

Veysel Kaya. *Felsefe-Kelâm İlişkisi Çerçevesinde İbn Sînâ'nın Kelâma Etkisi [Ibn Sinâ's Influence on Islamic Theology in the Context of the Relation Between Falsafa and Kalâm]*. Ankara: Otto, 2015. 183 pages. ISBN: 9786054696789.

Tuna Tunagöz*

Translated by Sümeyye Parıldar**

Kalâm (Islamic theology) has the highest self-confidence of all religious sciences. Al-Ghazālî (d. 505/1111) defends its superiority over all other religious and non-religious sciences because it proves and defends the Islamic creed and provides the principles for other branches of theological sciences. One should not think that these reasons, mentioned at the beginning of *al-Mustaşfâ*, only reflect the zeitgeist of late-period (*muta'akhhirûn*) theology. In the section on Mu'tazilite theologians in his *al-Fihrist*, Ibn al-Nadîm (d.385/995?) attributes *al-Radd 'alâ Aristûtâlis fî al-jawâhir wa al-a'râd* to Dîrâr ibn 'Amr (d. 200/815?) and implies that this self-confidence is nothing new, for the criticisms against philosopher/philosophy can be traced back to the last quarter of the second Islamic century. Centuries after this, Sayyid Sharîf al-Jurjânî (d. 816/1413) accused Sirâj al-Dîn al-Urmawî (d. 682/1283), who dared to investigate theology and metaphysics in the context of their topics, and to depict metaphysics as the leading science of Islamic thought, of being a pretended philosopher who "licks up the crumbs of the *falâsifa*"¹. This exclusionist approach, be it implicit or explicit, gives us this message: Theology is superior to all sciences and receives this superiority directly from Islamic sources and dynamics. Theology's only interest in philosophy is maintaining one or two useful materials from it. Leaving aside the topic of being influenced by philosophy, one can say that theology is its leading opponent.

Studies in the twentieth century have provided important information on the foreign sources of theology. Horowitz's *Über den Einfluss der griechischen Philosophie auf die Entwicklung des Kalam* (1909) and Pines' *Beitrage zur islamischen*

* Dr., Çukurova University, Faculty of Theology. Correspondence: ttunagoz@cu.edu.tr.

** Dr., Istanbul University, Faculty of Theology.

1 Al-Sayyid al-Sharîf al-Jurjânî, *Sharh al-Mawâqif*, text and translation by Ömer Türker, vol. 1 (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2015), 153; A. I. Sabra, "Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islamic Theology: The Evidence of the Fourteenth Century," *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 9 (1994), 21.

Atomenlehre (1936) might come to mind as the first examples.² Again, Wolfson's *The Philosophy of Kalam* and Van Ess' six-volume *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam* are among the other important sources.³ These works, possibly exaggerating the emphasis placed on the influence of foreign sources, have mainly focused on how Greek philosophy influenced the Mu'tazilite school. Other scholars, among them Richard M. Frank, Alfred L. Ivry, Michael Marmura, Ulrich Rudolph, and Robert Wisnovsky, have focused their attention to the journey itself within Islamic thought between theology and philosophy. When the picture is viewed in its totality, one can see that the impact of Muslim philosophers upon Muslim theologians is the least studied subject.

Veysel Kaya of Istanbul University's Theology Faculty has conducted important research on this gap. The book in question is based upon his doctoral dissertation, entitled *Felsefi Kelam Çerçevesinde İbn Sînâ'nın Kelama Etkisi [Ibn Sînâ's Influence on Islamic Theology]*, completed in 2013. In 2016, the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TÜBA) bestowed its Scientific Book Authored Award (TESEP) upon this book.

Another dimension of this work is its focus on Ibn Sînâ as the channel of influence. Identifying him as Islamic philosophy's most important figure is hardly biased. His intellectual gift, which enabled him to perfect what he inherited from al-Fârâbî (d. 339/950), his masterpieces, the desire of all philosophy enthusiasts to quote from his ideas are enough to show his preeminent place in the culture. Although this great philosopher has always received the academic interest that he deserves, Kaya's book still fills an important gap in the literature.

