Moderation and al-Ghazali in Turkey: Responses to Skepticism, Modernity, and Pluralism

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Abstract

Turkish theology faculties are an important but understudied source of moderate Muslim responses to the challenges of modernity. Although it is strongly associated with questions of such Enlightenment values as tolerance and freedom of thought, modernity is also tied to skepticism, atheism, and pluralism. Thus one way to examine whether the label of "moderate" applies to a given case is to examine how such a position reflects both the positive values of modernity in addition to how it addresses modernity's challenges.

This paper deals with the resources for religious moderation found in the thought of al-Ghazali and how they are used and analyzed in modern Turkish theology faculties. By focusing on two recent works by Turkish theologians Mehmet Bayrakdar and Adnan Aslan, this paper explores skepticism, atheism, and religious pluralism. I argue that not only are both thinkers "moderate," but that they also engage this label by using their own theological interests and interpretations of al-Ghazali.

Both theologians were trained in Turkish theology faculties and did significant graduate study in Europe. Their work reflects an active engagement with the western intellectual tradition. Al-

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Ghazali plays a crucial – but not final – role in each of their responses to modernity and the western intellectual tradition. For Bayrakdar he functions as a symbol of Muslim intellectual independence, whereas for Aslan he serves as a fundamental resource for making sense of the religious "other." Thus, a case is presented for the increasing relevance of Turkish theological responses to debates outside Turkey.

Introduction

Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (d. 1111), though not uncontroversial, represents for many Muslims a standard of moderate Sunni orthodoxy, a defender of the union of traditional sciences with rational tools, a harmonizer of Aristotelian and Muhammadan virtue of the mean,[1] and a sober critic as well as supporter of Sufi practice. Even though officially Hanafi, the Ottoman Empire recognized the Shafi'i al-Ghazali's legacy as part of religious orthodoxy. Works like his *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah*, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, and *Mishkāt al-Anwār* continued to be influential.[2] In modern Turkey, scholars at the state theology faculties have also shown a marked interest in him,[3] one that has only grown in recent decades. Numerous books, articles, and graduate theses dealing with his thought can be found in academic libraries, journals, and bookstores.[4]

What makes Turkish academic interest in al-Ghazali particularly worthwhile for examination lies in how this scholar has become more and more a tool for critically engaging the western intellectual tradition. Here we will focus primarily on the work of Mehmet Bayrakdar (2013) and Adnan Aslan (2010) as outstanding exemplars of this trend. Their recent work illustrates two important ways in which this classical-era scholar is used to critically engage western intellectual history and suppositions, especially in terms of skepticism and pluralism. More precisely, al-Ghazali represents a moderate yet still orthodox resource for the questions of skepticism[5] and pluralism upon which Turkish academic theologians build their own independent positions. These positions, as we shall see in both theologians' work, reflect a dynamic balance between their concern for orthodoxy and the creative use of various current debates.

Turkish Theological Faculties: A Source of Moderation?

It may be helpful to clarify what specific qualities *moderation* designates. For the sake of initial analysis, we will designate three sets of values often implied by this particular term[6]: (1) a search for balance between past and present, orthodoxy and modern concerns; (2) the freedom of inquiry, openness to external

viewpoints, and tolerance of those who think and believe differently; and (3) some capacity to formulate original and creative solutions.

Recent western scholars of the Qur'an have made a case for the increasing interest of Turkish theology faculties. Rotraud Wielandt and Felix Körner have pointed out the increasing relevance of Turkish theological scholarship to the wider discussions on Qur'anic exegesis. The German Jesuit scholar Körner even describes these faculties as "a great blank on the Western map of Muslim exegesis."[7] In his quest for exegetical approaches that move beyond the apparent dichotomy of criticism and fideism, Körner suggests Turkey as a promising place in which to seek new answers. He also makes a point of highlighting the Turkish university 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 Qur'an 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.[8]

