# 1 Introduction
## The Agonistic Spirit at the Fifteenth-Century Ottoman Court

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The fifteenth-century Ottoman philosophical corpus is a neglected area of research in early modern intellectual history, which has been overshadowed by innumerable studies on philosophical production in other contemporaneous contexts, such as the Italian Renaissance or early modern European thought. These philosophical debates and disputations that took place in Ottoman public and private settings were highly rich in terms of intellectual extent, covering subjects at the intersection of philosophy, theology and, in certain cases, Sufism. These scholarly events mined for potential parallels to specific developments in the history of philosophy. And a good number of them were based on certain Graeco-Arabic doctrines originally purported by the Muslim Peripatetic philosopher and physician Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), also known as Avicenna in the West.

For the early twentieth-century scholarship, the genres of commentary (*sharḥ*) and gloss (*ḥāshiya*), which were popular registers for knowledge production in the post-classical Islamic world, were previously regarded as stale, static, and unoriginal, only restricting themselves to redundant expositions. New studies on the commentary and gloss tradition, however, reveal that the production of knowledge in the early modern Islamic world was a dynamic seedbed of intellectual change and scientific investigation. The analyses of lemmata in the plethora of post-classical commentaries and


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glosses reveal that scholars could posit numerous and disparate doctrinal positions, each referencing particular texts, through which the scholars gave their own syntheses based on their own unique perspectives.[1] In order to delve into the philosophical traditions of the late fifteenth-century Ottoman medrese, contemporary scholars of post-classical Islamic intellectual history have to consider the recontextualized philosophical discussions emphasized in the multilayered texts of glosses, by bearing in mind the time span between the *Urtext* and the later textual amendments. The textual tradition in each book could span over hundreds of years.

Competition was a law of the fifteenth-century Ottoman scholarship. The scholarly communities and medrese networks were dominated by countless formal debates, royal commissions, written encounters, and snap challenges in which the scholars engaged to prove their superiority in scholarly merit, argumentation, referencing, and religious piety over one another.[2] The content of these debates covered a wide range of scientific disciplines from religious sciences, such as jurisprudence,[3] inheritance law and manumission,[4] and theology,[5] to philosophical matters, including logic,[6] metaphysics and

1 See *Oriens*'s special issue on "the *Ḥāshiya* and Islamic Intellectual History" introduced and edited by Asad Q. Ahmed and Margaret Larkin, *Oriens*, 41(3-4), 2013. For glosses in *ḥikma* and *kalām*, see Ahmed, "Post-Classical Philosophical Commentaries/Glosses", and Wisnovsky, "Avicennism and Exegetical Practice". The rich nature of commentary and gloss in the post-classical context was previously studied by Wisnovsky in his "The Nature and Scope of Arabic Philosophical Commentary".

2 For an index of academic debates, intellectual rivalries, and scholarly collaborations, see Balıkçıoğlu, *A Coherence of Incoherences*, 478-82.

3 See the set of exchanges written concerning the question of four principles (*muḳaddimāt-ı erbaʿa*), a topic in the principles of jurisprudence. The discussion was initiated by the Ottoman scholar Mollā ʿAlāeddīn-i ʿArabī (d. 901/1496), and there were responses prepared by his other fifteenth-century contemporaries, including Ḳasṭalānī, Ḥasan-ı Ṣamsunī, Ḫatībzāde, and Ḥācı Ḥasanzāde, preserved in a single manuscript (Süleymaniye Library, MS Bağdatlı Vehbi 2027). See Ḫoca Saʿeddīn, *Tācü't-tevārīḫ*, 2: 487; Atçıl, *The Formation of the Ottoman Learned Class*, 279-83; Köksal, "Osmanlılarda Mukaddimât-ı Erbaa Literatürü".

4 Korkmaz, *Molla Hüsrev'in 'Velâ' Hakkındaki Görüşleri*; Özer, "Molla Hüsrev'in *er-Risâle fî'l-Velâ*'sı"; "Molla Hüsrev'in *Velâ* Meselesi".

5 The famed fifteenth-century theologian Ḳasṭalānī (d. 901/1496) wrote a treatise of polemics concerning the Timurid verifier al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī's (d. 816/1413) alleged mistakes in six theological issues under the title *Iʿtirāḍāt al-Ḳasṭalānī ʿalā al-Sayyid al-Sharīf*. Sinān Paşa (d. 891/1496) responded to these objections on behalf of Jurjānī, and the exchange was also referred to as "[Ḳasṭalānī's] boastings" (i.e. the *tafākhur* debate). See Ünver, "Molla Kestelli'nin Seyyid Şerif'e", 111-13.

6 Mollā Luṭfī (d. 900/1495) wrote a treatise titled *al-Sabʿa al-shidād*, a critique of Jurjānī's views on the term of logic 'subject' (*mawḍūʿ*) in response to the verifier Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī al-Taḥtānī's (d. 766/1363) points in his commentary on Sirāj al-Dīn al-Urmawī's (d. 682/1283) *Maṭāliʿ al-anwār* in logic (Gökyay, Özen, "Molla Lutfi", 258). Mollā ʿİzārī (d. 901/1496), who was in charge of Luṭfī's execution, also penned a refutation of this treatise. See Ḫocazāde's defense of Jurjānī in a discussion with two prominent scholars, the Shaykh al-Islām Efḍālzāde (d. 908/1503) and the Sultan's tutor Ḫoca Ḫayrüddīn (d. ?). The debate concerns Taftāzānī's statement regarding *kalām* being in need of logic (Balıkçıoğlu, *A Coherence of Incoherences*, 90-1). Besides Mollā Luṭfī's work, also see Mollā Ḫüsrev's (d. 885/1480) *taḥqīq* on the question of logical definitions with regard to the unity of genus and species, see Üçer, "Müteahhir Dönem Mantık Düşüncesinde".

natural philosophy,[7] as well as others, such as rhetoric,[8] dialectical inquiry,[9] and mathematics.[10] In fifteenth-century Ottoman scholarship, verifying the truth in the face of different domains of knowledge took many forms, including Sufi epistemology,[11] as well as a dialogue with certain other non-Muslim traditions (see chapter 2).

The scholarly exchanges were opportunities for scholars to display their knowledge, make names for themselves and, most importantly, establish their mastery in synthesizing knowledge coming from diverse schools of thought by way of verification (*taḥqīq*), a method of arbitration, closely associated with Avicennism and the post-classical commentary and gloss practice.[12] *Taḥqīq* is a form of constatation to ascertain already established truths through the process of acquiring a thing's true existence, an essential way of knowing based on skepticism towards the past and openness to independent reasoning and syncretism. According to Khaled El-Rouayheb, the culture of arbitration during the seventeenth century, which could be regarded as the "age of *taḥqīq*" in the Arabic-speaking regions of the Ottoman Empire, insisted on the insufficiency of 'imitation' (*taqlīd*), that is, acceptance of the creed based on uncritical affirmation of what one has been

7 See the fifteenth-century Ottoman adjudications (*muḥākamāt*) on Ghazālī's critique of the philosophers in his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (Özervarlı, "Arbitrating between al-Ghazālī and the Philosophers", 375-97 and van Lit, "An Ottoman Commentary Tradition", 368-413).

8 The celebrated jurist Mollā Ḥüsrev penned an unedited gloss on Taftāzānī's *Muṭawwal*, objecting to the criticisms by ʿAbdullāh-ı Ḳırımī (d. 879/1474) (Millet Library, MS Feyzullah Efendi 1791). See Alak, "Molla Hüsrev'in Belâgat İlimlerine" and "Şeyhülislâm Molla Hüsrev'in Belâgatle".

