

Ömer Türker, Osman Demir (ed.), *Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī in the Age of the Transformation of Islamic Thought [İslām Düşüncesinin Dönüşüm Çağında Fahreddin er-Rāzī]*, İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2013, 635 pages, ISBN: 978-605-48-29-09-5

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Although the late period of Islamic thought (*muta'akhhirün*) was neglected for a long time due to discourse of *decadence* about the period after al-Ghazālī, studies concerning this period have relatively increased in recent times. On the other hand, few, if any, comprehensive monographic studies exist on important thinkers who influenced Islamic thought after al-Ghazālī. The book titled *İslām Düşüncesinin Dönüşüm Çağında Fahreddin er-Rāzī [Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī in the Age of the Transformation of Islamic Thought]*, edited by Ömer Türker and Osman Demir and written as a part of the “Second Classical Period” project of the Turkish Religious Foundation Center for Islamic Studies (ISAM), is an important step toward filling this gap.

The work comprises four chapters with an introduction including a preface written by Türker about al-Rāzī's thought, and a comprehensive monographic work by Eşref Altaş. Following the introduction, the second chapter begins with an article written by Müstakim Arıcı on the School of al-Rāzī. It also includes articles concerning al-Rāzī's contributions to various areas including philosophy, jurisprudence, language, Qur'an commentary, the history of sects and religions. The third chapter systematically presents al-Rāzī's ideas about knowledge, existence, God, prophecy, and the theory of substance. Finally, the fourth chapter includes two articles concerning the commentary tradition of *al-Ishārāt* and the criticisms of Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī in *salaf* tradition. The Turkish translation of al-Rāzī's testament and a list for further readings have also added to work.

Türker's article titled “Kelam ve Felsefe Tarihinde Fahreddin er-Rāzī” [*Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī in the History of Kalām and Philosophy*] (pp. 17–41) describes how al-Rāzī left a considerable number of problems for his successors by “analyzing the implications of the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā and criticizing philosophical thought with the sensitivity of both a philosopher and a theologian.” According to Türker, al-Rāzī, did not consider

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theology, like in al-Ghazālī, as a superior science that includes logics and metaphysics; rather, he considered it to be the equivalent of a theoretical philosophy as a whole. In this respect, while he ensured that pure divinity issues (*al-ilāhiyyāt al-mahḍ*) in theology were the purpose of this science, at the same time he constructed *al-umūr al-‘amme*, which forms the main subjects of Ibn Sinā’s metaphysics, as an introduction (*muqaddimah*) of *al-ilāhiyyāt al-mahḍ*. Thus, Ash‘arite theology became a school of thought, which is equivalent to, and speaks the same language as, the philosophy of Ibn Sinā. Türker states that al-Rāzī’s reinterpreting of theology in order to create a dialogue with philosophy gains its real meaning in the context of building a stronger testimonial structure by advancing al-Juwaynī’s and al-Ghazālī’s methodological criticisms of the early period of Islamic theology (*al-mutaqaddimūn*). In this respect, al-Rāzī criticizes the idea that the absence of the proof requires the fallacy of assertion, and analogy of the unknown to the known (*qiyās al-ghāib ‘alā al-shāhid*) and methods of *ilzām* (coercion). Furthermore, he draws attention to the inappropriateness of using transmitted proof which provides suppositional knowledge, regarding rational issues that aim for certain knowledge. According to al-Rāzī, as with metaphysics, theology which seeks knowledge of existence *qua* existence, should not try to obtain certain knowledge through literal denotation without critical investigation (*tahqīq*). Methodology based criticism directed by al-Ghazālī towards previous theologians led to the conclusion that theology is *insufficient* for the truth which it seeks. Türker states that theology could be exposed to criticism for being *insufficient* were it not for the efforts of al-Rāzī which redirected theology and demonstrated that theoretical studies of theologians—despite discussions among themselves with transmitted proofs which aim coercion—were indeed real investigations of truth in comparison to theoretical philosophy (p. 34). Are the methods adopted by philosophers, *al-burhān*, sufficient for theologians who are seeking metaphysical truths or does al-Rāzī offer a new method? The answer to this question is the most interesting part of Türker’s article. According to Türker, while al-Rāzī suggested that metaphysics gain its legitimacy from primary and self-evident concepts such as existence (*wujūd*), possibility (*imkān*), and origination (*hudūth*), and fundamental propositions, such as the principle of identity and the law of excluded middle, he realized that intellect does not follow a single path in the reasoning based on these concepts and propositions. In this respect, al-Rāzī developed many arguments which are perfect in terms of formal rules of logic, while they are incorrect for not having demonstrative conditions (*al-shurūt al-burhāniyya*). Al-Rāzī’s main goal in developing such arguments is to show that the logical perfectness does not require necessarily demonstrative knowledge (*al-‘ilm al-burhānī*). Behind these efforts, there is an important agenda in al-Rāzī’s mind. According this agenda “the determination of the relationship between the predications and subjects of propo-

