Mustakim Arıcı. *İnsan ve Toplum: Taşköprîzâde'nin Ahlâk ve Siyaset Düşüncesi* [*Humanity and Society: Ṭāshkubrīzāda's Ethical and Political Thought*]. Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık, 2016. 164 pages. ISBN: 9786053203995.

Ahmed Tahir Nur[*]

Studies on the Ottoman polymath Aḥmad b. Muṣṭafā b. Khalīl Ṭāshkubrīzāda (d. 968/1561) mirror the recent revival of scholarly interest in Ottoman intellectual history. The collective project of discussing and editing his works and the consequent "International Ṭāshkubrīzāda Symposium" can be mentioned in this regard.[1] This review examines *Humanity and Society: The Ethical and Political Thought of Ṭāshkubrīzāda* by Mustakim Arıcı, who has published on this philosopher both separately and within the abovementioned project. Arıcı's investment in Ṭāshkubrīzāda started with his interest in *Sharḥ al-Akhlāq al-ʿAḍudiyya* and continued with his critical edition and translation of Ṭāshkubrīzāda's two works on practical philosophy. The present book, a culmination of these studies,[2] consists on an introduction; three main parts titled "Knowledge and Ethics," "Ethics and Humanity," and "Society and Politics"; a short conclusion; and a bibliography and index.

In the "Introduction," Arıcı presents an overview of the sixteenth-century Ottoman ethical literature to provide the historical context of Ṭāshkubrīzāda's ethical and political writings. He states that in Ottoman culture, ethics corresponds to a wide range of meanings, among them the domain of literature in addition to philosophical ethics, *fiqh*, *kalām*, and Sufism. The author points out that he does not seek to analyze the century's entire ethical mentality, but only to interpret the

* PhD Student, Yale University, Religious Studies. Correspondance: ahmed.nur@yale.edu.

1   For a review of the symposium, see Mustakim Arıcı, "Uluslararası Taşköprülüzâde Sempozyumu," *İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi* 36 (2016): 209-14.

2   Taşköprîzâde Ahmed Efendi, *Şerhu'l-Ahlâki'l-Adudiyye: Ahlâk-ı Adudiyye Şerhi*, eds. Elzem İçöz and Mustakim Arıcı, trans. Mustakim Arıcı (Istanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2014); Taşköprîzâde Ahmed Efendi, *Ahlâk ve Siyaset Risaleleri*, ed. and trans. Mustakim Arıcı (Istanbul: İstanbul Medeniyet Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2016).

primary sources of its ethical literature (3). Since the ethical literature from this wide perspective forms a large corpus, Arıcı limits his analysis to the philosophical and literary works about ethics (3-11). Following his review of the literature, the author introduces Ṭāshkubrīzāda's relevant works under such categories as "classification of sciences," "ethics and politics," "religious sciences," and "biography" (11-20).

According to Arıcı, although Ṭāshkubrīzāda's ethical thought reveals his philosophical and Sufi tendencies, the Ottoman philosopher associates ethics with a number of fields. In particular, the relationship between knowledge and ethics precedes all other ethical discussions, as can be seen in his exposition of ethics and manners of knowledge in the introductions of his works (22). Along this line, Arıcı begins his first chapter, "Knowledge and Ethics," by analyzing the relationship between ethics and the adjacent fields of philosophy, *fiqh*, Sufism, *kalām*, *adab*, physiognomy, astrology, and the occult sciences (21-43).

The author first presents Ṭāshkubrīzāda's thoughts on several topics, including the classification of sciences, the perils of knowledge, the qualities of teachers, the etiquette of students, and the relationship between scholars and sultans. In Arıcı's view, some of these topics are wide enough to deserve their own separate studies. For instance, Ṭāshkubrīzāda criticizes the decadence of knowledge (*inqirāḍ al-ʿilm*) and the incompetence of the scholars of his time, although the sources of his criticism and the extent to which it is valid are open to discussion (25).

As for the relationship between philosophy and ethics, Arıcı analyzes the place of ethics in Ṭāshkubrīzāda's classification of sciences. According to Arıcı, he follows the Aristotelian classification in his encyclopaedia of sciences, *Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda*, situating ethics among the disciplines of practical philosophy, together with household management and politics. In his commentary on ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī's (d. 756/1355) *al-Akhlāq al-ʿAḍudiyya*, however, he defines the entire sphere of practical philosophy as ethics, following the approach taken by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274) and al-Ījī. As for the relationship between *fiqh* and ethics, according to Arıcı, Ṭāshkubrīzāda's association of philosophy and ethics with *fiqh* in his *al-Maʿālim fī ilm al-Kalām* and *al-Risāla al-jāmiʿa li-waṣf al-ʿulūm al-nāfiʿa* suggests that one can conceive of ethics within *fiqh* in the wider sense of the latter term, a view that is prevalent in the Ḥanafī tradition (29). Ṭāshkubrīzāda's approach to the relationship between Sufism and ethics is to regard the former as an ethical orientation that would lead one to metaphysical truths by means of spiritual purification.