9 For an adjudication in dialectical inquiry (*ādāb al-baḥth*), see Belhaj, "Mullā Khusraw as a Dialectician".

10 Fazlıoğlu, "Ali Kuşçu'nun Bir Hendese Problemi".

11 See the forthcoming article by Balıkçıoğlu, "In the Crucible of Ottoman *Taḥqīq*" to be published in the special *taḥqīq* issue of *The Journal of Early Modern History*, 27, 2023 edited by Giancarlo Casale. The term *ahl-e kashf wa-taḥqīq* (often contrasted with *ahl-e ẓāhir* or *taqlīd*) was initially used for a select number of distinct Timurid scholars who synthesized Ibn ʿArabī's doctrines with Sunnī theology, occultism, and Avicennan philosophy. For the use of taḥqīq in the context of the Timurid scholar Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī (d. 858/1454) and his milieu, see Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran*, 98-9. The earlier sense of *taḥqīq* implied the concordance of natural, philosophical, scriptural, and mystical knowledge with specific references to Akbarī theosophy, the Neoplatonist vocabulary of the syncretic *Ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*, esoteric sciences, as well as various key doctrines, such as the unity of opposites, the causal connectivity among lower and celestial bodies (astral determinism), *waḥdat al-wujūd*, and the belief that Arabic letters inscribed in the Qurʾān hid divine secrets. Associating a distinct intellectual network of scholars who sought ways to prove the unity of *madhab*s and differing schools of thought including the fifteenth-century Timurid syncretic universalist-occultists Yazdī and Ibn Turka, *ahl-e taḥqīq* was a term further employed for a distinct network of Islamicate jurists like Ḥusayn al-Akhlāṭī (d. 799/1397) and Akmal al-Dīn al-Bābertī (d. 786/1384), as well as the Hanafi lettrist-mystic al-Bisṭāmī (d. 858/1454). All those figures were linked to Ottoman verifiers, such as Mollā Fenārī and Qāḍīzāde-i, as well as the jurist-mystic rebel Şeyḫ Bedreddīn (d. 819/1416) in various capacities (Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks*, 100-6). Having spent most of his later life in the Ottoman Brusa, Bisṭāmī was known for his preoccupation with natural sciences, prognostication and astronomical/astrological compendia based on Timurid models. His extant compendia with apocalyptic/messianic themes date back to the first two years of Meḥmed II's reign, which suggests that the millenial-universalist tendencies in political vision was a common trend in the post-Mongol Islamicate world (Fleischer, "Ancient Wisdom and New Sciences", 232-6). As a category different from *faylasūf* or *mutakallim*, *muḥaqqiq* (one who realizes) referred more specifically to high caliber Sufis associated with the school of Ibn ʿArabī (Chittick, *Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, 45-57; "The School of Ibn ʿArabī", 510-16; Dagli, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture*, 100).

12 Wisnovsky, "Avicennism and Exegetical Practice", 2013, as well as Brentjes, *Teaching and Learning the Sciences*, 175-7; and, for the context of verification in the Ottoman North Africa, see El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 2017.

told by elders, peers, teachers, and books[13] – as opposed to the rational demonstration of the truth of the Islamic creed through demonstrative arguments and critical assessments.[14]

Within the very limited literature available on early modern Islamic intellectual history, the contemporaneous achievements of Muslim scholars during the Renaissance are vastly overlooked. Current research reveals that like their contemporaries in the Italian world, there was a similar vibrant community of Muslim scholars who mediated between different schools of thought through synthesis and verification, even those deemed to be against the central orthodoxy of Islam.[15] A competent verifier (*muḥaqqiq*) in the Ottoman context was expected to arbitrate among diverse doctrines with rigor and finesse in argumentation, not with blind imitation. In that sense, a master verifier was not only asked to give exact references to past debates, but also should be able to restate them in the new context. *Taḥqīq* required that the verifier adhered most closely to demonstrative (*burhānī*) arguments as opposed to rhetorically persuasive arguments, often having followed Avicenna's own critical method or defended his positions.[16] *Taḥqīq* did not necessarily aim at breaking away from the tradition but tackled new formulations based on the internal assessment of traditional sources present by moving away from the standard interpretation.

The fifteenth-century Ottoman scholarly culture denoted the efficacious resort to skill, power, calculation, and self-control, which could be argued to have corresponded to the Ancient Greek principle of *agôn* (ἀγών).[17] With regard to the formal qualities of various types of games, Roger Caillois singles out agonistics as the backbone of competitive games, including sports, as well as scholarly debates and disputations, in which adversaries confront each other under ideal conditions, susceptible to assigning precise and incontestable value to the winner's triumph based on ambition, valor and, in the early Ottoman context, erudition and scholarly merit. The Ottoman agonistics were total actions, reflecting authority, codification, and competitive merit. The evaluations were based on the arbitration of a capable referee who acted as the guardian of truth and veracity.[18]

Besides scholarly debates and disputations, snap challenges were also a form of popular exchanges among Ottoman scholars with past rivalry and personal animosity. These phenomena aimed at proving one's superiority in knowledge and argumentation skills in often off-the-cuff settings, and had

**13** In the religio-legal context, *taqlīd* is understood to be a scaffolded doctrine within the system of school conformism as opposed to *ijtihād*, yet this did not mean that many possible changes and amendments could be introduced within each doctrine. In the scholarly context, *taqlīd*, in turn, is understood in juxtaposition to *taḥqīq*. For the religio-legal context, see Ibrahim, "Rethinking the *Taqlīd* Hegemony" and Jackson, "*Taqlīd*, Legal Scaffolding".

**14** In their dictionaries of technical terms, ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Munāwī (d. 1622) and Ebūʾl-Beḳā Kefevī (d. 1684) both defined that *taḥqīq* is "to establish the proof of a scholarly question" (*ithbāt dalīl al-masʾala*) (El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History*, 4, 27-8, 357-60).

**15** Balıkçıoğlu, *A Coherence of Incoherences*, 1-23.

**16** For the case of verification in the Islamic context of philosophical sciences, see Wisnovsky, "On the Emergence of Maragha Avicennism", 273. Technically speaking, verification is a method of acquiring a real definition of a concept by achieving a complete and essential conception (B. Ibrahim, "Faḫr al-Dīn al-Rāzī", 396; Bertolacci, *The Reception of Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 276-9).

**17** Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, 72; Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 30-1, 48-50.

**18** For the status of referees in the Italian debate culture, Quint, "Dueling and Civility", 231-4.

close connotations in the Greek concept of 'dare to contest' as in *agôn* and, arguably, Immanuel Kant's later *sapere aude* (dare to know) borrowed from the Latin poet Horace. There are numerous extant accounts of such exchanges in which the fellow scholar tried to challenge the other party in the presence of other scholars before even greeting his adversary.[19]

The practice of *agôn* is a vindication of personal responsibility, and assumes sustained attention, determined application, and the desire to win.[20] Its corruption only begins when no referee or decision is recognized. Depending on the context of the scientific method and value system of the society, an agonistic debate has to be based on meritocracy and high achievement.[21]

The culture of scholarly debates (*mubāḥaṣāt-ı ʿilmiyye* in Ottoman Turkish)[22] was a prominent feature of court life in the post-classical Islamic world. Particularly through its formal structure, ambitious display of scholarly pride, and close links to patronage activities, this culture shared an affinity with the intellectual life of other contemporary Islamicate courts, including Timurid/post-Timurid Persia and Mamlūk Egypt,[23] and found new venues in knowledge transfer, especially in the cases of Baghdad and Isfahan, two cities that were in continued intercity dialogue despite their competing distinctions in language (Arabic/Persian), religious affiliation (Sunnī/Shīʿī) and cultures of early sciences and their developments.[24] The Ottoman Sultan, his viziers, or the scholars themselves could initiate the scholarly debates. If a discussion was commissioned or ordered (*ʿamara*) by the Sultan, an official debate could be held in front of the members of the ruling class along with various reputable scholars of the day, and the debate could result in the promotion of the victorious party to a higher post or the loser's removal from a seat, should the end result prove especially humiliating. These exchanges were not limited to sciences but also extended to the arts, and the case of the Ottoman panegyrics even saved the lives of scholar-poets who managed to combine political confessionalism with advanced rhetorical skills.[25]

The egalitarian spirit of *agôn*, a term that dates back to Ancient Greece, was at the heart of the Ottoman scholarly practice. The debates were regulated and subject to arbitration and evaluation by a qualified referee or a

19 As for exemplary snap exchanges, see Ḫocazāde and ʿAlī Ḳuşçu on the tidal waves in the Strait of Hormuz and the Bosporus: Ṭaşḳöprizāde, *al-Shaqāʾiq al-nuʿmāniyya*, 161; Ḫoca Saʿeddīn, *Tācüʾt-tevārīḫ*, 2: 490-1; al-Laknawī, *al-Fawāʾid al-bahiyya*, 352; Balıkçıoğlu, *A Coherence of Incoherences*, 94-5. The epistolary exchange between the late fifteenth-century scholars Aḫī Çelebi and Gulām Sinān regarding the critique of their respective glosses on Ṣadr al-Sharīʿa's commentary on *al-Wiqāya* in jurisprudence: Özen, "Sahn-ı Semân'da Bir Atışma".