sitions in accordance to the theory of essence” is the main criterion of demonstrative knowledge; however, in respect to the beings which are not perceived by our senses but we know them only by reasoning, our knowledge about the relationship between subjects and predications will remain at the level of existence only. Based on these evaluations, al-Rāzī grouped problems of metaphysics in two areas. The first is the area which is the truth can be conceived through the perfection of reasoning. The second is the area which develops cumulatively and becomes demonstrative through the contributions of every philosopher. This area corresponds to the dynamic aspect of metaphysics, which is open to completion and allows for different contributions in different periods. According to Türker, this distinction enabled metaphysics to be “considered as intellect’s area of possibility and turned into a common area of production where theological and philosophical ideas are to be discussed together.”

The article titled “Fahreddin er-Rāzī’nin Hayatı, Hämileri, İlmî ve Siyâsî İlişkileri” [*The Life of Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī*] (pp. 41–91) written by Altaş in the introduction, discusses al-Rāzī’s life during three distinct periods, sheds light on disclosed aspects of his life, and presents a very important prosopography of al-Rāzī. The article titled “Fahreddin er-Rāzī’nin Eserlerinin Kronolojisi” [*The Chronology of Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī’s Works*] (pp. 91–167), also written by Altaş, constitutes one of the most important contributions of the book. Here Altaş progresses the efforts previously exhibited by different authors, which embrace al-Rāzī’s oeuvre only partially, and he presents a full chronology of al-Rāzī’s 64 works. Referring to a comprehensive range of sources, Altaş revises the previous efforts and also presents basic principles relating to dating al-Rāzī’s works. In this respect, the article presents a diagram outlining how al-Rāzī’s works were dated. It’s worth noting that the work of Altaş, in terms of both scope and methodology, would be indispensable for researchers who would like to correctly identify the transformations of problems and solutions in al-Rāzī’s ideas.

The first article in the second chapter, *School of al-Rāzī in Islamic Thought*, belongs to Mustakim Arıcı and he discusses whether a school of al-Rāzī exist or not, and if so, who are the leading figures of this school and what are the essential features of it (pp. 167–203). In the second article, Agil Shirinov discusses al-Rāzī’s impact on the tradition of *al-Ishārāt* commentaries (pp. 203–243). Here, Shirinov addresses the main aspects of criticism directed by al-Rāzī towards Ibn Sinā in *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* and offers a detailed account about the effects of this criticism on the commentators of Ibn Sinā and theologians in the subsequent period. This chapter also includes an article by Tuncay Başoğlu (pp. 243–265), which discusses the school of al-Rāzī in the history of Islamic jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), and an article

by Kadir Gömbeyaz, which discusses al-Rāzī as an author of the history of sects (pp. 347–379). This chapter also includes the following articles: “Fahredden er-Rāzī'nin Belāgat ve İ'cāz Teorisi” (*Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Theory of Balāgha and I'jāz*) by Nasrullah Hacımüftüoğlu, “Tefsirde Fahreddin er-Rāzī” (*Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in Quranic Commentary Tradition*) by Mustafa Öztürk, and “Fahredden er-Rāzī ve Dinler Tarihi” (*Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and the History of Religions*) by Hidayet Işık.

