

Understanding the Ottoman Gaze at Ghazali: The Case of Tashkoprizade Ahmed Efendi (1495-1561)

Ahmed Tahir Nur

A good understanding of the Ottoman reception of al-Ghazali (d. 1111) requires comparative case studies. The sixteenth-century Ottoman scholar Ahmed Tashkoprizade (d.1561) frequently draws on al-Ghazali, whose perspective on knowledge he largely embraces. In his paper, I will first present three points of continuity between the two scholars. First, I will show how Tashkoprizade's *Miftah al-sa'ada* reproduces al-Ghazali's *Ihya* at the end, keeping its structure and content largely intact, adapting its Shafi'i teachings into Hanafi context and updating especially its devotional contents. Second, I will demonstrate that when the Ottoman scholar discusses the human agency in his plague treatise, he puts an emphasis on trust in divine providence (*tawakkul*), drawing largely on the 35th book of *al-Ihya*. Third, Tashkoprizade's recently discovered treatise, *al-Lujja al-zahira* -a partial autobiography- heavily relies on *Ihya*, while introducing different divisions and new dimensions. If these comparisons point more toward influence and continuity, where to locate rupture, if there is one? I will show two points of divergence from al-Ghazali, one related to Tashkoprizade and the other to the larger Ottoman reception of the Proof of Islam. First, in some of his treatises, Tashkoprizade closely follows Ibn Arabi (d. 1240), whose system embraces the theory of emanation and accepts the world's pre-eternity. As is well-known, al-Ghazali had identified such a position with apostasy from Islam. However, al-Ghazali's accusation of Muslim philosophers like al-Farabi (d. 950) and Avicenna (d. 1037) was not adopted by the Ottoman scholars in general, another important point of divergence. This paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of the continuities and ruptures from classical to post-classical philosophy in Islam through one case study of the Ottoman reception of al-Ghazali.