

Şükran Fazlıoğlu (ed.), *Dil Bilimlerinin Sınıflandırılması: el-Metalib el-ilahiyye fi mevzuat el-ulum el-luğaviyye*, Tokatlı Hasanoğlu Lütfullah, (*The Classification of Linguistic Sciences: Molla Lutfi's al-Matālib al-ilāhiyya fi mawdū'at al-ulūm al-lughawiyya, Critical text and study*), İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2012. 217 pages. ISBN: 978-605-5397-38-8.

Abdullah Yıldırım*

In the history of Islamic thought in general and Ottoman thought in particular the language phenomenon has been considered as an *independent ontological sphere* despite its place in external and mental existence. The principal reason for this is the fact that the divine words (revelation) reached to people not through any other means, but through a natural language, i.e. Arabic. The disciplines of lexicography, grammar and balāghah/rhetoric seek to describe and analyze this ontological sphere. These developments account for many philosophical issues beyond linguistics, such as the origin of language, its nature and formation, the connection between the language and human mind and the external world, its effect on the formation and classification of science and thought. In this respect, we can say that the language phenomenon has been researched in the Islamic tradition as a transcendental structure which is located on the ground of all natural languages i.e. was examined at the absolute level. Besides texts on linguistics, it is possible to come across this kind of issues disorganizedly in works on philosophy/theology and logic or in the Islamic sciences such as principles of Islamic jurisprudence and exegesis. In addition to that, discussions on the origin and nature of language are encountered particularly in the science of *'ilm al-waḍ'*.

The literature on *waḍ'* appeared through a treatise of the famous theologian Aḍḍ al-dīn al-Ījī where he criticized earlier linguists for establishment of uncertain words and instead proposed a new theory and through the commentaries on this work. The accumulation of knowledge on the subject which has reached a certain extent and depth by the subsequent debates between Taftazānī (d. 792/1390) and Sayyid Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413) was later systematized with Ali Qushji (d. 879/1474)'s *Unqūd al-zawāhir* that is written after his relocation to Istanbul and with this text the knowledge on *waḍ'* moved to the most advance point than ever.

In this process, in the Ottoman territory, it is observed that there are different texts that are dealing the language phenomenon with a philosophical sensibility at

* Res. Assist., Istanbul Medeniyet University, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Department of Eastern Languages and Literatures.

various levels. Molla Luṭfi's (d. 900/1495) *al-Maṭālib al-ilāhiyya fī mawḍū'āt al-ulūm al-lughawiyya* is a striking example of these texts. As indicated by the title of the work, it seeks to categorize and describe the linguistic disciplines. A critical edition of this text was published by Şükran Fazlıoğlu in 2012 with a detailed study on the text itself. The text, previously published by Rafiq al-'Ajam in Beirut in 1994, is incomplete and deficient because it was based on a single copy located in Al-Assad National Library. Fazlıoğlu states that a new edition for the text in consideration of academic standards was necessary (pp. 60-61).

The book is composed of four sections. The first section makes a survey of the works on linguistics and related disciplines from the beginning of Ottoman period until the time of Molla Luṭfi and provides a general description of these works (pp. 13-46). In this section, Fazlıoğlu describes the incorporation of Ottoman circles of science and thought to the shared culture of the Islamic world through teacher-student networks, composed texts and the circulation of these texts. The description of this process indicates in one respect the historical and theoretical context in which Molla Luṭfi lived. The second section is devoted to Molla Luṭfi's life and works (pp. 47-62). Fazlıoğlu in this section summarizes briefly the subject available in the literature and relates particularly the points marking the intellectual development of the author. The editor states that Molla Luṭfi belonged to a scholarly tradition that can be traced back to Hızır Bey's (d. 863/1459) circle because of his being student of Sinan Pasha (d. 891/1486) and therefore to the school of Molla Fanārī (d. 834/1431) (p. 48). The distinguishing mark of this scholarly tradition is their special reverence to theology and theoretical Sufism as well as logic, language and methodological sciences. Considering Luṭfi's works in various fields such as logic, linguistics, theology/wisdom, prophetic traditions, exegesis and mathematics, we can rightly conclude that he had wide range of interests that fit the scholarly tradition to which he belonged. It should be noted that, because of his excessive humorous and critical personality, the author was exposed to harsh criticism by the contemporary scholarly circles and was executed due to accusations of heresy. At the end of the second section, the editor outlines some technical issues concerning critical edition of the text (pp. 54-62).