20 Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, 14-18; Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, 46-7.

21 Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, 46.

22 In Ottoman biobibliographical sources, the term was employed as *mübāḥiṣ-i ʿilmiyye*. See, for instance, Muḥtesibzāde, *Ḥadāʾiḳ al-reyḥān* [*Terceme-i şaḳāʾiḳ*], MS TSMK 1263, f. 98a.

23 See Brentjes, "Patronage, Networks and Migration"; Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion*, 63-4; Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System".

24 See Kheirandish, *Baghdad and Isfahan*. For 'one-volume libraries' (as in Franz Rosenthal's coinage) from Iṣfahān, which included a *thematically-curated* select number of cannonical works in philosophy, see Endress, "Philosophische ein-Band-Bibliotheken aus Isfahan".

25 The competitive spirit, as well as the rewarding mechanism, extended to skillfully composed panegyrics addressed to the ruling class, which were often honored with salaries, prizes, and ceremonial robes. The Ottoman panegyrics were always politically motivated. In some cases, they also saved one's life, as in Veliyüddīn Aḥmed Paşa's (d. 902/1496-97) panegyric to Meḥmed II (Aguirre-Mandujano, "The Social and Intellectual World").

notary before the announcement of the victorious.[26] Though the agonistic spirit had often been associated with sports in Ancient Greece, the Socratic tradition did encourage philosophy as *agôn* as an indispensable feature of the philosophical method *elenchos*/*elenchus* (ἔλεγχος, cross-examination) to get at truth, which was in direct opposition to the rhetorical character of philosophical sophistry. In this case, the combativeness of the Homeric hero in warfare was directed at philosophical truth and certainty, and Socrates' agonistic *elenchos* also transformed the interlocutors in their commitment to inquiry, the outcome of which could be evaluated based on the criteria of the day.[27]

All knowledge including philosophy is polemical by nature, and polemics cannot be divorced from agonistics.[28] An agonistic impulse in philosophical debates gravitates towards the rigor and ambition to reach truth through a cooperative search between the interlocutors. In the case of *elenchus*, the questioner takes upon himself the task of refuting the other party's arguments or bringing out counter-explanations.[29] 'Winning' means showing oneself superior in the outcome of a game since the object for which scholars compete is victory that may be based on merit, erudition, etiquette or, simply, a semblance of superiority in expected criteria.[30]

The relationship between erudition and credibility informs the dynamics of early modern Ottoman disputes, which, in fact, resembled highly codified (verbal) duels exercised in the Italian Renaissance.[31] Nonetheless "there were no medals to be won", as Monica Azzolini suggests, in scientific duels in the Italian context, so the discussions were more directed at one's public reputation rather than institutional standing. One could race with another for a prospect, yet, for the Italian context, there were no apparent losers or those who were removed from their positions indefinitely.[32] A great variety of semi-

**26** See the exchange between the mathematician Niccolò Tartaglia (1499/1500-57) and the polymath Girolamo Cardano (1501-76) for the case of notary, Azzolini, "There Were no Medals", 275-6.

**27** Metcalf, *Philosophy as Agôn*, 22, 106 and for its crossovers in classical Chinese thought, Wong, "*Agon* and *Hé*". In turn, for sophistry as play, see Huizinga, "Play-Forms in Philosophy", in *Homo Ludens*, 146-57. With regard to the Socratic *elenchus*, the method of refuting the empty belief in one's own wisdom, Gregory Vlastos has singled out two types, i.e. standard versus indirect *elenchus*, such that the former corresponds to Socrates' main instrument of philosophical investigation, for the latter is uncommitted to the truth of the premise-set from which he deduces the refutation of the refutand in a way that the original claim does not play a role in the process (Vlastos, "The Socratic *Elenchus*", 711-14). Recent studies have shown that there was no such distinction in Socrates' method; and both aspects rather consider *elenchus* as "an argument in which an interlocutor's original claim is rejected when it is seen to be inconsistent with other things that the interlocutor believes" (Young, "The Socratic *Elenchus*", 56-8). Recent discussions concerning the nature of *elenchus* focus on whether this method is a systematic and uniform method of refutation with set premises or it simply exposes certain inconsistencies without being able to refute a given moral thesis or *endoxon* (Wolsdorf, "Socratic Philosophizing", 34-40).

**28** Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 156.

**29** Metcalf, *Philosophy as Agôn*, 6-8.

**30** Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 50.

**31** There were various types of duels, including verbal and hot-blooded vendetta, yet violence still had its codified etiquette of politeness, even if it ended in a gory fashion. Duellos could be verbal, physical or written (e.g. in lieu of *cartelli*) (see Quint, "Dueling and Civility", 264-5; Weinstein, "Fighting or Flyting?"). In the early Islamic world, the debates against the dialectics of the philosophizing theologians were "fierce" (Belhaj, "Disputation is a Fighting Sport"). In the fifteenth-century Ottoman context, could the execution of Mollā Luṭfī, which have been recently viewed to be political rather than theological in nature, be considered as a revenge act in lieu of dueling?

**32** Azzolini, "There Were No Medals", 264-5.

public exchanges were simply based on honor, reputation, and personal animosity with the aim of "gaining profit in the form of status and patronage".[33] Scholars were making careers out of polemics and controversy, as honor and reward were complementary aspects of court visibility and state support.

Similar to the fifteenth-century Ottoman world, the scholarly exchanges at the Italian Renaissance universities were verbal arenas in which the scholars demonstrated their ability to argue strongly in Latin, by reflecting on a question, making inferences and conclusions through their strict argumentation and, in the case of the medical professor Girolamo Cardano (1501-76) who was never bested by anyone in his lifetime, even by discomforting opponents with quoted passages from memory.[34]

Some of these exchanges were simply motivated by claims of supremacy, original authorship, historical meanings or priority[35] in a given subject, instead of focusing on content and output. Historically speaking, a good number of disputes in the context of the Italian Renaissance, such as the exchanges between the mathematicians Niccolò Tartaglia (1499/1500-57) and Ludovico Ferrari (1522-65) or the astronomers Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) and Baldassarre Capra (1580-1626), were related to honor, priority, and the claims of plagiarism, rather than scientific credibility and content.

Both in the Western and Eastern Mediterranean, disputations were not also limited to the junior and senior members of the academy. Novice students were able to only find lectureship positions in the coming academic years or even future preferment in ecclesiastical and political enterprises based on their performance (see the case of scholarly disputations at the University of Bologna at the turn of the sixteenth-century).[36] A novice student, as in the case of one of the primary scholars of this study, Ḫocazāde Muṣliḥuddīn Muṣṭafā (d. 893/1488), was eager to seek an agonistic activity with his peers or seniors in order to demonstrate his prowess and aptitude in knowledge. Likewise, disputations had a lasting impact in one's career, and universities often competed one another in order to gain the upper hand to make a name for their institutions and designate academic adversaries, often motivated by ensuing political conflicts and tug-of-wars for territorial hegemony.[37]

Across cultures and traditions, the functions of debates and disputations as global social constructs may vary from legitimizing, defending, and acknowledging certain rights and doctrines,[38] to creating a propaganda for

**33** Azzolini, "There Were No Medals", 269. For a case study of Italian artistic games of honor and profit, see Hoklman, "'For Honor and Profit'", and for the case of the professional disputes and feuds among English medical practitioners, Harley, "Honor and Property".

**34** Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance*, 152-4. Also see the case of Ḫocazāde in chapter 3.

**35** For the priority dispute between the mathematicians Tartaglia and Cardano concerning a general rule for the solution of algebraic equations to the third degree or cubic equations, see Long, *Openness, Secrecy, Authorship*, 198-201. The debates could be even extended to the historical meanings of certain words against various forms of politico-legal codifications and censorships, see McCuaig, *Carlo Sigonio*, 174-250. For Carlo Sigonio's (1524-84) famous disputation with the humanist Francesco Robortello (1516-67) on the Roman questions and the republic with references to various volumes of commentary, see McCuaig, *Carlo Sigonio*, 41-50.