The third chapter opens with an article titled “Fahredden er-Rāzī'nin Bilgi Teorisi” (*Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Theory of Knowledge*, pp. 423–53) by Şaban Haklı; it also includes an article titled “Fahredden er-Rāzī'nin Varlık Görüşü” (*The Conception of Being in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, pp. 453–73) by Veysel Kaya. Haklı reviews al-Rāzī's ideas about the nature and sources of knowledge within the context of his criticisms of *falāsifa*, and discusses his approach towards mental existence. Kaya discusses al-Rāzī's view of being in respect of his preserving and transforming the fundamental concepts and distinctions belong to early period of Islamic theology. According to Kaya, al-Rāzī's ideas about being, shaped with the application of Ibn Sīnā's systematic theory of *al-ımkān* to the idea of *al-jawāz / al-ımkān* in the early period of Islamic theology. The question of “how did important transformations which affected theologians in the later period of Islamic theology (*muta'akhhirūn*) occur in the distinctions of the early period of Islamic theology such as substance and accident, and in the subjects such as proving the Necessary (*ısbāt al-wājib*)?” is among the important problems that Kaya presents original solutions to them. The chapter also includes an article titled “Fahredden er-Rāzī'de Cevher-i Ferd ve Heyülā-Süret Teorisi” (*Theory of al-jawhar al-fard and matter and form in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, pp. 527–555) by Osman Demir, which offers a detailed analysis regarding al-Rāzī's main arguments concerning the ontological foundation of physical existence between the early period of Islamic theology and Ibn Sīnā's philosophy. Two articles written by Muammer İskenderoğlu are included in this chapter as well. The first article titled “Fahredden er-Rāzī'de İsbāt-ı Vācib ve Tanrı-Ālem İlişkisi” (*Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī on the Relation of God and World and Proving the Necessary Being*, pp. 473–505) classifies proofs provided by al-Rāzī for the existence of God and discusses them in the context of *al-Maṭālib al-āliya* and *Kitāb al-Arba'in*. İskenderoğlu distinguishes between the proofs developed by the theologians of early period of Islamic theology and the approach developed in *al-Maṭālib al-āliya* which demonstrates the existence of God initially, before the universe. According to İskenderoğlu, this approach, which does not require for the universe to be created in order to demonstrate the existence of God, is an important innovation in respect to the early period of Islamic theology. In the last section of the article, İskenderoğlu discusses how al-Rāzī's opinions about the proofs of God's existence determined his opinions about the God-universe relationship. The article titled “Fahredden er-Rāzī'de Nübüvvet Teorisi” (*Theory of Prophecy*

in *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, pp. 505–527) by İskenderoğlu includes important determinations about how al-Rāzī discussed the traditional theological method with regard to proving the prophecy, and presented new methods and ways which can be labeled as Avicennian in this regard.

The fourth and the last chapter of the book include critiques of the subsequent thinkers directed to al-Rāzī. The first article by Hakan Coşar presents the example of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī and systematically presents the criticisms of Al-Rāzī in the tradition of *al-Ishārāt* commentaries (pp. 555–579). The second article, written by Faruk Sancar, reviews criticisms of al-Rāzī by *ahl al-hadīth* generally and by Ibn Taymiyya and his followers specifically under the title “Selef Geleneğinde Rāzī’ye Yöneltilen Metodik Eleştiriler” (*Methodological Criticisms of al-Rāzī in Salaf Tradition*, pp. 579–603).

In conclusion, this study makes an important contribution to the period of Islamic thought after al-Ghazālī in general, and more specifically to al-Rāzī studies. Within this framework, the book *İslām Düşüncesinin Dönüşüm Çağında Fahreddīn er-Rāzī (Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in the Age of the Transformation of Islamic Thought)* is an important source both for those who want to read a general and systematic presentation of al-Rāzī’s thought and who seeks to examine the problematic transformations in al-Rāzī’s views and his efforts to critically harmonize early period of Islamic theology and the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā.