turn now to Fidan’s contribution in the \textit{Symposium on Women and the Qur’ān}.\textsuperscript{298} Published in 2013, the symposium was held in 2010. Its contents provide a map of Turkish scholarship on a variety of issues, as well as a new publication by Hafsa Fidan.\textsuperscript{299} Her short but pithy article bore the title, “The Women in The Qur’ān: Eve, Mary and the Queen of Sheba.” Useful to the present discussion, her position at the \textit{Symposium} is basically consistent with the position of her 2006 book and, in addition, affords her reader with the immediate reactions of other scholars. The

\textsuperscript{295}To equate the human other with the divine other is a common move perhaps in Jewish and Christian thought. Given the total transcendence of Allah, this particular point is intriguing. They do not flesh out what the implications of such an equating would entail, but they also do not insist upon it.

\textsuperscript{296}Could this mean a reference to priesthood?


\textsuperscript{298}\textit{Kur’ān ve Kadın Sempozyumu 4-5 Haziran 2010} (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2013).

session in which she participated was followed by heated responses and proved the longest section of responses in the symposium. In this paper, her discussion on Eve highlights her unique relational approach to identity, while Mary and the Queen of Sheba function as quranic images of female agency. Clearly stressing the need for a relational ontology, half of her discussion centered on Eve and the question of whether the “soul” (nafs) in Q 4:1 represented a non-gendered primal unity before being split into a pair of gendered mates. Fidan opens with the following question, one that will ultimately lead this discussion back to the original discussion of fitra: “What sort of being would Adam have been without Eve?”

This question offers a strategic vantage into Fidan’s contribution to women’s Qurʾān hermeneutics. Her response to this question offers a prime example of how history, transcendence, traditional Islamic sciences, and Western humanities play integral roles in her work. Fidan again integrates Western discussions on feminism in religion and philosophical hermeneutics with a variety of traditional tafsīr and hadith literature. Moreover, she is willing to take a few theoretical leaps in order to restructure the way we look at the question of women in the Qurʾān.

For example, before asking what sort of being Adam would have been without Eve, she acknowledges the currently popular approaches to try to disambiguate traditional accounts of the creation narrative with what the quranic texts actually depicts—something we have already seen in the groundbreaking work of Tuksal. She goes on to ask whether Eve was created after Adam, whether she was created from the same material as Adam, and whether Eve was guilty of

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300 “Havvâ olmasaydı Âdem nasıl bir varlık olurdu?” Fidan, “Kurʾân’da Üç Kadın,” 151. Henceforth, her paper and the comments of her respondents will simply be referred to by their place in the Symposium.

301 That is, influenced by the Isrâʿîlyâr literature.
the first sin. But these are only her leading questions. Such questions recognize the increasingly common tactic of claiming that the qur'anic references to Adam and Eve’s descent to Earth have been corrupted by subsequent non-Muslim (i.e. Christian or Jewish) elements that entered into the tradition after the initial reception of the qur'anic text. Nevertheless, Fidan is not overly hasty in discarding potentially corrupted tradition. She instead uses it strategically, accepting its contested shortcomings. Like others before her, she clearly points out, for example, that, contrary to the interpretation of traditional commentator al-Ṭabarī, Eve cannot be held solely responsible for the first sin, since in the Qurʾān either Adam is described as the transgressor or the couple is jointly inculpated. Yet, Fidan’s real contribution to this discussion is her original tactic of reshaping the issue of gender in the Qurʾān into a framework of what I call relational ontology—a position already present in her earlier work.

Within a framework of relational ontology, the implicit answer to her leading question is that Adam would not have been a man without Eve. In other words, what her relational ontology means for the creation of Adam and Eve is the following: The original nafs (primal soul) represents a primal unity which is then actualized by gender distinction, coinciding with the birth of male-female gender dialectics. Such a dialectic (her word) is possible because of the original shared being, i.e. both came from one nafs. Yet humans will never return to this undistinguished primal unity from whence they came. The male-female gender dialectic remains an unavoidable ontological reality, but a relational and fluid one, rather than a static or hierarchical one.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰² See for example, her discussion on pp. 153-55 in the Symposium. On page 155, Fidan expounds upon the negative influence of the Biblical account regarding Eve’s role in paradise.
⁴⁰³ Fidan’s position is in many ways comparable with that of Neo-Orthodox Christian theologian Karl Barth, who also makes use of gender dialectic as fundamental to human identity. Barth writes, “Man never exists as such, but always as the human male or the human female. Hence in humanity, and therefore in fellow-humanity, the decisive, fundamental and typical question, normative for all other relationships, is that of the relationship in this differentiation…We have to say both that man is necessarily and totally man or woman, and that as such and in
This position of relational ontology, or in her terms gender-dialectic, can be characterized as constructive theology. She then uses her own constructive theology to reinterpret medieval Qur’ān commentator al-Ṭabarī. Al-Ṭabarī’s commentary on Adam and Eve presumes Adam was created before Eve in accordance with the biblical story. Using her constructive position, she can reconsider al-Ṭabarī’s reading with the proviso that Adam’s identity is not clearly established until the creation of Eve—since, according to al-Ṭabarī, Adam roamed paradise in boredom until Eve’s creation. In this way, Fidan, while maintaining her framework of relational ontology, speaks to two different groups – those still attached to the traditional lens of interpreting the Qur’ān through tafsīr literature and those who stress the divergence of traditional tafsīr literature from the quranic account. Without attempting to smooth out all the differences between traditional readings and the Qur’ān, she nevertheless deems Eve the “being that sets history in motion” (tarihın akişını başlatan varlık). Such a label does not contradict the quranic material that names Eve as a co-agent with Adam in eating the forbidden fruit. It also does not wholly consequence he is equally necessarily and totally man and woman. He cannot wish to liberate himself from the differentiation and exist beyond his sexual determination as mere man; for in everything that is commonly human he will always be in fact either the human male or the human female. Nor can he wish to liberate himself from the relationship and be man without woman or woman apart from man; for in all that characterises him as man he will be thrown back upon woman, or as woman upon man, both man and woman being referred to this encounter and co-existence. No other distinction between man and man goes so deep as that in which the human male and the human female are so utterly different from each other. And no other relationship is so obvious, self-explanatory and universally valid as that whose force resides precisely in the presupposed underlying otherness. The female is to the male, and the male to the female the other man and as such the fellow-man. It is with reason, therefore, that we first enquire what the divine command has to say in this sphere of fellow-humanity.” From Church Dogmatics: A Selection, ed. and trans. G. W. Bromiley (New York: Harper, 1962, reprint of T & T Clark, 1961), 194-5. I have Tasi Perkins to thank for this parallel, the consequences of which I will not pursue here.

304 Fidan, Symposium, 157.
305 Fidan, Symposium, 157.
306 Here Fidan points to the material in The Heights, Q 7:11-25 where both Adam and Eve are agents, as opposed to the material in sūras two (The Cow) and twenty (Ta Ha). She recognizes all three accounts on page 153 of the Symposium, but focuses on the one in sūra seven to highlight the agency the Qur’ān recognizes in Eve.
invalidate the value of traditional speculation on Eve’s role. Yet it adds something new to Eve’s agency and role. Fidan explains Eve’s role in this manner:

Perhaps Adam would have [indeed] been able to understand how he was different from the rest of [God’s] creatures, but because he would not have resembled them, he would have only understood himself from the perspective of ‘difference.’ Whereas, Eve was the sole being able to show Adam what sort of individual he was, [that is] by being clearly similar to him.\(^\text{307}\)

As Fidan points out, Adam is only recognizable as human once Eve is also taken into consideration. Adam’s basic humanity is constituted through his resemblance with Eve.\(^\text{308}\) Eve is the being described in transcendent revelation, who sets history in motion by making full human identity possible. In short, human identity is from the outset relational. Humans need one another for their identity.

Further, her renewed treatment of süra four (the Women), Fidan continues the popular discussion of the nafs or soul. As noted above, Q 4:1 states, “…be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single soul [nafs], and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide…” Fidan divides the interpreters of this verse into two groups, one which assumes the nafs refers to Adam and that Eve is the mate created afterward, and the other which assumes no gender distinction in nafs. The second group (presumably of mostly modern provenance) takes gender as a result of the second step, where a pair of mates is what is created from one previously non-gendered nafs. Fidan clearly states that from the Qur’an itself it is not clear which interpretation is more appropriate.\(^\text{309}\) However, she

\(^{307}\) Translated from the Turkish which reads, “Belki, Âdem kendisini diğer yaratıklardan farklılığı nedeniyle algılayabilirdi ama onlar arasında bir benzeri olmadığı için kendisini sadece ‘farklılık’ perspektifinden kavramış olurdu, Oysa Havvâ, Âdem’in belli ölçude benzeri olarak Adem’e kendisinin nasıl biri olduğunu gösterme potansiyeline sahip tek varlık oldu.” Symposium, 151-2.

\(^{308}\) Fidan, Symposium, 152.

\(^{309}\) Fidan, Symposium, 158.
quickly rallies other verses which suggest the greater salience of the second interpretation.\textsuperscript{310} In this way, she makes use of intra-textual resources to support a non-gendered primal soul [\textit{nafs}]. In further support of her emphasis on the relation between Adam and Eve for human identity, Fidan, in a footnote, even cites the account in \textit{Genesis} 2:18, which incidentally reads: “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.’”\textsuperscript{311} Despite the fact that such evidence also underscores the secondary nature of Eve’s humanity as helper and not primary agent, her overall interpretation of Eve is mainly about human identity. In other words, humans are beings that exist in relation—in particular, gender relation.

Fidan also approaches the subject of human identity, and especially women’s agency, through the portraits of other women in the Qur’an—namely those of Mary and the Queen of Sheba. If her project is to use the quranic portraits of women to argue for a vision of full female agency, the role Mary plays is less illuminating. Apart from being an example and even considered a prophet by al-Ash’arī,\textsuperscript{312} the specific form of Mary’s agency reflects only the more traditional understanding of her passive role as obedient, dedicated to God, and bearer of the Messiah. Her respondent Halis Albayrak (at the Ankara University Theology Faculty), in an effort to strengthen Fidan’s argument, suggests thinking of Mary less as a symbol of obedience and more one of self-respect and strength.\textsuperscript{313}

\textsuperscript{310} She cites \textit{Q 7:189, Q 35:11, and Q 49:13}. Concerning \textit{Q 7:189}, when translated into Turkish neither the soul nor the mate carry gender. In the original Arabic, \textit{nafs} is feminine, and its mate appears in a masculine form (\textit{zawj}). \textit{Q 35:11} more clearly supports Fidan’s reading of gender as the second step in the creation of human beings.


\textsuperscript{313} Albayrak, \textit{Symposium}, 182.
The example of the Queen of Sheba is perhaps more fruitful, but still leaves something to be desired. Fidan touches on the Queen of Sheba as an example of a woman in a position of intellectual competence, power, and authority. However, she downplays several aspects of the quranic account, namely that the Queen of Sheba is heavily dependent on her male advisors, that she rules over a kingdom which Satan has led into error, and that she ultimately submits to Solomon’s (male) authority. At the same time, she does not downplay the mixed reception the Queen of Sheba has accrued. She recognizes that in current debates the Queen of Sheba has become a hot topic of discussion for determining the Islamic position on women’s right to hold political office. In this vein, she notes that some use the Queen of Sheba as a positive example of a woman ruling and others use her as a negative one. However, her treatment does not go beyond this. Leaving us with both positive and negative approaches to reading the Islamic role of women, it is possible to fault her for not going further in her analysis. Yet, as Karen Bauer has aptly pointed out, the efforts of some to insist that the Qur’ān supports total gender equality do so only at the cost of downplaying certain aspects of the text and ignoring much of the traditional interpretation of the text. In this light, Fidan’s position is not only more conservative but perhaps more realistic. As noted above, instead of focusing on the verses of greatest controversy, her approach is to look at the female images and female characters that the Qur’ān provides. In this way, she chooses not to limit herself to a small selection of quranic verses and instead covers substantial narrations. In these narrations the Qur’ān offers tantalizing and open-ended characterizations of gender and women role-models. In this way, she establishes her own agency as an interpreter of the Qur’ān. Instead of allowing herself to be limited by highly politicized

debates, she recognizes these debates and moves around them at will, conscientiously constructing her own approach to reading gender in the Qurʾān. At the same time, her respondent Albayrak offers some gentle criticism—one which is perhaps a logical extension of Fidan’s overall approach: It does not make sense to talk of women in isolation from men, and making the issue about ‘women and the Qurʾān’ often overlooks the fact that men are a large part of the discussion.\footnote{Albayrak, *Symposium*, 182.} Even though Fidan’s ontological approach posits the necessity of thinking of gender in relation, her emphasis on female figures in the Qurʾān still treats women in isolation.

**The Wider Discussion**

Fidan’s contribution can be better understood in terms of the debates which followed in her panel. After her paper, several respondents were given the chance to comment on the overall panel. The speaker who received the most sustained criticism, and was even given a chance to defend himself, was İbrahim Hilmi Karslı. In his paper, Karslı dealt with the values and developments of modernity in dialogue with medieval and modern *mufassirun*—with particular focus on the question of women’s rights and gender equality. While critical of modernists who wish to critique traditional interpretations without adequate historical context, his position is similar to that of Fazlur Rahman’s. Accordingly, Karslı makes a distinction between historical criticism and the recognition that the reason behind legal rulings are tied to custom, which is itself subject to the changes of history. He uses a Gadamerian approach to hermeneutics to push back on modern readings, pointing out that modern readers make prejudgments about the Qurʾān just as readers in the past approached the divine text with prejudgments. These prejudgments, even though modern, must not be accepted without scrutiny. However for him, rather than using
a superficial appropriation of Western intellectual tools, it is necessary to delve into the traditional Islamic sciences for new answers. Notably, others resist Karslı’s fairly simplistic division of traditional vs. historical commentary. One respondent outright stated, “Actually I do not completely agree with Ibrahim Hilmi Karslı’s definitions made in the framework of a traditional-historical divide.” In particular, Mahmut Ay (Ankara University Theology Faculty) is responsible for the harshest critique of Karslı’s position. Ay rejects suspicion of gender equality and women’s rights, and theology DEFENDS them as natural outcomes of God having equipped human beings with freedom and responsibility. He affirms the Qur’ān as utterly transcendent, but does not think such an unqualified affirmation for the Sunna is historically or logically appropriate. Women’s issues are not simply a modern phenomenon or problem. Rather, God takes an active interest in women’s struggles to be individuals (and presumably has always done so). Ay claims the Qurʾān is not a text outside of history, but if one approaches it properly it is a document that makes history. Insofar as a traditional approach to the Qurʾān impedes humans (including women) from using their God given talents to become full individuals, it is the biggest obstacle to finding transcendent meaning in the Qurʾān.

Beyond the Panel—A Brief Excursion into Hermeneutics

This brings us to the question of Qurʾān itself. What is the Qurʾān that distinguishes it from other texts? Fidan’s dissertation advisor and qur’anic scholar Mehmet Paçacı offers us a starting definition. In Paçacı’s introduction to the Qurʾān, he asks what the Qurʾān is. His

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316 Albayrak, Symposium, 183. Turkish: “Aslında, İbrahim Hilmi Karslı Hocamın gelenekselci-tarihselci ayrımı çerçevesinde yaptığı tanımlamalara bütünleyle katılmıyorum.”
317 Ay, Symposium, 169.
318 Ay, Symposium, 169.
319 Ay, Symposium, 170.
answer: The Qur’ān is God’s final revelation. As revelation, the Qur’ān is information revealed by God to the Prophet Mohammad in a manner similar to the occasions of revelation sent to prophets before him. His approach is somewhat traditional, and a little suspicious of modern treatment of the Qur’ān as a text to be dissected into parts at the expense of the whole. As he writes near the end of his introduction to the Qur’ān: “With the increasing effect of a modern, secular worldview, the disciplines assessing the sources of religious texts at distinct levels have lost something of the larger picture.” More than this, there are basic disagreements on how to define the Qur’ān as a text.

The difficulty of defining the Qur’ān as text goes further. A Western scholar of Islamic thought once noted, “In the Arabic tradition, ‘to interpret’ (awwala) etymologically means ‘to bring something to its origin.’ Those who practice interpretation (ta’wīl) apply the meaning originally intended by the author of the text.” But for some Turkish theologians and academics, the designation of God as ‘author’ is something of an unfortunate projection from Western theology.

For instance, according to Turkish philosopher of religion Zeki Özcan’s book on theological hermeneutics, God is not an author. He acknowledges that texts do have limitations and a life of their own, but makes a qualified exception for Divine Revelation, arguing that (contra some conservative Christian theologians), we cannot say God is the

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322 Frank Griffel, Al-Ghazali’s Philosophical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 107.
323 Zeki Özcan, Teolojik Hermenötik (İstanbul; Bursa; Şanlıurfa: ALFA, 1998). Published through Uludağ University’s Theology Faculty under Philosophy of Religion.
324 One relatively well-known example of a Christian theologian treating God as an author of a text is Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Is There a Meaning in This Text? (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998). For a useful example of a
“author” of a text. In this sense it is impossible to get inside God’s mind in order to better understand the text. Nevertheless the sacred text is still a text. Thus the modern Muslim interpreter’s task is to pay attention to the concrete dimensions given in the text. But can the believer really function as the measure of the interpretation? This is where hermeneutics serves to preserve continuity in interpretation of the text. The continuity that counts is a theological one. In response to the many secular uses and sources for hermeneutics, it is nevertheless important to find the theological limits of hermeneutics. Thus, Z. Özcan affirms the value of hermeneutics while limiting it to make space for theological concerns rooted in Islamic tradition. In light of these reflections on sacred hermeneutics, we can see how Fidan does exactly this. Her own work is theologically constructive and yet seeks to maintain hermeneutic continuity with traditional interpretation as well as draw from modern and Western debates. Moreover, Fidan’s continued focus on Q 4:1 shows her central contribution of equality without equivalence is still of potential import within Turkish academic circles. As has been shown, even a cursory glance into the debates of this recent symposium volume show that an oversimplified paradigm of rejecting tradition to claim an egalitarian text does not reflect the complexity of debates about tradition and modernity among Turkish scholars of women’s Qur’ān hermeneutics. Fidan is clearly one example among many.

**Conclusion**

We have seen how in addition to a variety methods (sociological, hadith-based, and hermeneutical), there are also a variety of positions available on gender and *fitra* in Turkish

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academic discussions. On the position of women’s essential nature, there exists a varied range of options and a live discussion in Turkish Theology Faculties. I have argued for the original contribution of Hafsa Fidan in particular, but it stands to note that none of the three main scholars in these two chapters could easily be labeled as traditionalist or modernist. Despite divergent views on whether and how gender can represent an ontological reality that transcends sociological constructs, none of the three scholars has an absolutely positive or negative relationship to tradition or modernity. More importantly, each navigates the tension between traditional and modern values differently by developing or assuming a distinctive stance on the nature of gender. For Barbarosoğlu, ḥadīth, or original human nature, is obviously gendered, and is gendered in such a way that full realization of that nature comes into conflict with many modern values. For Tuksal, ḥadīth is fundamentally human and common and more or less transcends gender—with scholars today in a prime position to seize upon this truth and look with a discerning eye on false notions of gendered ḥadīth in Islamic tradition. Finally, for Fidan, gender is built into what it means to be human, but this does not mean gender is atomic and fixed, rather gender is vibrant, moving and always only ever actualized in relation.

Now to close, I bring this discussion into contact with a more general observation by Muslim scholar Jerusha T. Lamptey:

Contemporary scholars who attempt to use the Islamic tradition as a basis for affirming women’s rights and human equality…often find themselves contending with the residual impact of these dual historical circumscriptions. From the secular side, the religious approach is depicted as traditional and backward and perhaps even as manifesting a false consciousness. From the religious side, our feminism is depicted as modern, Western, and thus un-Islamic. This has contributed to the reticence of many scholars to identify their work as Islamic feminism.\textsuperscript{326}

I suggest, however, that the situation in Turkey is somewhat distinct. It is not assumed within the theological context that rigorous scholarship and religious commitment are mutually exclusive ends. Further, women scholars of the Qur’ān in Turkey might reject the feminist label for projecting an idea of modernity which falsely impugns traditional religion while still wishing to employ their own Muslim (and modern) affirmations of women’s rights and human equality. The tension between the values of representing religious tradition and exemplifying the modern values of equality are hot subjects of debate and discussion. Yet, while it is true that debates on historicity and tradition abound in the Turkish context, as we have seen, it would be an oversimplification to characterize these academic discussions in strict polarities—even the most conservative of the three scholars (Barbarasoğlu, who is perhaps ironically the one sociologically and not theologically trained) made a point to resist such a reduction. And as we have seen, each of the three Turkish scholars examined finds different ways of integrating history and tradition with the challenges of modernity. Each of these three scholars work with some degree of ambiguity as well as ambivalence in the space of negotiation of past and present—thereby pointing to new future possibilities. In particular, Fidan’s work, which is the most the most constructive, proves the most adventurous in playing with the ambiguity of gender and tradition—offering a relational and therefore open model of gender.

Finally, even though Fidan is not the most well-known or representative author of the present analysis, her example sets the stage for a larger inquiry into a broader trend of integrated scholarship in Turkish theology. In the following two chapters on authority, I will explore in greater depth the history and theological portent of this Turkish trend to pursue tradition and scholarship, classical Islamic and Western intellectual heritage in one combined effort.
CHAPTER FOUR

Authority: On the Individual’s Dynamic Relation to Tradition According to Two Turkish Theologians

Scholarship on Islam in contemporary Turkey, with relatively few exceptions, underemphasizes or passes over the complex relationship of Islamic scholarship in Turkey to multiple authoritative traditions. These authoritative traditions include classical Islamic sources, increasingly Ottoman sources, contemporary Islamic thought outside of Turkey, as well as Western philosophical and theological traditions. I have suggested to characterize these various engagements in terms of a dialectical threefold schema, which emphasizes the complex interplay between Turkish, Arabic, and Western sources. The present section further highlights the complexity of Turkish theological authority and shows how this threefold schema plays out on the issue of individual authority. The previous two chapters looked at how Turkish theological discussions of gender and religion navigated all three of these sources. Especially in Fidan’s case, we saw how this dialectical interaction of traditions could be generative and creative, but the question arose as to how Turkish theologians navigate authoritative claims between intellectual traditions. The present section, comprised of chapters 4, 5, and 6, sets out to

327 In Anglophone and European scholarship, the two main exceptions I am aware of are Felix Körner and Philip C. Dorroll. Even so, both of these scholars tend to praise “modernist” (Dorroll) or “revisionist” (Körner) theologians in terms of their compatibility with modernity. I differ from them in that I problematize the concept of modernity, and as such move away from the term “modernist,” even if Turkish theologians at times use this word themselves. While the divisions between Turkish theologians they discuss are real, I do not view “non-modernist” or “non-revisionist” theologians as voices outside this complex negotiation of authorities occurring in Turkish theological discussions. So, for the sake of the present analysis I seek to avoid polarizing labels.

328 Since the scholars that I treat use the word “Western” and “West” to characterize broadly various intellectual and religious traditions that have European and Anglophone ties and roots, I use this term throughout the section and elsewhere. When it is not unwieldy, I use the designation “European and Anglophone” to include Europe and English-speaking scholarship outside of Europe, like North America. This second designation I use in my own analysis, but preference remains with the terms “Western” and “West,” when the terms accurately reflect the views and designation of the scholars in questions.
provide some answers to the question of Turkish theologians’ understanding of authority as it plays out in dialectical interaction with multiple traditions. I stress the complexity of Turkish theological authority and show how this threefold schema plays out specifically on the issue of individual authority. Before going into the work of specific theologians, in this chapter I would first like to clarify which parts of the Islamic tradition carry greater weight for Turkish theologians and how this relates to their own sense of Turkish Islamic identity. To do this, I will draw heavily on the work of Philip C. Dorroll.

State-funded Turkish theology faculties are spaces that mediate academic/scientific, religious, and individual authorities. Western authority, Ottoman authority, Arab and Islamic authority, and modern Turkish authority all play various roles. Lines are not always clearly drawn, and there is not always consensus on what counts as an authoritative voice or what counts as an authoritative appropriate of a tradition. Individual voices along with legacies of entire traditions flow together forming various combinations to effect theological discourses able to speak to Turkish Muslims in a modern age of science, pluralism and globalization.

To speak of authority in the context of Turkish Muslim theology is especially tricky. Theology faculties are not only spaces for diverse types of authorities but are also spaces of contested authorities. One camp of contestation is the historical divide between those labeled

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329 Philip C. Dorroll argues that the difference between “modernist” theologians of the Ankara Paradigm and their critics is not that one group relies on classical Islamic sources and the other does not, but a discussion of whether or not classical Islamic voices are used in such a way to express true Islam. In other words, it is not about whether or which Turkish theologians use classical Islamic sources (since all do), but rather what constitutes an acceptable Turkish Islam (and therefore an acceptable use of classical Islamic sources). More progressive and more conservative voices alike refer to classical Islamic sources, but they make different arguments and champion different values as Islamic. See Dorroll, “The Turkish Understanding of Religion: Rethinking Tradition and Modernity in Contemporary Turkish Islamic Thought,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 82:4 (2014): 1033-1069.
“modernist” theologians and their critics tracing back to the early days of Kemalism. And while it would be tempting to divide theological output along political lines or into traditional vs. modern camps, this section will resist both possible approaches. First, what sorts of discourse qualify as traditional forms of Islamic authority is itself a contested subject. Second, who qualifies as a modernist and what that entails also defies clean consensus. Furthermore, to reduce theological output to political projects or a paradigm of tradition vs. modernity is reductive and at times misleading. This is especially true, since debates on tradition vs. modernity, or even the religious vs. the secular, is—from both ends of the conversation—a very modern phenomenon.

I argue throughout that Turkish theological output cannot always be reduced to dynamics of tradition vs. modernity, even if these dynamics are, in varying degrees, nevertheless present. Accordingly, I focus on uses of authority that defy this reductive schema. Instead of presenting an analysis in terms of “Islam vs. the West,” this section focuses on the complex relationship of Turkish theology to Arabic, Ottoman, and Western intellectual canons. This is a complexity

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330 Dorroll addresses this divide in “The Turkish Understanding of Religion,” 1057-1061. Some Turkish theologians who do not identify as “modernist” and use the label to negatively identify others, accuse these “modernists” of reducing Islamic identity to an unhistorical Turkish nationalism, a tool of Kemalist ideology. Such a view aligns Western modernity and Kemalism in stark contrast with authentic Sunni Islam. Three examples of such critics treated by Dorroll are Hayreddin Karaman, Fatih M. Şeker and Süleyman Uludağ. Dorroll aptly remarks that neither “modernist” nor critic are immune to the practice of reading Islamic history only to support their own view of what constitutes the essence of Islam: “It should be pointed out, however, that if the followers of the Ankara Paradigm utilize an essentialized concept of Turkish national culture, the critics of this paradigm seem to respond with an essentialized notion of unitary Islam.” (1061)

331 Some of the camps and labels were clearer at different moments in the history of Turkish theology faculties. For instance, in the 1990s there existed a more unified Ankara school, many of whom saw themselves as progressive or as Köerner writes “revisionist,” but since the twenty-first century this unified idea of a school has increasingly dissipated. Marmara University theologian İsmail Taspınar and Philip C. Dorroll both confirmed to me that there is no single school that characterizes Turkish theology. On this subject, I spoke with Taspınar Nov 17, 2015 and received email communication from Dorroll Nov 18, 2015.

332 The Turkish theologians discussed will use the terms “Islam” and the “West” as monoliths, but the two theologians discussed here do not settle for a discussion of monoliths—I claim they do more.
that cannot be reduced to politics. Instead, it is a double, even triple, dialogue, or what I have characterized as a dialectical threefold schema. This constructive dialogue or conversation amid competing authorities is neither stuck in past nor jettisons tradition; it is neither bluntly modernist nor reactionary.

It would be, however, an incomplete discussion on Turkish theological authority, if we did not first touch on the illuminating work of Philip C. Dorroll. Dorroll has extensively studied the intellectual roots of some of the most common assumptions in Turkish theology. One of his most helpful insights is his identification of what he calls the “Ankara Paradigm” and some of its fundamental assumptions. According to Dorroll, the Ankara Paradigm has some of its roots in late Ottoman thought, and while often associated with Kemalist views of the proper boundaries between the religious and the secular, the paradigm does not fundamentally assume that modernity and tradition are at odds. Further, Dorroll argues for three fundamental commitments of the Ankara Paradigm: “a broad notion of religious humanism, a commitment to religious reform, and the elaboration of a specifically Turkish Islamic heritage.”

Fundamental to this paradigm is recognizing the social value and expression of religion, or in other words a recognition of the value of sociology in the study of religion. Dorroll notes both how Émile Durkheim functions as an especial model and influence for the Ankara Paradigm and how, theologically speaking, there is an especial focus on the value of the individual. While there is currently no unified school that consciously aligns with the original Ankara Paradigm, these assumptions and attitudes still prevail in much of the Turkish theological world. For instance, Dorroll’s observation is corroborated by the fact that many theology faculties support

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333 Dorroll, “The Turkish Understanding of Religion,” 1040.
departments for the sociological study of religion. Rather than a discipline outside the purview of divinity or theology, the sociological study of religion is integrated into the broader mission of the theology faculties in Turkey. Some of Dorroll’s further contribution to the discussion of authority in Turkey will be touched upon below.

In more recent history of Turkish theology, Felix Körner has identified a group of Ankara theologians who in the 1990s took it upon themselves to coordinate and edit a series of books under the title of “the Ankara School” (Ankara Okulu). Many of the Turkish works cited here hail from this now relatively well-established publishing series. By Körner’s estimation, these scholars in particular showed a noteworthy interest in engagement with Christian theology. Körner recounts:

Some of the younger academic staff constitute what they call “a tradition”. The see themselves as—creatively—continuing trains of thoughts of their own Ankara teachers such as Hüseyin Atay, who has recently gained some fame outside Turkey, and especially Mehmed Said Hatiboğlu. Several academic teachers, now in their forties, have in the course of their studies spent some time at European or North American universities. These thinkers form a team, not homogenous but with an ambition to publish their ideas jointly. They are editing a series of books titled “Publications of the Ankara School,” thus presenting themselves as a movement of thought. The series contains translations of books—prominently by Fazlur Rahman—into Turkish and collections of articles as well as original contributions; and its publication policy betrays a particular interest in Christian theology. In English, members of the “school” characterize their own “tradition” as “Islamic modernism.”

335 For instance, the Ankara Theology Faculty currently supports a department of Psychology of Religion (din psikoloji); see The Ankara Theology Faculty Department Listings, accessed Jan. 19, 2017, http://www.divinity.ankara.edu.tr/?page_id=242. Regarding the inclusion of secular sciences in ilahiyat faculties, even the Darulfünun İlahiyat Faculty opened in 1924 (and closed in 1933) had departments for sociology, philosophy of religion, history of religions, and history of philosophy. Mehmet Paçacı and Yasin Aktay, “75 Years of Higher Religious Education in Modern Turkey,” in The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought, ed. Ibrahim Abu-Rabī’ (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 126-127. When the Ankara Theology Faculty was opened in the 1940s it was again envisioned as a place for sociological study and other secular sciences, alongside religious sciences (ibid., 130-131). Faculty offerings in the 1990s continued to offer history, philosophy, sociology, and training in other religious traditions and even included inter-religious dialogue (ibid., 137-139).

336 Körner, Revisionist Koran Hermeneutics: Rethinking Islam (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2005), 60.
While much of the landscape of Turkish theology faculties has changed since the 1990s, many of these self-ascribed “Islamic modernists” are still active, though the labels they use for themselves may have changed. While never a rigid school, there is even less homogeneity now than there was twenty years ago.

The two theologians examined in this section reflect values of the “Ankara Paradigm” elaborated by Dorroll and harbor at least some commonalities with the “Ankara School” described by Körner. On the one hand, they uphold and build upon some of the main assumptions Dorroll attributes to the Ankara Paradigm—that religion exists for human flourishing, and, as such, should remain open to change and should never be compulsory. On the other, both Şaban Ali Düzgün and Recep Alpyağıl critically embrace modernity, even aspects of postmodernity and, in so doing, directly engage Christian theology.

The present analysis examines responses which re-appropriate an Islamic past without reducing the present to a mere recovery of an imagined past. These are constructive theologies which gently deconstruct modernity and Islamic identity as well as offer new visions of an authentically Islamic future. In other words, they reconstruct and point to new avenues of appropriating tradition. This section provides two important examples of how references to authority embody a complex mediation of traditions. That is, instead of trying to speak of theology in general, the next two chapters will take an in-depth look at the work of two theologians in order to move from abstraction to the concrete. As a scholar once remarked, “Theology is an abstraction in a way theologians are not...”

the complex use of authority Turkish theology faculties in this section, I go on to navigate some of this complexity in a close study of two prolific and creative theological names—one theologian from the Ankara Theology Faculty (Şaban Ali Düzgün) and one philosopher of religion from the Istanbul Theology Faculty (Recep Alpyağıl).

At present, I will endeavor to sketch a broader portrait of what I call the double dialogue or threefold schema characteristic of Turkish theological engagement. The double dialogue refers to a dialogue between Turkish Muslim theologians and Anglophone/European Christian intellectual trends alongside the intra-Muslim component of modern Turkish Muslims interpreting Islam of the past—generally the Arabic of classical Islamic thinkers, but also Persian and Ottoman contributions. In other words, Turkish theologians have a mixed formation in traditional Islamic sciences and modern academic discussions rooted in the Western intellectual canon.338

This section will show how the voices of different authoritative traditions are mediated by examining theological projects which showcase a synthesis of authorities, both through the scope of the project and through specific key terms like “common sense” (sağduyu), “conscience” (vicdan), and “authenticity” (otantisite).339 I argue that a common theme between these two theologians, Alpyağıl and Düzgün, is the call for re-appropriating individual

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339 Dorroll also remarked that “religious common sense” seems to be a shared assumption Turkish theological discourse; his dissertation is an effort to trace this assumption and others back to thinkers of the early days of Turkish theology from the 1920s to the 1950s (Communicated in email correspondence from Nov. 18, 2015).
authority. This is not in the sense that anyone, without qualification, can be a mujtahid or issue fatwas. Rather, the call to individual authority manifests in appeals to conscience, fiṭra, and navigating historical identity. Behind such appeals lies a confidence that God created human beings purposefully and with a nature that allows human beings to connect to and even reflect God—not only in religious acts of worship but also in living out moral truths and in the act of making sense of history. The Qur’ān is a testament to this reality and promise of human potential. These are not reactive discourses that try to retrieve a pristine Islamic past. Nor are these discourses snagged in circular discussions that accept now dated Orientalist assumptions about Islamic tradition and the Ottoman intellectual heritage at face value. Instead, fresh voices are looking forward and using individual authority to interpret and theologically construct empowering visions of past, present and future.

In other words, Turkish theologians are carving out the space to construct legitimate theological and philosophical projects. By construct, I mean in the sense of constructive theology. Constructive theology, like systematic theology, tends to think in terms of connected issues and related positions. Constructive theology, in addition to putting together a relatively systematic project, tends to incorporate a wide variety of sources and authorities. This is the sense in which I use the term “constructive.” By constructive, I do not mean “invented” or “made up” without respect to rigorous thought or extensive knowledge of one’s avowed tradition. On the contrary, both the thinkers in this section connect issues in a loosely systematic way and are

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340 Judging from popularity of discussions of individual conscience, common sense, and reason as sources of authority, other Turkish theologians also value individual authority. And there are some broader historical roots for this. However, what makes Düzgün and Alpyağil distinctive is that they make theological and philosophical cases for individual authority of any reflective Muslim (particularly their Turkish readership). They do not merely make the case for and speaking from their own individual authority. They make the case for individual authority more generally.
deeply engaged with various aspects of Islamic tradition and other intellectual traditions. In treating both thinkers, I have taken pains to respect the systematic aspects of their thinking and present their projects in such a way that highlight this systematic aspect.

Nonetheless, I do not wish to argue that freedom in religion, individual authority, the weight of reason and conscience are new phenomena to the Turkish theology faculty scene. Notably, Yusuf Ziya Yörükân, in his work *Muslim-ness*—first published in 1957 and 1961 and meant to be a standard teaching book for instructing the basics of Islam outside the academy—strongly asserted that human reason and choice are conditions for proper religion and that the exercise of reason and freedom of conscience (*vicdan*) are pillars of religion.³⁴¹ In Turkey, the discourse of reason, freedom, conscience, and the importance of the individual has historical roots, which the work of Philip C. Dorroll (discussed below) helps illuminate.

I ultimately argue that the appeals to authority in Turkish theology faculties can be both complex and creative. As stressed above, the complexity and creativity of such Turkish theological projects has been underappreciated. By focusing on constructive theological projects in dialogue with multiple authoritative traditions, I claim that any attempt to understand the appeals to authority in Turkish theology faculties must recognize the complexity of this unique intersection of traditions as well as the potential fecundity of Turkish theologians who actively reformulate and re-narrate³⁴² this intersection of authorities. The importance of re-narration or

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³⁴¹ Yusuf Ziya Yörükân, *Müslümanlık ve Kur'an-ı Kerim’den Âyetlerle İslâm Esasları* [Muslim-ness and the Foundations of Islam with Verses from the Holy Qur’an], ed. Turhan Yörükân (İstanbul: Ötüken, 2006), 246. To note, the Turkish nominalization of ‘Muslim’ used in the title (*Müslümanlık*) is often simply translated as ‘Islam.’ In this case, I preferred to reflect the distinctness of this Turkish word in English.

³⁴² I use the term narrate/re-narrate; I also considered the term “bricolage” as used by philosophers Claude Lévi-Strauss and Richard Rorty as a possible theoretical reference point but found it might unnecessarily impose itself on the question at hand. The term “re-narration” seemed more appropriate and less philosophically laden with associations. “Narration” is taken up as a theoretical term by the theologians I am analyzing, and for this reason also seemed more suitable. Bricolage, as defined by Lévi-Strauss, seemed to undermine the fundamental argument I was
 redescribing should not be underestimated. In fact, I argue that this act is an integral part of what Turkish theologians are doing today. As American philosopher Richard Rorty once interpreted Gadamer’s hermeneutics, “redescribing ourselves is the most important thing we can do.”

A Broader View

In order to provide sufficient context for the next two chapters, I find it necessary to address the more general question of which major figures and schools of thought carry and have carried authoritative weight in Turkish theology faculties. Four to five major figures/schools from classical Islam immediately come to the fore: al-Māturīdī/the Māturīdiyya tradition, Ḥanafī jurisprudence, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Muhammad al-Ghazālī (along with some Shāfi‘ī jurisprudence), and Ibn ʿArabī/the Akhbāriyya tradition. In particular, Māturīdī and Ḥanafī influence have an especial historical significance for Turkish theology.

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…trying to make—one of mediated individual authority. He writes, “the characteristic feature [of bricolage] is that it expresses itself by means of a heterogeneous repertoire which, even if extensive is nevertheless limited. It has to use this repertoire, however, whatever the task at hand because it has nothing else at its disposal.” Such a characterization implies a passive situation, and my analysis endeavors to highlight the agency present in mediating various canons of authorities. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966 [1962]), pp. 16-17. In the start of his book *Din, Birey ve Toplum* [*Religion, the Individual and Society*], Düzgün briefly treats Lévi-Strauss—this is why I turned to him for a possible theoretical framework.


344 I would suggest that Ghazali, and others, still carry formative weight. Al-Ghazālī and Avicennan thought were also an integral part of Ottoman discussions. For instance, the Ottoman scholar Hocazade (1434-88) famously wrote a gloss of al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut al-falāṣifa*, one of two scholars commissioned by Mehmet II (The Conqueror) to revisit al-Ghazālī’s criticism of speculative philosophy—the other, less successful, author commissioned being ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī. See Ibrahim Kalın, “Hocazade (Muslihiddin Mustafa),” in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Oliver Leaman (London: Bloomsbury, 2006; 2015). Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought also became “Turkified” (I use this term artificially) through the works of Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274) and later of Dâvūd El Kayserî (following the common Turkish spelling). El-Rouayheb numbers Dâvūd El Kayserî (Dâ‘ūd Qayṣarî) among the Persianate commentators (though Kayserî is currently a city in modern Turkey) and firmly in the Qūnawī tradition, which espouses a monistic reading of Ibn ʿArabī. El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 244, 281. To note, in May of 2015 Uludağ University hosted an international scholarly symposium on Dâvūd El Kayserî; on this see the Kültür News report, accessed Dec 12, 2016, http://www.haber7.com/kultur/haber/1359895-uluslararasi-davud-el-kayseri-sempozyumu.
Al-Māturīdī, Abū Ḥanīfa, Islamic Humanism and the Ankara Paradigm

Broadly speaking, Turkish Ottoman history favors Ḥanafī jurisprudence; and since Ḥanafī jurisprudence often goes hand in hand with Māturīdī theology, al-Māturīdī’s history in Turkey touches on deep historical roots. 345 In particular, according to Bruckmayr, “[t]he history of Ottoman kalām scholarship displays an ongoing and constant engagement with Māturīdī texts throughout the Ottoman period.” 346 The relationship between the earlier Seljuk and Ottoman ties to Māturīdī thought and modern Turkish faculties is a topic beyond the scope of this inquiry. May the present section suffice with a brief overview of Turkish theology’s relationship to authoritative Islamic traditions of the past.

Philip Dorroll has already explored the scope and impact of the Māturīdī school in Turkish theology of the mid-twentieth century. 347 As mentioned above, he identifies something he calls the “Ankara Paradigm,” characterized by a humanist and modernist reading of al-Māturīdī theology and Ḥanafī jurisprudence. This paradigm, he argues, though viewed by its critics as an extension of Kemalism and therefore not authentically Muslim, uses a humanist reading of a classical Islamic sources long associated with Turkish and Ottoman Islam in a way

345 Wilfred Madelung explains the connection between the earlier Seljuk Turks, Ḥanafī law and Māturīdī theology: “As a result of the Turkish expansion, eastern Ḥanafism and Māturīdī theological doctrine were spread throughout western Persia, ’Irāq, Anatolia, Syria and Egypt. Numerous Transoxanian and other eastern Ḥanafī scholars migrated to these regions and taught there from the late 5th/11th to the 8th/14th century. Māturīdī doctrine thus gradually came to prevail among the Ḥanafī communities everywhere.” W. Madelung, “Māturīdiyya,” EI2, consulted online on 15 September 2016, http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5046. A more recent perspective on this historical relationship can be found in Philipp Bruckmayr, “The Spread and Persistence of Māturīdī Kalām and Underlying Dynamics,” Iran and the Caucasus 13 (2009): 59-92.


that, distinct from Kemalism, does not assume a fundamental antagonism between the secular and religious. In short, according to the Ankara Paradigm, to be modern and Muslim is not only an authentically Turkish way of being Muslim, it is also a true and valid expression of universal Islam. On this, Dorroll affirms:

The Ankara Paradigm’s essential argument, especially as it has been elaborated by contemporary Turkish Islamic modernists, may be phrased in this way: religion exists to bring fulfillment to human beings. It therefore must be understood with respect to its impact on human individuals and the societies in which they live. [...] Turkish Islamic modernism and reformism therefore reflects the essence of true Islam.\textsuperscript{348}

Dorroll further argues that the use of pre-modern Islamic thinkers (in particular al-Māturīdī) to support modern assumptions shows that, for some Turkish theologians, modernity and tradition do not form a dichotomy. Although I am less inclined to start from the assumption that modernity and tradition stand as a dichotomy to be disproved, my own analysis builds on this basic argument. In other words, by arguing for the complexity of authority and identity in Turkish theological discourse, I support the general claim that a significant number of Turkish theologians do not see modernity as incompatible with tradition.\textsuperscript{349} Nor do I dispute Dorroll when he writes in the context of Turkish theology, drawing on Saba Mahmood:

Religious “tradition” is the necessary ground of the religious believer’s construction of her own sense of agency or participation in a particular religious community. Tradition is not simply the static “other” of modernity. Nor does it have to be identified with conservatism...\textsuperscript{350}

\textsuperscript{348} Dorroll, “The Turkish Understanding of Religion,” 1058.
\textsuperscript{349} Dorroll refers to “liberal” Turkish theologians, but I would like to avoid use of this word due to its many and often polarizing connotations. I do not wish to highlight the imagined and embodied polarities of modern vs. tradition by labelling Turkish theologians who are not stuck in such polarities as “liberal.” Generally, I do not evaluate theologians based on political alignment, and while “liberal” can mean something outside of politics, I prefer to focus directly on the claims and assumptions made by the theologians engaged here.
\textsuperscript{350} Dorroll, “The Turkish Understanding of Religion,” 1034.
Further, while I avoid the question of the religious vs. the secular, I nevertheless agree with Dorroll’s statement on the question of authentic authority in the context of contemporary Turkey:

Reformist or modernist Islamic thought does not create something arbitrary with respect to “traditional” discursive frameworks, opposed to the authenticity of (conservative) tradition. Rather, it redraws the boundaries between certain key concepts in pre-existing discursive frameworks, in this case between the religious and the secular.\textsuperscript{351}

That is to say, in Turkish theology faculties, perceived divisions between “modernist” and “traditional” do not cleanly map out onto a dichotomy of the religious vs. the secular. Whether “traditional” or “modernist,” there is always some negotiation of past and present. The question becomes what constitutes authentic expression of tradition and, by extension, Islam. Dorroll writes:

The analysis of reformist Islamic thought in Turkey shows that the bases of “modernist Islam” are not dissimilar from its conservative counterpart, and that it involves a similar process of negotiation between the secular and the religious mediated through understandings of “tradition.” The analysis of the history of modernist Islam in Turkey thus demonstrates that the debate between modernist and conservative Islamic thinkers in the modern era is not a question of whether or not to follow authentic Islamic tradition. It is instead a debate over what actually constitutes Islamic tradition, with each ideological side defining “tradition” through specific configurations of the boundary between the religious and the secular.\textsuperscript{352}

In the present analysis, I prefer not to use the label “modernist,” because it may do more to obfuscate than to clarify in terms of classifying various contemporary Turkish theologians.\textsuperscript{353}

\textsuperscript{351} Dorroll, “The Turkish Understanding of Religion,” 1036.
\textsuperscript{352} Dorroll, “The Turkish Understanding of Religion,” 1036.
\textsuperscript{353} For one, the idea that conservatism as we understand it today is anti-modern is not an assumption I wish to critically take on. Secondly, Turkish theologians themselves may self-identify differently at different times and have varying opinions as to which of their peers qualify or do not qualify as modernist, depending on whether the term is conceived as a term of approval or of disapproval. Even if used as a term of disapproval or to place distance between one scholarly project and another, this is arguably less a question of modernity and more a question of perceived priorities—for instance, does this scholar value the literal authority of hadith traditions more than international discourse on human rights? Examples of how this plays out in engaged debate can be found in some previously discussed works—in the publication of the \textit{Qur’ān and Women Symposium} (2013) and Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal’s work on hadith. Other discussions include M. Hayri Kırbaşoğlu’s \textit{İslam Düşüncesinde Sünnet: Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım} [The Sunna in Islamic Thought: A Critical Approach], 15th Printing (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2015), originally published in 1996 as well as İlhami Güler’s \textit{Sabit Din Dinamik Şeriat} [Unchanging Religion,
Nonetheless, I agree with Dorroll that the debate of the mid-twentieth century and now is one, not of tradition vs. modernity, but of whose interpretation of tradition counts as authentic Islam. And instead of dividing the camps of discussion into modern on the one hand and more traditional readings of classical Islamic sources on the other, I will focus on those readings which engage multiple canons of authority—namely, Turkish academic theology, classical Islam, and Anglophone/European Christian intellectual output. As we shall see, the two theologians examined in this section take on the task of re-narrating multiple authoritative discourses and in the process also uphold many of the humanistic values associated with the Ankara Paradigm.

For Dorroll, a “humanistic religious philosophy” represents a hallmark of the Ankara Paradigm. Dorroll argues that the Ankara Paradigm’s appropriation of al-Māturīdī represents an especially humanist reading of Islam still present in the views of Turkish theologians today. In this reading, the value of the individual stands front and center. As an example, he looks at the work of Hanifi Özcan, whom I will briefly treat in a later chapter. Specifically, Dorroll uses the example of Hanifi Özcan’s reading of al-Māturīdī to show that the basic assumptions of the Ankara Paradigm are still held by many Turkish theologians today—a claim supported by my examination of Recep Alpyağıl and Şaban Ali Düzgün in the next two chapters. Moreover, the work of Alpyağıl and Düzgün does more than support Dorroll’s insights from the Ankara Paradigm; their work is more than a question of modern values aligning with Turkish readings of Islam—it is constructive and explorative theology aimed to help the pious reader engage more

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_Dynamic Shari‘a_ (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 1999). Further, M.S. Aydı̇n explained in 1990 that to a Muslim modernist, returning to the Sunna is not necessarily historically returning precisely to the Prophet’s example, but at least to the historical example of the first generations more broadly. See Mehmet S. Aydı̇n, “Fazlur Rahman ve İslâm Modernizmi/Fazlur Rahman and Islamic Modernism,” _İslami Araştırmalar_ 4:4 (1990): 275. Cited as “Fazlur Rahman and Islamic Modernism.”

_355_ See chapter 7 for a brief treatment of this figure in the discussion of religious pluralism in Turkish theology.
confidently with the challenges of the contemporary world. First, however, let us look at Dorroll’s reading of Hanifi Özcan’s Islamic humanism.

