

Muhammet Maşuk Aktaş, *Metafiziğin Mantıksal Kökenleri: Nasîrüddîn-i Tûsî'nin Nefsü'l-Emr Anlayışına Giriş* (The Logical Foundations of Metaphysics: Naşîr al-Dîn al-Ṭûsî on Nafs al-Amr), İber Akademi Yayınları: İstanbul, 2024. 384 sayfa. ISBN 9786256055179.

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Following the elimination of metaphysics from the sciences, disciplines were sharply separated, and the structure of the academy was reshaped along a horizontal axis. As a result of this clear separation, researchers began to develop interdisciplinary approaches, driven by the increasing contact between horizontally related fields. In this way, different branches of knowledge can now be reinterpreted holistically from a higher perspective. Interdisciplinary work has become particularly essential in Islamic studies. Almost all classical Islamic scholars received systematic training that equipped them to master every field within Islamic studies, and they authored works across multiple disciplines. Therefore, it would be inconsistent to claim that a classical Islamic scholar's *madhhab*, doctrines, principles, or teachings in one field did not influence their perspective in another.

Metafiziğin Mantıksal Kökenleri: Nasîrüddîn-i Tûsî'nin Nefsü'l-Emr Anlayışına Giriş (The Logical Foundations of Metaphysics: Naşîr al-Dîn al-Ṭûsî on Nafs al-Amr) stands as a successful example of how an interdisciplinary study should be conducted. This work is an expanded version of M. Maşuk Aktaş's master's thesis, completed in 2021 at Istanbul Medeniyet University under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Eşref Altaş.

This study explores the concept of *nafs al-amr*—the ontological counterpart to the question “what is truth?”—in Islamic thought, through the lens of one of

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the most influential thinkers of the post-classical period, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274). It would not be an exaggeration to state that this is a master's thesis exceeds typical academic standards in terms of intellectual rigor and diligence. The author provides a clear articulation of the methods employed, as well as those deliberately avoided. The study is constructed systematically, progressing proposition by proposition, and—true to the author's own words—it is “a thesis with a thesis.” Particular care is taken in translating key concepts across Arabic, Turkish, and English, with thoughtful proposals for new terminological equivalents where needed. In recognition of its scholarly contribution, the thesis was awarded the Incentive Prize in 2022 as part of the Kastamonu University Muhammed İhsan Oğuz Theology Research Awards.

The book consists of an elaborate preface and introduction, followed by three chapters, and a conclusion—mirroring the structure of Ṭūsī's original treatise, which serves as the primary source of the study. In the introduction, Aktaş explains why he chose to focus on Ṭūsī as the central figure. He outlines his methodological approach, provides a comprehensive literature review, and offers a historical overview of the concept of *naḥs al-amr* from ancient Greece to the present day. The study centers on Ṭūsī because he authored the first independent treatise (*risāla*) on *naḥs al-amr*. Although he was not the first scholar in the history of Islamic tradition to engage with the concept of truth, Aktaş argues that Ṭūsī was the first in the history of philosophy to dedicate an entire work to it. Moreover, Ṭūsī introduced the theory of *al-ʿAql al-Kull* (the Universal Intellect), linking the problem of truth to the concept of *al-ʿAql al-Faʿāl* (the Active Intellect). He also critically engaged with earlier scholars who addressed the question “what is truth?”, evaluating the reasoning behind the views he rejected and articulating his critiques in relation to their positions. This approach allows the reader to clearly locate Ṭūsī's stance within the broader historical and philosophical debate.

Although Aktaş provides a detailed account of the theoretical history surrounding the *naḥs al-amr* debate, the book goes far beyond a mere historical description. In the introduction, he clarifies that while the study incorporates both the historical development of the concept and Ṭūsī's intellectual network, neither of these constitutes the central methodology of the work. This is because, in Aktaş's view, such approaches risk reducing Ṭūsī's theoretical contributions to a passive or derivative framework. Instead, historical narratives and references to intellectual networks are used solely to contextualize and clarify Ṭūsī's own positions. In tracing the question

“what is truth?” from Plato to Ṭūsī, Aktaş discusses the contributions of figures such as Avicenna (d. 428/1037), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī (d. 663/1265 [?]), and ‘Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325), all of whom either influenced Ṭūsī or served as interlocutors in his critiques. Yet, Aktaş remains alert to the risk that overemphasizing these historical and intellectual connections could overshadow Ṭūsī’s originality. Therefore, he explicitly avoids placing these two dimensions at the center of his analysis.

What stands out most remarkably in this work is its structural design. Aktaş methodically constructs the theoretical framework of Ṭūsī’s response to the question “What is truth?” by organizing the material into a clear and logical sequence. He identifies and numbers 67 distinct propositions upon which Ṭūsī’s views are built. These numbered propositions are then systematically referenced throughout the demonstrations, allowing the author to resolve complex issues from Ṭūsī’s perspective with precision. This approach not only clarifies the internal logic of Ṭūsī’s thought but also enables the reader to follow the author’s reasoning with ease, revealing the clarity and coherence of his analysis. To further aid the reader, all 67 propositions are compiled in an appendix at the end of the book, allowing for quick reference when needed.