The book begins with a well-organized introductory section that defines the context, scope, method, and sources of the research. The context mentions that the Mu'tazilite school was the first to confront the classical Greek heritage. The Mu'tazilites in particular and theological literature in general were taken seriously by philosophers, and the influence of theology on philosophy is undeniable. This acknowledgement naturally plays a preparatory role for the book's framework, for one of its central claims is that Ibn Sînâ voluntarily contacted the theological tradition and was influenced by it, as well as influenced it, afterward. Thus, as the

2 Saul Horovitz, *Über den Einfluss der griechischen Philosophie auf die Entwicklung des Kalam* (Breslau: Druck von Th. Schatzky, 1909); Shlomo Pines, *Beiträge zur islamischen Atomenlehre* (Berlin: A. Heine GmbH., 1936).

3 Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976); Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im Frühen Islam*, 6 cilt (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991-1995).

author explicitly states, the book not only focuses on how Ibn Sīnā influenced theology, but also on how theology influenced the development of his own thought.

This research nevertheless causes a worthy question to arise: Given the author's interest in both dimensions, namely, the influence and the influenced, why did he not entitle it *Ibn Sīnā's Interaction with the Science of Theology* or another title that would indicate this spectrum? All of the chapters, especially the most comprehensive first chapter, deal with these two dimensions in detail, and frequent reference to the ideas of theologians who passed away before Ibn Sīnā's time are observable throughout the book.

The research limits Ibn Sīnā's influence on theology to a specific topic and timeline. This topic is the concept of possibility (*imkān*). The reasoning behind this choice is that the author regards existence as the center of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy and the concept of possibility as the center of his ontology. The choice to focus on possibility among the many other relatively attractive topics of physics and metaphysics is, understandably, also shaped by a desire to benefit from the guidance of the present body of work on the topic. The timeline, which is limited to the two centuries that follow Ibn Sīnā, deals with al-Ghazālī, al-Shahristānī, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's theological systems.

The first chapter, "Ibn Sīnā's view of *Kalām*," seeks to demonstrate the dimensions of this figure's relation to theology. Ibn Sīnā does not prefer to refer to theologians openly, which naturally results in the author's having to trace back to and consult various hints. An anecdote quoted from Ibn Sīnā's *Sīra*, as well as a number of discussions in his various treatises and manuscripts, are used as keys to understand his background in theology. Kaya does not dismiss the Ash'arites' influence on the philosopher, and yet he still favored Mu'tazilite *kalām* for a number of reasons. There is nothing to say against taking the Mu'tazilite school's leading role in the history of theology as a worthy sample. However, the facts that Ibn Sīnā mentioned Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār by name in a treatise on *faḍā'* in reply to a theologian and that his distinction between essence and existence is related to the discussion on thing-ness of nonexistence, are the strongest present reasons. The theological dynamics of *al-Risāla al-'arshīyya*, the identification of theology with dialectical disputation (*jadāl*) and consequently, theology's falling short of metaphysics because of *jadāl*, the denial of temporal creation, and atomism do not qualify for claiming a relationship to the Mu'tazilite approach. Moreover, Ibn Sīnā's reference to theologians who deny any necessity for God and his explanation on the famous seven positive divine attributes (*thubūti*) show, more appropriately, a relation to the Ash'arites.

The well-prepared and comprehensive second and third chapters evaluate several directly connected terms to possibility and their development in Islamic thought. The author's evaluation starts with translations of Aristotle (d. 322 BCE), leads to considerably lesser known theologians and their works, and ends with Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. In the second chapter, Kaya raises two important interrelated claims. The first one is that the content of "necessary existent" (*wājib al-wujūd*), which is almost identified with Peripatetic metaphysics, has existed within theological texts since fourth Islamic century. He strengthens this thesis by quoting al-Ka'bi (d. 319/931), al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), Abū Salama al-Samarqandī (d. after second half of the fourth/tenth century), and Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. after 355/966). According to Kaya, theologians embraced the concepts of necessary, possible, and impossible using the Aristotelian modal logic and presented "the necessary" from this trio as God.

