Havva Özçay[*]

Works on Islamic ethics reflect the influence of various fields. In this respect, disciplines such as *fiqh*, *kalām*, *tafsīr*, Sufism, literature and philosophy can all be seen as contributing to ethical thought. Therefore, a key question when reading an Islamic ethical work is which framework should be used for interpretation. Depending on the predominant nature of its content, an ethical work can be placed under different categories such as theoretical/philosophical, literary, scripture-centred, related to body-soul medicine (*ṭabāba*), or belonging to the wisdom (*ḥikamiyyāt*) tradition. The work under review, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Fāqihī's (d. 982/1574) *Manāhij al-akhlāq al-saniyya fī mabāhij al-akhlāq al-sunniyya* is, as its title indicates, a treatise on ethics and may be situated within the broader *adab* tradition. However, *Manāhij* exhibits a depth that surpasses that of a conventional *adab* work. Composed in the sixteenth-century Hijaz, it is a distinctive text, primarily structured around Qur'anic verses and hadiths. While grounded in transmitted sources, the work is notably enriched with Sufi and philosophical elements.

As the translator notes in the introduction, *Manāhij* was discovered during manuscript research conducted as part of "The Islamic Ethical Thought Project."[1] It attracted attention for its unique combination of philosophical and Sufi methods,

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[1]   "The Islamic Ethical Thought Project" was carried out between 2013 and 2016 under the auspices of İLEM (Scientific Studies Association) and İLKE (Foundation for Science, Culture, and Education).

[*]   Ph.D. Student in Philosophy and Religious Studies, Institute of Social Sciences, Marmara University. Correspondence: havva95uls@gmail.com

as well as for its arrangement of good and bad moral traits in alphabetical order. Despite the challenges posed by the book's incorporation of concepts from diverse disciplines and utilization of poetry for illustrative examples (*istishhād*), Osman Demir produced a fluent and accessible Turkish translation, published under the title *İslam Ahlâk Düşüncesi Sözlüğü* (*Dictionary of Islamic Ethical Thought*), alongside the Arabic text. However, the work may be read not merely as a dictionary, but as a genre-blending composition—part ethical treatise, part encyclopedia— that seeks to delineate the principles and methods of Sunnī moral thought, as its title suggests.[2] In this sense, it offers the reader considerably more than a conventional reference work.

The book consists of a preface, an introduction, two chapters (sing. *maqṣad*), and a conclusion. In the preface, Fāqihī states his purpose in composing the work, briefly outlines its structure, and explains that he was motivated to write *Manāhij* due to the absence of a comprehensive work on the science of ethics. His aim is to create a text that elevates the pursuit of moral refinement to its highest form, incorporates the virtues of the Prophet Muhammad and prominent Sufis, and compiles the ethical teachings dispersed throughout the Sunnah (p. 64). In the introduction, the author addresses theoretical topics commonly analyzed in philosophical ethical litarature, such as the definition of morality (*akhlāq*) and the possibility of its transformation. He then divides the work into two main parts. The first part, consisting of ten chapters, covers a range of subjects including praiseworthy/good moral traits (*al-akhlāq al-ḥamīda*), arranged alphabetically, as well as definition, benefits, and aims of these virtues. It also includes discussions on topics such as the Most Beautiful Names of God (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*). The second part, divided into seven chapters, focuses on blameworthy/bad moral traits (*al-akhlāq al-dhamīma*), offering explanations on how to treat them, along with methods for protection and purification. In the conclusion, Fāqihī outlines the principles of the spiritual paths that draw one closer to God, explains these principles using the Sufi methods, and shares his hope that a Muslim might, at some point, embody one of these virtuous traits, which is the reason why he wrote this section (p. 66).

It is also useful to discuss the sources of *Manāhij*. Among his more than twenty sources, Fāqihī cites most frequently Sheikh Zarrūq (d. 899/1493-94), whom he respectfully refers to as "my sheikh." Sheikh Zarrūq is recognized as the founder of the

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2   *Manāhij* (singular: *minhāj*) in Arabic refers to methods, models, paths, or approaches.