Admittedly, his motives and desiderata are not above critical inquiry. For example, why do we assume that his vision of a revisionist Qur'an hermeneutics is a desirable approach in the first place? His own criteria for such an approach reflect very closely the same values enumerated earlier under the question of moderation and moderate Islam. These include, namely, engagement with other (read: western intellectual) traditions, a climate of open inquiry, and a chance for creative solutions. Accepting that neither label is unproblematic, let us build on the shared intellectual values assumed in his call for a revisionist Qur'anic hermeneutics and the question of moderate Islam. If, for example, his case for increased attention to Turkish theology faculties reflects an intellectual environment of relatively free inquiry, engagement with the western intellectual tradition, and new answers to old dilemmas, then it is likely that Turkey's relevance extends beyond the field of Qur'anic hermeneutics. Arguably this is indeed the case, for these faculties are dynamic and developing institutions that deserve greater scholarly attention outside of Turkey.

The People's Party of the modern Republic of Turkey established the first Islamic theological faculty in Ankara in 1948.[9] This new institution took root in an open intellectual space that had come into being after the traditional Is-

lamic educational system was abolished in 1924 and left fallow for nearly a quarter of a century thereafter.[10] Still, some continuity exists between the traditional and the modern. Turkish theology faculties, which are often in close academic contact with neighboring sociology departments, offer such traditional Islamic specializations as *tafsīr*, hadith, Sufism, *kalām*, and jurisprudence.[11] They also represent the more traditional Islamic sciences in active engagement with neighboring secular disciplines and western universities. Furthermore, these theology faculties continue to spread and take root in Turkish soil outside Ankara and Istanbul, and are thus becoming a more common feature of Turkish university life.

In short, these faculties represent various intellectual voices that are already in dialogue with those outside the Islamic tradition – not merely in the case of Qur'anic hermeneutics, but also in terms of Muslim intellectual responses to skepticism, atheism, and pluralism.

Al-Ghazali as a Symbol of Intellectual Independence from Western Thought

One major function of this current interest in al-Ghazali is, quite possibly, his value as a symbol of intellectual independence. Not only does his thought champion a strong measure of intellectual independence, but, at least in Turkey, he conveniently marks the modern theological tradition's continuity with its Ottoman and Islamic roots. Moreover, he is known to have significantly influenced medieval European thought and thus represents a reversal of the modern trend of western intellectual standards influencing other traditions. Finally, al-Ghazali provides a rich and varied opus for culling responses to questions dealing with skepticism, atheism, and pluralism.

Mehmet Bayrakdar's (b. 1952) *Pascal's Wager: Rolling Dice on the Afterlife According to Ali, al-Ghazali, and Pascal* is illustrative of this.[12] After completing his studies at Ankara University's Theology Faculty, he enrolled at the Sorbonne for his doctorate. He has been employed in the Ankara Theology Faculty since 1979 and has served as a professor there since 1991. While interested in European and Islamic intellectual history, he seems to have a special interest in mathematics and technology.[13]

Pascal's Wager (2013) is a relatively compact three-part essay[14] on the question of probability and the afterlife. The main line of argument is that the Islamic intellectual tradition significantly influenced Blaise Pascal's (d. 1662) formulation of his famous wager. Bayrakdar starts by naming Ali ibn Abi Talib as the real inventor of Pascal's wager, citing Qur'anic resources and even

bringing in the blind Arab poet al-Ma'arri (d. 1057). Yet his real dialogue partner for Pascal is al-Ghazali. Accordingly, the first part situates Pascal's wager within the context of an earlier Islamic precedent. Al-Ghazali's position on the afterlife is fairly straightforward, but not trivial.[15] For both scholars, the crucial consideration lies in the difference between finite goods and infinite consequences. For al-Ghazali, finite happiness cannot compare with infinite happiness and therefore, 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.