“Neo-Hanafism” and Humanism

The humanism Dorroll links to the Ankara Paradigm is one in which religion puts the individual at the center and stresses religious freedom. Dorroll stresses that the strong positive valuation of religious freedom stems from a “neo-Hanafi” theological trend, of which theologian Hanifi Özcan is a prime example.356 Dorroll explains:

Özcan argues that due to the “individual-centered” conditions of modernity, the principle that “religion exists for the person, not the person for the religion” (din insan için vardır; insan din için değil) must be adopted.357

It is in this sense that Dorroll labels Özcan’s approach “fundamentally humanist.” Another important aspect of this form of Islamic humanism is its fundamental relationship to tawḥīd, or the affirmation of God’s unity. The connection between a humanist understanding of Islam and tawḥīd lies in the determination of what is essential to religion and what belongs to changing human circumstance. It is tawḥīd which is crucial to parsing this distinction. For instance, “Özcan recognizes that even if religion’s origins are divine, its institutional structures are human.”358 At the same time Özcan still holds that one must be able to distinguish between the parts of religion that are contingent and the parts of religion that are eternal. This then raises the question as to what the eternal content is for Özcan. The short answer is tawḥīd: “This eternal

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357 Dorroll, “The Turkish Understanding of Religion,” 1047. On this Dorroll cites, Hanifi Özcan, “Modern Çagda Dinin Birey ve Toplum için Anlamı” [“The Meaning of Religion for Society and Individual in the Modern Age”], Akademik Araştırmalar Dergisi 32 (2007). At a later point in the discussion, Dorroll again stresses the ‘individual-centered’ aspect of Turkish religion for Özcan: He explains, “Özcan argues that the “Turkish understanding of religion” is properly characterized as ‘realist’ and ‘individual-centered [fert-merkezli].’” Dorroll, ibid, 1057. In this discussion of modernity, Dorroll does not endeavor to question or challenge the category of modernity.
358 Dorroll, ibid, 1047.
content is the reality of the Oneness of God, the ultimate principle of monotheism (tawḥīd in Arabic, tevhid in Turkish). “It is perhaps no coincidence that al-Māturīdī’s most famous work on theology, is entitled Kitāb al-Tawḥīd. Tawḥīd functions like foot of the compass that remains steady in the center as time and circumstance lead the outside foot to draw circles of different size. Divine unity is the central piece, the capstone of religion. Dorroll explicates:

Özcan analyzes the notion of Şeriat (Sharī‘a) and Din (religion), concluding that the latter term signifies what is eternally true in Islam (the notion of tawḥīd) and that the former is the complex of Islamic belief and practice, the totality of the “way” of Islam that is designed to lead the human being in apprehending and following the implications of the truth of din.361

Dorroll treats Özcan on the eternal characteristic of religion and the contingent, adaptive aspects of sharī‘a but Dorroll does not treat this in light of Fazlur Rahman’s influence on Turkish theology faculties. Importantly, Fazlur Rahman discussion of historical contingency and religion’s eternal truths in the context of Qur’ān hermeneutics has played a wide-spread role in Turkish discussions of the essence vs. the contingent facets of true religion.

As noted by Felix Körner and Turkish theologians themselves, Pakistani Muslim intellectual Rahman’s views on quranic hermeneutics has had a significant impact on Turkish discussions of what is essential and what is specific historical context.362 One useful discussion

359 Dorroll, ibid, 1047. For this, Dorroll, cites Özcan’s Māturīdî’de Dini Çoğulculuk [Religious Pluralism in Māturīdī] (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 1999): 33, 77.
360 Even M.S. Aydın points to the value of tawḥīd in continually reforming and purifying Islam, praising past revival movements for appealing to this concept and criticizing them for not applying the concept holistically. Mehmet S. Aydın, “Fazlur Rahman and Islamic Modernism,” 275.
361 Dorroll, “The Turkish Understanding of Religion,” 1055. Also, Özcan, Religious Pluralism in Māturīdī, 47.
362 In particular, Felix Körner analyzes the work of Turkish theologian Adil Çiftçi on Fazlur Rahman along with Rahman’s influence on other authors, including Mehmet Paçacı. See Körner, Revisionist Koran Hermeneutics in Contemporary Turkish University Theology: Rethinking Islam (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2005). Though not treated here, Adil Çiftçi is the author of Fazlur Rahman ile İslam’ı Yeniden Düşünmek [Rethinking Islam with Fazlur Rahman] (Ankara: Ankara Okulu, 2000). To note, Rahman’s Revival and Reform in Islam (2000) was translated into Turkish by Fehrułlah Terkan (2006) and Rahman’s Major Themes of the Qur’an (1980) by Alparslan Açıkgenç (1996). Other Turkish translators of Fazlur Rahman include Mehmet Aydin, M. Hayri Kırbaşoğlu, Salih Akdemir,
on this is provided in Mehmet S. Aydın’s summary appraisal of Fazlur Rahman. Aydın strongly praises Fazlur Rahman for not only understanding the importance of Islamic “modernism” but also paving the way for it at the abstract and lived level. Aydın points out that Islamic modernism falls into a long tradition of Islamic “revival” (iḥyā’) stretching back to al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) and including Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328). With so many historical precedents, Aydın holds it would be a great mistake to view Islamic modernism as a Western product. Further, he picks up on Rahman’s stern criticism of Ash’arite theology and its overemphasis of divine agency over human agency—a criticism echoed in other Turkish theologians who ostensibly ground their theology in Māturīdī sources. Aydın also explains how Rahman’s hermeneutical approach to the Qurʾān involved the importation of two hermeneutical approaches—that of the Italian thinker Emilio Betti and the German Hans-Georg Gadamer, one emphasizing the possibility of objectivity, the other emphasizing the inescapable reality of historical context. Finally, Aydın defends Fazlur Rahman as a thinker who was not opposed to tradition, but rather steeped in it. Drawing this back to the legacy of al-Māturīdī, I suggest that the Turkish Wirkungsgeschichte, or effective history, of Māturidism and other classical sources may at least in part elide with much more modern discussions, such as Fazlur Rahman’s work on Qurʾān hermeneutics.

A. Bülent Baloğlu, and Adil Çiftci. The majority of Rahman’s major works seem to have been translated in the mid to late 1990s.

364 M.S. Aydın, “Fazlur Rahman and Islamic Modernism,” 274.
367 M.S. Aydın, “Fazlur Rahman and Islamic Modernism,” 280. Though his name comes up less frequently in article and book titles, Emilio Betti is still a significant influence for some Turkish theologians. Gadamer, however, appears more conspicuously in discussions.
In terms of texts frequently cited, Turkish theologians often refer to al-Māturīdī’s major kalām work *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* (The Book of Unity) and, significantly, al-Māturīdī’s lengthy *tafsīr* work (*Qurʾān* commentary) *Taʾwīlāt al-qurʾān*, which is currently being translated into Turkish. Some relatively recent works on al-Māturīdī include a volume of collected essays entitled *Māturīdī’s World of Thought*, edited by Şaban Ali Düzgün; Hanifi Özcan’s *The Problem of Knowledge in Māturīdī* as well as his *Religious Pluralism in Māturīdī*; another collected volume *Imam Māturīdī and Māturidism*, edited by Sönmez Kutlu; Hülya Alper’s *The Relation of Reason and Revelation in Imam Māturīdī*; and Harun Işık’s *Human Freedom in Maturidi*. In addition, Abū’l-Muʿīn al-Nasafī (d. 1114), author of the largest comprehensive work of Māturidite theology, stands out among the names who hail from the Māturīdiyya school of theology. Şaban Ali Düzgün has devoted a work specifically to this figure entitled *The God-World Relation According to Nasafī and Islamic Philosophers*.

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369 Al-Māturīdī’s *tafsīr* work was even labeled “book of the year” in 2008, and its translation to Turkish began late 2014, according to Turkish news site Milliyet, accessed Dec 11, 2016, [http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yilin-kitabi-secelen-te-vilatu-l-kur-istanbul-yerelhaber-474862/](http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yilin-kitabi-secelen-te-vilatu-l-kur-istanbul-yerelhaber-474862/). It is possible that the *tafsīr*’s popularity is either a more recent phenomenon or that its influence is only slated to increase. Its present Turkish translation (ongoing as of late 2016) is the work of Bekir Topaloğlu, Kemal Sandıkçı, Yusuf Şevki Yavuz, Yunus Vehbi Yavuz, along with the help of dozens of other scholars. Four volumes are currently available in print. Eighteen total volumes are projected.


371 Hanifi Özcan, *Māturīdī’de Bilgi Problemi* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İli̇hı̇yat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 1993) and *Māturīdī’de Dini Çoğulculuk* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İli̇hı̇yat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 1999), respectively.


373 Hülya Alper, *İmam Māturīdī’de Akl-Vahiy İlişkisi* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2008).


Hanafism – Another Name Associated with Humanism in Islam

Turkish theologian Yörükân, mentioned above for his mid-twentieth century book on the foundations of Islam, not only stressed reason and freedom of conscious but also highlighted the humanist values of Ḥanafī tradition. In particular, he stressed the Ḥanafī sensitivity to diverse cultures and its role in the formation of an explicitly “Turkish Islam,” known especially for its tolerance of diversity and social adaptability. Yörükân is not alone in this conviction; Dorroll attributes this view to the Ankara Paradigm more broadly, writing:

The Ḥanafī tradition of Islamic religious thought is most notable for its respect for individual human reason and the human search for knowledge, and that this orientation characterizes Islam in general. This point is shared by a number of contemporary representatives of the Ankara Paradigm, who see in Ḥanafism both the humanist core of Islamic teaching and a spirit of religious interpretation found deep within Turkish culture itself.

Dorroll further elaborates the link between Ḥanafism and humanist values:

The Ankara Paradigm and its contemporary adherents emphasize Abū Ḥanīfa’s reputation for intellectual creativity, broad-mindedness, and respect for individual reasoning in interpreting Islamic law and sacred texts.

By stressing the individual’s capacity for creativity, reasoning, and reflection, the Turkish understanding of Ḥanafism stresses the individual’s role in interpretation. In other words, this

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376 For a treatment of Ḥanafism in relation to Ottoman history see Burak, Guy. The Second Formation of Islamic Law: The Hanafi School in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire (New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2015). Burak argues that not only did Ottomans favor Ḥanafi jurisprudence but that they developed a very specific reading of Ḥanafi jurisprudence. This specific Ḥanafi branch favored under the Ottomans, Burak argues, was part of a larger trend in the region towards dynastic influence on Islamic jurisprudence. Per Burak, Kemâlpaşazâde’s Risâla fi ṭabaqât al-mujtahîdîn, one of the earliest Ottoman histories of the Ḥanafi school including biographies of its jurists, attributed lower individual authority to later generations, where the lowest level of individual authority was apportioned to the Ottoman generation it was written in (72-73). As such, historically speaking, the role of individual authority in terms of use of reason and greater flexibility was likely not always consciously associated with the Ottoman Ḥanafi tradition.

377 Dorroll, “The Turkish Understanding of Religion,” 1044.


379 Dorroll, “The Turkish Understanding of Religion,” 1051.
means a championing of individual interpretive authority. Moreover, the stress on individual authority is authentically Islamic. As Dorroll puts it:

Contemporary Turkish Islamic modernists argue that an individualized approach to religious interpretation, one that allows the individual believer to interpret Islam for herself based on her own situation, is truly reflective of the Turkish Islamic heritage, and therefore is the most “authentically Turkish” approach to Islam.

Thus, the centrality of the individual in Turkish academic theology is not a new phenomenon—it is already one of the hallmarks of the Ankara Paradigm. Yet, for the sake of the present examination, I will not emphasize the Ankara Paradigm as a category of my analysis of Alpyağlı and Düzgün. First, as a label it is too embroiled in a paradigm of religious vs. secular. Second, it comes with the baggage of being “modernist.” And finally, there is currently no unified school in Turkish theology. Although the Ankara Paradigm remains a part of the history of theology faculties and while many of its main assumptions are popularly held, as a label it fails to refer to a homogenous, tightly coordinated group. For these reasons, it will not feature as a label to be actively used or disputed in the following treatments. However, it is important to keep in mind that many of its values still strongly influence the theological landscape in Turkey.

_Beyond Māturīdī and Ḥanafi Roots_

Something Dorroll does not stress as authoritative sources in Turkey is the Ottoman legacy of al-Ghazālī or of Ibn ‘Arabī. As historian Halil İnalcık notes, Ottoman medreses developed the

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mystical ideas of al-Ghazālī, Ibn ‘Arabī and al-Suhrawardī (d. 1234). In particular, the thought of Ibn ‘Arabī carried widespread significance both in Seljuk as well as Ottoman periods.

Historian Inalcik identifies a long-standing division between Ottoman ‘ulemā’ who tolerated and subscribed to some mystical views and associated practices and “fanatics” who condemned such views and practices. Inalcik also notes the existence of trends of strict traditionalism and Ḥanbalite adherents in the Ottoman Empire—such tides stand against the an elite Ottoman like Kâtip Çelebi (d. 1657), who defended mystics, Ibn ‘Arabī, and a view of Islam as tolerant and open to change. Other Ottoman intellectuals who developed Akhābāriyya thought include Dâvûd El Kayserî, Kutbeddîn of Iznik and Yaziczâde Mehmed of Gallipoli, Bâlî of Sofya (d. 1533) and Abdullâh of Bosnia (d. 1660). Of these figures, Dâvûd El Kayserî has received theological attention in Turkish theological publications.

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383 Inalcik, The Ottoman Empire, 182. He writes, “In Ottoman society there was always a class of fanatical ulema who regarded the intellectual sciences, mysticism, music, dancing and poetry as impious; against these was a class which defended them as coming within the scope of religion. The fanatics were usually the popular şeyhs and ulema who preached and taught in the mosques, while the ulema in higher medreses or in government service formed the second group.” It may be fruitful to ask in what ways modern Turkish academic theologians are a continuance of the second group.
384 Inalcik, The Ottoman Empire, 185. Elsewhere, Inalcik elaborates on the Ottoman elite’s relationship to mysticism: “From earliest times mysticism was a main element in the thought of the Ottoman intellectual elite and was not confined to the popular beliefs of the tarîkats. This tradition goes back to the Seljuk period. The Seljuk sultans welcomed in their lands the famous scholars and mystics from Turkestan and Iran, fleeing before the Mongol invasion. Thus the Seljuk cities such as Konya, Kayseri, Aksaray or Sivas became the most brilliant centers of mystical thought in the Islamic world. […] Like al-Suhrawardî, Ibn al-‘Arabī was personally invited to the Seljuk lands and honoured by the sultan. By interpreting and disseminating his works his stepson, Sadr al-Din of Konya (d. 1273), played a major part in establishing Ibn al-‘Arabī as a dominant influence in Turkish thought. Mystical belief thus became a well established tradition among the sunnî ulema.” (199) Molla Fenari or Mehmed al-Fanarî is also included among those influenced by Ibn ‘Arabī (200).
385 Inalcik, The Ottoman Empire, 200.
386 Mehmet Bayrakdar has translated some of Dâvûd El Kayserî’s work and Sema Özdemir has published a study on Dâvûd El Kayserî. See Dâvûd El Kayserî, Lèdûnnî İlim ve Hakîkî Sevgî [Otherworldly Knowledge and Divine Love], trans. Mehmet Bayrakdar (İstanbul: Kurtuba Kitap, 2011) and Sema Özdemir, Dâvûd Kayserî’de Varlık Bilgi ve İnsan [Being, Knowledge and Humanity in Dâvûd El Kayserî] (İstanbul: Nefes Yayınevi, 2014).
Other traditions integral to Turkish theology are traceable to Ibn Sina, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn ʿArabī. While Māturīdism’s ties to Turkish past is often stressed by Turkish theologians, it is equally important to understand that Ashʿarism has played a significant role in Ottoman thought and, as such, is part of contemporary Turkish theological heritage. Bruckmayr writes, “Ottoman curricula dating from the 16th to 19th century are in no way displaying a dominance of Māturīdi vis-à-vis Ashʿari works, but rather equal representation of a limited number of texts of both schools of thought, and at times, even, an absence of Māturīdi texts.”

Al-Ghazālī (who was trained in the Ashʿarite school of theology) also holds significance for Turkish theology, and interest in his legacy can be seen by the number of publications that have recently come out—some in the commemoration of the 900th year since his death. *On the 900th Anniversary of Ghazzali’s Death: 7-9 October, 2011, Istanbul* is a collection of works on al-Ghazālī by many Turkish scholars; through the articles are in Turkish, the work also contains article abstracts in both Arabic and English. *Ghazzali Talks* (2012) is another compilation of essays on al-Ghazālī written by Turkish scholars; it includes the work of İlhan Kutluer, Fehrullah Terkan, among others. There is also İbrahim Çapak’s *Ghazali’s Conception of Logic* (2011). *Ghazali and Causality* (2012) is a compilation of non-Turkish scholarly contributions on the long-debated question of al-Ghazālī’s stance on divine agency in the natural world. Also, there are works such as *Ghazzali: His Philosophy and Influence on Islamic*
Modernism (2012)\(^{392}\) and Knowledge and Method in Ghazzali's Philosophy (2011).\(^{393}\) Frank Griffel’s seminal Al-Ghazālī’s Philosophical Theology (2009) was even translated by İbrahim Halil Üçer.\(^{394}\)

In addition to al-Ghazālī, his philosophical predecessor Ibn Sīnā also has an important place in contemporary Turkish theology. Two heftier recent works on Ibn Sīnā are İlhan Kutluer’s Necessary Being in Ibn Sīnā’s Ontology (2013)\(^{395}\) and Ömer Türker’s Ibn Sīnā Felsefesinde Metafizik Bilginin İmkânı Sorunu (Istanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010).\(^{396}\) Finally, a work that falls in the tradition of both Avicenna and Ibn ‘Arabī is Ömer Mahir Alper’s Being and Humanity: The Reconstruction of an Idea in the Context of Kemalpaşazâde (2010).\(^{397}\) Kemalpaşazâde (d. 1534), as Ö. M. Alper points out, stands in the traditions of Shāfi‘ī jurisprudence, Māturīdī theology, as well as Avicennan and Akhbāriyya philosophy.\(^{398}\)

**Roads Not Taken**

There are a range of other theological voices I could have chosen to give greater attention to on the subject of authority. In order to give a sense of the landscape available as well as possible points of focus for future inquiries, here is a list, not exhaustive, of figures which came


\(^{394}\) Frank Griffel, Gazâlî’nin Felsefi Kelâmı, trans. İbrahim Halil Üçer, 2nd printing (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2015).

\(^{395}\) İlhan Kutluer. Ibn Sînâ Ontolojisinde Zorunlu Varlık (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2013).

\(^{396}\) Ömer Türker, Ibn Sînâ Felsefesinde Metafizik Bilginin İmkânı Sorunu (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010).

\(^{397}\) Ömer Mahir Alper, Varlık ve İnsan: Kemalpaşazâde Bağlamında Bir Tasavvurun Yeniden İnşası (İstanbul: Klasik, 2010).

\(^{398}\) Ö. M. Alper, Varlık ve İnsan, 8. Bruckmayr, by contrast, underplays Kemalpaşazâde’s Māturīdī ties and emphasizes the Ash’arī influence in his thought: “Some of the influential Ottoman scholars, such as Kamǎlāshâhāzâde, indeed, appear to have been, in many aspects, more impressed by later Ash’ārī scholars (\textit{muta’akhkhirūn}), especially, al-Rāzī (Badeen 2008: 19), and thinkers such as al-Ṭūsī, with their more philosophy laden \textit{kalām} than by the thought of the Māturīdīyya.” In “The Spread and Persistence...,” 69.
to my attention but did not receive in depth treatment in the ensuing examination of individual authority.

Mehmet Bayrakdar is a figure I treat in a later discussion of Turkish theological engagements with Christianity in the context of pluralism. He is a theologian of note at Ankara, but not necessarily creatively systematic. According to Mehmet Bayrakdar, the two main sources of Muslim authority are the Qur’ān/Sunna and human reason. These two main sources of authority can be consistently traced through the course of Islamic intellectual tradition.

İlhami Güler has already been partly treated by Felix Körner, who looked at Güler’s work on historical contingency and the Qur’ān. Güler’s published work can be described as something akin to Muslim liberation theology. At the same time, he tends to delve more into politics than constructive theology. Güler, a professor in the Ankara Theology Faculty, has published a book entitled Thus Conscience Decreed, strongly signaling the role of his own personal conscience as an integral aspect of his authority as a theologian, Muslim, and academic. In this work, he remarks that in Turkey the most basic problem is less a lack of sincerity and more that reflective effort and a well-oriented conscience are missing in present theological efforts.

Hayreddin Karaman, an open critic of the Ankara Paradigm, is a renowned scholar of Islamic jurisprudence, fiqh, and comments on Islam in modernity from his fiqh-based

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400 Körner, Revisionist Koran Hermeneutics, 165-192.
402 Güler, Thus Conscience Decreed, 229.
perspective. In general, I have not explored *fiqh* discourse in Turkey, since it is, for one, less obviously in dialogue, and, two, less obviously constructive.

Turkish names associated with Avicennism include İlhan Kutluer, Ömer Türker, and Ömer Mahir Alper—as touched on above. These scholars tend to have more ties to Istanbul than to Ankara and may end up playing a formative role in future ventures of Turkish theology.

*Alpşaga and Düzgün*

While an examination into any of the above scholars could provide important insights into the use of authority and traditions of authority, I have selected two scholars, *Recep Alpşaga* and Şaban Ali Düzgün, who demonstrate creative and loosely systematic synthesis along with a strong interest in engaging Christian theology. These also happened to be scholars who reflected many of the values associated with the Ankara Paradigm, even if Alpşaga is active at the Istanbul University Theology Faculty. Yet, this does not mean the work of either theologians can be reduced to the values of this paradigm.

In the case of both Düzgün and Alpşaga, the individual is not disconnected from society, revelation or tradition. Rather, the religious individual is fully an individual insofar as she takes responsibility in mediating her relation to society, tradition, and revelation. This is a portrait of an individual embedded in a dynamic community of believers, able to dialogue confidently with non-believers and those of other faiths. Such an individual is not reduced to a passive object of social forces, hierarchical structures, tradition, or even “literal” readings of scripture. She is possessed of an original nature (*fitra*) that puts her in a relation to be addressed by God’s authority—addressed internally through her inner faculties and externally through revelation.

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Sharpe, 2009). Theologians at the Marmara Theology Faculty highly recommended him to me as widely-respected representative of an orthodox Turkish Islam.
And in this relation, she plays an active role in mediating the competing authorities around her by forging new paths and canons, telling authentic stories, and asking new questions.

In the following two chapters I will examine individual authority through Alpyağıl’s quest for authenticity in Turkish philosophy of religion and through Düzgün’s theological anthropology, showing how each theologian exemplifies a threefold engagement with Turkish context, Islamic intellectual tradition, and Western intellectual tradition.

Note on Citations

For the sake of brevity in citing, I have used abbreviations to designate the most quoted works of the two thinkers who feature in this section. The following table delimits the scholar, the assigned abbreviations, and the titles in Turkish and English translation, along with publication dates. Because the works are in Turkish, I have used abbreviations which reflect the Turkish title rather than my English translations of the titles. As the discussion of these two authors will continue into the final chapters of this work, the abbreviations will be used throughout.
Abbreviations for Works by Alpyağil and Düzgün

Recep Alpyağil

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WK:</strong></td>
<td>Wittgenstein ve Kierkegaard’dan Harektle Din Felsefesi Yapmak (2002, 2013)</td>
<td>Doing Philosophy of Religion with Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard as Points of Departure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DCDD:</strong></td>
<td>Derrida’dan Caputo’ya Dekonstrüksiyon ve Din (2007)</td>
<td>Deconstruction and Religion from Derrida to Caputo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FY:</strong></td>
<td>Fark ve Yorum – Kur’anı Anlama Yolunda Felsefi Denemeler II (2009)</td>
<td>Difference and Commentary: Philosophical Essays on the Way to Understanding the Qur’an II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TO:</strong></td>
<td>Türkiye’de Otantik Felsefe Yapabilmenin İmkani ve Din Felsefesi (2010, 2014)</td>
<td>The Possibility of Creating an Authentic Philosophy in Turkey and Philosophy of Religion: An Investigation into the Example of Paul Ricoeur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 9: Abbreviations for Alpyağil’s Works.*
**Figure 10:** Abbreviations for Düzgün’s Works.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Translation</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DBT:</strong></td>
<td><em>Din, Birey ve Toplum</em> (1997; ?; 2014)</td>
<td><em>Religion, Individual, and Society</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ST:</strong></td>
<td><em>Sosyal Teoloji: İnsanın Yeryüzü Serüveni</em> (1999; ?; 2012)</td>
<td><em>Social Theology: Humanity’s Global Adventure</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VB:</strong></td>
<td><em>Varlık ve Bilgi Aydınlanmanın Keşif Araçları</em> (2008)</td>
<td><em>Being and Knowledge: The Ways of Revealing Enlightenment</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CDDD:</strong></td>
<td><em>Çağdaş Dünyada Din ve Dindarlar</em> (2012; 2014)</td>
<td><em>Religion and Religious [People] in the Contemporary World</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SYEI:</strong></td>
<td><em>Sarp Yokuşun Eteğinde İnsan</em> (2016)</td>
<td><em>Humans at the Bottom of a Precipitous Slope</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**404** Frequently cited works ordered by date of original publication. Neither of these lists exhaust either author’s publications. For a more complete list of each author’s publications, see bibliography. Full citations will be given as the works appear in subsequent chapters.
CHAPTER FIVE

The Individual in Dialectical Continuity: Alpyağıl on Authority

Against all delicacy, it is far from an artificial synthesis; on the contrary it is creative. – Recep Alpyağlı

In the work of philosopher of religion Recep Alpyağlı, the question of “authenticity” takes center stage regarding issues of authority. A renegotiation of intellectual canon is deeply tied to Alpyağlı’s quest for authenticity. In Alpyağlı’s work, these three things go hand in hand: authority, authenticity, and intellectual canon. Alpyağlı’s work explicitly addresses the possibility and conditions of an authentically Turkish philosophy of religion and does so by arguing for an inclusive, multifaceted canon of legitimate sources of philosophy. Alpyağlı’s reference to multiple authoritative traditions and his argument that an authentically Turkish philosophical canon should de facto include a multiplicity of authoritative traditions makes his work a prime example of how Turkish theology cannot be reduced to old dichotomies. This chapter will lay out the interrelations of authority, authenticity, and canon in Alpyağlı’s work by building a case for the role of individual authority amid an authentic and inclusive intellectual canon.

The previous chapters on gender revealed varying measures of dialectical interplay between Turkish, Arabic, and even Western sources. The question arose as to how Turkish theologians navigated claims to authority within what I call a dialectical threefold schema of these sources. By examining Alpyağlı’s case for an inclusive canon and individual authority, the

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discussion will take up more explicit treatments of dialectical interplay between multiple authoritative traditions. While Alpyağıl does not use the language of “threelfold schema,” I will argue that his project for an inclusive canon is, at heart, a case for the authenticity of Turkish theology’s dynamic engagement with multiple traditions.

The role of the individual is central to Alpyağıl’s case for greater authenticity. In making the case for individual authority, this chapter will look at 1) how Alpyağıl frames the problem of philosophy of religion in Turkey, 2) his choice of Paul Ricoeur as an entry point for reclaiming the religious dimensions of philosophy, 3) his case for an inclusive canon, 4) his position on historical tradition, and 5) finally what he says on the role of the individual in “hypoleptic” continuity.

As the chapter unfolds, I will show the various ways in which Alpyağlı recognizes the believing individual’s dynamic relationship to sacred text, to tradition, to canons of authority, and to society. I argue that two common elements in each of these relations are their dynamism and reciprocity. For Alpyağlı, an individual is formed by scripture, tradition, various canons of authority, and the society she lives in; however, she is not merely a product of these relations. Instead of a purely passive relationship to these outside sources, she exists in webs of ongoing dialectics, wherein she plays a defining but not an absolute role.

Recep Alpyağlı (b. ?) is a Turkish theologian and scholar of philosophy of religion. He completed his masters in philosophy of religion at the Ondokuz Mayıs Theology Faculty (2002) and went on to earn his doctorate in philosophy of religion at the Istanbul University Theology  

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406 The Turkish language does not have gender or gendered pronouns. For the sake of this discussion my default translation of “o” (he/she/it) is “she.”  
407 His works do not list his birthdate.
Faculty (2006). He has concentrated on philosophical hermeneutics and currently holds a post at Istanbul University Theology Faculty in philosophy of religion. Alpyağıl has travelled extensively and has published in English as well as Turkish. He engages most explicitly with postmodern thought, with book titles including names and buzzwords like Wittgenstein, Derrida, Caputo, and “deconstruction.” He is also known for his efforts to recover the Ottoman philosophical heritage and to found a modern Turkish philosophical tradition, alongside his endeavors to read Classical Islamic thinkers in dialogue with postmodern thought.

In his book, *Whose History Which Hermeneutic? Essays on the Way to Understanding the Qur’an* (2003), Alpyağıl expressly grapples with the “linguistic turn”—especially its consequences for sacred scripture. Like Düzgün, whom we will discuss in the next chapter, Alpyağıl’s enemy is not modernity but rather reductionism. His goal is to de-mystify the new discourse of hermeneutics so popular in Turkish academic discussions, without over-insisting on either objectivism or subjectivism. Since AlpyAĞıL deals extensively with religious hermeneutics, he ultimately grapples with a common polemical question in Turkish theology and beyond: is the Qur’ān historical or not? His response, in short, is that there is no neat answer to that question. While refusing to offer a pre-packaged answer on the question of quranic historicity, Alpyağıl also raises the call for Turkish thinkers and especially philosophers of religion to develop their

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409 On this, see his article on deconstruction. For his work in English, see Alpyağıl, “Derrida and Islamic Mysticism: An Undecidable Relationship,” in *A Companion to Derrida*, eds. Z. Direk and L. Lawlor (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 480-489. In Turkish, see Alpyağıl’s book *Derrida'dan Caputo'ya Dekonstrüksiyon ve Din* ['From Derrida to Caputo: Deconstruction and Religion'] (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2007). This work will reappear in chapter 7’s discussion of skepticism.

410 Recep Alpyağıl, *Kimin Tarihi Hangi Hermenötiğ: Kur’an’ı Anlama Yolunda Felsefesi Denemeler I* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2003; repr. 2013). Cited as KTHH.

411 KTHH, 135.
own ideas on what critical historicism should even entail. Further, he remarks that many of the Islamic debates on the historicity of the Qur’ān feed upon an inferiority complex vis-à-vis Western civilization and end up calcified with simplistic understandings of imported categories instead of fully engaged in lively re-negotiation of said categories. As such, the frameworks of many Muslim discussions of historicity are not really helpful or equipped to move Muslim thinkers forward into independent and creative approaches equipped to address religious and intellectual identity today.

Alpyağıl calls for reformulation of debates on historicity and advocates for a more integrated discipline of philosophy of religion; additionally, Alpyağlı’s broader contributions also serve to develop the idea of Ottoman/Turkish intellectual authority, reframing debates on historicity, fideism, rationalism as well as other touch-points of modernity. His wider oeuvre reflects the double task of seriously engaging Western philosophical traditions and of using resources from these traditions along with Ottoman sources to rethink Classical Islamic sources and Muslim intellectual tools. Overall, Alpyağlı’s work exemplifies a consistent endeavor to negotiate between extremes, ask better questions, avoid reductionism, and maintain as much critical distance to his subject as possible. In this way, he offers an especially self-conscious and dialectical example of Turkish theology’s threefold engagement with Turkish, broader Islamic, and Western sources. Not only this, he suggests Turkish philosophy of religion’s strength and authentic future lie in critically embracing this multi-tradition engagement.

412 KTHH, 136.
413 KTHH, 146. I take up his critique of quranic historicity in Turkey below.
414 KTHH, 7-8.
The Problem of Philosophy of Religion in Turkey

In his book, *The Possibility of Creating an Authentic Philosophy in Turkey and Philosophy of Religion: An Investigation into the Example of Paul Ricoeur* (2010), Alpyağlı makes a case for an authentic philosophy of religion in Turkey. This does not mean he aims to introduce the discipline to Turkish academic theologies, since philosophy of religion is not new to Turkish academia. Philosophy of religion exists already as a recognized discipline in Turkish theology faculties today. Moreover, philosophy of religion is not new to Turkish academics generally. In fact, during the mid-twentieth century it was Mustafa Şekip Tunç (1886-1958), who first used the expression “philosophy of religion” systematically in Turkish thought. Alpyağlı instead draws attention to a perceived stagnation, specifically, of Turkish philosophy of religion—one that has been bemoaned by at least some scholars since the mid-1980s. Alpyağlı does not claim to solve the dilemma of founding an authentically Turkish philosophy; nonetheless, he does suggest that scholars have consistently framed this issue in ways that do not help move the discussion forward. In particular, the question of whether the Ottomans had an authentic philosophical tradition is a loaded one. Behind this question, lurk the specters of

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415 The Turkish title: Türkçe‘de otantik felsefe yapabilmenin imkanı ve din felsefesi: Paul Ricoeur örneği üzerinde bir soruşturma (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2010). Cited as TO.
416 While there was extensive intellectual exchange between European intellectuals and the Ottomans of the nineteenth century, this exchange continued in very formal ways on into the twentieth century. For a detailed account of the names and contributions of European scholars (including philosophers and scholars in the humanities) who sought refuge and employment at Istanbul University during the garrulous first half of the twentieth century, see Gürol Irzik, “Hans Reichenbach in Istanbul,” *Synthese* 181 (2011), 157–180.
418 TO, 67.
orientalism, post-colonialism, crisis and rupture, which—as we will see—he constructively addresses.

While Alpyağıl is not trying to introduce philosophy of religion to Turkish academies or theology faculties (since it already exists there), he nevertheless envisions a discipline more integrated than the current divisions. For instance, it may be useful to the reader to note that in Turkish theology faculties there is a fairly strong division between “philosophy of religion” (*din felsefesi*) and “Islamic philosophy” (*İslam felsefesi*). A scholar specialized in one discipline will not necessarily be conversant in the other discipline. Philosophy of religion generally involves a curriculum built around European and Anglophone texts; whereas Islamic philosophy focuses on Classical Islamic thought and increasingly later Ottoman thought. As such, the very question of canon and authority in Turkey must somehow address this academic divide. Many of Alpyağıl’s arguments entail stronger integration of the two disciplines, and he directly argues for a greater inclusion of Islamic texts within the to-date fairly Eurocentric discipline of philosophy of religion. To this end, his own work represents an example of the kind of integration of

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419 The division between Islamic philosophy and philosophy of religion struck me especially on my late 2015 visit to the Ankara Theology Faculty. In the faculty canteen, I had the pleasure of sitting with several graduate students and faculty. Some of us inquired about one another’s research. In the process, it became clear that some of my references and questions were appropriate either for those in philosophy of religion or for those in Islamic philosophy. I asked about the division, and it was later confirmed to me by other theologians. There are some parallels between religion and theology in Anglophone academies, but the division here is also specific to Turkey and mapped out between two subdepartments nested under one shared department (i.e. The Department of Religious and Philosophical Sciences). For a concrete sense of this division, visit the Ankara Theology Faculty website and click on Academic Departments (*Akademik Bölümler*) and you will see both Philosophy of Religion (*Din Felsefesi*) and Islamic Philosophy (*İslam Felsefesi*) listed as separate departments, each with their own faculty members. See the Ankara University Theology Faculty website: [http://www.divinity.ankara.edu.tr/](http://www.divinity.ankara.edu.tr/).

420 It may be worth noting that the Ankara University Theology Faculty page for the Department of Philosophy of Religion stresses the existence of the discipline among late Ottoman thinkers. Among those mentioned are Memduh Süleyman and Eşref Zade Muhammed Şevketi. See the Ankara University Theology Faculty webpage for the Department of Philosophy of Religion, accessed 9/1/16, [http://www.divinity.ankara.edu.tr/?page_id=234](http://www.divinity.ankara.edu.tr/?page_id=234).
authenticity for which he argues. The question of authenticity arises precisely amid this vision for a more broadly integrated canon.

Authenticity of an academic discipline and an entire cultural canon of thought strikes to the heart of the question of which texts and whose academies carry authority. In his work *The Possibility of Creating an Authentic Philosophy in Turkey and Philosophy of Religion*, “authenticity” (*otantise/otantiklik*) is Alpyağlı’s word and discussion of choice. As a rough synonym to the European-derived *otantik* (authentic), he also uses the Arabic-derived *sahici*, which translates to “authentic” or “genuine.” Alpyağlı’s investigation into what makes a tradition authentic is both deconstructive vis-à-vis European intellectual heritage and constructive vis-à-vis the Ottoman/Turkish intellectual tradition.422 He gestures toward the inevitable rootedness of the European and Anglophone philosophical tradition in its own specific religious heritage—regardless of whether it labels itself secular or atheist.423 Alpyağlı’s main argument in this work is as follows: If those in European and Anglophone countries connect to their religious roots while doing philosophy, why cannot this also be the case in Turkey? Further, he urges Turkish intellectuals to not be satisfied with imitating Western philosophy or teaching philosophy of religion according to the perceived Western canon. Instead, scholars in Turkey should dare to discover their own approaches and canon(s) for doing philosophy of religion.

422 By deconstructive and constructive, I do not mean critical and uncritical. Alternately, he positively appreciates many of the European and Anglophone authors which he treats and at the same time critiques his own academy.

423 Şaban Ali Düzgün holds a comparable position. The notion that all “Western” intellectual product reflects a Judeo-Christian heritage regardless and sometimes by virtue of its claim to secularism seems to be, in various forms, a widely held assumption in Turkish theology faculties. While this association is explored further in chapters Five and Six, an analysis of the full extent of this association goes beyond the scope of this project.
But what does the term “authentic” mean for Alpyağıl? He equates authenticity with the self and selfhood.\textsuperscript{424} The self that acts, owns and moves with independence—that is, embodies an internal agency rather than an external one—is an authentic self.\textsuperscript{425}

In addition to a sense of internal agency, authenticity also entails rootedness. Yet, Alpyağlı does not associate authenticity with a simple return to the past or a mere retrieval of lost identity. He writes that authenticity is not something simply retrieved:

However, it should not be forgotten that authenticity is not a pre-existing place that we can return to, it is [rather] an identity which we will be able to discover.\textsuperscript{426}

Authenticity is active and creative. It is something a person moves towards and discovers—not something a person finds and uncovers. This does not mean that authenticity disregards the past. On the contrary, authenticity is profoundly rooted in the past. Alpyağlı goes on to define being authentic as having a clear root, not cut off. “\textit{Authenticity} in its most basic and historical sense is related to having root or origin,” he elucidates, “Accordingly, it can be said of \textit{something with a clear root} that it is \textit{authentic}.”\textsuperscript{427} At the same time, authenticity is not something that already exists, nor something that can be returned to.\textsuperscript{428} Authenticity is again something that must be discovered, perhaps even constructed. This authentic self-discovery does not happen in a vacuum, however. Part of being authentic is also having a living relation to place.\textsuperscript{429} For

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{424} TO, 168. He here says “\textit{otantik}” is the same as “\textit{kendi}.” This second word can mean self and be part of the noun for selfhood, but it can also be used as type of pronoun or possessive pronoun to emphasize personal agency. “I did it \textit{myself},” would be, “\textit{kendim} yaptım.” Or “I live in my \textit{own} house,” would read, “\textit{Kendi} evimde oturuyorum.”
\item \textsuperscript{425} TO, 168.
\item \textsuperscript{426} TO, 168: Original Turkish: “Ancak unutulmamalı ki, otantlik, zaten varolan ve kendisine dönebileceğimiz bir yer değil, keşfedebileceğimiz bir kendilik.”
\item \textsuperscript{427} TO, 33. Original Turkish: “\textit{Otantiklik}, en basit ve tarihsel anlamıyla kök-le, kökenle alakalıdır. Buna göre \textit{otantik} olan, \textit{belli bir kökü olana} denebilir.”
\item \textsuperscript{428} TO, 37.
\item \textsuperscript{429} TO, 39.
\end{itemize}
Alpyağıl, authenticity is neither a myopic return to an idealized past nor a naïve attempt to start anew without sense of rootedness in the past. Authenticity—as Alpyağlı uses the term—lives in the present, is connected to the past, and looks creatively towards the future.

Alyağıl also sees a certain irony in using the word *otantiske*, or authenticity. He writes:

It is interesting [to note that] one of the ironies facing this topic is our [Turkish scholars] not yet having an authentic term to discuss authenticity. In other words, with respect to the present discussion, the very term ‘authentic’ is not authentic.  

In the context of an authentic Ottoman/Turkish philosophical tradition, Alpyağıl observes the very word he uses (*authentic/otantık*) to frame this discussion does not live up to its own meaning. It is simply a European import.

Nevertheless, authentic philosophy is a philosophy of roots. While Alpyağlı makes a case for consciously recognizing Turkish and Islamic roots in his country’s philosophical tradition, the fact of the matter is that philosophy of religion in Turkey also has some European or Western roots. More precisely, contemporary philosophy of religion in Turkey predominantly takes its roots from Western sources. Yet, what Alpyağlı argues for is a stronger integration Ottoman/Turkish and Islamic roots into this conversation. This means he must make the case for including more Islamic and Ottoman sources into debates and discussions that have hitherto been dominated by Western voices and discussions framed in Western terms. In other words, his project entails a healthy admixture of rootedness.

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430 TO, 33. Original Turkish: “İlginçtir, bu konuyu bekleyen en önemli ironilerden birisi de, otantikliği tartışmak için henüz otantik bir kavramımızın olmayışıdır. Yani, *authentic* kavramının kendisi konuştuğumuz bağlam için otantik değildir.”

431 TO, 34. He also references Heidegger’s “*Eigentlichkeit*” in the course of this discussion. While this does not play a major role in his overarching argument, he does note the German phenomenological roots of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*)—here as elsewhere displaying a broad awareness of Western philosophical tradition.
These reflections direct the question to the place of philosophy in Turkey. In accordance with his project of forming a new, integrated, and more fruitful relationship with Ottoman/Turkish and Islamic roots, Alpyağıl argues for the necessity to retrieve in order to construct anew. Why is it still necessary to retrieve the Ottoman intellectual tradition? The problem is that Turkish intellectuals have not been looking for a philosophy of their past due to, more or less, a bias drawn from Orientalist views and perpetuated by Turkish scholars: the assumption that the Ottomans had no philosophical tradition.

Alpyağlı starts by critiquing the assumptions involved in asking whether or not there is a philosophy native to Turkey. He does not simply naively ask, “Does Turkey have its own particular philosophy?” Instead, he starts with this question in order to address the assumptions behind it and to offer his own challenge to these assumptions. These assumptions date back as far as the early twentieth century. In the first decades of the Turkish Republic, it was commonplace for people to ask whether Turkey had its own particular brand of philosophy, and for the reader interested to know who he means when he addresses philosophers of religion in Turkey, Alpyağlı engages and draws on various Turkish philosophers who contribute to the discussion of hermeneutics and philosophy of religion. These include Zeki Özcan, Mehmet Aydn, Nilgün Toker, Zeynep Direk (Turkish translator of Levinas), Ahmet İnam, Cafer S. Yaran, Betül Çotuksöken, Latif Tokat, Mustafa Günay, Nurettin Topçu, Nermi Uygur, Arslan Kaynardağ, and Necip Taylan (TO, 24, 38-53, 84, 89, 90, 93-94 115, 119, 131-135, 140, 146). From an older generation active in the mid-twentieth century, in TO he cites Mubahat Türker Küyel (author of Türkiye’de Cumhuriyet Döneminde Felsefe Eylemi, 1946) on pp. 83-84 and 122-123 as well as the later Doğan Özlem (who wrote Tarih Felsefesi in the 1960s, first published in 1984) on TO, 85 and on KTHH, 149. From those writing at the end of late Ottoman period and in the early days of the Republic, he cites Mustafa Şekip Tunç and Elmalılı Muhammed Yazır; he also cites İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, whose written production spans both the end of the Ottoman empire to well into the late twentieth century (TO, 14-15, 29-30, 52). This is not an exhaustive list but it is meant to be a starting point for orientation. Throughout his treatment Alpyağlı offers a critical digest of differing opinions. For instance, he notes Kaynardağ rejected the claim that there was any Ottoman philosophical thought (TO, 119), whereas the earlier Küyel thought there already existed a potential to create an authentic philosophy from Ottoman sources (TO, 122).

See, for instance, Khaled El-Rouayheb, Relational Syllogisms and the History of Arabic Logic, 900-1900 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010). In his introduction, he challenges the previous scholarly trend to dismiss the post-thirteenth century Arabic logical tradition. The course of his argument throughout this book stresses the ongoing contributions of Ottoman scholars to the Arab/Islamic philosophical tradition in logic.
the standard response was to conclude in the negative.\textsuperscript{435} Yet, asking whether Turkey or its
Ottoman past had its own authentic brand of philosophy perpetuates a circular debate. This
circular debate has continued to circle up to the present day, as Alpyağılı paints the picture of a
Turkish academy that is still stuck asking the wrong questions. He proposes one way out of this
cul-de-sac—learning to ask new questions. Asking new questions is crucial for arriving at new
answers. As the situation stands, the question of philosophy in Turkey ties into a bigger web of
questions. This is not surprising, since even European and Anglophone philosophies are also
bound up with questions that bleed into other disciplines. So, for a start, instead of asking
whether Ottomans did philosophy, Alpyağılı suggests asking what sort of philosophy they did.\textsuperscript{436}
This is a question he does not attempt to answer; nevertheless, he goes on to illustrate the
significance of breaking out of limiting discussions. His aim is not to exhaust the topic, but to
look at a seemingly static discussion from fresh angles. To the forefront of this exercise in
seeking fresh angles, Alpyağılı brings the example of Paul Riceour.

\textbf{Paul Ricoeur as an Example of Integrating Religious Tradition as a Source of
Authentic Philosophy}

His reader may find it curious that Alpyağılı begins with a European philosopher in order
to make the case for an authentic Turkish philosophy. Yet, Alpyağılı is ultimately arguing for an
inclusive canon that draws critically and freely from Western and non-Muslim examples even as
it roots itself more authentically in Islamic sources. So, Alpyağılı’s use of Paul Ricoeur reinforces
the idea of a more inclusive Turkish philosophical canon. Thus, he has chosen the example of

\textsuperscript{435} TO, \textsuperscript{38}.
\textsuperscript{436} TO, \textsuperscript{18}.
Paul Ricoeur to argue that any authentic philosophical tradition is legitimately and inevitably rooted in the religious tradition(s) and text(s) out of which it developed. Once the reader can accept this as a fundamental premise, Alpyağıl then makes the parallel case for including the Qur’ān, the Classical Islamic, and Ottoman traditions as legitimate sources for an authentic Turkish philosophy of religion.

Alpyağıl works with English, limited French, and numerous Turkish translations of Ricoeur’s oeuvre. With recent significant translations of Ricoeur’s work into Turkish, this also means that at least some of Ricoeur’s work is directly accessible for Turkish scholars and readers who cannot read the French hermeneutical philosopher’s works in English (or French). It appears that many of Ricoeur’s works were translated into Turkish in the late 2000s. While it is hard to estimate the impact of these translations, it is still informative to recognize that the

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efforts to translate Ricoeur into Turkish are relatively recent and extensive, making Alpyağıl’s choice of example timely.

Alpyağlı also explicitly addresses the reasons behind this choice of Ricoeur as an example for Turkish philosophy of religion. For Alpyağlı, Ricoeur’s contribution to philosophy of religion serves as a positive case for the value of an inclusive yet still authentic philosophical canon. This inclusive move is one of the first steps needed to reconstruct broken ties with the past. Alpyağlı stresses that Paul Ricoeur is a perfect case example, because, within European and Anglophone academies, he helped hoist philosophy of religion into mainstream philosophical discourse. Alpyağlı rightly affirms that, for Ricoeur, thinking philosophically always entails thinking religiously. Ricoeur’s significance in pioneering the practice of tearing down walls between philosophy, hermeneutics, and theology elucidates in part Alpyağlı’s own vision for the future of philosophy of religion and broader philosophical discussions in Turkey. Alpyağlı writes:

In [the context of] philosophical endeavors in Turkey, new topics are needed—topics that will speed up the development of philosophy and open up the possibility for an authentic

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439 TO, 21.
441 TO, 21. For this claim, he refers to Main Trends in Philosophy (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979). In this work, Ricoeur specifically addresses the question of philosophy of religion at the end of this work, pp. 372-392, a discussion which begins with the following statements: “It is impossible to treat the foundations of humanism without entering into the discussions in regard to the significance of the religious fact for philosophy. We have given our survey of these the title ‘Philosophy of Religion,’ which simply means: How is the religious fact accounted for in philosophical discourse?” (372). Ricoeur goes on to evaluate ontological, analytic, linguistic and hermeneutical approaches to religion. Ricoeur recognizes that many reject a religious ground for humanism, but states there are also dissenting voices who affirm the necessity of a religious grounding of philosophical humanism; Ricoeur lists: Aldous Huxley, Paul Tillich, Reinhold Niebuhr, Gabriel Marcel, Karl Jaspers, and Arnold Toynbee (391).
442 TO, 25.
identity to develop. The best example of this is hermeneutic literature in contemporary philosophy.\textsuperscript{443}

In other words, Alpyağıl thinks that Turkish philosophy needs new subjects, new horizons in order to establish itself authentically. For him, hermeneutics has problematized in exemplary fashion the boundaries of Western philosophy.\textsuperscript{444}

To better grasp how Ricoeur’s work speaks to the situation in Turkey, it is important to clarify two things. First, Alpyağıl speaks of crisis and rupture in the context of Turkey’s intellectual tradition. Second, Alpyağıl treats the Western tradition as a diverse whole that enjoys continuity between its past and present. For Alpyağıl, Ricoeur is a bridge as well as an indication of rupture within the Western canon—his work is an effort to expose and validate the seams intertwining theological and philosophical reflection. Moreover, Alpyağıl thinks that Ricoeur represents a rupture as well as a bridge for the Turkish intellectual canon. On the one hand, Ricoeur is a European thinker whose Judeo-Christian heritage has been minimized in Turkish philosophical discussions, a double rupture, an authority from outside and an example of a thinker stripped of his roots. On the other, his integrated philosophy of religion is also a bridge—an example for greater integration of religious tradition and philosophical thought in Turkish philosophy.

\textsuperscript{443} TO, 26. Original Turkish: “Türkiye’deki felsefe faaliyetlerinde, felsefenin ivmesini hızlandıracak, otantik bir hüviyet kazanmasına imkan tanyacak yeni mevzilere ihtiyaç vardır. Bu da, hermenötik örneğinde olduğu gibi dinle felsefe arasındaki sınırları sorunsallaştıran teşebbülerle mümkün olacaktır. Bunun en güzel örneği çağdaş felsefedeki hermenötik literatürdür.”