**36** Matsen, "Students' 'Arts' Disputations".

**37** Denley, "Academic Rivalty and Interchange".

**38** Graf, "Christliche Polemik", 832-4.

promotion, reinforcing communal identity, and having an instructive nature.[39] Besides the institutional and careeristic aspects of disputations, the defense of certain doctrines did lead to a conflict with the religious authority. One of the most famed disputations of the Renaissance, which never took place, was the anticipated defense of Pico della Mirandola's (1463-94) thirteen theses included in his *Conclusiones nongentae*. Out of nine hundred, the papacy condemned thirteen theses offering Pico to participate in a disputation in Rome sometime after 6 January 1487.[40]

## 1.1 A Literature Review. The Nature of Early Muslim Debates and Disputations (From *Jadal* and *Munāẓara* to *Ādāb al-baḥth wa-l-munāẓara*)

Dialectic was an indispensable tool for scientific inquiry and knowledge transfer in the Islamic world, promulgating rational methods and procedures for scholarly disputation under the rubric of *jadal* (dialectical disputation) and *munāẓara* (dialectical investigation) or, in later centuries, *ādāb al-baḥth wa-l-munāẓara* (protocols of dialectical inquiry and investigation).[41] *Jadal*, an early adopted method of argumentation in religious sciences, was a pedagogical instrument that sought the opponent's assent, whereas the *munāẓara* was perceived as a more truth-oriented investigation, since it sought veracity through proof – not the rhetorical superiority over one view over another.[42]

*Munāẓara* gained technical precision by the thirteenth century, and began to be often associated with rational sciences as a method of inquiry formulized under *ādāb al-baḥth wa-l-munāẓara*, a style aimed at bungling inquiries, reducing your opponent to concession, or silencing based on proof-seeking indicants and logical implications.[43] As a form of formal investigation, *baḥth* was directed at veracity and brought a new parameter that was picked up by philosophers who eschewed from *jadal* due to its rhetorical and logical fallacies.[44] It was not a coincidence that the court debates and disputations – whether oral or written – in the Ottoman context, were re-

39 Holmberg, "The Public Debate".

40 Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance*, 156.

41 Young, "Dialectic in the Religious Sciences".

42 Miller, *Islamic Disputation Theory*, 9-11. Compared to the Aristotelian dialectic, the Arabic *jadal* (especially in the case of Imām al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwaynī, d. 478/1085) was closer to the peirastic form than to eristic since *jadal* was believed to lead to truth in theology and jurisprudence (Widigdo, "Aristotelian Dialectic, Medieval *Jadal*", 19). For an overview of disputation culture in early Islamic history, Abū Zahra, *Tārīkh al-jadal*. For a full bibliography of primary and secondary resources in Islamic culture of disputation, see the website of Society for the Study of Islamicate Dialectical Disputation (SSIDD): `https://ssidd.org`.

43 Miller, *Islamic Disputation Theory*, 9-11.

44 Fārābī regards philosophy among the certain sciences that asserted themselves as the intended end of investigative activity with principles that are universal, true, and certain; whereas the dialectic, that is, the tool or servant of scientific art, is equally concerned with where something is said as well as what is said, aiming for universal and generally accepted premises (Di Pasquale, *Al-Farabi's Book of Dialectic*, 149-51). As for Fārābī's criticism of *ādāb al-jadal* that this method failed to establish truth with thorough examination, close study, and precision (*istiqṣā'*), see Gyekye, "Al-Fārābī on the Logic" and Miller, "Al-Fārābī's Dispute". With regard to theological discussions in the method and criteria for logical reasoning, see Frank, "The *Kalām*" and van Ess, "The Logical Structure".

ferred to as *baḥth* from the root *b-ḥ-th* or, as a verbal noun in its increased third form, *mubāḥatha*/*mübāḥaṣe*, which also described a mutual exercise directed at acquiring knowledge through investigation.

Dialectic as the art of argumentation first diffused into the Abbasid sources through the first translation of Aristotle's *Topics* by the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I (d. 208/823) under the title *Kitāb al-jadal*, a work which was commissioned by the third caliph al-Mahdī (d. 169/785). Timothy I was also known for his apology (including a discussion on the singular versus triune nature of God) written as a result of a two-day's debate between him as the Catholicos of the East Syrian Church and the Caliph himself. Both sides debated the tenets of each other's religion in sympathy and piety – the former especially praising the Caliph's theology.[45]

The introduction of *jadal* as a general method for knowledge inquiry had close connections to the claims of universalism, political leadership, and proselytizing religion.[46] The early collections of scholarly exchanges in the Islamic world go back the ninth- and tenth-century Abbasid Baghdad, at a time when Christian and Muslim scholars penned disputations in a great variety of subjects, and most of these debates consisted of either interfaith dialogues between Christian and Muslim theologians or discussions related to the transmission of knowledge from different religious sources and intellectual communities.

Before the advent of Islam, the disputation was already a form of formal exchange between religious scholars, and there were even earlier debates recorded, such as the case of the debate between the Sasanian viceroy of northern Iraq, Mar Qardagh, and his Christian mentor, the hermit Abdišo, on the question on the nature of eternal and created realities, an event indicated the transfer of knowledge and cultural exchange at the Byzantine-Sasanid border.[47] As early as the fifth century, there were East-Syrian Christian disputations (*drāšā*) directed at controversial aspects of prevalent religions of the day, including apologetics, propaganda pamphlets in support of a candidate for the elections of a new catholicos,[48] as well as defenses of certain Christian tenets against various monotheistic denominations and their non-monotheistic opponents, such as Jews, various Christian sects, Samaritans, Zoroastrians, Manicheans, and other pagan religions.[49]

The rigor of religious disputations of the Syriac Christian scholars carried over to the early centruries of the Islamic period. Scholars like Josef van Ess, Michael Cook, and Gerhard Endress studied the narrative structure of early Syriac and Arabic polemics, showing the abundance of dialectic disputations as the foremost method of intellectual inquiry in the context of Mus-

**45** Mingana, *The Apology of Timothy the Patriarch*, 1-10 and, for the definitions of God in both traditions, 17-23. Also see Beaumont, "Speaking of the Triune God".

**46** Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 62-7; Karabela, *The Development of Dialectic*, 46-8.

**47** Walker, "Refuting the Eternity of the Stars".

**48** Holmberg, "The Public Debate", 51.

**49** For a list of such religious polemics and disputations, see the titles preserved by the East-Syrian bibliographer 'Abdišo' of Nisibis (d. 1318) in *Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Writers*. Walker mentions that some of the titles were framed as prose dialogues in the Byzantine style (Walker, "Refuting the Eternity of the Stars", 169-70). For an overview of Byzantine polemical disputations, Cameron, "Disputations, Polemical Literature" and a study of polemics with regard to the Byzantine anti-Judaism, Külzer, *Disputationes Graecae*.

lim-Christian dialogue.[50] These debates and disputations covered a number of interreligious subjects concerning the transmission and modification of Greek and Syriac works into Arabic, the relationship between reason and revelation and/or logic and grammar, along with topics in Syriac and Arabic philosophy and theology, including but not limited to, hypostases, unicity, trinity,[51] the nature of created beings, and the question of God's divine attributes and causal power.[52]

With the advent of the translation movement in Baghdad, the general concerns of the debate shifted from Christian-Muslim disputes related to catechism and creed, to the question of reconciliation of the Aristotelian and Neoplatonist traditions with the monotheistic strands of religious thought.[53] This trend also continued in the post-classical Islamic world, where the system of Avicenna was discussed, amended, and criticized by a plethora of scholars who produced work in post-classical Avicennism (*ḥikma*) and philosophical theology (*kalām*) that developed twelfth century onwards and, as in the Ottoman case, a great number of debates attempted at reconciling these traditions in the face of emerging scholarship.