As for the relationship between *kalām* and ethics, the author presents theological issues related to ethics such as the freedom of human action and the

source of knowledge about good and evil, stating that Ṭāshkubrīzāda sometimes defends Māturīdī and at other times Ashʿarī positions. According to Arıcı, the latter school permeated Ottoman thought through Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), al-Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390), and al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413) and thus explains the Ashʿarī tone in *al-Maʿālim* (34). In the section about *adab* and ethics, he asserts that in line with the Islamic intellectual tradition, *adab* stands out in Ṭāshkubrīzāda's oeuvre as a multidimensional concept that encompasses life as a whole. The author then explains how Ṭāshkubrīzāda's notion of *adab* applied to such contexts as prayer, community, the search for knowledge, work, and so on.

At the end of the first chapter, Arıcı deals with the relation of ethics to physiognomy (*ʿilm al-firāsa*), astrology, and the occult sciences (37-43). Stressing the importance of physiognomy, he notes that this field of knowledge attracted an unprecedented attention in the Ottoman intellectual and cultural milieu and that, along with other scholars of his time, Ṭāshkubrīzāda appreciated its findings. For example, so Arıcı says, not only did Ṭāshkubrīzāda elaborate on its subfields in his encyclopaedia of sciences, but he also devoted a section to it in his political treatise to serve as an aid to the rulers.

In the second chapter, "Ethics and Humanity," Arıcı analyzes how Ṭāshkubrīzāda considers such issues as the source of ethical acts, the mutability of dispositions, and the conception as well as the definition of virtues. Approaching the soul as the philosophical and psychological source of ethical acts, Arıcı discusses the immaterial soul of the philosophers and the corporeal soul of the religious scholars and concludes that Ṭāshkubrīzāda's perspective differs from the general conception of the latter found among the classical *kalām* scholars (*mutaqaddimūn*). Arıcı explains that in *al-Maʿālim*, Ṭāshkubrīzāda's discussion is in agreement with the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) and follows the structure of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, a significant scholar who introduced the former's theory of the soul to *kalām*. And yet Ṭāshkubrīzāda does not totally subscribe to the conception of the immaterial soul, for he states that the soul operates in the body through a "function of liveliness" (*rūḥun ḥayawāniyyun*) whose origin is the heart (55). In his late works, such as *Miftāḥ al-saʿāda* and *Risāla fī bayān asrār al-khilāfa al-insāniyya,* Ṭāshkubrīzāda retains this understanding of humanity. Declaring the heart to be the body's ruler, his explanation follows that of al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111).

According to Arıcı, Ṭāshkubrīzāda subscribes to the view that dispositions are based on the constitution of the body's elements and can change. He points out that Ṭāshkubrīzāda discusses this topic largely by following the philosophical tradition, as can be seen, for instance, in the Ottoman philosopher's definition of virtue as

the balance of the soul's faculties. Arıcı also stresses that Ṭāshkubrīzāda introduces a Sufi dimension by referring to, among others, virtues such as renunciation (*zuhd*), fear (*khawf*), poverty (*faqr*), and piety (*taqwā*). He illustrates Ṭāshkubrīzāda's conceptual contributions in tables containing the secondary virtues and vices related to wisdom, courage, and chastity (76-78). In Arıcı's view, the philosopher echoes those Muslim thinkers who embrace teleological ethics when he states that humanity's main struggle consists of cultivating/preserving virtues and avoiding vices. Explaining how one can achieve these goals, Ṭāshkubrīzāda utilizes the term *riyāḍa* (the human struggle) in both philosophical and Sufi contexts. Arıcı highlights that Ṭāshkubrīzāda's Sufi ideas accord with the solutions and methods proposed by the philosophers (86).

In the third chapter, "Society and Politics," Arıcı examines the Ottoman scholar's various works from the perspective of political thought. He states that Ṭāshkubrīzāda, in both *Sharḥ al-Akhlāq al-'Aḍudiyya* and *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda*, categorizes politics under practical philosophy and refers to the Aristotelian notion of man as a political animal by nature (*al-insān madaniyyun bi-l-ṭab'*). Following this, Ṭāshkubrīzāda maintains, in line with Ibn Sīnā, that the law legislated by the prophets would provide justice among people. In his *kalām* work *al-Ma'ālim*, he explains prophecy not according to the philosophers' theory, but within classical Ash'arī doctrine and states that God chooses as prophets whomever He will from among His servants. In the last resort, however, he acknowledges the philosophers' theory and, in particular, includes Ibn Sīnā's explanations (94).