\textsuperscript{444} Within his treatment of the problematic bounds of Western philosophy, he mentions the divide between Continental and Analytic philosophy. It may be worth noting that this divide is also treated ambitiously in Ricoeur’s \textit{Main Trends in Philosophy} (New York, NY: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1979), which moves from a history philosophy of mathematics and logical positivism towards new cases for ontology, hermeneutics, and humanism.
How exactly does Alpyağıl frame the issue of rupture and crisis? Alpyağlı recognizes that the Turkish philosophical landscape still reels from a historical rupture with its Ottoman and, to some extent, with its broader Islamic heritage. Turkey is, of course, not the only place to feel the effects of rupture and crisis. The effect of colonial encounters with the West has reached many non-Western cultures. Yet, how does one respond to crisis and rupture? Alpyağlı articulates a need to recognize and re-narrate. For a start, he reads the Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876) as a typical manifestation of a dualistic East-West encounter.445 This sort of dualism is harmful when it leads to false paradoxes and circular reasoning. For this reason, his aim is not to react against Western influence, but rather to find ways to reclaim agency in the process of re-narrating the Ottoman and Turkish encounter with the West. He also stresses the necessity of retrieval, with the remark, “Frankly speaking, it is necessary to re-establish the broken bridges and ruptured ties, if we ever wish to establish an authentic philosophy.”446 However, this would require a broader understanding of philosophy of religion. He clarifies, “[I] do not mean ‘philosophy of religion’ in a narrow sense, [but rather] in a broader, comprehensive sense.”447 Alpyağlı criticizes the narrow understanding of Turkish philosophy of religion, which relies heavily on Western academic discussions. Doing so, Alpyağlı sheds light on how philosophy of religion as it is still practiced in Turkey fails to be an authentically Turkish expression. What would render philosophy of religion in Turkey truly authentic, according to Alpyağlı, would be to embrace an inclusive intellectual canon and affirm the importance of individual efforts to creatively navigate

445 TO, 28.
446 TO, 28. Original Turkish: “Açıkçası kopan bağların, yıkılan köprülerin yeniden kurulması gerekmektedir, eğer otantik bir felsefenin ortaya çıkması isteniysorsa.”
447 TO, 28. Original Turkish: “…biz ’din felsefesi’ ni dar anlamda değil, daha geniş ve kuşatıcı bir anlamda ele alıyoruz.”
this wider, richer canon. Understood more broadly, Alpyağıl’s indictment means that Turkish academic theology, at its philosophy of religion, fails to embrace its true potential for complexity and independent creativity. Turkish philosophy of religion fails to be truly dialectical and remains stuck in stagnant duality, but Alpyağıl is trying to change this. To move forward, he proposes a dialectic between philosophy and philosophy of religion. Why philosophy of religion? Philosophy of religion has the potential “to build bridges.”

Alpyağıl turns to the Western example of intellectual continuity. Alpyağıl’s treatment of Turkish philosophical authenticity strongly suggests that Turkey still stands in the wake of rupture with its own tradition; by contrast, academic cultures representative of the Western intellectual tradition enjoy a relatively less problematic relationship to their past. Not only this, he notes the ease with which Muslim thinkers make use of Western sources compared with the relative paucity of Islamically grounded philosophies:

Decades after colonialization, the [continued] absence of authentic intellectual approaches directed towards Muslims, apart from superficial attributions, is a very surprising (!) situation.

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448 TO, 29.
449 While the question of modernity may be a question of rupture for many cultures, even Western cultures; arguably the rupture which Western societies experience is not always analogous to the rupture other societies subjected to Western cultural and technical norms have experienced. The discussion of double standards is drawn out, occurs most explicitly in TO, 43-57, 67-80, 83-100, and continues as an ongoing thread. Alpyağıl does not offer counter examples to the assumption that Western cultures experience continuity; his focus instead lies with his Turkish audience.
450 TO, 101. Original Turkish: “Onca yıllık sömürünün ardından, Müslümanlara yönelik hâlâ, yüzeysel atıfların düşında, sahici düşünsel yaklaşımın olmaması çok şaşılacak (!) bir durumdur.” In this same paragraph he contrasts this gap with the continued dependence of Muslim intellectuals on Western sources.
In his view, compared to Western (included with this: Christian) philosophers who enjoy relatively extensive recourse to their intellectual traditions, Muslim thinkers are far less likely to build philosophical approaches seriously grounded in Islamic traditions.\textsuperscript{451}

Alpyağıl frequently addresses the disparity between rupture and continuity. He shows there has arisen a double standard regarding whose religious tradition is considered a legitimate part of philosophical knowledge production. As a prime example of this double standard, he points to Jesus and the Torah as inexhaustible sources for Western (including secular) thought even today.\textsuperscript{452} By contrast, philosophy of religion in Turkey does not necessarily draw on Islamic sources with confidence.\textsuperscript{453} To bring out the two-sided logic of this double standard, he points out that if philosophy is only legitimate when it is not grounded in religious tradition, then most medieval philosophy (and presumably many modern thinkers) are not real philosophers. That is to say, St. Augustine, St. Thomas, Ibn ‘Arabī, and Ibn Sīnā—all of whom write from a context of religious conviction—are not real philosophers.\textsuperscript{454} In this way, Alpyağıl uses an *ad absurdum* argument to highlight the fact that it is unrealistic to consider philosophy legitimate only when it

\textsuperscript{451} While there is a sub-department in Turkish theology faculties devoted to Islamic philosophy, Alpyağlı does not seem satisfied with partitioning Islamic philosophical sources into a discipline sheltered from broader discussions of philosophy. Since he is advocating for an authentic, even creative, Turkish philosophy of religion, he addresses a broader audience—Turkish philosophers inside and outside of the theology faculties. His argument puts more emphasis on including Islamic sources in these broader philosophical discussions than on interjecting these broader discussions into the Turkish discussions of Islamic philosophy. This may be in large part due to the fact that he has been trained and holds a position in Philosophy of Religion and not Islamic Philosophy.\textsuperscript{452} TO, 44. Another example he lists is secular French philosopher Alain Badiou’s work on the Christian figure of St. Paul. See his *Saint Paul : la foundation de l’universalisme*. Alpyağlı cites this secular philosophical use of the Christian tradition in TO, 80. For a comparative viewpoint regarding Western continuity, Talal Asad formulates it in the following manner: “The West defines itself, in opposition to all non-Western cultures, by its modern historicity. Despite the disjunctions of modernity (its break with tradition), ‘the West’ therefore includes within itself its past as an organic continuity.” T. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 18.\textsuperscript{453} Alpyağlı notes of only one attempt in Turkey to create a philosophy based on the life and teachings of Muhammad—Cemil Sena’s *Hz. Muhammed’ in Felsefesi [The Philosophy of Muhammad]*, 1984 (TO, 80).\textsuperscript{454} TO, 45.
has been stripped and sanitized of its religious roots. Moreover, in his opinion, there historically has been much less concern for such sanitization when it comes to members of the Western philosophical canon.\textsuperscript{455}

Alpyağlı’s fundamental stance is that genuine philosophy, whatever the form, will pass through religion. The task is to apply this premise to Islamic sources in addition to Christian and other Western sources already part of the Turkish philosophical discussion. The precise admixture of this complex set of sources is in large part left up to the discretion of the individual philosopher. Alpyağlı firmly asserts:

\[\ldots\text{the path of an authentic philosophy, in some form—a form determined by the philosopher—will pass through religion.}\textsuperscript{456}\]

Not only does Alpyağlı foresee the future of authentic philosophy as intricately bound up with its religious roots, he also warns that trying to deny these roots results in a harmful and stultifying form of intellectual reductionism. In short, when philosophy does not take account of religion, philosophy degenerates into reductive tendencies. It is this sort of reductionism which Alpyağlı considers an enduring obstacle in Turkey. Alpyağlı contrasts his assessment of philosophy of religion in Turkey with Ricoeur’s example: Ricoeur’s synthesis is neither superficial nor reductive—and for this reason it is precisely this sort of synthesis that interests Alpyağlı.\textsuperscript{457}

\textsuperscript{455} Though Alpyağlı does not mention this debate, the contemporary debates on whether medieval Muslim thinker al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) was a philosopher embody the double standard that Alpyağlı wishes to move beyond. For a concise literature review on varying scholarly opinions of al-Ghazālī’s status in this regard, see the introduction of Frank Griffel’s \textit{Al-Ghazali’s Philosophical Theology} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). In his introduction, Griffel treats and challenges al-Ghazālī’s assumed role in the now heavily challenged theory of philosophical decline post-classical Islam.

\textsuperscript{456} TO, 50. Original Turkish: “Kanaatımızce, sahici bir felsefenin yolu, bir şekilde, -ki şekline filozof karar verecektir-, dinden geçecek tir.”

\textsuperscript{457} TO, 27.
One tactic Alpyağlı suggests for getting beyond stultifying reductionism is moving beyond false dichotomies and expanding past rigid binaries. Alpyağlı argues for the value of moving past *either/or*—particular in the context of Turkish academia. According to Alpyağlı’s diagnosis, Turkish philosophers have not identified the real problems. As a result, Turkish philosophers are still stuck as they were in 1986.\(^{458}\) Not only that, Turkish philosophers are conscious of being stuck. One of the reasons Turkey remains stuck, he argues, is due to an oversimplification of the problem; it is not, as many try to frame the issue, a question of religion vs. science.\(^{459}\) Instead of approaching things with an *either/or* mentality, Alpyağlı proposes working through issues with a *both/and* attitude:

> In the author’s opinion, philosophy of religion’s continuously thinking in terms of *both/and* could build a bridge across this compartmentalization.\(^{460}\)

In other words, it is time for Turkish philosophy to get beyond the false assumptions that one can do philosophy without religion or that one cannot be both religious and a philosopher. It is possible to be both religious and think philosophically.\(^{461}\) In this case, it is possible to be Muslim and a philosopher, or use Muslim sources in building an authentic philosophy. In support of his


\(^{459}\) TO, 68. The temptation to frame religion and philosophy in terms of a question of religion versus science is a common tactic in Turkey (and elsewhere). Arguments and qualities of approaches vary from the infamous Adnan Oktar (also known as Harun Yahya) to serious academic theologians like Şaban Ali Düzgün, whom we will treat in the coming chapter. Adnan Oktar is famous for bringing a lawsuit against Richard Dawkins, who responded with a mocking public retort. Michael Ben Sims, a scholar of popular religion and Turkey, informed me of Oktar, whose caricatured take on religion and science is prevalent in Turkish popular media.

\(^{460}\) TO, 70. Original Turkish: “Kanaatimizce, sürekli ve ile düşünün din felsefesi bu bölünmüşlük arasında bir köprü kurabilecektir.”

\(^{461}\) It is worthwhile noting that while he draws on Paul Ricoeur’s work, there is another major European thinker who challenged the boundaries between theology and philosophy—Paul Tillich. While Paul Tillich is known in Turkish theology faculties, it is possible that Alpyağlı prefers Paul Ricoeur because Ricoeur established his legitimacy within philosophy and helped legitimize and bring awareness to the religious roots of philosophy. Paul Tillich, on the other hand, is more known for philosophical theology and for his contributions to theological discourse. It is worth noting that Zeki Özcan, whom Alpyağlı cites and sometimes relies on, translated some of Paul Tillich’s works. Also, Şaban Ali Düzgün, whom we will treat in the next chapter, offers a brief treatment of Tillich’s contribution.
suggestion for a both/and mentality, Alpyağlı uses Ricoeur to stress anti-reductionism and openness. In addition to a stress on openness, Alpyağlı insists that a theological turn is not necessarily a reactionary turn. It is in fact the reactionary turn of either/or that he wishes to avoid. Theology is neither monolithic nor mere reaction—it too is in constant development. For instance, he employs Ricoeur’s language of circle to show how turning to theology means creative change, motion forward and plurality. Alpyağlı playfully explains:

Theology, however, is not a unity such that it returns [to a point] and stops. Rather, it turns and turns, halts somewhere, and where it stops is never where it began—much has changed.

This process of turning is also a process of change and collision. This sort of turning is also an open circle—like a hermeneutic circle. Speaking of circles and centers, Alpyağlı also holds that despite Ricoeur’s role as an example for philosophy of religion and even despite Ricoeur’s own awareness of the dangers of Eurocentrism, Ricoeur still remains relatively Eurocentric.

Alpyağlı cites Ricoeur, who states, “In emphasizing the importance of the Greek or Judaeo-Christian traditions, we often overlook the radically heterogenous discourses of the Far East...” and Alpyağlı asks whether it is not helpful to take this oversight more seriously.

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462 TO, 71.
463 TO, 78. Original Turkish: “Oysa teoloji de yek değildir ki, dönür, durur. Yani dönür dönür, bir yerde durur, durduğunda ise yer asla eski yer değildir, çok şey değişmiştir.” The verb dönmek can mean to turn or to return in Turkish. I have translated it alternatively based on context. I have also translated ‘yek’ or ‘one’ as ‘a unity’ for this context.
464 TO, 100. In this criticism, Alpyağlı cites Ricoeur, “The Creativity of Language,” an interview with Richard Kearney. See Ricoeur, “The Creativity of Language,” in A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination, ed. Mario J. Valdés (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 463–481. In this interview, Ricoeur also takes up an evaluation of Lévi-Strauss. Ricoeur thinks Lévi-Strauss was right to designate some (non-Western) societies as “cold” societies who are both resistant to historical and interpretive thought and to designate “Greek and Hebraic” along with “Western culture” as “hot” societies for whom interpretation and historicity are internal elements of meaning-making (471). Though Alpyağlı does not cite this discussion from the same work, it supports Alpyağlı criticism of Eurocentric aspects to Ricoeur’s perspective.
466 TO, 100.
With Ricoeur’s comments in mind, Alpyağıl looks the languages, narratives, discourses, and traditions out of which specific philosophies emerge. The question of language presupposes the texts which shape and wield authority in language. Thus, it is not merely a question of whose language but also a question of whose texts. He goes on to propose that Ricoeur’s case for intertextuality (metinlerarasılık) be expanded beyond the European canon—especially since intertextuality can entail deep theological dimensions. Being a text entails that in being read it is read in relation to other texts. This process is for Alpyağıl a hallmark of intertextuality. As Alpyağıl notes, it is difficult to speak of real and robust intertextuality if the canon considered remains limited to Judaeo-Christian texts.

For those afraid that this proposed soup of intertextuality will boil down to pure subjectivism, he retorts that reacting defensively against subjectivism only creates another form of subjectivism. Since everything humans do is through language, hermeneutics is what brings things together. Hermeneutics is pervasive in its scope. It is neither a threat nor a perfect solution. On this he refers to Zeki Özcan, one of the pioneers of theological hermeneutics in Turkey. Z. Özcan explains that hermeneutics is neither Aladdin’s lamp nor Pandora’s Box but something extremely useful. Why is hermeneutics useful? Hermeneutics is “a point of

467 TO, 99-101.
468 TO, 101.
469 TO, 101.
470 TO, 102. This goes especially for philosophers of religion who are writing in a primarily Muslim context, i.e. the context in which Alpyağıl writes.
471 TO, 130.
472 TO, 131. Zeki Özcan, Teolojik Hermenötik, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Alfa, 2000), xix-xx. Notably, Özcan begins the preface to the first edition of this work with a citation attributed to Newton, “The world is a book written in the language of hermeneutics.” He begins with this to assert both the prevalence of hermeneutics in how we “read” the world and to affirm that meaning is not an individual human creation, that it is handed down through culture. At the same time, to live means to play the game of assigning meaning to reality. This discussion appears on pp. xvii-xviii of the second edition.
convergence” (bir kesişme noktası) between theology and philosophy.\textsuperscript{473} In the space between theology and philosophy, Alpyağıl points to the positive function of both hermeneutics and philosophy of religion.\textsuperscript{474} He suggests that, “hermeneutics could be a meeting point between religion and philosophy for an authentic philosophy. I think that the best candidate for establishing this meaning point is philosophy of religion.”\textsuperscript{475}

What sort of questions would or could an authentic Turkish philosophy address? As one example of a possible application of theological hermeneutics, Alpyağıl brings up the issue of quranic historicity. He criticizes the banality of Turkish discussions on quranic historicity, using medieval Muslim thinker al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) to support his own position—a position that takes Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of revelation (vahyin hermenötiği) as a helpful reference point.\textsuperscript{476} Regarding hermeneutics of revelation, Ricoeur emphasizes that when it comes to revelation, the believer’s textual perspective allows for more “pluralism” and “polysemy” than the perspective of a philosopher trying to formulate a “monolithic” concept of revelation.\textsuperscript{477} This emphasis on plurality has strong parallels with Alpyağlı’s work. Specifically, Alpyağlı insists, with Ricoeur,
that the reader of the text is not master of the text, but a person open to being acted on by the
text.\textsuperscript{478}

Sacred scripture, or revelation, walks ahead of the reader open to encounter. This means
that revelation works forward into the future, and as such is not something static. The text is
always one step ahead of its commentator.\textsuperscript{479} In this spirit, he baptizes Ricoeur’s approach with
some of al-Ghazālī’s remarks in the \textit{Niche of Lights}:

One who considers the realities of these words may become bewildered by the
multiplicity of the words and imagine many meanings. But one to whom the realities are
unveiled \textit{will make the meaning a root and the words a follower}. This situation is
reversed in the weak, since they search for the realities from the words.\textsuperscript{480}

Alpyağič implies through al-Ghazālī’s words that meaning lives and pours from revelation. This
is a question of the direction and origin of meaning, where revelation always precedes the
believer’s commentary and speculation. Revelation is not limited by one commentary or one
interpretation. To explain it with the analogy of Ghazālī cited above, just as the meaning is the
root of the word so too is revelation the root of sacred commentary. In this context, “believing to
understand and understanding to believe” does not denote a fideist position but a living (rather
than objectified) relation to the text.\textsuperscript{481}

\textsuperscript{478} TO, 137. Ricoeur deals with this question of ‘actant’ (agent) and text in several ways—through modes of
revelation, a critique of philosophical speculation’s presumed role in receiving revelation, and a turn to the appeal of
poetry. See Ricoeur’s “Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation.”

\textsuperscript{479} TO, 137. Among various works cited, Alpyağič includes Paul Ricoeur, “Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of

\textsuperscript{480} Al-Ghazālī, \textit{The Niche of Lights}, trans. David Buchman (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998),
26. Alpyağič, on pages 137-138 of TO, uses a Turkish translation of the same work: “Lafızlardan hakikatere giden,
onun kesetinden şaşkınlığı düşer ve manaların çokluğunu tahayyül eder. Ancak hakikatin kendiinde inkışaf ettiği
kimse manaları asıl ve lafızları bu manalarara tabi kılars. Zayıf olan kimse hakikatleri lafızlardan talep eder.” Ebu

\textsuperscript{481} TO, 137. Elsewhere, Alpyağič does a sustained critique of Christian fideism. This critique will be discussed in
section two of chapter 7.
In sum, Alpyağıl uses Ricoeur primarily as a starting point to take up and move beyond the (allegedly stalled) Turkish situation. Importantly, Alpyağıl takes pains to appreciate that while Ricoeur is known as a philosopher, Ricoeur also does a lot of serious theological work. Ricoeur holds the credentials of a philosopher and nevertheless remains in touch with and even draws philosophical reflections from Judeo-Christian roots. Ricoeur’s example pushes back against those who insist philosophy must steer clear of theology. Further, Ricoeur serves as a point of passage to talk about philosophy of religion in Turkey as a mere example, rather than an absolute authority. Finally, Alpyağıl portrays Ricoeur as a voice calling for opportunity amid crisis.  

Alpyağıl approvingly notes of Ricoeur, that he, “soundly draws together a number of opposing poles that seem distant from one another,” and being philosophically equipped to deal with dichotomies and dialectics, Ricoeur “saw dilemmas as an opportunity and not as a crisis.” Just as Ricoeur saw dilemmas between theology and philosophy as opportunities, so too should Turkish philosophers of religion. In short, amidst a crisis of authenticity it is still possible to move beyond passive eclecticism and a chance to do something new and non-reductive. Let us pass now to the question of an authentic Ottoman/Turkish canon.

**Beyond a Reactionary Canon—Inclusions and Re-narrations**

One thing worth stressing is that Alpyağıl does not argue for the value of Islamic and Ottoman sources in order to exclude what would be considered Western sources from an authentic Turkish intellectual canon. Instead, his project is one of restoration, integration, and re-

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482 TO, 57.

483 TO, 57: Original Turkish: “[Ricoeur], birbirine uzak görünen birçok kutbu [...] sağlam bir biçimde kaynağınaştırılmıştır. [...] O, ikilemleri bir kriz olarak değil her zaman bir şans olarak görmüştür.”
narration. Earlier, the discussion touched on the topic of crisis. Alpyağıl does not stop with a story of crisis; rather, he points to opportunity present in the ongoing crisis of identity and to a positive search for authentic roots. This section offers a limited sample of the plurality of voices which both inform Alpyağıl’s sense of intellectual canon and serve as his critical dialogue partners. Alpyağıl free engages with European/Anglophone, Turkish, Ottoman, and contemporary Arab and classical Islamic counterparts. This engagement makes Alpyağıl a strong example of how Turkish theology can move beyond dichotomies and creatively forge new theological insights with the help of a canon that integrates Turkish, Arabo-Islamic and Western sources.

*Canon*

As mentioned above, Alpyağıl asserts that for intertextuality to be truly intertextual, the canon of texts considered formative must expand to include those outside of Western thought and religion—in particular, he makes a case for the legitimate inclusion of the Qur’ān and pious Muslim perspectives. Alpyağıl does not make his case in a vacuum. He recognizes that Turkish scholars in academia have made some progress in re-appropriating their philosophical roots, yet he nevertheless stresses the continued need to wriggle out of the trap of Eurocentrism. On this point, he defers to Mustafa Günay’s relatively recent remarks on the matter. Mustafa Günay writes:

> It appears necessary for us to get out of Eurocentricism. [...] We must not think in terms of reducing philosophy merely to local and national elements.

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484 TO, 90. He shies from claiming that the Qur’ān should be systematically used to underpin a whole philosophy, and, in this, his position is similar to Ricoeur’s, who also pushes back against a purely speculative and secondary appropriation of sacred text.

485 TO, 84.

Yet, how does one ever break free from the nearly ubiquitous “circle” of Eurocentricism? Alpyağıl provides us with a simple yet truly appropriate visual model: the move from circle to *spiral*.\(^{487}\) Let us take a moment to flesh out this image with elements from the above discussion on authenticity and rootedness. It was noted above that Alpyağıl does not argue for an exclusive or reactionary philosophy of religion in Turkey.\(^{488}\) On the contrary, he adeptly engages and draws on Western philosophical and theological traditions. A spiral contains within itself the motion of a circle, yet it is not doomed to always repeat itself—it moves forward and backwards. It was also noted in the discussion of authenticity that Alpyağıl refuses to limit authenticity to a static relation to the past. Authenticity and rootedness do not involve simply returning to a lost path; they are essentially motions that integrate past, present and future. A spiral includes within it a circle but reaches out behind and in front of the circle. In this way, a spiral is a very elegant symbol for authenticity, rootedness, and openness towards the new. The question of an authoritative canon among Turkish academic philosophers, for Alpyağıl, hinges on this image of rootedness and openness as well as an implied sublation of Eurocentric pressures. Philosophy in Turkey, it appears, must pass both through religion and through the Western canon. At the same time, it stops *neither* at static reactionary claims to an idealized past *nor* at the bounds of what is considered authoritative in a Eurocentric intellectual canon.

A productive canon is both rooted and open. A canon can and should be this way, because the very notion of a tradition (which would inform the canon) is not monolithic. There is

\(^{487}\)TO, 88.

\(^{488}\)TO, 82. Alpyağlı strongly rejects a strict notion of turn/return (*dönüş*) to the past—as he sees it, this does not work philosophically.
no statically fixed tradition for the canon to limit itself to. As Alpyağıl asserts, tradition is not a monolith; it is by nature multifaceted. He writes:

[T]he relationship between problem and history is not one dimensional or drawn only with one line—there are many dimensions and many lines. As a matter of fact, tradition itself is not a monolithic structure, it is a whole that is constantly changing, revolving and expressing plurality in relation to us.489

Here we see that Alpyağıl emphasizes the relational aspect of tradition. Tradition exists in relation to communities. Communities have diverse and changing needs. Accordingly, he questions why Turkish philosophers do not include more thinkers of the Arabic and Ottoman traditions. Would this not better reflect the needs, history, and rootedness of their Turkish readers?

Alpyağıl advocates a practice of philosophy of religion that consciously includes a broad spectrum of Islamic sources. To the reader following his examples, it becomes clear that Muslim thinkers whose legitimacy as authorities does not need as much arguing for tend to be figures that have already gained authority in the Western canon (like Avicenna or Averroes). While Alpyağıl includes such figures, he does not limit his canon to these figures. In addition to stressing the importance of an Avicenna or an Ibn Rushd, he points to as yet untapped resources available to the Turkish canon, writing:

Is there a place in philosophy departments close to those deservedly recognized as philosophers such as Augustine, Aquinas or Abelard for someone like a Taftazani or a Jurjani, who in fact are no less [deserving of such rank]? Or are the names Molla Fenari, Sari Abdullah, Gelenbevi, Sacaclizade, etc...remembered?490

489 TO, 41. Original Turkish: “…sorun ve gelenek ilişkisi, tek boyutlu ve tek çizgili değil, çok boyutlu ve çok çizgilidir. Zaten geleneğin kendisi monolitik bir yapı değil, bizlerin ilişkisiyle sürekli olarak değişen, dönen, çoğulasma bir bütündür.”

490 TO, 48. Original Turkish: “…felsefe bölümlerinde Augustinus, Aquinas veya Abelard’ın felsefeci olarak hak ettikleri yere yakın, hatta onlardan hiç farklı olmayan sözgelimi bir Taftazani’nin, Cürçani’nin yeri var mıdır? Ya da Molla Fenari, Sari Abdullah, Gelenbevi, Sacaclizade vd. Bunların adları anılır mı?” The works of Al-Taftazâni (1322-1390) and al-Jurjâni (1339-1414), Ottoman scholar Halil Inalcik notes, were foundational to the Ottoman medrese tradition. Inalcik, The Ottoman Empire (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 175-176. The last four names
Here Alpyağıl mentions post-Classical Islamic figures less recognized by Western philosophy and goes on to include Ottoman thinkers. To better appreciate the above comment, it is perhaps helpful to recall the division between Islamic philosophy and philosophy of religion in Turkish theology faculties—not to mention the existence of separate philosophy departments outside of theology faculties altogether. While there may exist Turkish theologians who produce scholarly studies of such figures as listed above, what is lacking is an integration of these figures into the wider philosophical canon in Turkey. He cites Necla Arat, who pointed out in 1986 that philosophy done in Turkish philosophy departments is simply Western philosophy.\(^{491}\) What was true for Turkish philosophy in the 1980s is, in Alpyağıl’s view, still at least largely true in Turkish philosophy today. Alpyağıl argues for a change of this status quo.

According to Alpyağıl, an authentic philosophical canon in Turkey ought to include sacred scripture, classical Islamic thinkers, Ottoman thinkers, Turkish thinkers and European/Anglophone thinkers. Among classical Islamic thinkers, he suggests incorporating those like al-Farābī (d. 950/951), Ibn Sīnā (980-1037), Ibn Rushd (1126-1198) along with those who came after, like Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1149-1210), Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (1201-1274), Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī\(^{492}\) (1210-1274), Athīr al-Dīn al-Abhari\(^{493}\) (1200-1264). He also points to the value of late Ottoman and thinkers of the early Republic like Ziyaeddin Fahri Fındıkçı (1901-


\(^{492}\) In Turkish,  \textit{Konevi}.

\(^{493}\) In Turkish,  \textit{Ebheri}.
Notice, Alpyağıl does not have to argue for the inclusion of Western philosophers in Turkey’s philosophical canon. Western thinkers have and continue to dominate the philosophical landscape in Turkey and they also play an integral role in Alpyağıl’s own scholarly production. Rather, the argument needs to be made for the inclusion of Muslim and Ottoman sources which currently are not formative voices in the Western philosophical canon, but which are nevertheless potentially authentic roots for contemporary Turkish philosophical production. For a visual illustration of Alpyağıl’s inclusive canon, one need only to look at the cover of his book *Difference and Commentary: Philosophical Essays on the Way to Understanding the Qur’an*. 

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494 TO, 88.

495 One interesting subtlety to note is that Alpyağıl not only uses Western thinkers but he also uses Western critiques of Eurocentrism (and also points out their limits as we saw with Paul Ricoeur’s notion of “intertextuality”). In short, he uses the assumed voice of Western authority to put in question its assumed authority. This element is particularly prevalent in Alpyağıl’s *The Possibility of Creating an Authentic Philosophy in Turkey and Philosophy of Religion* (Cited as TO).

496 *Fark ve Yorum: Kur’an’ı Anlama Yolunda Felsefi Denemeler II* [Difference and Commentary: Philosophical Essays on the Way to Understanding the Qur’an II] (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2014). Cited as FY.
Figure 11: Cover of *Difference and Commentary*.397
From top left to bottom right, the reader is met with a kaleidoscope of philosophical representatives: Avicenna (980-1037), Averroes (1126-1198), the Moroccan Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri (1935-2010), the Iranian Abdolkarim Soroush (b. 1945), the Egyptian Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (1943-2010), the English Don Cupitt (b. 1934), the Scottish William Montgomery Watt (1909-2006), and the Austrian Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951). Notice that all but the first two names are figures from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In short, even the cover of this book shows his most basic move: not a reactive canon of authority, but an inclusive canon of authority—one that freely mixes Ottoman, Arab, Persian and European faces.

Not only does Alpyağıl argue for an inclusive canon across religious traditions, he also argues for inclusiveness of the canon within the Islamic philosophical tradition. In his book *Difference and Commentary*, he concludes by taking up Moroccan philosopher Mohammed Abed al-Jabri (1935-2010)’s treatment of Eastern and Western Islamic traditions. Al-Jabri harshly criticizes what he sees as the Eastern Islamic branch of thought—believing it to be philosophically unsound due to its stress on mystical knowing (*irfan*). Al-Jabri traces the root of the problem to Avicenna and al-Ghazālī (whom al-Jabri considered a blind follower of Ibn Sīnā). Alpyağıl concedes to Al-Jabri that Andalusian thought is valuable and representative of the Islamic tradition, but he also asks: Do we have to throw out Ibn Sīnā?1499 Alpyağlı points to the Ottoman stands of the Avicennan tradition and asks whether these sources would not carry equal value or merit. He resists al-Jabri’s insistence on dividing up Islamic tradition between East and West to decide which one is more authentic. For Alpyağlı, it is not necessarily a question of

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497 Recep Alpyağlı kindly sent me the image of his book cover and enumerated the identities of the figures.
498 Again, for this list I am indebted to Alpyağlı—I could not visually identify all figures without aid.
499 FY, 176.
either/or when faced with Western and Eastern Islamic traditions. There is room for both. By critically engaging Al-Jabri on the question of an authentic Islamic tradition, Alpyağıl offers his reader a direct example of the power of saying both/and when it comes to recognizing and narrating the roots of a specific philosophical tradition.

Let us look at one more example from Alpyağıl’s wide and inclusive canon before turning to the question of narrative—his comments on Gadamer’s weight in Turkish academic self-understanding. Remarking on the influence of Gadamer in modern Turkey, Alpyağıl states that the Turkish reader is accustomed to Gadamer. Gadamer’s basic thesis is well established in Turkey—that is, there is really no such thing as prejudice-free reading. Thus, the savvy Turkish reader is less amenable to the notion that a reading can be purely objective. On this note, he introduces “narrative” and explains how this term has proliferated in the humanities. His explanation is of the English term is clear, brief and to the point:

\[
\text{Narration, a word whose Turkish equivalent is ‘anlatı,’ simply put, means the transmission of a specific explanation of the past or present.}
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Narration, according to his given definition, also applies to history. He argues there is no absolute way to represent the reality of the past. In fact, a plurality of possible historical truths

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500 This discussion raises the question of an assumed discourse here. Why is a Ghazalian interpretive schema is suspect? Or why should an overly philosophical (Avicennan) or mystical (Akbariyya/Ibn `Arabi’s school) approach be suspect? His choice to end his book, Difference and Commentary (FY), on this discussion might indicate his sensitivity towards a larger case of disputed intra-Islamic authority. Outside of Turkey, these same strands are sometimes held suspect.

501 FY, 155.

502 FY, 156.

503 By “explanation” I aim to translate “anlatımı,” which is a slightly different word that “anlatı”—the one he is already defining.

504 TO, 107. Original Turkish: “Narration’ın Türkçe olarak dilimize girmiş olan anlatı, basitçe, geçmişin ya da şimdinin beli bir anlatım yoluya aktarımı ifade eder.”

505 TO, 111.
is a good thing. Narratives, whether factual or fictional, play an important role. In this way, he guides the reader to accept (the admittedly Gadamerian thesis) that there is no neutral perspective from which to narrate history. With this turn, the issue now becomes how “we” narrate “our” philosophical past. Alpyağıl asks what this new narration should look like—from what point in history should it begin and what roads should it pass through? Whatever roads are taken, the task at hand is no doubt a living synthesis of past and new. In Alpyağıl’s words, “We must formulate a new narrative in relation to the philosophical tradition of our past.” This re-narration is unfinished and ambitious. For the outside inquirer, the whirl of names and references can be hard to follow. Yet, Alpyağıl’s stated goal was not to answer questions but to lay the groundwork for asking new and better questions. I will now turn to his use of narrative and address its function in his overarching project.

_Narrative_

Alpyağıl does not simply address narrative as a philosophical concept, his work reflects a sincere engagement with narrative theology. Specifically, he delves into the question of narrative and narrative theology his book _Difference and Commentary_. With some regret, he remarks that this book “is part of an unfinished story of Islam’s modernity.” Looking back on

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506 TO, 112.
507 TO, 113.
508 TO, 115.
509 TO, 116.
510 TO, 118. Original Turkish: “Geçmişteki felsefe birikimimize ilişkin yeni bir anlatı oluşturmalıyız.”
511 Narrative theology is a development of the late twentieth century and focuses on narrative, especially Biblical narratives, rather than systematic doctrine.
512 FY, 9. Original Turkish: “İslam modernizminin henüz tamamlanmadıği öyküsünün bir parçasıdır.”
Islam’s encounter with modernity, Alpyağlı starts with several key discoveries of the past century. I list these in the table below:

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<td>1) The Qur’ān, like the New Testament, is a big basket where the interested reader can find almost anything, including at times seemingly contradictory principles.</td>
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<td>2) Different ideologies can find things that support their ideologies in the sacred text—this includes socialists, capitalists, Islamic calls for peace, and Islamic calls for war.</td>
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<td>3) The Qur’ān can be read across various topics. While the Qur’ān is important and what it says is central to all Muslims, different people inevitably read different things out of the Qur’ān.</td>
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**Figure 12**: Key Milestones in Islam’s Narrative of Modernity.

In short, there is an increasing recognition in Muslim quranic scholarship that the Qur’ān can be read to say many things even if this does not threaten its centrality to all Muslims regardless of their individual interpretations. Moreover, Alpyağlı does not cite the above examples of discovery in order to get beyond the current crisis—moving out of the current crisis is not his goal. His purpose is to investigate how people try to understand the Qur’ān. He warns his reader not to expect all the answers from him but to approach the book as an exploration.

Among his numerous dialogue partners in this book are Hans Frei (1922-1988), Wittgenstein, Don Cupitt and the Egyptian modernist Muhammad Ahmad Khalafallah (1916-1991). Unfortunately, Alpyağlı does not offer his reader much individual context for each

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513 FY, 9-10. This table title is my own and is based on Alpyağlı’s text.
514 FY, 9-10.
515 FY, 11.
516 FY, 51, 54-57, 61-81. Frei is known for his work on biblical hermeneutics and serves only as an entry point for Alpyağlı. Frei’s work is important in the development of narrative theology. Khalafallah, whom Alpyağlı engages for nearly twenty pages (TO, 65-81) is known for his work on quranic narrative; a student at al-Azhar University in Cairo, he was never able to defend 1947 thesis on narrative in the Qur’ān and had to write a non-religious thesis in order to obtain his doctorate.
thinker within this multifaceted discussion. As he moves from one figure to the next, Alpyağıl consistently resists approaching religious narratives as if they were strictly historical narratives. He suggests, rather, that a religious narrative should be evaluated by its function.\textsuperscript{517} In this regard, he places distance between his own position and that of famous Egyptian scholars of the Qur’ān and narrative like Abu Zayd and Khalafallah. Specifically, he criticizes Khalafallah for reducing and oversimplifying the function of stories.\textsuperscript{518} Rather than seeing talk of narrative as an attack on the Qur’ān, Alpyağıl suggests that the Qur’ān might tell stories for good reasons.\textsuperscript{519} He points out that the more the reader limits the bounds of her interpretation, the easier it becomes to attribute error to the Qur’ān.\textsuperscript{520} Thus, a narrow conception of narrative function, while seemingly protective of the Qur’ān’s sacred status, could unintentionally cause an interpreter to attribute errors to the text. Alpyağıl does not stop at this point, however.

Alpyağıl makes a further move that puts into question the assumed dichotomy between narrative and history. While many assume that narrative is fictional and history is factual, history itself, as Alpyağıl points out, is a kind of narrative. Therefore, even history is not necessarily realistic.\textsuperscript{521} He writes, “History, with respect to other literary productions, does not contain more truth/reality (gerçeklik).”\textsuperscript{522} Who you are determines how you view history.\textsuperscript{523}

\textsuperscript{517} FY, 63-64.
\textsuperscript{518} FY, 66.
\textsuperscript{519} FY, 67.
\textsuperscript{520} FY, 68.
\textsuperscript{521} FY: 77-79. He cites H. White (from the English) and R. Chartier (from Turkish translation) to talk about history as a fiction-making operation (kurgu oluşturma işlemi). See Hayden White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact” in History and Theory: Contemporary Readings, ed. B. Fay and P. Pomper (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). H. White argues that the bounds between history and narrative are necessarily blurry.
\textsuperscript{522} FY, 79. Original Turkish: “Tarih diğer edebi ürünlere oranla daha fazla gerçeklik içeriyor değildir.”
\textsuperscript{523} FY, 80.
Returning the issue of narrative, regardless of whether fact or fictional: narratives are important to people. Narrative is important in life. Further, narratives can perform many functions. As such, the Qur’ān may contain fictional narratives; and if it does contain them, this does not subtract from its sacredness. More importantly, whether fictional or factual, a sacred narrative does not merely bend to human expectation. He stresses that both literary and historical perspectives have something to offer. While the Qur’ān may make use of fictional stories, these narratives may still be based on real happenings; Alpyağıl reminds his reader that it is important to keep in mind the Qur’ān is still more realistic than other scriptures. His goal here is not to propose a great map to God or a model that explains all, but rather push past the fact/fiction dichotomy and recognize the value of various approaches, including literary approaches. While he affirms various popular methods for reading the Qur’ān, he reminds the reader that these methods do not exhaust the meaning of the Qur’ān.

Another Turkish scholar, Nurettin Topçu, argues that the Qur’ān is to be systematized along with major Islamic figures like al-Ḥallāj, al-Ghazālī, and Rumi to make a metaphysics of being and a philosophy of the human. Alpyağıl does not fully endorse Topçu’s proposal. On this point, Alpyağıl’s position is closer to Ricoeur’s, which stresses that revelation is not

524 FY, 82.
525 FY, 87.
526 FY, 89.
527 FY, 89.
528 FY, 93-95.
529 FY, 93. Here he explains that just like in geography it is not a question of finding the best map of the land but making maps that best help us recognize and understand the land, so too should the reader understand quranic narrative. He stresses it is important not to look for one single “mega model” but look instead for models that will best help us understand the quranic message.
530 Nurettin Topçu, Yarınki Türkiye (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1997). Cited in TO, 89.
531 TO, 90.
equivalent to philosophical speculation or systematization of revelation and therefore should not be reduced to philosophical systematization.

We have now looked at Alpyağıl’s case for an inclusive canon—admittedly a work in progress. As a work in progress, he calls the reflective reader to ask better questions and points to the plurality of authentic sources and narratives available. His understanding of narrative as a tool and not a monolith informs even his approach to quranic narratives.

**History, Tradition, and Text**

Alpyağıl’s views on history, tradition and sacred text are deeply related. Consistent across all three categories, Alpyağıl stresses mediation, dialectic, and navigation of extremes. Consistent with his stance on a plurality of authentic sources and a plurality of useful narratives, he opposes the outright rejection of history and tradition, the fetishization of any one particular historical interpretation, and any narrow understanding of sacred text.

**History**

Alpyağıl proposes a dialectical rather than a naïve idea of the sacred. This dialectical sense of the sacred is not meant to usher in a new conservativism. Rather, between the event (of the text) and the text (itself), there exists a profane relation. This profane relation is the historical dimension. It is through this historical or profane relation that the sacred is able to come forth. This act of the sacred appearing in and through the profane relation places the text in history and simultaneously constitutes the event of revelation.⁵³² Alpyağıl writes, “For no matter how profane the period in which revelation is sent down, it differs from other historical periods in that

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it contains a manifestation of what is sacred.”\textsuperscript{533} To support his position, he draws on Kenneth Cragg’s work on the Qur‘ān. Cragg asserts that something eternal cannot enter time without doing so at a specific point and time.\textsuperscript{534} On this point, Alpyağıl reminds his reader that this is a shared problem for any sacred scripture.\textsuperscript{535}

\textit{Tradition}

A text, especially a sacred text, is intricately tied to the community of readers that read it and seek meaning in it. This community’s readings over time forms a tradition around the text. Alpyağıl is philosophically sensitive to this dynamic in his treatment of the idea of tradition. The work where he delves most critically and extensively into the notion of tradition is his book \textit{Whose History, Which Hermeneutic?}\textsuperscript{536}

In \textit{Whose History, Which Hermeneutic} (2003), Alpyağıl starts with a very simple concept—rule following. He asks: What role does tradition play in following a rule? His answer: A large one. He defines tradition in terms of homogeneity (read: consensus) of people applying a rule. Belief, however, is not equivalent to following a rule.\textsuperscript{537} On this point, Islamic law, or fiqh, already recognized a distinction between faith and following a rule and it condemned examples of rule following without faith. For those who tend to think faith is a purely personal matter, Alpyağıl further clarifies that rule following is an act which points beyond the single individual. For, it is not the individual but the society in which the individual lives that determines whether

\textsuperscript{533} KTHH, 109: “Çünkü vahyin nazil olduğu dönem, her ne kadar profansa da, kendisinde kutsalın tezahür etmekliliğiyle diğer olan tarihsel dönemlerden farklıdır.” (translation into English not overly literal)


\textsuperscript{535} KTHH, 129.

\textsuperscript{536} \textit{Kimin Tarihi Hangi Hermenötiği? Kur’an Anlama Yolunda Felsefi Denemeler I} (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2003; repr. 2013). Referred to as KTHH. The title bears similarity in structure to MacIntyre’s \textit{Whose Justice, Which Rationality?} (1988). KTHH does contain citations of MacIntyre but not references to this 1988 work.

\textsuperscript{537} KTHH, 14.
one is following a rule. At the same time, an individual nevertheless possesses the power to interpret, since individual interpretation is necessary for any specific application of a rule. In this manner, Alpyağıl slowly teases out the back and forth nature of individual interpretation and societal consensus. Rules are not such that their application is something that can be determined in advance. As such, no rule’s meaning is entirely definitive ($kati$). Even if there is no escaping an individual or particular side to interpretation, each individual act of interpretation is still subject to judgment of the community. In short, meaning transcends the individual and points backwards to a pre-existing social context. That is to say, meaning entails something prior. However, when he asserts that rules point to something prior, he nowhere claims that this something prior can predetermine individual acts of interpretation. Rules are necessary but not sufficient for understanding, for giving meaning. To address this double and irreducible dynamic of the individual and social context, he suggests a double ($ikili$) hermeneutic—one that navigates the two extremes of absolute objectivity and absolute relativity.

Alpyağıl then turns from the general questions of rule following and meaning to approaching a sacred text and the role of tradition in interpreting that text. According to Alpyağıl, encountering the Qur’ān is similar to an encounter with a work of art, yet not reducible

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538 KTHH, 15.
539 KTHH, 9-25. This position he builds from a discussion of Wittgenstein’s linguistic theory. To note, this position is incidentally reminiscent of Schleiermacher’s characterization of the individual, who is both relatively independent and dependent on the world around (and by extension society). He does not bring in Schleiermacher here, but he does touch on Gadamer and Habermas.
540 KTHH, 19.
541 KTHH, 22.
542 KTHH, 24.
543 KTHH, 35.
544 KTHH, 53.
545 KTHH, 55.
to an aesthetic encounter. In a work of art, the art acts on the viewer, producing a reaction. The Qur’ān also acts on the reader, illuminating the passive aspect of encountering revelation.546 At this point, Alpyağıl raises an important question: When a believer reads the Qur’ān, is the reader truly the subject and the text merely an object?547 He answers that a believer who reads the Qur’ān is both subject and object with respect to the text.548

For this reason, believers cannot simply read the Qur’ān like any other text.549 The encounter with revelation necessitates a heavier or more “intensive interaction” (yoğun iletişim) between the reader and text for the text to function as sacred.550 In an unusual conjunction of voices, he touches on the positions of the Egyptian Said Qutb alongside German thinkers Heidegger and Gadamer, to finally claim, “The Qur’ān should be approached above all as a dynamic, living document that urges [believers to action].”551 Or, in other words, the Qur’ān’s aim is to be read and to drive the reader to action, not simply to be analyzed or intellectualized.552 Reading the Qur’ān means reading for action and giving life to word.553

Following this analysis, there are two clear ways in which the quranic encounter differs from, for instance, an experience of art: 1) the presence of faith in the reader and 2) the reader’s

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546 KTHH, 59.
547 KTHH, 63.
548 KTHH, 64. It may be helpful to supplement Alpyağlı’s position on this with some words of Ricoeur, whose treatment of revelation Alpyağlı has elsewhere drawn on. Ricoeur, in an article that Alpyağlı elsewhere draws upon, also portrays the one who reads revelation in a way that resists the objectification of the text. He writes, “Reflection is never first, never constituting—it [tradition] arrives unexpectedly like a ‘crisis’ within an experience that bears us, and it constitutes us as the subject of the experience.” Riceour, “Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation,” 29. In the same article, Ricoeur further claims, “...the pretension of consciousness to constitute itself is the most formidable obstacle to the idea of revelation.” Ibid., 30. Ricoeur and Alpyağlı are in agreement that the human mind is not the only subject in the encounter with revelation; revelation, too, is a subject which acts upon the believer.
549 KTHH, 64.
550 KTHH, 65. As quranic indications of this intense relation between believer and revelation, he cites Q13:31 and Q18:01.
551 KTHH, 67. “Kur’an, her şeyden çok sevki edici, dinamik ve canlı bir belge olarak algılanmalıdır.”
552 KTHH, 68.
553 KTHH, 102-103.
consciousness of her nothingness before God.⁵⁵⁴ Other necessary tools for reading the Qur’ān are common sense (sağduyu) and good will (iyi istenç).⁵⁵⁵ Important to note, Alpyağıl does not espouse that the reader can simply approach the text and take from it whatever meaning she desires.⁵⁵⁶ Further, the Qur’ān is not something a believer reads once and exhausts, but it exists as an ongoing guide for the reader.⁵⁵⁷ Finally, the tools for understanding a text, even a sacred one, depend on the existence of readers who will use them.⁵⁵⁸

Text

As for as what it means for the Qur’ān to be a historical text, he stresses firmly that there are no prepackaged answers.⁵⁵⁹ In Turkey, theologians have tended to understand the historical nature of sacred text to mean that “the text has been left in history” (“metnin tarihte kalmış olması”) along with its rulings.⁵⁶⁰ This, he points out, does not satisfy many Turkish readers. With a sacred text left behind in history, it is hard to imagine the injunctions and rules of that text remaining relevant to the present age. It starts to sound as if a universally valid message sent by God for all people and all times has actually been nullified. This contradiction results in part from the limitations of discussions on historicity. Alpyağıl criticizes the narrow discussions this approach has produced—in the discipline of fiqh and even among the debates of the moderate historicists.⁵⁶¹ For even if one upholds the existence of an eternal kernel held in the historical

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⁵⁵⁴ KTHH, 68. Şaban actually pushes back on characterizing the encounter with God and revelation as one that reduces the believer to a sense of nothingness—see next chapter. Alpyağıl’s quranic resources for the point made here are: Q6:81, Q11:24, Q9:109.
⁵⁵⁵ KTHH, 75.
⁵⁵⁶ KTHH, 77.
⁵⁵⁷ KTHH, 78.
⁵⁵⁸ KTHH, 79.
⁵⁵⁹ KTHH, 135.
⁵⁶⁰ KTHH, 135.
⁵⁶¹ KTHH, 135. I take him to refer to those influenced by Fazlur Rahman’s method when he speaks of moderate (ılimli) historicists.
husk of a historically situated text, the question still arises as to what this essential and eternal core message is when stripped of its historical baggage.⁵⁶² Alpyağıl expresses his skepticism concerning such an “historical” approach, asking:

Can we [even] speak of a text’s concrete message outside of the social and political identities of those trying to understand it?⁵⁶³

His answer to this question is a firm no. As far as Alpyağıl reads the debate, neither radical nor moderate historicists break away from the narrowness of the discussion. For this reason, he has tried to offer alternative ways of thinking through history.⁵⁶⁴ The question finally becomes, “whose discussion” (kimin yorumu) are we even having?⁵⁶⁵ Drawing on the thought of figures like Foucault, Derrida, Habermas, J. Caputo, Edward Said, Alpyağıl argues that we inevitably read into a text.⁵⁶⁶ Moreover, good intentions alone do not guarantee good or valid readings.⁵⁶⁷ Drawing on Gadamer, he reminds the reader that good intentions can be shaped by political, economic and power instincts.⁵⁶⁸ Turning to Pakistani thinkers Aziz Ahmed and Fazlur Rahman, he points out these thinkers as well as those making similar moves in Turkey tend to problematize the historicity of the text so much so that they ignore the historicity of their own

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⁵⁶² A parallel debate in Christian thought, not referenced in Alpyağıl’s discussion: Troeltsch’s critically responded to Adolf von Harnack’s thesis that the message of Christ and the New Testament must be shorn of its historical husk to reveal the essential meaning of Christianity. In his famous article, “What Does ‘Essence of Christianity’ Mean?” (1903), Troeltsch astutely pointed out that, since truth comes to us by way of history and we ourselves are also in history, it is rather tricky to determine what is ‘husk’ and what is ‘essence.’ In short, his response to von Harnack was that truth does not work in such a way that one can claim an ‘essence’ free of historical ‘husk.’ Alpyağıl’s position on historicity seems more or less in agreement with Troeltsch’s basic objection.