Dialectical disputation was indeed an esteemed literary genre in early Arabic literary tradition, a source of amusement, competition, and struggle that lent other Islamicate contexts certain traits in etiquette and composition. Having analyzed the common narrative structures of extant public disputations during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, Bo Holmberg has presented various distinctive traits of the genre that also existed in the Ottoman world, such as motivation, description, the presence of an official person, the rewarding mechanism, as well as the winner ('hero') versus the loser ('anti-hero').[54] The narratives regarding competing parties were common literary topoi in Arabic biobibliographical sources, often taking a position on the personage in question through praise or polemic.[55]

**50** There are various case studies of early Muslim disputations and dogma published by Josef van Ess and Michael Cook, such as van Ess, *Traditionistische Polemik* and Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma* respectively. Cook has accentuated the importance of Syriac intermediaries in the role of the Muslim theologians' acquiring this method for the development of *kalām* (Cook, "The Origins of *Kalām*"). For a recently edited volume, which covers the philosophical exchanges and case studies among the rival Muslim and Christian scholars, see Janos, *Ideas in Motion*; especially the chapters by Gerhard Endress and Olga Lizzini. Also see the article on the logical roots of Arabic theology by van Ess, "The Logical Structure". For the uses of disputation in theology, see van Ess, "Disputationspraxis in der Islamischen Theologie", 932-8 and, for the genres of refutations (*muʿāraḍa*) and public disputation (*munāẓara*), and the structure and milieu of the *munāẓara* practice, van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 4: 725-37. For the sociopolitical contexts of interfaith dialogues on dialectics, Aristotelian physics, and theology, see Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 61-74; and also with regard to the context of early heresies (*zanādiq*), *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 1: 423-56.

**51** For a treatise on a similar topic with the Zeyrek-Ḫocazāde debate, see Holmberg, *A Treatise*. Also Hundhammer, "Die Trinitätsdiskussion".

**52** As for the early Christian apologetics in defense of Christianity against the doctrinal criticism of Islam, see Griffith, *The Beginnings of Christian Theology*, as well as his "Disputing with Islam in Syriac". For the sources of early Syriac Christian-Arab Muslim disputations, Pietruschka, "Streitgespräche", 152-8. For Arab Christian apologetics, see Sbath, *Mubāḥath falsafiyya*.

**53** See Watt, "The Syriac Aristotelian Tradition". In the works of the sixth-century Syriac scholar and priest Sergius of Rēshʿaynā, Watt has argued that Syriac Aristotelianism was a compromise between Christianity and the pagan philosophy taught in the School of Alexandria.

**54** Watt, "The Syriac Aristotelian Tradition", 48-50.

**55** For a study of the general characteristics of polemical exchanges in Islamic biobibliographical sources, see Douglas, "Controversy and Its Effects".

In this sense, dialectical disputations merged arrogance and quarrelsomeness with competitiveness based on the scholars' skill in syllogistic logic.[56] A paragon of the early debate genre was the seminal exchange between and the Arab grammarian Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī (d. 368/979) and the tenth century Christian philosopher Abū Bishr Mattā ibn Yūnus (d. 328/940), one of the pioneers of the Baghdad School of Aristotelianism. The court debate was held upon the request of the Abbasid vizier Abu'l-Fatḥ Ibn Furāt in the year 320/932, who asked Sīrāfī to take up the refutation of Bishr Mattā's claim that logic was the only way to distinguish truth from falsity. The debate itself carried the tension raging between the representatives of conventional Arabic scholarship versus the proponents of the Greek sciences (especially logic). The accounts showed that Mattā was not able to keep up with Sīrāfī's questions, coming to terms with the fact that, as in the words of Gerhard Endress, he failed to prove that Greek logic transcended the limitations of language, and contained universal laws of reason inherent in the structure of language.[57]

The early sources on Arabic disputation etiquette outlined various reasons for defeat. Refraining from answering the question, lacking a guiding principle, or having an inadequate reply to the arguments presented were explicit reasons but, additionally, there were also some other individual signs of defeat, such as silence, peevishness, incapacity, digression, contradiction, incommensurability, reduction *ad absurdum*, and appeal to the crowd.[58]

In that context, one of the highlights of the debate was the Abbasid vizier Ibn Furāt's intervention in the discussion obliging Mattā to reply Sīrāfī's tangential questions with substantial counter-arguments. Mattā himself regarded the vizier's points as digressions and could not fully develop and reiterate his point in a deft manner, thereby accepting the opponent's superiority.[59] Ibn Furāt's intercession indicates the presence of an external arbiter who directed the conversation if the answers were not satisfactorily outlined, which was a sign of defeat.

Beyond the formal setting of reading groups at various mosques (*ḥalaqāt*), which were mostly reserved for religious sciences, the *majālis* (sing. *majlis*), i.e. séances of learned literary exchange grouped around influential scholars, were the main social settings for learning, deliberation, and discussion.[60] The model of Mattā-Sīrāfī debate had a lasting impact on future generations because, despite the fact that he was the loser of the debate, his students were armed with a better understanding of the grammarian's technique in the decades to come. Mattā's successor to the chair of logic, the

**56** van Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, 185-8.

**57** For the historical account of the debate, see the eleventh-century philosopher al-Tawḥīdī, *Kitāb al-imtāʿ wa'l-muʾānasa*, 107-33 and Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, 894-908. There is a manuscript recorded in Sultan Aḥmed III's (d. 1149/1976) Topkapı Palace Library inventory of Tawḥīdī's work from the year 815-16/1413, see MS 2389 Topkapı, 429 folios. *Kitāb al-imtāʿ* covers Tawḥīdī's philosophical and literary conversations with his friend Abū al-Wafā al-Buzjānī and the Buwayhī vizier Ibn Saʿdān, including forty topics and spanning a period of thirty-nine nights (Tawḥīdī also included the episode between Sīrāfī and Mattā). See Margoliouth, "The Discussion", and Abderrahmane "Discussion". For the précis of the debate, Endress, "The Debate"; Versteegh, "The Debate between Logic and Grammar" and Günaydın, *Al-Sīrāfī's Theory*, 47-77.

**58** For a list of signs of defeat based on early works on *jadal*, such as by the Karaite Jew Jacob al-Qirqisānī (d. after 937) and his Shīʿīte contemporary Abū al-Ḥusayn Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Kātib, see Miller, *Islamic Disputation Theory*, 39-46.

**59** Margoliouth, "The Discussion", 123.

**60** Osti, "The Practical Matters of Culture"; Endress, "Theology as a Rational Science", 225.

Jacobite scholar Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAdī (d. 363/974), and his Muslim disciple Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī (d. after 391/1001) continued in the path of their master by preparing treatises on the meaning and topic of logic and grammar as fundamental disciplines.[61] Along with those on other subjects,[62] they argued for the independence of logic and its centrality in scientific inquiry. It was another student of Mattā, the great Muslim philosopher Abū Nasr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) who would later place logic to the highest position in his enumeration of the sciences.[63]

Thanks to the Islamic practice of dialectical investigation, the Abbasid debate culture fostered a group of scholars who would continue to develop their research practice in generations to come. The legacy of early debates characterized by a strict code of disputation etiquette, thus, paved the way for future systematic investigations led by the scholars of classical Arabic philosophy and theology.

## 1.2 The Transformation of Disputations. The Rise of Collaborative Research and Practice

The medieval Latin *quaestiones* had a different trajectory from post-classical Islamic disputations. It was the chief method of instruction at schools and universities until its demise in the seventeenth century, especially when a new form of criticism challenged the status of the Aristotelian *sophismata* as a verified way of scientific inquiry.[64] Starting with its eleventh century application in Roman law, theology, and exegesis, and finally to logic in the Mertonian tradition of the fourteenth-century Oxford, the disputations as methods of scientific inquiry gained prominence and began to be employed for discussions in medicine and natural philosophy afterwards.[65] It was only from the sixteenth century onwards, the reaction against the fallacious nature of scholastic disputations took many forms, by garnering first the attention of the Italian humanists and, then, the emerging class of medical doctors and scientist-engineers who especially favored a new empirical methodology based on anatomical and surgical procedures.

**61** Çıkar, "Nahiv ve Mantık".

**62** The relationship between logic and grammar was not the only subject-matter to be covered, and even questions on the definition of the Aristotelian concept of nature was also debated in a series of lemmata by Christian Arab philosophers of the eleventh-century Baghdad against Avicenna's disposition: Brown, "Avicenna and the Christian Philosophers".