When reconstructing Ṭāshkubrīzāda's imagination of a virtuous state, types of leadership, and qualities of an ideal ruler, Arıcı compares him to earlier figures such as al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī on the one hand, and to later authors like Qinalizāda (d. 979/1572) and Munajjimbāshī Aḥmad Dede (d. 1113/1702) on the other (115-27). The author stresses the impact of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bisṭāmī (d. 858/1454) and Molla Luṭfī (d. 900/1495) on Ṭāshkubrīzāda's political thought, particularly on the sciences that complement politics, such as the etiquette of rulership and vizierate along with military commandership. Arıcı also emphasizes Ṭāshkubrīzāda's inclusion of the inspection of public affairs as a science (*'ilm al-iḥtisāb*) and military commandership as a part of political studies.

Arıcı contends that Ṭāshkubrīzāda uses an eclectic method in his ethical and political thought, whereby he includes philosophical approaches, advice literature, and partly juristic and Sufi conceptions at the same time. Writing *Sharḥ al-Akhlāq*

al-'Aḍudiyya in the tradition of practical philosophy, following al-Ījī and al-Ṭūsī, in his *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda* Ṭāshkubrīzāda uses the discourse of *al-siyāsa al-shar'iyya* to explain the sultan's duties. In his *Risāla fī bayān asrār al-khilāfa al-insāniyya*, he follows Sayyid 'Alī al-Hamadānī's (d. 786/1385) *Dhakhīrat al-Mulūk*, which is a synthesis of *al-siyāsa al-shar'iyya*, advice literature, and the philosophical tradition.

As Arıcı states, Ṭāshkubrīzāda embraces the main lines of the Islamic intellectual heritage until his time to varying degrees and proves his competency in the debated theoretical issues. However, the author also notes the shortcomings or dilemmas that he comes across while trying to reconstruct Ṭāshkubrīzāda's political thought. For instance, the philosopher's works contain inconsistent or contradictory statements regarding the place of justice among virtues (73) or the proper approach to wealth (126). In Arıcı's view, Ṭāshkubrīzāda also seems to have difficulties in conceptualizing some of the vices (75). Finally, the author maintains that Ṭāshkubrīzāda sometimes conveys scattered views related to politics in different genres without connecting them to their sources (146).

While evaluating Ṭāshkubrīzāda's ideas, Arıcı considers the elements of continuity and change in Islamic intellectual history. His cross references between this philosopher and other scholars in the same tradition provide readers with a comparative framework and enlighten them about the future reception of these ideas. Arıcı writes that he could not locate (132) the source of Ṭāshkubrīzāda's views in *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda* on the etiquette of rulership. It should be noted that these views closely resemble those stated by Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) in his *Mu'īd al-ni'am wa mubīd al-niqam*.[3]

Arıcı does not limit his analysis to the three texts he had introduced under ethics and politics. Rather, he considers, to varying degrees, Ṭāshkubrīzāda's works on other topics, including *kalām*, philosophy, the classification of sciences, and biography. The fact that he did so is crucial in terms of the scope of the research. At the same time, however, one question to be asked when evaluating Ṭāshkubrīzāda's works is the relationship between the philosopher's ideas and historical experience. Arıcı touches upon this problem with respect to the question of the decadence of knowledge in Ṭāshkubrīzāda's time. But in general, he does not

---

3   Ṭāshkubrīzāda, *Miftāḥ al-sa'āda wa-miṣbāḥ al-siyāda fī mawḍū'āt al-'ulūm*, ed. Kāmil Kāmil Bakrī and 'Abd al-Wahhāb Abū'n-Nūr (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1968), I, 410-11; Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Mu'īd al-ni'am wa mubīd al-niqam*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Najjār, Abū Zayd Shalabī, and Muḥammad Abū'l-'Uyūn (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1367/1948), 16-24.

attempt to answer questions such as the practical implications of Ṭāshkubrīzāda's political ideas or their connection to that period's political debates. In this regard, reading his political writings and locating them in their historical context remains a significant problem.[4]

Arıcı's comparative method, as well as the tables throughout the book, enable readers to better understand the various classifications in Ṭāshkubrīzāda's ethical and political thought. Nevertheless, a few points could have been improved in the book. For example, including information about his family, education, and networks would have shed more light on his intellectual world. One can speculate that Arıcı, who had included a narration of Ṭāshkubrīzāda's life in the introduction to his edition of *Sharḥ al-Akhlāq al-ʿAḍudiyya*, might not have had a chance to compile a more detailed account in this book. A literature review of the studies on Ṭāshkubrīzāda would also have given readers a general idea of the current state of the research. At the end of his book, Arıcı acknowledges these two points and declares his intention to include them in the second edition.

---

4   Asım Cüneyd Köksal, "Taşköprîzâde'de Akıl, Siyaset ve Tarih," *İnsan ve Toplum* 7/1 (2017), 247.