⁵⁶³ KTHH, 135: “Bir metnin, onu anlamaya çalışan kişilerin ait oldukları siyasal ve sosyal kimliklerinin dışında, somut bir mesajından söz edilebilir mi?”

⁵⁶⁴ KTHH, 136.

⁵⁶⁵ KTHH, 136-137.

⁵⁶⁶ KTHH, 137-143. He especially draws on Foucault’s emphasis on power in discourse. The connecting theme between these figures is postmodernism and post-colonialism. Here and elsewhere, it is difficult to provide adequate context for all the authors he uses without detracting from the flow of his own argumentation. Alpyağıl often provides minimal context for the figures he engages and sometimes none at all, making high demands on the reader.

⁵⁶⁷ KTHH, 143.

⁵⁶⁸ KTHH, 143.
readings of the text. Looking at Aziz Ahmed’s readings, he points out how they inevitably reflect his own situation in Pakistan/India. He does the same with Fazlur Rahman, who has been widely influential in Turkish discussions of quranic historicity. Importantly, Alpyağıl does not discount the readings of Aziz Ahmed or Fazlur Rahman, but he challenges them as facile instances of “historical” interpretation. In reality, there are two historical moments—the moment being interpreted and the moment and place behind the act of interpretation. Such interpretations are not worthy of condemnation, but he calls his reader to greater self-reflection on the impact of her own historical context upon her reading of the Qur’ān. Fazlur Rahman, whose historical approach has long been established in Turkey, does not in Alpyağıl’s view offer an adequately nuanced understanding of historicity.

As Alpyağıl argues with great sophistication that historicity is an issue of authority. He laments that much of the hype over historicity feeds on Muslims’ “backwardness complex” (“geri kalmışlık kompleksi”) in the encounter with Christian/secular Western civilization. Thus, the discourse of historicity (tarihsellik) is de facto a discourse of defeat. However, he does not want to be overly essentializing or reductive in making this claim. It is, nonetheless, important to keep in mind that the question is more than “whose hermeneutic?”, it is also and always a question of “whose affair?” There is no narration of history which is not entangled in

569 KTHH, 145. In terms of Qur’ān commentaries, Alpyağıl makes use of Mohammad Asad’s commentary translated into Turkish. He is somewhat critical of M. Asad and prefers al-Suyūṭī on matters of literal interpretation (KTHH, 156). For M. Asad he uses the following translation: M. Esed, Kur’an Mesaji: Meal-Tefsir, trans. Cahit Koytak- Ahmet Ertürk (İstanbul: İşaret Yay., 1996). On al-Suyūṭī (1445-1505), Alpyağıl refers to his El İtkan fi Ulum’l-Kur’an, Darub-u Kesir, Damascus, 1987, I, 92.
570 KTHH, 145.
571 KTHH, 145.
572 KTHH, 145.
573 KTHH, 147. In the discussion of whose affair, he uses the phrase, “which affair” or “hangi maslahat.” The word “maslahat” means “business” or “affair” in modern Turkish. In Arabic, in the context of fiqh, it has a specific meaning of benefit or good. One way of translating it here might be “vested interest.”
a socio-political context. As Alpyağıl puts it, “A history without ideology is nothing but a clump of events.”

For Alpyağıl, there is no getting out of the political aspect of hermeneutics. Inevitably, the manner in which guidance is derived from the Qur’ān is a historically and politically entangled affair. This does not mean, however, that the Qur’ān’s guidance is historically limited to the point it cannot still address and guide its reader. The Qur’ān may not have a clear ruling for everything but it is nonetheless guidance. As such, the quranic examples should not be dismissed as outdated, on the one hand, nor should they be treated as a manual of rulings on all future human problems, on the other. To explicate his point, Alpyağıl draws partially on Gadamer, who remarks that a text is a stage in the event of communication. Alpyağıl appropriates this to claim that the Qur’ān is not merely a fecund object. Not only is the text not a passive object, but neither historical scrutiny nor an over-literal reading of the text can secure revelation’s (vahiy) relation to the believer. Reading with faith, on the other hand, prevents the believer from objectifying the text.

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574 KTHH, 167. Original Turkish: “İdeoloji olmaksızın tarih, bir olaylar yığından başka bir şey değildir.”
575 KTHH, 148.
576 KTHH, 157.
578 KTHH, 158. Alpyağıl draws on Gadamer to make this point, even if he does not fully agree with Gadamer.
579 KTHH, 161.
580 KTHH, 163. Despite his insistence on faith for reading the Qur’ān as more than an object, Alpyağıl in no way espouses an arational or fideist position. In another publication, Doing Philosophy of Religion Moving from Wittgenstein to Kierkegaard [Wittgenstein ve Kierkegaard’dan Hareketle Din Felsefesi Yapmak], he is clear to distance himself from recent and current Christian arguments for fideism. He believes that faith needs to remain open to rational inquiry, but does not claim to have all the answers, nor does he think people will ever agree on a single answer. This book will be taken up in chapter 7’s discussion of skepticism and fideism.
Again, Alpyağıl is very clear that he is not attempting to solve all the problems he delves into. Rather, his aim is to ask better questions and approach these old problems in new ways.\textsuperscript{581} His work expresses an openness combined with rigorous inquiry, which both engages and invites the reader to struggle towards independent conclusions, new questions and lived answers. We now turn to the role of the individual in mediating the authority of an inclusive canon with a plurality of possible narrative readings.

**Dialectic of the Sacred: The Individual in “Hypoleptic” Continuity**

As discussed above, for Alpyağıl, not every text exists merely for pure reading—sometimes we read for action. We read to give life to word.\textsuperscript{582} In reading for action, the agency of the individual and the individual’s own mediated authority come to the fore. It is ultimately the individual who acts. Thus, he envisions an active reader in living relation to the Qur’ān. Alpyağıl points forward to an empowered Muslim—not at the mercy of Western criticism, but rather confident and able to actively dialogue with many voices and many authorities.\textsuperscript{583} Arguably, his work provides the reader with one example of what an empowered Muslim voice in active dialogue looks like. Humbly, he invites his readers to do the same.

When it comes to reading the Qur’ān, reading with faith includes using the believer’s intellectual capacities to take the initiative on working out how to apply the quranic address to

\textsuperscript{581} Alpyağıl suggests that one way of tackling the tricky business of reading a text from a different time and context for universal meaning is to approach the Qur’ān like an anthropologist. In saying this, he does not mean all anthropological approaches are appropriate. He stresses that using one’s own culture as a reference does not have to entail negating the culture behind the text. He even suggests that late Ottoman \textit{mufassir} Elmalı Elmalılı Muhammad Yazır does an anthropological reading of the Qur’ān with Anatolian culture as his own touch point. See his discussion in \textit{KTHH}, 152-155.

\textsuperscript{582} \textit{KTHH}, 102-103.

\textsuperscript{583} \textit{KTHH}, 165.
her own time and place. Alpyağıl draws on Turkish Islamic philosopher Burhanettin Tatar. Tatar writes:

The Qur’an is not a text which speaks directly about something: it is a text that incites people to come into communication [with it] on clear topics and questions by calling out to the human faculties of understanding.\textsuperscript{584}

This vision of the reader’s relationship with the Qur’an implies a deeply engaged, personal dynamic. By stressing such a dynamic I argue Alpyağlı also emphasizes the role of individual engagement and authority. This engaged quality of readership stresses the living and dynamic relationship an individual believer brings to the encounter with the Qur’an. As touched upon earlier in the discussion of Ricoeur, scripture is both object and subject. The believer in the encounter with the Qur’an is also both object and subject.

Again, as Alpyağlı stresses, there are no ready answers to questions of interpretation.\textsuperscript{585} This does not mean that any interpretation is valid or that the reader reads out of the text whatever she desires.\textsuperscript{586} However, the process of encountering the text is not as straightforward as reading an instruction manual or a metro map, even if such an individual encounter is (rightly) still deeply embedded in social rules and interpretive voices from tradition.

Without a ready map for action, the uniting thread in Alpyağlı’s careful discussion of history, sacred address, and tradition is the individual. For, it is the individual who mediates tradition and lives out the sacred call of the text. Let me take a moment to better elucidate how Alpyağlı envisions the role of individual authority, whose key word is “hypoleptic.” For


\textsuperscript{585} KTHH, 134.

\textsuperscript{586} KTHH, 77.
Alpyağıl, hypolepsis is continuity with variation rather than strict recapitulation.\textsuperscript{587} It entails a dialectical idea of the sacred rather than a naïve idea of the sacred.\textsuperscript{588} As he explains it, hypoleptic continuity is a way of mediation between rejection of tradition and uncritical acceptance of tradition. In other words, to be in hypoleptic continuity means the believer does not have to reject tradition, but at the same time, she does not have to use tradition uncritically either—by avoiding these extremes, the believer develops a “hypoleptic awareness” \textit{(hipoleptik bir bilinc)}\textsuperscript{589} In this way, believers are not always starting from scratch. The authority of tradition is taken into account; while at the same time, the value of individual (and hence new) authority is still upheld.\textsuperscript{590} This is a mediated individual authority, where the individual stands in a critical but positive relation to tradition and stands also in reflective relation to her own social and historical context. Moreover, this critical relation to tradition is not directed solely towards Islamic tradition. This critical relation also addresses the traditions of the European Enlightenment and other Western sources. Alpyağıl remarks that if it is clear that there is no universal agreement on Enlightenment claims to universality, it also makes sense to enter into critical dialogue with Enlightenment criticism.\textsuperscript{591} Such an individual, having rooted herself authentically in her own context and religious identity is “…secure in her past and future”\textsuperscript{592} and, as such, is capable of critical reflection and dialogue with various canons of authority. She is like the spiral that Alpyağıl mentioned earlier. She is not stuck in a dead end, a static return to the past, nor trapped in stultifying false dichotomies, instead she is reaching forwards into the future.

\textsuperscript{587} KTHH, 124.  
\textsuperscript{588} KTHH, 108.  
\textsuperscript{589} KTHH, 130.  
\textsuperscript{590} KTHH, 129.  
\textsuperscript{591} KTHH, 130.  
\textsuperscript{592} KTHH, 165. Original Turkish: “…geçmişine ve geleceğine güveni olan, kendisini ötekinin karşısında konumlayarak ve de bu cezayı Allah’ın hududu biçimde tanımlayan bir kimlik çıkar.”
and backwards in dialectical continuity with her past. Though Alpyağıl’s approach puts greater responsibility on the individual believer, this does not mean that the believer cannot err in interpreting scripture or tradition. He acknowledges that it is often an open question as to when an interpretation counts as bankrupt. Thus, an individual is active, aware, and ethically responsible in interpreting sacred scripture.

On a broader note, Alpyağıl uses Scottish philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre’s definition of humanity: Humans are a story-telling animal. This definition is important to keep in mind regarding the individual Muslim’s relation to the Qur’an. Alpyağıl stresses the importance of the Qur’an in Muslims’ self-narratives today. He writes:

Above all else, the Qur’an is what represents us (Muslims) in the face of other paradigms. […] [I]t is our history; it is the history—the narrative—that makes us who we are.

Narrative, including history, is an inescapable and constitutive part of identity. This sense of context and belonging is a formative relationship for individual identity. As I read Alpyağıl, the believing individual does not stand outside looking in at the Qur’an and tradition, but stands already in relationship to the Qur’an, as a next that offers the believing individual with her fundamental narrative and history as a Muslim.

I identify a dialectic in this space of narrative between self-understanding and historical understanding. Failing to engage in this dialectic results in a kind of paralysis, which Alpyağıl directly addresses. In order to illustrate the effect of this paralysis, he draws on Oliver Sacks’ *The

593 FY, 102.
595 KTHH, 167. Original Turkish: “Kur’an her şeyden önce, bizi (Müslümanları), diğer paradigmalar karşısında temsil eden bir metindir. […] bizim tarihimizdir; bizi yapan bir tarihtir, anlatır.”
Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat.596 Sacks brings up the case of Jimmie, the 49-year-old who still thinks he is nineteen and is incapable of forming new memories. According to Alpyağıl, twenty-first-century Muslims run the risk of exhibiting the same symptoms as Jimmie.597 A Muslim who relates to the Qur’ān and the history of her tradition in the way Jimmie does to his life is a Muslim stuck with a truncated memory of her own tradition. Such a Muslim may have a naïve understanding of history and, as a result, be incapable of fully connecting with her tradition so as to contribute actively and meaningfully to it.598 In other words, such a believer is impeded from coming into her full agency and identity as a Muslim.

Alpyağıl ultimately addresses a crisis of memory—at the heart of this is the issue of identity (kimlik). This trauma is a result of—or characterized by—a crisis of identity and memory, and it is now a question of getting beyond this trauma. He states, “In sum, our present moment is a situation that has caused us to experience a trauma.” Then he asks, “Well, is there a way out of this trauma?”599 As we have seen throughout, the way out for Alpyağıl is—without getting stuck in the past—embracing history as something that gives Turkish philosophers and believers identity today and helps them imagine utopias for tomorrow.600 This way out is also a dynamic and dialectical dance between individual authority, collective identity, and profound

596 He cites the Turkish translation of this work: *Karısını Şapka Sanan Adam*, trans. Çiğden Çalışlıç (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1997).
597 KTHH, 168.
598 This I am inferring from the example. I have the sense that he is criticizing both extremes—those who reject tradition for an idealized pristine religious past (like many Salafists) and those who reject tradition and the call of sacred scripture in the face of modern skepticism.
599 KTHH, 169. Original Turkish: “Özetle içinde bulunduğumuz an bizi ağır bir travmaya uğratmış durumdadır. [...] Peki, bu travmadan bir kurtuluş yolu var mıdırd?”
600 KTHH, 169. He points to the Jewish tradition as an instance of successful mediation between embracing history and utopic vision.
formation through encounter with the sacred text. He writes, “Reading the Qur’an as a narrative that makes us ‘us’ means that it is a source still in the process of forming us.”

In a similar manner, this dynamism is present in Alpyağıl treatment of intellectual canons of authority. As a prime example of the dialectical balance Alpyağıl values, he holds up medieval philosophical al-Fārābī (c. 872-950). In the latter’s Kitāb al-Burhān, Alpyağıl praises al-Fārābī’s careful yet critical appropriation of Aristotle—al-Fārābī is able to appreciatively study Aristotle without blindly accepting Aristotle’s position on every subject. Al-Fārābī shows exemplary intellectual engagement as well as confidence in his own judgment of what to take from Aristotle and what to reject. This is the sort of attitude Alpyağıl wishes to see in Turkey. Philosophy is not made by simply translating. Translation is not enough to engage in critical dialogue. There must be dynamism and criticism. Yet again, the importance of a dialectical relationship between individual authority and various canons of authority (here in the philosophical sense) comes to the fore.

The dialectic at work here is also a dialectic of both/and. Both the individual and tradition matter. Both narrative and history have a place in discussions of sacred hermeneutics. Sometimes it is even appropriate to say both yes and no. Alpyağıl at one point even calls this a “yes-no dialectic.” Further, he does not claim that the yes-no dialectic is new to Islamic tradition and he even suggests that the yes-no dialectic even has some foundations in Islamic tradition.

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601 KTHH, 170. Original Turkish: “Kur’an’ı bizi biz yapan bir anlatı olarak okumak, onun hala bizi oluşturmaya devam eden bir kaynak olduğunu anlamına gelir.”
602 TO, 94-95.
603 TO, 90.
604 TO, 92.
605 TO, 138. Original Turkish: “evet ve hayır diyalektiği.”
606 TO, 139. Similarly, for a work in which Alpyağıl looks at potential postmodern resources in Islamic tradition see his “Derrida and Islamic Mysticism: An Undecidable Relationship,” in A Companion to Derrida, eds. Z. Direk and L. Lawlor (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014).
short, being able to mediate extremes with authenticity is crucial to moving into a new phase in Turkish philosophy. Alpyağıl reminds his reader:

In the author’s opinion, regarding philosophy’s relation with the past, it is an overly simple preference to chuck its [philosophical] heritage and try to save oneself in this manner.\(^{607}\)

In other words, rejecting the past or the valuable contributions of prior Islamic tradition will not save Turkish thought from its current identity crisis. Blind acceptance of this or that interpretation or blind acceptance of this or that philosophical canon is not enough either. Sometimes it is not a question of yes or no, but saying yes and no—and this is an attitude that, according to Alpyağlı, could be useful for Turkish philosophy.\(^{608}\)

Yet who or what stands at the heart of these extremes? Who mediates and directs these dialectical spaces? Alpyağlı’s answer, I submit based on my reading of his work, is that it is the individual, who must bravely use her own faith, intellect, context and judgment to navigate extremes, external authorities, and the crisis of identity. This individual has no intention to exercise absolute authority since she does not suffer from the illusion that her individuality can exist in a purely objective, abstract sense distinct from her relations to other beings in the world. She understands she is as much her own product as she is the product of the world around her. Moreover, this individual recognizes the value of tradition, of society, of her relations to others, and of the call of sacred text. Moreover, this individual consciously and carefully exercises dialectical and mediated authority in order to navigate and establish her place in a world of many voices and many claims.

\(^{607}\) TO, 99. Original Turkish: “Kanaatimizce, felsefenin geçmişle ilişkin mişle mirası atmak ve bu yolla ondan kurtulmaya çalışmak oldukça basit bir tercihtir.”

\(^{608}\) TO, 141.
Only an empowered and hypolectically aware believing individual is equipped to creatively bring new answers and questions out of the mixed canons of intellectual authority which Turkey has inherited. Instead of reacting against part of Turkey’s intellectual heritage, Alpyağıl’s response is to bring them all in the mix—whether they are Turkish/Ottoman, Arabic, or Western. Thus, Alpyağıl is a prime exemplary of the threefold complexity and internal dialectics which I find characteristic of Turkish theology. Alpyağıl looks to the creative potential of authentic Turkish philosophy as something that includes and combines voices from Islamic intellectual tradition, Western intellectual tradition, and from Turkey’s own recent history. For Alpyağıl, authentic Turkish philosophy bespeaks an inclusive canon and an ongoing dialectic of authoritative traditions.
CHAPTER SIX

A Theological Anthropology of Empowerment: Şaban Ali Düzgün on the Individual and True Religion

In our previous discussion of Recep Alpyağıl’s work, mediated individual authority came to the fore—this individual authority stood as a necessarily philosophical keystone in the bridge leading to greater awareness of both worldly context and openness to the divine. In Alpyağıl’s case, the argument for authority was inferred from his larger project of reclaiming and re-narrating an authentic philosophical canon along with a living, dynamic Muslim identity. In this chapter, the aim is to address a more direct argument for individual authority. This argument for individual authority will be a theological rather than a philosophical one and is based on the pervasive effects of a consistent theological anthropology. Şaban Ali Düzgün, whose work is the subject of the present chapter, argues for the importance and theological validity of individual agency in true religion. My reading of Düzgün’s theological case for individual agency stresses the integration of concerns and sources from both Islamic and non-Islamic discussions, while still remaining in an Islamic framework. I will first provide a short overview of Düzgün’s career and work, attempting an overview of his positions on individual authority, modernity, what it means to be human, and what counts as true religion. I will then delve into these various positions and show how, together, his theological project vigorously affirms and defines individual agency. By fleshing out Düzgün’s theological anthropology and his understanding of individual authority, I illustrate ways in which Düzgün’s thought cannot be reduced to binary schemes of Islam vs. the West, religion vs. secularism, or tradition vs. modernity.
Şaban Ali Düzgün (b. 1968) is a well-known and prolific professor at Ankara University’s theology faculty, where he entered and completed his theological studies. After earning his doctorate in kalām (Islamic theology) on the subject of the God-world relation in Islamic philosophy (1996), he went on to participate in an academic exchange with the Gregorian University in Rome (2000-2001) and was a visiting academic at Georgetown University (2003-2004). He is currently the head of Ankara Theology Faculty’s Kalām Department. He travels internationally with regularity and has earned broader recognition for his efforts to address the question of religion and violence. His theological reflections represent a mixture of the modern and postmodern, as well as roots in classical Islamic thought and the Qur’an.

A scholar’s sources and citations, while not an unproblematic meter of his or her intellectual context, engagements and interests, may still offer some perspective. Düzgün’s use of traditional Islamic sources alongside Western philosophical and theological scholarly works, a practice that I have argued is characteristic of many Turkish theologians, offers a sample overview of the multiplicity of authoritative traditions engaged in Turkish theology. Though only closer engagement with specific arguments will be able to answer the question of how Düzgün uses his sources, this section offers a brief overview of what he typically cites as sources.

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609 See his personal website: [http://www.sabanaliduzgun.com/](http://www.sabanaliduzgun.com/).
610 His doctoral thesis was entitled “Nesefi ve İslâm filozoflarına göre Allah-Alem ilişkisi” [“The God-World Relation according to Nasafi and Islamic Philosophers”] (1996) and was completed under the direction of Mustafa Sait Yazıcıoğlu.
611 His definitions of religion are intentionally modern, but he sees positive value in deconstruction and postmodernity for their aid in challenging hegemony, or what he calls Western ‘truth monopolies’. On ‘truth monopolies’, see below.
612 He uses the term “kelam” to refer to classical Islamic theological thought, which he appropriates to include an even broader category than the English word “theology.” He explains this in a footnote in Allah, Tabiat ve Tarih: Teolijide Yöntem Sorunu ve Teolojinin Metaparadigmatik Temelleri [God, Nature and History: The Question of Method in Theology and Theology’s Metaparadigmatic Foundations] (Ankara: Lotus Yayınevi, 2005; 2012), 19fn.

613 It would be too cumbersome and not particularly illustrative to cite all references to the names discussed here. All figures mentioned in this section are cited variously and included in the bibliographies of the works of Düüzgün discussed here: ATT, DBT, CDD, ST, and SYEI (cited below). While these figures often come from very different contexts, the important thing to keep in mind is that Düüzgün’s broader discussions, where names often appear in clusters or brief references, do not tend to focus on an individual scholar.

614 These figures appear throughout his work and so I have not cited individual pages. Admittedly, many of these figures serve merely as passing references; however, I would argue against the assumption that lack of sustained
Western sources tend to offer occasions for broader discussions rather than fundamentally shape or determine the scope of his project.

In addition to Western sources, Düzgün frequently cites the Qur’ān and offers his interpretation or an explanation of the significance of various verses. Added to this list are classical Arabic authors like the Shāfi‘ī scholar Abū Manṣūr ibn Ṭāhir al-Baghdādī (980-1037) and theologian Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (853-944), whose work is often associated with Ḥanafi thought. In addition to classical Islamic sources he draws on modern Muslim thinkers, for instance, the Iranian intellectual icon Ali Sheriati (1933-1977), the modernist Pakistani Fazlur Rahman, the Indian Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898),\(^\text{615}\) Tunisian Mohamed Talbi (b. 1921), late Ottoman Ahmet Cevdet Paşa (1822-1895), and the Ottoman-Turkish Hilmi Ziya Ülken (1901-1974).

Beyond an idea of his sources, it may be helpful to first give an overview of Düzgün’s thought and consistent positions before looking at any one position in detail. This section offers a brief overview of some of Düzgün’s signature positions, drawing on material from his talks made available online. Not only do Düzgün’s sources reflect an internal conversation of authoritative tradition with Arabic, Ottoman/Turkish, and Western sources but Düzgün’s conceptual repertoire also reflects a similar dynamic. While many of his positions are in line with

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\(^{615}\) Düzgün wrote his Master thesis on Syed Ahmad Khan (1992). His Master thesis was later published as the book *Seyyid Ahmed Han ve Entellektüel Modernizmi* [Syed Ahmad Khan and His Intellectual Modernism] (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 1997).
values associated with the tradition of the European Enlightenment, these values are grounded in
an Islamic framework and are often defined with the help of Islamic concepts.

Düzgün considers himself a universalist. In other words, he affirms that human beings
share a common constitution, both religious and moral, regardless of other human variations
(such as culture, appearance, gender, class, etc...). Each human being possesses a fitra, a
conscience (which is itself a reflection of fitra), the use of reason, and a propensity to seek true
religion. In several of his books, as well as in public talks, Düzgün argues for the authority and
cosmology of the individual. He does so within a combined Islamic and Enlightenment framework.
His appeals to the universality of human experience and language are consistent hallmarks of the
positive influence of Enlightenment values in his work. These appeals are often made in the
name of common sense and reason. Nevertheless, his theological project as a whole resists being
reduced to a potpourri of Enlightenment values. Undergirding this universalist framework of
Enlightenment values stands a theological anthropology which is avowedly Muslim. I shall argue
that the foundation of his case for individual agency is his premise that true religion does not
stand in the way of human values and individual agency, but indeed provides the healthiest
grounds for true individual agency. This individual authority is not the authority of a decentered
self à la Charles Taylor. Rather, the individual, according to Düzgün, bears authority precisely

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616 The Islamic concept of fitra, or original disposition/nature, is a broad one. Düzgün’s understanding of fitra will
be treated in the section below on fitra. Arguably, the propensity to true religion is another aspect of fitra, but I
separate it here for clarity and due to Düzgün’s specific interpretation and emphasis of this aspect.
617 In Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989),
Charles Taylor argues that the modern self is a fundamentally decentered and fragmented one: “The original unity of
the theistic horizon has been shattered […]” (496). This unity is shattered because, “[w]e are now in an age in which
a publicly accessible cosmic order of meanings is an impossibility” (512). By contrast, Düzgün’s view of individual
authority does not rest on such a view of the self (and Taylor does not espouse this sort of selfhood either,
ultimately). Düzgün’s view of the self rests on a firm grounding in tawhīd, or the oneness of God, and tawhīd’s
implications for human beings. In Turkey, Charles Taylor’s Sources of the Self has been translated into Turkish by

because God has outfitted each human being with an original nature that points back to God. In other words, God is the source and outfitter of individual authority. Further, a closer examination of Düzgün’s theological case for individual authority shows how his work often resists dualities of tradition vs. modernity, Islam vs. the Western intellectual tradition, or even modernity vs. postmodernity. Instead of dualities, his case for individual authority highlights the creative, constructive, and synthesizing elements at play in the Turkish theological context of competing as well as cooperating sources of intellectual authority.

Of his many writings, one of his more recent books Religion and Religious [People] in the Contemporary World (2012)\(^6\) directly engages the concepts of modernity and postmodernity. In this work, Düzgün stresses the importance of religion in the continuity of cultural values. In particular, religion, at its best, keeps culture striving for universal standards.\(^7\) For this reason it is important not to see religion as something opposed to all other facets of human existence.\(^8\) The diversity of cultures—even within the scope of a single religion—is a sine qua non for a living, fecund religious life. Islam, as the best example of this, embraces and thrives on cultural diversity. To force the entire Islamic world into one single culture would be to sterilize it.\(^9\) In this way, Düzgün appreciates both universality and particularity. Religion urges individuals and cultures to strive for universal ideals and standards while simultaneously embracing and thriving amid diversity.
Since Düzgün views religion as a force that pulls people out of local hegemonies and cultural tunnel vision, he also defines religion as something that one can come to without an institution. Religion transcends individual human institutions and can be found in an individual’s primal nature (fitra), conscience (vicdan), reason (akıl) and in common sense (sağduyu). These faculties equip any human being with the ability to discover divine, natural, and universal values. Yet it if this is the case, then what additional purpose does revelation or the birth of a new religion serve? Düzgün’s answer is that, in the course of history, new revelation’s purpose was to restore society to universal values and principles; that is, revelation instigated the reformation of society. In other words, religion functions to establish values and social equality as Islam did when it appeared. Düzgün writes:

For this reason, the fundamental purpose for religions being revealed is to create the structure of society anew within a framework of basic universal values like justice, freedom, equality of rights, and mutual respect.

As the reader may note from the quote above, Düzgün’s definition of religion and its function is very modern. Yet, he himself acknowledges this modern aspect, claiming that real religion has always carried within itself modernizing and reforming elements. Düzgün, citing Western Christianity as a primary example, also concedes that in the wrong hands, religion can be sterilized and used as a tool of an unjust state. Because religion can be misused, Düzgün offers the following standard for discerning when religion is not being used for the wrong ends:

622 CDDD, 16.
623 CDDD, 17.
624 CDDD, 17-18. Original Turkish: “Dolayısıyla dinlerin vahyedilmelerinin temel sebebi, toplumsal yapıyı adalet, özgürlük, haklarda eşitlik, karşılıklı saygı gibi temel evrensel değerler çerçevesinde yeniden inşa etmektir.”
625 CDDD, 18.
626 CDDD, 18. In his preface, he cites Pope Urban as a token example of religion and violence (CDDD, 10). This is less a detailed historical analysis and more a hasty reference. Nonetheless, the effort to give Christian examples of violence and hegemony is sustained and dovetails with his own understanding of Islam.
Believers must test whether something is done in the light of concepts like basic human rights in the relations of the society they live in, justice, freedom and trust—with forms of critical conscience, creative imagination, utopian [regulative] ideals and dialectical thinking.\textsuperscript{627}

This standard may sound like a rehashing of modern humanist values; however, it is grounded in his theological understanding of Islam.\textsuperscript{628} Düzgün consistently recognizes the positive values of modernity by pointing to the existence of such values in Islam and in religion regardless of time or place. While not critical of many values associated with modernity, Düzgün does criticize modernity’s reductionist tendency to strip religion of its ability to transcend time and place, effectively reducing religious values into a cultural or institutional hegemony. In short, Düzgün does not demonize modernity \textit{per se}, but rather the reductionism associated with modernity. For the theologian, reductionism is not a necessary attribute of modernity; however, it has been a historical outcome in Western modernity.

While Düzgün recognizes values such as justice and equanimity as “modern,” he distinguishes between various modernities.\textsuperscript{629} Western modernity, as he sees it, exhibits a harmful desire to homogenize human diversity.\textsuperscript{630} Moreover, the culture of monopoly on truth and salvation are for Düzgün rooted in Judeo-Christian culture. For instance, expression of this cultural way of looking at reality is embodied in the Western prevalence of \textit{center-periphery}

\textsuperscript{627} CDDD, 18. Original Turkish: “Müminler eleştirel bilinç, yaratıcı imgelem, ütopik kurgular ve diyalektik düşünce biçimleriyle, yaşadıkları toplumda ilişkilerin temel insan hakları, adalet, özgürlük, güven gibi kavramlar ışığında yapılandırılıp yapılandırılmadığını test etmelidirler.”

\textsuperscript{628} On this point, another theologian Mehmet Paçacı remarked to me in a conversation that one major theological weakness common to many Turkish theologians is the construction of Islamic tradition without regard to or interest in the historical realities and current historical research available. While Düzgün may be open to this criticism, theological construction, whether Christian or Muslim, does tend to have different foci and goals than historical research on religious history.

\textsuperscript{629} CDDD, 28-30, 181-186, 288. Düzgün discusses dependency theory (\textit{bağımlılık tezi}) and post-colonial theory, relying heavily on the work of Talal Asad. He stresses the need for multiple modernities which are no longer defined in terms of reaction to Western modernity.

\textsuperscript{630} CDDD, 182.
modes of thinking. Again, Düzgün proves critical of Western modernity without rejecting modernity as a broader concept. Namely, he views the reductionist and monopolizing discourses of Western modernity as central causes of violence and intolerance. Simultaneously, Düzgün embraces some aspects of postmodernity, hailing it as a much-needed critique of the Western modern’s desire to package all human experience into metanarratives. In this way, postmodernity offers some tools for moving forward and out of what he sees as the sterilizing singlemindedness of Western modernity’s tendency towards intellectual hegemony; Düzgün drops names associated with the critique of modernity, such as Michel Foucault (1926-1984), Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), and Max Horkheimer (1895-1973). While his direct engagement with postmodern thought is limited, he still admits of postmodernity’s value as a tempering force to Western modernity’s false claims to universality.

Amid this sea of Western and Islamic references, Düzgün argues for the primacy of real individual agency over materialistic or fatalistic mentalities. And he does so by appealing to true religion. That is, he exhorts his reader on the value of individual agency in the affair of making a difference in the world—by being true to true religion. For, as I will expand upon below, Düzgün holds that true religion is not a dogma and is in fact the opposite of dogma.

One of Düzgün’s most consistent and fundamental theological arguments is to stress the authority of the religious individual and the importance of her agency in the world. Far from arguing for rugged individualism, Düzgün builds this call for individual authority on the basis of

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631 CDDD, 182.
632 CDDD, 186.
633 CDDD, 186. In this work, he does not offer a sustained engagement with these figures.
what I deem to be his Islamic theological anthropology. This theological anthropology is founded on a universalist position on human morality, an Islamic affirmation of the plurality of human life, a view of religion as both constructive and deconstructive, the claim that true religion is fundamentally modernizing, and a view of human agency that is not in competition with divine agency. He also argues in various contexts for the authority of ‘aql (a combination of heart and thought, as he uses the term), common sense, human intuition, and conscience.

In order to demonstrate some of the complexities of mediating various traditions and voices of authority, I endeavor to show how these complexities inform Düzgün’s theological project as a whole. By looking at how the pieces of his theological project fit together, it is possible to trace not only superficial engagements with distinct voices and tradition but to also shed light on the deeper fault lines of tension and on creative moments of synthesis. While most of Düzgün’s core positions were laid out in the above introduction to his thought, the rest of the chapter will now take up in detail his treatment of 1) modernity, 2) Düzgün’s theological anthropology, 3) religion as a source of values, 4) religion and civilization, 5) religion and the individual, and 6) what I will call a “tawhidic framework of plurality.”

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634 I am using the term “theological anthropology” to refer to his project. It is not his term, but I did ask him whether this term was appropriate at the May 2016 Building Bridges Conference held at Georgetown. At that time, he did not object to my use of the term to describe this aspect of his theology.

635 He uses the terms ‘aql and qalb nearly interchangeably in ATT, 125. The combining of both heart and mind into one term like ‘aql or fi’ad is not uncommon in the classical Arabic tradition. For instance, Farid Jabre’s study of al-Ghazālī’s terminology strongly emphasizes the functional interchangeability of the words ‘aql (mind) and qalb (heart)—see his Essai sur le lexique de Ghazali (Beirut: Lebanese University Publications, 1970). The ‘aql is discussed further below.

636 These are in Turkish: akıl, sağduyu, sezgi, vicdan. Vicdan, though derived from an Arabic root, is not used in modern Arabic to denote conscience. The modern Arabic for conscience is ḍamīr. In the Turkish Encyclopedia of Islam, scholar Osman Demir suggests that the current Turkish use and meaning of vicdan probably comes from its use by late 19th century Ottoman authors, particularly Ahmed Cevdet Paşa. Osman Demir, “Vicdan,” in İslâm Ansiklopedisi (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı), accessed March 2, 2017, http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info/.

637 This section will look at Düzgün’s views on reason, common sense, intuition and conscience under the umbrella concept of fiṭra.
Modernity – a question of avoiding reduction and affirming plurality

Düzgün makes a case for the religious importance of individual agency, authority, and responsibility in the modern world. His case is not an account of the religious person disconnected from the crisis of modernity, globalization, secularism or the horizons of science and technology. Instead, Düzgün embeds his discussion of the role of the individual within a larger, nuanced discussion of modernity. This discussion delves into questions of hegemony, post-colonialism, the authority of sacred text, hermeneutics, and the global context of science and pluralism. Due to the constructive nature of his thought, i.e. he does not tackle issues in isolation with one another, it is not possible to grasp fully his views on the role of the religious individual without first placing these views into context. As I will argue, Düzgün does not reject modernity or react against it; he criticizes what he sees as Western modernity’s tendency to reduce the necessary and healthy plurality of human experience.

Hegemony and Post-colonialism

Düzgün marks 1839 as the beginning of intellectual modernism. This coincides with the beginning of the Ottoman Tanzimat period (1839-1876), which marked significant change in Ottoman state policies, including the increasing recognition of the rights of non-Muslims and the opening of the first modern universities (darülfünun). However, Düzgün does not restrict himself to the Ottoman experience of modernity. He speaks to a broader discussion of modernity beyond the Ottoman context. Within the scope of this wider discussion, he more than once delves into the post-colonial and dependency theories (post-kolonyal tez/sömürge sonrası tezi and bağmlılık

tezi, respectively). For this discussion, he draws heavily on Talal Asad’s work. Dügün’s use of terms (such as post-colonial and dependency) illuminates his stance towards modernity. Dügün references post-colonial theory to indicate the thesis that non-Western societies can develop their own modernity; whereas, he references dependency theory to indicate the thesis that liberal modernity as exemplified in Western societies is the only modernity. He speaks out against the monolithic idea of one modernity.

As indicated above, Dügün consistently argues for plural expressions of modernity. While he does not believe human beings are essentially different or foreign to one another at a most basic level, he points to diversity as a divinely willed and necessary element in human survival and flourishing. For this reason, Dügün actively investigates and appraises different assumptions and associations behind the concept of modernity. Rather than treating the concept as a predetermined monolith, he variously employs modernity as a unifying concept and as a concept to be broken down and critically analyzed. As I will argue, stressing both the unity and plurality of a concept is one of the hallmarks of Dügün’s intellectual style of inquiry.

While modernity may have various expressions, Dügün stresses that modernity is nevertheless exemplified by Western societies belies a tendency towards hegemony. This tendency, whether expressed in secular or religious forms, he traces to the Western expression of Judeo-Christian history. For Dügün, even an aggressively secular West reflects origins in a religious outlook and a certain history of institutional religion. Critically, Dügün notes that

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639 CDDD, 28, 182, 288.
641 CDDD, 28. Dependency theory can also be taken to refer to the economic dependence and exploitation of non-Western states, but Dügün does not stress this.
642 DBT, 37.
truth and salvation monopolies tend to get tied up with ethnocentrism, especially in the Judeo-Christian tradition. To illustrate, this tendency includes what he deems the “ethnocentric truth monopoly” of positivism. He accuses positivists of not being consistent in their universal values. And what is the destructive element of positivism? Düzgün answers monopolizing tendencies; positivism’s underlying ethnocentrism stems from its Judeo-Christian “genetics”: center/periphery, I/other—all this is problematic. This ethnocentrism creates a false and oversimplified division of West and other—as if all non-Western humanity fits into one category.

Düzgün also speaks directly of a “Western truth monopoly” (Batının hakikat tekelciliği). In other words, he notes there is a Western tendency to homogenize the world. This is most evident in Western portrayals of non-Western societies, portrayals which often rest on a center/peripherary discourse. The very structure of a center/periphery discourse implies the centrality of one position relative to all others. When this centrality is taken for granted and pervasively informs socio-political realities, it operates as a kind of truth monopoly. For Düzgün, examples of this in Western society include the medieval crusades and more recent colonial history. In short, there is a bloody side to the West’s truth monopoly. This truth monopoly can manifest in religion, philosophy or politics; this truth monopoly is not limited to religion even if he views the source of Western truth monopolies in a certain, faulty expression of religion. He

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643 CDDD, 30. By positivism he means the reduction of philosophical explanations to material phenomena.
644 CDDD, 290.
645 CDDD, 181.
646 CDDD, 182.
647 CDDD, 182.
648 CDDD, 183. He also cites Talal Asad here.
cites Hegel as a typical example of a truth monopoly in philosophy. Center/periphery frames of thinking have also helped create a tendency to view non-Western societies as arational. Although this center/periphery mode of thinking infiltrates even secular modes of thought, Düüzgün envisions the Western truth monopoly as a kind of quranic punishment for Christians and Jews. However, this truth monopoly is not absolute. Even within Western thought, post-colonial, deconstructive, and post-modern authors point to resources for a more authentic plurality. On this point, he touches on Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), M. Foucault, T. Adorno, and M. Horkheimer; as Düüzgün sees it, the positive value of postmodernity is that it has brought an end to the supremacy of metanarratives.

For Düüzgün, part of the problem in Western trends of thought lies in reigning metaphysical assumptions that produce a falsely divided sense of reality. Materialists value only the material world. Many Christians value only the non-material world. Both groups fail to look at existence as a whole. By contrast, Islam—unlike materialism or Christianity—does not divide the world into material and non-material realms in such a way as to deny the worth of only part of creation. Moreover, Islam embraces and thrives amid cultural diversity—so much so that to force the Islamic world into one homogenous culture would be to sterilize Islam. Rather than trying to contain Islam within the bounds of institutional religion, he stresses the importance of

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649 CDDD, 184. He refers to Hegel’s “Geist” but does not cite any specific passage. While he cites Hegel as an example of one espousing a truth monopoly, I would argue Hegel’s famous rival Schleiermacher found ways of building a philosophical system that at least partly avoid this pitfall. While Düüzgün does reference Schleiermacher, he does not engage the German theologian at length or as a philosopher. For a reading of Schleiermacher that highlights aspects of his thought which can be read to resist the colonial narrative see Steven R. Jungkeit, *Spaces of Modern Theology: Geography and Power in Schleiermacher’s World* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2012).

650 CDDD, 288.

651 CDDD, 184. Here he cites Q5:14, which addresses Christians, and Q5:64, which addresses Jews.

652 CDDD, 186.

653 DBT, 59. In support of this, he cites Q2:201.
respecting the individual’s ability to discover truth through common sense and by connection to her authentic nature. In his judgment, it is precisely this aspect of the Islamic understanding of the individual that makes it more resistant to the negative effects of institutionalization which so ravaged European religious history. He writes:

It must be recognized that a human person is able to discover truth with her fitra and common sense even before being part of the structure of an institutional religion.\(^{654}\)

Institutional religion, in the negative sense, Düzgün functionally equates with a monopoly on God. In speaking out against institutional religion (which he views as exemplified by the Catholic Church), he essentially resists the idea of any human monopoly on God. At the same time, he believes different individuals should have access to common means for discussing religion. Touching on the philosophical grounds for a broader discussion, he remarks that a broader discussion of religion cannot start from revelation (vahiy), as this is not commonly accepted by all.\(^{655}\) Since people cannot agree on God, secular thinkers then insist on conscience.\(^{656}\) As we will see, he also uses conscience as a starting point for religious authority.

**Epistemology in Modernity: the Authority of Theology and Sacred Text**

This brings us to the question of epistemology. What sort of knowledge is considered valid in a modern world? In order to address this question, Düzgün touches on the crisis of theology in Western academia as well as issues of scriptural hermeneutics. In accord with the modernity’s high estimation of human reason, Düzgün argues for the validity of independent

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\(^{654}\) CDDD, 16. Original Turkish: “Kurumsal bir dini yapının parçası olmadan önce de insannın sağduyu ve fıtratiyla hakikati keşfetme kudretinde olduğu kabul edilmelidir.” Note, turkish pronouns are without gender, so I default to the feminine or “she” when translating “o.”

\(^{655}\) CDDD, 21. Here he also points out that liberal theologians have spoken of a God of feeling and experience. While somewhat critical of liberal theology’s emphasis of feeling and experience, his own approach does emphasis the individual, existential and experiential elements of religious authority.

\(^{656}\) CDDD, 22.
human reasoning in making sound ethical decisions, but he also points to a broader spectrum of
human faculties for knowing right and wrong, grounding them all in God’s plan for humanity.

Düzgün tackles the modern epistemological challenge to theology most directly in his
book *God, History and Nature: The Problem of Method in Theology and Theology’s Meta-
paradigmatic Foundations* (2005). In this work, Düzgün points out that theology is often
reduced to rationalism, empiricism, or to sacred texts. He traces the reason for this reduction to
the modern philosophical crisis of knowledge. He claims modern philosophy’s epistemology is
at the heart of theology’s search for method.

Düzgün argues that one major feature of modern epistemology is its tendency to discard
the value of “*kashf*” (Turkish: *keşf*). *Kashf* can be translated to mean revelation or unveiling, but
what precisely does Düzgün mean by *kashf*? Süleyman Uludağ in the Turkish *Encyclopedia of
Islam* published by the Directorate for Religious Affairs defines *kashf* in the following manner:
“A Sufi term which refers to the mind and senses’ direct acquisition of knowledge on religious
topics where [formally revealed] instruction is lacking.” Düzgün uses the term more or less in
this sense, making occasional but not over-frequent references to Sufis where appropriate.

That is, *kashf* functions as an instance of individual authority, since it designates direct knowing
by means of an individual’s insight and perception (for instance, as in dreams). According to

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657 Allah, Tabiat ve Tarih: Teolojide Yöntem Sorunu ve Teolojinin Meta-Paradigmatik Temelleri (Ankara: Lotus
Yaynevi, 2005; 2012). Cited as ATT.
658 ATT, 13-14.
659 Süleyman Uludağ, “Keşf,” in *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 25 (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2002), accessed online 9/19/16,
http://www.islamansiklopedisi.info. Original Turkish: “Aklın ve duyuların yetersiz kaldığı ilahiyyat konularında
doğrudan bilgi edinme yolu anlamında bir tasavvuf terimi.”
660 The status of Sufi piety and claims to authoritative knowing is in Turkish theology faculties, as it is elsewhere, a
controversial matter. Many do not see it as a legitimate expression of Islam. Many see it as the lived heart of Islam
Düzgün, for his part, is not anti-Sufi. For an overview of Sufism’s controversial relation to mainstream Sunni Islam,
Düzgün, by current theological standards, *kashf* cedes to history and revelation. Religious knowledge comes only through history and revelation and not through *kashf*. Düzgün resists this modern devaluing of *kashf*, arguing instead that humans need spiritual vision to see reality as a whole and to not give in to empiricism, rationalism or agnosticism. Modern rationalism, true to its reductionist tendencies, dumps “*nous*” for “*logos*.” *Nous* designates, for Düzgün, a broader idea of comprehension and conceptualization (with room enough for something like *kashf*), whereas *logos* means reason in the strict, mechanical sense. In this case, rather than using Arabic or Islamic concepts, he uses ancient Greek distinctions in rationality to critique modern Western epistemology—employing terms that have traditionally defined Western intellectual self-image to critique that same self-image.

Regarding the status and function of scripture, Düzgün refers with appraisal to Gadamer’s “fusion of horizons” (*ufukların birleşmesi*). While Düzgün does not spend extensive time assessing Gadamer’s broader contribution; he nevertheless uses Gadamer’s famous term to point to the crucial contribution of the reader to the act of meaning-making:

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661 ATT, 23.
662 ATT, 194.
663 ATT, 195.
664 ATT, 95, cf. ATT, 192. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer explains the fusion of horizons in the context of historical and linguistic interpretation. He cautions it is the height of naïveté to assume one can understand a text in categories purely derived from the text and its historical epoch, without respect to one’s own historical situation and epoch. Interpretation is not simply about understanding the text; it is always understanding what the text can say ‘for us.’ It is this convergence between the world of the interpreter and of the text which Gadamer terms ‘fusion of horizons’. He writes: “In our analysis of the hermeneutical process we saw that to acquire a horizon of interpretation required a ‘fusion of horizons’. This is now confirmed by the linguistic aspect of interpretation. The text is to be made to speak through interpretation. But no text and no book speaks if it does not speak the language that reaches the other person. Thus interpretation must find the right language if it really wants to make the text speak. There cannot, therefore, be any one interpretation that is correct ‘in itself’, precisely because every interpretation is concerned with the text itself. The historical life of a tradition depends on constantly new assimilation and interpretation. An interpretation that was correct ‘in itself’ would be a foolish ideal that failed to take account of the nature of tradition. Every interpretation has to adapt itself to the hermeneutical situation to which it belongs.” Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroads, 1975), 358; original German publication 1960.
Düzgün strongly affirms, “the text exists solely in the act of being read.” As such, the role of the individual and the question of individual authority become paramount in the act of interpreting. Counter to popular trends that conflate the authority of individual and literal interpretation, Düzgün opposes limiting readings to the literal sense. For him, a literal reading is too restrictive; it is hard to draw a hard line between experience and textual commentary. In a more recent work entitled *Humans at the Bottom of a Precipitous Slope* (2016), Düzgün clarifies that his method for understanding stresses agency rather than passivity—on the part of sacred text and on the part of the reader: The Qurʾān is not to be read as a passive text reduced to historical detail; rather, the act of reading the Qurʾān should be understood as a heavily interactive process. To read the Qurʾān as a document that historically addressed only its first interlocutors overlooks the creative purpose the Qurʾān serves in its interaction with the present-day reader. The Qurʾān is more than a book bound to the Prophet’s time.

Thus, just as the reader is actively interpreting, so the Qurʾān is also purposefully acting on the reader. To illustrate this mutual relation Düzgün turns to a Christian scholar of scriptural hermeneutics while still affirming aspects of Gadamer’s position. Düzgün agrees with Kevin J. Vanhoozer, on the point that commentary is a theological duty. Vanhoozer, a Christian

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665 ATT, 95. Original Turkish: “Metin sadece okunduğunda vardır.”
666 This conflation has become a truism in the Christian hermeneutical literature. By directing authority to literal interpretation, traditional authority is easily undercut and discarded in favor of individual readings, which claim authority by virtue of their literalism—i.e. “I’m not interpreting, I’m just reading what the text says.”
667 ATT, 97.
668 ATT, 98.
670 CDDD, 116.
671 ATT, 94. Quranic commentary has also been considered a duty (*farḍ al-kifāya*) in the classical Islamic tradition—one not incumbent upon all individuals but on those in society qualified to do so. One might speculate that Düzgün cites Vanhoozer rather than Islamic tradition to emphasize the individual duty of interpretation rather than the general duty of interpretation traditionally assigned to those suitably qualified.
theologian and hermeneuticist, is known for writing a “theology of interpretation” but, unlike Gadamer, argues that, in the case of sacred text, meaning is independent of the individual reading or interpretation of the text. Düzgün has thus brought aspects of two opposing opinions on sacred text together to inform his own attitudes on the subject—Gadamer and Vanhoozer. He appears to agree with Vanhoozer on the sacred text’s independent agency and simultaneously concords with Gadamer on the relational quality of any one interpretation. Here Düzgün dwells less on what Gadamer’s views on interpretation mean for the question of correct interpretation and dwells more on the relational and interactive elements of interpretation entailed in Gadamer’s general thesis. Alpyağıl, by comparison, hones in on both the relational aspects of Gadamer’s thesis and the question of what a correct or incorrect interpretation might look like within a Gadamerian framework.