The second part lists those who had a direct historical influence on Pascal, among then such Europeans as the *philosophe* and political thinker Jean de Silhon (d. 1667) and the Jesuit Jacques Sirmond (d. 1651). However, he concludes this section with an argument for al-Ghazali's influence on Pascal not only on the matter of Pascal's wager, but more generally as well.[16] To do this, Bayrakdar meticulously lists the transmission history of al-Ghazali's works into Europe as well as the main figures of medieval European intellectual history known to have been affected by these translated works.[17] By doing so he attempts to close the gaps between al-Ghazali's influence on medieval European debates and those to which Pascal responded. But as this alone cannot make a strong case for a deeper influence on Pascal, Bayrakdar claims that the French State Library possesses collections of notes from Enlightenment thinkers, such as Pascal, that show a direct engagement with Islamic sources, including al-Ghazali.[18] Although he was unable to access these archives, he nevertheless cites Goichon and other scholars who posit al-Ghazali's direct influence on European skepticism.[19] There is still another thrust to his argument, one that is arguably the most interesting. Pointing to Pascal's predominantly mathematical writings, Bayrakdar makes a cursory case for the influence of Islamic mathematics on Pascal's approach to arithmetic in the development of Pascal's Triangle by tracing its precedents in the Arab world. For instance, Pascal's Triangle's is first mentioned in Europe in the early sixteenth century, when it was still named after its Muslim originator al-Karaji (d. 1029).[20]

Bayrakdar closes the second section by addressing the question of whether al-Ghazali directly influenced Pascal's formulation of his wager. This last point rests on two main claims and one suggestion. First, there is a potential textual parallel between the two men.[21] Second, he traces a specific trajectory of influence from Raymond Martin (fl. thirteenth century) to Pascal. The problem with the first claim is that the parallel in question is very short, actually no more than 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-Ghazali and the Islamic tradition without acknowledging that a variation of this phrase has been made quite famous through the Gospel of Matthew.[22] The second argument of indirect influence through Martin would benefit from a more thorough provision of supporting details. The suggestion provokes reflection: Even if we do not know the exact details of how al-Ghazali's thought affected Pascal, it is interesting that the latter's wager did not significantly diverge in argument from that of his Islamic predecessor.[23]

None of the above arguments carry any 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-Ghazali. Furthermore, that such questions should be relevant to modern Islamic identity vis-à-vis the western intellectual tradition(s) is no incidental happenstance. To trace the direct lines of influence from Islamic thought not only to medieval western sources but onward into the beginnings of the Enlightenment could be significant to Muslim as well as to modern self-understanding.[24]

His third and final section asks why al-Ghazali's formulation of Pascal's wager underwent no significant criticism in the Islamic world – not even from one of his biggest critics: Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328).[25] In contrast, in the subsequent western intellectual tradition Pascal's wager has been subjected to significant criticism. One reason that Bayrakdar posits for the misunderstanding of Pascal's simple and accessible logic is that neither al-Ghazali nor Pascal actually doubted the existence of God when formulating the wager.[26] But if the wager itself is not a product of doubt, then what is it? For Bayrakdar, Pascal's purpose paralleled al-Ghazali's just as the basic structure of Pascal's argument followed that of the imam.

Rather than formulating an expression of real doubt, the wager was a call to Christian morals and faith, just as the *Iḥyā'* was a call to renew the faith of al-Ghazali's fellow Muslim scholars.[27] To suspect either one of entertaining or spreading real doubt about the existence of God or the afterlife fails to give either one positive credit. Pascal's wager represents an invitation to believe not merely with one's heart, but also with one's mind. In his argument, Bayrakdar points to al-Ghazali as an Islamic example of what in the Christian tradition is known as "faith seeking understanding." Drawing on al-Ghazali's *Mishkāt*, *Al-Munqidh*, and his theological work *Al-Iqtiṣād fi al-I'tiqād*, Bayrakdar argues that for al-Ghazali faith (*īmān*) is not merely the work of the heart but also of the mind,[28] and that his interpretation of Pascal's wager reflects his interpretation of al-Ghazali's interpretation.[29]

Al-Ghazali as a Springboard, But Not a Source of *Taqlīd*,[30] for Responses to Religious Pluralism

As can be gathered by the shape and aim of his argument, Bayrakdar's work is no dispassionate inquiry into the shared Muslim-Christian intellectual history. Rather, it is a *theological* text written by an academically trained *theologian*, as is the case with Aslan's text. However, whereas Bayrakdar focuses on past debates regarding skepticism, Aslan confronts the issue of atheism today. The former ultimately argues that Pascal was no representative of skepticism and thus skirts the issue. By contrast, Aslan deals directly with what many would deem the modern consequences of skepticism: atheism and pluralism.