**63** Endress, "The Debate", 320.

**64** See the chapter "The *disputatio de sophismatibus*", in Lawn, *The Rise and Decline*, 39-44. For the reception of dialectic in Christian Latin tradition, Novikoff, *The Medieval Culture of Disputation* and Donavin, Poster, Utz, *Medieval Forms of Argument*, especially Bose, "The Issue of Theological Style", 4-8.

**65** As for the development of new syllogistic methodology to be applied to scientific discussions and later its application to medicine and natural philosophy, see chapters "The Mertonian Tradition", "Medial *quaestiones disputatae* c. 1250-1450", and "*Quaestiones disputatae* in *physica* During the Late 15th and 16th Centuries", in Lawn, *The Rise and Decline*, 45-52, 66-84, and 85-100 respectively.

Having been adopted as an essential method of theological inquiry in the late medieval world, disputations expelled any qualms about the applicability of logical techniques to religious dogmas early on.[66] The academic counterparts to the Timurid and Ottoman public debates were also present at medieval universities of Europe, including Oxford, Paris, and Padua: the *quaestiones ordinariae* were disputations on a fixed subject with the participation of questioners, professors, and students, whereas the *quaestiones de quodlibet* could cover any subject proposed by any participant. The debates could concern any range of topics from the merits of particular sciences to cross-religious theological and eschatological matters, such as the Trinity and the unicity of the monotheistic God, similar to the Islamicate world.

The earlier application of disputations in law and theology at medieval universities yielded to often controversial, innovative, and productive results in combatting heresies, as well as resolving or harmonizing conflicting references, which constituted alternative solutions to perennial debates in theology. They applied induction, experiential method, and verification to philosophical subject (including more practical Aristotelian topics), paving the way for an attempt at verifying complex universal truths in medieval quodlibetal disputations.[67]

By the fourteenth century, the quodlibetal disputations took another form culminating in types of disputations called the *sophismata* that dwelled on ambiguous, puzzling or simply difficult sentences that had to be resolved, or the ambiguous propositions that could be both true and wrong (see the case of the Liar Paradox in Islamic philosophy).[68]

The *sophisma* was a technical term with no pejorative connotations, which referred to a puzzling or an ambiguous sentence presenting logical hardships. Despite being distinguished from sophism, these types of disputes still presented certain difficulties by virtue of faulty formulations. A new approach was developed to dismantle possible fallacies based on the meaning of words, the analysis of the terminology involved and, finally, the supposition of terms employed in proposed statements.[69]

As quodlibetal disputations started to lose prestige from the fourteenth century onwards, the masters became extremely reluctant to preside over such exchanges due to the improper use of dialectic in scholastic disputations.[70] In addition to the critics in theology who claimed this method of inquiry was against the will of God, the later generations of Italian humanists also had a critical attitude towards the use of the *sophismata* as a method of inquiry. The rhetorical character of these exchanges began to be utilized

**66** The systematic use of logic in religious inquiry was already embraced by the eleventh-century theologian St. Anselm (Lawn, *The Rise and Decline*, 9).

**67** Lawn, *The Rise and Decline*, 26 and 36-8. Also see the views of the thirteenth-century theologians William of Auvergne and Robert Grosseteste on this new method of verification employed by the *quaestio disputata* especially when applied to the teaching of physics: see Dales, "Robert Grosseteste's Scientific Works", 381-4 and also the study the scientific methods of aforementioned scholars: Marrone, *William of Auvergne and Grosseteste*, 272-8.

**68** Alwishah, Sanson, "The Early Arabic Liar", 106. Having begun as a bitter argument in a scholarly gathering and then led to written exchanges, the debate between Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Dashtakī (d. 903/1498) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (d. 908/1503) was the most detailed scrutiny of the Liar Paradox in the Arabic tradition. For the topic of discussion and Dashtakī's alternative solution, see El-Rouayheb, "The Liar Paradox".

**69** Lawn, *The Rise and Decline*, 41-2.

**70** Lawn, *The Rise and Decline*, 101-28.

for departmental rivalry, personal feuds, and rhetorical exercises based on the *sophismata* rather than a clash of opposite philosophies.[71]

The pervasiveness of the scholastic *quaestio disputata* as a general method of instruction and scientific inquiry led its utilization in subjects not limited to law, theology, and logic, and this was one of the main reasons behind the unitary character of late medieval learning both in medieval Latin and post-classical Islamicate traditions. With the increased knowledge in Greek texts and its commentaries, as well as the humanist tendency of using the dialogue and the treatise to expound ideas and challenging positions, the method of disputation caused a new trend of questions dwelling on particular issues in natural philosophy. For instance, the *sophismata*-based reasoning in fourteenth-century physics highlighted common analytical languages applied to theology and philosophy, by enabling Aristotelian conceptions, definitions, and principles to prevail in theological subjects.[72] These disputations were often written in the form of *cartelli di sfide* and directed at certain contemporary adversaries (*concurrentes*).[73] In the late medieval world, both traditions kept on producing knowledge based on the modified version of Aristotelian dialectic and ended up accumulating a vast corpus over centuries.

As the fifteenth-century Ottomans were interested in rectifying certain standards to dialectical investigation as a primary method of scientific inquiry, the Latin West saw it as an obstacle to practical naturalism and astronomy. Even though the Italian humanists directed eloquent criticisms to the Aristotelian logic and rhetoric, the later generations to come, in an ironic way, still continued to use this method in their disputations. As Paul Oskar Kristeller suggests, the humanism and scholasticism of the Italian Renaissance arose in medieval Italy at about the same time, having coexisted while also developing different branches of medieval learning. Contrary to the commonly held view, Aristotelianism was not overridden by the humanist perspective. This did not, however, mean that Aristotelianism did not remain entirely untouched. It was further modified and enriched with the revival of Neoplatonism and Stoicism in the Humanist movement. With the sixteenth century, mathematics and astronomy, along with mechanics, would assume flourishing importance in their practical application through the advent of new empirical methodologies and revised curricula for universities.[74] In the Ottoman context though, the scholastic efforts of the *quaestio disputata* continued in theology and philosophy (i.e. logic, metaphysics, and, even to an extent, physics) as a generic exercise, and used as a viable tool to rule out unfounded assertions and derive religious and rational information.

**71** In the words of the Italian nobleman and philosopher Pico della Mirandola, "only useful for causing disgrace an associate and for upsetting the memory by repetition but they [disputations] were of little or no us for finding out the truth" (Lawn, *The Rise and Decline*, 111-12). Also see Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 99-100.

**72** Murdoch, "From Social into Intellectual Factors", 303-8.

**73** The early exponents of disputations on Aristotelian natural philosophy and metaphysics were comprised of figures like Nicoletto Vernia (1426-99) and Agostino Nifo (c. 1473-1545), who often listed and qualified three resources (the late Greek, Latin, and Arab) for their inquiry into the Aristotelian principles (Mahoney, "Philosophy and Science", in *Two Aristotelians of the Italian Renaissance*). Similarly, the bitter animosity that arose between the Ockhamist theologian Alessandro Achillini (1463-1512) and the humanist-philosopher Pietro Pamponazzi (1462-1525) led to the production of a set of exchanges on the Averroestic doctrines of the unity of the intellect, the immortality of the soul, and the Aristotelian theory of passive and active intellects.