Globalization and Questions of Pluralism and Science

Globalization is yet another face of modernity. Düzgün neither uncritically acclaims nor unequivocally condemns globalization. Globalization, he admits, has negative and positive aspects. On the positive side, globalization pushes for more universal values. On the negative side, it provokes a profound loss of identity and foundation, resulting in a disorienting and paralyzing relativism (görecelik). He writes:

People are everywhere but nowhere at home. This feeling of insecurity is the most significant factor pushing people to seek a new source of meaning.


673 CDDE, 131. Original Turkish: “İnsan her yerde, ama hiçbir yerde evinde değil. Bu güvensizlik hissi, insanı yeni bir anlam kaynağı bulma konusunda arayışa iten en büyük etkendir.”
Globalization produces displacement and uprootedness. The displacement and loss of rootedness leads to a quest for meaning. While people may feel drawn to seek out meaning; at the same time, religion’s sense of being threatened is in part a response to globalization.\textsuperscript{674} In Düzgün’s estimation, the negative aspects of globalization are not the result of intentional conspiracies—the world simply developed in this manner to produce the challenges we face today.\textsuperscript{675} Nevertheless, he still suggests a few causal connections of note. Namely, Düzgün views deformed/secularized Protestantism (a particular expression of Christianity, not its entirety) as an ongoing threat to world religions.\textsuperscript{676} Though he approves of the Protestant trend to put greater emphasis on individual responsibility rather than hierarchies, Düzgün strongly condemns individualism devoid of a sense of greater responsibility as something that devolves quickly into totalitarian and imperialist selfhood; the problem with some Protestant understandings of Christianity is that they did not stop at a call to individual responsibility, voided of their original values, they further devolved into systems that promoted a totalitarian and imperialist sense of self.\textsuperscript{677} A self unchecked quickly takes on demonic qualities, or as Düzgün explains, absolute hegemony demonizes a person.\textsuperscript{678} Destructive individualism is one of the many challenges of globalization.

Globalization is merely one part of a larger phenomenon and it is also inextricably marked by the experience of post-colonialism. Düzgün uses the word trauma to speak of the colonial experience.\textsuperscript{679} Insofar as the effects of Western power are felt, he writes, it is possible to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}[\textsuperscript{674}]
\item CDDD, 132. In this discussion, he also casts blame on socialism.
\item CDDD, 145.
\item CDDD, 146.
\item CDDD, 146.
\item CDDD, 318.
\item DBT, 186.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
say that no well-rooted reform has been achieved. As we saw with Alpyağıl, there is a clear reference to trauma and a recognition of the need to find new modes of responding to this trauma. Düzgün’s initial criterion is for Muslims to get out of the rut of reflexive or reactive responses to colonialization. He calls for Muslims and other non-Western societies to move beyond the perceived tendency merely to react to colonialism and its aftereffects. New forms of action are needed that do not fall into ruts reflective of old colonial power structures. In this context, Düzgün hails Q16:125 as a quranic prescription for West-East relations. The verse reads:

Call [people] to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching. Argue with them in the most courteous way, for your Lord knows best who has strayed from His way and who is rightly guided.

With this quranic verse as a foundation, Düzgün points to dialogue, critical discussion and re-evaluation of terms as ways of moving beyond the trauma of colonialism and other shocks of globalization. As part of the task of critical re-evaluation of terms, he highlights the pressing need to redefine terms such as racism, difference, otherness, and tolerance. Further, Düzgün cautions the reader to place critical distance between his own prescriptions and the common tendency to stress center and periphery ways of categorizing issues. Such binary modes of discourse only serve to essentialize and obfuscate complex issues. On this point, though he is not alone in this observation, Düzgün also identifies a new form of Orientalism: essentializing

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680 CDDD, 291.  
681 CDDD, 291.  
682 CDDD, 291.  
683 English translation from M.A.S. Abdel Haleem.  
684 CDDD, 294-295. He also remarks on the need to avoid discourses that provoke Christians and stir racism. He aims for a peaceful discourse that does not demonize “them,” i.e. those who are not with “us”—whether this be Muslims or Christians.  
685 CDDD, 293.
anything a Muslim says as particular of Islam.686 While he himself will speak for Islam and about Islam, he does remind his reader that individual Muslims express different aspects of Islam differently. Muslims in different places and contexts face very different challenges. For instance, he notes that Muslims in the West are increasingly faced with challenges of identity and belonging.687 In this context, he stresses the importance of seeing Islam not as a foreign belief (not periphery, not other) but as a natural, value-producing well-spring wherever it is found.688

**Düzgün’s Theological Anthropology: Fiṭra (fitra)**

As seen above, Düzgün stresses the positive contribution Islam can make to individuals and society. This section delves into what Düzgün argues is the qur'anic purpose for humankind or what I call Düzgün’s “theological anthropology.” For Düzgün, the divine purpose entails affirming freedom (especially that of religion), affirming individual agency (i.e. humans are not subservient to either jinn or hierarchical religion), in addition to the divine outfitting of humans with the interrelated faculties of intuition (sezgi), common sense (sağduyu), conscience (vicdan), and reason (akıl). Building on a qur'anic understanding of divine purpose, Düzgün illustrates various ways in which divine purpose affirms human purpose. In another sense, the affirmation of human purpose and agency goes hand in hand with the affirmation of inherent meaning in all of creation: God creates purposefully. It follows that human beings are created with a purpose and equipped with faculties tailored to help them fulfill that purpose. Thus, in this context, by

686 CDDD, 294.
687 CDDD, 295.
688 CDDD, 294.
Düzgün’s “theological anthropology,” I mean what he claims to be the divine purpose for humanity as well as the divinely willed constitution of the human being to fulfill said purpose. 689

On this note, let us return to the term ʿfiṭra, an Islamic concept of central importance. 690 The term is often translated as primordial nature, innate nature or natural disposition. Ebrahim Moosa describes ʿfiṭra as something humans are equipped at birth with—“a natural state and with a built-in disposition for the truth (ʿfiṭra).” 691 Moosa explains that for an earlier scholar of Islam like al-Ghazālī, “the role of innate nature (ʿfiṭra) [functions] as a receptacle in the heart for the light associated with divine mercy and grace.” 692 In short, the ʿfiṭra is also an openness and orientation towards truth. Düzgün means something more or less the same when he uses the word, as we shall see. Similarly, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, whose work is relatively well-known in Turkey, describes ʿfiṭra in the following way. According to Nasr, a human being (ʾinsān), whether male or female, is “a being who still carries his primordial nature (ʿal-ʿfiṭrah) within himself, although he has forgotten that nature now buried deep under layers of negligence.” 693 Here we note an image of estrangement from humankind’s original disposition. As we shall see with Düzgün, estrangement from one’s ʿfiṭra or natural disposition plays a central role in his thoughts on society’s relation to religion and the individual.

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689 As state above, at the May 2016 Building Bridges Conference at Georgetown University, I asked Prof. Düzgün if the term “theological anthropology” was a suitable label for his theological project. He acknowledged that the term, as I explained my intended use for it, was on point and accurately reflected this central aspect of his work. To note, Düzgün has engaged more secular concepts of anthropology. For instance, at the beginning of Religion, Individual and Society (DBT), he starts building what is essentially a case for a theological anthropology; however, he starts not with theology but with Western anthropology—citing Bronislaw Malinowski, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (philosophy and ethnology), Claude Lévy-Strauss (DBT, 12-14). So much of what Düzgün does seems to be telling the story of Western thought and spirituality, but from a critically engaged perspective. In this respect, his endeavor effort is similar to Alpyağıl’s quest for authenticity as seen in chapter 5.
690 See Chapter 2 for an earlier discussion of this concept.
691 Ebrahim Moosa, Ghazālī & The Poetics of Imagination (Chapel Hill, NC; London: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 175.
692 Moosa, Ghazālī & The Poetics of Imagination, 177.
While Düzgün develops these themes in his written opus, it may be helpful to start with a brief example from his popular talks. In a talk given in early 2014, Düzgün summarizes some of the most fundamental elements of his theological anthropology. In this talk, roughly translated as “Building Identity based on Value,” he treats the question of human nature, or in Islamic terms *fitra* or “disposition.” Exploring an Islamic perspective on the fundamental identity and nature of a human being, Düzgün remarks that this original disposition is something individuals lose touch with over time. He describes how politics, religion, culture and other societal pressures drive people to act out twofaced behavior and, as a result, alienate them from their *fitra*. As I will argue below, *fitra*, in this discussion and throughout, is linked profoundly to the question of authority.

Since it is, as Düzgün maintains, society that often alienates an individual from her *fitra*, Düzgün’s portrayal of society initially emphasizes the corrupting nature of civilization, especially its institutions. For Düzgün, questions of authority and human values are especially precarious in societies that depend on law (*kanun*) and legal standards to ensure morality. This does not mean he opposes legal structures or institutions. Law is good in the sense that it provides rule of law and base-line standards, but it is better for individuals to have the space to freely negotiate these standards rather than to reduce their moral values to statutes and rulings. Statutes and rulings alone simply cannot take the place of individuals striving for and negotiating values among themselves.

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694 Şaban Ali Düzgün, "Değer Temelli Kişilik İnşası" [“The Construction of a Person on the Foundation of Value”] (given March 26, 2014 and organized by Hamamönü Kabakçı Konağında Mevlana Kültür ve Sanat Vakfısı): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HyLYbIYuAs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HyLYbIYuAs). He recently re-delivered this talk on June 27, 2016. That link is [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ut1nvvfKfs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ut1nvvfKfs). Disposition is an English translation he offers in the talk, but he also admits there is no direct translation of the term.
Düzgün’s take on individual authority is best understood in contradistinction to external authority or authority imposed from without by society, government, and legal strictures. Stressing the individual’s role in the process of building a society founded on shared values, Düzgün brings individual authority to the fore as an indispensible component of society’s moral fiber. A world run only in terms of institutional authority cannot be a world of living values. A world where individual discretion and expression of values has no formative place is also a world where authority comes entirely from the outside. Authority imposed solely from the outside restricts us. Such authority is dry and procedural and lacks authentic vitality. It also requires no active cooperation from the individual. To illustrate this aspect of outside authority, in “Building Identity based on Value,” Düzgün gives the example of a government collecting taxes. When a government collects taxes, it makes no efforts to convince citizens to cooperate. The act is a demand accompanied by a strict expectation compliance. This sort of externally imposed and potentially oppressive authority is the polar opposite to what he characterizes as inner authority.

From external authority of the stultifying variety, Düzgün turns to an ideal of authority that comes from within. Conscience, or in Turkish “vicdan,” is the inner authority we all possess. 695 When we act on our conscience, this exemplifies authority from within. However, this is no individualistic authority accountable merely to some vague and egotistical sense of self. On the contrary, this inner authority is inextricably linked to a higher authority,

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695 Vicdan comes from an Arabic root but is used in Turkish and not in Arabic to mean conscience. The modern Arabic word for conscience is damir. For a comparative etymology of the word conscience in Arabic and a history of the word in European languages see the work of Leirvik. Oddbjørn Leirvik is a Scandinavian theologian highly engaged in interreligious dialogue engages Egyptian authors of the mid-twentieth century. Leirvik traces “conscience” from Biblical texts all the way up to its modern differentiation in various European languages from the notion of “consciousness.” He then turns his analysis to Egyptian writers active in the 1950s. Oddbjørn Leirvik, Human Conscience and Muslim-Christian Relations (New York: Routledge, 2006).
transcending the laws of states and societies. According to Düzgün, God acts through the human conscience. That is, through and not counter to an individual’s sense inner authority. The authority of conscience comes simultaneously from God and from human nature; it has a distinctly participatory and cooperative bent. For this reason, Düzgün intimates that the authority of conscience is more essential and fundamental to human flourishing than any particular manifestation of external, institutional authority.

In this same talk, Düzgün explains that true religion (din) is not about compulsion (zorlama); rather, it is about persuasion (ikna). Where there is compulsion (zorlama) one cannot be in true religion (din). The Qur’an itself does not force religion but works instead to convince—it is, in his words, a “book that works to convince.” Faith (iman), in turn, is like a motor. Faith does not evince compulsion but encourages us to do good things. Faith alone does not amount to much by itself unless a believer is already striving to be a good person and to do good works.

From this brief look into one of Düzgün’s more informal talks, it becomes clear that the idea of an original human nature is tied up with considerations of various types of authority and even the potentially negative effects of external authority. Düzgün, here and elsewhere, speaks against the constrictive and suffocating sides of dry legalism or institutional religion run amok. Nevertheless, in “Building Identity based on Value,” he still affirms that individuals, while valuable as single entities, have even more worth as parts of larger wholes. Significantly,

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696 The phrase is taken from his talk, “Değer Temelli Kişilik İnşası” [“The Construction of a Person on the Foundation of Value”] (given March 26, 2014), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HyLYbIYuA5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HyLYbIYuA5). Original Turkish phrase: “ikna edici bir kitap.”

697 Unfortunately, I cannot convey the sense of eloquence or effective emoting Düzgün commands when he speaks publicly. His spoken prose is very accessible and engaging. He makes abundant use of figurative examples that serve to draw the audience in. He is charismatic public speaker.

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he does not say individuals have worth only when detached from society and structures, which may contain various external authorities. Rather, he affirms individual worth, first by affirming the value of the individual conscience, and then remarks that such individuals (who exercise their conscience) have even more worth as active members of larger societies. In other words, individuality is enhanced and not diminished by conscientious participation in society. While society can estrange an individual from her *fitra*, there exists no exclusive binary between individual and communal existence. Since Düzgün’s concept of an individual includes the individual’s relationship to society and community, I stress the centrality of “mediated” individual authority in his works in order to underscore the fact that his concept of the individual is not that of a lone, disconnected automaton.

Düzgün’s views on the importance of internal authority also play out in his written works. In his book *Religion, Individual and Society*, he starts with al-Māturīdī (d. 944), the importance of *fitra*, and a call for universal religious values. In this work, Düzgün’s fundamental claim is that humans are by nature religious. Though an earlier work first published in 1997, Düzgün holds this basic position consistently over the course of his scholarly activities. While al-Māturīdī did not figure as a prominent figure of discussion in Alpyağ’s work, Al-Māturīdī figures prominently in Düzgün’s theological project. In this, Düzgün is not an isolated case. As discussed previously, al-Māturīdī serves as a major source of authority and orientation for many Turkish theologians—this trend going back to at least the mid-twentieth century. Broadly

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699 DBT, 11-12.
speaking, Turkish Ottoman history favors Ḥanafī jurisprudence; and since Ḥanafī jurisprudence often goes hand in hand with Māturīdī theology, al-Māturīdī’s history in Turkey touches on deep historical roots.\(^{701}\) As for Düzc̣ün, he draws primarily on al-Māturīdī’s Qurʾān commentary (Taʾwīlāt al-qurʾān)\(^{702}\) and from al-Māturīdī’s kalām work Kitab al-Tawḥīd. Düzc̣ün, elsewhere,\(^{703}\) writes on a follower of al-Māturīdī from a subsequent generation—Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafi (d. 1114/5), famous for his Kitāb Tabṣirat al-adilla.\(^{704}\)

For his part, Düzc̣ün stresses the practical significance of subtle variations between Māturīdī and Ashʿarite theology. Compared with Ashʿarite theology, Māturīdī theology places greater importance on human free will, strongly affirms human ability to come to knowledge of God and morality apart from prophecy, and considers God’s creative act as eternal and ongoing despite the finite nature of creation.\(^{705}\) These distinctions carry over strongly into Düzc̣ün’s work and all have direct implications for Düzc̣ün’s theological evaluation of fiṭra.\(^{706}\) Such distinctions point to a human being who possesses free will and an innate orientation towards God and

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\(^{701}\) Wilfred Madelung explains the connection between the earlier Seljuk Turks, Ḥanafī law and Maturidi theology: “As a result of the Turkish expansion, eastern Ḥanafism and Māturīdī theological doctrine were spread throughout western Persia, ʿIrāq, Anatolia, Syria and Egypt. Numerous Transoxanian and other eastern Ḥanafī scholars migrated to these regions and taught there from the late 5th/11th to the 8th/14th century. Māturīdī doctrine thus gradually came to prevail among the Ḥanafī communities everywhere.” Wilfred Madelung, “Māturīdiyya,” in Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, accessed 15 September 2016, http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5046 .


\(^{704}\) Other notable works of Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafi include his Tamhīd fī uṣūl al-dīn and Kitāb Bahr al-kalām fī ʿilm al-tawḥīd.


\(^{706}\) As Düzc̣ün remarks in his book Social Theology, Māturīdī theology and to a lesser extent Muʿtazilite theology, unlike Ashʿarite theology, do not assume an inverse correlation between God’s transcendence and human agency. In other words, God’s transcendence and power does not depend on human lack of power or choice. Humans are not in competition with God. Düzc̣ün, Sosyal Teoloji: Insanın Yeryüzü Serüveni [Social Theology: Humanity’s Worldly Adventure] (Ankara: Lotus Yaynevi, 2010; 2012), 11. Cited as ST.
toward moral truths, a human being who is both given space and responsibility to choose and to act but is nevertheless not abandoned by God. God has created human beings with qualities of the divine attributes; independently, they can recognize God’s oneness and can come to consciousness of the gratitude they owe their creator.707

For Düzgün, a human being is complete insofar as she is able to preserve and remain true to her fitra; she is primitive insofar as she has become estranged from her fitra.708 His use of the word “primitive” (ilkel) is a conscious re-association of the term as used in anthropology of the early and mid-twentieth century.709 Rather than designating people outside of urban civilizations or at perceived peripheries as “primitive,” he marks those who have lost touch with their original disposition as primitive regardless of whether they live in Tokyo, New York, Minnesota or Botswana. Further, he states the idea of God is so bound up with humanity’s innate nature that the very concept of God came into existence together with the rise of humanity.710 Accordingly, religion is something an individual can come to without an institution, through fitra and common sense. Düzgün parses individual authority and ability to discern into an array of God-given faculties: common sense, conscience and reason. Yet, Düzgün does not mean reason (akıl) in a

707 DBT, 10.
708 DBT, 16.
709 At the outset of DBT, he discusses Bronislaw, Malinowski, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, and Claude Lévy-Strauss especially with regards to the term “primitive” (ilkel). See DBT, 12-15. The turning point of the discussion away from Western anthropology is when he uses fitra to redefine “primitive.”
710 DBT, 16. For comparison, Karl Rahner makes a similar remark in his Foundations of Christian Faith. However, rather looking back into human origins, Rahner speculates on humanity’s future, deeming that the day humans no longer have a concept of God is the days humans become a species other than human. In this same work, Rahner, similar to Düzgün, affirms that humans are moral beings by transcendental necessity and that humans as spiritual beings are necessarily free. Rahner’s view of divine and human freedom as directly correlated rather than inversely correlated also strikes a parallel with Düzgün’s Māturīdī-influenced positions. With regards a theological anthropology, there are quite a few parallels between Düzgün and Rahner (including an emphasis on conscience), where the former ultimately stresses the finite-infinite relationship through tawḥīd and the latter through Christology. See Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroads, 1993), original German published 1976.
limited or narrow sense. For instance, in *Religion and Religious People in the Contemporary World*, he treats the authority of reason (akıl) and intuition (sezgi), stating that both together are what allow us to recognize good from bad. As he claims, the Qur’ān calls the talent of intuition (sezgi) “ilhām,” or inspiration, linking his own argument for the independent authority of reason and intuition with what he sees as a quranic argument for individual authority. In support of this, he cites Q91:8 as quranic indication of human authority: “and [God] inspired it [that is, the soul] with [the ability to discern] between its immoral action and its piety.” Note that the word “inspired” in the quranic Arabic comes from the same root as “ilhām,” which Düzgün elsewhere translates as intuition (sezgi). Düzgün aligns this interpretation with Ḥanafī thought on morality and contrasts it with Ash‘arite reasoning. His explanation of Ḥanafī moral reasoning is as follows: for Ḥanafīs, something is forbidden because it is bad, not bad because it is forbidden. By contrast, Ash‘arite positions on human morality emphasize that something is good or bad because God enjoins or forbids it. In contrast with Ash‘arite emphasis on the importance of revelation in determining moral good and moral evil, it makes sense from a Ḥanafī perspective that human beings can determine bad and good without the direct aid of revelation. Düzgün stresses that Ḥanafīs hold knowledge of good and bad can exist independently of *sharī‘a*, or revealed Islamic law; revelation itself addresses its interlocutors with the assumption they already know good from bad. What then is the purpose of revelation in this instance if the

711 CDDD, 111. DBT, 36.
712 The Arabic for this verse requires the reader to fill out the text from the preceding verses and context. The translation offered here is one made after consulting Düzgün’s Turkish translation, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem’s English translation, and the English Sahih International Translation. Abdel Haleem’s translation looks significantly different, but the Sahih International more or less agrees with Düzgün’s rendering. Düzgün’s Turkish translation of the Arabic: “Allah insanın özüne neyin iyi neyin de kötü olduğunu bilme yetisi yerleştirmiş.” CDDD, 111.
713 CDDD, 111.
714 CDDD, 111.
human being is already equipped with moral discernment? Düzgün explains that revelation serves to educate the will (irade).\footnote{CDDD, 112. To further support this reading, Düzgün cites the Mu'tazilite Şâfi'î thinker al-Qâdî Abduljabbâr (935-1025), who held that humans know good and evil before coming to know God. He also notes that for the Mâlikî school of Islamic jurisprudence something is inherently good or bad for humans while juridically (hükmen) good or bad in relation to God.} It would seem that, in comparison with the human mind and conscience, human will is less naturally equipped to recognize and pursue moral good.\footnote{Düzgün does not explain why the will is less naturally endowed with orientation towards truth and reality than faculties such as conscience and reason. From a Christian perspective, the discrepancy could be explained by the effects of sin on the will, but Düzgün rejects the Christian doctrine of the fallen and inherently sinful state of humanity. This is not to say a Christian explanation is inherently better, but only to point out that the effects of sin on human faculties has been a long standing conversation in Christian tradition due to the Christian doctrine of the Fall; and since Muslim theology does not build upon a doctrine of Original Sin, it may be tricky to identify analogous discussions in Islamic tradition.}

In addition to the importance of reason (akıl) and intuition (sezgi) in the process of human moral discernment, Düzgün stresses the role of the conscience. He points to the Arabic etymology of the Turkish word for conscience to underscore the intimate relationship between conscience and an innate orientation to truth:

Conscience, which comes from the same root as existence (w-j-d), and reason [whose root is (‘-q-l)], which hints at the unbreakable tie binding human beings to the source from which they came, give human beings the power to distinguish between right and wrong (judgement [furkan] and insight [basiret]). Humans with both conscience and reason can discover divine/natural/universal values and in light of these [values] can live a life codified (guidance [hidayet]) towards goodness and beauty.\footnote{CDDD, 16. Original Turkish: “Varlıkla (vücûd) aynı köken gelen vicedan ve insanın geldiği kaynağına kopmaz bir bağla (akıl) bağlandığımı imleyen akıl, insane doğru ve yanlış arasında ayırmı yapacak (furkan ve basiret) bir kudret verir. Bu vicedan be akıl ile insan, ilahi/doğal/evrensel değerleri keşfedebilir ve bunlar ışığına iyıye ve güzel doğru kodlanmış (hidayet) bir yaşam sürebilir.”} 717

In short, fitra, which entails reason, intuition and conscience, bespeaks a relationship to something beyond the human individual and reaches out towards universal values. As Düzgün puts it, fitra is a tendency towards the real.\footnote{DBT, 47.} On this point, he is not Gadamerian to the extent that Alpyağıl may be.\footnote{Recall last chapter’s discussion. Alpyağıl on Gadamer: KTHH, 20, 67-68, 158 and FY, 155-156.} Orientation to the real, as a concept, is less problematic for Düzgün than
it is for philosopher of religion Alpyağlı. The former builds from the premise that humans are fundamentally oriented towards the real, rather than delving into the philosophical grounds for and challenges of making this claim, as does the latter. According to Düzgün, God gave humans the ability to determine good and bad, the ability to reason abstractly, and the gift of common sense. However, these gifts are not inviolable; humans also need to protect their fitra. Since life is full of pressures and forces that estrange humans from their fitra, it is often necessary to make a conscious return to this fitra. This conscious return, he explains, is repentance—“Repentance [tövbe] is the return to a sound fitra.” Further, piety (takva) is what keeps human within the healthy bounds of fitra. In other words, he defines piety and repentance in terms of the individual’s relationship to her innate disposition. Piety is the attitude which

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720 DBT, 48. He differs slightly on the “reasonableness” of īmān slightly from Alpyağlı—i.e. īmān is reasonable. For Düzgün, īmān, or faith, in Islam is something in harmony with an essentially reasonable and rational fitra. As we will see in Chapter Six, Alpyağlı does not see īmān as an entirely rational or unproblematic move (likening it to a passion and comparing it with the Christian idea of faith). This does not mean Alpyağlı discounts the necessity of sound īmān; rather, he simply investigates in a comparative philosophical setting how īmān can stand in tension with human rationality. On a comparative note, in the late 18th century in Europe, the concept of common sense was considered alongside reason and faith as a possible ground for human truth. On this see Frederick C. Beiser, The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), for instance, pp. 111, 168, and 173.

721 DBT, 49. Original Turkish: “Sağlam fitrata dönüşüm adı, tövbedir.”

722 Some people translate taqwā as pious fear of God, but others argue for different primary shades of meaning than fear. Quranic scholar and linguist Toshihiko Izutsu translates taqwā as fear, in particular eschatological fear of final judgment. He argues that the Qur’ān uses taqwā in conjunction with several other words for fear (khashya, khawf, and rahiba). Toshihiko Izutsu, Ethico Religious Concepts in the Qur’ān (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 195-200. Fazlur Rahman, widely read in Turkish theology faculties, translated taqwā as both fear and piety, explaining: “The unique balance of integrative moral action is what the Qur’ān terms taqwā, perhaps the most important single term in the Qur’ān.” He remarks it is usually translated as fear of God and piety. For Rahman, taqwā designates a fear that comes from “an acute sense of responsibility, here and in the hereafter […] Taqwā, then, in the context of our argument, means to be squarely anchored within the moral tensions, the ‘limits of God,’ and not to ‘transgress’ or violate the balance of those tensions or limits. Human conduct then becomes endowed with that quality which renders it ‘service to God [iḥāda].’” Fazlur Rahman, Major Themes of the Qur’ān (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 28-29.
preserves a believer’s innate disposition. Repentance is an act or state that restores this disposition.

As we have seen, one important aspect of fitra is the human capacity for reason and common sense. In, God, History and Nature (2005), Düzcün expands upon what he means by rationality and reason. He argues that rationality is much broader than a theory of ‘aql (the Turkish adaptation of the Arabic being “akıl”).

To clarify, ‘aql is sometimes translated into English as “intellect” or understood generally to designate the faculty of reason. Classical and modern scholars differ on its exact use and function. For instance, Deborah Black, scholar of classical Arabic philosophy, explains the various philosophical divisions of ‘aql or “intellect” common in classical Arabic:

The framework for all Arabic theories of the intellect was provided by Aristotle’s distinction in book III of the De Anima between the agent and potential intellects. But the Arabic philosophers also identified a number of additional stages of the intellect, a practice which they inherited from the later Greek tradition.724

While the Classical philosophical understanding of ‘aql is still significant to the contemporary use of the word, Düzcün more likely has modern and modernist assumptions about the function of human reason in mind. These assumptions—for instance, faith’s diametrical opposition to reason—he subsequently wishes to challenge. Humanity’s faculty of thought is not limited to reasoning as it is captured in the term ‘aql (Turkish: akıl). He lists understanding (anlama) or

723 ATT, 45.
724 Deborah L. Black, “Psychology: Soul and Intellect” in The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy, eds. P. Adamson and R. C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 317. Additional stages of intellect Black refers to are: the agent intellect, the potential intellect, habitual/speculative intellect, and acquired intellect (ibid., 317-318). These divisions have more to do with a theory of how the mind acquires knowledge; by contrast, this question does not figure in centrally into Düzcün’s consideration. He is arguably more interested in the question of what sorts of mental and psychological states and activities bear intellectual authority.
725 Translations of this word (‘aql) can vary, and even subtle differences will have significant effects on how one translations various texts.
comprehension (kavrama) as another function of thought. Moreover, he lists intuition as part of human cognition; intuition works alongside more abstract reasoning associated with ‘aql (Turkish: akıl). He writes:

For human ‘knowing’ to be labelled religious or theological, or in other words, for the cognition of theological knowledge, it is necessary for reason [akıl], intuition and other faculties of knowing to be used as a whole and in such a way as to support one another.

To summarize the above citation, intuition (sezgi) and reason (akıl) together play significant roles in human cognition. Düzgün further defines intuition (sezgi) in the following way:

The concept that the Sufis used to get beyond the chain of cause and effect, however, was ‘intuition [sezgi]’. [...] [T]he author proposes that instead of ‘reason’ and ‘intuition’ being formed as opposing concepts, the two of them found a cognitive subject-objective relationship in which they both function in tandem.

For Düzgün, intuition is a complementary faculty alongside reason. Human intuition and reason work together to furnish a more complete relationship to reality. The significance of this argument lies in Düzgün’s affirmation that abstract reason alone is insufficient to be mindful of God. Human use of reason may be a divine gift and part of our innate nature; however, abstract reason is not the only faculty humans require in order to live meaningfully. Nor does abstract reason exhaust the complex process of human cognition. While reason is still a source of internal authority, it is nevertheless incomplete on its own. More complete insight and understanding is

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726 ATT, 86.
727 ATT, 88. Original Turkish: “İnsanın ‘bilme’sinin dini yahut teolojik bilme olarak adlandırılabilmesi başka bir ifadeyle teolojik bilginin kognitifliği için akıl, sezgi, vs. bilme yeteneklerini bir bütün olarak ve birbirini destekleyecek şekilde kullanılması gerekmektedir.”
728 ATT, 190. Original Turkish: “Sufilerin sebep-sonuç zinciri dışına çıkmak için başvurduğu kavram ise ‘sezgi’ idi. [...] bizim önerimiz ‘akıl’ ve ’sezgi’ kavramlarını birbirine karşı yapılardırmaktan vazgeçip, ikisinin birlikte iş gördüğü kognitif bir özne-nesne ilişkisi kurmaktır.”

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possible when reason as well as other aspects of human cognition (like intuitive grasping) are given due credit.

In order to be truly mindful of God, intuition, experience and emotions all have a role to play. For those individuals forgetful of their original nature and unmindful of God, Düzgün refers to Q59:19: “Do not be like those who forget God, so God causes them to forget their own souls...”\(^729\) He takes this quranic verse and expands on the character of those who have forgotten God and, as a result, their own souls. Those who have forgotten God are paralyzed in life; he likens them to butterflies that have become victims of their own silken cocoons, unable to open their wings and seize their true identity. Such individuals darken the world in their efforts to save themselves from it.\(^730\)

By contrast, those who remember God are bound to God and life with a foundational feeling of trust, which allows them to rise above paralysis and face the world. As Düzgün puts it, God’s most basic creation within the human being is the feeling of trust (\textit{güven}).\(^731\) This feeling of trust is available to all humans in touch with their original disposition. He thus affirms the value of all human beings independently of intelligence and good deeds. Not only do all humans have value, but they also need and seek purpose.\(^732\) Human beings are also the only living creatures saddled with true responsibility.\(^733\) In their special relationship with God, humans are given real responsibility and are even endowed with God’s attributes—seeing and hearing.\(^734\)

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\(^{729}\) English translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem.
\(^{730}\) ATT, 150.
\(^{731}\) DBT, 26.
\(^{732}\) DBT, 57.
\(^{733}\) DBT, 58.
\(^{734}\) ATT, 136.
In addition to reason, to intuition, and to physical senses like seeing and hearing, humans are also outfitted with freedom. This freedom, Düzugün argues, is non-trivial and is not nullified by God’s oneness or power. Nonetheless, while human freedom is real, human freedom is not without limit. As such, human freedom is not absolute, yet it is common to us all. According to Düzugün, freedom is 1) tied to the person, 2) cannot be transferred to another, and 3) cannot be taken away. Further, this freedom extends to matters of faith. Faith cannot be forced. On this point Düzugün strongly grounds his position with quranic verses. He cites Q10:99-100, which reads, “Had your Lord willed, all the people on earth would have believed. So can you compel people to believe? No soul can believe except by God’s will, and He brings disgrace on those who do not use their reason.” He also cites the oft quoted Q 2:256, which states there is no compulsion in religion. Düzugün stresses that, in Islam, God’s freedom and human freedom do not conflict. It is not religion but human tendencies to resist real freedom that reduce the free individual to a divided slave.

The free individual whose freedom comes from God contrasts starkly with the superficial and false freedom of the individual as defined by liberal society. Düzugün writes, “The error of liberal thought lies in its failure to understand the human being.” The negative traits of a liberal individual include selfishness and a feeling of powerlessnes. This liberal individual is

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735 DBT, 135.
736 English translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem.
737 CDDD, 174.
738 CDDD, 175.
739 CDDD, 176. Here he also harps on Catholic indulgences.
740 CDDD, 176. Original Turkish: “Liberal düşünmenin hatası insan tanınamakta yatıyordu.” His use of the term liberal is fairly broad. It seems to incorporate both early/mid-twentieth-century understandings of liberalism that stress free market capitalism alongside extreme individualism and early twenty-first-century associations of liberalism that focus on individualism in terms of identity rather than economics.
741 CDDD, 177.
divided up by her own superficial and decentered desires. Because she cannot orient herself to the One God, she becomes a slave of every whim in creation. And in today’s consumer culture, this image is not difficult to flesh out. By contrast, submitting to God means freedom in this world. Not submitting to God means submitting to others. 742 One who submits to God, while remaining truly free, is nevertheless not estranged from the world around her. Far from some mythical ascetic or isolated monk, the truly free individual is one who lives out her piety actively in society:

This individual who has acquired true freedom in being God’s slave [...] is the person who carries in her mind the awareness and courage to shoulder the responsibility that falls upon her in society at every turn. 743

Otherwise stated, Islam takes as its fundamental basis the individual and individual accountability—or in Düzgün’s words, “Islam takes the individual as its foundation.” 744 Düzgün underscores what I call the “mediated” (rather than absolute) authority of the individual. Through this mediated individual authority, Muslims carry authority and responsibility in living out religious truth. Religion, as something in a continual state of renewal, gives and establishes the right of its own establishment to its believers. 745 For this reason, Düzgün sees Islam as fundamentally less prone to hegemony than Christianity. Specifically, where the individual is recognized as the center of religion over any one institutional hierarchy, the tendency for hegemony can be more effectively avoided. On this note, he urges individual Muslims to create their own modernities. 746 By realizing the power and responsibility they carry as living

742 CDDD, 178.
743 CDDD, 179. Original Turkish: “Allah’a kul olmakla gerçek hürriyeti elde etmiş bu birey [...] O, toplumda var olan her harekette kendi üzerine düşen sorumluluğu omuzlayacak cesareti ve bilinci zihninde taşıyan bir ferttir.”
744 CDDD, 179. Original Turkish: “İslam bireyi esas alır...”
745 CDDD, 196.
746 CDDD, 196.
expressions of true religion, and by accepting religion as fundamentally modernizing regardless
of place or time, pious individuals can realize their own responsibility in manifesting true
religion on earth.

**Religion as a Source of Meaning and Values**

For Düzgün, religion is a source of meaning and values, some of which look very
decidedly modern. I will lay out Düzgün’s explanation for how religion functions as a source of
value and show that he successfully integrates both modern and traditional values in this schema.

What is true religion for Düzgün? Düzgün frequently speaks of religion in terms of an
existential (varoluşsal) struggle. Religion entails a struggle of meaning and value, where God
is the ultimate source of values. Religion is what produces and manifests values in creation.
True religion also frees a human being. Further, religion is one, especially in the sense of
morality. Given these qualities, true religion, by definition, resists corruption and fossilization.
Further still, real religion is not exclusivist. Düzgün claims in contrast to an authentic Islam,
Christianity and Judaism are more exclusivist. Even though he views an authentically lived
Islam as less exclusivist than Christianity or Judaism, it is always clear from his description of
true religion that he holds Islam to offer the most solid foundations for living out true religion.

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747 In the Christian tradition, two seminal figures who cast faith in terms of existential struggle are Søren
Kierkegaard (1813-1855) and Paul Tillich (1886-1965). While these two figures are well-known in Turkish theology
faculties, Düzgün does not extensively engage either thinker in the works cited here.
748 To note, Düzgün does not generally identify with the philosophical school of existentialism. Generally, he refers
to philosophical existentialism only in a negative, positivist context.
749 CDDD, 195.
750 DBT, 21.
751 DBT, 23.
752 DBT, 23.
According to the Qur’an, as Düzgün reads it, living a virtuous life of doing good to others should be the basic aim of all religion.\textsuperscript{753}

Since Düzgün stresses individual freedom, reform, and inclusivism as hallmarks of true religion, the question might arise as to whether Düzgün is a quranic deist like the popularly known Yaşar Nuri Öztürk.\textsuperscript{754} The answer to this question is no. Düzgün is adamantly not a deist, nor is he a pantheist. Düzgün’s understanding of religion has a complex relationship to Islamic tradition. On one hand, Düzgün embraces traditional and classical Islamic resources and, on the other, he does not shy from challenging traditionally held opinions in the name of moral progress. He is, in short, a creative and critical theologian with significant grounding in the theological tradition he represents.

On the nature of values, Düzgün holds Islamic values are the same as universal human values.\textsuperscript{755} Instead of making Islam accountable to modern conceptions of universal human values, he argues that Islam has always upheld values which would be recognized today as universal ones. According to Islam, human beings are one family. Brotherhood, mutual trust and help are what it means to be a slave of God.\textsuperscript{756} In other words, religion is the essence of life: it informs all human bonds, duties, and relationships for the better.\textsuperscript{757} In this way, principles of morality are common to all humans. Law alone (whether secular or religious) is not all of

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item DBT, 24.
\item See Yaşar Nuri Öztürk, \textit{Tanrı, Akl ve Ahlaktan Başka Kutsal Tanımayan İnanç Deizm} (İstanbul: Yeni Boyut, 2015). This title translates to \textit{Deism: The Belief that does not Recognize Anything Sacred Besides God, Reason, and Morality}. In this book, the late Öztürk argued the Qur’ān, while not espousing deism, offers resources for the deist position. As a proponent of laicity and a supporter of Turkish Republican values, Öztürk’s work is much more overtly political than any of the theologians the present study focuses on. The book is discussed in chapter 7.
\item DBT, 110.
\item DBT, 164.
\item DBT, 115.
\end{thebibliography}
morality—some is left to religion and conscience.\textsuperscript{758} Piety, (\textit{taqwā}) as conscience of one’s finitude in relation to God, allows human beings to move past the tension and tragic limitations of their finitude and seek out loftier goals.\textsuperscript{759} This struggle for greater meaning is what helps a believer become a full individual. And while religion helps the believer to become a full individual, religion does not reduce to mere individualism. It is, rather, intensely relational and operates on a much broader plane than the value system of the material world.\textsuperscript{760}

As discussed above, Düzgün exhibits a very modern assumption about the purpose of religion—it functions to restore equal, just and respectful relations. In this sense religion modernizes, renews, and reforms.\textsuperscript{761} Religion functions to renew values and equality just as Islam did when it first appeared. Religion is “modernizing” (\textit{moderleştirici}) in its very essence.\textsuperscript{762} In its corrupted form, however, religion can be used as a tool of the state—and this, Düzgün repeatedly remarks, is one of Christianity’s biggest sins.

Again, Düzgün’s standard for religion when it is true to its essential function is fairly modern, but it remains grounded in an Islamic framework. Concerns both modern and Muslim combine in Düzgün’s criterion for positively functioning religion. An important and ostensibly modern standard Düzgün proposes for evaluating whether religion stays true to its essential function lies in whether or not its practitioners think critically, creatively, idealistically, and

\textsuperscript{758} DBT, 122.
\textsuperscript{759} ATT, 151.
\textsuperscript{760} CDDD, 19.
\textsuperscript{761} CDDD, 17-18.
\textsuperscript{762} CDDD, 18. This is an interesting turn-about on using the term modernity, but not too far from Muhammad Abduh. Abduh, in his writings on \textit{tawḥīd} [unity] argues that it is the Qur’ān and Islamic culture which is originally modern (i.e. inherently reasonable) and thus already in harmony with modern science. See Muhammad Abduh, \textit{The Theology of Unity}, trans. Kenneth Cragg (Selangor: Islamic Book Trust, 2003).
dialectically about basic human relations in human society, showing concern for “basic human rights, justice, freedom and stability.”

On the subject of human rights and justice, one fundamental criterion for the living truth of a religion according to Düzgün is the measure by which a religion addresses those who do not belong to it. That is, how a religion treats non-believers and dissenters is an essential indicator of its health and vitality. How a religion treats non-believers is a standard applicable to other religions, not only Islam. He remarks that “exclusivism is likely a problem common to all religions.” Even if this problem is common among all religions, it is one that, as Düzgün affirms, still needs rethinking.

One way of rethinking exclusivism is by looking at the internal resources a respective religion possesses to resist hegemony or monopolizing modes of thinking. Religions have within them currents of anti-hegemony—resources for fighting hegemony are found in critical consciousness, creative thinking, adherence to ideals and dialectical thinking. Thus, religions, even ones with plagued histories like Christianity, have resources to counteract harmful expression of exclusivism and hegemony. When evaluating Düzgün’s sense of what proves just and inclusive, it is clear that while striving for universality he remains positively situated in an Islamic perspective.

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763 CDDD, 18. Original Turkish: “temel insan hakları, adalet, özgürlük, güven[.]”
764 CDDD, 20. Original Turkish: “[...] bütün dinlerin başına gelmesi muhtemel bir dışlayıcılık belasıdır.”
765 CDDD, 20. Though he urges for rethinking on this matter, Düzgün sees Islam as more likely to be inclusive, starting with the divinely ordained protections for non-Muslims like “people of the book” (Jews and Christians) and further warns his readers not to expect inclusivism from (presumably non-Muslim) “monopolists” of religion (CDDD, 21).
766 CDDD, 130.
767 CDDD, 129-130. Düzgün mentions both Christianity and Islam in this discussion. While he is not his most critical of Christianity here, he consistently tends to portray Christian history as more monopolizing, destructive, and hegemonic than Islamic history.
Another criterion for true religion which highlights Düzgün’s integration of Islamic context and challenges common to all religions lies in his explanation of the real and ideal. One problem Düzgün notes that arises when trying to determine religious values is confusing the real with the ideal.\footnote{CDDD, 113-117.} For instance, when the Qur’ān was revealed, it addressed a specific audience on specific occasions. However, if those occasions of revelation (\textit{asbāb al-nuzūl}) are made to serve as universal principles or general rules, the distinction between the real and ideal is overlooked. Düzgün argues there should always be a dialectic between the real and the ideal (and this very dialectic is an essential part of religion).\footnote{CDDD, 114.}

To give an example of the confusion of real and ideal in Islam, he treats the issue of slavery and polygamy in Islam. Düzgün does not think slavery as an ideal essential to Islam but instead sees slavery as an unfortunate social reality religion was meant to reform.\footnote{CDDD, 114.} He remarks that Meccan period started to abolish it, but this process was unsuccessful.\footnote{CDDD, 114 ft.} Nor does Düzgün think polygamy to be ideal.\footnote{CDDD, 114.} While slavery and polygamy are real parts of Islamic history, that does not make them ideals to be sought after.\footnote{CDDD, 114.} Religion is the driving force behind this real vs. ideal dialectic, where what is ideal eventually becomes real through reform and the development of human conscience.\footnote{CDDD, 115.} For this dialectic to function, the individual must be at liberty to critically question the relationship between the real and ideal. This is an ongoing and continual dialectic, for which Düzgün refuses to offer an easy solution. In accordance with the divine
purpose for humanity, each individual is embedded in her own age and the task is hers to develop her conscience by responding to the events of her age.\textsuperscript{775}

**The Relationship between Religion and Civilization**

For Düzgün, the individual is both the foundation of an authentic lived religion and the one charged with ensuring a civilization that does not alienate humans from their \textit{fitra}. In \textit{Religion, Individual, and Society}, Düzgün speaks of humanity as one essential kind, with each individual representing the whole. In support of this view, he refers his reader to the important quranic verse Q5:32, which explains that to kill one person unjustly is tantamount to killing all of humankind.\textsuperscript{776} He then accuses Western thought of not truly being able to face this truth—that one human individual is the microcosm of all humanity.\textsuperscript{777} He firmly states, “Islam has the individual as its foundation.”\textsuperscript{778} The individual is thus both the locus of religion and the microcosm of human civilization.

The view that human individuals are significant to the course of civilization stresses the value of free individual action. In a world ruled by statistical calculations that reduce people to passive, faceless figures on a page, Düzgün is pushing back as if to say, “It doesn’t matter how big our global world gets, an individual person’s life and choices remain the foundation for everything we build as a race.” While some try to read history as a blind play of forces beyond the scope of any one human life or meaning, Düzgün retorts it is ridiculous to assert that the

\textsuperscript{775} CDDD, 115.
\textsuperscript{776} DBT, 66.
\textsuperscript{777} DBT, 67. Whether or not his accusation stands up to scrutiny, affirming the individual human being as microcosm of the whole exists both in the classical Islamic tradition of \textit{adab} and in European humanist writings of the Renaissance. Arguably, Christian tradition has never had a problem affirming that some human individuals represent all of humanity in important respects, particularly Adam and Christ or Eve and the Virgin Mary.
\textsuperscript{778} DBT, 69. Original Turkish: “İslâm ferdi esas alır.”
individual plays no role in history.\textsuperscript{779} Regarding the role of human agency in history, he speculates that human society follows natural laws; however, society can also be changed and guided by human choice. Furthermore, societal change is natural and part of God’s plan.\textsuperscript{780} This perspective focuses less on the particular structures in society at a given time and more on their development and how that development expresses the values of true religion. He exclaims in \textit{God, Nature, and History}, “For, what gives the world meaning is not its essence but the currents of events in it.”\textsuperscript{781} God is present in change. For instance, the de-Arabization of Islam is also the story of its universalization.\textsuperscript{782} Accordingly, God provides a way for each age and country.\textsuperscript{783} Throughout ages and places, religion, insofar as it is alive and well in the hearts of individual believers, keeps culture striving for universal standards. Therefore, it is important not to view religion as a force opposed to everything else around it.\textsuperscript{784} Without religion and without a mission for higher values, society becomes destructive and real civilization is impossible.

Düzgün also offers a rough historical narrative of human civilization. It starts before the birth of widespread urbanization and urban civilizations and moves steadily towards our global, urbanized world. This trajectory is marked by two opposing currents—the corrupting aspects of urbanization and the positive, universalizing aspect of interconnected human civilization.

As mentioned earlier, Düzgün takes the story of primitive versus civilized humans and turns the categories around. His use of the term primitive (\textit{ilkel}) in both a negative and a positive

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{779} CDDD, 43.
\textsuperscript{780} DBT, 90.
\textsuperscript{781} ATT, 234. Original Turkish: “Zira dünyaya anlam katan şey, tözsel/cevhersel olarak dünyanın ne olup olmadığını değil, onda cereyan eden olaylardır.”
\textsuperscript{782} CDDD, 127.
\textsuperscript{783} DBT, 112.
\textsuperscript{784} CDDD, 15. Perhaps is where he distinguishes his position from that of Ali Shariati; this would also speak against Salafist trends.
\end{flushright}
sense offers another example of how he creatively resists a binary understanding of religion’s relationship to modern values. Before Abrahamic religions, people believed in God as part of their fiṭra, arguing that the person closest to their fiṭra is the primitive person. For Düzgün, it is the primitive human being (understood positively) who is better suited to act as a true individual. By this logic, earlier peoples were not necessarily primitive, in the negative sense of the word, if they remained in touch with their inner God-given nature. In this vein of reasoning, Düzgün tells the tale of the urbanization and subsequent corruption of religion, blaming primarily urban environments for despotic trends in religion. At the same time, true religion (din) is fundamentally opposed to all forms of tribalism. With the rise of urbanized civilizations, humans were continually challenged to move beyond tribalist ways of expressing value. So while Düzgün criticizes urban civilization as a source of corruption, he also identifies it as a potential driving force towards universal values. Optimally religion should walk the fine balance line between respecting individual context and difference and pushing humans to more universal values.

Düzgün looks to the Qur’ān for what it means to be a functional civilization. Real civilization is civilization that helps individuals be better people, i.e. be peaceful people. According to his reading, quranic civilization is a civilization with “kitāb,” an Arabic word

785 DBT, 27.
786 CDDD, 71.
787 CDDD, 76.
788 CDDD, 84. Here he speaks against religions being used for destroying customs. He gives the example of Indonesia as an example where Islam did not do this.
789 In this context he prefers the quranic word “ümran” (in Turkish) rather than the usual Turkish word “medeniyet” for civilization. Both words derive from Arabic.
790 CDDD, 204.
commonly translated as “book,” but here Düzgün takes it to mean law, revelation and a sense of common good. “False civilization” (sahte medeniyetler) lacks “kitāb” (Turkish: kitap) and is based on misuse and exploitation. In this manner, Islamic civilization is a “civilization of agreement” (uzlaşır medeniyeti), that is, one governed justly by fair standards, laws and a sense of the common good amid a plurality of ways of life. A “civilization of agreement” also values the quality of being flexible and inclusive rather than exclusive. Within this context, he interprets Q49:13 to mean that homogenization of human civilization actually prevents this process of divinely intended human knowledge production. Q49:13, a verse commonly cited in the context of interfaith dialogue, reads: “People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should come to know one another.” In this verse, the diversity of human peoples is depicted as part of the divine plan for human growth and development. Düzgün cautions against understanding this quranic verse as calling human beings to know one another in a superficial sense; instead, Düzgün reads this verse to refer an ongoing process of inter-civilizational knowledge production from which all

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791 On the question of how to translate book, see Daniel Madigan, The Qur’an’s Self-Image (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). In this work, Madigan questions the conventional translation of kitāb as “book” and argues for the importance of an oral and recited understanding of quranic scripture.