Adnan Aslan (b. 1963) first studied theology at the Erciyes University Faculty of Theology, acquired his masters at the University of London, and earned his doctorate at Lancaster University on the subject of religious pluralism (1995). After working as a researcher for İSAM,[31] he is currently a faculty member of İstanbul 29 Mayıs University's Philosophy Department.

Aslan's *Religious Pluralism, Atheism, and the Perennial School: A Critical Approach*[32] comprises three distinct but related essays, each of which addresses 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."[33] Nevertheless, he makes a case for Muslim theological engagement with other religions in a twofold manner: He first extensively treats several non-Turkish positions on pluralism as well as atheism, and then, in dialogue with the Muslim Perennial School, encourages Turkish theologians to construct their own 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, he takes great care to faithfully present various non-Turkish views. At the same time, 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."[34]

Aslan is also careful to define what he means by *pluralism*. According to him, pluralism is a western framework for dealing with the competing truth claims of various religious traditions.[35] He ties the western world's increased interest in these various truth claims closely with debates on the existence of God or the afterlife. The theological responses characteristic of modernity turned to the irreducible nature of religious experience[36] in response to the in-

creased questioning of absolute truth claims.[37] Aslan follows this development into the twentieth century, touching on Vatican II, and deftly engages with such influential figures as Karl Rahner, Paul Tillich, John Cobb Jr., Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Ninian Smart, Gavin D'Costa, and John Hick.

His discussion builds into a constructive dialogue with 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-Ghazali.[38] Although he does not want to simply 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 al-Ghazali's *Fayṣal al-Tafriqah bayn al-Islām wa al-Zandaqah*, from which he draws resources for pluralism.

In this work, al-Ghazali begins by hoping that God's mercy is extended to those Turks and Christians outside the Islamic empire who die without having received the call to faith. He then considers three possibilities for non-Muslims: (1) those who have never heard of the Prophet or his message, (2) those who have 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.[39] Those in the first group are excused and receive God's mercy, whereas those in the second do not. For those in the third group, things are a bit more complicated. Aslan signals his interest in their case and delves further into the discussion. Al-Ghazali held that the members of this group who err in their final judgment of the matter are held responsible, whereas those who die still seeking the answer receive God's mercy. Thus, Aslan consciously pushes back against the simplistic reading that al-Ghazali considers all non-Muslims as infidels destined for damnation.

He clearly affirms that Islam stands as the most complete religion and views all others as corrupt. But he does not think it should be a Muslim's goal to prove that other religions are corrupt, for a Muslim accepts the Qur'anic message that other religions are corrupt. Aslan is, however, flexible in that he recognizes it as normal for believers in other religions to adhere to their faith despite the Qur'anic warning, and that God has foreseen this because it was part of the divine plan for humanity's salvation. People who have not heard the Qur'anic address are unable to see the limitations of their own faith. Thus he neither holds them accountable for their corrupt religion, nor does he believe that God will hold them accountable.[40]

This is more or less his modern application of al-Ghazali's position in *Fayṣal*.[41] Aslan's fundamental motivation is that he neither wants to condemn non-Muslims nor say that all religions are true. Furthermore, he is willing to

recognize that a non-Muslim could be a Muslim in terms of the beliefs held in his or her heart. Given this, one could argue that he is an inclusivist who holds a position similar to that of the Catholic theologian Karl Rahner.[42]