The author presents a thorough review of previous studies on theories of truth and *naḥs al-amr*, discussing how these works informed his own research, where his approach diverges from them, and which aspects he critiques. In this section, he not only summarizes the existing academic literature on *naḥs al-amr* but also clearly articulates the originality of his own contribution. Notably, he updates the literature review to include studies published between 2021—when he completed his thesis—and 2024, the year the work was published as a book. This attention to the most recent scholarship demonstrates the study’s currency and relevance. Moreover, this level of diligence serves as a model for theological research, exemplifying how “new and original contributions to the field” should be situated within academic discourse.

In his chapter on the history of *naḥs al-amr*, Aktaş describes two different historical narratives. The first narrative covers the history of theoretical answers to the question “what is truth?”. In this context, he states that the problem of truth extends back to Plato’s dialogues. He then refers to a passage in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and states that in the ancient tradition built upon it, especially in the period of commentators and Neo-Platonists, the following formula became widespread: since existence exists only in the external world, what exists in the external world is true, and what does not exist in the external world is false.

Between the lines, Aktaş suggests that the history of theoretical responses to the question “What is truth?” can be divided into three main periods. The first encompasses the era of Plato’s dialogues and Aristotle’s writings, along with the interpretations offered by later commentators. During this period, the question of truth was addressed only briefly in select passages of large encyclopedic works. The second period features more detailed theoretical responses by scholars such as Avicenna and Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. 547/1152 [?]). At this stage, the nature of truth was treated as a distinct subject in major philosophical works, such as *al-Shifā’* and *al-Mu’tabar*. The third period begins with Ṭūsī, who, according to Aktaş, inaugurated a new phase in which independent philosophical treatises on truth were written and original theories were developed for the first time.

As part of his second historical narrative, Aktaş explores the development of the concept of *naḥs al-amr* within the Islamic intellectual tradition. He traces its early usage to Ishāq b. Ḥunayn (d. 298/910) and follows its appearances in the works of later thinkers such as Fārābī (d. 339/950), Qāḍī ‘Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025), Avicenna, Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), Sahlān al-Sāwī (d. 540/1145 [?]), Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Aktaş also notes that when the question “What is truth?” is addressed, other terms and theories emerge alongside *naḥs al-amr*. In examining these discourses, he observes that the theologians of the early period (*mutaqaddimūn*) proposed four distinct criteria for truth: (i) correspondence to reality (*muṭābaqat al-wāqī’*), (ii) al-Naẓẓām’s (d. 231/845) criterion that truth lies in the alignment of a proposition with the belief of the speaker (*i’tiqād al-mu’taqid*), (iii) al-Jāhīz’s (d. 255/869) view that both belief and correspondence to reality are necessary, and (iv) the Mu’tazilite position, which upholds the “thingness” of the non-existent (*shay’iyyat al-ma’dūm*) and thus requires correspondence to external existence (*khārij*). By identifying the link between Mu’tazilite views on non-existence and their theory of truth, Aktaş develops an original and coherent interpretation of the relationship between epistemology and ontology in the Mu’tazilite school.

Aktaş’s clarification of his conceptual choices, beginning in the introduction, reflects his academic rigor and methodological awareness. With support from Hasan Spiker, he repeatedly emphasizes the distinction between the correspondence theory in Western philosophy and the *muṭābaqa* theory in classical Islamic theology. Unlike correspondence theory, *muṭābaqa*—along with the phenomenon to which it applies—encompasses more than mere external existence. In the chapters that follow, Aktaş further demonstrates that the term “categorical proposition,” often used

synonymously with *ḥamliyya* in translations, more accurately corresponds to *khārijīyya*. He argues that commentators on the *Organon*, who interpreted modal propositions exclusively through the lens of temporality, maintained that the subject of a proposition must be actualized (*taḥaqqāqa*) at some point in time—past, present, or future. Accordingly, they believed that the subject must fall under a category located in the external world, which is itself embedded in time. In contrast, Ṭūsī, who abstracted logic from content, insisted that propositions need not be tied to categories but could instead be framed as *ḥaqīqīyya* (essential or truth-bearing propositions). Thus, Aktaş argues that translating *maḥṣūra* propositions in the Islamic logical tradition directly as “categorical propositions” obscures the nuanced theoretical developments within Islamic logic and risks reducing intellectual historiography to the frameworks of Western philosophy. These two interpretive pitfalls—conceptual conflation and translation imprecision—are recurring academic tendencies that Aktaş critiques from the beginning to the end of the book.