The main body of the book, the third and fourth sections, analyzes first the content of *al-Maṭālib al-ilāhiyya* and then reproduces the critical edition of the text. At the beginning of the third section, Fazlıoğlu states that she examines *al-Maṭālib* subjects that are important for linguistics by following the author's presentation (p. 63). In this framework, the editor first analyzes Molla Luṭfi's ideas on the origin of language and writing –by referring to the concept of *waḍ'* (pp. 64-68), then summarizes the development of '*ilm al-waḍ'*' before Luṭfi through its definition, content and short history (pp. 68-76) and then analyzes *al-Maṭālib* section on '*ilm al-waḍ'*' (pp. 76-79). Following this, she outlines the linguistic and legal disciplines categorized

in *al-Maṭālib* (pp. 79-86) and explains the author's methodology and principles of taxonomy first for linguistics and then for legal disciplines (pp. 86-104). The editor's analysis ends with a list of people and works mentioned in *al-Maṭālib* (pp. 105-106.)

While *al-Maṭālib* is in essence a taxonomy of sciences (p. 63), the thing that makes Molla Luṭfī's work different is the central position of '*ilm al-waḍ'*' within his taxonomy. In other words, the author tries to examine legal disciplines by taking linguistics into the center and also linguistics by taking '*ilm al-waḍ'*' into the center. Fazlıoğlu states that the main argument of the work is "to establish linguistic and legal disciplines by basing on rational theory of language ('*ilm al-waḍ'*)" which was established by Aḍud al-dīn al-İjī (p. 11). The concept of *waḍ'* is constitutive in the text to the extent that *al-Maṭālib* would be cited by later literature as a classical treatise on *waḍ'* (p. 55, 68). The strongest proof in this context is that the terminology used in taxonomy belongs to '*ilm al-waḍ'*' (p. 68).

Before starting his taxonomy of sciences, Molla Luṭfī explains how language and writing originated and how they emerged. Language was organized through arranging meaningful sounds in the most economical way for men to understand each other's intentions. The thing that leads men to this is the necessity of cooperation between individuals. Otherwise life would end. This is also ultimately necessitated by the civilized/social nature of human beings.

The author separates two stages of the language formation. The first one is the emergence of sound in the human body as a result of the effect of data transmitted from the external world to the brain on the heart. Since the voice comes out as a result of the mentioned data, it naturally indicates the effect of these data (natural indication). Because of the fact that the first aspect of this issue is completely a physical process, it is not specific to the mankind but shared by all living beings. As Molla Luṭfī explains this stage through internal and external organs of the human being by referring to contemporary disciplines of medicine and physics, the editor calls the author's perspective as a *physical theory for waḍ'* (p. 64).

The second aspect of the issue takes place with the human control on this natural condition/process in communicating his own kind of sound and this is particular to mankind. According to this, the thinking man, as a soul perceiving the universals, views the sound as a nominal datum and defines it as the name of mental images through his will and intent. Therefore, new sounds are made beyond the natural indications. These sounds indicate the perceived mental images not naturally but by definition/ *waḍ'*. Thus, letters and words made of letters appear. In other words, the process of the language formation begins (p. 65).

After explaining the process of the sound from its natural indication to *waḍ'*, Molla Luṭfī takes the issue of *writing*. Shapes of writing are nominal values showing letters used in the language in order to indicate meanings thought in the soul. The

emergence of these nominal values is essentially originated from the need to transmit the intended information/news or message to individuals who are not present in conversation or to later generations. The word appearing through the usage of language can have meaning only for the interlocutor. For those who are not present vertically or horizontally, this can only be possible through writing (pp. 66-67).