For Aslan, it does not seem logical to bind one's personal salvation with having a perfect religion, since perfection is not a human quality. Underpinning this is a view of God whose justice is fundamentally characterized by mercy toward finite creatures. There remains, however, an unresolved tension: He continues to regard all other religions as corrupt and yet wants to acknowledge the workings of God's mercy in them. Of course this position belies the characteristic tension underlying all inclusivist positions, whether Christian, Hindu, Muslim, or other. And even though he diverges from al-Ghazali in positively holding non-Muslims responsible for maintaining their own religions, his position leaves many issues unanswered. For example, his inclusivism only treats those who are born into non-Muslim faiths, not those who convert to them. Nor does it deal with the question of multiple religious belongings.

After this, Aslan uses his second essay to engage various atheist positions. He is not quick to throw all atheists into one pot. On the contrary, he makes a point of saying that just as there are many ways to believe in God, there are also many ways to not believe in God.[43] His discussion offers some of the western intellectual history behind atheism as well as a longer engagement with the analytic philosophers' approaches to rationally justifying atheism. His major dialogue partner in this regard is Michael Martin. Aslan's treatment stands out in two distinct ways: He first recognizes and explores the intellectual coherence of atheist objections to theism and, second, does not defend monotheism by claiming that reason and faith must ultimately agree, as did Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) in his *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*.

Aslan's response to the challenges of modernity is both more subtle and incredibly versed in western intellectual discussions. For him, reducing faith to logical arguments misses the point, for equating the most perfect faith with the most reasonable faith resolves nothing. Instead, he contends that "faith is a psychological condition" that cannot be destroyed by logic alone.[44] Faith simply has more dimensions to consider. And in this, Aslan tips his hat to the objections of fideism – a surprising move, for moderate Muslim theologians often assume faith without reason to be a Christian prerogative. This is not to say that he abandons reason, but rather to acknowledge that his argument is very reasonable. In sum, coming to or losing one's 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 the usual narrow, well-rehearsed arguments.

On this note, Aslan concludes his book by calling for the formulation of a Turkish Muslim response to modernity. In this he again takes up the Perennialist School as a model of what has already been done. He does not want Turkish theologians to copy what scholars like S. H. Nasr have done, nor does he think that it would be wise for them to ignore this particular school's challenges, limitations, and successes. For him, this school represents a way for Islam to exist in a pluralist world without losing its identity and to spread its message to an even broader audience.

Taking the book as a whole, Aslan starts by aligning himself most closely with al-Ghazali on the question of pluralism; however, he goes on to seriously consider the intellectual possibility of atheism and, in the final section on the Perennialist School, calls for a new Muslim approach to modernity. Thus he does not simply use al-Ghazali as a symbol of orthodoxy by which to measure the religious "other." Rather, Aslan uses him as an anchor for sailing into the sea of pluralism on a boat that is entirely his own. Most importantly, he moves beyond al-Ghazali to ask an extremely relevant question: What would a modern Turkish Islamic perspective look like?

Conclusion

In light of Bayrakdar's and Aslan's reflections on modernity, it is clear that al-Ghazali can function on several fronts: as a source of authority and intellectual independence relevant to European Enlightenment debates as well as a viable launching point for rethinking Muslim responses to atheism and pluralism. Although Aslan is the more creative and independent theologian, both he and Bayrakdar move beyond al-Ghazali in order to form moderate positions that reflect both the scholarship and the needs of Turkish Muslims. Furthermore, both theologians are in active dialogue with western intellectual history and, especially in Aslan's case, current western scholarship. If *moderation* is characterized by openness, tolerance, and engagement with the "other," then we would be hard pressed to deny that label to either of them. I would also argue that they exemplify the tendency for Turkish theological faculties to encourage creative and novel approaches to rethinking a moderate Muslim identity.[45]

However, there is one caution related to the criterion of moderation that should be considered: To expect Turkish theologians to conform entirely to external notions of moderation and ignore their output when they diverge from such external criteria risks missing the point. For instance, Aslan notes that it is impossible for Muslims to read a thinker like Immanuel Kant (d. 1804) as western Christians read him. Even if doing so were possible, it could not help

to construct a robust Muslim response to modernity in Turkey.[46] Aslan is not saying that Turkish Muslims ignore Kant (clearly some are reading him), but that in order to produce a Muslim response to modernity that can deal effectively with some of its major elements (viz., skepticism, atheism, and pluralism), one must understand that Turkish Muslim intellectuals will inevitably view such challenges in light of their own tradition and perspective.