The first part of the study focuses on *ḥamliyya* (predicative) propositions. This chapter opens with definitions of singular (*mushakḥkhaṣa*), quantified (*maḥṣūra*), and natural (*tabīʿīyya*) propositions. Aktaş then elaborates on key conceptual distinctions, including that between *dhāt* (the individual), *ʿunwān* (the designation of the subject), and *waṣf* (the designation of the predicate) in quantified propositions, as well as between *ʿaqd al-waḍʿ* (the act of positing) and *ʿaqd al-ḥaml* (the act of predicating). One of the study’s notable contributions is Aktaş’s proposal of the concept of “double-layered predication” (*çift katmanlı yükleleme*), in which *ʿaqd al-waḍʿ* forms the first layer and *ʿaqd al-ḥaml* the second. Before this study, this distinction—central to the theory of predication in Islamic logic—had been addressed only by Necmi Derin, whose views Aktaş critically engages and reassesses in depth. Aktaş argues that this layered understanding of predication is not only foundational for theories of modality (*muwajjihāt*), but also reveals why the analytic–synthetic distinction that dominated early modern Western philosophy lacks relevance in the Islamic tradition. Since analytic and synthetic propositions are subsumed under categorical (*khārijīyya*) propositions—which Islamic philosophers critiqued in favor of *ḥaqīqīyya* (truth-bearing) interpretations of quantified (*maḥṣūra*) propositions—many debates within early modern philosophy do not map meaningfully onto Islamic logical frameworks. Aktaş skillfully highlights this point across several chapters, making this section particularly valuable as a reference or instructional resource for students of logic and philosophy.

The central focus of this chapter is the debate between Abharī and Ṭūsī over how *ḥamlīyya* propositions should be classified—whether as *khārījīyya* (external), *dhihniyya* (mental), or *ḥaqīqīyya* (essential). Aktaş presents their disagreement in a structured and methodical manner, highlighting the foundational principles each thinker sought to uphold in defense of their respective views. In a significant contribution, Aktaş identifies the unnamed ancient proponent of the *khārījīyya* interpretation—criticized by Ṭūsī in his treatise—as Alexander of Aphrodisias. By uncovering this connection, he demonstrates how the positions of ancient logicians on broader issues such as modality, categories, and propositions shaped their approaches to truth theory.

The second chapter of the book explores the relationship between logic and metaphysics—a theme that gives the work its title and overarching significance. In this chapter, Aktaş addresses foundational topics such as general existence (*al-wujūd al-‘āmm*), the equivocality of existence (*ishtirāk al-wujūd*), and the distinction between existence and essence. Within this framework, he presents Ṭūsī’s seven arguments supporting the distinction between essence and existence, all grounded in the differentiation between *dhāt* (individual), *‘unwān* (designation of the subject), and *waṣf* (designation of the predicate). Aktaş explains that Ṭūsī defends the division of existence into external and mental realms by referencing our capacity to formulate *ḥaqīqīyya* propositions. However, commentators on *Tajrīd* reject Ṭūsī’s interpretation of *ḥamlīyya* propositions and instead treat this discussion solely within the context of proving mental existence. Drawing from debates introduced in the first chapter, Aktaş provides his own metanarrative, posing and answering critical questions from Ṭūsī’s standpoint: How does Ṭūsī divide existence? How is mental existence defined? In what form do the subject and predicate of a proposition exist? Through these inquiries, Aktaş underscores the foundational role of logic in metaphysics. Challenging a widespread academic assumption, he contends that metaphysics—particularly the theory of quiddity (*māhiyya*)—did not shape logic; rather, the conceptual elaboration.

Following the first two chapters, Aktaş devotes the third chapter to analyzing Ṭūsī’s response to the question “What is truth?” He argues that it was the principle of non-contradiction that led Ṭūsī to raise this fundamental inquiry, and he highlights the disagreements between Ṭūsī and later commentators regarding the nature of *naḥs al-amr*. To address the interpretive challenges posed by seemingly inconsistent passages in Ṭūsī’s works, Aktaş offers an alternative reading: he suggests that,

for Ṭūsī, the *dalāla* (signification) of propositions is distinct from their *muṭābaqa* (correspondence). Through a careful cross-reading of Ṭūsī's texts, Aktaş proposes a coherent interpretive framework that resolves long-standing confusions in Ṭūsī scholarship. He systematically examines Ṭūsī's criteria for truth across seven stages, ultimately arriving at the theory of the Universal Intellect (*al-'Aql al-Kull*). According to this theory, the Active Intellect(s) serve as the repository of the forms (*ṣūra*) of all existing beings, thus offering a metaphysical grounding for truth itself.

The discussions and scholarly positions presented in this study are so masterfully articulated that the reader may be tempted to believe the original sources themselves addressed these issues with comparable clarity. Yet, upon turning to the primary texts, it becomes evident just how much intellectual labor Aktaş has invested in the work and how intricate the conceptual network he has constructed truly is. In the conclusion, after offering a concise summary of the chapters and their contributions, Aktaş remarks that what most clearly sets his study apart from others is its rigorous methodology and distinctive approach—both of which reflect the depth of analytical effort that underpins the entire project.

This work—both in its original thesis form and as a published book—stands as a remarkably promising contribution to academic studies in philosophy.