792 CDDD, 205-206.

793 CDDD, 206.

794 CDDD, 207. In support of his claims of Islamic civilization, the work of the following two scholars might aid his case: Walid Saleh has argued that Sunni tradition is marked by its tolerance for diversity, and tendency for inclusivity, like a large umbrella. See Walid Saleh, The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition: The Qurʾān Commentary of Al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035) (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Also, the late Shahab Ahmed’s posthumous work details theoretical and historical considerations which highlight the broad and inclusive aspect of Islamic civilization. See What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

795 For an example of the use of this verse to exhort interfaith dialogue: Reza Shah-Kazemi, The Other in the Light of the One: The Universality of the Qurʾān and Interfaith Dialogue (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2006), 113. Shah-Kazemi’s book argues for the value of tawḥīd (divine unity) in Muslim efforts of interfaith dialogue.

796 This is a slight modification of M.A.S. Abdel Haleem translation, where “recognize” is substituted with “come to know.”
humanity is called to benefit.797 In other words, Düzgün takes Q49:13 to mean that all human nations and peoples will benefit when civilizations dialogue and learn together.798 Yet, since Düzgün identifies as a universalist, is it fitting to speak of civilizations in the plural in this context? Important to keep in mind, it is the plurality within unity that he stresses. He envisions one humanity with many civilizational expressions. This vision of a unified diverse humanity is shaped by both his convictions as a Muslim and his values as a scholar who writes and thinks about religion in the modern era.

**The Relationship between Religion and Individual**

This section draws previously discussed elements of Düzgün’s thought, consolidating some of the former discussions into a coherent summary, and argues that the relationship between religion and individual is arguably one of Düzgün’s most fundamental concerns. As noted above, religion is not something to be forced on the individual. Religion, in its true form, is life-giving. This life-giving relation between religion and the individual can only exist in a relationship of genuine freedom. On this point, Düzgün consistently stresses that human freedom should not be understood as in competition with divine freedom.799 This freedom is non-trivial

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797 CDDD, 208.
798 CDDD, 208.
799 CDDD, 44, 178-179. DBT, 21. The truly free individual, he explains here is one that is truly God’s servant. Elsewhere he attributes error of conceiving of human freedom in conflict with divine freedom to many Western religious and secular strands of thought—for instance, ATT, 91. It may be useful to note that Karl Rahner makes a similar case about the relationship between human and divine freedom. In Rahner’s *Hearer of the Word*, he argues that God’s freedom and human freedom do not correlate inversely but directly. God’s free act is intelligible and that free action is luminous in itself and is only dark for one standing outside. Thus, being, truth, and revelation, can become intelligible to another by co-enactment in love. The human being freely takes part in the performing or re-enacting and thereby understands God’s free act. See Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Continuum, 1994).
and embraces the free use of human faculties—faith is not merely the freedom to assent blindly. Since faith, or ʾīmān, is founded on reason and common sense, it is not blind following.800 Further, while Islam does not reject human difference, it also does not take human differences as fundamental to our human character. This is Düzgün’s universalist understanding of Islam. He writes, “While Islam does not deny all these [various human] realities, it accepts none of these qualities as its basic character.”801 What then is Islam’s basic character for Düzgün? Arguably, Islam’s character is founded on an affirmation of God’s oneness, which does not reduce human agency to nothing, but rather empowers individuals to take on responsibility in the created world. Significantly, he equates this responsibility with the Islamic idea of khalīfa or successorship. The Arabic root *kh-l-f* forms the word meaning successor (and is also the origin of the word “caliphate”); Düzgün employs this word to indicate human responsibility. Interestingly, the same root also forms the verb to differ—both meanings occur in the Qur’ān. While Düzgün does not stress the second meaning of the root, it may be helpful to use the duality of meaning in the root *kh-l-f* to illustrate his position of unity in diversity—on the one hand God gave humans a shared responsibility and hence authority in creation (*khalīfa*), on the other God also gave humans diversity and the richness of differing with one another (*ikhtilāf*).802 Or, as Düzgün affirms, with divine successorship given to humans, humanity marks a new page in creation.803 True religion is the locus of this responsibility, and as such it does not reduce human existence to nothing before God.804 Humans, especially individuals and individual pious efforts,

800 DBT, 38.
801 DBT, 38. Original Turkish: “Bütün bu gerçeklikleri inkâr etmemekle birlikte İslâm bu niteliklerden hiçbirini temel karakter olarak kabul etmez.”
802 At least in the works covered here.
803 DBT, 51.
804 DBT, 75.
fundamentally matter in the human struggle to live up to the responsibility of divine successorship.

Düzgün views true religion as a perennial and indispensable resource in rising to the challenges of the modern world. For Düzgün, Ancient Greece, humanism, and existentialism all claim that religion alienates humans from themselves. With some irony, he implies at many turns that true religion (din) is in this sense more human than humanism. While this opposition may oversimplify the issue, it reflects a sense of failure of Western culture and of Western manifestations of religion to offer meaning and value for the individual’s role in the modern world. Yet, he does not simply stop with a critique. Instead, he offers a solution grounded in the Islamic idea of human nature and the divine purpose for humanity. His solution proposes a self that is not alienated, disjointed, or driven by market value. For him, true religion (din) manifests the very opposite of alienation from an individual’s true self.

In sum, when Düzgün speaks of an individual (birey) he means an individual both in touch with her true religious nature and responsible for the facing the world in her own place and time—this is an individual in touch with her true identity and purpose. Yet, what does this individual do in the world? What does a truly free and pious individual look like in action? Certainly, it is possible for an individual to fail to achieve true freedom and authentic piety. He admits to the dangers of how an individual can be made into a passive object of social forces—often with negative effect. These negative effects express themselves in spiritual poverty such as blind following and materialism but also in outright violence, strife, and war. By contrast,

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805 DBT, 76.
806 DBT, 77.
807 CDDD, 48.
God’s gift of *khalīfa*, or divine trust of responsibility to humanity, is not a license for human beings to kill each other but a call to human beings write their own history.\(^{808}\) God’s gift of responsibility to humanity is also a sign that change is part of God’s plan for humanity. The possibility of change secures the basic freedom of movement for humans to grow, develop, and have real responsibility. In this way, religion has always been “modernizing.”

Theology, Düzgün admits, is necessarily tied up with society, culture, and history. He remarks, “Theological development’s particularity, that is its being tied to a particular social and cultural framework, is an inescapable fact of history.”\(^{809}\) This does not mean he cedes all theological value to historicism or a material view of history. He simply acknowledges that theology is a living and developing human process, which necessarily unfolds within particular historical and social contexts. As we saw with Alpyağıl in the previous chapter, Düzgün does not think theology, insofar as it represents a human endeavor, can ever be neutral or claim an objectivity that is not also inflected by its historical and socio-political context. Yet, in order to foster dimensions which transcend material context, more is needed. An individual must employ a “critical consciousness” (*eleştirel bilinçlilik*) and “dialectical thinking” (*diyalektik düşünme*). These tools help the individual connect to both her place in society and history as well as to her divine purpose, expressed in the transcendent recognition of God’s unity and purpose for humanity. The infinite is always in the finite, or the universal is manifest in the local, the particular.\(^{810}\) And since religion is always localized, a counter force is needed to push it always

\(^{808}\) ATT, 233.

\(^{809}\) ATT, 216. Original Turkish: “Teolojinin bağlamsal olması yani belli bir sosyal ve kültürel yapıyla bağlantılı gelişmesi, tarih içinde yer tutmanın getirdiği kaçırmaz bir durumdur.”

\(^{810}\) CDDD, 110.
in the direction of the universal.\textsuperscript{811} It is the critical and dialectical process internal to each individual that provides the locus for this counter force.

Accordingly, a religious individual mediates her relation to their society and zeitgeist with a faith that transcends her era. The religious individual must have recourse to a “higher doctrine” (\textit{üst doktrin}) in order transcend the currents of societal thought that shape her.\textsuperscript{812} This is how she realizes herself as more than a mere object of societal and material forces and, moreover, how she expresses her God-given freedom. Düzgün grounds this critical and mediating process through several epistemological assumptions, proposing a general method for vetting theological knowledge. His proposed method is that believers start from a foundation of 1) \textit{a priori} knowledge, 2) experience, and 3) trustworthy reports.\textsuperscript{813} While still highly general, the criteria mix Islamic and Western epistemological terms, where the term \textit{a priori} lends connotations of Enlightenment discussions of reason and where the idea of trustworthy reports harkens back to Islamic prophetic reports. Though the category of \textit{a priori} connotes Western philosophical discussions, Düzgün does not differ greatly from common Islamic (or even Aristotelian) views of what constitutes the basis of sound knowledge.\textsuperscript{814} Still, within the category of experience he also leaves some room for intuition and direct religious insight (\textit{kashf}), without

\textsuperscript{811} CDDD, 113.
\textsuperscript{812} ATT, 217.
\textsuperscript{813} ATT, 126.
\textsuperscript{814} Aristotle names “credible opinions,” or \textit{endoxa}, as a valid source of knowledge. Aristotelian credible opinions and Islamic trustworthy reports, though not precisely the same concept have much in common: both acknowledge the social aspect of knowing and both recognize the validity, even necessity, of second-hand knowledge. In the \textit{Organon}, a collection of works devoted to logic, Aristotle writes, “[\textit{Endoxa}] are those opinions accepted by everyone, or by the majority, or by the philosophers—i.e. by all, by all or the majority, or by those who are the most notable and illustrious of them” (\textit{Top.} i 1, 100b21–23). The Basic Works of Aristotle, trans. McKeon (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 2001), 188. On the translation of \textit{endoxa} as “credible opinions,” see Christopher Shields, “Aristotle,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2016 Edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/aristotle/>.
overly detailing this process.\textsuperscript{815} Since God is both Creator and sender of revelation, this means humans can have knowledge of God by logic and inference.\textsuperscript{816} At the heart of this process stands the \textit{fitra}, which allows humans to accurately seek God-knowledge.

In sum, true religion (\textit{din}) positively affects society through the individual person.\textsuperscript{817} Although many thinkers and individuals in the West have thought negatively of Islam,\textsuperscript{818} Düzgün’s understanding of Islam is one that actively contributes to the health of any society through the conscientious and free contributions of Muslims. This vision of individual contribution is paired with a view of religion that refuses to idolize any one human particularity over another and refuses to falsely proclaim one religious status quo as a universal category free from change. He exclaims, “Humanity is the source of change.”\textsuperscript{819} For this reason, it is wrong to see religion as a source of the status quo.\textsuperscript{820} Rather, tradition should be seen as a positive instrument for change and agency. At the same time, it is not helpful to overgeneralize tradition and then force this oversimplified and overgeneralized ideal onto religion. In short, God positively transforms humanity insofar as a society humans change themselves.

\textbf{Tawhidic Framework of Plurality}

Düzgün stresses the value of divinely willed plurality as essential to humanity and creation’s flourishing. In this section, I will show how \textit{tawḥīd}, or the affirmation of divine unity, provides the foundation for this divinely willed plurality. Not only is \textit{tawḥīd} foundational for the

\begin{flushright}
\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{815} Though, as discussed above, Düzgün does critique “modern” theology for not recognizing the legitimate contribution \textit{kashf} and intuition make in the individual’s efforts to orient themselves to reality and truth.
\textsuperscript{816} ATT, 129.
\textsuperscript{817} CDDD, 180.
\textsuperscript{818} CDDD, 180.
\textsuperscript{819} CDDD, 55. Original Turkish: “değişimin kaynağı ınsandır.”
\textsuperscript{820} CDDD, 55.
\end{footnotesize}
\end{flushright}
flourishing of pluralism, this “tawhidic” framework also provides the grounds for the affirmation of individual agency. Düzgün’s understanding of the role of tawḥīd in questions of pluralism and individual agency is yet another theological instance of how his thought integrates long standing Islamic concerns with humanistic values and contemporary issues.

*Tawḥīd* is an Arabic term indicating the affirmation of God’s oneness. The term has a long history, and can indicate anything from simply affirming verbally that “God is one” to a metaphysical or mystical view on reality’s most fundamental fabric. In Düzgün’s case, *tawḥīd* means affirming God’s power and goodness are one. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, many of whose works have been translated into Turkish and are cited by Turkish theologians, offers an explanation of *tawḥīd* closely in line with Düzgün’s understanding:

In an ordinary sense [the recognition of *tawḥīd*] means the surrender of ourselves to God, and in the highest sense it means the awareness of our nothingness before Him, for, as the Quran says, “All that dwells in the heavens and earth perishes, yet there abideth the Face of thy Lord, Majestic, Splendid” (55:26-27). The very name of the religion, Islam, comes from this reality, for the Arabic word *al-islām* means “surrender” as well as the peace that issues from our surrender to God.

For Nasr and for Düzgün *tawḥīd* lies at the heart of a believer’s orientation to truth. And although Islam affirms God’s oneness, this does not mean it rejects the plurality of creation or the plurality of human existence. For Düzgün, Islam does not reject human difference, but neither does it take our differences as fundamental to our human character. *Tawḥīd* is a central concept in making unified sense of human difference. Affirming God’s unity goes hand in hand

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821 ATT, 141.
822 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2004), 7-8. Nasr goes on to explain that “Islam considers all authentic religions to be based on this surrender, so that *al-islām* means not only the religion revealed through the Quran to the prophet Muḥammad, but all authentic religions as such” (8). While Düzgün’s focus is less the authenticity of other religions, he does espouse the idea of “islam” with a lower case “i” in a similar sense.
823 DBT, 38.
with affirming human plurality. As mentioned above, Düzgün refers to Q49:13 to stress God’s plan for human plurality.\textsuperscript{824} Once again, this verse reads:

\begin{quote}
People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should come to know one another. In God’s eyes, the most honored of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware.\textsuperscript{825}
\end{quote}

This verse indicates that behind the obvious fact of human plurality lies a unified divine purpose. As such, \textit{tawḥīd} is not just about unity, it is also about the plurality of finite reality. And as a guarantor of human freedom, \textit{tawḥīd} is also the guarantor of human morality—affirming God’s oneness and affirming God as the sole true source of one’s being frees the individual from the claims of the world upon her person. By recognizing God as the ultimate authority, the pious individual at the same time refuses to recognize the unquestioned authority of any being other than God.\textsuperscript{826} In affirming \textit{tawḥīd}, all earthly sources of authority are recognized as finite and relative.\textsuperscript{827} God alone is the ultimate source of authority. As Düzgün reminds his reader, the first Muslims distinguished themselves by acting with a God-centered sense of authority.\textsuperscript{828} Even the ‘\textit{ulemā}’ of later ages would end statements with the recognition that “God knows best.”\textsuperscript{829}

For Düzgün, Islam’s most pointed universality lies in its dual affirmations of \textit{tawḥīd} and human morality—after all, morality is recognized even by secular thinkers as something common to humanity. On this, he refers to Rawls’ \textit{Theory of Justice} and points out rather bluntly that even liberals still believe in morality.\textsuperscript{830} The universal Islam is “islam” with a lower-case

\textsuperscript{824} DBT, 117. CDDD, 207-208.
\textsuperscript{825} English translation is a modification of the M.A.S. Abdel Haleem translation.
\textsuperscript{826} DBT, 123.
\textsuperscript{827} While I here use the word “relative,” Düzgün does not espouse relativism (Turkish: görecilik). He is a universalist who also recognizes the social embeddedness of human knowledge. On the social character of knowledge, see for instance ATT, 99.
\textsuperscript{828} DBT, 123.
\textsuperscript{829} DBT, 123. The quranic verse he uses to support this is (Yusuf) Q12:76.
\textsuperscript{830} DBT, 121. 269
He is quite direct on this point and explains that “[i]slam means voluntary submission [to God]. This submission is valid for all things whether living or inanimate.”\(^{832}\) In this sense, all of creation is Muslim. Even natural laws, which are divinely ordained, constitute a form of submission.\(^{833}\)

Düzgün offers another reason for pairing *tawḥīd* and morality together as central to Islam’s universality. *Tawḥīd* is not only the affirmation of God’s oneness, it is also the affirmation of God as wholly other. Theologically speaking, when God is wholly other, the believer’s connection to God is moral, not ontological or anthropological, or so goes his argument.\(^{834}\) Another way of speaking about God’s otherness is through the finite/infinite relation, where humans are relatively finite beings and God is absolutely infinite. As Düzgün explains, this finite/infinite relation is both symmetrical and asymmetrical, and the subtle implications of this are not lost on Düzgün.\(^{835}\) As he puts it, theological language reflects this complex finite/infinite relation. Accordingly, revelation should not be reduced to a subject-object relation. The subject-object relation is too reductive to express the intricate dialectic of the finite/infinite relation. Moreover, the finite/infinite relation actively resists this reductive use of language. Theological language is in fact deeply indebted to this order of affairs:

Our basic connection with God is moral rather than ontological or anthropological. [...]

The relationship between God and humans, infinite and finite beings, is both symmetrical


\(^{832}\) DBT, 105. Original Turkish: “İslâm, gönüllü teslimiyeti ifade eder. Bu teslimiyet, canlı cansız herkes ve her şey için geçerlidir.”

\(^{833}\) DBT, 106.

\(^{834}\) ATT, 63.

\(^{835}\) ATT, 63.
and asymmetrical. Theological language owes its existence to this distinction. [...] It is necessary not to reduce revelation to a subject-object relation. For, the quality of the finite/infinite relation prevents ‘language,’ which is used to bridge these two spheres, from being reduced to a subject-object relation.\footnote{ATT, 63. Original Turkish: “Tanrı ile iletişimimizin temel zemini ontolojik ve antropolojik olmanın ötesinde ahlakıdır. [...] Tanrı ile insanlar, sonsuz ile sonlular arasındaki ilişki hem simetrik hem de asimetriktir. Teolojik dil varlığını, bu farklılığa borçlandır. [...] vaḥyi bir özne-nesne ilişkisine indirgememek gerekir. Zira sonlu ve sonsuz arasındaki ilişkinin niteliği, bu iki alan arasındaki ilişkide kullanılan ‘dil’i özne-nesne ilişkisine indirgemeyi engellemektedir.”}

More concretely, tawḥīd is a way of putting the pieces back together after recovering from modernity’s unhealthy need for a false unity of human experience.\footnote{CDDD, 188.} Yet, how should individuals resist the human tendencies towards monopoly and homogenization? His answer is to reject a single history, a single type of human being, and a single type of modernity. Q5:48, a verse that both affirms the finality of Islam but also reminds believers that God willed human heterogeneity even in matters of faith, Düzgün holds as a divine command to honor heterogeneity.\footnote{CDDD, 189.} Q5:48 reads:

\begin{quote}
We sent to you the Scripture with the truth, confirming the Scriptures that came before it, and with final authority over them: so judge between them according to what God has sent down. Do not follow their whims, which deviate from the truth that has come to you. We have assigned a law and a path to each of you. If God had so willed, He would have made you one community, but He wanted to test you through that which He has given you, so race to do good: you will all return to God and He will make clear to you the matters you differed about.\footnote{M.A.S. Abdel Haleem translation.}
\end{quote}

Düzgün reads this verse as a divine injunction to foster tolerance and honor plurality. When Düzgün speaks of plurality in this manner, he is not speaking of a do-whatever pluralism that admits of no shared human values but rather he means a concrete ethnic and religious plurality that expresses core human values in infinite variation.\footnote{CDDD, 197.} Plurality does not mean a plurality of
goods and commodities for purchase and sale; he does not advocate a market pluralism but instead a real plurality for human ways of life.\textsuperscript{841} Even in the sphere of sacred text and textual commentary—plurality of opinion and a healthy diversity in readings keep believers open to the transcendent speaking through the text. What brings all of this plurality together is divine unity. Humans require a healthy tawḥīd for a real plurality.\textsuperscript{842}

In light of this, various civilizations need to develop an ethic not just of recognizing the other but also of seeing the other as a living source of value and human civilization.\textsuperscript{843} Further, he calls specifically on European culture to rediscover its own heterogeny. He advocates for a “dialogue of life” (hayat diyaloğu).\textsuperscript{844} Such a dialogue is not abstract, nor does it pretend to mete out universal standards. What Düzgün envisions is more particular and local, advocating for the development of discourses in various local cultural codes, especially among non-Western cultures; he writes, “…it is necessary to accept the possibility for Non-Western societies, whatever their cultural context, to develop a modernity with their own cultural codes.”\textsuperscript{845}

Finally, Düzgün stresses that Muslims in particular have the potential to create new forms of religious expression, and this process means they develop their own forms of civilization.\textsuperscript{846} For a Muslim individual who takes on this responsibility, religion becomes something truly living and not merely a status quo to maintain, a lost ideal to be retrieved, or a fossilized tradition to be handed over. Further, Muslims and non-Muslims alike need to let go of the temptation to

\textsuperscript{841} CDDD, 197. Düzgün’s critique of the marketization of an otherwise divinely willed blessing is a similar motion to that of Barbarosoğlu and her critique of Islamic “fashion” as a contradiction in terms.
\textsuperscript{842} CDDD, 198. He writes here that where the concept of tawḥīd is compromised, pluralism cannot be fruitful.
\textsuperscript{843} CDDD, 201.
\textsuperscript{844} CDDD, 289.
\textsuperscript{845} CDDD, 289. Original Turkish: “…hangi kültür ortamında olurlarsa olsunlar Batı dışı toplumların kendi kültür kodlarıyla bir çağdaşlık geliştirmelerinin imkânını kabul etmek gerekecektir.”
\textsuperscript{846} CDDD, 289.
see all Muslims as a homogenous group. This message is accompanied by calls for Muslims in the West to recognize the polar dangers of radicalization and assimilation. Instead of allowing themselves to be homogenized by reductive discourses, he urges Muslims to engage in intellectual or social activity.

**Conclusion**

To summarize, the following elements are fundamental to Düzgün’s understanding of individual authority: 1) He holds a universalist position on human morality. 2) He argues for an Islamic affirmation of the plurality of human life. 3) Religion is constructive and deconstructive. 4) True religion is fundamentally modernizing—and there is not merely one modernity but a plurality of modernities. As such, Muslims must take their own agency seriously and take charge of their civilization in such a way that is no longer a reaction to Western modernity. 5) Human agency is not in competition with divine agency (for this he draws on al-Māturīdī). Further, change is an inescapable part of God’s plan. In a changing world, as humans we have responsibility, *khalīfa*, from God, which allows our agency and authority, when true to true religion and our commonly shared *fitra*, to share in God’s agency. 6) The individual *fitra* is equipped with the authority of *ʿaql* (the combination of heart and various aspects of cognition), common sense, human intuition, and conscience. With the aid of these faculties, the individual

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847 CDDD, 295.
848 CDDD, 295.
849 These are in Turkish: *akıl, sağduyu, sezgi, vicedan.*
can know right and wrong intuitively, in a way consistent with Ḥanafī views on human knowledge of good and evil.

The individual plays a central role in Düzcün’s theological project, which integrates discussions from Muslim and Christian, religious and non-religious sources. In order to argue for the theological value of taking responsibility as individual believer, Düzcün champions individual authority. Again, this authority is not absolute. It is in constant dialectical interaction and dialogue with tradition, society at large, and even non-believers. Most importantly, Düzcün’s case for individual authority is also a case of individual responsibility.

Moreover, it is not merely reason which carries weight but a broader understanding of human cognition that has room both for the heart and for the conscience. Düzcün’s idea of conscience, notably, is not a radically individualized conscience. Instead, human conscience stems from a shared human community and is developed in specific social contexts, whose variation and change is a divinely willed aspect of human destiny. Düzcün’s understanding of conscience may well converge with the following description: “Conscience is not a principle or authority on its own but is assumed to act in a dynamic relation with the moral standards of society even when one is in good conscience dissenting from them.” Moreover, conscience stands out as an internal authority for Düzcün—an internal authority paramount for exercising moral responsibility in society. In this sense, to stress individual authority does not mean the

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851 Heck, “Conscience across Cultures: The Case of Islam,” 295. Incidentally, scholar of Islam Paul Heck’s characterization of an idea of conscience potentially held in common between Christianity and Islam may easily apply to Düzcün’s understanding of conscience. Heck writes, “…conscience serves as a necessary foregrounding for
individual possesses authority in an unqualified sense. For Düzgün, it is the divinely planned human constitution and the divinely willed social and historical varieties of universal human nature which vest the individual with authority to discern. Individual authority does not come by coercion but from conviction in true religion.

As with Alpyağıl, Düzgün uses sources from various traditions and discourses to present the case to the reader that it is ultimately the believer who must stand up, engage and negotiate her place and role in the modern world. The case for mediated individual authority, for Alpyağıl as well as Düzgün, is equally a case for individual responsibility.

Finally, Düzgün’s case for mediated individual authority involves an integration of modern and traditional values as well as an integration of (non-Muslim) Western and Islamic sources. One way to frame this integration is to view his theological efforts as successful integration of a real binary that remains, like that of tradition and modernity. Another way to frame this integration is to view it as evidence that binaries, such as tradition and modernity, are not absolute and, accordingly, that Düzgün’s reference to values defined in both modern and traditional terms indicates that these values should not be expressed or understood in terms of binaries. In other words, rather than remain in dichotomies like Islam vs. West or religion vs. tradition, Düzgün’s case for the centrality of individual authority points beyond these dichotomies, legitimately drawing from Arabic, Turkish and Western intellectual resources.

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engaging in the moral good in society by conviction rather than by coercion.” With Heck and with Düzgün, a sense of internal authority is placed above external authority.
Questions of skepticism, atheism and the value of competing religious claims to truth are an unavoidable hallmark of the present global age. While these topics are often treated alongside one another in other contexts, when it comes to Turkish theology, these subjects are especially interconnected. This is because Christianity is viewed by many Turkish theologians as the standard bearer for all three categories. Skepticism and atheism are viewed primarily as products of Christianity. The same holds for religious pluralism. The contemporary trend towards religious pluralism, far from being viewed as a neutral term connoting the truth claims of various religions, signifies for many Turkish theologians an especially Christian theological venture. Given the strong association between Christianity and these three challenges, this chapter looks at what might be Turkish theology’s most obvious instance of its characteristic threefold engagement. Yet, while there is both reference to Western/Christian and Arabic intellectual traditions, many instances of these references fail to exhibit real dynamism, with some noteworthy exceptions.

This chapter will move between closer case examples and more broad-brush surveys of relatively recent publications. The aim is to give the reader both concrete examples and a rich context in which to process these examples. My claim throughout is that skepticism, atheism,

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and pluralism are related topics in Turkish theology in large part due to the common association of Christianity with all three terms. As the chapter unfolds, I will move back and forth from majority opinions to significant exceptions, covering wider assumptions in Turkish theology along with counterexamples to said assumptions.

After a short introduction of some the seminal Turkish texts on atheism and skepticism within and outside Turkish theology,853 this chapter will divide into three sections: the first on atheism and related concepts, the second on skepticism in dialogue with Christian sources, and the third on religious pluralism. Each section will provide a broader picture contrasted with important minority positions. While both majority and minority opinions equally associate Christianity with all three topics, I contend that it is the minority positions which best exemplify the dialectical complexity and creative potential at work in Turkish theology.

While Turkish theologians refer to terms such as atheism, positivism, skepticism, and materialism with marked frequency, it may help to look first at a few general resources on atheism, materialism, and even heresy in Turkish. Below I will give a brief overview of work by Murtaza Korlaelçi, Mehmet Akgün, and Ahmet Y. Ocak.

Still significant is a work written over three decades ago: Murtaza Korlaelçi’s The Arrival of Positivism in Turkey.854 This book, written by intellectual historian Korlaelçi, offers its reader a walk-through of positivism in the thought of many Enlightenment and nineteenth-century European figures before turning to positivism’s effects on Ottoman institutions and its reception

853 To my knowledge, there are no earlier works dedicated exclusively to religious pluralism which serve as foundational texts for contemporary Turkish theological approaches to pluralism.
854 Murtaza Korlaelçi, Pozitivizmin Türkiye’ye Giriş (Ankara, 2000) and (Ankara: Kadim Yayınları, 2014). This work came out earlier than 2000—the original Preface is dated to 1980. However, I was unable to find the original publishing information.
at the hands of various late Ottoman intellectuals: Beşir Fuad, Ahmet Rıza, Salih Zeki, Rıza Tevfik, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, Ahmed Şuayb, and Ziya Gökalp.

Another work from the late 1980s still available in print is Mehmet Akgün’s *The Arrival of Materialism in Turkey.* While not the product of a theologian, this work was nevertheless available for sale in the Marmara University Theology Faculty book store. Akgün looks at the entry of materialism in the late Ottoman world through accounts of various Ottoman intellectuals—those that embraced materialism and, more importantly for Akgün, those who criticized materialism. Here, as in many other passing references to materialism by other Turkish authors, the underlying assumption at play is that materialism is negative, philosophically bankrupt, and threatening as well as a product of Western modernity.

Ahmet Yaşar Ocak’s *Atheists and Heretics in Ottoman Society of the 15th to 17th Centuries* (1998) is markedly different in scope and method from the two works above. I am uncertain how often this book is referenced by Turkish theologians, but, as a scholar and historian, Ahmet Yaşar Ocak is a monumental name in and outside of Turkey. Notably, upon first printing in 1998, this title apparently received far more attention outside of Turkey than from Turkish academics. In any case, the work in question addresses an earlier period than

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856 I visited the Marmara Theology Faculty bookstore November 2015 and purchased a copy of this work there.
857 Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve Mülhidler 15-17. Yüzyıllar* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998). The word “zındık” means atheist in modern Turkish, even though Turkish speakers also use the word “ateist.” The word “mülhid” comes across as more archaic in modern Turkish and signifies someone who is faithless or who does not believe correctly. On these definitions in modern Turkish see, for instance, *Türkçe Sözlük* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2011). Both terms come from Arabic. Yet they connote slightly different things in modern Turkish than those who primarily work with Arabic texts of Classical Islam may initially suppose, where the Arabic term *zindiq* (Turkish: *zındık*) has even been translated as “freethinker.” See for instance Sarah Stroumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam: Ibn al-Rawandi, Abu Bakr al-Rażī, and their Impact on Islamic Thought* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 1999).
Akgün’s study of materialism. Ocak’s rich volume covers an impressive range of fringe and unorthodox religious groups, practices, and beliefs in the Ottoman world during the empire’s heyday. Importantly, unlike other works on established religious and ideological deviations such as skepticism, deism, atheism, this formidable oeuvre looks at the question of deviance with little reference to categories like “modernity” or the “West,” portraying different sects and groups as integral parts of Ottoman society.859

Materialism and positivism are heavily associated with the theological questions of skepticism and atheism. Thus, the subject is also tackled within the purview of academic theology. Discussions of materialism and positivism tend to come up in treatments of Western Christianity and its related forms of modernity, along with the questions of skepticism and atheism. The reverse is also true: in treatments of skepticism and atheism, Christianity often features in the discussion, with negative connotations.

A highly influential work among theologians is Mehmet S. Aydyn’s Philosophy of Religion.860 While this work does not treat skepticism or atheism specifically, it nevertheless remains a staple in Turkish theological scholarship on the subject, still cited frequently in the more recent generations of scholars. Aydyn offers a broad range of solid explanations of both Muslim and Christian theological trends (in addition to remarks on other religions) throughout

859 Scholar of Sufism Ahmet T. Karamustafa has also published in the Anglophone scholarly world in this vein. Karamustafa has stressed, contra M. F. Köprüülü, the Islamic nature of Turkish sects, personality, and groups. This includes groups otherwise seen as deviants from orthodox Islamic practice. See for instance, Ahmet T. Karamustafa, “Kaygusuz Abdal: A Medieval Turkish Saint and the Formation of Vernacular Islam in Anatolia” in Unity in diversity: mysticism, messianism and the construction of religious authority in Islam, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014).

860 Mehmet S. Aydn, Din Felsefesi (İzmir: İzmir İlâhiyat Vakfı Yayınları, 2014), 14th printing. The original Preface dates to 1987. Two indications of the influence of a Turkish work is the number of reprintings as well as the length of time over which the reprintings occur. Successive reprintings over time point to a sustained interest and demand for a work. This work, cited extensively in most of the theologians’ works discussed here, enjoys a remarkable number of reprintings.
history. He devotes a section to integrated treatments of deism,\(^{861}\) pantheism,\(^{862}\) panentheism,\(^{863}\) and atheism\(^{864}\)—where sources cited hail primarily from European and North American authorship (not all sections are so weighted). At other times, he draws his sources from Islamic intellectual tradition, often citing both Christian and Muslim sources in one discussion.

Another theologian who writes on skepticism and atheism worth mentioning is Mustafa Açıköz.\(^{865}\) His three volumes on skepticism give a broad overview of skepticism in various religions, times, and places.\(^{866}\) While extensive in breadth, Açıköz’s treatment expresses little interest in the intellectual value of skepticism, affirming its value only insofar as it unwittingly affirms \textit{tawḥīd}, i.e. God’s unity.

\textbf{Atheism, Deism, and Unbelief}

This section looks at some of the widely-held assumptions among Turkish theologians concerning atheism, skepticism, and deism. As noted above, skepticism and deism are heavily associated with Western trends in philosophy and religion. Turkish theologians tend to view many of the theological crises in the West as primarily Christian problems—in particular, the

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\item \(^{861}\) Aydın, \textit{Din Felsefesi}, 178-183
\item \(^{862}\) Aydın, \textit{Din Felsefesi}, 183-195. This section brings in al-Ghazālī, Spinoza, Hegel, Muhammad Iqbal—among others.
\item \(^{863}\) Aydın, \textit{Din Felsefesi}, 195-204. Here he continues to cite al-Ghazālī and brings in Whitehead along with Christian process theology.
\item \(^{864}\) Aydın, \textit{Din Felsefesi}, 205-233. This draws on the work of Antony Flew (1976), Paul Riceour and MacIntyre’s \textit{The Religious Significance of Atheism} (1969). In his discussion, he includes Hume, Feuerbach, Nietzsche, Freud, Durkheim, Sartre, Camus, John Hick, and others.
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Western rejection of the God of ontotheology as indefensible and the ensuing drive to devise other theological approaches. Since, in the eyes of many Turkish theologians, ontotheology is generally seen as indefensible on Christian rather than Muslim terms, it is common for scholars in Turkey to devote works to subjects of being, necessary being, and knowledge—insofar as all acts of knowing are dependent on God’s necessary being—through the lens of Classical and some Ottoman Islamic scholars. The following discussion will detail some Turkish trends vis-à-vis the viability of ontotheology.

**Tawhid and the God of Ontotheology**

*Which god is dead? We may answer: the God of metaphysics—and also of theology, inasmuch as theology relies on the metaphysics of a first cause, of a necessary being, of a prime mover which is absolute goodness and the origin of values. Let us say that it is the God of ontotheology, to use the word coined by Heidegger.*

—Paul Ricoeur

For Turkish theologians, many of whom cite Paul Ricoeur, Sigmund Freud, and Friedrich Nietzsche, the statement above simply does not hold. The God of theology—one described in the metaphysics of first cause, of necessary being, and of the originator of values—is very much alive in Turkish theology faculties. In Turkish theology, the God of ontotheology lives and thrives (yet this does not mean everyone takes this route). When it comes to the question of skepticism, it is still not uncommon to view unbelief in terms of an improper ontological grounding. That is, Turkish theologians are more likely to attribute the death of ontotheology in the West to the corrupting influence of Christian doctrine on said ontotheology rather than to the project of ontotheology itself.

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In fact, much of the wider theological output is arguably a retrieval of the “ontotheology” of prior Muslim scholars. Interest in classical Islamic philosophy is not limited to the scope of Anglophone Islamic Studies and it carries very pressing theological implications for Turkish theologians as well. A cursory glance at recent publication titles suggests the widespread role of ontotheology in Turkish theology. Düzgün, whose work we have already encountered, earlier in his career wrote *The God-World Relation According to Nasafi* [d. 1142] and *Islamic Philosophers* (1998). Yaşar Türkmen has recently edited a volume on al-Ghazālī and causality, making leading Anglophone Islamic Studies scholarship available to Turkish theologians. Sema Özdemir has written a work on an Anatolian figure of particular significance to Turkish scholars: *Being, Knowledge and Humanity in Davûd al-Qayṣarî* [d. c. 1350] (2014). The Avicennist İlhan Kutluer has authored *Necessary Being in the Ontology of Ibn Sīnā* (2013). Fatma Zehra Pattabanoğlu has written *Ibn Kammûna* [d. 1284] and *His Philosophy* (2014). İsmail Hanoğlu has penned *Theological Anthropology in the Philosophy of Fakhr al-dîn al-Rāzî* (2014). Ömer Türker, another Avicenna scholar, has written *The Problem of Possibility in Metaphysical Knowledge in the Philosophy of Ibn Sînā* (2010). Fehrullah Terkan, who completed his PhD at Chicago University on the subject of al-Ghazâlî and Ibn Rushd, has written extensively on Muslim philosophy, including treatments of Ibn Țufayl and al-

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Finally, fellow Avicennist Ömer Mahir Alper, active in the Philosophy Department at 29 Mayıs University in Istanbul, has authored *Being and Humanity: The Recreation of an Idea in the Context of Kemalpaşazade* (2010). While a thorough evaluation of these works lies beyond the scope of this project, suffice it to say that a significant portion of Turkish theological scholarship is working to retrieve and apply ontological insights from past Islamic scholars—particularly philosophers. The ultimate significance of these efforts remains to be seen.

*Atheism as a Product of Christianity*

I have suggested that Turkish theologians do not recognize the theological death of God in terms of viewing ontotheology as defunct, nor do they consider problematic philosophical attempts to articulate God’s relationship to the world. Generous scholarly output continues to tackle such ontological themes in Turkey. However, Turkish theologians are aware of the crisis of ontotheology in Christian theology. Instead of attributing the crisis to the nature of ontotheology, Turkish theologians are more likely to attribute this crisis to contradictory and flawed Christian beliefs, which cannot successfully be formulated in acceptable philosophical terms. The work of İbrahim Coşkun and Şaban Ali Düzgün offers two examples of how this attitude plays out.

Turkish theologian İbrahim Coşkun argues in *Atheism and Islam: A Kalām Critique of Atheism in the Modern Era* that atheism’s primary cause is Western Christianity. This is a

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875 See bibliography for details. Fehrullah Terkan is also an instrumental figure in the Ankara Theology Faculty’s English theology program, which offers courses in English in addition to Turkish instruction. He kindly let me speak with one of his undergraduate classes on the subject of Western modernity when I visited in Ankara, fall 2015.


relatively standard Muslim attitude towards atheism and its allegedly primary cause, i.e. Western Christianity. While this work treats a number of topics; when it comes to the causes and trends in atheism, focus lies squarely on Western intellectual history and corrupted Christianity.\textsuperscript{878} His treatment of atheism strongly confirms the hypothesis that Turkish theologians treat atheism as a Christian problem. In sections devoted to the causes of atheism, he delves straight into Christian beliefs and history of the Western church.\textsuperscript{879}

Not all of Coşkun’s work reduces the topic of atheism to Muslim-Christian polemics, though his work often leans in that direction. Coşkun cautions his reader to distinguish between various types of atheism—theoretical and practical. He points out many people are falsely labelled atheists for criticizing the religious belief of their community. And like Açıkoz, Coşkun denies the possibility of “absolute” atheism—arguing it is impossible to be an atheist without in some way affirming God’s existence. Yet, under atheism’s primary causes, his discussion turns nearly exclusively to the topic of Christianity.\textsuperscript{880} By contrast, Coşkun does not fault any mainstream trends in Islam for directly causing or encouraging atheism. In his estimation, Islam is, more or less, naturally invulnerable to atheism.

For Coşkun, several things went wrong in Western Christian history that sowed the seeds for widespread atheism.\textsuperscript{881} First, he holds that Christianity was corrupted from the outset—

\textsuperscript{878} Unlike Düzgün’s work as discussed in the previous chapter, Coşkun does not tend to offer at least a few positive evaluations of Christianity alongside his criticisms. Recall that Düzgün positively evaluated Protestantism’s focus on the individual but chided it for taking individualism too far and that he also saw in postmodernity resources for Western epistemological humility.

\textsuperscript{879} Coşkun, \textit{Ateizm ve İslam}, 113-170.

\textsuperscript{880} Coşkun, \textit{Ateizm ve İslam}, 113-170. This section entitled “Causes of Atheism in the Modern Age” is more or less a doctrinal and philosophical critique of Christianity.

\textsuperscript{881} While Christian theologians may first wish to object to broad-brush characterizations of Church history and doctrine; rather than trying to ‘correct’ the academic myths about Christianity, I find it more useful to give voice to them. It seems to be an inevitable reality that, in any academic circle, some assumptions will accrue enough authority by common consensus as to become monolithic myths, slow to change and resistant to data that does not
especially with the preaching of St. Paul. This is a standard position in Muslim-Christian polemics that traces back as far as the Middle Ages. Second, he offers the more contemporary thesis that Europe does not represent authentic Christianity. These claims are not novel and reside well within the scope of traditional Muslim polemics against Christian doctrine. For Coşkun, Christianity in its corrupted form requires human beings to believe irrational things without any certainty; this lies in stark contradiction with the quranic understanding of the respective roles of faith and the human mind. For him, rationally indefensible doctrines like original sin, the trinity, the Eucharist, and baptism are the reason faith and reason clashed in the West. Further errors include the restriction of religion to the fortress of the human conscience, Western Christianity’s history of oppression, and the failure of pious Christians to live up to their own standards. Coşkun also assures his reader that monotheistic religions, while necessarily containing some supra-rational elements, will never ask a believer to accept

fit into the reigning schema. While arguably applicable to many Turkish views of the West and Christianity, this is also applicable to numerous Anglophone and European views of Turkey, the Muslim world, and Islam. As such, I will try, in my own analysis, to minimize instances of the pot calling the kettle black and direct critical efforts at engagement towards more constructive ends. Nevertheless, for a brief overview of the variety of European, Christian and Anglophone positions on Islam, see William Dalrymple, “The Truth about Muslims,” New York Review of Books 51.17 (1 November 2004). This is review and critical assessment of the positions on Islam of three authors who treat Islam’s relation to Christian and European culture: historians Bernard Lewis, Richard Fletcher, and Nabil Matar. In his review, Dalrymple also offers a selection of illustrative anecdotes throughout the history of Muslim-Christian cooperation and antagonism, including a mention of the Moroccan monarch Ahmad al-Mansur’s offer to Queen Elizabeth I to co-colonize the Americas.

882 Coşkun, Ateizm, 114.
884 Coşkun, Ateizm, 140.
885 Coşkun, Ateizm, 132.
886 Coşkun, Ateizm, 134.
something irrational—unless corruption has taken place.\footnote{Coşkun, \textit{Ateizm}, 117.} This entire discussion of Christianity occurs in the section of his work on atheism dedicated to explaining the causes of atheism today, while earlier in this book, he treats the history of Western philosophy, materialism and positivism. His main discussion of atheism’s cause centers around corrupted Christianity.

In addition to Christianity serving as the primary cause of atheism, there may also be a positive factor that legitimates an Islamic case for the continued validity of ontotheology. In Coşkun’s explanation of \textit{tawḥīd} (divine unity), he not only affirms that God is the greatest being to exist, he also affirms God is the only being to exist.\footnote{Coşkun, \textit{Ateizm}, 186.} In this way, Coşkun asserts Islam to be simultaneously monotheistic and monistic. This double affirmation inherent in many scholars’ understanding of \textit{tawḥīd} may contribute to the view that, from a Muslim perspective, ontotheology has not ceded to the winds of doubt and secular modernity. Coşkun’s reference to \textit{tawḥīd} in questions of unbelief is one shared with Açıköz above and will also come up in our discussion of Düzgün.

\textit{Düzgün: A Tawhidic Counter to Unbelief}

Düzgün, whose work features in the previous chapter, explicitly addresses the question of unbelief and skepticism as it has been tackled by contemporary Christian theologians. Although more sympathetic towards some aspects of Christian thought than Coşkun, Düzgün also builds his own narrative of what went wrong in the intellectual history of Western Christianity in order to account for a perceived explosion of atheism. Düzgün differs from Coşkun when he proposes that it is not Christianity itself but a particular Western appropriation of Christianity which has
proved toxic. In other words, Düzgün sees deformed/secularized Protestantism as a threat to all religions.

Düzgün, like Coşkun, claims that the opposition between revelation and reason was never as direct in Islamic societies as it was in Western Christianity. Nor does he think that science and religion should necessarily come into conflict. In his view, science does not fully answer humanity’s basic questions. Religion is not irrational but super-rational. As such, he views science and religion as complementary. There need not be an inevitable dichotomy of faith and reason. In the Christian West, however, Düzgün claims that because of Aquinas’ synthesis of Aristotelian thought with Christian doctrine, the philosophical criticisms applicable to Aristotle also became applicable to Christianity. On this point, he offers a relatively standard argument: The integration of Aristotle into Christianity caused undue polarization of religion and science, which came to a head in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Damage, he notes, was also done in Galileo’s Dialogues and Newton’s Principia. Düzgün goes on to characterize Aristotle as first a positive and then, by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a clearly negative influence on Western Christianity. It is at this turn in history that science acquired the authority to judge all other forms of knowledge with the prevailing attitude that “something is only

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888 Düzgün, CDDD, 156.
889 Düzgün, CDDD, 146. Even if his main criticism is of a certain form of Protestantism, he also entertains negative views of Catholic hierarchy and Catholic medieval history.
890 Düzgün, CDDD, 24.
891 Düzgün, DBT, 41.
892 Düzgün, DBT, 42.
893 Düzgün, ATT, 42.
894 Düzgün, ATT, 19. By contrast, Louis Dupré lays more blame on the nominalism that developed after Acquinas, viewing neither Neo-Platonic nor Aristotelian worldviews as insufficient forces in themselves to produce the rupture that led to the challenge of modernity (citing the alternate course of Eastern Christianity to support his thesis). Dupré does however cite the combination of Judeo-Christian theology with Greek cosmology as part of the story of the Western “double breakup” of God and Cosmos, Person and Cosmos. See Louis Dupré, Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture (New Haven; London: Yule University Press, 1993).
895 Düzgün, ATT, 27.
meaningful insofar as it can be proved."\textsuperscript{896} Yet, this is only one way of viewing the world; Düzgün reminds his reader that rationality is a question of method rather than of content.\textsuperscript{897} The problem, he claims, was when Newton’s method morphed into unquestioned metaphysic.\textsuperscript{898} He does not claim that the trajectory of science and religion in the West was necessarily doomed to fall out of balance, but he does claim that it eventually did fall out of balance.\textsuperscript{899} Some blame theology for the modern epistemological crisis.\textsuperscript{900} Düzgün, for his part, blames the specific trajectory of not just Christian theology but the wider culture that it helped create. Further, he does not think that the answers of contemporary Anglophone theology are adequate to address this crisis.

For instance, Düzgün does not view the linguistic turn in theology as a definitive one, though he nonetheless appreciates some of its insights. Düzgün accepts without objection that theology is grounded in a culturally specific grammar and language, and for this reason he accepts that theological language also differs from other discourses.\textsuperscript{901} Yet, he dismisses Wittgenstein and Lindbeck as insufficient theological answers to the epistemological crisis in theology.\textsuperscript{902} He also looks at the efforts of theologians David Tracy and Janet Soskice in addressing the challenge of positivism, yet is not entirely satisfied.\textsuperscript{903} He carries on to treat the subjective and experiential aspects of knowing, even if he is not always satisfied with Christian

\textsuperscript{896} Düzgün, ATT, 20. Original Turkish: “Bir şey ancak delillendirilebiliyor ise anlamlıdır.”
\textsuperscript{897} Düzgün, ATT, 46. On this point, he cites Karl Popper’s \textit{Objective Knowledge} and Ingolf Dalferth.
\textsuperscript{898} Düzgün, ATT, 34.
\textsuperscript{899} Düzgün, ATT, 35.
\textsuperscript{900} Düzgün, ATT, 53.
\textsuperscript{901} Düzgün, ATT, 62. For instance, he also brings in Ian Ramsey and the \textit{sui generis} logic of religious language, ATT, 80.
\textsuperscript{902} Düzgün, ATT, 58.
\textsuperscript{903} Düzgün, ATT, 66.
theological arguments from religious experience. His eventual formulation of the matter is as follows: Moral and religious claims have to do with the process of forming an individual and, as such, these claims have little to do with proving something about an object. He is thus not arguing for unrestrained subjectivity as an epistemological position; rather, he argues that religious and moral claims exist to form the subject.

While Düzgün does not build his argument on ontology but rather shared human morality, he still builds this argument on an understanding of tawḥīd. When God is wholly other, our connection to God is moral, not ontological or anthropological. So, there are indeed some ontological claims at work. For one, God as creator and sender of revelation entails human ability to have knowledge of God by logic and inference, and it is the fitra that allows individuals to seek God-knowledge with accuracy. In addition, seeking God beyond the causal chain of events is something done with the ‘aql, or mind, according to classical kalām and is something done through love (sevgi) for Sufis. Humanity’s ontological connection with God transcends physical and even metaphysical considerations and this connection locus is a point of existential meaning. In other words, the fundamental tie between a human being and God is a matter of the heart and not of the head. Using traditional Muslim understandings of the heart, he lists six

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904 He, for instance, accuses Schleiermacher of missing the moral piece of the religious puzzle. ATT, 91. Whether this is a valid criticism is another matter for a different discussion.
905 Düzgün, ATT, 106.
906 Düzgün, ATT, 63. This sort of position is critiqued by a theologian below, but the critique is directed at Christian religious pluralism. See the discussion below on Ruhattin Yazoğlu. In any case, this is an interesting answer, since someone like Dupré views the Western ontological crisis as a breakup between the Divine and the World, locating much of the issue in the way Western Christianity made the Divine something wholly other through trends like nominalism and the Reformation. The idea of God as wholly other does not seem to threaten the individual’s moral relation to God.
907 Düzgün, ATT, 131.
908 Düzgün, ATT, 134.
909 Düzgün, ATT, 152.
layers of the heart that go beyond the ‘aql: (in Turkish:) sadr, kalb, fuad, lübb, nühâ, and hicr.\(^{910}\) Only at the fourth level of the heart, the lübb, does one achieve full realization of tawḥīd or divine unity. This implies that monotheism is not simply a matter of logic and propositions but a much deeper journey of knowledge, self-knowledge, and self-actualization. It is the act of seeking and trying to understand God which sustains humans. Thus, God is not an object of thought but an essential part of our thought process.\(^{911}\) Düzgün’s overall evaluation of Christianity’s role in atheism does not significantly diverge from common polemical readings; however, it does distinguish itself by direct, if at times terse and dismissive, engagements with contemporary Christian theologians. Düzgün dialectically navigates his Turkish context, classical Islamic sources, and a range of Western sources. But this navigation risks remaining superficial.

_An Exception in Attitudes towards Deism: Öztürk_

In addition to terms such as materialism, positivism, skepticism, and atheism—a fifth term often gets thrown into the mix: deism. The general majority of Turkish theologians place deism as a step on the way to atheism, even if they distinguish between the two concepts. Öztürk stands out as a controversial counterexample, well-known by the general public in Turkey.

Yaşar Nuri Öztürk (1945-2016) was a well-known public figure, politician, and professor of theology at Istanbul University. His position on religion in Turkey was heavily redolent of Kemalist laicism,\(^{912}\) and his work engaged heavily with modern thought—in this instance the

\(^{910}\) Düzgün, ATT, 208.

\(^{911}\) Düzgün, ATT, 153. For instance, Karl Rahner has famously made a similar argument in his _Hearer of the Word_, published first in German in 1941.

\(^{912}\) See for instance his work on Laicism: _Kur’an Verileri Açısından Laiklik [Laicism from the Perspective of Quranic Data]_ (Istanbul: Yeni Boyut, 2003).
modern, Western deist tradition. He also famously prepared a simplified Qur’ān commentary based on the Qur’ān commentary by the late Ottoman figure Elmalılı Muhammed Hamdi Yazır, entitled *Hak Dini Kur’ân Dili* [*The Religion of Truth is the Language of the Qur’ān*]—a work of undisputed popularity in Turkey, that has also been prepared by other scholars. While familiar to non-specialists, Öztürk is not necessarily a warmly received scholar in the eyes of many Turkish theologians. His work is controversial and addresses the public more so than academic peers. He has also received more scholarly attention outside of Turkey than most of the other Turkish theological figures mentioned or treated in the present inquiry.  

In his book, *Deism: Belief that Recognizes Nothing as Sacred Except God, Reason and Ethics (A Theo-philosophical Analysis)*, Öztürk argues that the Qur’ān leaves the door open for a deist position. He admits such a claim is contentious and calls upon the authority of his conscience, of his identity as a scholar, and of one who has spent his life in study of the Qur’ān. He recognizes that the Qur’ān does not explicitly call for a deist position but points to resources in the Qur’ān that leave open the possibility for a quranically acceptable deism. In Öztürk’s understanding of deism, religion itself, revelation itself, and places of worship are not sacred; rather it is reason, knowledge, and ethics which are sacred. He then identifies two early 10th-century Islamic thinkers Ibn al-Rāwandī (d. 913) and Abu Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 925) as authentic

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913 For example, Ayşe Öncü, “Becoming ‘Secular Muslims’: Yaşar Nuri Öztürk as a Super-Subject on Turkish Television,” in *Religion, media, and the public sphere*, eds. B. Meyer and A. Moors (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006).  
914 Yaşar Nuri Öztürk, *Tanrı, Akıl ve Ahlaktan Başka Kutsal Tammayan İnanç Deizm (Teofilozofik Bir Tahlil)* (İstanbul: Yeni Boyut, 2015)—henceforth cited as *Deizm*.  
915 Öztürk, *Deizm*, 9.  
916 Öztürk, *Deizm*, 9.  
917 Öztürk, *Deizm*, 10.
resources for systematizing an Islamically acceptable deism. As an Ottoman example of deist-friendly thought, he cites Şehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmet Hilmi (d. 1914)’s *History of Islam.*  

To clarify his motives, Öztürk makes an effort to invite the audience to understand why those within the Muslim or Christian traditions might be fed up with organized religion. Christians may be disillusioned with the church and its attempts at “inquisition;” while Muslims may be fed up with individuals (in particular Sufis) who claim special spiritual authority and then abuse it. He even points out the tendency in the Old Testament to illustrate the sins and depravity of Biblical prophets. In doing so, he departs from more traditional Muslim interpretations of biblical prophets, which stress their blamelessness. For Öztürk, the prophets, as the Old Testament describes them, justify the reaction of deists who rejected religion as harmful religiosity and a corruption of values through the authority of corrupt human beings. Unlike the Old Testament, the Qur’ān does not depict prophets in this manner—stressing rather their moral excellence and freedom from worldly corruption, specifically the temptations of political power. In this way, the Qur’ān hints at deistic values that cut across theistic traditions.

The following quote sums up his main theological thrust: “Religiosity is a deception and an ideology of power that turns the religion of tawhid into a religion of shirk [i.e. disbelief].” Unlike many theologians, he does not see deism or atheism as the fundamental threat to religion.

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918 Sadly, footnotes are scant. The work he refers to can be found in modern edition: Şehbenderzade Filibeli Ahmet Hilmi, *İslam Tarihi* (Istanbul: Huzur Yayınevi, 2011).
919 Öztürk, *Deizm*, 18.
921 Öztürk cites, for instance, Erich Fromm’s description of the virtue of prophets as an unintentional description not of Old Testament prophets but quranic prophets (22-23).
In fact, he remarks that those who are sincerely religious, deists, and even atheists who still practice respect towards other humans have a common enemy: “falsely religious irreligion” (*dinci dinsizlik*). To elucidate, Öztürk begins with the word “*iqrāh*” (Turkish: *ikrah*) or “compulsion,” recalling the quranic verse “There is no compulsion in religion” (Q2:256). Religiosity—in the false sense he speaks of—breeds compulsion, and this compulsion leads to both violence and hypocrisy. Öztürk associates compulsion with false pharaonic religion. Compulsion has wreaked havoc in the histories of various religions, including cultures affected by those religions. Just as in the Islamic world injustices were at times committed in the name of countering “*fitna*” (Turkish: *fitne*), so too does the buzzword “democracy” often serve to justify compulsion.

A case for deism is particularly necessary in the Muslim world today, according to Öztürk. Since secularism (*laiklik*) is already rooted in European culture, that cultural nexus does not have to make such a conscious turn to deism to save itself from the negative effects of religiosity and radicalism. By contrast, he holds that in the Islamic world there is no getting around the challenge of destructive religiosity. For this reason, he claims deism should be the shelter and resource of choice. If deism is not seen as a qurantically sanctioned option, people who are fed up with religiosity will simply turn to atheism and away from human values. Moreover, not only is deism a solution for responding to the negative impact of religiosity today, deism is also at the heart of religious dialogue. Rather than pandering to what he sees as less-

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924 Öztürk, *Deizm*, 25.
926 Öztürk, *Deizm*, 31.
927 Öztürk, *Deizm*, 32.
than-helpful Christian calls for dialogue on Christian terms, Öztürk asserts that behind the jargon of any honest attempt of religious dialogue among theists the meeting point is inevitably deism.Öztürk’s views on Deism represent a minority opinion among the publications of Turkish theologians, and his engagement with Islamic and Western sources is, for many, less a product of dialectical interplay of traditions and more a Kemalist reading of religion. Nonetheless, he does explicitly engage parts of the Western tradition alongside traditional Islamic sources. He may not be an example of dialectical nuance when it comes to the threefold schema of sources in Turkish theology, but his position on deism carries significant popular weight.

The Connection Between Christianity and Skepticism

Above I stressed that Turkish discussions of atheism and skepticism frequently point to Christianity as primary cause and continuing contributor to unbelief and suspicion regarding religion. In this section, I will discuss Turkish evaluations of Christianity, treating the work of Mehmet Bayrakdar as a representative voice and the work of Recep Alpgağ as a key exception. Alpgağ, distinct from many of his counterparts, does not view skepticism as a purely Christian problem. Instead, he engages the question of revealed religion from the perspective of philosophical theology, arguing that even if Christian theologians may have more severe challenges to address, Muslims too must work to find answers to relatively similar conundrums.

Before turning to Turkish theological evaluations of Christianity, I wish to start with some background on Christian and Muslim evaluations of one another’s religion. Christians have

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928 Öztürk, Deizm, 35.
long viewed Islam as a kind of heresy. John of Damascus (d. 749) set the tone when he treated Islam as a type of Arian heresy. According to John of Damascus, Muhammad—whose prophetic calling John denied—chanced upon the Old and New Testaments and spoke with an Arian monk. The result is John’s approximation of the Muslim creed (and I quote from his “On the Heresy of the Ishmaelites”):

…there is one God, creator of all things, who has neither been begotten nor has begotten…Christ is the Word of God and His Spirit, but a creature and a servant, and that He was begotten without seed of Mary the sister of Moses and Aaron…the Word and God and the Spirit entered into Mary and she brought forth Jesus, who was a prophet and a servant of God…the Jews wanted to crucify Him in violation of the law, and that they seized His shadow and crucified this. But the Christ himself was not crucified…for God out of his love for Him took Him into heaven…

John was a well-educated Syrian with likely broad exposure to Muslim power and culture. Beyond polemical jabs, his words reflect some of the actual Muslim beliefs. Polemics from both sides and beyond have continued down the ages. Various Muslims have, for instance, asked: If the Christian Gospels are not the Gospel given to Jesus, then why does the Qur’ān call Christians people of the book? Did they not take a message of *tawḥīd* (divine unity), like that given to all prophets, and corrupt it with superstitious and irrational tales of Incarnation, resurrection, and above all the Trinity? Are Christians not gravely misled in insisting faith transcends rationality?

With the rise of missionary and colonial activity in the nineteenth century, Muslim responses to Christian doctrine took on new dimensions—that is, as responses to politics and power. Ottomans, for instance, saw a great rise in Christian missionary activity, especially with the arrival of Protestant groups. As Turkish scholar of religion İsmail Taşpınar notes in the

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929 From *Saint John of Damascus Writings: The Fount of Knowledge - The Philosophical Chapters, on Heresies, the Orthodox Faith (The Fathers of the Church, Vol. 37)* (South Bend, IN: Ex Fontibus, 2015), 153-160.
introduction to *Hacı Abdullah Petrici’s Critique of Christianity*, Ottomans witnessed the arrival of Darwinism and materialism through the works of Louis Büchner. Ottoman and Turkish religious thinkers have been engaging contemporary Western Christian sources of all variety for about two hundred years.

Ottoman Muslims and contemporary Turkish Muslims alike have taken up the subject Christianity and its associated challenges of skepticism. I will now attempt to offer a broad but limited survey on different aspects of this engagement as it plays out today, with dual focus on Mehmet Bayrakdar of the Ankara Theology Faculty and Recep Alpyağıl of the Istanbul Theology Faculty. These two scholars in particular—both widely recognized within the realm of Turkish theology—offer two in depth perspectives on connection between skepticism and Christianity in the context of Turkish theology.

More broadly, I suggest there are some common moves Turkish theologians can and have made vis-à-vis Christian concepts and beliefs. Important to keep in mind, however, is that the line between concepts from Western Christian civilization and doctrines from Christian theology does not necessarily need to be strictly drawn. Or in other words, these two categories are not always seen as particularly distinct from the perspective of a Turkish theologian. I will first point

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930 *Hacı Abdullah Petrici’nin Hıristiyanlık Eleştirisi* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2014).

931 On this, see for instance Mehmet Akgün’s *Materyalizmin Türkiye’ye Giriş* (Ankara: Elis Yayınları, 2005). Akgün is not a theologian but holds a position in the literature department at Pamukkale University. His work has already been mentioned above.
out a few of the broader trends with specific examples before taking a closer look at the work of these two different theologians.

One move Turkish scholars make is to reappropriate a concept. For instance, many scholars say “yes” to the stress on local identity and the necessity for embracing pluralism, but simultaneously claim that Christianity and Western culture actually export the opposite reality under the banner of pluralism. The examples we have already seen in previous chapters are the work of theologians Şaban Ali Düzgün (chapter 6) and Fatma Barbarasoğlu (chapter 2).

Another approach is to critically apply a concept or a particular theological discourse endemic to Christian or Western tradition. Scholars engage in a Western discussion and appropriate part of the underlying theological assumptions, while actively rejecting other elements. In the realm of religious hermeneutics, the well-established Zeki Özcan, for instance, is heavily versed in Western hermeneutic theory and responds to debates on authorial intent in sacred text with the clear statement, “God is not an author.” Recep Alpyağıl, whom we discussed previously and will discuss again below, argues elsewhere for a critical application of narrative in the reading of sacred texts—drawing heavily on Paul Ricoeur as well as faulting Arab thinkers like Abu Zayd for not going far enough.

Another important contribution is for a Turkish academic theologian to look critically at the history of Christianity in order to deconstruct monolithic claims to authoritative orthodoxy. For instance, Şinasi Gündüz and Hakan Olgun use historical inquiry and church history (including the opinions of Christians theologians on church history) to deconstruct Christianity

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932 Zeki Özcan, Teolojik Hermenötik [Theological Hermeneutics] (Istanbul: ALFA Yayınları, 1998; 2000), 254. Although he criticizes some Christian assumptions regarding theological hermeneutics, he generally argues for the positive value of hermeneutics in protecting textual continuity and ensuring proper engagement with the text.
*qua* monolith. In other words, scholars like Gündüz and Olgun look at the historical research on Christianity (even that done by Christian scholars) in order to point to its plurality, potential contradictions, and admitted criticisms.

A fourth approach—and this is by no means an exhaustive list—is to do philosophical comparisons between Western and Classical Arab thinkers. Such a comparison might ultimately champion the insight of the Muslim thinker and apply that insight to the interpretation of the Christian thinker in question—as, I will argue, is the case with Mehmet Bayrakdar’s comparison of al-Ghazālī and Pascal on skepticism.

**Bayrakdar: Dispersing the Specter of Skepticism**

Returning to the topic of skepticism, we will now take a more in-depth look at Mehmet Bayrakdar’s *Pascal’s Wager: Rolling Dice on the Afterlife According to Ali, al-Ghazali and Pascal*. Mehmet Bayrakdar (b. 1952) studied first at the Theology Faculty of Ankara University and then went to the Sorbonne for his doctorate. He has been employed in the Ankara Theology Faculty since 1979 and has been a professor there since 1991. While interested in

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933 See Şinasi Gündüz, *Pavlus Hristiyanlığı Mimarı [Paul the Architect of Christianity]* (Ankara: Ankara Okulu, 2001; 2004; 2011; 2014) and Hakan Olgun, *Protestanlık: Sekülerliğin Teolojik Kurgusu [Protestantism: The Theological Foundation of Secularism]* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2006). Gündüz even uses the work of modern theologians like Bultmann, Fitzmyer and Küng in such a way as to stress that none of them claim Paul is Christianity’s founder. Olgu, for his part, is primarily making the case for why secularism is an essentially Christian phenomenon—an argument also sometimes made in Anglophone literature.


935 *Pascal Oyunu: Hz. Ali, Gazzâlî ve Pascal’a Göre Âhirete Zar Atmak* (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2013). The translation of the title is my own, as well as all subsequent translations from Turkish. Henceforth referred to as ‘Pascal’s Wager.’
European and Islamic intellectual history, he has a special research interest in mathematics and technology.\textsuperscript{936}

His book, \textit{Pascal’s Wager} (2013) is a relatively compact essay on the question of probability and the afterlife divided into three parts.\textsuperscript{937} Bayrakdar argues that Islamic intellectual tradition significantly influenced Pascal’s formulation of his famous wager. Even though Bayrakdar starts by naming the fourth Caliph Ali as the real inventor of Pascal’s Wager, cites quranic resources, and even brings in the blind Arab poet al-Ma‘arrī (d. 1057), his real dialogue partner for Pascal is al-Ghazālī (d. 1111). Bayrakdar begins by situating Pascal’s wager within the context of an earlier, Islamic precedent—centered on the line of reasoning developed by al-Ghazālī. Al-Ghazālī’s position on the afterlife is straightforward but not trivial.\textsuperscript{938} For al-Ghazālī and for Pascal the crucial consideration lies in the difference between finite goods and infinite consequences. For al-Ghazālī, finite happiness cannot compare with infinite happiness; and given any doubt that there might be an eternal afterlife, it is safer to hedge one’s bets and avoid eternal damnation. Pascal follows along these lines.

Bayrakdar goes on to address the question of whether al-Ghazālī directly influenced Pascal’s formulation of his wager. This last point rests on two main claims and one suggestion.

\textsuperscript{936} Mathematics plays a large role in his work on Pascal. Bayrakdar also recently published Îslâm’da Bilim ve Teknoloji Tarihi [\textit{History of Science and Technology in Islam}] (Ankara: TDVY, 2012).

\textsuperscript{937} The book is around a hundred pages.

\textsuperscript{938} For instance, Egyptian Qur’ān exegete and literary critic Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd severely berated al-Ghazālī for his obsession with the afterlife; see his “Al-Ghazālī’s Theory of Interpretation,” \textit{Journal of Osaka University of Foreign. Studies} 72 (1986): 1-24 (I am grateful to Hume scholar Ryu Susato for access to this obscure article). And while the afterlife is a recurrent and omnipresent feature is much of al-Ghazālī’s work, his views on the afterlife are not simple or undisputed. Bayrakdar refers mainly to the \textit{Iḥyā’} for al-Ghazālī’s version of Pascal’s wager. But al-Ghazālī also discusses it elsewhere in his \textit{Mīzān al-ʿamal}. The argument for preparing for the afterlife is more or less the same; he even uses a common analogy of the report of poisoned food. Bayrakdar, on page 33, cites volume three of the \textit{Iḥyā’} though the argument also appears elsewhere. One of al-Ghazālī’s arguments runs as follows: If someone told you your food was poisoned, would you take a chance and eat it? This is like hearing a report of the threat of eternal hellfire, and al-Ghazālī also uses it in \textit{Mīzān}. 299
First, there exists a potential textual parallel between Pascal and al-Ghazālī. Second, he traces a specific trajectory of influence from Raymond Martin to Pascal. While fascinating, the problem with the first claim is that the parallel in question is very short—a variation of “seek me and you will find me.” His first argument is thus severely weakened by the fact that he ties Pascal’s remark to similar phrases in al-Ghazālī and Islamic tradition without acknowledging that a variation of this phrase has been made quite famous through the Christian gospel of Matthew. The second argument of indirect influence through Martin would benefit from more thorough supporting details. The final suggestion provokes reflection—even if we do not know the exact details of how al-Ghazālī’s thought affected Pascal, it is noteworthy that Pascal’s wager did not significantly diverge in argument from his Islamic predecessor. None of the above arguments carry decisive weight for a case of direct influence, but they certainly do raise questions as to whether and how directly Pascal might have been influenced by a thinker such as al-Ghazālī. And this is the sort of reflection Bayrakdar aims to provoke. Further, that such questions should be relevant to modern Islamic identity vis-à-vis the Western intellectual tradition(s) is no incidental happenstance. To trace direct lines of influence from Islamic thought not only to

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939 In this, Bayrakdar refers to Bousquet’s “Un Mot de Pascal dans l’Ihyā de Ghazālī” in *Studia Islamica* 30 (1954), 104.
940 Matthew 7:7-8, “Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.” (NRSV translation)
942 Some such reflection already exists in the Turkish scholarly world. See Abdurrahman Bedevi, *Bati Düşünçesinin Oluşumunda İslâm'ın Rolü [Islam’s Role in the Genesis of Western Thought]*, trans. Muharrem Tan, 3rd printing (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2012). This translation from the Arabic original shows Turkish interest in scholarship which points not only to Western influence of Islam but *vice versa.*
Medieval Western sources but onward into the beginnings of the Enlightenment could be significant to Muslim as well as modern self-understanding.\textsuperscript{943}

His third and final section asks the question of why in the Islamic world al-Ghazālī’s (earlier) formulation of Pascal’s wager underwent no significant criticism—not even from one of al-Ghazālī’s biggest critics, Ibn Taymiyya.\textsuperscript{944} In contrast, subsequent Western intellectual tradition has subjected Pascal’s wager to significant criticism. One reason that Bayrakdar posits for the misunderstanding of Pascal’s simple and accessible logic is that neither al-Ghazālī nor Pascal actually doubted the existence of God in formulating the wager.\textsuperscript{945} Yet, if the wager itself is not a product of doubt, what is it then? For Bayrakdar, Pascal’s purpose paralleled al-Ghazālī’s purpose, just as the basic structure of Pascal’s argument followed the imam. Rather than formulating an expression of real doubt, the wager is a call to Christian morals and faith, just as the \textit{Iḥyā’} was a call to renew the faith of al-Ghazālī’s fellow Muslim scholars.\textsuperscript{946} To suspect either al-Ghazālī or Pascal of entertaining or spreading real doubts about the existence of God or the afterlife fails to give either positive credit. Pascal’s wager represents an invitation to believe. This invitation is not merely to believe with one’s heart but to believe also with the mind. In his argument, Bayrakdar points to al-Ghazālī as an Islamic example of what in the Christian

\textsuperscript{943} And if at any point, a more direct line can be traced from Islamic responses to skepticism, linking such issues clearly with Enlightenment debates, this would open the way for a rethinking of Western Enlightenment (and hence modern) intellectual heritage. As it stands, there remains a stereotype of Medieval Europe as fundamentally superstitious and backward, so it is no surprise to some that Islamic civilization offered many advances to European philosophy and technology. However, to say that Islamic thought directly fed into debates on skepticism which raged throughout the Enlightenment, and even beyond, would require many to rethink the Islamic contribution to Western thought and modernity. Mark Sedgwick’s recent book, \textit{Western Sufism: From the Abbasids to the New Age} (2017), fills in some of these potential gaps in intellectual history, showing instances of intellectual influence moving from Ottoman Islamic culture to European spirituality in the pre-modern era.

\textsuperscript{944} Bayrakdar, \textit{Pascal’s Wager}, 75. Notably, Bayrakdar unhesitatingly designates Ibn Taymiyya as a \textit{kalām} theologian.

\textsuperscript{945} Bayrakdar, \textit{Pascal’s Wager}, 77.

\textsuperscript{946} The fact that he interprets Pascal’s motives in light of what are generally seen to be al-Ghazālī’s is not a point he dwells on, but rests implicit in his treatment.
tradition is known as “faith seeking understanding.” Drawing on al-Ghazālī’s *Mishkāt al-anwār* (*Niche of Lights*), *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (*Deliverer from Error*) and his theological work *al-Iqtiṣād fī ʾl-iʿtiqād* (*Moderation in Belief*), Bayrakdar argues that for al-Ghazali faith (*īmān*) is not merely the work of the heart but also the mind.947 Thus, his interpretation of Pascal’s wager reflects his interpretation of al-Ghazālī’s. Even though skepticism provides intellectual stimulus for faith, Bayrakdar in no way admits that skepticism poses an actual intellectual challenge. Like other Turkish literature on skepticism, Bayrakdar largely denies that skepticism poses any real intellectual challenge to sound faith. In the case of Alpyağıl, however, we will encounter an exception to this attitude.

*Alpyağıl on Faith and Reason*

In contrast to the works of Coşkun, Düzgün, and Bayrakdar, the work of Alpyağıl takes the question of skepticism as it has arisen in Christian tradition seriously. For Alpyağıl, though he himself is not a skeptic, skepticism is not something to be philosophically dismissed as irrelevant or simply as a Christian problem. This intellectually curious attitude towards the problem of doubt stands out particularly in his critical dialogue with Kierkegaard and Western representatives of philosophy of language. I argue here that Alpyağıl critically engages controversial Christian figures in such a way that might count as a sympathetic rather than dismissive treatment of the challenges of faith and doubt.

To do this, we will look at his treatment of Christian arguments for fideism—both radical and moderate. This treatment can be found in Alpyağıl’s *Doing Philosophy of Religion with*

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947 Bayrakdar, *Pascal’s Wager*, 88. Al-Ghazālī tends to use terms like heart (*qalb*) and mind (*ʿaql*) to refer to a similar or identical faculty in the human being—an issue that Bayrakdar does not go into.
Wittgenstein and Kierkegaard as Points of Departure (2002). While it is common for Muslim thinkers to argue that Christian faith is irrational and that Muslim faith coincides perfectly with reason, this is not quite the path Alpyağıl takes. Instead, Alpyağıl employs robust critical engagement with Christian debates on fideism to gain a fresh perspective for Muslim discussions on the question of faith vs. reason. In other words, Alpyağıl’s goal is not finger pointing at Christianity but a deeper reflection on Muslim belief.

To begin, he looks at the radical fideism embodied by many of Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous works, in particular Concluding Unscientific Postscript (1846) and Fear and Trembling (1843). Søren Kierkegaard has long been a controversial figure for Protestant Christianity; theologically trained, he never took up a position in the Danish church. Mocked by many philosophers and theologians for possibly advocating a teleological suspension of the ethical, or in crasser terms “divine command theory” (i.e. God told me to do this, so I do it without question), Kierkegaard brings into sharp focus Christian doubts on the compatibility of faith and reason. Particularly, in Fear and Trembling, his pseudonym Johannes de Silentio claims that the essence of faith is paradox, and to believe means to believe in the absurd.

Surprisingly, Alpyağıl does not label Kierkegaard as irrational but describes him primarily as ironic and anti-intellectual. He appreciates Kierkegaard’s understanding of faith as a passion but cautions the reader from taking such an idea too far. He further cedes that

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948 Alpyağıl, Wittgenstein ve Kierkegaard’dan Hareketle Din Felsefesi Yapmak (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2002, 2013). Henceforth referred to as WK.
949 The Folkschurch of Denmark is Evangelical Lutheran.
950 Alpyağıl, WK, 116-117. The Turkish for “teleological suspension of the ethical” is “etik olanın ereksel askıya alınma.”
951 Alpyağıl, WK, 106. While this position is not an uncommon one in Kierkegaard scholarship, this position is uncommon with respect to Turkish treatments of Christianity and skepticism, which still tend to be less charitable and to emphasize the irrationality of Christian faith.
Kierkegaard is justified in his criticism of those who try to ground faith in reason alone. Significantly, Alpyağıl remarks to his reader that neither Christians nor Muslims are exempt from this criticism, saying that even if Islam has more historical evidence to hand, in essence, it still faces the same issue as Christianity. To try to ground faith in reason is just as problematic for Muslims as it clearly already is for Christians. Yet, Alpyağıl drops the Kierkegaardian category of absurdity for Muslims. That is, it is not an acceptable approach to believe *quia absurdum* for Muslims. Alpyağıl then goes into an analysis of Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous *Fear and Trembling* (Turkish: *Korku ve Titreme*) and picks out an especially fruitful angle: existence as a divine test and whether the logic of divine trial stands up to scrutiny, suggesting that faith is deeply impacted by the logic of divine test.

*Fear and Trembling* is an inquiry into the biblical account of Abraham’s faith when he was told to sacrifice his son Isaac. Kierkegaard problematizes faith and ethical responsibility in pointing out that by obeying God’s command, Abraham was essentially preparing to murder his own son. So why is Abraham a man of faith, when reason tells us that Abraham was ready to murder his own son? Many understand Kierkegaard to be claiming that there is a religious sphere of action which goes beyond the ethical sphere ruled by universal reason. And, in Alpyağıl’s reading, Kierkegaard denies there can by any synthesis between faith and reason. By looking at *Fear and Trembling* through the lens of a divine test, Alpyağıl disparagingly remarks that Kierkegaard manages to transform positive faith into blind obedience to a senseless, strange, and

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952 Alpyağıl, WK, 106.
953 Alpyağıl, WK, 107.
954 Alpyağıl, WK, 107.
955 Alpyağıl, WK, 122.
amoral God. Still, Alpyağıl does not merely dismiss Kierkegaard—he takes a closer look. Specifically, Alpyağıl criticizes Kierkegaard for portraying God solely under the aspect of power:

> Whether from a Christian perspective or some other religious perspective, to think of God entirely in terms of God’s power proves a misguided approach.  

Moreover, Alpyağıl rejects that the religious sphere goes beyond the ethical, because it is not clear what Kierkegaard means by “going beyond.” In short, things get murky once you start going “beyond” rationality. Once a person denies rationality, what objective standard can be taken up to measure validity? In this sense, Alpyağıl accepts the value of Fear and Trembling as a philosophical work (i.e. a criticism of overconfidence in reason) but rejects the work as a definitive statement on faith in the true theological sense. He references the quranic story of Abraham. The Qur’an, too, presents the tale as a test of faith, acknowledging that even from a quranic perspective some of the same questions of faith arise. Not having found a satisfactory answer with Christian formulations of radical fideism, Alpyağıl turns to more moderate formulations of fideism, such as those influenced by Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein, in his second period, argued that beliefs and religious statements are language games and as such cannot be evaluated by terms and rules from other language games. Wittgenstein, as Alpyağıl notes, stresses the intricate relation between belief and life.

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956 Alpyağıl, WK, 123.
957 Alpyağıl, WK, 126. Original Turkish: “Gerek Hıristiyanlıktan gerekse diğer dinler açısından tanrıyi bütünüyle kudreti bağlamında tanımlamak hatalı bir yaklaşım olsa gerekir.”
958 Alpyağıl, WK, 127.
959 Alpyağıl is very sensitive to the issue of objectivity, from a Kierkegaardian as well as a Gadamerian perspective. He does not throw the term around carelessly and often qualifies it.
960 Alpyağıl, WK, 128.
961 Alpyağıl, WK, 149.
Wittgenstein, faith statements only make sense in religious language games. However, this leaves open the question of how people offer rational validity for their religious convictions. Alpyağıl’s theologian of focus is here not actually Wittgenstein but D.Z. Phillips (1934-2006)—again a thinker whose contributions he openly appreciates but still finds inadequate.

For D.Z. Phillips, a believer’s beliefs form her entire life into a picture that allows her to make sense of her life. For this reason, Phillips does not look at beliefs as things to be proved. Others have criticized Phillips for being a theological non-realist—i.e. “I do not claim my religious beliefs correspond to reality.” Within this treatment of theological realism vs. non-realism, Alpyağlı develops a serious discussion of the merits and drawbacks of theological non-realism (teolojik nonrealism). As Alpyağlı appreciates to a certain degree, Phillips would say the question of realism vs. non-realism misses the point about beliefs. Alpyağlı then brings in several atheists as points of engagement, one of whom being K. Nielsen. Nielsen raises the case of those who start out believers and then reject the religious picture that made their life have religious meaning. Phillips, for his part, explains this phenomenon by saying changing pictures is not the same as saying one picture is better than the other. For Phillips this sort of situation ultimately boils down to a trading of a religious picture for a secular picture. In other words, changing one’s worldview does not necessarily negate the old one or entail that the old view is false. Unsatisfied, Nielsen retorts that if Christianity is just a language game among others, then it cannot claim to be better or more correct than any other language game. This

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962 Alpyağlı, WK, 151.
963 Alpyağlı, WK, 220.
964 Alpyağlı, WK, 231.
965 Alpyağlı, WK, 232.
966 Alpyağlı, WK, 233.
brings us to the point Alpyağıl sees as the fundamental weakness of even moderate fideism: If you understand religion/faith as a language game, what is there to distinguish it from any other hobby or activity? In short, while Alpyağıl appreciates the sort of criticisms of rationality which fideism can bring to the table, he thinks even a moderate fideist like D.Z. Phillips cannot successfully convince the rational skeptic.

In Alpyağlı’s conclusion, he sums up with the following evaluations: 1) Though fideist epistemology gets many things right, separating faith from reason is not a viable solution—and among Christian fideists such as Augustine, Kierkegaard and D.Z. Phillips, Alpyağlı has also included the Muslim al-Ghazâlî. 2) Any theoretical synthesis of faith and reason will always be open to criticism, because people cannot agree on a shared objective criterion for measuring authority. 3) He appreciates here and elsewhere Kierkegaard’s notion of faith as a passion, but warns that if taken too far, faith becomes an empty concept and degrades into a senseless, blind passion. In this context, he points out that asking questions about faith and reason does not necessarily amount to attacking religion. 4) Alpyağlı objects to the the practice of not trying to ground beliefs. He positively objects to simply giving up, though acknowledges that the task of grounding beliefs is a messy business. 5) He accepts to a degree that faith and reason run on their own language games, but contends that real believers in today’s world generally cannot avoid asking about the rationality of their beliefs. In this sense, he strongly appreciates D.Z. Phillips’ work but still criticizes it, arguing most people will not be satisfied with Phillips—a faith without

967 Alpyağlı, WK. 234.
968 This attitude contrasts strongly with Açıköz’s attitudes towards skepticism. For the latter, skepticism cannot help but affirm in some way God’s unity and absolute existence. As such, it is skepticism which proves intellectually lacking, never faith insofar as it remains uncorrupted.
969 Alpyağlı, WK. 246-249.
facts is not enough. In short, Alpyağıl predicts that people will not get over the desire to reconcile reason with beliefs, but neither will people within and across religions come to a clean consensus.

In another work of relevance to the present discussion, Alpyağıl offers more insights into how philosophy of religion can respond to the task of faith vs. doubt. In *Deconstruction and Religion from Derrida to Caputo* (2007), he endeavors to find a way through the Charbdys and Scylla of modernity and postmodernity. To do this, he sees philosophy of religion as a necessarily composite tool for the task. Further, he believes in the necessity of engaging both analytic and continental philosophies of the West—thus, he endeavors to take deconstruction seriously as a philosophical concept. In this willingness to take deconstruction seriously, he realizes that he represents a minority among Turkish theologians—so he addresses the general resistance to deconstruction. Assuaging the fears of those who view deconstruction as something essentially pessimistic, he assures his reader that a “philosophy of hope” is indeed always within reach. For those afraid of loss of religious identity through the process of dialogue with deconstruction, he reminds his reader that learning a foreign language does not require one to forget her mother tongue; in fact, it often strengthens a person’s grasp over her native language. His assessment of deconstruction’s value for Turkish theological discussions is

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970 Again, Alpyağıl does not throw around the world *olgu* (event or fact). He has a fairly nuanced understanding of the philosophical challenges of historical knowledge. As such, he does not throw this criticism at Phillips simplistically.
971 Alpyağıl, WK, 250-251.
972 Alpyağıl, *Derrida'dan Caputo'ya Dekonstrüksiyon ve Din* (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2007; 2010). Henceforth DCDD.
973 Alpyağıl, DCDD, 18.
974 Alpyağıl, DCDD, 16.
975 Alpyağıl, DCDD, 18.
976 Alpyağıl, DCDD, 19.
977 Alpyağıl, DCDD, 20.
hopeful and looks towards the future. He is less concerned with having all the answers now and more interested in the philosophical journey that accompanies human change. Alpyağıl holds that since humanity is always developing, so are human conceptions of God. Alpyağıl’s sentiments seem to parallel those of Ricoeur, who writes:

> Atheism opens a new path to faith, though a path full of uncertainties and dangers. We might be tempted not to follow this path but to leap instead directly to its destination. A philosopher, however, cannot go so far so quickly.

Though Alpyağıl does not advocate doubt or skepticism, he takes the challenge very seriously and recognizes the importance of this challenge for believers everywhere. While the intellectual challenges to belief encountered in modern philosophy and elsewhere can still serve the journey of faith, Alpyağıl nevertheless resists facile resolutions of such challenges. This new path toward faith cannot be so easily or quickly navigated as scholars like Açıköz may wish to claim—at least not from Alpyağıl’s philosophical perspective.

**Pluralism—Fuel for Faith or Skepticism?**

At the start of this chapter, I noted that Turkish discussions of atheism and skepticism tended to receive treatment in the context of Christianity. After having looked at various treatments of atheism and skepticism, our focus now shifts to Turkish theologians’ explicit stance towards other religions—in particular, towards Christianity—along with the question of their theological status. A common theme among Turkish discussions of religious pluralism is, unsurprisingly, the association of religious pluralism with Christian stances towards other

978 Alpyağıl, DCDD, 281.
religions. Further, many Turkish discussion of religious pluralism remain planted in an inclusivism along the lines of John Hick, but they also draw on the inclusivism of Muslim Perennialists. In rare instances, the discussion moves into more nuanced treatments of pluralism. Even so, some version of inclusivism prevails for those Turkish scholars willing to engage religious pluralism as something with positive theological implications. This section will provide an overview of a selection of positions, and begins with the work of Adnan Aslan.

Adnan Aslan (b. 1963) studied theology first at the Erciyes University Faculty of Theology, acquired his masters at University of London, and achieved his doctorate at Lancaster University on the subject of religious pluralism (1995). After his studies in England, he worked as a researcher for İSAM and has been a faculty member of İstanbul 29 Mayıs University in their Philosophy Department (which is part of their Faculty of Literature).

Aslan’s *Religious Pluralism, Atheism and the Perennial School: A Critical Approach* (2010) is comprised of three distinct but related essays, with each essay addressing one particular theme in the book’s title. His preface begins with a significant statement, “In Turkey philosophy of religion, like the serious study of other religions, is strange.” Aslan goes on to

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980 İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, or the Center for Islamic Research.
981 Prior to July 2016 he was still at 29 Mayıs University, but currently he is no longer listed in their philosophy department or other related departments. A glance at “Faculty of the Philosophy Department at 29 May University” [https://www.29mayis.edu.tr/akademik-kadro/1/felsefe-bolumu-bolumu-akademik-kadro.html](https://www.29mayis.edu.tr/akademik-kadro/1/felsefe-bolumu-bolumu-akademik-kadro.html) (most recently accessed 1/1/2017) does not list Adnan Aslan, but his former bio can be seen on former iterations of their website.
982 *Dini Çoğulculuk, Ateizm, ve Geleksel Ekol: Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım* (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010). This title is referred to below as ‘Pluralism’. Aslan also published an English version of the work: *Religious Pluralism in Christian and Islamic Philosophy: The Thought of John Hick and Seyyed Hossein Nasr* (Abingdon: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004)—printed previously in 1994 with Japan Society Publications. I refer to the Turkish, as the Turkish has a middle section devoted to atheism and was intended for Turkish readers. A more recent general work, which will not be commented upon here, is Adnan Aslan’s *Din Felsefesine Giriş* [Introduction to Philosophy of Religion] (İstanbul: Ufuk Yayınları, 2015).
983 Aslan, *Pluralism*, 7. Original Turkish: “Türkiye’de din felsefesi diğer din ilimleri gibi gariptir.” I loosely translated “diğer din ilimleri” as “the serious study of other religions” rather than “the sciences of other religions,” which makes more sense in Turkish and in the context of Islamic “religious sciences.”
make a Turkish case for Muslim theological engagement with other religions. He does this in a
twofold manner: first, he extensively treats several non-Turkish positions on pluralism as well as
atheism; second, in dialogue with the Muslim Perennial School, he makes a case for Turkish
theologians to construct their own Muslim responses to such issues.

In the first essay, Aslan deals with the question of religious pluralism. His treatment is
notable for the fluidity with which he treats common Western models of pluralism and Islamic
material. Starting with the common paradigm of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism, Aslan
meticulously presents various non-Turkish views on pluralism. He begins his discussion in the
spirit of Q 11:118, “If your Lord had pleased, he would have made all people a single
community, but they continue to have differences.”

Aslan carefully defines what he means by pluralism—he understands it to be a Western
framework for dealing with competing truth claims of various religious traditions. The
increased Western interest in the truth claims of other traditions Aslan ties closely with debates
on the existence of God or the afterlife. Theological responses characteristic of modernity turned
to the irreducible nature of religious experience in response to increased questioning of
absolute truth claims. Aslan follows this development into the twentieth century, touching on
Vatican II, and deftly engaging well-known and still influential figures like Karl Rahner, Paul
Tillich, John Cobb Jr., Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Ninian Smart, Gavin D’Costa, and John Hick.

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987 Though not referenced by Aslan, his interpretation of the interaction of Western views on religious experience
and possible truth claims is supported by scholar of German intellectual history Frederick C. Beiser. See his *The Fate
of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).
His discussion builds into a constructive dialogue with John Hick and the Muslim Perennialist School. While Aslan notes positive aspects in many of his interlocutors’ positions, he contends that his stance on pluralism is closest to that of al-Ghazālī. Though Aslan does not want to say that all religions are right, he is very sensitive to the tension inherent in considering both a just God and contending religious claims to salvation. He finds his own sensitivity validated in the work of al-Ghazālī, drawing resources for pluralism from the medieval thinker’s *Fayṣal al-Tafriqa bayn al-Islām wa ’l-Zandaka (The Criterion of Distinction between Islam and Unbelief)*. In this work, al-Ghazālī begins by hoping God’s mercy is extended to those Turks and Christians outside the Islamic Empire who die without having received the call to faith. Al-Ghazālī then considers three possibilities for those living outside the Islamic faith: 1) those who have not heard anything of the Prophet or his message, 2) those who have both heard of the Prophet and his miracles, and 3) those who have heard both good and bad reports of the Prophet and are seeking the truth. Those in the first group are excused of accountability and receive God’s mercy. Those in the second are accountable and do not receive God’s mercy. For those in the third group, things prove more complicated. Aslan signals his interest in al-Ghazālī’s treatment of the third group and delves further into the discussion. For those in the third group who err in their final judgment of the matter, they are held responsible. Yet to those who die still seeking the answer al-Ghazālī accords God’s mercy. Thus, Aslan consciously pushes back on the over-simple reading that al-Ghazālī considers all non-Muslims as infidels destined for damnation.

989 Aslan, *Pluralism*, 43-44.
Aslan, nevertheless, clearly affirms that Islam stands as the most complete religion, viewing all other religions as in some way corrupted. Nor does he think it should be a Muslim goal to prove that other religions are corrupt, since a Muslim accepts the quranic message that states other religions are corrupt. Aslan is, however, flexible in that he recognizes it is normal for believers in other religions to continue in their faith, despite the quranic warning; and that God already foresaw this in God’s plan for the salvation of humanity. People who have not heard the quranic address are not capable of seeing the limitations of their own faith. Thus, he does not hold those who have not heard the quranic address accountable for their corrupt religion, nor does he believe God will hold them accountable.990 This is his modern application of al-Ghazālī’s position in *Fayṣal*.991 Essentially, Aslan neither wishes to condemn non-Muslims nor does he wish to say all religions are true. Further, Aslan is willing to recognize that a non-Muslim could be a Muslim in terms of the beliefs of his or her heart. Thus, in his final stance towards other religions, he is arguably an inclusivist, with a position similar to the Catholic theologian Karl Rahner.992

For Aslan, it does not seem logical to bind one’s personal salvation to the prospect of having a perfect religion, since perfection is not a quality of average human beings.

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990 Aslan, *Pluralism*, 49. One might ask what then happens for believers in other faiths who read the Qur’ān and study Islam and yet do not convert. I suppose in this case the same paradigm applies – such people are part of al-Ghazālī’s third group and may or may not receive God’s mercy, provided they are still spiritually seeking truth.
991 Aslan is by no means the only reader of al-Ghazālī to interpret this text as assuring salvation for many non-Muslims. See for example, Ahmed el Shamsy’s chapter “The social construction of orthodoxy” in the *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
992 Aslan, *Pluralism*, 50. Rahner is a famous Catholic inclusivist and coined the controversial term ‘anonymous Christian’ for believers in other religions who nevertheless could be seen as living lives in the spirit of Christ. Although Aslan treats Rahner, he does not identify his position with Rahner’s. That identification is my own. One non-academic Turkish evaluation of Rahner’s anonymous Christianity can be found in Ramazan Yazıcı, *Anonim Din Arayışı ve Dinsel Çoğulculuk* (*The Search for Anonymous Religion and Religious Pluralism*) (Istanbul: Ekin Yayınları, 2008; 2014).
Underpinning this is a view of God whose justice is fundamentally characterized by mercy towards finite creatures. There remains nonetheless an unresolved tension. Aslan continues to hold non-Muslim faiths are corrupted, yet he wants to acknowledge the workings of God’s mercy even in these corrupted faiths. Of course, this position belies the characteristic tension underlying all inclusivist positions, whether Christian, Hindu, Muslim, etc. Further, he diverges from al-Ghazâli in positively holding non-Muslims responsible for maintaining their own religions—that is, he encourages those who have not come to the point of conversion to Islam, at the very least, to maintain their own faiths with care and sincerity. However, there are many questions that his position leaves unanswered. For instance, his inclusivism only treats those who are born into non-Muslim faiths, not those who convert to non-Muslim faiths. Nor does it address the question of multiple religious belonging.

Having dealt with the question of other religions, Aslan turns to atheism as a related discussion. The second essay in his book meticulously engages various atheist positions. Aslan is not quick to throw all atheists into one pot. On the contrary, he makes a point to say that just as there are many ways to believe in God, there are also many ways to not believe in God. His discussion offers some of Western intellectual history behind atheism as well as a longer engagement with analytic philosophers’ approaches to rationally justifying atheism—his major dialogue partner being Michael Martin. Aslan’s treatment stands out in two distinct ways. Firstly, he recognizes and explores the intellectual coherence of atheist objections to theism. Secondly,
Aslan does not defend monotheism by claiming reason and faith must ultimately agree, as Muhammad ‘Abduh did in his *Risālat al-Tawḥīd (Theology of Unity)* over a hundred years before him. Aslan’s response to the challenges of modernity are more subtle, as well as versed in Western intellectual discussions. For Aslan, to reduce faith to logical arguments misses the point. It is not a solution to equate the most perfect faith with the most reasonable. Aslan instead contends that “faith is a psychological condition” that cannot be destroyed by logic alone. This does not mean faith is illogical. Faith simply has more dimensions to consider. In this, Aslan tips his hat to the objections of fideism—a surprising move since many Muslim theologians often assume faith without reason a Christian prerogative. This is not to say he abandons reason. Rather his argument is very reasonable: Coming to faith or losing faith is an incredibly complex process that cannot be reduced to a few logical arguments. Such a position moves the discussion on faith, reason, atheism and pluralism beyond narrow, well-rehearsed arguments.

On this note, Aslan concludes his book with a case for building Turkish Muslim responses to the challenges of modernity. He takes up the Perennialist School as a model of what has been done before. He neither wishes Turkish theologians to copy what scholars like Muslim representative of the Perennialist school S. H. Nasr have done nor does he think it would be wise for Turkish theologians to ignore the challenges, limitations, and successes of the Perennialist School. For him, the Perennialist School represents a way for Islam to exist in a pluralistic world without losing its identity, even spreading its message to a broader audience.

In sum, Aslan starts by aligning himself most closely with al-Ghazālī on the question of pluralism, but he does not stop there. He goes on to seriously consider the intellectual possibility

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995 *Aslan, Pluralism, 80.*
of atheism; and in the final section on the Perennialist School, Aslan calls for a new Muslim approach to modernity. Thus, Aslan does not simply use al-Ghazālī as a symbol of orthodoxy by which to measure the religious “other.” Rather, Aslan uses al-Ghazālī as an anchor in sailing out onto the sea of pluralism, while the boat is entirely his own. Most importantly, Aslan moves beyond al-Ghazālī to ask what a modern Turkish Islamic perspective would look like—an extremely relevant question.

Adnan Aslan is not the only scholar to address issues of pluralism. Other Turkish theologians have made some efforts to tackle the question as well. While John Hick and Seyyed Hossein Nasr tend to come up most frequently in this body of literature, those like Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, and Paul Knitter also make sustained appearances in discussions. Below is a limited survey of other Turkish authors on the subject of pluralism.

One work that focuses especially on John Hick is Ruhattin Yazoğlu’s *The Problem of Religious Pluralism: A Study of John Hick* (2007). Yazoğlu draws on the work of other Turkish scholars discussed here, such as Adnan Aslan (whom he cites with greatest frequency), Mahmut Aydın, Mustafa Köylü, Şinasi Gündüz, Hanifi Özcan, Recep Kılıç, and Cafer Sadık Yaran. As Yazoğlu understands the term pluralism, it signifies the philosophical question of a plurality of expressions and claims made about the singular truth of reality, rather than the question of possible multiple or conflicting ultimate truths. On his interpretation of Hick, the question of pluralism is not about religion, but about God, who is essentially unknowable.

Further describing Hick, Yazoğlu notes that due to this ontological gap between human

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understanding and God, ethical and existential approaches to God prove the most fruitful; however, such a reduction of religion excludes the role of revelation, an unacceptable position for Abrahamic religions. Implicit in Hick’s assessment of religions is the claim that all religions err partially in their truth claims. And while some may try to read Hick as espousing one global religion, Yazoğlu recognizes this does not accurately reflect Hick’s philosophical position—there may be one reality, but the paths are many. Nevertheless, Hick’s philosophical interpretation of religions threatens their sacredness and, moreover, comes off in a remarkably Christian color—that is, Hick tries to describe all religions in terms of salvation. Yazoğlu is critical of Hick, but other Turkish scholars see him in more positive light.