Zarrūqiyya branch of the Shādhiliyya Sufi order.[3] Fāqihī, himself affiliated with the Shādhiliyya, frequently draws on Zarrūq's works, especially *Mawāhib* and *Qawāʿid* and his commentary on God's Most Beautiful Names and concludes his book with Zarrūq's views. In addition to Zarrūq's works, the author cites other notable figures including al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1415), and Ibn al-Bārizī (d. 656/1208) (p. 68). Fāqihī's sources span jurists, Sufis, and philosophers, including Avicenna (d. 428/1037) and ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355). As evident from the title and content, Fāqihī's intellectual grounding is firmly within Sunnī Islam. Although Fāqihī references figures such as al-Ījī and Avicenna in his work, he notably omits authors like al-Ṭūsī and Ibn Miskawayh, who were prominent ethical thinkers of their time presumably because they were Shīʿī. This omission suggests that *Manāhij* does not only have an academic dimension but also an ideological one. Thus, Fāqihī's book can be evaluated as an important work that reflects the ethical worldview of the Sunnī Islamic tradition.

The author opens the introduction with theoretical discussions commonly found in the early sections of philosophical works on ethics. He examines definitions of ethics presented in both philosophical and Sufi texts, exploring the possibility of moral transformation by drawing connections between the views of thinkers such as al-Ījī, Avicenna, and Galen (d. 200?), alongside relevant hadiths. These definitions and the philosophical debates on the mutability of moral dispositions are incorporated in a way that supports Fāqihī's broader ethical vision. However, his formulations do not fully align with either Galenic or Aristotelian models. For instance, Fāqihī offers the following definitions regarding ethics, its subject, foundational principles, and benefits: "Ethics is the science of the human soul's ability to acquire praiseworthy dispositions. Its subject is the human soul in terms of being the source of praiseworthy and blameworthy actions. Its principles are the conception of virtues and vices and the affirmation that they are praiseworthy and blameworthy. Its benefit is to ensure eternal bliss in the hereafter and to gain obedience and praiseworthy characteristics in this world" (p. 74).

The author asserts that one aspect of morality is determined by temperament, while another can be shaped though education and habit. According to Fāqihī, although human beings are innately created with goodness, exposure to a corrupt

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3   Derya Baş, "Zarrūq", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/zerruk (accessed on July 14, 2024).

environment can lead to immoral character. To support this view, Fāqihī cites the hadith, "Every child is born upon *fiṭra* (innate predisposition)" emphasizing the primacy of hadiths throughout the introduction, which he initially framed within a philosophical context (p. 72). This writing style in the preface extends throughout the book, where religious and Sufi teachings are regarded as fundamental sources for conveying the intended message. In this sense, it can be said that the issues discussed in philosophical ethical literature form an introductory framework in this sixteenth-century text. Clearly, Fāqihī did not set out to write a work of philosophical ethics; rather, he utilized philosophical ethical literature as a tool to express his ideas. Furthermore, he presented these concepts in a manner accessible to a general readership, avoiding overly technical or abstract discussions.

Following the introduction, the author turns to the discussion of good dispositions, which he explores across ten chapters. He designates the seventh chapter as the most significant part of the book. In this chapter, Fāqihī explains individual character traits in alphabetical order, primarily using aphorisms from *Ḥikam* (*Wisdoms*) by Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1309), among other sources. This is the book's longest chapter, encompassing more than two hundred virtues. While the list echoes virtues discussed in philosophical literature, it is also accompanied by Sufi concepts. Fāqihī similarly engages with philosophical ideas in the seventh chapter of the book's second part, which focuses on bad moral dispositions. At the end of that chapter, he provides a list of the principles and corollaries of good and bad moral dispositions, based on the methodology of the philosophers. Although he adheres to this list throughout the work, he also makes several notable additions. For example, he includes "repentance" as a virtue and identifies "frowning at a fellow believer's face" as a vice—both of which are supported by references to Qurʾanic verses and hadiths.

The character traits Fāqihī discusses throughout the two sections of *Manāhij* are often elaborated in detail, supported by examples from narrations such as hadīths and Sufi sayings. When necessary, the author supplements the entries with his own commentary, organized under subheadings like *tadhkira* (reminder), *fāʾida* (benefit) and *qāʾida* (rule). This reflective and instructive style characterizes the work as a whole. In the definitions of the terms, philosophical insights appear particularly at the end, even in some cases they dominate the entire defnition. For instance, in the entry on "*ḥikma,*" Fāqihī first explains the concept using the philosophical schema of virtues, then closes the section with the hadith "*Ḥikma* is the lost treasure of a believer" (p. 110). A similar approach is taken in the entry on *tadbīr al-maʿīsha* (managing livelihood),