The editor, after summarizing the science of *waq'* before Luṭfi (pp. 68-76), examines the author's explanations under the title of '*ilm al-waq'*' which includes basically a literature review (pp. 76-79). According to this, the author states that the first words identified during the process of the language formation appear by three forms in the framework of isolative (*shakhṣi*) *waq'*. These include two forms in which both *waq'* and *mawḍū'* lah are special or general and the third form in which *waq'* is general and *mawḍū'* is particular. Then, he points out synonymous, conveyable and shared nature of the word-meaning relationship and shows distinctions among them. After these first words realized in the context of the isolative *waq'* in the language, the author explains the formation of new forms from these words and new words from these forms by way of *subsumptive* (*naw'i*) *waq'*.

The author both in the text and the commentary does not satisfy explaining '*ilm al-waq'*', he applies *waq'* system and terms to the entire taxonomy. He explains emergence of all linguistics according to the system of '*ilm al-waq'*' from the origins of letters to individual words, and to sentence structures. For instance, he states that lexicography deals with isolative and *subsumptive waq'* likewise morphology deals with *subsumptive waq'* of the singular words with a general perspective. The author explains the science of *nahw* through *subsumptive waq'*. According to this, those who created the Arabic language combined the words in different forms to make sentences and created the regular-meaningful forms of this operation by way of *subsumptive waq'*. Therefore, the listener understands this creation when s/he hears being independent from the intention of the speaker. In this case, *nahw* is a discipline examining the forms of *subsumptive waq'* in the sentences. Molla Luṭfi goes one step further and discusses the sciences of *balaghah* such as *ma'āni*, *bayān* and *bed'i* in the same framework. According to this, various forms derived within the limits of words and grammar can obtain new meanings through the means of speaking. Since these new meanings are because of the means, they emerge not from the creation of the word or sentence but from their usage. Therefore, it should be considered as rational indication not *waq'i* indication. As a matter of fact Molla Luṭfi defines the discipline of *ma'āni* as the science examining the possible and preferable forms that can be attached to the primary speech and the reasons for their preferences through a kind of rational indications (pp. 78-79).

The editor states that the author enumerates twenty-nine disciplines studying the Arabic language. Some of the important aspects concerning the taxonomy of

these disciplines are the following: The author first defines these disciplines, then talks about their elements such as subject matter, premise, theorem and objective. The taxonomy follows a path from the piece to the whole and knits all linguistic disciplines by deriving each one from the rules of *wad'*. Besides, it can be said that logic has a significant effect on the language of taxonomy (pp. 86-90).

After the linguistic disciplines, Molla Lutfi continues with the taxonomy of legal disciplines. The departure point of the author in this context is the necessity of law in order to maintain the continuity of social order. God should determine the law because it is binding for all men. Otherwise, everybody would head towards the thing s/he wishes. Besides, the legislator should be in equal distance to all individuals and know the needs of the society absolutely in order to be just towards the society. Only God can make such a thing. Secondly, the determined law can be transmitted to men only through a trustable messenger/teacher. The messenger should belong to the same kind in order to communicate with men, but on the other hand he should have a divine aspect in order to maintain the connection between the legislator and the interlocutor.

At this point, the relationship between the law and the language appears. The messenger, i.e. the teacher receiving the knowledge of the laws, can teach these laws only through a language. Therefore, this explains why Molla Lutfi considers the legal disciplines together with the linguistic disciplines. Because of this, Lutfi examines the legal disciplines not as they are but their expression by way of language. The author states that the laws determined by God cannot always be learned orally from the teacher by everybody. Therefore, it is necessary that words should be organized with certain rules in order to show the meanings particular to the law. Since word-meaning relations depend on the phenomenon of *wad'* for Molla Lutfi, the relationship between the divine law and the human being is ultimately reduced to linguistic disciplines (pp. 96-97).

In this framework, the author classifies the legal disciplines as sciences on the essence of God and the messenger, sciences examining the words of God and the messenger for their being words and sciences examining the judgments acquired through words from both laws. Lutfi, who sees the common disciplines among these four parts as a separate kind, divides these common disciplines as sciences on the premises of the first four kind and auxiliary sciences (pp. 98-104).

Fazlıoğlu's critical edition of the text is an example for the growing interest in contemporary Turkish scholarship in the classical texts written during the Ottoman period. Considering the text's historical position and effects in the Ottoman intellectual history, it can be said that the subject has been chosen appropriately. More importantly, *al-Maṭālib* shows how the Arabic language was taken as the subject of a scientific and philosophical endeavor in the Islamic tradition.