**74** Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, 101-4.

The late sixteenth century in Northern Europe was a period when a new sociotype of scientist-engineers emerged whose knowledge was based on high artisanship. During this period, the sociotype of *ingenere* was still regarded as a denigration of the 'court philosopher' status,[75] and philosophy in the hierarchy of knowledge was still placed high. This was the case until when a new vision of mathematical philosophy of nature derived from the discipline of mechanics that attacked the prevailing Aristotelianism, thereby drafting a new natural philosophy with the elevated status of practical investigation.[76]

With the decline of disputations and the further development of scientific-technological in the Latin West that made the European globalization possible, the reconfiguration of geopolitics by excursions and explorations became the new norm and the agonistic spirit was carried into the voyages in the race of discovering the New World.[77] The technical edge and the rise of practical branches of sciences that would ultimately led to an empiricist method and a new scholarly etiquette, which brought openness and collaboration. This new sense of scientific collaboration was based on the model of peer review, collegiality, as well as a new type of precision and certainty in proof and persuasion,[78] rather than secrecy, dramatic gestures, and argumentative disputations.[79]

## 1.3 The Ottoman Case. An Attempt at Reconciling Past Schools by Verification (*Taḥqīq*)

The post-classical scholarly disputations in theology came with the rise of a new scientific paradigm based on Aristotelian logic, physics, and metaphysics in the later medieval world, and was a result of the clash between different currents of scholarly traditions that often contradicted one another over centuries. For the case of the fifteenth-century Ottomans, debates and disputations reflected attempts at reconciling and reconstructing certain aspects of past scholarships in post-Avicennan philosophy (*ḥikma*) and Muslim philosophical theology (*kalām*) within the context of the post-classical Islamic thought. With a few exceptions, there were no radical attempts at leaving the disputation framework in favor of collaboration, nor challenging Aristotelian metaphysical and physical dogmas through the introduction of, more desirably, mathematical or mechanical proofs.

75 See the example of the Italian philosopher Giovanni Battista Benedetti (1530-90), who was the contemporary of the Dutch scientist-engineer Simon Stevin (1548-1620), as well as Mario Biagioli's setting 'Galilei the courtier' as opposed to the image of 'Galilei the engineer' (Omodeo, "The Engineer and the Philosopher", 25-6). And for the short-lived fever of Ottoman explorations, Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*.

76 Omodeo, "The Engineer and the Philosopher", 35-6.

77 Renaissance philosopher, physician, and mathematician Girolamo Cardano observed in his autobiography *De vita propria liber* that three canonical technologies of the modernity, i.e. gunpowder, the compass, and the printing press, were overshadowed by the geographical discoveries of his time (Omodeo, *Amerigo Vespucci*, 18; and for a list of expeditions reflecting the competitive spirit of geographical discovery, 27-9). For a case of *tahqīq* in geography from the Islamic world, see Casale's "On Tahqīq, Space Travel, and the Discovery of Jetlag" to be published in *The Journal of Early Modern History*, 27, 2023.

78 Serjeantson, "Proof and Persuasion".

79 Azzolini, "There Were No Medals", 282-3.

For the Ottoman case, it had been already more than four centuries since Avicenna produced works and, in the centuries that followed him, there was already a full-fledged corpus that had developed through critiquing his central doctrines both within (post-Avicennans, i.e. *ḥikma*) and outside (theologians, i.e. *kalām*). The post-classical Islamicate world, therefore, was dealing with a long set of objections, refutations, and amendments and, for a fifteenth-century Ottoman scholar, the central question focused on how to reconcile these clashing views in the face of scholarly veracity.

The discipline *ḥikma* as the new technical term for philosophy as a naturalized form of *falsafa* and, in the sixth/twelfth century, it replaced *falsafa* as a self-description of the practice of philosophy, just as *ḥukamāʾ* replaced *falāsifa*, the latter of which was often taken in negative connotation, especially from Suhrawardī onwards.[80] It was after the critical works of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) that *falsafa* started to be applied to Avicenna, yet it generally referred to the 'sages' in the past.[81]

Recent studies on Ottoman philosophical production from the period reveal that contrary to the view about the decline of Islamic philosophy after Ghazālī, the Ottomans employed, if not, studied and acknowledged certain aspects of Avicennan-Aristotelian philosophy (*falsafa*) that had been incorporated into the post-classical corpus through certain modifications. These reworkings of classical *falsafa* doctrines were often classified under *ḥikma*, a discipline officially taught and studied at early modern Ottoman medreses that was often taken in juxtaposition to post-classical philosophical theology, that is, *kalām*.

After the second half of the fifteenth-century, the core doctrines and positions studied at Ottoman medreses were products of this tension between *ḥikma* and *kalām*, mostly based on the works and commentaries of previous Persian verifiers, such as philosophers ʿAthīr al-Dīn al-Abharī (d. 663/1265) and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), as well as Il-Khanid and Timurid theologians ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ījī (d. 756/1355), Ṣaʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 792/1390), and al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413). The works of these Perso-Islamic scholars were used as standard medrese handbooks, and an accomplished Ottoman student or tutor was expected to know their contents lemma-by-lemma and evaluate them in a critical manner.[82] The Ottoman imperial consciousness based itself on the Timurid models of disputation, in which the famous set of exchanges between the rival theologians Taftāzānī and Jurjānī were often taken as paragons of scholarly rigor and exactitude.

The theoretical antinomies of the Aristotelian worldview were only to be challenged with some efforts in the pre-Ottoman world but, for the case of the fifteenth-century Ottomans, the Aristotelian-Avicennan assertions and doctrines still prevailed in a modified form. Many of the famed medrese scholars of the time continued to study, teach, and comment on Aristotelian-Avicennan principles, for instance, in theoretical physics, without resorting to independent mathematical models in astronomical calculations.

**80** Griffel, *The Formation of Post-Classical Philosophy*, 200.

**81** Griffel, "Ismāʿīlite Critique of Ibn Sīnā", 211.

**82** For a survey of Jurjānī's scholarly investigations and debates with other competing scholars: Gümüş, *Seyyid Şerîf Cürcânî*, 99-106. As for his exchanges with the Sufi shaykh Shāh Niʿmatullāh Walī, Binbaş, "Timurid Experimentation", 277-303; and for the account of this debate, Aubin, *Matériaux pour la biographie*, 86-7.

As an émigré scholar who received patronage outside the medrese network, the Timurid-Ottoman astronomer and mathematician ʿAlī Ḳuşcu (d. 879/1474) had a flexible position at the Ayaṣofya mosque/medrese complex, which may be equivalent of today's high-paying research posts at institutes for advanced study. For the fifteenth-century context, it was mostly with his qualified criticism that the astronomy was to be freed from the idée fixes of the Aristotelian conceptualizations of theoretical physics.[83]

During his tenure, not only did Ḳuşçu conduct informal reading groups in physics, astronomy and mathematics at Ayaṣofya (the persecuted Ottoman polymath Mollā Luṭfī (d. 900/1495) was a prominent pupil) but also continued his separate research that would establish mathematics as a foundational discipline for astronomy. His paradigmatic shift and critique, as displayed by George Saliba, bore new evidences for the transmission of Arabic science to Europe, being traced particularly in the writings of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543).[84] Yet it should be noted that Ḳuşcu's post was outside medrese networks. He was often engulfed in his own research without much communal appreciation and embrace, and the upholders of the Perso-Islamic medrese curriculum turned a blind eye on his output in theoretical physics, which only became widely available at medreses in the centuries to come.[85]

With a few exceptions, Aristotelian-Avicennism was still a dominant and popular current in fifteenth-century Ottoman metaphysics and physics that employed classical Islamic dialectic disputation and investigation techniques in argumentation. The main figures of this study, Ottoman scholars Mollā Zeyrek (d. 903/1497-98) and Ḫocazāde Muṣliḥuddīn Muṣṭafā (d. 893/1488), represented this *ancien régime* of theoretical medrese framework, emulating a broadly Perso-Islamic culture of learning, which saw scientific inquiry as a product of the tension between *ḥikma* and *kalām*, and often had the intention of applying theory to practice.[86] As a Sufi-scholar who neither studied nor produced works in *falsafa* or *ḥikma*, Zeyrek was a representative of the *kalām* tradition from the perspective of Sunnī orthodoxy. In contrast, Ḫocazāde, a famed figure in the study of *ḥikma* and *kalām*, was a representative of a tradition who were conversant in both schools well and had the merit to evaluate their points as a verifier (*muḥaqqiq*).

The fifteenth-century was a period before practical sciences branched out into a wide range of subcategories, which were often practiced by scholars outside medrese networks and career paths.[87] Aristotelian-Avicennan terminology constituted the core of metaphysics and physics and, as the influence of scholastic theology waned, the practicalization of natural knowledge

**83** Ragep, "Freeing Astronomy from Philosophy"; "Copernicus and His Islamic Predecessors"; "'Alī Qūshjī and Regiomontanus" and "Ṭūsī and Copernicus".