More generally, various assumptions lie behind the label *moderate*. This is particularly true the case in religion and especially with Islam, despite its wide variety and plurality of representatives. A heightened concern for moderation may rightly signal colonial baggage, unjust power balances, and a negative or controlling view of the tradition. To deem moderation good and then subject a tradition to the standards of one's personal view of it risks unduly filtering or politically skewing the possible ways of engaging or representing it. At the very least, one must be consciously aware of what goods he or she associates with moderation.

Neither is it enough to identify moderation with freedom of inquiry, openness to external viewpoints, and tolerance of those who think and believe differently. Certainly these are essential elements, but a sense of independence, full agency, and healthy power balances with others must underlie such values. In short, moderation and excessive vulnerability do not mix well. Moreover, the former cannot function justly as a criterion if its main task is to mask an external normative judgment. Especially in the case where *moderation* is not a self-applied label, the standard used must reflect the interests of those whom it evaluates and not merely the values of those doing the judging.

To conclude, al-Ghazali functions as a symbol of independence and creative agency in the work of both Bayrakdar and Aslan. Their theological texts speak to other Turkish Muslims, as well as testify to each theologian's long and active engagement with western thought. Their value lies not only in the arguments they put forth, but also in the theological spirit that they represent. And this theological spirit is arguably one of self-defined moderation, for it is firmly rooted in Muslim tradition and responsive to modernity.

Endnotes

1. Sections of al-Ghazali's magnum opus *Iḥyā'* are indebted to Miskawayh's ethical treatise *Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq*, which treats Aristotelian virtue theory. See for example, Walter James Skelle, *Introduction to Al-Ghazali's The Marvels of the Heart* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2010) and Mohamed Ahmed Sherif, *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975).