The second claim is that the essentials for the proof of possibility (*imkān*) existed before Ibn Sīnā. According to the author, the starting point is admitting that God is eternal and that the cosmos is created. In other words, the concept of necessary (*wujūb*), derived from Aristotelian philosophy, is now identified with the eternal (*qadīm* and *bāqī*), and the concept of possible is identified with the created (*ḥādīth* and *jā'iz*). Accordingly, the cosmos, which is created (*jā'iz*), rests on its need for a necessary existent. The ideas of al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) and Abū Rashīd al-Nisāburī (d. mid-fifth/eleventh century) might not be fully closed to Ibn Sīnā's influence; however, the author's quotation from the Shia theologian Ibn Bābawayh's (d. 381/991) *Tawḥīd* presents a very strong proof.

Kaya discusses the details of his claims on the proof from possibility in the third chapter, "Proving God and the Proof from Possibility." The message given in this and previous chapters can be summarized as such: The metaphysics of possibility and the related conceptual mapping is not Ibn Sīnā's invention. Rather, he perfected the theological heritage and equipped it with his own philosophical dynamics. Either as a theologian or as a philosopher, Ibn Sīnā influenced intellectuals who lived after him. What lies behind al-Ghazālī and al-Shahrastānī's hesitant approach to his theses is their sensitivity on the issue of the temporality of the creation of cosmos. On the other hand, al-Rāzī, a good reader of Ibn Sīnā, openly admires the proof of possibility.

The fourth chapter, "Distinction of Essence and Existence in Theology," summarizes the thesis that "nonexistence is a thing," Abū Ya'qūb al-Shahḥām's (d. 270/883[?]) "gift" given to Islamic thought, and how the Māturīdī and Ash'arite theologians later criticized this thesis. The chapter claims that Ibn Sīnā's ideas, in

connection with the distinction of essence and existence, are products of these previous disagreements and an attempt to solve the problem. In addition, this chapter also deals with the problem raised by Ḍirār ibn ‘Amr: “Can God’s essence can be known in its reality?” The chapter closes with reflections of the essence-existence discussion of al-Ghazzālī, Ibn al-Malāḥimī (d. 536/1141), al-Shahristānī, and al-Rāzī.

In the last chapter, which deals with God’s attributes, Kaya contends that although Ibn Sinā’s ideas have a Neoplatonist perspective, they still reflect clear Mu‘tazilite and Ash‘arite influences. Yes, Ibn Sinā does deny that God’s attributes are separate from His essence and that this view can be attributed to all members of negative theology from Aristotle to al-Fārābī. However, the fact that *Risāla al-‘arshīyya* evaluated all of the seven attributes accepted by the Ash‘arites one by one and explained them with denial of attachment to the divine essence, and also presented the attributes as negative (*salbī*), relative (*iḍāfī*), and negative-relative (*salbī-iḍāfī*) are authentic points in Ibn Sinā’s approach. The two concepts of *salbī* and *iḍāfī* found their echo in theological works and established his real impact. Another influence is related to the problem of whether the attributes are necessary or possible, the roots of which go back to discussions on the multiplicity of the eternals (*ta‘addud al-quḍamā*). The author refers to the reflections of these two discussions when he evaluates Ibn Sinā’s influence, through his view of divine attributes, on theologians. The last two chapters are products of a satisfactory investigation. Still, one could invest more effort in al-Rāzī’s interesting ideas in his *Sharḥ al-Ishārāt* to showcase how Ibn Sinā interpreted the essence-existence- divine attributes relation.

The book concludes with a general evaluation of these main chapters’ essential claims and a number of appendixes in Ottoman Turkish and Arabic.

Kaya’s book, which represents both authentic and successful research, is built on an extensive literature in Turkish, Arabic, English, Persian, and German. Most of these sources alone prove both his authority on the matter and his expertise in the relevant sources. The objective approach, clear mind, crystal and fluent style is infused in the whole text. This work and the author’s other works show that the history of Islamic thought has gained a promising researcher.

The book’s intended audience is intellectuals and academics interested in Islamic philosophy, Islamic theology, and the relation of theology and philosophy. It will easily fit into any suggested reading list for master’s and doctoral candidates. The publisher, who should be credited for the work’s careful presentation and design, deserves our sincere gratitude. One small note should be added on the font size of the footnotes: The reader would appreciate slightly larger letters.