**84** Saliba, *Islamic Science*, ch. 6: "Islamic Science and Renaissance Europe. The Copernican Connection".

**85** Given the paucity of early copies, 'Alī Ḳuşcu's primarily theological work, that is, his 'new' commentary on the thirteenth-century polymath and philosopher Ṭūsī's *Tajrīd al-iʿtiqād*, was started to be studied only after the sixteenth-century onwards, replacing the scholar Iṣfahānī's popular 'older' commentary.

**86** Küçük, *Science without Leisure*, 56-8. Also see the recent exchange on the arguments of the manuscript: For Nir Shafir's review article of Küçük's monograph *Science without Leisure*, see Shafir, "The Almighty Akçe".

**87** As for the practicalization of the sciences, see the high number of branches among practical sciences in Kātib Çelebi's the seventeenth-century encyclopedia *Kashf al-ẓunūn* when compared with Ṭaşköprizāde's earlier compendium.

gained momentum. It was with the Ottoman seventeenth-century that practical naturalism gained an unprecedented epistemological value and interest.[88]

As the fifteenth-century progressed, the Ottoman verifiers like Ḫocazāde continued to refine and amend previous frameworks, building their own syntheses through arbitration and verification, without resorting to either discipline – whether *ḥikma* or *kalām*. For the contemporaneous European context though, a new form of persuasion and proof in physics, mathematics, and practical sciences was on the rise, and the dialectic started to be perceived as either insufficient or fallacious. As the Latin West was moving away from the *sophismata* by finding new empirical methods to replace the classical disputation techniques inherited from the medieval Latin tradition, the Ottoman educators not only seemed to concentrate on the reconciliation of past debates through synthetic arguments based on careful arbitration and verification, but also reconstructed them in the new scholarly context.

## 1.4 An Archaeology of a Court Debate. Ḫocazāde versus Zeyrek on God's Unicity

The debate between Zeyrek and Ḫocazāde on God's unicity (*tawḥīd*), a private court event that was held in the presence of Sultan Meḥmed II, his grand vizier Maḥmūd Paşa, and an arbiter-scholar Mollā Ḫüsrev, occupies a significant place in post-classical dialectical disputation and investigation. For scholars the extant texts of the event provide invaluable insights about early modern conventions of scientific study, knowledge acquisition, source critique, and scholarly patronage, by laying out the Ottoman rules of conduct in religious and rational inquiry, exemplifying preference in scholarship, and giving a bird's-eye view of what was accepted as scientifically true and rigorous during the day.

As the story goes, the famed Sultan Meḥmed II (second reign 855/1451-886/1481) orders the young verifier Ḫocazāde to pen an inquiry upon Zeyrek's unfounded criticism of the master verifier Jurjānī's piety. According to the extant texts, Zeyrek criticizes the verifier based on his leniency towards the philosophers' premise that states that necessity is identical to God's quiddity/essence with regard God's unicity. For Zeyrek though, who follows the theologians' view, necessity (like existence) is an accident superadded to God's quiddity/essence externally and, contrary to the philosophers' thesis, cannot be identical with Him since it goes against God's singularity. In response to his opponent's counter-arguments in support of the philosophers' formulation, Zeyrek further remarks that none of the stated meanings of necessity corresponds to 'necessity' in the philosophers' sense, which is a proof that necessity should be taken as an *accidental* quality.

In later lemmata, Ḫocazāde, on the other hand, for the sake of verification, shows that what the philosophers have claimed concerning necessity, like the case of existence, is valid in their own paradigm and, that is why, Jurjānī did not rule out this premise as impossible. This, however, does not mean that the Timurid master followed the proof, he simply quoted it to exemplify the philosophers' formulation and line of thought. It is important to note that Ḫocazāde does not necessarily follow the philosophers' view (as

88 See Küçük's *Science Without Leisure*, Introduction, chs 2-3.

evidenced by certain other passages in another work, especially his adjudication – *muḥākama* – on the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*). His aim was not only to demonstrate Zeyrek that the philosophers' premise regarding necessity is true in and of itself (with respect to the accepted meanings of necessity in Avicennan philosophy), but also how Avicenna's proof can still be reconciled with the new post-classical framework of mental considerations (*i'tibārāt*) in philosophy (see Conclusion).

As our sources indicate, the debate continued unusually for a week – a story often depicted ostentatiously in Ottoman biobibliographical sources. The duration of the debate indicated that there were a number of attempts by each scholar to object, refute, counter-object, or amend the other's arguments. This also meant that the exchange was a deliberative event in which the Sultan and the other scholars present could involve in evaluating both sides remarks, coming to a conclusion about what was discussed.

The present study aims to contextualize a famed fifteenth-century philosophical debate that occurred between two celebrated scholars of the late fifteenth-century, by tracing their sources and arguments in past scholarship. The debate covers a wide range of subjects in the context of God's unicity, by often employing arguments ranging from classical Arabic philosophy to post-classical philosophical theology through philological rigor and close reading.

The book attempts at reconstructing the sociocultural context of the debate through the information found in biobibliographical sources, and it comments on the intellectual reasoning behind its commission, by evaluating the positions of each scholar with the aim of mapping early Ottoman scholarly conventions. Chapter two gives a general survey of the early Ottoman attitudes towards knowledge production, by tracing different aspects of the Ottoman intellectual community, such as imperial patronage, scholarly etiquette, culture of meritocracy, institutionalization, and the role of palatine libraries. In light of the Sultan's urban development projects in Constantinople, the chapter will first cover the ways in which fifteenth-century endowment deeds, the Sultan's Code of Law, and contemporary Ottoman historical chronicles portray the institutional novelties introduced by the centralized imperial policies; subsequently it will provide anecdotal instances regarding academic rivalry, cases of jealousy, and the Ottoman scholarly sentiment for academic autonomy.

Chapter three covers background information about the debate available through biobibliographical sources, as well as the context of a wide range of subjects regarding the scholarship of the day, such as the categorization of philosophical and theological texts, the clash of conflicting doctrines at post-classical medreses, Ottoman debate/disputation etiquette, and Zeyrek's alleged declaration of Ḫocazāde's unbelief. The chapter aims to provide the sociocultural background of the debate through various primary source materials dating back to the early Ottoman biobibliographical dictionaries.

Chapter four provides an intellectual background of the main subject-matter by referencing previous scholarship on the proof of God's singularity contrary to the claims of non-monotheists. The main context of the debate concerns the validity of a thesis included in the philosophers' proof of God's *tawḥīd*, which is the central doctrine of Muslim creed and theology. The proof originally goes back to the works of philosopher Avicenna, whose definitions and formulations were reinterpreted and modified by later commentators. The chapter also traces how Avicenna's proof was outlined and later criticized or modified by post-classical theologians, such as Jurjānī.

After outlining the debate's philosophical background in classical and post-classical scholarship, chapter five will resume with the outline and analysis of the debate lemma-by-lemma to show the breadth of its referencing and arbitration, with references to past and contemporaneous philosophical scholarship in the footnotes. By way of conclusion, it should be noted that even though Ḫocazāde did not believe in the philosophers' thesis precisely, he defended it for the sake of the debate, by proving that it was true in and of itself on their own terms.

The analysis at hand does not extend to other contemporaneous fifteenth-century discussions and debates held in the presence of the Sultan. Given the number of debates in various genres including jurisprudence, catechism, logic, etc., this will be beyond the scope of this book which, rather, aims to exhume an oft-mentioned but previously unanalyzed debate in Ottoman philosophy and theology, by laying out all its socio-political and intellectual context – especially in light of new studies as in the case of the Sultan's newly studied library and study room, as well as the pieces of information included in biobibliographical dictionaries. The extent of the philosophical debate culture and the influence of Avicennism in early Ottoman scholarship will be a topic of another book. The extent of the philosophical debate culture will be a topic of another book. The translations of Zeyrek's and Ḫocazāde's texts, along with their *editiones principes* and the facsimiles of their original manuscripts, could be found in the Appendix. I believe that analyzing such a complex debate argument-by-argument not only shows the diversity of references to past passages and positions but also exemplify the breadth and depth of early modern disputation culture and scholarly methodology utilized during the Ottoman 'age of scholarly debates'.