2. In fact, Ottoman responses to the *Tahāfut* and other works by al-Ghazali were fairly common. For example, Ibn al-Humam (d. 861/1456) wrote a response to al-Ghazali's *Al-Risālah al-Qudsīyah* (p. 52) and Ibn Kemal (d. 940/1534) wrote a gloss on the *Tahāfut* (p. 65). Even thinkers at the end of the Ottoman period wrote on al-Ghazali. For example, Şerafeddin Yaltakaya (d. 1947) wrote several works on him (pp. 88-89). See Ömer Aydın's *Türk Kelâm Bilginleri* (*Turkish Kalam Scholars*) for the paginated references. Also available through İSAM online holdings are several late Ottoman articles on al-Ghazali by Ali Suavi, Hafiz Ibrahim, and Aksekili Mehmed Hamdi (in addition to Yaltakay's article).
3. For instance, Ibrahim Agâh Cubukcu's *Al-Ghazali and Skepticism* (*Gazzalî ve Şüphecilik*) was published in 1964 and is still cited.
4. A full analysis of all the Turkish-language books, graduate theses, and articles on al-Ghazali over the last fifty or so years is far beyond the scope of this article. The following list gives just a sense of these as regards questions of modernity or western thought in Turkish academia: Zeynep Gemuhluoğlu, *Teoloji olarak yorum: Gazzali ve Ibn Rüşd'de Te'vil* (*A Theological Commentary: Ghazali and Ibn Rushd on Quranic Interpretation*) (Istanbul: İz Yayınları, 2010); Mesut Okumuş, *Kur'ân'ın Çok Boyutlu Okunuşu: İmam Gazzâlî Örneği* (*A Multidimensional Reading of the Qur'an: The Example of Ghazâli*) (Ankara: Ankara Okulu Yayınları, 2006); Sabri Orman, *Gazâlî: Biyografisi, Hakikat Araştırması, Felsefe Eleştirisi, Ihya Hareketi, Etkisi* (*Ghazali: His Biography, Search for Truth, Critique of Philosophy, Revival Movement, and Influence*) (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1986, 2013); Sadık Türkler, *Aristoteles Gazzali ile Leibniz'de Yargı Mantığı* (*Ghazali and Leibniz on the Logic of Judgment)* (Istanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2002); Mevlut Uyanık, *İslam Bilgi Felsefesinde Kalbin Anlaması: Gazzâlî Örneği* (*Understanding of the Heart in Islamic Philosophy of Knowledge: The Example of Ghazali*) (Ankara: Ankara Araştırma Yayınları, 2005); Mehmet Vural, *Gazzâlî Felsefesinde Bilgi ve Yöntem* (*Knowledge and Method in Ghazali's Philosophy*) (Ankara: Ankara Okulu, 2004, 2011); Muhammet Yazıcı, *Gazzali Sonrası Ehl-i Sünnet Kelamı'nda Varlık Anlayışı* (*The Concept of Being in Sunni Kelam after Ghazali*) (Istanbul: Salkımsöğüt Yayınevi, 2010).
5. For a recent treatment on al-Ghazali within the framework of skepticism in classical Islamic thought, see Paul L. Heck, *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion* (London & New York: Routledge, 2014).
6. Rather than launch a review of the debates on *wasatiyyah* and moderation in Arab and Islamic studies, I choose to start with some reasonably common assumptions and let the use of the term develop in tandem with the sources.
7. Felix Körner, *Revisionist Koran Hermeneutics in Contemporary Turkish University Theology* (Würzberg: Ergon Press, 2005), 19.
8. Ibid., 47.
9. Ibid., 50.

10. There was a Faculty of Theology at Istanbul University, but it was abolished in 1933. Mehmet Paçacı, "75 Years of Higher Religious Education in Modern Turkey," in *The Muslim World* 89 (1999): 389.
11. See, for instance, "Ankara University Theology Faculty Divisions," http://www.divinity.ankara.edu.tr/?page_id=61, accessed January 15, 2015.
12. Pascal Oyunu, *Hz. Ali, Gazzâlî ve Pascal'a Göre Âhirete Zar Atmak* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2013). The translation of the title is my own, as well as all subsequent translations from Turkish. Henceforth, it is referred to as *Pascal's Wager*.
13. Mathematics plays a large role in his work on Pascal. Bayrakdar also published *History of Science and Technology in Islam* (*İslâm'da Bilim ve Teknoloji Tarihi*) (Ankara, TDVY: 2012).
14. The book is around 100 pages.
15. For instance, Egyptian Qur'an exegete and literary critic Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd severely berated al-Ghazali for his obsession with the afterlife. See his "Al-Ghazali's Theory of Interpretation," *Journal of Osaka University of Foreign Studies* 72 (1986): 1-24. And while the afterlife is a recurrent and omnipresent feature is much of al-Ghazali's work, his views on it are not simple or undisputed. Bayrakdar refers mainly to the *Iḥyā'* for al-Ghazali's version of *Pascal's Wager.* But al-Ghazali also discusses it elsewhere in his *Mīzān al-'Amal*. 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 p. 33, cites volume three of the *Iḥyā'*. One of al-Ghazali'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-Ghazali also uses it in *Mīzān*.
16. In this he relies heavily on the Spanish Orientalist M. Asin Palacios and also on the OttomanTurkish al-Ghazali scholar Çubukçu. On page 73 Bayrakdar cites Palacios as admitting al-Ghazali's influence on Pascal.
17. He lists Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Raymond Martin, and Martin Lille as famous figures influenced by al-Ghazali (p. 67).
18. He also lists Leibniz and Berkeley as being represented in this collection (p. 68).
19. The source that he does cite, please note, refers to Avicenna's influence on medieval Europe rather than the Enlightment. He refers the reader to A-M. Goichon, *La Philosophie d'Avicenne et Son Influence en Europe Médiévale* (Paris: 1951).
20. Bayrakdar, 68-69. He cites Niccolò Fontana Tartaglia (d. 1577) as referring to Pascal's triangle as Karajī's Triangle. He also notes the mention of this triangle in Hindi and Chinese sources.
21. In this, Bayrakdar refers to Bousquet's "Un Mot de Pascal dans l'Ihyâ de Ghazâlî," *Studia Islamica* 30 (1954): 104.
22. 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).