which is classified among the good moral dispositions. Here, Fāqihī draws upon the *tadbīr al-manzil* (household management) section of practical ethics—a major division in philosophical ethical literature. He begins with a summary the *tadbīr al-manzil* section from ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī's *al-Akhlāq al-ʿAḍudiyya* and its commentary, then concludes with narrations from hadith literature on family ethics, supplemented by his own reflections. A different example appears in the entry on "courage," where the virtue is defined strictly according to the faculties of the soul, as framed in philosophical ethics (p. 352). Notably, in this case—as in many others—Fāqihī does not cite specific sources but clearly draws upon philosophical literature. In the article on *adab*, he addresses the question of the origin of good and evil, a classic topic in philosophical ethics. Evil, according to him, is defined as that which sharīʿa deems evil (pp. 154-156). Fāqihī's reliance on a religious standard rather than a rational one in this context underscores his broader methodological and ideological orientation.

These discussions of moral traits go beyond offering insight into the commonly held definitions; they also serve as valuable indicators for understanding the cultural history of the period. Certain expressions reveal prevailing perceptions of women during Fāqihī's time, including both denigrating and appreciative views. For example, "obeying women" is listed as a blameworthy trait, and Fāqihī explains it as follows: "It is reported that lack of intellect and religion are the qualities of women. One does not obey a deficient person except in regard to the things that must be obeyed" (p. 650). Here, the author adopts the traditional view of women's deficiency in intellect and religion, aligning with the hadith he cites. However, in the entry on "consultation" (*istishāra*)—classified among the good moral dispositions—Fāqihī includes a report stating that Caliph ʿUmar consulted women and, finding wisdom in their words, acted upon them (p. 154). Yet, in the entry on "obeying women," he interprets ʿUmar's consultation as a means of testing women's views rather than genuinely valuing them.

Similar perspectives appear in the discussion of household ethics under *tadbīr al-maʿīsha*. This section includes advice on household management and relationships, offering both positive and cautionary notes. While the husband is advised to treat his wife well and clothe her appropriately, he is also warned not to share secrets with her, to consult her only on minor matters, and to remember that even the wisest of women are prone to jealousy (pp. 284-286). Nonetheless, the work also includes affirming statements. In the entry on "guiding through education and instruction" —classified among the good moral dispositions— Fāqihī cites a report emphasizing the necessity of educating one's wife, sons, and daughters (p. 170). This conveys a

sense of the importance he places on the education of women and girls, suggesting a more nuanced view within the broader ethical framework of the text.

As previously noted, this work can be described not only as a dictionary but also as an encyclopedia. This dual characterization stems from its structure: it opens with the systematic format of a reference work but concludes with the reflective tone of a scholarly monograph. In the epilogue, Fāqihī explicitly states that his motivation for writing the book was the hope that Muslims, across across time and space, might adopt some of the moral dispositions he outlines. The epilogue is steeped in Sufi teachings and begins with a renowned saying by Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā (d. 618/1221): "The paths leading to God are as numerous as the breaths of the creatures." Drawing on this idea, Fāqihī explains three principal paths to God. The first is the path of *muʿāmala*, or practical devotion, which entails approaching God through acts of worship such as fasting, prayer, Qurʾanic recitation, and pilgrimage. According to Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā, those who reach God through this route have been diminished in number. The second path, which has attracted more followers, is that of asceticism and spiritual struggle—often associated with the Sufi tradition. The third, and most favored, is the path of divine attraction (*jadhba*) and love (*maḥabba*), which is characterized by key spiritual dispositions: repentance, asceticism, trust in God, contentment, seclusion, continual remembrance, turning toward God with justice, patience, introspection, and full acceptance of divine justice. In closing the book with these reflections, Fāqihī not only affirms the principles of the ethical path he personally upholds but also communicates the core message of his work: that moral refinement is essential for drawing nearer to God.

In conclusion, it is clear that the author consistently adheres to the aims outlined in the introduction throughout the main body of his work. *Manāhij* stands out as a unique and significant contribution to the intellectual landscape of its century, notable for its methodical structure, its alphabetical arrangement of moral dispositions, its integration of Sufi and philosophical elements, its wide-ranging sources, and its didactic tone—primarily narration-based yet enriched with the author's own reflections and insights. Beyond its immediate function as a moral guide, the work also offers valuable perspectives on the religious, intellectual, and cultural concerns of its time. This work invites further studies both as a source for the study of Islamic ethics and as a historical document that reflects the moral imagination of the early modern Sunnī worldview.