A more positive appraisal of John Hick can be found in Mustafa Eren’s *Religious Pluralism in John Hick* (2016). Mustafa Eren began his theological studies at the theology faculty of Dokuz Eylül University and went on to compete a doctorate in philosophy religion at Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt, writing a comparative thesis on Hans Küng and the medieval Muslim Brethren of Purity. The primary task of his later work, *Religious Pluralism in John Hick*, is to provide a Muslim commentary on John Hick. In this commentary, Eren seems to accept without much objection that human beings necessarily access one Absolute Truth through a plurality of human experience and that one acceptable way of viewing the human journey towards Absolute Truth is a Hickean move from self-centered existence to Truth-centered existence. Further, his work on John Hick and religious pluralism relies heavily on

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Mahmut Aydın, Hanifi Özcan, and Adnan Aslan. For example, Eren speaks approvingly of fellow Turkish scholar Hanifi Özcan’s work on al-Māturīdī’s religious inclusivism (kapsayıcı tutum) and partial pluralism.\textsuperscript{1004} From this, Eren affirms sound Islamic grounding for a genuine embrace of a limited religious plurality that does not devolve into a meaningless, absolutely relative pluralism.\textsuperscript{1005} Like Şaban Ali Düzgün, he views human beings as essentially religious, regardless of particular form, and he embraces the diversity of human religious experience within this overarching sense of unified human identity.\textsuperscript{1006}

A work that explicitly addresses the Christian nature of pluralism is Mahmut Aydın’s \textit{From Monologue to Dialogue: Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Contemporary Christian Thought} (2001).\textsuperscript{1007} Mahmut Aydın began his studies in theology but finished his masters on aspects of the Christian church in the social sciences—a move not uncommon among those who begin their studies in a Turkish theological faculty. He then completed his doctorate at Birmingham University in England with the thesis entitled, “Modern Western Christian Theological Understandings of Muslims Since the Second Vatican Council” (1998). After his studies abroad, he returned to his alma mater, Ondokuz Mayıs University, to take up teaching in the faculty of theology. His work provides a history of Christian views of Islam, progressing (with some exceptions) from negative and exclusive attitudes towards Islam towards more positive and dialogical attitudes. He announces the profound change in interreligious relations starting in the 1970s, calling this shift the onset of an “age of dialogue.”\textsuperscript{1008} His work divides into four sections:

\textsuperscript{1004} Eren, \textit{Pluralism in Hick}, 96.
\textsuperscript{1005} Eren, \textit{Pluralism in Hick}, 96.
\textsuperscript{1006} Eren, \textit{Pluralism in Hick}, 117.
\textsuperscript{1008} Aydın, \textit{From Monologue to Dialogue}, 9.
1) A history of Christian views of Islam prior to Vatican II, 2) a treatment of Vatican II and its stance on dialogue, 3) a survey of dialogue in the wake of Vatican II, and finally 4) a treatment of non-Catholic Christian views on dialogue in light of the World Council of Churches (Dünya Kiliseler Birliği). Notably, he views Christian efforts to take up constructive dialogue with non-Christian religions as a natural result of the Enlightenment and globalization.\(^\text{1009}\) In his estimation, this has allowed for Christians to correct older, incorrect views of other religions, but—perhaps even more importantly—a turn to dialogue has opened the doors for greater interreligious cooperation on issues such as better stewardship of planetary resources and other planetary crises.\(^\text{1010}\) Even though there are still many obstacles to dialogue, neither Muslims nor Christians can afford to avoid it any longer.\(^\text{1011}\) Further, dialogue is not merely a medium for finding reasons to merely respect the “other”—such an approach is one-way; dialogue also requires us to grapple with the religious ‘other’ in ways that they (the ‘other’) themselves recognize and self-describe.\(^\text{1012}\) For M. Aydin, dialogue is not simply a way of perfecting our describing those different from us; it is also a profound journey in self-development and growth.\(^\text{1013}\) On this point, he approvingly points to opportunities for Christians to review their own Christologies in light of what the Qur’ān has to say about Jesus as well as the benefits for Muslims to make use of Christian scriptural understandings to engage more deeply the

\(^{1009}\) Aydin, *From Monologue to Dialogue*, 247. On this point, he would find many European and Anglophone Christian theologians at his side in relative agreement. For a critical and non-theological account of the Enlightenment and imperialist roots of religious pluralism see Tomoko Masuzawa, *The invention of world religions, or, How European universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

\(^{1010}\) Aydin, *From Monologue to Dialogue*, 278. He explicitly speaks of ecological and nuclear threats and affirms the need of religions to cooperate in fostering attitudes and practices to respond effectively to this.

\(^{1011}\) Aydin, *From Monologue to Dialogue*, 256.

\(^{1012}\) Aydin, *From Monologue to Dialogue*, 256.

\(^{1013}\) Aydin, *From Monologue to Dialogue*, 256.
Qur’ān.\textsuperscript{1014} As a constructive warning, Aydın also states it is necessary for Christians to move beyond notions of mission in order to enter into genuine dialogue that does not reduce to polemics.\textsuperscript{1015} Finally, he stresses the quranic call to turn to God rather than to obsess about one’s own creed.\textsuperscript{1016} On this point, he reminds the reader that the present age of dialogue is not guaranteed a future unless the faithful of non-Christian religions rise up to claim their place in the dialogue.\textsuperscript{1017} Accordingly, he calls for Muslims to come together in concert on the question of dialogue, together with non-Muslims, after the model of Vatican II or the World Council of Churches—this is also where he sees a positive role for Turkish theological faculties in providing research to better facilitate and enrich official religious dialogue.\textsuperscript{1018} Finally, M. Aydın has also edited, translated, and written in a volume dedicated to the question of truth claims and religious pluralism, \textit{Religious Pluralism and Absolute [Truth] Claims from Christian, Jewish and Muslim Perspectives} (2005).\textsuperscript{1019} Thanks to his efforts, primary source excerpts from John Hick, Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Langdon Gilkey, Paul Knitter, and Gavin D’Costa are now available to Turkish students of theology.

\textsuperscript{1014} Aydın, \textit{From Monologue to Dialogue}, 256.
\textsuperscript{1015} Aydın, \textit{From Monologue to Dialogue}, 257. On this point, Roger Haight has suggested that mission not be reduced to the old goal of exclusionary conversion but rather broadened to embrace a wider mission of dialogue. Gerard Mannion, “Constructive Comparative Ecclesiology: The Pioneering Work of Roger Haight,” \textit{Ecclesiology} 5 (2009), 188. Thus, while Aydın speaks in terms of abandoning mission, some Christian theologians are active in promulgating a fundamental change in the understanding of mission which accepts and seeks to break from the historical reality of imperialism. Haight writes, “The Christian conception of salvation is rooted in a historical narrative of God’s entering into dialogue with human freedom. If the church is to represent this initiative of God to the world as it has been revealed in Jesus Christ, it must do this in a way that has the deepest respect for human freedom.” This dialogue is modeled after human conversation, “a project of mutual discovery of something new for each party and affirmed together from different perspectives.” Roger Haight, \textit{Ecclesial Existence}, Volume 3 of \textit{Christian Community in History} (London: Bloomsbury, 2004; 2014), 251-252. For a discussion of agency in dialogue, modeled on conversations between two friends, see Taraneh Wilkinson, “On Drawing and Being Drawn: On Applying Friendship to Comparative Theology,” \textit{Journal of Ecumenical Studies} 48 (2013).
\textsuperscript{1016} Aydın, \textit{From Monologue to Dialogue}, 258.
\textsuperscript{1017} Aydın, \textit{From Monologue to Dialogue}, 259.
\textsuperscript{1018} Aydın, \textit{From Monologue to Dialogue}, 265.
Another work worth noting is Mustafa Köylü’s *Dialogue between Religions* (2001). Mustafa Köylü began his studies in the Turkish theology faculty system at the Ondokuz Mayıs University and went on to complete his doctorate at the United Theological Seminary in Dayton, OH. The work in question treats both Muslim and Christian perspectives on dialogue. Like many others, he treats John Hick; he also discusses Hans Küng, and Paul Knitter. The second half of his book deals with Muslim perspectives on Christian-Muslim relations—in particular, those of Shi‘ite scholar Mahmoud Eyoub, Tunisian historian Mohamed Talbi, and finally Seyyed Hossein Nasr at George Washington University. Köylü documents and appreciates the mutual efforts made on Christian and Muslim sides to work towards deeper interreligious understanding and tolerance. Further, he clarifies that interreligious dialogue is not merely frills and fluff; on the contrary, the Qur‘ān calls all Muslims into dialogue with those of other faiths. Dialogue is a serious duty.

As a brief note, some Turkish theologians have, similar to Adnan Aslan, taken up a classical Islamic scholar into their discussion of religious pluralism. Two examples of this are Hidayet Işık’s *Islam and Other Religions according to al-Āmirī* (2006) and Hanifi Özcan’s frequently cited *Religious Pluralism in Māturidī*. This latter and more influential work affirms the importance of religious pluralism as a philosophical problem.

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1023 Hidayet Işık, *Āmirī’ye Göre İslâm ve Öteki Dinler* (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2006).
Lastly, Düzgün, whom we have touched on in depth before, conducted an interview during his time in Washington, D.C. with controversial Catholic theologian Roger Haight. He published the initial English interview in the *Ankara University Theology Faculty Journal* in 2006 and then offered a translation of the interview in his book *Religion and Religious [People] in the Modern World* (2012). In the interview, Düzgün asks Haight a very pertinent question:

[The p]ostmodern situation in its emphasis on historicity and religious pluralism poses new questions and puts severe pressure on the traditional absolutistic claims. In your understanding is a new theocentrism something necessary, one which refrains from traditional totalizing metanarratives? Is pluralism an indispensable consequence of the necessity to interpret religious texts? How is it possible to decide whether a text admits a pluralism of different interpretations?\(^{1026}\)

In response to this question, Haight distinguishes between a religious metanarrative and a theory of religions, the former being more problematic than the latter. The difference between the two is that religious metanarrative tries to assign a place and role for those of other religions that does not fit their self-understanding. In this way, a religious metanarrative boldly makes claims about the whole of reality. This distinction between theory and metanarrative offers an opportunity for reflection on Turkish discussions of religious pluralism. Arguably, many Turkish discussions of religious pluralism (and even skepticism) remain in the space of religious metanarrative—one that is shaped by an underlying embrace of *tawḥīd* or divine unity.\(^{1027}\) However, the boldness of such claims varies greatly from theologian to theologian. As we saw particularly with Recep

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\(^{1026}\) Düzgün, “Pluralism and Christianity in A Postmodern Age: An Interview with Roger Haight,” *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 47 (2006): 46. This part of the article (i.e. the interview) is in English.

\(^{1027}\) The distinction between religious theory and metanarrative is problematic, and it would be hard not to judge a great many Christian or post-Christian theologians as remaining in the space of metanarrative. However, I retain the distinction because it is one Turkish theologians have engaged and as a device for further discussion.
Alpyağıl and Adnan Aslan, there was a conscious effort to limit evaluations of those practicing other religions, opening up spaces for new engagements with the religious other.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we looked at a wide range of Turkish theological output and found that discussions of skepticism, atheism, and the question of other religions tend to be treated in connection with one another. In particular, causes of skepticism and atheism were often recounted in conjunction with Christianity—either as a rejection of a corrupt and irrational Christianity (Coşkun) or as a result of secular worldviews informed by toxic expressions of Christianity (Düzgün). We also saw that Turkish theologians still find the God of ontotheology defensible and unproblematic—their confidence in the connection between sound metaphysical claims and lived faith is expressed in literature devoted to *kalām*\(^{1028}\) and Islamic philosophy as well as reflections on the profound significance of *tawḥīd* or divine unity.

Frequently, Turkish theologians fault Christianity with corrupt hierarchies (Church) and corrupt beliefs (making the Christian God of ontotheology ultimately indefensible) for the Western susceptibility to skepticism and eventually atheism. As two very distinct exceptions to this pattern, we treated the work of Yaşark Nuri Öztürk and the work of Recep Alpyağlı. Öztürk, does not single out Christianity as the cause of atheism but false religiosity—he faults Islamic practices with false religiosity and does not reserve his criticisms for Christianity. For Öztürk, it

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\(^{1028}\) There is a movement called ‘New *Kalām*’ (Turkish: *Yeni Kelam*). It has some precedent in late Ottoman thinkers—for instance, Abdüllatif Harpūṭ, İzmirli İsmail Hakkı, Filibeli Ahmed Hīmī, Ömer Nasuhī Bilmen, Mehmet Ali Aynī, and Ferit Kam. Modern Turkish figures include Bekir Topaloğlu and M. Sait Özervarlı. See Yusuf Şefki Yavuz: *Kelâm*, in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 202. Coşkun also brings up the subject under the title *Yeni İlm-i Kelam*, describing these theologians as those who have taken up the task of defending divinity in the face of a barrage of Western atheistic trends. See Coşkun, *Ateizm ve İslam*, 223.
is this false religiosity, rather than atheism, that proves the most harmful to society and the spiritual life of true believers. In the case of Recep Alpyağlı, while he accepts that Christian history and belief may be more problematic than Islamic history and belief, he nevertheless views the question of skepticism and doubt as real challenges to both religions. He refuses to relegate the modern clash of faith and reason to Christian discussions alone.

Finally, on the question of other religions, Turkish scholars associate the issue of religious pluralism with Christianity. And though critical of some aspects of pluralism, many Turkish scholars develop their own versions of inclusivism—positions frequently marked by an understanding of *tawḥīd*. Or, as echoed in Düzgün’s words to Haight, Turkish theologians interested in engaging Christian theologians on the question of pluralism stress islamically grounded “theocentrism.” Lastly, a number of Turkish scholars see the value of religious dialogue and encourage Muslims, especially Turkish Muslims, to do their part in taking up a voice in a conversation which has heretofore been dominated by Christian discourses.

Even though Christianity is a prominent and common thing in Turkish discussions of atheism, skepticism, and religious pluralism, the more nuanced discussions cannot be reduced to a simple dichotomy of reaction against Christianity or Western philosophical trends. There are instances of serious engagement, and these instances also draw on Islamic sources—classical and modern. Once again, Turkish theologians dialectically navigate multiple intellectual traditions, and this navigation cannot be reduced to over-simple dualities. Certainly, there are oversimplified treatments of atheism, skepticism, Christianity, and pluralism—and many of these

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1029 Some of these inclusivisms, even for those not specifically engaging Anglophone literature on pluralism, are built on a framework of *tawḥīd* or divine unity. This arguably allows Turkish theologians to affirm one truth, while still embracing various levels of plurality.
treatments reflect widely held assumptions. But there are also sustained theological engagements
which move beyond reductive assumptions and which also deserve to be taken as original
theological contributions.
CONCLUSION

Reflections on Modernity and Dialogue

From the start of this examination I have argued that Turkish theology is characterized by engagement with the Western intellectual tradition, alongside Turkish and broader Islamic sources. Turkish theologians examine and incorporate voices from the Western intellectual tradition, including academic Christian theology. Not all Turkish theologians express a simple, polarized reaction to the West or Western Christianity. The responses vary and include negative, positive, and constructive elements; they include clichés, generalizations, and points of active dialogue. This engagement with Western sources may be conceptual or it may be played out in footnotes. It can be indirect or direct. At its most creative it is dialectical, navigating Western sources with the help of Turkish and Arabic ones and at times navigating Turkish or Arabic discussions with the aid of Western sources.

The title of this examination is “Dialectics not Dualities.” What the title is meant to convey is that Turkish theology needs to be read not through the lens of reductive dualities but to be understood in terms of its complex dialectical relations between intellectual traditions. I have attempted to characterize these complex dialectical relations with a threefold schema which includes Turkish/Ottoman, Arab-Islamic, and Western sources. The dialectical dynamics present in Turkish theology are not limited to the broad picture suggested by this threefold schema, but also manifest in individual discussions and in critical re-narrations of Turkish and Muslim identity in the modern world.
In this conclusion, I will first summarize the major points from the preceding chapters, then return to the reflections on modernity begun in chapter 1, and finally address the question of possible academic dialogue between Turkish theologians and Western Christian theologians.

**Summary**

The first chapter of this study looked at the context and history of Turkish theology faculties. I proposed that Turkish theology faculties are both expressions of Ottoman-Turkish continuity as well as products of modernity, arguing that Turkish theology has an ongoing history of complex intellectual tributaries. Due to this complexity, I held that Turkish theology needs to be studied in non-binary frameworks, which do not reduce it to politics or debates on secularism. Instead of limiting analysis to reductive dualities, I argued that it is necessary to look at the theological value of the arguments presented by Turkish theologians—particularly in their responses to Western Christianity. To better evaluate Turkish theological contributions, I proposed a roughly threefold schema of engagement, suggesting that Turkish theology involves a dynamic interplay of Turkish, wider Islamic, and Western sources.

The second and third chapters took up the question of gender in the work of three figures: Fatma Barbarosoğlu, Hidayet Şefkatli Tuksal, and Hafsa Fidan. I framed the discussion with a typical question from feminist discourse: Does gender have an ontological reality? I then reshaped this framework with the help of quranic terminology: Is the *fitra* or *nafs*, or primal human nature, gendered? While both Barbarosoğlu and Tuksal exhibit some dialectical engagement with Western discussions and classical Islamic roots, neither thinker applies dialectical dynamism to her respective understanding of gender: Barbarosoğlu espouses rigid gender binaries, and Tuksal stresses shared human identity irrespective of gender.
Chapter 3 turned to Fidan’s work, and I argued for her significance as an example of successful dialectical engagement, in terms of her creative imagining of gender and in terms of her engagement with both Islamic and Western traditions. Her interpretation of \( naf's \) bespoke a relational ontology of gender—where gender is neither understood in a rigid binary nor as something that can be overlooked as part of the fundamental human experience. In exploring what I call her relational ontology of gender and what she calls gender dialectic, it became clear that considerations of dialectics were 1) at least diffusely influenced by related philosophical debates in European and Anglophone literature\(^{1030} \) and 2) not limited to Fidan’s specific case. Further examination of Fidan’s work brought to light reference, on the part of Fidan and others, to contemporary European and Anglophone works, including scholars of religion and theology. This raised questions as to whether there were more explicit engagements with Western sources that also exhibited dialectical dynamism and how such engagements might navigate authority.

How a Turkish theologian uses European and Anglophone sources, depending on context, constitutes a response to Christianity, modernity, and the Western intellectual tradition. But these are not responses aimed at Christian theologians or Western thinkers directly; they are part of an internal address to the Turkish situation. So, how does authority function for Turkish theologians who heavily engage European and Anglophone philosophical and religious thought? Or in other words, how do they mediate a confluence of authoritative traditions? To address this, I brought in the work of Philip C. Dorroll on Turkish theology faculties in the mid-twentieth

\(^{1030}\) Without a direct statement by an author, either in their written work or in personal communication, speculation and an analysis of citations and terms at best provides a less precise and open-ended picture of possible influence. While I did communicate with Fidan via email, I was not able to ascertain whether she was consciously thinking of Gadamer when she developed her understanding of gender dialectics. In any case, even in European and Anglophone philosophical literature dialectics can mean different things—for instance, while many think of Hegelian dialectics, Schleiermacher, whose influence is still felt in modern hermeneutics, developed his own distinct understanding of philosophical dialectics.
century. In chapter 4, I took up Dorroll’s thesis that there existed in Turkey theology faculties of the mid-twentieth century an “Ankara Paradigm,” a paradigm whose premises are still at work among Turkish theologians today. According to Dorroll, the basic premise of the Ankara Paradigm is that modern values like democracy or the possibility of secularism were not considered *a priori* inimical to Islam, and, as such, reform in religion and religious law (sharia) was considered acceptable. While I did not use the Ankara Paradigm in my following treatments of Recep Alpyağıl and Şaban Ali Düzgün, I did identify similar elements at work. Specifically, I identified the value of individual authority in both figures and, in the work of Düzgün, the premise that humanistic and positive values associated with modernity are fully compatible with an Islamic position, especially one informed by Māturīdī theology.

Chapter 5, which treated the work of philosophical theologian Recep Alpyağıl, made the case for the importance of individual authority, especially in forging dialectical continuity between a Muslim individual’s Islamic past, present, and integrated vision for the future. Alpyağıl advocates for the integration of European and Anglophone voices alongside figures from the Arabic and Ottoman traditions as necessary for an authentic Turkish canon of philosophical theology. For Alpyağıl, the wide spectrum of voices claiming authority—from classical Islamic sources, Ottoman and modern Turkish sources, to Christian and Western sources—necessitate the mediating, creative, and self-conscious execution of individual authority. Since there are no easy answers, according to Alpyağıl, the burden to ask better questions and to navigate claims of authenticity and authority lies largely on the informed efforts of the believer.

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1031 Philip C. Dorroll stated these assumptions explicitly in an email correspondence to me dated Nov 18, 2015. Chapter 4 examined his treatment of the “Ankara Paradigm” in his published work.
In chapter 6, I argued that individual authority lies also at the heart of Düzgün’s theological anthropology. And it is this internal, though not absolute, authority of the individual which both ties the believing individual to God and to her own tradition and so allows her to face the challenges of a global world. Düzgün stresses that God created human beings to be free and that the most authentic form of authority is internal—as opposed to external. The freedom underpinning individual authority is not a freedom that necessarily contradicts tradition or society. Insofar as tradition or society may be considered corrupted, the individual who pursues true religion may at times find herself in conflict with tradition or society. Yet, individuals are meant to mediate their place in society. As a human being, the individual believer is deeply connected to the rest of humanity. For Düzgün, who cites Ḥanafi tradition, all human beings are equipped with cognitive faculties, common sense, intuition, and conscience. He further draws from his reading of Māturīdī theology to argue that human diversity is divinely willed and that human agency—when properly put to use—shares in divine agency. Thus, I read Düzgün’s case for individual authority to simultaneously be a case for individual responsibility. The responsible believer is willing and able to critically approach her own tradition as well as authentically engage other individuals who do not share in her faith tradition or way of viewing the world.

Chapters 5 and 6, while focusing on the subject of authority, served to present two case examples of the extensive engagement between Turkish theologians and various facets of the Western intellectual tradition. This engagement incorporates explicitly Christian, secular philosophical, and even atheist voices. In the cases of both Alpyağil and Düzgün this engagement involved criticism, positive appraisal, and a strong sense of the need to redefine terms drawn from this engagement. I found that neither figure held that engagement with non-
Muslim and non-Turkish thought should or could be avoided. Instead, Alpyağil and Düzgün respectively advocated philosophical and theological approaches for individual engagement with non-Muslim and non-Turkish thought—with Alpyağil arguing for the common ground of philosophical theology and Düzgün arguing for a universal theological anthropology that recognizes diversity and mutual engagement as part of humanity’s divinely willed responsibility and journey.

Chapter 7 considered another aspect of Turkish engagement with multiple authoritative traditions, offering a brief survey of Turkish treatments of skepticism, atheism, and religious pluralism. I argued that the common thread between all three topics is Christianity. Many Turkish theologians strongly associate skepticism, atheism, and religious pluralism with Christianity—and often with negative connotations. Turkish theologians tend to view Christianity as both a cause of skepticism and atheism. In addition, Turkish theologians tend to view Christianity to be more vulnerable to the forces of skepticism and atheism than Islam. Further, for some Turkish theologians, religious pluralism functions nearly as synonym for Christian theological responses to other religions, or is at the very least heavily defined by Christian concepts. Apart from these widely held assumptions, I also examined notable exceptions to such broad associations. For instance, Yaşar Nuri Öztürk did not claim that Christian theology or even the European deist heritage were major causes of atheism; instead, he claimed false religiosity fueled unbelief. Alpyağil, in another example, claims that skepticism is not merely a Christian problem but also poses intellectual challenges for Muslims. Adnan Aslan also seriously engages atheism within the discussion of religious pluralism. And while pluralism, even for Aslan, represents a strongly Christian project, Turkish theologians, including Aslan,
have developed their own variations of inclusivism. This Muslim and Turkish inclusivism tends to embrace *tawḥīd*, or divine unity, as a keystone for inclusivism, a fulcrum around which diversity can be properly celebrated without the possibility of universal truth falling into question.\(^{1032}\)

The treatments and insights I have presented here do not reflect the full complexity at play but they do offer a range of examples and an analysis of major dynamics. Namely, I have argued for the importance of not trivializing or reducing Turkish theological discussions to political landscapes or false dichotomies, suggesting instead Turkish theology reflects a pervasive and dialectical threefold engagement with Turkish/Ottoman, Arabic, and Western sources. As part of this threefold engagement, Turkish theological voices draw from, engage, and at times consciously respond to Western intellectual tradition(s) on topics of gender, modernity, postmodernity, globalization, human nature, skepticism, atheism, deism, and religious pluralism.

In light of this threefold engagement, I claim that Turkish theologians are very much products of modernity, but they are not merely passive products of modernity. Turkish theologians engage, respond to, reshape the discussion of modernity, claiming the authority to pronounce judgment on it. After all, humans are both passive products of the world that shapes them and active agents shaping the world,\(^{1033}\) and so it is possible to be a product of modernity

\(^{1032}\) When I visited Ankara, Prof. Mualla Selçuk graciously gave me the opportunity to share a Christian perspective on *tawḥīd* (influenced by Schleiermacher, Rahner, and contemporary comparative theology) and express how it affected my own understanding of religious pluralism in her graduate seminar (Dec 4, 2015). Unbeknownst to me, it happened to be a day already set aside for the discussion of *tawḥīd*, so my reflections were well received. Not only that, but my view that *tawḥīd* was an appropriate concept to bring into the discussion of religious pluralism also seemed to resonate. Then, as I looked deeper into the literature of theologians that engage Christianity and religious pluralism, I also found that *tawḥīd* was referenced, as I have noted in prior discussions here. Theologically speaking, it is a topic I have not yet been able further investigate.

\(^{1033}\) For a Christian philosophical perspective on this statement, see Schleiermacher’s *Second Speech on Religion*. For a recent translation of the 1806 edition of this famous work, see F. D. E. Schleiermacher, *Christmas Dialogue, The Second Speech, and Other Selections*, edited and translated by Julia A. Lamm (New York & Mahwah, NJ: 332
and still respond critically to it. If this were not the case, then the considerable body of
Anglophone and European literature on the concept of modernity would be unthinkable. In the
Turkish context, the question of how Turkish theology reflects and responds to modernity is
largely a function of how modernity is defined. For, in Turkish theology, the terms of discussion
along with their definitions are often a function of this proposed threefold dynamic.

The definition of modernity is a still-open discussion, and while I will bring in non-
Turkish voices, I am in no way attempting an exhaustive treatment of either Western debates on
modernity or Turkish ones. The following section limits itself to a modest reflection on the
category of modernity in light of Turkish theology.

Reflection: Back to the Topic of Modernity

To further reflection on the question of modernity in Turkish theology, this section draws
primarily on contributions of Christian theologian Roger Haight, Islamic historian Thomas
Bauer, scholar of Islam Shahab Ahmed, and philosopher Louis Dupré. I argue for the value of
Turkish responses to modernity as part of a greater opportunity for academic dialogue between
Turkish and Christian theologians.

Globalization and Dialogue: Roger Haight

Globalization, the process by which the world is shrinking and nations and cultures
become ever more interdependent, forces specific groups of people to take note of other
nations and cultures. The international rubbing of shoulders across great distances has a
universalizing and a particularizing effect. The common international standards of
communication and commerce that are being constructed threaten local cultural values
and encourage them to become more entrenched. Because Western nations hold such

Paulist Press, 2014). Schleiermacher also elaborates on this theme and its implications for piety and consciousness
of relationship with God in his monumental The Christian Faith, ed. H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (London;
New York: T&T Clark, 1999), 5-26 (i.e. §3-§5, which discuss piety and consciousness of human agency) and 131-
141 (i.e., §32-§35, which discuss the feeling of absolute dependence in relation with relative dependence and agency
in the world).
power, globalization carries a Western bias. For example, though the majority of Christians now live in the developing world, the church still remains associated with Western culture and is often resisted on those grounds alone.\(^{1034}\)

– Roger Haight

I begin with Haight’s statement above as an opening mirror, point of contrast, and theological challenge for the present discussion on Turkish theology. Haight, who, as mentioned previously, has had direct interaction with Şaban Ali Düzgün,\(^{1035}\) suggests that globalization, and by extension modernity, carries a Western bias, backed not only by ideas but by more practical histories of power, economy, and influence. Like some of the Turkish theologians discussed earlier, Haight also recognizes the potential threat globalization can pose to local cultures and systems of value. Globalization and Western cultural bias are interconnected. While this bias cannot be eliminated, I suggest that Turkish theological portrayals of and responses to Western and Christian modernity are valuable contributions in coming to terms with and gaining new perspective on this bias. In learning from Turkish theological portrayals of Western modernity and Christianity, Christian theologians have an opportunity to engage Turkish theologians in dialogue.

Haight has some reflections on dialogue that may be helpful here. He distinguishes between pragmatism when dealing with difference of historical consciousness and the positive appreciation of difference in “pluralist consciousness.” The former does not positively value diversity, while the latter does. In Haight’s view, the historical consciousness now common to many within and outside of academia “looks more like pragmatic negotiation than an effort at


agreement in a shared internalized truth.”

In other words, people in and outside academia worry more about practical measures of mutual tolerance than valuing diversity as part of a collective journey towards truth. By contrast, Haight explains, “pluralist consciousness” does not see different perspectives as a neutral or even negative obstacle to negotiate but rather views them as opportunities for greater mutual enrichment. He writes:

Dialogue provides a way of taking the pluralistic character of the present situation with utmost seriousness while at the same time not surrendering commitment to a common truth that makes claims on all. But dialogue is not a simple concept. It contains an implicit ethic, a set of rules that governs its authenticity.

Haight cautions that dialogue, when lacking an ethic of mutual respect, can easily devolve into manipulation. I note that in the case of Turkey, there is strong weight given to academic reflections on modernity and dialogue. With the help of an ethic of mutual respect, theologians both inside and outside of Turkey might successfully develop fruitful discussions. Yet in order to have successful and mutually respectful inter-academic dialogue on such issues, it is necessary to acknowledge the relevant material power dynamics and Western bias present in the project of globalization.

Haight also remarks that, unlike an individual given over to the compulsion of seeking pleasure after pleasure, “Distinctively human freedom begins with constancy and commitment to stable values.” I suggest this discussion of values may be richer and more complete if continued through increasing efforts of academic dialogue across theological traditions.

1036 Haight, Ecclesial Existence, 245.
1037 Haight, Ecclesial Existence, 247.
1038 Haight, Ecclesial Existence, 247.
1039 Haight, Ecclesial Existence, 249. This appeal to human freedom and values resonates strongly with the work of Düzdün.
Especially since human freedom, ethical values, and dialogue with the modern world are already topics treated by Turkish theologians.\textsuperscript{1040}

Lastly, I hold that when engaging Turkish theology the category of West/Western should not be dismissed. Turkish theologians use it intentionally, challenge it, discuss it in engagement with post-colonial literature, and associate it strongly with Christianity. In this way, using the terms “West” and “Western” may serve to help theologians move away from thinking of the world in terms of West and other. For instance, Recep Alpyağıl’s engagement with Western philosophy of religion is a very successful example of this turnabout, and it allows him to redraw the lines of intellectual canon to include Western voices within an authentic Turkish intellectual heritage. It is thus important to recognize that Turkish theological references to the Western intellectual tradition do not inevitably result in polarization, but sometimes produce active integration, as in the case with Alpyağıl. This category of West/Western, though at times deceptively monolithic, is used by Turkish theologians; and how they use it both matters and merits attention.

\textit{Ambiguity and Authenticity: Thomas Bauer and Shahab Ahmed}

Another question which briefly arose in chapter 4 is that of the perceived Muslim authenticity of Turkish theology. Can Turkish theologians who strongly engage Western intellectual tradition and Christianity represent authentically Muslim voices? I draw on the work of scholars of Islam Thomas Bauer and Shahab Ahmed to argue that Turkish theological voices

\textsuperscript{1040} See chapter 6 on Şaban Ali Düzgün.
in dialogue with modernity and the Western intellectual tradition can and do represent authentically Muslim voices.

As discussed in chapter 1, the work of Islamic historian Thomas Bauer highlights the intolerance of ambiguity so symptomatic of modernity, tracing this intolerance through the changes in Islamic self-understanding prior to and after interactions with Western modernity. Bauer cautions that normative Islamic claims which seem reactionary or traditional may also be manifestations of Western influence. Namely, reactionary or traditional voices reflect modernity’s intolerance of ambiguity and plurality of meaning. As Bauer argues, ambiguity and polysemy are historically very much a part of Islamic intellectual culture prior to modernity. I argue that Turkish theologians in dialogue with Christian and Western sources exhibit a significant tolerance for ambiguity and plurality.\(^{1041}\) To view this tolerance as a deficit in Islamic authenticity is not a reaction against modern values but rather an instance of modern intolerance—in this case what Bauer identifies as the modern intolerance of ambiguity and plurality of meanings.

The late scholar of Islam Shahab Ahmed, similarly to Bauer, also addresses the question of Islamic authenticity. In his recent work, *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic*, he argues for a more inclusive view of what counts as authentically Islamic culture. In his discussion on various ways to categorize and conceptualize Islam, he writes:

> We need to resist our conceptual predisposition to conceptualize and categorize by elimination of difference, and conceptualize and categorize, instead, *in terms of inclusion of difference*. As such, the goal and touchstone of a successful conceptualization of Islam

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\(^{1041}\) In terms of valuing pluralism but critiquing the false pluralism of globalization, two authors discussed earlier come to mind: Barbarosoğlu and Düzgün. Both authors included criticism of globalism and modernity’s negative impact on healthy diversity, stressing instead the value of local diversity (Barbasoğlu) and divinely willed human diversity (Düzgün).
as theoretical object and analytical category must be to *locate and explain*, to the fullest degree possible, the *logic of internal contradiction that allows contradictory statements and actions to cohere meaningfully to their putative object*...¹⁰⁴²

Ahmed’s position is similar to Bauer’s in arguing for an inclusion of difference when categorizing cultural and intellectual products as Islamic. When evaluating Islamic authenticity, the question should not be limited to an either/or discussion but rather set amid an analysis of the complex both/and’s and contradictions present in any one manifestation of Islam.

Many of the Turkish theologians treated above were consciously explorative and creative in their theological projects. Critics may question their religious authority on these grounds: The theologians examined here are not figures who issue fatwas, but scholars who open up discussions. Are these then true representatives of Islam? I would like to respond to this question with Ahmed’s remarks on the question of what is and is not Islam:

Symptomatic of the marginalization of exploration, ambiguity, ambivalence, relativism and contradiction in the conceptualization of Islam is the fact that a unique feature of the study of societies of Muslims, as compared to other societies, is that so much value is given and *meaning* ascribed to the prescriptive and restrictive discourses of Muslims, such as law and creed, and so little value is given and *meaning* ascribed to explorative and creative discourses such as fictional literature, art and music. Simply, when Muslims act and speak *exploratively*—as opposed to *prescriptively*—as they seem to have spent a very great deal of their historical time doing, they are somehow not seen to be acting and speaking in a manner and register that is representative, expressive and constitutive of Islam.¹⁰⁴³

Ahmed stresses that stopping at the prescriptive elements of Islamic thought and culture does not do justice to more creative and exploratory expressions. Even though the present discussion is not about art or music, it is still worthwhile to heed Ahmed’s observation: Is a creative or explorative venture in Muslim thought inherently less Islamic than Muslim discourse on

jurisprudence or ritual practice? Is it not possible to act and speak *exploratively* in the name of authentic Turkish Islam? I would argue that at least some Turkish theologians think that it is possible—the exploratory and dialogical aspects of both Alpyağıl and Düzgün’s projects depend on this assumption. And though Alpyağlı and Düzgün feature as primary cases in this study, these two figures are not the only instances of *explorative* discourses in Turkish theology. For example, all three primary figures examined on the question of gender (Barbarosoğlu, Tuksal, Fidan) exhibited some explorative tendencies. Discourse was not limited to lists of prescriptions or injunctions. Barbarosoğlu incorporated sociological and personal reflection, Tuksal applied concerns of patriarchy associated with feminist discourse to the evaluation of hadith, and Fidan used philosophical hermeneutics to conceptualize open spaces of interpretation for gender in the Qur’ān. Further, in chapter 7’s discussion of skepticism, atheism, and other religions, figures arose willing to either explore grounds for new Islamic positions or to explore non-Muslim positions. Öztürk argued for a quranically grounded Deism. Alpyağaļ considered Christian fideist responses and the challenges of skepticism. Adnan and others explored different possibilities for Muslim inclusivism. There are no doubt further examples of this exploratory practice not considered in the present study awaiting treatment.

In short, Turkish theologians range from taking on more prescriptive roles to explorative roles. The present study has given pride of place to projects that dialogue with Western sources and, as such, has highlighted more exploratory theological projects. Admittedly, not all Muslims in Turkey recognize these more exploratory (or even some of these prescriptive roles) as authoritative. As Dorroll has noted, there are critics of the Ankara Paradigm today. The

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1044 The question of the normative credibility of Turkish Theology Faculties, as a whole, is both fascinating and beyond the scope of this project.
Ankara Paradigm is one that takes up Enlightenment values and assumes religion and reform are compatible, and its influence is still notable among Turkish theologians. As discussed in the introduction to the section on authority, one notable critic of the Ankara Paradigm Dorroll identifies is Hayreddin Karaman. As a fiqh scholar, his work is more focused on prescriptive values in Islam than exploratory ventures. Those like Karaman who see prescriptive Islam as inherently more authentic may, as Ahmed notes more generally, consider more exploratory and progressive theological ventures as inherently less authentic. Nonetheless, some Turkish theologians do undertake exploratory ventures and they do so from an explicitly Muslim perspective. The present analysis has endeavored to highlight these more creative and exploratory notes—which generally represent theological engagements with perceived cultural and religious “others” like the West, Christianity, atheism, and even pluralism.

**Critics and Builders Modernity: Louis Dupré**

Modernity is an event that has transformed the relation between the cosmos, its transcendent source, and its human interpreter. To explain this as the outcome of historical precedents is to ignore its most significant quality—namely, its success in rendering all rival views of the real obsolete. Its innovative power made modernity, which began as a local Western phenomenon, a universal project capable of forcing its theoretical and practical principles on all but the most isolated civilizations. “Modern” has become the predicate of a unified world culture.

Critics of modernity implicitly accept more of its assumptions than they are able to discard. Even those who globally reject its theoretical principles continue to build on them.

― Louis Dupré

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1045 See, for example, Hayreddin Karaman, *Hayatımızdaki İslâm 1* [Islam in our Life 1] (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2002) or his *İslâm Hukuk Tarihi* [A History of Islamic Law] (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1999).


Louis Dupré, like Haight, stresses the global aspect of modernity. Modernity is so pervasive that even critics struggle to fully divest themselves of its principles. These words from philosopher Dupré’s *Passage to Modernity* bring us to several important questions helpful for making a few generalizations about Turkish theology’s relationship to modernity and the Western intellectual tradition. Are Turkish theologians primarily critics of Western religious tradition and modernity? Do they approve or positively represent some of its assumptions? Do they hold themselves to intellectual criteria most heavily associated with modernity; and in doing so do they redefine such criteria? Can they not as critics of modernity in its Western forms also function as supporters and developers of the principles associated with modernity? I argue that Turkish theological criticisms modernity also entail actively building upon the principles of modernity which they positively value.

Among Turkish theologians, while there certainly exists literature devoted to the criticism of an unhealthy expression of Western Christianity and Western modernity, there is also a deep sense of identification and embroilment with this same heritage. As explained in chapter 1, Turkish theology was founded on an ideal of the academic and scientific study of religion—an ideal grounded in Ottoman and Turkish appropriation of sociology of religion. The physical faculties themselves reflect this admixture of traditional Islamic sciences and Western academic divisions, so much so that it is standard for a faculty to have, for instance, both a tafsīr department and instruction dedicated to psychology of religion under the roof of one larger edifice. Also, Turkish theology has a relatively strong international component—pressing many of its scholars to attend and host international conferences and to collaborate with scholars of other academies in order to increase both their visibility and the quality of their own research.
There is a globally-minded element to much Turkish theology. Certainly, not all Turkish theologians are equally interested in this broader picture, but, as we have seen, many are and their scholarly journeys and output clearly reflect this. Moreover, Turkish theology, as I have argued throughout, boasts a strongly dialogical component. Much of its output is done in conversation with or reference to Western voices, Christian figures and philosophers.

The cases of Recep Alpyağıl and Şaban Ali Düzgün present Turkish theologians who approve of certain aspects of both modernity and postmodernity, reconnecting both concepts to perceived past values and pointing to ways forward.¹⁰⁴⁸ Turkish theologians—some aligned more closely with the Ankara Paradigm than others—do not necessarily reject modernity when they criticize Christianity or Western ontotheology. Historically and even today, many embrace and defend principles strongly associated with the Enlightenment, modernity, and postmodernity. With authors Hidayet Şefkatlı Tuksal and Hafsa Fidan, we find value assigned both to tradition as well as to “modern” ideals such as gender equality, even if both have different ways of striking a synthesis. And as we saw in chapter 7 on Turkish discussions of other religions and religious pluralism, there exists simultaneously a robust emphasis on ontotheology and a strong confidence in its superiority to Western ontotheology.

Allow me to further illustrate this last example. On the subject of Western ontotheology, Dupré speaks of a “double breakup” clefting a rift between Creator and Cosmos and between the human individual and the Cosmos; he identifies a Christian “ontotheological synthesis” between God, humanity, and world, whose rupture “guided Western thought to break down.”¹⁰⁴⁹ This

¹⁰⁴⁸ Though his work does not feature here, Turkish theologian İlhami Güler, for example, recommended to me that I reach Richard Kearney on the subject of postmodernity, when I visited the Ankara Faculty (Dec 3, 2015). Güler is in fact responsible for introducing me to Kearney’s work.
¹⁰⁴⁹ Louis Dupré, Passage to Modernity, 3.
rupture he uses to mark the dawn of modernity. As we have seen in the work of Düzgün, modern Turkish interpretations of Māturīdī kalām stress a perceived strand of Islamic thought. Düzgün explains that in Māturīdī kalām the bonds between Creator and Cosmos maintain person- and life-affirming harmony. By contrast, this is a harmony that Dupré judged Western ontotheology to have lost. In the case of Düzgün, the affirmation of Māturīdī thought over Ash'arite thought (where Creator and Cosmos were arguably put more at odds due to debates on divine agency and causality\textsuperscript{1050}) is also an affirmation of Muslim ontotheology in the face of a perceived failure in Western ontotheology, a failure which Düzgün cites Christian and Western thinkers to articulate and affirm. Beyond the work of Düzgün, there exists a robust confidence in Muslim ontotheology to produce meaningful and effective answers to the challenges of modernity. And this confidence arguably motivates much of Turkish theological literature.

Turkish responses to modernity, I suggest, fall into a broader context of reengaging the past critically to move forward. This past is a mixed past—one that includes Islamic, Ottoman, and Western history. As mentioned in chapter 1, Turkish theologians today are not the only generation to have encountered and responded to intellectual trends in the West. Ottoman and Turkish historian İsmail Kara says more generally in his work *Between Religion and Modernization*:

The human being is a forward-looking being, his face, his eyes, and his feet have also been created to point forward. But [...] the future is a [sieve of] recollection, a chain of transmission, a perception, and built first upon a mental/theoretical foundation, it can only be constructed practically. [...] The future should not be called an order of coincidences, but rather a construction operation.\textsuperscript{1051}


\textsuperscript{1051} İsmail Kara, *Din ile Modernleşme Arasında: Çağdaş Türk Düşünsesinin Meseleleri* [Between

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Kara uses the word construction to speak of the human (and by extension Turkish) relation to past and future. I have used the word constructive to describe theological projects examined here: Fidan, Alpyağıl, and Düzgün stand out in particular. Construction stresses agency over the negative associations of criticism, and this positive agency seems to prevail in a number of Turkish theological projects which engage the Western intellectual tradition. Turkish theologians like Düzgün and Alpyağıl do more than deconstruct and criticize, they integrate, re-narrate, and construct. Does this mean Turkish theologians not only criticize but also positively use Western categories to break assumptions of intellectual dependence to those same categories?

To take an anecdote as an analogy, Ottoman historian Halil İnalcık writes of when scholar and British diplomat Arnold Toynbee noted how Turkey employed the Western principle of national sovereignty to assert itself against Western aggression and encroachment post-World War I, writing, “indeed, Mustafa Kemal was defending the most exalted principles of the West—against the West itself.”

It may be safe to say that even beyond the scope of Kemalism, Turkey has found other ways to defend principles of the West against Western bias and encroachment—in the case of Turkish theology faculties, scholars have defended Muslim identity along with religious freedom, gender justice, the significance of individual authority, the
importance of a scriptural hermeneutics not limited to one tradition’s text, and even comparative philosophy of religion. While caricatures of Muslim identity stress irrationality, coercion, close-mindedness, gender inequality, and blind following of tradition, Turkish theological scholars engage from various angles Western theological resources and Western ideals to actively challenge such easy assumptions.

**Dialogue, an Ongoing Conversation**

…we cannot deny that we have learned quite a lot about Islam from serious [non-Muslim] Western scholars. Certainly, the historical research they have done on Islam cannot count as a contribution to “normative Islam.” Nevertheless, it is still a historical reality that their [contributions] have sped the increase of creative thought and commentaries regarding normative Islam.¹⁰⁵³

— M.S. Aydın

These words come from the pen of Turkish theologian and respected philosopher of religion M.S. Aydın. It is striking to note the positive recognition of non-Muslim scholars to the understanding of Islam and the enrichment of normative discussions of Islam amongst Turkish theologians. Turkish theologians not only learn from Christian theologians speak about Christianity, they also learn from non-Muslim scholars speak about Islam. Similarly, are there ways in which Christian thinkers and theologians might recognize and respond to Turkish theology, which engages both Christian history and theology?¹⁰⁵⁴ This final section turns to the

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¹⁰⁵⁴ It has been argued that Christian theologians profited in a limited manner from earlier encounters with Ottoman Islam. Mark Sedgwick notes periods of intellectual transmission from Ottoman, Islamic culture into European culture. See his *Western Sufism: From the Abbasids to the New Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2017).
question of further academic dialogue, drawing on the work of Oddbjørn Leirvik and his case for interreligious studies.

Oddbjørn Leirvik, a professor of interreligious studies at Oslo University, is a scholar of Christianity and Islam as well as an active proponent of interreligious studies. He pays significant academic attention to the practical sides of dialogue in his recent book Interreligious Studies: A Relational Approach to Religious Activism the Study of Religion (2014). In this work, Leirvik speaks of a “relational approach” to studying religion as the defining trait of interreligious studies.\textsuperscript{1055} When Leirvik stresses the relational aspect of the study of religion, he advocates for an awareness of \textit{intra} and \textit{inter}.\textsuperscript{1056} That is, when it comes to the pressures and stresses of culture, faith, and politics, “the fields of tension are just as often to be found within the religions as between them.”\textsuperscript{1057} This means that dividing and uniting factors cut across academic and confessional environments. It is not possible to simply assume that an individual of one faith (or academy) has necessarily more or less in common with those of the same or diverging confession.

Central to the present discussion, Leirvik argues that the new discipline of interreligious studies is best seen as “an academic endeavor—marked by relational perspectives both on dialogue and other forms of religious activism.”\textsuperscript{1058} Or in other words, he advocates for relational, and even theological, academic dialogue between faiths. He explains:

\begin{quote}
\ldots there is something essentially relational with interreligious studies that make them different from religious studies […] and from confessional theology.\textsuperscript{1059}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{1056} Leirvik, \textit{Interreligious Studies}, 1.  \\
\textsuperscript{1057} Leirvik, \textit{Interreligious Studies}, 8.  \\
\textsuperscript{1058} Leirvik, \textit{Interreligious Studies}, 5. The term “interreligious studies,” he remarks, was rarely used before the 1990s (7).  \\
\end{flushright}
Leirvik, stresses that “[i]nterreligious studies is something essentially relational.”\footnote{Leirvik, Interreligious Studies, 11.} He further explains that interreligious studies is relational in three ways: first, its object of study is interreligious; second, the subject carrying out the study does so in an interdisciplinary manner; and third, the discipline of interreligious studies is only meaningful in conversation with different “faith traditions.”\footnote{Leirvik, Interreligious Studies, 10.} As he notes, interreligious studies grew out of theology rather than religious studies.\footnote{Leirvik, Interreligious Studies, 11.} Befitting of its theological origins, interreligious studies both instances of dialogue and is itself a space for dialogue.\footnote{Leirvik, Interreligious Studies, 12.} Leirvik admits that it is hard to clearly differentiate between interfaith dialogue and the interreligious studies, but he nonetheless stresses that it would be reductive to approach interreligious studies as the study of interfaith dialogue. He explains:

…the distinction between interreligious studies and interfaith dialogue is hard to make in practice, and also in the academic context. It would be simplistic to see interfaith dialogue solely as an object of study. Insights from dialogue may also affect the way in which religion is studied and taught in the academy.\footnote{Leirvik, Interreligious Studies, 139.}

Because of this, Leirvik affirms academic rigor but resists that such a relational discipline can or should boast scholarly neutrality:

…it is difficult to see how anyone […] should be able to posit oneself outside of the cultural and religious encounters and explore them from a completely detached position. Such insights render the old distinction between a (theological) insider perspective and a (religious studies) outsider perspective not so meaningful…\footnote{Leirvik, Interreligious Studies, 144.}
Leirvik thus challenges the insider-outsider distinction. All scholars must place themselves; everyone exists in the between somewhere.

As an academic space for dialogue, Leirvik underscores that dialogue should not be understood in contradistinction to confrontation. Asking whether the movement is from confrontation to dialogue, or if it is simultaneously both, he ultimately argues for a both/and approach to confrontation and dialogue. Leirvik affirms that sometimes stereotypes are true: “Both Christian and Muslim do, in fact… often struggle to ‘Christianize’ or ‘Islamicize’ their environments…” With this in mind he urges those considering interreligious studies that scholars need to be “honest about the unpleasant” in order to move forward with dialogue.

Turkish theologians routinely study and engage Christianity and other non-Muslim faiths and, accordingly, they potentially share common challenges and aims with Anglophone and European theologians. As Leirvik remarks:

…social contractions do not always coincide with religious borders. If one looks more closely into the matter, one will find that social and ideological differences are generally more conspicuous within the religions than between them.

In terms of doing academic theology in dialogue with other theological and intellectual traditions, I would argue that Turkish theologians share many aims and challenges with Christian theologians who wish to pursue interreligious dialogue at the academic level. Further, increased conversations between Turkish theologians and Christian theologians could lead to more precise formulations of shared aims and challenges.

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1067 Leirvik, *Interreligious Studies*, 64.
Finally, Leirvik, who accepts, like some Turkish theologians, that the Qur’ān positively affirms the plurality of human belief and culture, also challenges Christian theologians, writing:

But the question remains of how Christians will respond to the fundamental Qur’ānic acceptance of religious plurality as a divine test and a potential blessing.\textsuperscript{1070}

The question also remains as to how Christian theologians will respond to Turkish theologians’ efforts to engage Christianity and its associated Western intellectual tradition. But as with all continuing conversations, the fruits will continue to depend on the mutual efforts of both sides.

\textsuperscript{1070} Leirvik, Interreligious Studies, 129.
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