23. Bayrakdar, *Pascal's Wager*, 73. For this, he cites a remark in *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1980).
24. 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 the western Enlightenment (and hence modern) intellectual heritage. As it stands, there remains a stereotype of medieval Europe as fundamentally superstitious and backward, and thus 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 the debates on skepticism that raged throughout the Enlightenment and even beyond would require many to rethink the Islamic contribution to western thought and modernity.
25. Bayrakdar, *Pascal's Wager*, 75. It is interesting to note that Bayrakdar unhesitatingly designates Ibn Taymiyyah as a *kalām* theologian.
26. Ibid., 77.
27. The fact that he interprets Pascal's motives in light of what are generally seen to be al-Ghazali's is not a point that he dwells on, but it is implicit in his treatment.
28. Bayrakdar, *Pascal's Wager*, 88. Al-Ghazali tends to use terms like heart (*qalb*) and mind (*'aql*) to refer to a similar or identical faculty in the human being – an issue into which Bayrakdar does not go.
29. The book closes on a strongly pseudo-scientific adventure through the laws of thermodynamics and physics, ending on a hadith concerning the fate of human remains. The closing section is not of particular interest for the issue of Pascal and al-Ghazali.
30. Here I mean *taqlīd* in the negative sense, which even al-Ghazali himself criticized: that of blind following.
31. İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi (The Center for Islamic Research).
32. Dinî Çoğulculuk, Ateizm, ve Geleksel Ekol: Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım (Istanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010). This title is referred to below as *Pluralism*.
33. Ibid., 7: "Türkiye'de din felsefesi diğer din ilimleri gibi gariptir." I translated "diğer din ilimleri" more loosely 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."
34. Trans. by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem. See ibid., 13.
35. Ibid., 14.
36. In this he cites those like Friedrich Schleiermacher, Rudolf Otto, William James, and John Hick, 15.
37. Though not referenced by Aslan, his interpretation of the interaction of western views on religious experience and possible truth claims is supported by Frederick C. Beiser, a scholar of German intellectual history. See Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).
38. Aslan, *Pluralism*, 10.

39. Ibid., 43-44.
40. Ibid., 49. One might ask what happens to believers in other faiths who read the Qur'an and study Islam but do not convert. I suppose that in this case the same paradigm applies – such people are part of al-Ghazali's third group and may or may not receive God's mercy.
41. Aslan is by no means the only reader of al-Ghazali to interpret this text as assuring salvation for many non-Muslims. See for example, Ahmed el Shamsy's chapter in the *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*.
42. Aslan, *Pluralism*, 50. Rahner, a famous Catholic inclusivist, 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.
43. His words are: "Just as there are infinite ways to bind a man to God, there are also infinite ways to obstruct a man from God" (Turkish: "İnsan Tanrı'ya bağlayan sonsuz sayıda yollar olduğu gibi, insanı Tanrı'dan ayıran sonsuz sayıda engeller de olabilir"). Ibid., 61.
44. Ibid., 80.
45. These two books offered what seemed to be the most direct attempts to use al-Ghazali in order to engage modernity. But other works may deserve some attention as well, such as Hasan Aydın's *Gazzâlî: Felsefesi ve İslam Modernizmine Etkileri* (2006 and 2012) and Mehmet Vural's *Gazzâlî Felsefesinde Bilgi ve Yöntem* (2004 and 2011).
46. Aslan, *Pluralism*, 118.